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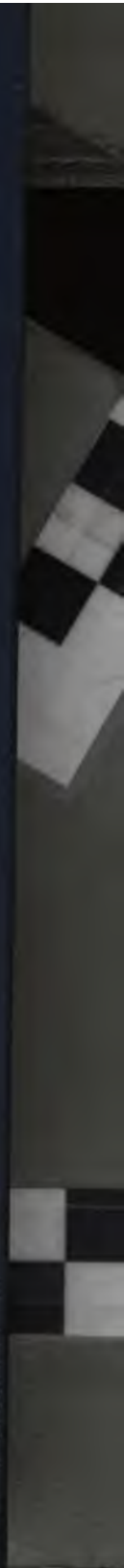
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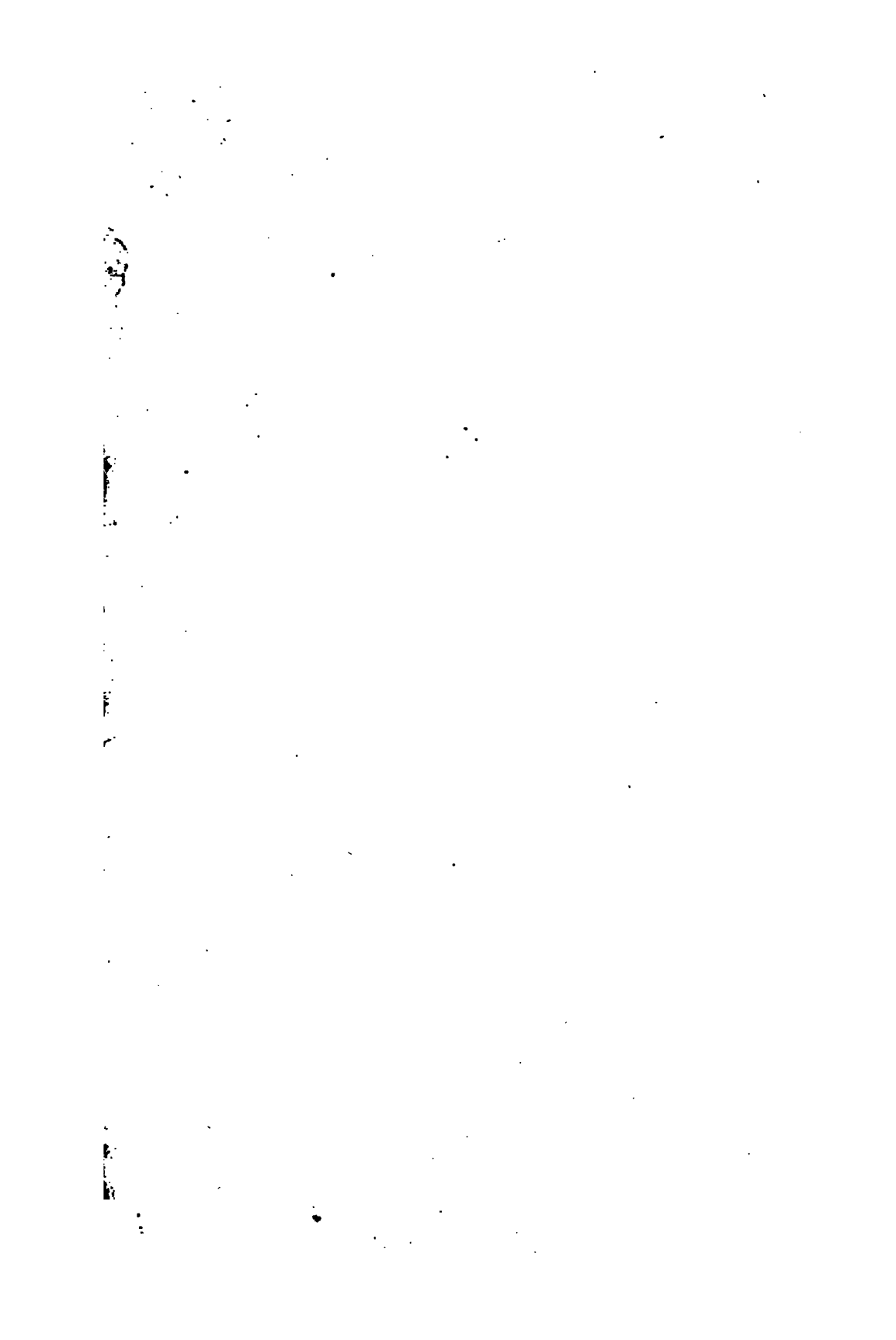


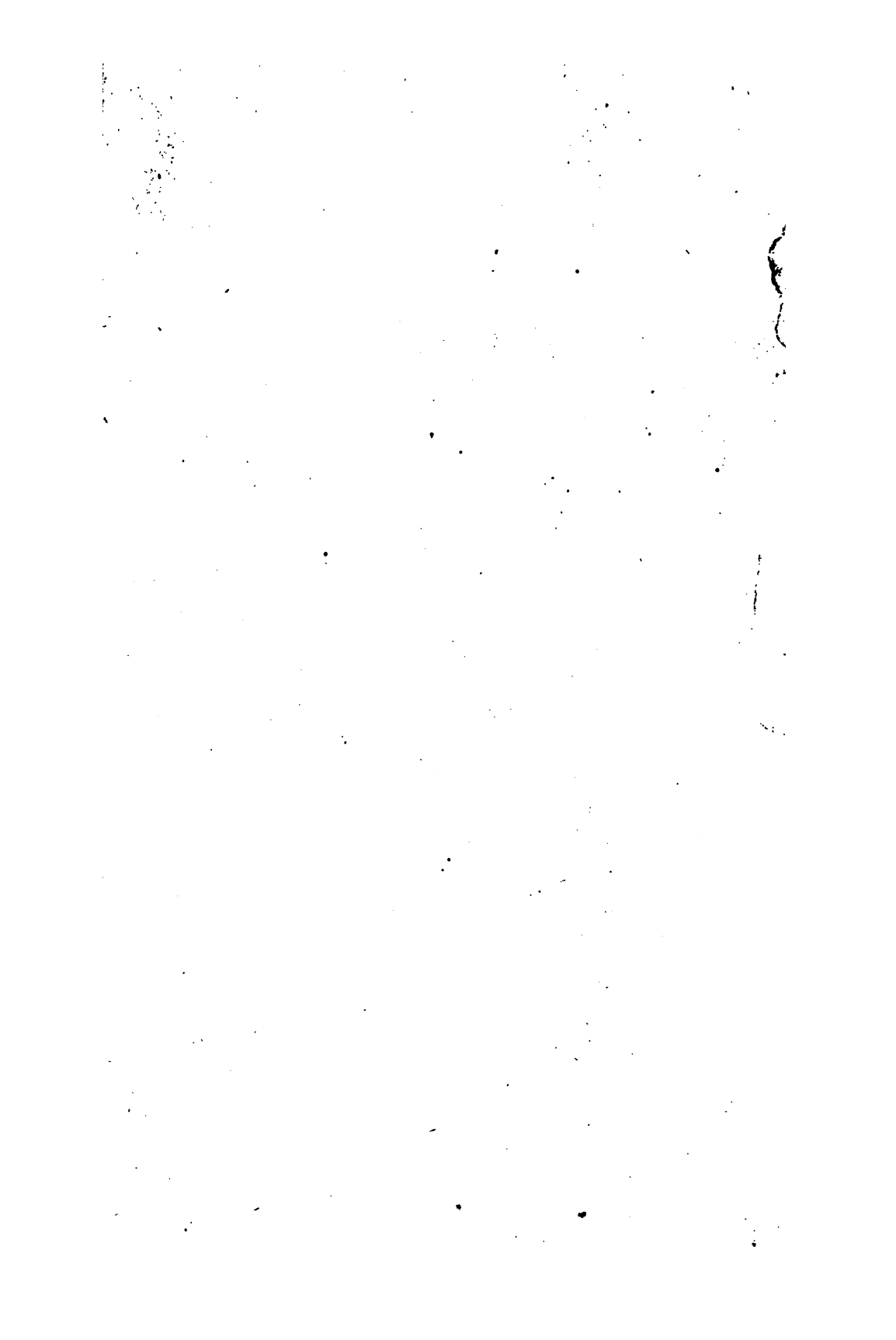












THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR,

ORIGINAL SERMONS FROM LIVING MINISTERS.

MONTHLY.

EDITED BY

REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON,

NEW-YORK.

Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue KNOWLEDGE, and to knowledge TEMPERANCE.—II Peter, li. 5, 6.

VOL. V.

FOR THE YEAR COMMENCING JUNE, 1830.

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THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations...Matthew, xxviii. 19.

No. 1.

NEW-YORK, JUNE, 1830.

Vol. V.

SERMON LXXXII.

By JUSTIN EDWARDS, D. D.

ANDOVER, MASS.

THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1 JOHN, ii. 20.—*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

THIS was said to a company of real Christians. They had united in a church, and covenanted to obey God. But in this church, as in perhaps every other, there were some who were Christians only in name. At the time the apostle wrote, they were assailed with dangerous errors, and some had actually apostatized. But the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, declared, that the persons who had apostatized never were *real Christians*. "They went out from us; but they were not of us. Had they been of us (that is, real Christians,) no doubt they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Their apostacy, therefore, instead of proving that real Christians would ever apostatize, only proved that merely nominal Christians would; while it was reasonable to expect, that real Christians would not; for, said he, "*ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*"

An *unction* is a figurative expression, and refers to the manner in which the priests of old, and sometimes the prophets and kings, were set apart for their office. They were anointed with oil, in token of being endued with the Holy Spirit. The sign is here used for the thing signified: an unction, for the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Real Christians have this teaching: "Ye have an unction." The effect is knowledge: "and ye know all things." All things, in this place, means the things in question; the things about which the apostle was writing, and which he had before preached: the great truths of the Gospel.

The doctrine of the text then is, that **REAL CHRISTIANS ARE TAUGHT BY THE HOLY GHOST THE GREAT TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.**

This teaching consists, however, not in revealing to them these truths directly from heaven; but in leading them rightly to apprehend, and suit-

ably to feel the force of the truths as revealed in the Bible. He shows them, in the use of means, what the truths of the Bible are; and leads them to feel their force. Thus it is written, "They shall be all taught of God." "The meek will be guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

I would now invite you to attend to this divine teaching; and to witness its effects upon the hearts and lives of men.

I. God has revealed, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be."

This truth is doubted by some, by others is denied; but the Holy Ghost teaches real Christians that it is a fact. By being made acquainted with themselves, they are convinced that their hearts were deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that they were carnal, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be, while they continued in that state. They have found that they loved themselves and the world more than God; and by comparing this with his requirement, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," they have found, that it was enmity against him. It was serving the creature; and they could not serve two masters. They must "love the one, and hate the other; or hold to the one and despise the other;" they could "not serve God and mammon." And when they found, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that they did serve one, they felt that they were in fact opposed to the other. Hence, instead of boasting of the goodness of their own hearts, or the moral excellence of human nature; they cried, "Wo is me, I am undone." They were, in their own view, as they were in the view of God, *lost*. And when He who came to seek and to save, was seen dying for all, they felt that "all were dead." They feel so still. The doctrine of human depravity, as revealed in the Bible, appears to them a reality; and it appears to be as universal and entire, as God represents.

II. God has revealed that this is a state of guilt and of ruin. "Thou hast destroyed thyself." "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is also doubted by some, and by others is denied. But the Holy Ghost teaches real Christians, that they *have* "loved darkness rather than light;" that their deeds have been evil; that they have sinned against heaven and before God. They feel that they deserve to perish; and that unless they are, through grace, delivered from sin, they must perish. Hence, instead of crying, Peace, peace, and trying to cast the blame of their wickedness upon Adam, or upon God, they take it to themselves; and they feel that it belongs to them. "Father, I have sinned." "Lord, I am vile." "Pardon *mine* iniquity, for it is great."

III. God has revealed, that without a change, a great moral change, which he calls "being born again," no man can be saved. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Real Christians know this also to be a fact. The Holy Ghost, by means of the truth, has given them such a view of themselves and of God, that they no longer marvel that men must be born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Men have carnal minds, which are "enmity

against God." And what can enmity against God do in heaven? Into that place entereth "nothing that defileth." But men are naturally defiled. "The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, and seek him;" but, "they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one." Hence, they must be changed; or, in the language of the Bible, be "born of the Spirit," or they "cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Real Christians feel this. They know, that he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into their hearts, and give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence they see,

IV. The reality of another truth which God has revealed, "In me is thine help. I, even I, am Jehovah, and beside me there is no Saviour." In days of impenitence and unbelief they may have sought help from others; but they never found it. They never found it till they felt, and that deeply, that it must come from God: and when they did find it, they were the first to cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "By grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Hence they see,

V. The reality of another truth which God has revealed: "Other foundation can no man lay (that is, for the immortal hopes of men,) than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This is doubted by many, and by some is denied. Some trust to works; the goodness of God, out of Christ; and some hope to be saved, because they think themselves of too much importance to perish. But these are all refuges of lies; and however long Christians, in days of their impenitence, may have trusted to them, and however firmly they may have thought such hopes to stand; they have all been swept away. The commandment has come, sin has revived, and they have died; and they found no hope of life, till Christ was revealed to them as "the hope of glory." And thus he was "all their salvation, and all their desire." They see now with perfect clearness, that "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

VI. God has revealed, that "whosoever believeth on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This truth, it may be, once they did not believe. Their sins were so many and so great, so long continued and so aggravated, that they may have thought, when they first saw their sins, that God could not, even for Christ's sake, ever forgive them. But then they had no "unction from the Holy One," as to the infinite worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when that glory from Calvary burst forth upon them, with a brightness that put out the sun, they saw that "God could be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth." And as they gazed upon the length, and the breadth, and the height of that amazing love, which passeth knowledge, they felt that he would do it; and believing, they found rest to their souls. This prepared them,

VII. To feel another truth that God has revealed, "Unto you that believe, he (Christ) is precious." To others he may be like "a root out of a dry ground," having "no form or comeliness why they should desire him." He may even be set at nought, with the vain inquiry, "What is thy Beloved more than another?" But "unto you that believe, he is precious." Real Christians all know this. The Holy Ghost has given them such a view of his infinite excellence, loveliness, and glory, that he is to them, "the chief among ten thousand; altogether lovely." They need not now, that any man should teach them that Jesus Christ is precious; the same anointing teacheth them. They know it. It comes home with divine power to their hearts. They see in him "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and love him with a love that is stronger than death. Hence,

VIII. They feel the reality of another truth that God has revealed; "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price;" and their hearts echo their duty: "Glorify God in your body and spirit, which are his." Hence you see them, in seasons of trial, not counting even life dear to them; but counting all things but loss, that they might win Christ, and be found of him in peace. And in doing this they experience the truth, not of one, or a few, but of many divine declarations. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you;" and "the peace of God passeth all understanding." "If a man love me, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; and in keeping them there is great reward." In short, the whole Bible becomes to such persons the testimony of God; which is therefore believed; and to a great extent is illustrated and confirmed by their own experience. And when these truths are known by experience, they have a reality, a fulness, and a power, of which, before, the persons had no conception.

The man who *feels* the heat of fire has a very different conception from the man who only hears about it; or reads concerning it; or only stands at a distance and looks at it. His conceptions are cold; and when shivering under the blasts of winter, they do him no good. He may have read about fire, he may have seen it, may have disputed about its properties, and may have thought, perhaps, that he was acquainted with it. But when he comes near, and receives its genial warmth, and still nearer, and feels its penetrating heat, it has a reality, it has a pungency, of which before he had no conception. "My word," saith God, "is a fire, and a hammer; it breaketh the rock in pieces." The man who feels it, has a totally different conception from the man who only hears about it, or reads concerning it, or reasons and disputes about it. The conceptions of the latter are cold and heartless; and leave him dead in sin. The momentous truths of the Bible may appear to him like fables: may pass by him unheeded; and leave upon his heart no permanent impression. While to the real Christian, who has been taught them by "an unction from the Holy One," and who receives them in love, they have a reality, and they have a fulness and power, which stamp upon the Bible, and upon his heart, the impress of God.

In view of this subject, I remark,

1. That true religion begins with *experience*. It is experience, however, not of any thing enthusiastic, delusive, or uncertain, but of the reality and power of those truths which God has revealed. And this experience gives them a kind of knowledge of those truths, as to their reality, efficacy, and importance, which before they did not have. Some men doubt whether there is any such religious experience. The reason is, they have never felt it. The same general reasons lead some men to doubt the truths of the Bible; they have never felt them. Yet the Bible is true; and let a man feel its saving efficacy, and he will know that religious experience is a reality; a momentous and glorious reality. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." But we learn from this subject,

2. That this peculiar kind of knowledge which real Christians have, is taught them, not merely by men, but by the Holy Ghost. It is not a knowledge which they gain *merely* by seeing, or hearing, or thinking. They do not obtain this knowledge in any way merely by the unaided efforts of their own minds. These are all means, and must be used; but it is the Holy One who imparts this knowledge to men. Flesh and blood merely do not reveal it; nor does any sinful or finite spirit; but the Holy Ghost. It is by "an unction from the Holy One" that they receive this knowledge.

This is doubted by some; not, however, by those who receive the truth. They know things, which, they are perfectly convinced, they never should have known, had not the Holy Ghost taught them. The deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart; its enmity against God; its guilt in disobeying him; the necessity of being born again; that there is no hope for sinners but in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that none to whom he is revealed can be saved except they believe on him; his infinite fulness, divine excellence, and beauty and loveliness as a Saviour; the blessedness of believing on him, trusting in him, and obeying his commands,—are truths which all real Christians know; but which they are deeply sensible that they never should have known, had not the Holy Ghost taught them. The teaching of the Holy Ghost is attended with a twofold effect, it gives to those who receive it an experimental knowledge of divine truth; attended with a permanent conviction that this knowledge is from God. Hence,

3. We see the reason why they will not, for any opposite errors, renounce those truths, a knowledge of which the Holy Ghost has given. The apostle took this for granted. "Had they been of us," said he, (had they been real Christians, who had "an unction from the Holy One,") "they would have continued with us." How could he say that? Simply from the fact, that real Christians, who have been taught by the Holy Ghost the truths of the Gospel, in their own experience, will not renounce them. The reason he gives is, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." They have been taught these truths, sent down from heaven, by the Holy Ghost. They find them in the Bible. They find them illustrated in their own experience. They find them to accord with their condition as sinners, and to meet all their wants.

These things cannot be said of the opposite sentiments. Real Christians cannot find them in the Bible. They do not describe their true condition as *sinners*; they do not meet their wants. To remove this difficulty, you may try to show them that they have no such wants as they suppose; that they have been among the enthusiastic, and are deluded. And upon this subject you may reason with great learning and acuteness; but their wants are not matters of mere speculation, but of *feeling*.

A man before you is starving; and you feed him on the east wind. He tells you that it does not satisfy him; that he wants food. You try to show him that he has no such want; that he has been among hungry men, and is deluded. You reason with great learning and acuteness; and, if he is not a learned man, he may not find it easy to answer you. But his wants are matters not of reasoning, though there is good reason for them; they are matters of feeling. And when a man feels pain, you cannot convince him that he has none. What he wants is *ease*; not proof that he has no pain. On that point he has proof enough; and proof which will for ever convince him; all your reasoning and efforts to the contrary notwithstanding.

A man is in agony under the pangs of conscious guilt in not having believed on the Saviour. What he needs is pardon; not proof that he has no guilt; on that point he has proof enough; and proof which will carry overwhelming and eternal conviction to his mind; though all the rest of creation should doubt it.

Suppose you undertake to prove to real Christians, that they have never had a carnal mind, or that the carnal mind is not enmity against God. How can you make them believe it? What revelation has God given to men, but the Bible? and where in the Bible is it written that when God looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek him, he found that there were some that *had not* the carnal mind, or that the carnal mind is *not* enmity against God? And how can you make this accord with their experience? They were ten, twenty, perhaps fifty years, supremely devoted to themselves and the world. How can you show them that they were all this time not at enmity with God? Not from the Bible; this declares, "They have rebelled against me." Not from their own feelings; these cry, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Now, if all other men should declare that they never had carnal minds, or that the carnal mind is not enmity to God, Christians will not believe it: they know it to be false.

Try, if you will, to make them believe that they do not deserve to perish; and that if they should perish with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, God would be unjust; and in their view you contradict the Bible; and you contradict also their own feelings, and that knowledge of themselves which the Holy Ghost hath given them.

Try to make them believe that they do not need the special influences of the Holy Ghost; and when they are quaking in fearful apprehension under conscious guilt, crying, Who will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh? or who shall deliver us from the body of this death? direct them to themselves, or to creatures, as their only hope and you only mock their anguish. "Miserable comforters are ye all."

But when they hear a voice from the throne, saying, "I will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh; and from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you;" and experience the truth of these declarations, they cry, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Take another of those errors which stand opposed to the Gospel of Christ. Try to show real Christians, that although "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," yet, that the Word was *not* God; and how can you make them believe this? Would God, say they, reveal to man a falsehood? and "when he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, command all the angels of heaven to worship" a *creature*? Could all things, "whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers," be created by, and for, a *creature*? and could the treasures of everlasting kindness and grace at an infinite expense be opened upon a guilty world, that all men should honour a *creature*, even as they honour the Father? And when they feel that they have, according to the divine declaration, destroyed themselves; that in God alone is their help; when they hear him say, "I am Jehovah, and beside me there is no Saviour;" how can you, by presenting a Saviour who is only a *creature*, meet their wants? And when Christ comes in fulfilment of his own promise, and manifests himself to them, and takes up his abode with them; when he manifests himself to ten thousand thousands of them, in thousands of different places; and when, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them, and at the same time is in heaven adored by unnumbered millions; and when their own hearts respond to the heavenly song, "Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever;" how can you make them believe that he is only a *creature*? How can you make it accord with the Bible? with that knowledge of Christ which the Holy Ghost has given them; which is life eternal; and which will lead them, wherever they are, through the whole period of their existence, to "walk in his steps?" No, it is not possible for the human mind to conceive of a system of errors which real Christians will find in the Bible; which will accord with their experience; which will describe their condition as sinners; and will meet their wants. This is peculiar to the Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God our Saviour. Real Christians know this; and for this reason they will not renounce it; but will hold it fast, whatever it may cost them, and whatever may be the consequence, even unto the end; contending earnestly for "the faith once delivered to the saints;" and following them, "who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises."

This inflexible firmness, this persevering adherence to sacred truth, which real Christians manifest, notwithstanding all the improvements which men imagine they have made, is thought by some to result from ignorance. They hold, it is said, to that old way, because they do not know any better. And it is a fact that they do not know any better. And so long as they continue to have "an unction from the Holy One," they never will. But, though they trust to the wisdom of another, yet they know something; and something, too, which is "hid from many wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes." Others, however, do not think

that they hold to this old way because they are ignorant, but because they are bigoted. They have, say some, been taught it, and they never will renounce what they have been taught. They have been taught it. This is what the apostle declares; but who was their teacher? Let the apostle answer. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." He was their teacher; and they will not give up what he has taught them.

Two things are peculiar to the Holy Ghost as a teacher; his disciples will believe him; and what he teaches them they will never renounce; though they should be tempted, or sawn asunder, or slain with the sword; or have to wander about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented, on account of their faith, yet they will not renounce it.

"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault their faith with treacherous art,
They'd call them vanity, and lies,
And bind the Gospel to their heart."

This some think to be obstinacy. But it is not; for obstinacy will sometimes, after long continuance, give up. It may, in some cases, be overcome. But this can never be overcome. It holds to its object with a grasp vastly more firm, and it is more unyielding than obstinacy itself. It never will give up. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." This is not obstinacy—no; it is faith; that faith which "has subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness been made strong, waxed valiant in fight," and will absolutely "overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil," and "come off conqueror, and more than conqueror, through him that loved us, and gave himself for us."

4. In view of this subject, we see, that it is not strange that different men, with the same external means, have very different views about the Gospel, and very different feelings towards it. It is not unaccountable that some men embrace it; and prize it more than they do thousands of gold and silver: and that others, of equal learning, talents, and opportunities, reject it. When Paul preached the Gospel, "some believed, and some believed not." But we have no evidence that those who believed had in all cases more learning, or talents, or opportunities, than some who believed not. Nor have we any evidence that those who had "an unction from the Holy One, and who "knew all things," were in talents superior to some who went out from them, and thus proved that they were not of them. It was not necessary to be superior in talents in order to know the truth, and be made wise unto salvation; for it is not human learning merely, or talents, or opportunities, which avail for the attainment of saving knowledge. These may be, nay, they are used as means, and the more of them, if devoted to God, the better; but this knowledge that is sanctifying and saving, is imparted by the Holy Ghost. If some men feel the need of his teaching, heartily seek it, and receive it, and other men do not, it is not strange that they should differ in their views about the Gospel, or in their feelings towards it. Nay, it would be strange if it were not so; for the truths of the Gospel are known by being felt.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of human depravity. If one man feels it, and when he looks into himself, finds that he is actually poor, and wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, in want of all things; and another man, when he looks into himself, imagines that he is rich, and increased in goods, and has need of nothing; it is not strange that the one believes the doctrine of human depravity, and the other rejects it. Just give to that man the same kind of evidence which the other has; let him look again into himself, his mind being enlightened by the Holy Ghost to "discern spiritual things," in a spiritual manner; and let him find, as thousands have found, that instead of being, as he supposed, rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing, he is actually poor, and wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, in want of all things; and he too will believe the doctrine of human depravity. He will feel it; and thus *know* that it is true. What the man needs may be neither learning, nor talents, nor opportunities; but an humble spirit, receiving the truth as God has revealed it. He needs *faith*; that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." If one man has this, and another has not, it is not strange that they should differ in their views about the truths of the Bible, and in their feelings towards them. It would be unaccountable if it were not so.

And if some men, without "an unction from the Holy One," seem to embrace the Gospel, and afterward in time of temptation appear to fall away; and other men, who, by an unction from the Holy One, really embrace the Gospel, and, through evil report and good report, persevere in their belief and practice of it to the end; being kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation; it is no more than what, from the Bible, we had reason to expect.

And when this takes place, instead of being, as some suppose, unaccountable, and operating as a stumbling-block, it is only a practical illustration of Bible truth. And it ought to lead every man who beholds it, to trust, not in his own wisdom and goodness, or strength, but in the living God.

5. We see, in view of this subject, the reason why children and poor persons; persons of little learning and small abilities, sometimes embrace the Gospel; appear clearly to understand it, and deeply to feel its truths. It is because the Holy Ghost can and does teach them as really as others. The truths of the Gospel are adapted to their condition, and exactly meet their wants. They can understand them.

The little child, when weeping over the wickedness of his own heart, in godly sorrow and true penitence, understands the doctrine of depravity as really as a man; and more so, unless the man has been taught it in the same way, by *feeling* it. And that child may pray as sincerely, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," as any man on earth. And he may turn from sin, look to the Lord Jesus, and believe on him, love him, and obey him; Christ may be formed in him the hope of glory; be all his salvation and all his desire; and be the end of the law for righteousness to him, as truly as if he were the greatest philosopher on the earth. The reason is, the Gospel, the glorious "Gospel of God our Saviour," is adapted, not merely to adult

sinner, or to learned sinners, or sinners of great talents; but to sinners of every class.

“ This remedy did wisdom find,
To heal diseases of the mind;
A sovereign balm, whose virtues can
Restore the ruined creature, man.”

And man, in every condition in which he is a sinner in a state of probation, and feels his need of pardoning mercy, is able to understand the Gospel, and is able to embrace it, and to be begotten again by it, unto a lively hope, which shall purify him even as God is pure. And this is one of the precious, unspeakably precious glories of the Gospel. It is adapted to sinners of every sort, and *whosoever will*, may embrace it. “ Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” “ Whosoever will, let him come; and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out.” “ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.”

6. We see, in view of this subject, the reason why some men, with the Bible in their hands, are “ ever learning, and yet never come to the knowledge of the truth.” They do not feel their *need* of the teaching of the Holy Ghost. They perhaps do not believe “ that there is any Holy Ghost. They do not seek his teaching. They do not obtain it. And the truths which he has revealed they do not believe. Hence, they grope in darkness at noonday, and stumble as in the night.

7. If Christians, to whom the Gospel has come, not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, would have others to embrace it, and in such a manner that they will never renounce it, but be sanctified and saved with an eternal salvation; while they use all suitable means to convey divine truth to their minds, they must depend for success upon “ an unction from the Holy One.” And for this he “ will be *inquired of* ;” he “ will be sought unto.” Hence Christians, while they make all possible efforts to convey divine truth to the minds of men, should, at the same time, *abound in prayer*. “ Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.” Nor is this the least discouragement either to effort or to prayer; it is rather the grand encouragement to both. For would any of you, being a father, should a famishing child ask bread, give him a stone? or should he ask a fish, would you give him a serpent? “ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” “ Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.” “ Every one that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, and to him who knocketh the door of mercy is opened.” Let then Christians, who have “ an unction from the Holy One,” of every denomination and of every name, use the means of God’s appointment, and there is no insuperable difficulty in the way of the conversion of sinners; or of a revival of true religion, which shall not stop till it has extended to every district, and state, and kingdom; and has reached to every family, and every in-

dividual on the globe. Give each a Bible; let him daily read it; and listen to it as to the voice of Jehovah; let the Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God, be preached in purity and with power to every creature; let prayer, believing, effectual, fervent prayer, ascend without ceasing; and in answer, let there be given to all people "an unction from the Holy One;" and there would be a mourning for sin all over the earth: and then, let the Lord Jesus Christ be proclaimed as the only hope of glory, and every heart would embrace him; the song of salvation would echo from sea to sea; and the whole earth join the blest anthem, **TO THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN, AND HATH REDEEMED US TO GOD BY HIS BLOOD.**

SERMON LXXXIII.

BY WILLIAM J. ARMSTRONG, A. M.

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PRACTICAL ATHEISM OF SINNERS.

EPHESIANS, ii. 12.—*And without God in the world.*

THE avowed advocates of atheism have never been numerous. Pride of intellect and depravity of heart have indeed led many to embrace opinions which would lead to it, if fearlessly followed out to their legitimate consequences. But atheistical doctrines are so completely at war with all around us, and all within us, that it seems scarcely possible for any to embrace them with a calm and deliberate conviction of their truth. Dark indeed must be that understanding which can nowhere discern traces of unsearchable wisdom and almighty power; and dead to every generous emotion that heart, which does not recoil with horror from the dark and desolate caverns of atheism. The Supreme Intelligence who presides over all things is indeed invisible and far above the comprehension of finite reason. Him no man hath seen or can see. He sits behind his works, covered with awful mystery, but in the veil that hides him from our view, his existence and agency are every moment seen, and heard, and felt. We do not doubt whether the sun shines at noonday, because its dazzling brightness renders us unable exactly to ascertain its shape and dimensions. As little should we doubt the existence of our Maker, because the overpowering splendours of his glory confound our imagination, and mock at the feeble efforts of reason to grasp or define them. I exist, therefore God exists. The universe exists, therefore God exists. No reasoning can be more direct and conclusive. Every exercise of consciousness, every operation of my senses, bears testimony to the divine existence. It is not wonderful then, that, while many have feared, and hated, and wished to shun the great Author and Judge of all, few have had the folly, the daring impiety, the infernal hardihood, to deny his existence.

But the truth which men cannot reject, they may alter and pervert, to suit their own feelings; or while they hold it uncorrupted, they may banish it from their *hearts*, and deny it that influence upon their *lives* which it demands. In this respect the Ephesians, to whom the apostle wrote, were "without God," until they heard and believed the Gospel. They were idolaters; worshippers of those deities, whose impure and cruel rites were at once the scourge and the shame of ancient Greece and Rome. They were not atheists, strictly speaking, but their gods were their own passions deified, and they ascribed to them characters, that would, in our day, banish men from all decent society. If any of them entertained more correct notions of the divine character, as doubtless some did, they "held the truth in unrighteousness," refusing to subject their hearts and lives to its authority. And as the expression of the apostle, "without God in the world," presents a just view of their character, so it correctly describes their condition. As they wilfully rejected the knowledge and the service of God, so they were aliens from his favour, and utterly destitute of that serenity and peace in life, that hope in death, and that blessedness in eternity, which flow from an interest in his love. In this respect, my brethren, their case was not singular. It is the criminal and unhappy condition of *all* our fallen race until they are renewed by the Spirit of God. It is ours to-day, if we have never been born "from above." Till the heart is changed by the Holy Spirit, every man is, in this sense, "without God in the world." However correct his notions of the existence and perfections of his Maker, he is practically an atheist. In the most important sense, "*without God in the world*," describes his *character*; and as to all that can inspire hope or justify joy, "*without God in the world*," describes his *condition*. To the illustration of these two points, let me now invite your attention; however painful the subject, listen, I pray you, to the testimony of Scripture and reason.

First: The *character* of unregenerate men is atheistical. They who admit the being of God, but deny all or any of his perfections, evidently reject the true God, and worship in his stead the creature of their own imaginations. That such are without God is too plain to need any illustration. The object of their worship is no more a reality, than the Jupiter of the Greeks, or the Brahma of the Hindoos. But admit the infinite majesty and excellence of our Maker, and you cannot deny that all rational creatures are under the most sacred obligations to love him supremely, to take his will as the rule of their conduct, and to seek his glory and the enjoyment of his favour as the great end of their existence.

The same conclusion is irresistible, if we regard him as the Author of our being, and the bountiful Parent of our mercies. Every generous and noble principle and feeling of our nature calls us to love, obey, and glorify him who gave us life, who feeds and clothes and protects us, who crowns us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. You would justly esteem that man a monster of ingratitude, who should disregard obligations to a fellow-man, unspeakably less than what you owe to the Father of mercies.

In addition to the perfect excellence and loveliness of his character—and to his creating and preserving power and goodness, recollect, that God is the author of eternal salvation, that he hath given his only-begotten Son to die for a fallen world, that he hath provided, at an infinite expense, for the pardon of our guilt, our renovation to holiness, and our exaltation to perfect and everlasting purity and bliss in his presence; and then say, if his claims to our love and obedience are not strong and sacred, and tender beyond all expression: and judge ye, if they who live in the daily and hourly disregard of claims like these, are not, emphatically, *without God in the world*. Are they not fairly obnoxious to the charge of practical atheism? And are they not surely, and justly, in a state of dreary alienation from the favors of him whom they profess to know, but in works deny?

Now, he who knows the human heart has testified that such is the natural character of men. They say unto the Almighty, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy way." The wicked, by reason of the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts. "The fool," (so the Bible speaks of the wicked, for every sin is an act of the grossest folly, because for a trifling and transient gratification, it hazards an infinite and eternal good,) "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

But to discuss this point more in detail—Unregenerate men are without God, because his love is not the reigning principle of their conduct; his law is not the rule of their lives. His glory and the enjoyment of his favour are not the end they seek.

The love of God is not the reigning principle of action in unregenerate men: so the Bible teaches. I know you, said the Saviour to the unconverted Jews, and by them, to all of similar character in every age and country, I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. "The world hateth me, and he that hateth me hateth my Father also. The carnal mind is enmity against God."

The same truth is evident from the necessity of regeneration. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God!" But why? Because, my brethren, love to God is essential to an admission to that kingdom, and a participation in its joys. Love is the animating principle of that kingdom, the golden bond which unites all its happy subjects to each other, and to him who sitteth on the throne. This imparts to their obedience all its worth; to their praise all its harmony; to their joy all its sweetness and perpetuity; to their communion with God, and each other, all its confidence and bliss—and because men are by nature destitute of this, therefore they must be *born again*, or they cannot enter the mansions of holiness and joy; and if admitted, they would pine and perish even there for want of every thing congenial to their tastes and feelings.

The impenitence and unbelief of men prove them destitute of love to God; for did they love him whom they have offended, they would surely mourn over and forsake their sins, and joyfully accept the offers of his forgiving love. But, to make the argument more personal, permit me to ask the impenitent. Where are the evidences of your love to God? Does it show itself by any of those marks which ever indicate love to any object? When any thing earthly engrosses your affections, does it not occupy your thoughts? Does it not give direction to your powers of mind and body? Does it not assume the throne in your souls, and compel every opposing principle to bow to its supremacy? Does not the friend think often and tenderly of his absent friend, and long for the time when they shall meet again and reciprocate the testimonies of mutual affection? Does not the votary of ambition exert every nerve to gain power and secure the applause of his fellow-men? Does not the miser lay his plans and put forth his energies to increase his treasures? If God is the object of your supreme affection, will you not think *often of him*, with love and veneration? Will you not rejoice that he is ever-present? Will you not see his beauty in all that is lovely? His grandeur in all that is sublime? His majesty in all that is venerable? His purity in all that is holy? If he permits you to approach his throne, if he invites you to communion with him, will not your bosom thrill with joy? Will it not be the paramount object of your exertions, while you live, to please and honour him? Will not your dearest wishes and fondest hopes centre in the everlasting enjoyment of his love? But is it thus with you? Do you love to think of God? Do you love to reflect that his eye is ever over you, and that you are surrounded by his presence? Or do you feel more at ease, when you forget that he is near? Have you not often, have you

not habitually gazed on the beauty and grandeur of his works, without one suitable thought of the Creator? When and where has he beheld you joyfully bending at his footstool? May he now behold his love reigning in your hearts, directing your energies, and causing you to rejoice in the light of his countenance, and to look forward with inexpressible emotions to an abode in his heavenly presence? Answer, O conscience, in the name and in the presence of the heart-searching Judge! Ah, sinner, may not an Omniscient Saviour say, as to the Jews, *know you, that the love of God is not in you?*

Again, as the love of God is not the reigning principle in the hearts of unregenerate men, so the law of God is not the rule of their lives. This follows as an inevitable consequence. For supreme love to God is the sum of all that his law requires. Wherever therefore this is habitually wanting, the whole life is evidently an habitual violation of the law. A man may do many things which the law requires, without any regard to that law, and of course without obeying it; for God looketh on the heart. Thus a man may have a native tenderness, or honesty, or mildness, or he may assume the appearance of these amiable qualities; and he may thus be led to the practice of kindness and charity, to integrity and honour in his intercourse with men, and to a placable and forgiving deportment; all useful and lovely in themselves, and certainly required by the law of God. Yet in all this there may be no true obedience to that law, no special regard to the authority of God. The mind may still be carnal and the sentence of inspiration concerning it, that "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Natural sensibility, deference to the opinions of men, the desire of earthly good, the fear of present or future suffering, are all principles which may lead to a course of conduct in some measure conformable to the law of God, yet very different from that supreme love to him which his law demands. Under the influence of these principles, a character may be formed containing many worthy and amiable traits, and its possessor may move along cheered by the smiles of his fellow-men, unconscious of any fatal defect, while yet he may be living *without God in the world*, and in the day of decision, the finger of Omniscience may write on all that men have admired, *Weighed in the balance, and found wanting!*

A radical defect in the obedience of such is often indicated by its want of universality. The kind and charitable person is often a lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God. The honest and upright man is often one who loves the world and the things of the world, so that *the love of the Father is not in him*. The mild and placid bosom, that is not ruffled by passion, nor haunted by malice, may be the seat of the most chilling and atheistical indifference to the honor of God, and the eternal interests of men. In all such cases, whatever wears the semblance of obedience to God is not real; for if his authority were paramount in the soul, the character would be uniform. A little self-examination might teach such persons that they are without God in the world. For they do not study his word as their rule of life. They do not ask its counsel in their perplexities. They do not appeal to it as the last resort.

But if the moral, the amiable, the exemplary, among the unregenerate, do not make the law of God their rule of life—much less do the avaricious, the dishonest, the profane, and the licentious. Nothing is more evident than that all who are habitually guilty of gross sin, have cast off the authority of their Maker, Sovereign, and Judge. Their sin is open, going before them to judgment.

Again, if the love of God does not reign in the hearts of unregenerate men, and if the law of God is not the rule of their lives, then it is plain that they neither seek his glory as the great end of their being, nor his favour as their supreme happiness. To glorify God and to enjoy his favour, is the twofold

end of man's existence; combining in itself his most sacred duty and his most precious interests. And he who disregards it, commits treason against God, and suicide upon his own soul. But if men do not take the law of God as the rule of their lives, certainly they do not seek to glorify him! No: they rebel against him, and their rebellion shows itself, in the only possible way—by disobedience. And if his love does not reign in their hearts, they certainly cannot desire, nor seek, nor could they enjoy his favour. No: they love and serve the creature more than the Creator.

The gratification of self is the unworthy end to which they prostitute their immortal powers, and for which they barter immortal happiness.

And now let me ask, what more is necessary to constitute a character, in all its essential elements, and all its prominent features, *atheistical*? What direct and immediate influence does the presence of the Eternal exert on such men? Through the influence of society around, their passions may be restrained, and their characters modified by these great truths. But suppose, for one moment, there were *no God*, and that public opinion, the customs of society, and the habits and feelings of all around, were just what they now are—would not these men live just as they now do? Are they not, then, *without God in the world*?

But, *secondly*—As unregenerate men deny God a throne in their hearts, as they refuse to love, obey, and honour him, so he casts them out of his favour: and they are without God as their guide in life, their refuge in death, or their portion in eternity.

As his creatures, his tender mercies are over them, for they are over all his works. As accountable beings in a state of trial, to whom salvation is offered, and by whom God will manifest the greatness of his mercy or display his wrath, and make known his power, he bestows on them many favours, he prolongs their lives and supplies their wants. He bears with their transgressions, offers them a full and free, a complete and eternal salvation; sends his Spirit to strive, commissions conscience to warn, allures by mercies, and accuses by his judgments. But in all this he expresses no approbation of their conduct, gives no testimonies of his special favour. On the contrary, he frowns on all their evil ways, and is angry with them every day! The hour hastens, when, unless a change of heart and life prevent, they will find they have only treasured up "wrath against the day of wrath"—that in the sunshine of mercy, they have ripened for judgment—and that abused goodness is the most abundant source of self-condemnation to the damned! For a season, they may enjoy the bounties of Providence, forgetting the great Author of all; and virtually saying, *Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?* But ere long he will say, *Give an account of thy stewardship.* Then to the fading honours and fleeting pleasures of time must succeed eternal infamy and woe. Surely, they are without God in the world!

They do not look to God, the only wise, to be their guide. They do not ask of him wisdom to direct—and he leaves them to the way that seemeth right in their own eyes, though *the end thereof is death*. On the ocean of life, they will not take the Saviour as their pilot, nor his word as their chart; nor will they seek the propitious breathings of his Spirit; and of course the current bears them wide of the haven of eternal rest; they are bewildered by the mists of error, and tossed by the storms of passion, and wrecked at last on the shores of a hopeless and miserable eternity. Are they not without God?

The offers of salvation made to them, and pressed upon them by motives the most affecting, and still rejected, or put off to a more convenient season, cease at length to be heard with interest, or to leave an impression. The Spirit of grace, at times, almost persuading the sinner to be a Christian, often grieved, and always resisted, at length is withdrawn for ever. Every

good impression made on the heart, by mercies or afflictions, by promises or threatenings, by warnings of conscience, or striving of the Spirit, and erased by any means, leaves it harder and less susceptible of impression than before, until the most pointed truths fall upon it, as arrows of reed on the rock of adamant. Then hope bids the man farewell for ever. For though he may still live, his judgment lingereth not; his damnation slumbereth not; he is forsaken of his Maker; he is without God in the world!

Death is inexpressibly solemn. But where God is loved, and honoured, and obeyed, his promises support the soul, his presence is its solace, in this trying hour. The light of his countenance irradiates the dark valley, and though heart and flesh fail, he is the strength of the heart and its portion for ever. But he who lives without God, must die without God—and shall I trace the progress of the immortal spirit as it enters on the retributions of eternity without God? becoming, as its powers expand, more sinful, more odious to God, and holy beings, and itself; sinking deeper, and deeper, and deeper still, in infamy and wo! O righteous God! who can describe how fearful a thing it is to fall into thy hands, when thou arisest to vindicate injured mercy and rejected grace!

Surely, to live without God is criminal and unhappy; to die without God, gloomy and dreadful; to spend eternity without God, awful and insupportable.

Who of us is now living without God? Who of us has never been born from above? has never come penitent and humble to the foot of the cross? Who of us has lived to this hour without loving God supremely, or obeying his law as the rule of life, or seeking his glory and his favour as the great end of life? Who? Searcher of hearts, thou knowest—impenitent sinner, *thou art the man*. Thou art living without God. And unless a great and speedy change prevent, thou wilt die without God; and, dying without God, O what an eternity awaits thee!

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SERMON LXXXIV.

BY BAXTER DICKINSON, A.M.

NEWARK, N. J.

ALARM TO DISTILLERS AND THEIR ALLIES.

ECCLESIASTES, vii. 29.—*God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.*

HAB. ii. 15.—*Wo unto him that giveth his neighbor drink.*

THE art of turning the products of the earth into a fiery spirit was discovered by an *Arab* about nine hundred years ago. The effects of this abuse of nature's gifts were soon viewed with alarm. Efforts were made even by a heathen people to arrest the evil. And it shows the mighty agency and cunning of Satan, that Christian nations should ever have been induced to adopt and encourage this deadliest of man's inventions. In the guilt of encouraging the destructive art, our own free country has largely participated. Fifteen years ago, as appears from well authenticated statistics, our number of distilleries had risen to nearly *forty thousand*. And, till within three or four years past, the progress of intemperance threatened all that was fair and glorious in our prospects. The reformation recently commenced is one of the grandest movements of our world: and to secure its speedy triumph, the concurrence of distillers is obviously indispensable. They must cease to provide the destroying element. This they are urged to do by the following considerations.

1. The business of distilling *confers no benefits on your fellow-men.*

Ardent spirit is not needed as an article of living. In the first ages of the world, when human life was protracted to hundreds of years, it was unknown. By the first settlers of this country it was not used. It was scarcely used for a whole century. And those temperate generations were remarkably robust, cheerful, and enterprising. To this we may add, that at least two hundred thousand persons, accustomed to use it, have given it up entirely within the last four years. And their united testimony is, that they have made no sacrifice either of health, or strength, or any real comfort. Indeed, few, if any, except such as have the intemperate appetite, will now seriously contend, that distilled liquor is necessary or useful. The little that may perhaps be desirable as medicine might be made by the apothecary or the physician.

The talents God has given you *might* be applied to advance the welfare of
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your fellow-men. It is your duty—your highest *honor*—thus to apply them. And on the bed of death, in near prospect of the judgment, it will surely be a melancholy reflection, that, as regards the happiness of mankind, your life has been an utter *blank*.

2. The business of distilling is not only useless, but is *the occasion of many and great evils*.

Recent examination has developed a number of appalling facts, which few, if any, pretend to question. It is admitted, that the use of ardent spirit has been a tax on the population of our country, of from *fifty to a hundred millions of dollars* annually. It is admitted, that three-fourths of all the *crimes* of the land result from the use of intoxicating liquor. It is admitted, that at least three-fourths of all the sufferings of *poverty* arise from the same source. It is admitted, that upwards of *thirty thousand* of our citizens have annually descended to the *drunkard's grave*. It is admitted, (by those who believe the Bible,) that *drunkards shall not inherit eternal life*, but must *have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*. In a word, it is admitted, that health, fortune, social happiness, intellect, conscience, heaven, are all swept away by the tide of intemperance.

And now, what you are specially bound to ponder is, that this burning tide, with all its desolations, flows from those very fountains *you* have opened—the boiling flood can be perpetuated only by those fires which *your* hands kindle, and which it is your daily task to tend.

The position you occupy, then, is one of most fearful responsibility. You are directly and peculiarly accessory to a degree of guilt and misery which none but the Infinite Mind can comprehend. I hear for you a loud remonstrance from every court of justice, from every prison of collected crime, from every chamber of debasement, and from every grave-yard; as well as from the dark world of despair. I hear the cries of unnumbered mothers, and widows, and orphans, all with one voice imploring you to extinguish those fires—to dry up those fountains—and to abandon an occupation pregnant with infamy, and death, and perdition.

3. The business of distilling *destroys, to a great extent, the bounties of Providence*.

Many of the substances converted into ardent spirit are indispensable to the comfort of man—some of them the very staff of life. But the work of distillation not only destroys them as articles of food, but actually converts them to poison. An incalculable amount of grain, and tens of thousands of hogsheads of sugar and melasses, besides enormous quantities of other useful articles, are every year thus wickedly perverted in this Christian land! Who does not know the odious fact, that, in many places, the *distillery* has regulated the price of bread? Who does not know, that this engine of iniquity has at times so consumed the products of industry, as to make it difficult for the poorer classes to get a supply? “The poor we have always with us,” and cries of the suffering are often heard from other lands. Such facts, it would seem, might reach the conscience of all who are wantonly destroying Heaven's gifts. Can you, for a little selfish gain, persist in converting the bread of multitudes into a pestilential fire! How utterly unlike the example of Him, who,

while feeding thousands by miracle, could still say, "Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost."

4. By continuing this destructive business, *you greatly offend the virtuous and respectable part of the community.*

The temperance reformation has been commenced and prosecuted by enlightened men. It is not the enterprise of any political party, or religious sect. It has the general support of ministers and Christians of different denominations, of statesmen, judges, lawyers, physicians, and hundreds of thousands in the walks of private life. They regard the enterprise as one, on the success of which hang the liberties of our republic, and the happiness of future millions.

You cannot be surprised, then, that they look with pain on operations directly adapted to defeat their plans, and perpetuate the dread evil they deplore. You cannot suppose that their eye will light on the *fountains* of this mighty evil, but with inexpressible grief, disgust, and indignation. And if you have the common magnanimity of our nature, you will surely cease to outrage the feelings of the virtuous throughout the nation.

5. You pursue a pernicious calling *in opposition to great light.*

The time was when good men extensively engaged in the distilling business; and when few seemed to be aware of its fearfully mischievous tendency. The matter had not been a subject of solemn and extensive discussion. The sin was one of comparative ignorance. But circumstances have changed. Inquiry has thrown upon the community a flood of light. The evil of intemperance has been exhibited in its complicated horrors. Ardent spirit has been found to be not only useless, but fearfully destructive. So that the guilt of manufacturing it is now enormously aggravated.

Good men were once engaged in importing slaves. They suspected not the iniquity of the business. And an apology can be offered for them on the ground of ignorance. But that trade has now come to be regarded by the civilized world in the same odious light as piracy and murder. The man who engages in it is stamped with everlasting infamy. And the reason is, that, like the distiller, he now sins amid that fulness of light which an age of philanthropy has poured around him.

6. Perseverance in the business of distilling must necessarily be *at the expense of your own reputation and that of your posterity.*

You are creating and sending out the materials of discord, crime, poverty, disease, and intellectual and moral degradation. You are contributing to perpetuate one of the sorest scourges of our world. And the scourge can never be removed till those deadly fires you have kindled are all put out. That public sentiment which is worthy of respect calls upon you to extinguish them. And the note of remonstrance will wax louder and louder, till every smoking distillery in the land is demolished. A free and enlightened people cannot quietly look on, while an enemy is working his engines and forging the instruments of national bondage and death.

Without a prophet's vision, I foresee the day when the manufacture of intoxicating liquor for common distribution will be classed with the arts of counterfeiting and forgery and the maintenance of houses for mid-

night revelry and corruption. Like these the business will become a work only of darkness, and be prosecuted only by the outlaw.

Weigh well, then, the bearing of your destructive employment on personal and family *character*. The employment may secure for you a little gain, and perhaps wealth. But, in a day of increasing light and purity, you can never rid treasures, thus acquired, of a *stigma*, which will render him miserably poor who holds them. Upon the dwelling you occupy, upon the fields you enclose, upon the spot that entombs your ashes, there will be fixed an indescribable gloom and odiousness, to offend the eye and sicken the heart of a virtuous community, till your memory shall perish. Quit, then, this vile business, and spare your name, spare your family, spare your children's children, such insupportable shame and reproach.

7. By prosecuting this business *in a day of light and reform, you peculiarly offend God, and jeopard your immortal interests.*

In "times of ignorance," God, in a sense, "winked at" error. But let the error be persisted in under a full blaze of light, and it must be the occasion of a dread retribution from his throne.

The circumstances of the distiller are now entirely changed. His sin was once a sin of ignorance; but is such no longer. He *knows* he is taking bread from the hungry, and perverting the bounties of Providence. He *knows* he is undermining the very pillars of our Republic. He *knows*, that by distilling he confers no benefits upon mankind. He *knows* he is directly accessory to the temporal wretchedness and the endless wailing of multitudes. And knowing these things, and keeping on his way, he accumulates guilt which the Holy One cannot overlook. If endless exclusion from heaven be the drunkard's doom, can *he* be held guiltless, who deliberately prepared for him and perhaps placed in his hand the cup of death and damnation! This is not the decision either of Scripture or of common sense. Wilfully persevering to furnish the sure means of death, you carry to the judgment the murderer's character, as clearly as the midnight assassin.

And now, what is the *apology* for prosecuting a business so manifestly offensive to God, and ruinous to yourself as well as others? Do you say, *It is necessary as a means of support?* But whence have you derived authority to procure a living at the sacrifice of conscience, character, and the dearest interests of others? And is the maintenance of a *public nuisance* really necessary to your support? In a country like this, the plea of necessity for crime is glaringly impious. Many and varied departments of honest and honorable industry are before you, all promising a generous reward. And, neglecting them for a wicked and mischievous occupation, you must bear the odium of a most sordid avarice or implacable malignity.

You virtually, too, impeach the character of God. You proclaim, that he has made your comfort and even subsistence to depend upon the practice of iniquity. It is an imputation he must repel with abhorrence and wrath. Nor is it sustained by the conscience, reason, or experience of any man.

But possibly you urge in self-justification, *Others will manufacture spirit if I do not.* But remember the guilt of one is no excuse for another. "Every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God." If others pursue

a business at the sacrifice of character and of heaven, it becomes you to avoid their crime, that you may escape their doom.

It is not certain, however, that others will prosecute the destructive business, if you abandon it. Men of forethought will not now embark their silver and gold on a pestilential stream, soon to be dried up under that blaze of light and heat which a merciful God has enkindled. They will not deem it either wise or safe to kindle unholy and deadly fires, where the pure river of the water of life is so soon to overflow. In the eye of thousands the distillery on your premises adds nothing to their value. Indeed, should they purchase those premises, the filthy establishment would be demolished, as the first effort of improvement. And every month and hour is detracting from its value, and blackening the curse that rests upon it.

Let the thousands now concerned in distilling, at once put out their fires, and the act would cause one general burst of joy through the nation; and any effort to rekindle them would excite an equally general burst of indignation and abhorrence. None but a monster of depravity would ever make the attempt.

But again, perhaps you say, *No one is obliged to use the spirit that is made.* But remember that you make it only to be used. You make it with the desire, with the hope, with the expectation that it will be used. You know it has been used by thousands—by millions—and has strewed the land with desolation, and peopled hell with its victims: and you cannot but acknowledge, that you would at once cease to make the liquor, did you not *hope it would continue to be used!* Indeed, you must see that, *just in proportion to your success,* will be the amount of mischief done to your fellow-men!

It seems hardly needful to say, that the foregoing considerations are all strictly applicable to *such as furnish the materials* for the distiller. Were these withheld, his degrading occupation would of course cease. By suffering, then, the fruits of your industry to pass into his hands, you perpetuate his work of death. You share in all his guilt, and shame, and curse. And remember, too, that the bushel of grain, the barrel of cider, the hogshead of melasses, for which you thus gain a pittance, may be returned from the fiery process only to hasten the infamy and endless ruin of a beloved son, or brother, or friend!

Nor is the crime of the *retailer* of ardent spirit essentially different. He takes the poison from the distiller, and insidiously deals it out to his fellow-men. It is truly stirring to one's indignation to notice his variety of artifice for rendering it enticing. His occupation is one which the civil authorities have, in some places, with a noble consistency, ceased to tolerate; and one which must soon be put down by the loud voice of public sentiment.

Indeed, the *retailer*, the *distiller*, and he who *furnishes the materials*, must be looked upon as forming a TRIPLE LEAGUE, dangerous alike to private and social happiness, and to the very liberties of the nation. And an awakened people cannot rest, till the deadly compact is sundered. Why not, then, anticipate a little the verdict and the vengeance of a rising tone of public sentiment, and at once proclaim the *unholy alliance* dissolved? Why not anticipate the verdict of an infinitely higher tribunal?—why not believe God's threatening,

and escape the eternal tempest that lowers for *him who putteth the cup to his neighbor's lips*? Why not co-operate promptly in a public reform, that is regarded with intense interest in heaven, on earth, and in hell?

O review, as men of reason, and conscience, and immortality, this whole business: And if you have no ambition to *benefit your fellow-men*—if you can consent to *ruin many for both worlds*—if you can persist in *wasting and perverting the bounties of a kind Providence*—if you can outrage the feelings of the most *enlightened and virtuous*—if you can pursue a work of darkness *amid noonday light*—if you can sacrifice a *good name*, and entail *odium on all you leave*—and if you can deliberately *offend God*, and jeopard *your immortal interests* for paltry gain,—then go on—go on a little longer;—but, “O MY SOUL, COME NOT THOU INTO THEIR SECRET; UNTO THEIR ASSEMBLY, MINE HONOR, BE NOT THOU UNITED!”

SERMONS LXXXV. & LXXXVI.

BY AMBROSE EDSON, A.M.

BROOKLYN, CONN.

THE EARLY CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

MARK, x. 14.—*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.*

THIS declaration of Christ was uttered on an interesting occasion. Several young children, or, as the Evangelist Luke styles them, “infants,” were brought to Christ, to receive his blessing; but the disciples, supposing that they were too young to be benefited by the instructions of their Master, rebuked the parents for thus trespassing upon his time. With this rebuke Christ was displeased, and encouraged the little children to come unto him, assigning as a reason, “of such is the kingdom of God.” This is the reason why little children, and even *infants*, should not only be suffered to come, but be “*brought*” to Christ, to receive his blessing. The objection of the disciples seems to have been founded upon their age; they were thought *too young* to derive any benefit from the Messiah, the Lord of men and angels; but his reply, and the treatment they received from him, show distinctly, that, *young* as they were, their age was no objection; for “*he took them up in his arms*, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” The reasoning is this: if children, *young* children, *infants*, are proper subjects of Christ’s spiritual kingdom, let them have all the religious advantages in which they can possibly partake. So far from throwing any obstacle in the way, suffer them to come—encourage them—nay, let parents *bring* them to me, and I will bless them.

It would be deeply interesting to learn the subsequent history of these little

ones, that were thus permitted to receive the benediction of the Son of God ; and it may be proper to observe, that, according to the testimony of Nicephorus, Ignatius, a disciple of John, and afterward bishop of Antioch, who was honored with martyrdom about seventy-four years after the death of Christ, was one of those very "*infants.*"

If, then, infants actually did receive the blessing of Christ when on earth ; were thus regarded as proper subjects of his visible and spiritual kingdom, and consequently of the kingdom of glory ; it is certainly fair to infer, that they may, at this age, *become the subjects of grace—may be converted—may become real Christians.*

To this sentiment, supported by the text, I now solicit your attention ; and to prevent misapprehension, I remark, that the term *infancy* will be used in its strictly proper application, as embracing *the first six years of life.* I repeat, then, that infants may become the subjects of grace, may be converted.

1. In elucidating this truth, it may be remarked, in the first place, that there is no natural *impossibility* in the case. If there be any incapacity to become Christians, between the commencement of moral agency and sin and any subsequent period, then, during that period salvation is absolutely impossible, and their condition hopeless ! But is such a portion of our race, who have commenced moral agency, and have sinned, rendered incapable of salvation, by not being able to comply with the terms of the Gospel ? Is the remedy so inadequate to the disease ?

Moral agency in doing what is forbidden, or refusing to do what is required, supposes the existence of all that ability that is needed for a compliance with duty. Destroy this, and you sweep away, at one fatal stroke, the obligations to comply with the terms of the Gospel—the only method revealed in the Bible, in which the wrath of God can be avoided, and the soul saved.

But I would ask, why a person, who is capable of sinning, is not capable of repenting of sin ? The former act is a violation of *obligation*, that was either known, or that might have been known ; the latter implies a *feeling* that such an obligation has been violated. And if a moral agent can violate obligation, he can feel that he has done so. No stronger mental powers are necessary for repentance than for sinning. What is there, then, in the nature of the case, that makes the conversion of *young* children impossible ?

2. But it may be remarked, in the second place, that infancy, or the first period of life, is the *best* time for piety to commence. I do not say simply that it would be most desirable for it to commence then, but that it is the most *favorable* time. The word of God teaches us, that when habits of sin have become fixed, the breaking of these, in all human probability, is as hopeless as that the Ethiopian will change his skin, or the leopard his spots. And observation and experience testify the same. If, then, the principle be correct, that a continuance in sin will strengthen sinful habits, and make a change in the character and life more difficult, and consequently more hopeless, is there any time so favorable to this change as when there are the fewest sins committed, and habits of sin have not been formed ?

If it be a more favorable time to become a Christian in youth than when

threescore and ten years have passed away in sin, who will say that the age of five years is not better than that of fifteen? Upon what principle may a person spend fifteen years in the neglect of the soul, and in the service of Satan, before he arrives at the most favorable time to commence a preparation for eternity? Is the prospect *brightening*, as one year after another passes away, while living without hope and without God in the world?

But if every additional year in sin would render a change in the sinner more difficult, and of course his condition more alarming, then every additional sin will produce proportionably the same effect. On this principle, the time for the commencement of piety is more favorable five years after moral agency commences, than fifty years after; and more favorable at an earlier period, than at the age of five years. It is easier bending the young sapling, than the sturdy oak, and easier still to bend the tender twig, than the young sapling.

But it may be said, that, during the period of infancy, or during the first six years of life, the mind is not so capable of weighing truth, of comprehending the nature and obligations of religion, as at a subsequent period. The fact is admitted; but what does it prove? That piety may not commence in infancy? or that this is not the most favorable time for it to commence? Far from it. If the mind be more matured at fifteen years of age than at five, the guilt of sin is proportionably greater at the first named period than the last. It is a principle well established in morals, that the *guilt* of sin is proportioned to the light resisted in its commission. This sentiment has an illustration in the declaration of Christ, that he that *knew* his Lord's will, and did it not, would deserve to be beaten with *many* stripes. It is upon this principle, too, that the guilt of fallen angels is greater than that of men. They were not created devils, but stood, once, right where Gabriel stands, before the throne of God and the Lamb, with minds as capacious, as holy and happy spirits needed for the service of heaven. It was there, in the language of another, "that they were schooled, and disciplined, and equipped;" and when they were banished from the abodes of purity and bliss, they did not become *idiots*. No! they carried all their "heaven-taught science" with them down to hell, and they have it now, and it is this that makes them *DEVILS*,—that loads them with heavier chains of guilt, and will give an intensity to the pangs of hell which none but devils can feel.

If, then, our minds, and the minds of our children, are more matured, can take a wider range in the field of truth, and better weigh the obligations to penitence and holiness, at fifteen years of age than at five, it is just as certain that the *guilt* of sin is *proportionably greater* than at the early period. It is of a deeper dye, cries to heaven for vengeance with greater urgency, and deserves a deeper damnation.

Now, I ask, is there any thing in the nature of the case that renders it necessary that our minds should be thus enlarged, that we should grow up to a manhood in guilt, that approximates so much nearer the guilt of devils, before we arrive at the most favorable period to become Christians? O, my hearers, I tremble when I think of this wide spread, this fatal delusion; and of the holiness of a forbearing God! Let our capacities be enlarged a thousand fold, they might still fall below those possessed by the very Prince of

devils; but, with all the additional guilt that would be contracted with such enlarged capacities, are we sure that we should be any better prepared to become the willing servants of God than we are now? Could we, while sinners, ascend in the scale of being to the intellect of Gabriel, we might, indeed, perceive truth far more distinctly, and better weigh its importance; but then, sin, at every gradation we ascended, would deepen in its guilt, until afforded the capacity of angels, it would make us devils. Admitting, then, that the capacity of children for comprehending truth is enlarged as they grow in years, is not their *guilt*, too, while they remain estranged from God, increased just in proportion to the enlargement of their capacities? I ask, then, if their *capacity and guilt* have been increasing for fifteen or twenty years, until they have arrived at a *manhood in both*, is it a better time to make their peace with God than at an earlier period? Are twenty years' capacity and guilt more favorable to piety than five? And are five years' capacity and guilt more favorable than two?

But is it said, that there is not that *capacity to repent* in the infantile years, that there is at maturer age? What if there is not? Neither is there that *guilt* to repent of. That man has not the capacity of fallen angels to comprehend truth, and feel to the full extent, the sorrow, which *their* guilt demands, is no proof that man has not the capacity to repent of his *own* sins. His *guilt* is proportioned to his capacity for knowledge, when the means of knowledge are within his reach; and his capability for repenting always corresponds with his obligation to repent; and his obligation to repent with the guilt of sin; so that man can always repent of all that he *ought* to repent, and therefore of *all his guilt*.

Were man required to repent of sins that equalled in guilt the sins of fallen spirits, he might need the capacity of mind, which they have, to obey; and if young children were required to repent of the sins of manhood, they might need the enlarged capacity of manhood to perform the duty; and then might there be a *plausibility*, at least, in waiting for riper years, as a more favorable time to commence a life of penitence and piety. But so long as their guilt is less, the fact, that their capacity is less, is no proof that they have not all the capacity needed for the immediate performance of all that is required to constitute them Christians.

But is it still said, that children cannot understand many of the *doctrines* of the Gospel? Admitting that they cannot, does this prove that they must wait till maturer age before they begin a life of piety? There are men, and good men too, who do not pretend to be able to comprehend all the doctrines of the Gospel; but does this prove that they cannot be Christians? There are doctrines in the Bible which man never did, and perhaps never will be able to comprehend. He may believe that the fact is just as God has represented it, and yet he may never be able to comprehend *how* it can be; nor is he required to do it. He may believe that God is *eternal*, while he is unable to *comprehend* eternity, or *how* it can be that there is an uncaused existence. But is the fact that man has ignorance upon some subjects with which God is acquainted, any proof that he cannot be a Christian?

That children cannot comprehend as much about the doctrines of the Gospel

as maturer minds, is no proof that they cannot have a sufficient understanding of them for all practical purposes. The fact is, they may be made to understand the simple truths of the Bible, at as early a period as they can understand any other truth. And often has there been a tenderness of conscience in view of truth, that has surprised those of riper years and more enlarged minds. In illustration of this, I will mention two or three facts, with some of which, you may have become acquainted.

A man once took his little son to walk with him in the fields on the Sabbath, while others had gone to the house of God; and upon entering a neighbor's corn-field, from the top of the fence, the father cast his eye around to ascertain if there was any one near that would be likely to detect him; and afterward, while engaged in his work of depredation, the little son thus accosts him:—"Pa, what made you look round so, when you were on the fence?" "Be still," said the father. "But what made you do so, Pa?" "To see if there was any body in sight," was the reply. "And doesn't any body see you, Pa?" "No." "But can't God see you in the corn-field, Pa?" This was enough from the little preacher; the father left the field and his ill-gotten booty, and returned to his house to think of an omniscient God.

At another time, a pious mother was giving vent to the anguish of a lacerated heart, upon receiving intelligence of the death of her husband at a distance; when her little child inquired the cause of her tears. The reply was, "To think that you are a little orphan girl." "But what is an orphan, Ma?" "Your Pa is dead, my dear; you will have no Pa to take care of you any more." The little thing covered her face in both her hands for a moment, and then lifted her moistened eyes to her weeping mother, saying, "*Ma, don't cry so; is God dead too?*"

I ask, now, why children cannot be made to understand all the simple truths of the Gospel that are necessary to piety? Who, with a mind ever so much matured and cultivated, could have been a messenger of sweeter consolation to a bleeding heart, than was this little one?

I will mention one instance more. In the town of —— in New-England, where it had formerly been the practice to urge all moral persons to unite with the Church, lived a wealthy man, who had, in this way, become a *professor* of religion, but with so little even of the *form* of godliness, as that he had hitherto lived in the entire neglect of family worship. On a Sabbath afternoon, after returning from the funeral of a child, where the clergyman had taken occasion to urge upon parents the necessity of faithfulness in giving their children religious instruction, and in accompanying their instructions by their prayers; as the family to which we have alluded were sitting around the table at tea, a little daughter broke the silence, by inquiring, in the simplicity of her heart, "Ma, did not Mr. —— say at the funeral, that Christians would pray in their families, and talk to them about religion?" "Yes," was the reply. "Well, Ma, Pa does not do it." And this appeal was an arrow of conviction to the father's heart, resulting in his hopeful conversion to God, and the erection of a family altar, where God was worshipped morning and evening.

In view of such facts, and a thousand others that might be named, who will

pretend that children—little children—cannot understand enough of the truths of the Bible to feel their force and obligation, while older sinners remain unaffected? Yes; children will feel upon the subject of religion, whenever instruction adapted to their capacities is afforded. I might press the obligations of religion upon a congregation of sinners of threescore years of age, with all the urgency of a dying man, and they probably would remain like blocks of marble; and I should have little more encouragement, humanly speaking, than I should were I to go to yonder field of graves, and preach to the dead that are slumbering there. But let me take their *grandchildren* from the Sabbath school, (who have, perhaps, heard scarcely a prayer but what they heard in the Sanctuary), and talk to them about God, and the sins they have committed, about Christ who died to save sinners, and the necessity of repenting if they would not be lost,—and these little ones, with quivering lip and weeping eye, will show that they *feel* they have done *wrong*, and offended God: and if they *feel* that they have sinned, can they not *confess* and *forsake* their sins? and, then, is not God faithful and just to *forgive* their sins, and to *cleanse them from all unrighteousness*?

SERMON LXXXVI.

MARK, x. 14.—*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.*

THE sentiment, to an illustration of which your attention was called in the preceding discourse, was, *that young children might become the subjects of grace,—might, at this tender age, be converted.*

In the elucidation of this, it was remarked that there was no natural impossibility in the case,—that this period was the most favorable time to enter upon a life of piety,—that the fact of the mind's not having arrived at its maturity, at this period, so far from being an objection to the practicability of their early conversion, is directly in favor of it, because their guilt is less than at any later period;—that they have all the capacity to repent that their condition demands,—that they can understand the simple truths of the Bible, as easily as they can understand any other truth,—and can be made to feel their practical importance far more easily than those who have grown old in sin.

Thus far it has been my principal object to show the *practicability* of infant piety. I now remark, that it not only may exist, but it actually has existed. Samuel, Josiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Timothy, are among the instances left on sacred record, to show that there is no natural impossibility of early piety—that such piety has existed: and we are warranted in the conclusion, that, through the instrumentality of pious parents, it may exist in any nation, and in any age of the world. A multitude of Samuels, and Jeremiahs, and Timothys have been consecrated to God in their infancy, in later days, who have given their first years to piety, and have gone to heaven; and many now in the church on earth, and in the Christian ministry, can look back to their infant years, as the time when piety first commenced, which has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. These are *facts*, my hearers; and facts that are worth more than a volume of theories and specu-

lations upon the subject ; and they establish the truth of the position, that even *infants* may become the subjects of grace ; and begin a life of experimental religion.

But I cannot dismiss the subject here. The piety, the practicability, and actual existence of which, I have been illustrating, *is greatly needed* at the present time.

The church has begun to awake to the importance of reclaiming from the prince of darkness, a world for which Christ has died. For eighteen hundred years, she had been slumbering over this momentous subject. But now she is beginning to feel that she has something to do in this blessed cause, that there is an urgency for doing, and that she must summon all the resources within her reach to this great, this godlike undertaking. It is not enough that she has talents at her command ; these must be sanctified by *piety*, or they will be worse than useless. This is the main-spring in the great machinery of benevolent operation, that is to save the world : without this, the whole would run down, and stop. This piety is needed in the church and in the ministry, —ardent, active piety—that has commenced, not in old age, or manhood, or even youth, but in *infancy*. *This* will strike a deeper root, while it rises higher, expands wider, and strengthens with every revolving year. The habits of life often impose a powerful restraint upon the piety that commences in declining years, that drags with it a load of infirmities and prejudices, to chill its influence and paralyze its energies. Less of this exists in middle life ; less still in youth ; and least of all in the tender years of infancy.

How much of Samuel's usefulness should be traced back to the stamp given to his piety, in his infant years, none but God can tell. He was a child of prayer, was given to God before his birth, and very early, was carried to the temple of the Lord, where he was left by his fond parents, and began to minister in holy things while but a *child*. Who could have seen him standing there, girded with his little linen ephod, without having enlarged expectations of the future man ? And such are the ministers, and missionaries, and Christians, that are needed to hasten on the millennial glory of the church ; whose young years have been given to God ; whose opening minds have been filled with truth ; whose young hearts have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. These will be prepared to pray, and labor, and suffer, and die, in that cause which is so dear to the Redeemer's heart. Let a host like these pour forth from our Sabbath schools, and infant schools, and nurseries, and there would be no want of money for the Lord's treasury, or of missionaries, or ministers, or bibles ; every vessel would be freighted with them ; every clime would be blessed by them ; until the gospel should be preached to every creature, and a voice be heard, *The nations of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord.*

The church has not yet awaked to feel the importance of this subject, else there would be more agonizing prayer for these tender lambs of the flock ; and many more, from the deep feeling of renewed hearts, would be heard singing the praises of Zion's King ; crying with those of former days, *Hosanna to the Son of David*. It is the piety that commences here, that, under God, will fill the earth with the light, and knowledge, and glory of the Lord.

But I remark again, that supposing this piety should produce none of these glorious results, still *God has a right to it.*

The soul that is capable of sinning, it has been remarked, is capable of all those exercises necessary to salvation. No sinner, therefore, is doomed to a single hour's impenitence; and if God ever has a right to the affections of the heart, he has a right to the *first* affections,—to the *earliest* exercises of love; to the *budding* and *blossoming* of life, as well as to its ripened fruit.

I have now attempted to show, that there is *no natural impossibility*, arising from mental incapacity, to prevent the commencement of piety in the years of infancy: that this is the most *favorable*, the *best* time for it to commence, from the fact, that until it does commence, their sins are not only increasing in number, but also deepening in guilt, just in proportion to the enlargement of the capacity of the agents, for comprehending truth, and for weighing the nature and obligations to penitence and piety; so that, although while in infancy their powers for the perception of truth are feeble, and their views limited, their guilt is also comparatively small; and that they can understand the simple truths of the Bible as early as they can understand any other truth. I have endeavored to show, too, that what appeared thus *practicable*, has actually taken place,—that the instances of early piety left on sacred record, and the still greater number that have existed in later ages, exhibit clearly, not only *what has been*, but *what*, through the instrumentality of pious, praying parents, may be in any nation and in any age; that this piety is needed to hasten on the millennial glory of the church; and that God has a right to the earliest affections of the heart.

I close with two or three practical remarks:—

1. The subject must make a solemn appeal to the hearts and consciences of *parents*. Beloved friends, have you properly estimated the importance of the charge committed to your trust, and the responsibility that rests upon you? When your children entered upon existence, it was an existence that will never end. Not that they will continue here for ever; this is but the embryo of their being; the morning—the young dawn of their existence. The body may sicken and die at any moment, however unexpected or unwelcome; but there is an immortal part that will never sicken, that will never die; that will survive the frail tenement in which it is lodged, and live to sing, or weep for ever. And this is committed to your care. Under your eye, and your guardianship, the mind first opens upon a world, not only of natural, but moral objects. From you it is to receive its first impressions, that may give a mold to its character that will last through eternity, and be instrumental in preparing it for heaven or for hell.

But this is not all. The influence which you exert will be a *continued* influence, so that the first impression will be *deepened* with every revolving month and day; and if this impression be wrong, there is a fixedness of character forming during this unseen, this silent operation, which nothing but the almighty power of God can change. What parent, then, would not wish to have this influence thrown on the side of piety and heaven?

But do you ask what you can do for these little ones around you, in the first years of life, towards their becoming Christians? I answer, that, under God,

you may do much. You may bring the simple truths of the Bible to bear upon their hearts, with a force that might surprise any one whose attention had not been given to the subject. You will not find them capable of taking that grasp of subjects which you take. This is not expected; it is not necessary. While you cannot make them understand an abstruse mathematical proposition, you can learn them to understand how many two and two will make. And there are truths in religion as simple, and as easily apprehended by infant minds. Let these be presented in their native simplicity, and they will make an impression that would be lost on minds long accustomed to sin. The infant will remember that God sees all things, while the father forgets it;—that God does not die, if earthly friends do; and will often bring truth home to the hearts and consciences of those, who have resisted its influence when addressed to them by the ambassadors of Christ.

Let children, then, be taught the character of God, and their relation and accountability to Him, with that fidelity that has its eye fixed upon the value of the soul, and that urgency that apprehends its danger, and the shortness of the time in which it must be fitted for heaven or lost for ever; and childhood—yes, my hearers, *infancy* will be made to feel.

But, parents, there is one thing more; precept is not enough; you must let the influence of your *example* to confirm the truth of your instructions; and for this purpose you must *live* that religion which you teach your children, or there will be a strange anomaly which they will not understand, but the ruinous effects of which they will not fail to exhibit. O how must that parent feel, who instructs his children to pray, while he lives a prayerless life; or to remember the Sabbath-day and keep it holy, while he profanes it; or to attend public worship, while he neglects it; or that there is a heaven to obtain, and a hell to shun, while he manifests no solicitude about either? How must the parent feel, when imparting religious instruction under such circumstances, when there is such a monstrous incongruity between the precept and the example? And how must the child feel, who cannot fail to make the comparison, and put his own construction upon it? Ah, my hearers, he must regard the subject of religion as all a fiction—a mere farce, designed to produce an effect for the moment, without a shadow of reality in the truths inculcated, or of importance in the duties enjoined! And here *unbelief* is generated and nurtured up, which shields the heart against the influence of truth in after-life, and which, it is to be feared, will damn the soul. It begins in the *nursery*,—I had almost said in the *cradle*. Teach that little one that has just learned to tell who made the sun, and moon, and stars, and trees, as much of God, and religion, as it may be able to comprehend, and you will see it turn to those who gave it being, with all the confidence which the young heart can feel, and ask, *Pa, is it so? Ma, is it so?* and *words* are not necessary in framing a reply. *Example* need only answer, *No*, and it is seized, and relied on. Some such parents have felt the inutility of giving their children religious instruction, on this very account, (because they knew their *example* to be inconsistent), and have therefore neglected it. But this incredulity operates against the influence of truth, from every other source, as well as from the parent. He may flatter himself that he will do nothing to counteract the

influence of the religious instruction of the Sanctuary and the Sabbath school upon the mind of his children ; but he is doing it every day. His own example, constantly before their eyes, is telling them, in stronger language than words can do, that there is no danger in living regardless of God, and in the neglect of a preparation for eternity ! In this very way, *the last avenue to the soul may be closed up for ever*. Parent, will you do this for your children ? If you are resolved on risking the consequences of impenitence yourself, shall the hearts of your little ones be steeled against the influence of truth, by your example, and shut out of heaven ? O how many parents, who are now drawing their children after them in the downward way, may, when the day of grace is ended, lift up their eyes in the prison of despair, and say, with an awful emphasis, **HERE, LORD, ARE WE, AND THE CHILDREN THOU HAST GIVEN US !**

But if parents would instruct their children in religion, or have them instructed, with any reasonable hope of lasting benefit, their own example must say, that there is a reality, an awful importance attached to the truths of the Bible : in fine, religion must be imbodied in the life—must be suffered to exert its legitimate controlling influence upon the external deportment ; and this would preach to the conscience of the child with more force than all the arguments that could be addressed without it.

But *precept* and *example* are not all that is necessary. The whole must be accompanied by *earnest, believing prayer to God*. And here, I apprehend, is as great a mistake as in any other part of the subject. Not that Christians do not pray for the conversion of their children, and sometimes pray *earnestly*. But what is the amount of your prayer, my Christian friend ? You have taught them the truths of the Bible, and stored their memories with its sacred contents, that they may benefit them *by-and-by*. And when you have prayed for them, has not the same feeling entered into your prayers, that *by-and-by*, when they have grown up, they may be converted to God ? And is not this putting off their conversion, in your very prayers ? As if their propensity to defer a preparation for death and eternity, to a more convenient season, were not enough to cause trembling in view of their future prospects ; you by your very prayers, Christians, render their present conversion to God more hopeless. They may become the subjects of grace in youth, or manhood, should they live, I admit ; but are they not running an awful risk ? Who has assured you, that those little ones around you, will see the period even of youth ? And if they should not, and have sinned, and not complied with the terms of the Gospel, with what feelings of solicitude must you contemplate their future prospects ? They suppose they have nothing to do with religion at present ; and you have felt that the present is not as favorable as some future time might be, and thus both have consented that the subject should be deferred. You have not intended to pray that they might *not* become Christians at present ; but after all, does it amount to any thing short of this ? If Felix, when pressed upon the subject of religion by the Apostle, in resolving to take up the subject at a future convenient season, did virtually resolve to dismiss it until that time arrived, it is obvious that the prayer of parents, that their children may become the subjects of grace at a future period, is a prayer that they may not

repent now. And is this what you owe your children? Were they sleeping upon the brink of a precipice, from which the least motion might precipitate them into the abyss below, would there be the same readiness to delay their rescue?—to hope, that a future time might be more convenient to effect it than the present? How then ought you to feel, when the immortal interests of their souls are in jeopardy every hour? Will you help them in *your very prayers*, to put off a preparation for eternity, for the present, when you know not what a day or an hour may bring forth? You must meet them at the bar of your Judge; and if you would do it with joy, and not with grief, ponder this subject upon your knees, in your closet, and ask, whether the influence which you have been exerting, and the prayers you have offered, have been such, as you can at last review with the approbation of conscience and of God.

2. The subject addresses itself to those who are engaged in *Sabbath school instruction*. Yours is an employment of no ordinary importance. Precious and immortal souls are committed to your care, to be trained for heaven. This is the great object for which you are to labor; and much, under God, will depend upon your faithfulness, whether your labors are successful. You have seen that piety in infancy is *practicable*; that it is the *best time* for it to commence, not only because the continuance of life is altogether uncertain, but because, while their capacities are enlarging as they grow in years, their guilt is also deepening, and their prospects for eternity darkening. You have seen, too, what is necessary to be done before this piety can be expected. They need the simple truths of the Bible, presented in the same style of simplicity that you would use upon any other subject, and pressed home upon the heart and conscience with that urgency that is demanded by the importance of the subject, accompanied by earnest believing prayer to God that they may produce effect,—not after you are in your graves, and they, perhaps, have gone to the judgment! No, dear friends, you are not required thus to put off their conversion. Labor, as though you *wished* for immediate effect; as though you *expected* it; and then pray to God, as though you *believed in his faithfulness to his promises*, and you will not plead in vain.

3. In conclusion, I cannot forget the *youth* before me. You have been often warned and entreated to improve the precious season you now enjoy for making your peace with God, and preparing for heaven. You may have been looking forward to this, as the most favorable season to commence a life of piety, and others may have encouraged this supposition; but let me tell you it is a *mistake*. In the light of this subject you may learn that the *best time, the most favorable period, is GONE FOR EVER!*

What then, let me ask, are your prospects for eternity? Every day's, every hour's impenitence deepens your guilt; lessens the brief period in which a "pardoning God may be found," and increases the fearful probability that heaven will be lost, and life and hope be extinguished together! Can you put off the subject? Can you *rest where you are*? You may not have a *moment* to parley! Then

"Seize the kind promise *while it waits*,
And march to Zion's heavenly gates;
Believe, and take the promised rest:
Obey, and be for ever blest."

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By FRANCIS WAYLAND, D. D.

President of Brown University.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO RELIGIOUS EFFORT.

MATTHEW iv. 10.—*Thy kingdom come.*

THE cause of Sabbath Schools, at the present day, and before such an audience as this, needs no advocate. If there be a God, a heaven, and a hell; if man be immortal and capable of religion, and if his present existence be probationary; if he be a sinner, and if there be but one way of salvation; and if moral cultivation may be most successfully bestowed in childhood and youth: then, surely, the importance of inculcating upon the young the principles of the Gospel, may be taken for granted. Supposing, then, these truths to be admitted, we shall on this occasion invite your attention to an illustration of some of the encouragements, which the present state of society offers, to an effort for the universal diffusion of Christianity.

It is the general misfortune of man, to be wise a century too late. We look back with astonishment upon those means for guiding the destinies of our race which preceding generations have enjoyed; and we see how, in the possession of our present knowledge, we might then have lived gloriously. We forget that no man lives to purpose, who does not live for posterity. Should I then be so happy as to direct your views only for a few years forward; should the Spirit of all wisdom teach each one of us the responsibility which rests upon the men of the passing generation.

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ration; we shall, through eternity, bless God, that he has permitted us to assemble, at this time, to deliberate upon the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

It will be convenient to my purpose, to commence this discussion by a brief allusion to the nature of the Reformation by Luther. You have all been accustomed to consider this as by far the most interesting portion of the history of man, since the time of the Apostles. In many respects it is so. Its results, although daily multiplying, are already incalculable. The fabric of ancient society began then to crumble, and a more beautiful edifice to arise from amid its ruins. Beside this, there is much of the moral picturesque with which every view is crowded. An imaginative man kindles into enthusiasm at the recital of every transaction. The leaders, on both sides, were men of consummate ability and of revolutionary energy. The fiercest passion of the human heart, in an age almost ignorant of law, stimulated them to contention unto death. Hence the whole period presents an almost unbroken succession of battles and sieges; of foreign war and intestine commotion; of brutal persecution, and of dignified endurance: and all this is rendered yet more impressive by the frequent vision of racks and dungeons, of torture and exile; of the assassin's dagger, and the martyr's stake. It need not then seem surprising, if this strong appeal to the imagination somewhat bewilder the reason, and if the impressive circumstances attendant upon the change, too much divert our attention from the nature of the change itself. These violent commotions, like friction in machinery, rather disclose the nature of the materials and the amount of the resistance, than the direction of the force, or the celerity of the movement.

But let us now, for a moment, draw aside these attending circumstances, and in what light does the Reformation present itself to our view? Simply as a period in which the creation of new forces changed the relation which had previously existed between the elements of society. A new and most powerful order of men arose suddenly into being; and institutions, cemented by the lapse of ages, required no inconsiderable modification to meet the unexpected exigency. In the midst of all this, a new and moral impulse was communicated to society, by which these changes were rendered beneficial to man, and the blessings which they conferred were perpetuated to the present generation.

To illustrate this very briefly—You may be aware that at about the period of the Reformation, great changes were wrought in the physical condition of man. The discovery of America, and of a passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, and of the use of the mariner's compass, opened exhaustless fountains of wealth to commerce and manufactures. Labor became, of course, vastly more valuable, and artisans became possessed of the means of independence. Hence a new order of men, a middling class, was created. Power, and wealth, and education were placed within the reach of a vastly greater number. The moral centre of gravity settled towards the base of the social cone. The rod of feudal vassalage was broken, and men were first acknowledged to possess rights which they did not derive from hereditary succession.

Beside this, the invention of the printing press furnished, at the same time, new means of intellectual culture. This astonishing instrument increases indefinitely the power of thought. It transfers the sceptre of

empire from matter to mind. It enables genius to multiply, to any extent, the copies of its own conceptions. Hence the facilities for intellectual cultivation were abundantly bestowed upon this new order of men, to which commerce and manufactures had given birth.

But above all, it pleased God to raise up, in the persons of the reformers, men of a character equal to the crisis. They were men who counted not their lives dear unto them when a moral change was to be effected. In despite of every thing appalling in the form of opposition, they studied, they argued, they preached, they wrote, they translated, they printed, they employed for the promotion of true religion all those means which the progress of society had placed within their power. They thus gave the impress of Christianity to the changes which were going forward; and that their labors formed by far the most important link in the chain of events which is denominated the Reformation, may be evident from the fact, that nowhere, but in Protestant countries, have the blessings resulting from the social changes, to which we have alluded, been fully realized. Catholic countries have been comparatively unimproved, except where their condition has been changed by the influence of Protestantism in their vicinity.

These few remarks are, we presume, sufficient to show the importance of moral effort at the crisis of a social revolution. But, if we mistake not, physical and intellectual changes very similar to those which characterized the Reformation, are at this moment going forward in the midst of us.

First; Important changes have of late taken place in the physical condition of man.

The natural wealth of man consists in his power to labor. This every man in a greater or less degree possesses. The less numerous class, in addition to the power to labor, possess also a portion of capital. Hence, as labor becomes more valuable, every man may become richer; that is, he is able to command a larger amount of such things as may gratify his desires. Almost every man among us may now, if he will, command the means of a very comfortable living. An industrious and virtuous artisan may provide for his family advantages, which, a few years since, were considered the attributes only of those above the level of mediocrity. The cause of this change may be easily stated. Labor is valuable to the employer in proportion to the amount of results that it will accomplish. Now, it is well known, that, within the last fifty years, increased skill has rendered human labor vastly more productive than it ever was before. A greater amount of the product of his labor may, therefore, be reserved to the operative, while the capitalist receives at the same time a larger interest upon his investment.

It is interesting, also, to observe the manner in which this increased value has been given to human labor. In some cases, division of labor has enabled one man to do as much as could otherwise be done by two hundred. In other and more numerous cases, a still more gratifying result has been produced, by the increased skill with which science has taught us to employ those qualities and relations with which the allmerciful God has seen fit to endow the universe around us. The most important of these are, the gravitating power of water, and the expansive force of steam. It is by a most beautiful adaptation of the former, that

you, in this city, employ a little waterfall, without cessation, and almost without cost, to carry the means of cleanliness and health to every family within your borders. In various other parts of our country, you may behold a single individual, by means of machinery connected with a similar waterfall, executing, with the utmost perfection, what could not otherwise, in the same time, be performed by many hundreds.

But specially am I astonished in contemplating the results of steam; that new power which the last half century has placed within the control of man. Whether we consider the massiveness of its strength, or the facility of its adaptation, we are equally overwhelmed at the results which it promises to confer upon society. Probably half a million of men could not propel a boat two hundred miles with the speed given to it by a dozen workmen with a powerful engine. On the Liverpool and Manchester railroad, two men, with a locomotive engine, could easily do the work of a thousand, with a speed five or six times as great as human strength could, at its greatest effort, accomplish. Beside this, there can be but very little doubt, that steam will, at least in Great Britain, to a very great extent, supersede the employment of brutes for draft labor, and thus enable the same extent of land to sustain more than double its present number of human beings. The same kind of result is in all cases produced, either by the introduction of valuable machinery, or by improvement in the means of internal or external communication. The instances which I have selected, are merely intended as specimens of a class of agents which Providence has, within a few years, taught us to employ for the improvement of our condition. It ought also to be distinctly borne in mind, that probably only a very small number of the most important of these, has yet been discovered; and that, of those which have been discovered, the application is but yet in its infancy. Sufficient, I trust, has been said, to illustrate the obvious tendency of improvements in the arts, and to show how utterly incalculable are the benefits which they have evidently in reserve for us. The manner in which all these changes affect the laboring classes may be thus briefly stated. The comforts of living are procurable only by human labor. If, then, by means of improvement in the arts, the labor of the human race is able to produce this year, twice as large an amount of the comforts of living as was produced last year, then every man may have twice as much to enjoy: and may, therefore, be this year in circumstances as comfortable as those of a man of twice his wealth the year before. With the labor of last year he may earn twice the amount of comfort, or he may possess the former amount of comfort with half the amount of labor. A little reflection will, I think, teach any one, that these are precisely the results to which the movements of society are tending. It will, I think, also be evident, that the forces are similar to those exerted upon the condition of man at the time of the Reformation, except that they affect more permanently, and to a greater degree, a much larger portion of the community.

The immediate effect of these changes upon the condition of the larger classes of society must be evident. They place within the power of every man a larger share of enjoyment, and a greater portion of leisure. They thus give to every man, not only more time for intellectual cultivation, but also the means for improving that time with increased advantage.

And if they do not render a man better educated himself, they render him sensible of his own deficiency, and awaken in him the desire, and furnish the means, of bestowing education upon his children. And hence, although the modes of education should undergo no improvement, there must result a more widely extended demand for mental improvement, and a more perfect and more powerful intellectual development.

But, *secondly*; The means of cultivating the human mind are also in a course of rapid improvement. Time will allow me only to allude to a very few considerations, connected with this branch of the subject.

First; The object of education is becoming better understood. It has, in many places, ceased to be considered enough to infuse into the pupil certain sentences, or even certain ideas, which some time before had been infused into the instructor. It begins to be admitted, that education consists in so cultivating the mind, as to render it a more powerful and more exact instrument for the acquisition, the discovery, and the propagation of truth, and a more certain guide for the regulation of conduct. Hence it is now frequently conceded, that education may be a science by itself, regulated by laws which require special study, and in the practical application of which, something more than a common degree of intelligence may be at least convenient. A higher degree of talent will thus be called to this profession, in every one of its branches. Division of labor will also produce the same beneficial results as in every other department of industry. And hence, as the object is better understood, as higher talent is engaged to promote it, and as that talent is employed under greater advantages, we may expect, in the rising and the succeeding generations, a more perfect mental development than the world has yet seen.

Again; It has, within a few years, been discovered that education may be commenced much earlier in life than was before considered practicable. Who would have supposed, unless he had seen it, that any thing valuable could have been communicated to an infant only two or three years old? Specially, who would have supposed that the memory, the judgment, the understanding, and the conscience of so young a child, were already so perfectly formed, and so susceptible of improvement? But recent experience has demonstrated, that a very valuable education, an education which shall comprise instruction in the elements of many of the most important sciences, may be acquired before a child is old enough to be profitably employed in muscular labor, and even while the care of it would be expensive to the parent. It has thus been made the interest of every one in the neighborhood of an Infant School, to give his children at least so much education as may be communicated there. And if I am not much mistaken, the instruction now given to infants, in these invaluable nurseries, is more philosophical, and does more towards establishing correct intellectual and moral habits than that which was attainable, when I was a boy, by children 12 or 14 years old, in grammar schools of highly respectable standing.

Allow me also to suggest an improvement, which, though not yet in practice, must soon follow in the train of the others of which I have spoken. I allude to the application of the science of education to the teaching of the operative arts. At present, a boy spends frequently seven years in acquiring a trade. His instructor, though a good practical ar-

tist, is wholly unacquainted with the business of teaching. Few will doubt that a man, who, with a knowledge of a mechanical art, should devote himself exclusively to teaching it, might, in a few months, communicate as much skill as is now acquired in as many years. The result would be, in the end, far greater excellency of workmanship; and, what is still better, much more time for obtaining an education might be allowed to young men before they devoted themselves to the employments of life.

From these facts, the tendency of the present movements of society is obvious. It is, to furnish more leisure than formerly to the operative classes of society, to furnish them more extensively with the means of education, and to render that education better. They must, from the very nature of things, become, both positively and relatively, far richer, and much better informed, than they have ever been before. Now, as social power is in the ratio of intelligence and wealth; the astonishing progress of the more numerous classes, in both these respects, must be producing more radical changes in the fabric of society than were witnessed even at the period of the Protestant Reformation.

But these changes are going forward with accelerated rapidity in our own country. With profuse liberality, a bountiful Providence has scattered over our territory all the means of a rapid accumulation of wealth. Land, rich and unexhausted, adapted to the production of every article of luxury and convenienc, stretches through every variety of climate. To peculiar natural advantages of internal communication, we add still greater capabilities of artificial improvement. The amount of our unappropriated water-power is incalculable; and in regions where this is less abundant, inexhaustible beds of fuel offer every facility for the employment of that incomparable laborer, steam.

This country also presents peculiar facilities for intellectual development. The political institutions of other countries rather retard than accelerate the progress of mental cultivation. With us, the absence of all legalized hereditary barriers between the different classes of society, presents to every man a powerful inducement to improve himself, but especially his children, to the uttermost. In other countries, the forms of government, being unyielding, do not readily accommodate themselves to a change in the relations of society. Ours are constructed with the express design of being modified, whenever a change in the relation of the social elements shall require it. The history of our country, since the adoption of the federal constitution, has furnished abundant proof of the truth of these remarks. Every change in the state governments has been from a less to a more popular form. This at least shows, *first*, that the power is passing from the hands of the less numerous, to those of the more numerous classes of society; and, *secondly*, that there is nothing in the nature of our institutions to prevent its thus passing. It is our duty to provide that it be wielded by intelligence and virtue.

I hope sufficient has been said, to show that the period is rapidly advancing, when all, but especially the more numerous classes of society, will enjoy much more leisure for reflection, will be furnished with a vastly greater amount of knowledge, both of facts and of principles, and will be educated to use those facts and principles with far greater accuracy, and with far better success.

We will now briefly consider the *encouragements* which these facts present, to an effort for the universal diffusion of Christianity.

First: The increase of wealth, and especially the subsequent increase of leisure, among the more numerous classes, is in many respects greatly favorable to the progress of religion. Moderate labor invigorates, excessive labor enfeebles, the intellectual faculties. He whose existence is measured by unbroken periods of either slavish toil or profound sleep, soon sinks in passive subjection to the laws of his animal nature. Lighten his load, and his intellect regains its elasticity, he rises to the region of thought, breathes the atmosphere of reason, rejoices in the discovery of truth, and feels himself a denizen of the universe of mind.

Again: The progress of education is rendering the human understanding a more successful instrument for the investigation of the laws of nature, both in matter and in mind. Hence has the progress of discovery been so rapid during the last half century—and we believe that the work has but barely commenced. We apprehend that the boldest imagination has never yet conceived of the exactitude and the extent of that knowledge which we shall acquire of the qualities and relations of the universe around us; and of the skill to which we shall yet attain, in subjecting them all to the gratification of human want, and the alleviation of human wo. Now, we believe that God made this universe; that he created every particle of matter, and impressed upon it its various attributes. We believe that this same Being also created mind and inspired it with its moral and intellectual capacities; and we believe that the attributes of matter and the capacities of mind, are all formed to harmonize with the moral laws contained in his holy oracles; so that in the end there shall not be found, throughout the wide universe, a floating atom which does not give testimony to the truth of revelation. Thus, to use the words of Foster, "Religion, standing up in grand parallel with an infinite variety of things, receives from all their testimony and homage, and speaks a voice which is echoed by creation."

Thus far, every discovery of science and every invention in the arts, has uttered its voice in favor of the Bible. Who can contemplate the relation of the various forces which move a steam engine, and the laws by which they operate, without seeing that all was devised by Infinite Wisdom, for just such a being, physical and intellectual, as man, to accomplish just such purposes as Infinite Goodness had intended? Who can contemplate the social circumstances under which man enjoys the greatest amount of happiness, without being convinced that the very constitution of man requires obedience to precisely such precepts as are contained in the Bible; that man is rewarded and punished on the principles which are there delineated; in other words, that the moral system of the Bible is the moral system of the universe? A striking illustration of the truth of the general principle to which I refer, may be found in the history of political economy. This science has been, to say the least, very successfully cultivated by men who had no belief in the Christian religion. And yet, reasoning from unquestionable facts in the history of man, they have incontrovertibly proved that the precepts of Jesus Christ, in all their simplicity, are the only rules of conduct, in obedience to which, either nations or individuals can become either rich or happy. So far as science has gone, then, every new truth in physics

or in morals has furnished a new argument for the authenticity of revelation. Thus will it be to the end. Philosophy herself will at last show the principles of the religion of Jesus Christ, so legibly written on every thing else which the Creator's hand has formed, that it will be as impossible to deny the truth of the Scriptures as the law of gravitation.

Besides, not only does the present state of society promise that vastly more of these laws will be known, and their moral connexions traced—it is also rendered evident that the knowledge of them will be more widely disseminated. Improvement in wealth and in the science of education, will render what is now considered erudition, common to the humblest member of the community. Thus the facts, on which may be constructed the most incontestible arguments in favor of religion, will be found in abundance in the mind of every man. Thus the *media* of proof are multiplied without number. Though ignorance be the mother of superstition, knowledge is the parent of devotion. Take any man whose soul has neither been brutalized by animal indulgence, nor his judgment radically distorted by incurable prejudice; open his eyes upon the universe as it actually is, with all its discovered and undiscovered variety of contrivances, and tell me, could he ever afterwards be made an atheist? Or let him remark, through the history of ages, the consequences resulting to individuals and nations, from different courses of moral conduct; and could he ever afterward be persuaded that the Deity neither had made nor would maintain the distinction between virtue and vice? Or let him ask himself upon what principle it is necessary to act, if he would secure to himself any valuable result for the life that now is, and he will come to the conclusion, that in the things of this world, as well as of the other, success can only be expected from the exercise of faith and obedience. Nor is this all. A well-regulated mind not only knows that it is so, but is at every moment reminded of it. Every thing speaks to such a man of God, and God speaks to him in every thing.

Nor is this all. Not only does improved development of the human faculties furnish new proofs of the truth of revelation—it also renders the mind more susceptible of their influence. It is the business of education to deliver us from the tyranny of prejudice and passion, and subject us to the government of reason. Mind thus becomes a more delicate, a more powerful, and a more certain instrument. It yields to nothing but evidence; before this it bows down in reverential homage. Thus, effect upon mind will at last be calculated upon with almost scientific precision. Now it is to this very training of the intellectual faculties that the progress of improvement in education promises to conduct mankind; so much more favorable is the mind of the hearer or reader becoming, to the production of moral effect.

But we hope that this system of changes is not to be limited here. We believe that improvement in intellectual science, but above all, more elevated piety, and more ardent devotion, will yet confer some new powers of suasion on the Christian teacher. Every one must be sensible, that the Gospel is an instrument which has never been wielded with its legitimate effect, since the time of the Apostles. May we not hope that there are forms of illustration at present untried, that there are modes of appeal as yet unattempted, which, with an efficacy more cer-

tain than we any where now witness, will awaken the slumbering conscience, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, lead the awakened sinner to the cross of Christ.

Christian brethren, estimate, if you can, the importance of these facts. We have seen that every law of matter and of mind presents a separate argument in favor of religion; that the providence of God is multiplying, with a rapidity beyond precedent, both the number and the power of such arguments, that all classes of men are becoming more deeply imbued with a knowledge of them, and that this knowledge, from the improved discipline of the faculties, must produce a more certain and more salutary effect: consider, too, how the press is enabling every man to exert his whole moral and intellectual power upon the thoughts and opinions of mankind, and you will surely say, that never have there been presented so many or so great encouragements for a universal effort to bring the world into cordial subjection to Jesus Christ. The prediction seems already fulfilled, "The sons of strangers shall come bending unto thee." Following in the train of every art, and every science, infidel philosophy herself is seen presenting her offering at the feet of the Redeemer. Every thing encourages us to move forward, and take possession of the inheritance which Messiah has purchased with his own most precious blood.

There are, however, a few circumstances of encouragement peculiar to the condition of this country, to which I may be permitted for a moment to advert.

1. The proportion of truly religious persons is greater with us than in any other country. Perhaps it would not be too much to assert that their intelligence and opportunity of leisure are greater than fall to the lot of Christians in any other nation. I hope that it may also with truth be added, that, notwithstanding the multiplicity of sects, a much greater degree of good-fellowship, in promoting the eternal welfare of men, is found here, than has been commonly witnessed, at least in the latter ages of the Christian church.

2. We enjoy perfect civil and religious freedom. Every man may originate as powerful trains of thought as he is able, may give them as wide a circulation as he will, and may use all other suitable means for giving them influence over the minds of others.

3. Public opinion is here, more than it has been in other countries, friendly to religion. This land was first peopled by men who came here that they might enjoy "freedom to worship God;" and thus they proved themselves worthy of being the Fathers of an Empire. Our institutions, at their very commencement, received the impress of Christianity. The name and the example of the Puritans are yet held in hallowed recollection. We are enjoying the rich blessings purchased by their labors and their prayers. Our nation, wicked though it be, is not yet cursed with the sin of having deliberately rejected the Gospel. Our soil is unstained with the blood of the saints. We may hope, then, that our eyes have not yet been smitten with avenging blindness. And, in carrying forward her conquests, we may hope that the church of God will have less opposition to encounter here, than she has met with elsewhere.

4. But it deserves specially to be remarked, that God has blessed, in a peculiar manner, the efforts that have been made in this country to check

the increase of vice, and promote the diffusion of piety. In illustration of this remark, I will not at present refer to the astonishing success which has attended the Bible, Sabbath School, and Tract Societies. I will mention only two facts, which, though not more important than some I omit, allow of being presented with greater brevity. The first is the effect which has been produced by the union of good men, for the promotion of temperance. But about four years have elapsed since this benevolent effort commenced. And already has it saved from worse than mere destruction several millions of the national capital; it has saved thousands of families from ruin; it has taught hundreds of thousands successful resistance to perilous temptation; it is purifying the atmosphere, which so soon must have poisoned the rising generation; its powerful influence is felt in every state, and, perhaps I may add, in every town and village, throughout the union; and is beginning to be felt in other lands. Travellers from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, tell us that the reform is strikingly manifest. The records of various religious denominations bear testimony to the same encouraging fact. We ourselves have witnessed, that in stage-coaches, and in steamboats, in public houses and in parlors, temperance is becoming more and more the habit of the people. The very traffic in ardent spirit is far from being reputable; and there is reason to hope that, in a few years more, this detestable leprosy may be banished from the land.

More especially, however, would I refer to the fact, that those seasons of extraordinary attention to the salvation of the soul, denominated revivals of religion, and produced, as we believe, by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, have been multiplied among us to a far greater degree than has before been known in any age or country. Almost every denomination professing Christianity has of late years been greatly augmented in numbers, and strongly excited to religious effort, in consequence of such revivals. Specially have these effects been visible among the young. Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes have, in a peculiar manner, been filled with that solemnity, which, turning the soul from the eager pursuit of pleasure and of sin, leads it to serious reflection, to unfeigned repentance, to faith in Jesus Christ, and to permanent and universal reformation. Now, it matters not what theory we may adopt in respect to this subject. We are all willing to be influenced by facts. The fact, then, we think, cannot be questioned, that events called revivals of religion are becoming very common among us, and that where they occur most frequently, a larger portion of the people become active and zealous Christians; and if this be granted, it is sufficient for our argument.

Behold, then, Christian brethren, the encouragement before us. We are citizens of a country whose uncultivated soil was moistened by the tears, and consecrated by the prayers, of persecuted saints; whose earliest institutions were formed under the auspices of the Bible; where every man may pray as much, and live as holily, as he will; where every man may circulate as widely as he pleases the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and, as eloquently as he is able, urge his fellow-citizens to obey it; and where God has been pleased to honor with his special benediction, every effort which has been made to arrest the progress of vice,

and increase the influence of religion. What can we ask for more? Why stand we here all the day idle? We see how glorious a success has attended our feeble and imperfect efforts. They have as yet been almost nothing, in comparison with the ability of the Christian church in this country. How few of us have even approached the point of self-denial in effort! And surely it is only at this point that real benevolence begins. Let us ponder what is our solemn and unquestionable duty: let us look at the wonderful blessing with which God has crowned our exertions; and I think we shall arrive at the conclusion, that with a corresponding degree of success upon such efforts, for the promotion of religion, as are palpably within our power, a revival of piety may be witnessed in every neighborhood throughout the land; the principles of the Gospel may be made to regulate the detail of individual and national intercourse; the high praises of God may be heard from every habitation; and, perhaps, before the youth of this generation be gathered to their fathers, there may burst forth upon these highly-favored States the light of the Millennial Glory. What is to prevent it? Let any man reflect upon the subject, and then answer. My brethren, I speak deliberately. I do not believe, that the option is put into our hands. It is for us, in reliance on the divine blessing, to say, whether the present religious movement shall be onward, until it terminate in the universal triumph of Messiah, or whether all shall go back again, and the generations to come after us suffer for ages the divine indignation for our neglect of the Gospel of the grace of God. The church has for two thousand years been praying "Thy kingdom come." Jesus Christ is saying unto us, "It shall come if you desire it."

Such, then, are some of the *encouragements* which the providence of God presents for attempting the universal promulgation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Motives equally strong may also be drawn from the fearful results which must ensue, if we prove unworthy of the high destiny which is now set before us. To these, however, time will only allow me very briefly to allude.

In no case does God array himself in more avenging majesty, than when he resents the misimprovement of unusual blessings, or the neglect of signal opportunities for usefulness. "Curse ye Meroz," saith the angel of the Lord, "curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof—because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." "And when Jesus 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 which belong to thy peace—but now they are hidden from thine eyes—for the days come in which thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and shall not leave thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*"

The spirit of these warnings applies with great emphasis to the church at the present day. With regard to society at large, it is evident that the changes which have commenced must either result in the universal diffusion of the principles of religious knowledge and civil liberty, or in the establishment of a more firmly riveted system of slavery than the world has yet beheld. The philosophy of Christianity is now generally well understood. Her points of contact with the human heart are

discovered. The secret of her great strength is revealed. Her enemies are rallying, and mean to regain the ground which they lost at the Reformation. Their resources are immense, and their wisdom has been gained in the most effectual of all schools, the school of reverses. Combining all their forces, and, with skill worthy of a better cause, adapting their weapons to the present state of society, they are preparing for one mighty, one universal onset. Christianity cannot safely remain in her present condition. Delay will be defeat. She must instantly seize the vantage ground, and march onwards, universally triumphant, or be driven again for ages to the dens and caves of the earth. Which shall she do? This question it is for the present generation to answer.

The period within which this question must be decided, may, in other countries, be prolonged; not so, however, in this country. Other governments may be kept stable amid political commotion, by balancing the interests and passions of one class of the community against those of another. With us, there is but one class—the people. Hence, our institutions can only be supported while the people are restrained by moral principle. We have provided no checks to the turbulence of passion: we have raised no barriers against the encroachments of a tyrannical majority. Hence, the very forms which we so much admire are at any moment liable to become an intolerable nuisance, the instruments of ultimate and remediless oppression. Now, I do not know that history furnishes us with reason to believe that man can be made the happy subject of moral government, in any other way than by the inculcation of principles such as are contained in the New Testament. You see, then, that the church of Christ is the only hope of our country.

I will not here ask, whether any thing has ever transpired within your recollection, in the history of our republic, at which a thoughtful man may tremble. I will not ask whether, when the most momentous questions are at stake, it be customary to address the passions or the reason and conscience of our fellow-citizens. I will neither ask, whether he would not be considered a novice, who was credulous enough to believe a mere politician honest, nor whether an utter disregard of truth be not avowed without a blush, as the principle on which are conducted many of the presses which politicians support. I will not ask, whether the most infamous want of principle has always obstructed the advancement of him, who has made his imposing voice heard amid the clamor of electioneering strife. Nor will I ask, whether there be not men deeply learned in the history of human affairs, who, overlooking the moral power that resides in the religion of Jesus Christ, have not already doubted whether such institutions as ours can long be perpetuated. I refer to these things, Christian brethren, to remind you how inevitable is the fatal result, if it be not arrested by the influences of Christianity. Good men should be aware of the fact, that even now not a moment is to be lost. When the statesman trembles, then it is time for the Christian to act. Unless prevented by the diffusion of religious principle, the wreck of our civil liberties is inevitable. But in the present state of society, civil and religious liberty must perish together. Then must ensue ages of darkness, more appalling than aught which this world in the gloomiest periods of her history has yet recorded. What form of misery will brood over this now happy land, I pretend not to foresee. I cannot tell

whether these solemn temples will become the resort of muttering monks, or of infidel bacchanalians. I know not, whether our children will worship a relic, and pray to a saint—or deny the existence of God, and proclaim “death an eternal sleep.” I should rather fear, that neither of these woes would fill up the measure of our cup of trembling; but that some strange ministration of wrath, more terrific than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived, was yet treasured up among the hidden things of the Almighty, to be visited in vengeance upon the iniquities of a people who so signally slighted the day of their merciful visitation.

Fathers and Brethren; you behold the result to which we have been led. It is for us to decide whether the moral light, which has just began to dawn, shall ascend to meridian glory, or whether for ages it shall be extinguished in darkness. It is for us to say, whether this nation shall first welcome the coming of Messiah, and rejoice in the earliest submission to his reign; or bear for ages the awful weight of divine indignation, for having, under such aggravated circumstances, rejected the offered mercy of God's well-beloved Son.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers; what shall we do? Shall the kingdom of Christ come, or shall it not come? But before you answer this question, it is proper to consider what the answer involves.

The kingdom of Christ will not come, unless an effort be made on the part of the church more intense and more universal than any we have yet seen. Little does it become me to speak in the language of a reformer. Yet you will, I trust, pardon me, if I, with diffidence, suggest some changes which must take place, before we can be prepared for the crisis before us.

In general, then, I would remark, that the providence of God calls loudly upon religious men, to be more deeply and thoroughly religious.

Too commonly now, the character of Christian is merged in the character of statesman, or lawyer, or physician, or merchant, or tradesman, or even of man or woman of fashion. I blush while I speak it, but it is too true; this age beholds *fashionable disciples of a crucified Jesus*. All this must, we think, be altered. If religion be any thing, it is every thing. If the Bible be not a fable, it is meet that every other distinction of a Christian be merged in that of piety. Our private history, the arrangements of our business, the discipline of our families, our intercourse with society, must show that we do really care very little about every thing else, if we can only promote the growth of vital piety in our own souls, and in the souls of others.

But to be somewhat more particular. New efforts are required of ministers of the Gospel. The times seem to demand that our lives be much more laborious than formerly. We must labor more abundantly in preparation for the pulpit; we must preach more, in season and out of season; we must visit our people more frequently, and more religiously; we must exhort more fervently: and thus make our moral influence more universally and more deeply felt upon all classes, but specially upon the young. If it be said, that clergymen are, generally, as laborious as their health will admit, we may grant it; but still, we would ask, might they not frequently obtain better health? Every one of us, surely, might understand and obey the laws of his animal economy. If we

would do this, we should less frequently complain of ill health. Besides, who of us, with the firmest health, has ever accomplished half the labor of Baxter, or Payson, who were invalids through life?

It will also be necessary that our efforts be more systematic. We act so much at random, that the labors of one day interfere with those of another, and thus much invaluable time is lost. Who, that has had the least experience in the ministry, does not see to how much better purpose he would have lived had he resolutely set about doing one thing at a time, and doing that thing thoroughly. Should every one of us survey the field which God has placed before him, and begin now to direct those influences, which, ten years hence, will be called into operation; and should we thus labor year after year upon the best plan that prayerful consideration will enable us to devise; would not our lives be spent to vastly better effect?

Again: The approaching crisis will demand a greater amount of intellectual vigor. The work will call for strong arms, and for very many of them. Ministers will find it necessary to devote themselves more resolutely to severe studies, to original thinking, and to every sort of discipline which may render the mind a more efficient instrument for swaying the opinions of men. Perhaps it will not be amiss to add, that the present state of society seems specially to demand of us a more profound knowledge of the evidences of revelation; of the various connexions which God has established between moral laws and the laws of the universe about us; and a deep and intimate acquaintance with the unadulterated oracles of divine truth, if possible, in the languages in which they were originally written.

But more than any thing else, do we need improvement in personal piety, in the experience of religion in our own souls. We must approach nearer to the luminary, if we would reflect more of its light. Nothing but ardent love to God, and unshaken trust in his promises, will animate us amid the labors to which the necessities of the church will call us. In the absence of these, we have no reason to expect that the influences of the Holy Spirit will attend our efforts, without which, they would be as unable to excite a holy volition, as to create a world. When ministers thus labor for Christ, thus love Him, and thus trust in Him—then may we hope to see the blessings of the day of Pentecost descend upon our churches.

But the principles which apply to a minister, apply also to every Christian man. I add, then, secondly, the necessities of the church require new efforts of laymen. The religious man, every where, and at all times, must show himself a devoted Christian.

It is necessary that Christians begin to use their property as stewards. The principles of the Gospel must be carried into the business of our every-day expenditure. We must sacrifice to Christ our love of pleasure, of ostentation, and of accumulation; or we must cease to pray, "Thy kingdom come." I see men professing godliness, spending their property profusely, in obedience to all the calls of a world that knows not God; or else hoarding it up, with miserly avarice, to ruin the souls of the rising generation; but I confess, I do not see how they will answer for it "to the Judge of quick and dead."

The cause of Christ, also, requires of laymen a far greater amount of

personal exertion. Suppose ye, that in apostolic times, the claims of religion would have required of a disciple, nothing more than a small portion of his income? When the time was come for the church to be enlarged, they that were scattered abroad, went every where, preaching the word. Now we do not say, that you are required to be preachers; but we do say, that religion requires you to consider the promotion of piety in the hearts of men, as an object demanding your highest efforts. The management of the religious charities of the day belongs to you. It now comes principally upon the clergy. Its tendency is to render them secular. It makes them men of dexterity, rather than of deep thought and commanding eloquence. The cause would gain much by a division of labor. Brethren, you are called upon to come forward and relieve us from this service. But yet more—every man who knows the value of the soul, may speak of its value to his neighbor. Every man of ordinary abilities who feels the love of Christ, may give profitable religious instruction to youth and children. The promotion of piety, in the hearts of others, should enter as much into every man's daily arrangements, as the care for the body that perisheth. When this spirit shall have become universal, something will be done.

Do you say, that you have not the requisite information? I ask, does it require much information, to remind men that they are going to the judgment-seat of Christ? But I say again, why have you not the information? That intellect is by far the most valuable, as well as the most improvable possession, with which God has intrusted you—why have you not rendered it a better instrument to serve him? Every Christian, in such a country as this, may be, and ought to be, a well-informed man.

And, lastly; As intimated before, the cause of Christ requires of private Christians, as well as of clergymen, deeper humility, more fervent piety, and a life of closer communion with God. Your money and labors, as well as our studies and preaching, will be despised, unless they be the offering of holy hearts. All, all, are utterly ineffectual, unless the Spirit descend upon us from on high. Our alms will be as water spilt upon the ground, unless our souls are fired with the love of Christ, and our hearts temples for the residence of the Holy Ghost.

You see, then, what is required. I ask again, Christian brethren, are you ready for the effort? Shall the kingdom of Christ speedily come, or shall it not? You have seen the option which the providence of God has set before us. You have seen, so far as ourselves are concerned, on what that option is suspended. What will you do? I put the question to the understanding, and the conscience of every man. Do you not believe that by proper effort the liberties of this country may be secured—and that, without it, there is every reason to fear they will be irrecoverably lost? Do you not believe, that, by such an effort, thousands of souls may be saved from eternal perdition—and that, without it, those souls will not be saved? Do you not believe, that, if such an effort were made, in entire dependence on the Spirit of God, this country would be subjected to Jesus Christ—that his kingdom would come, and his will be done throughout our land—and that if it be not made, there is every reason to fear that his kingdom will not come for ages? Do you not believe, that there is no time to be lost—but that every thing depends

upon the men of the present generation? You are then in possession of all the facts necessary to a decision. You stand in the presence of Him who died to redeem a world lying in wickedness, and at whose bar you must review the resolution of the present moment. In the presence of that Savior, redeemed sinners, what will ye do?

Time will barely suffer me to allude, in the briefest manner, to that species of religious effort which has given occasion to this address. You cannot, however, fail to see, that if ever the Gospel is universally to prevail, it must be by such efforts, under God, that its triumph will be achieved. By furnishing employment for talent of every description, the Sabbath School system multiplies, almost indefinitely, the amount of benevolent effort, and awakens throughout every class of society the dormant spirit of Christian philanthropy. It renders every teacher a student of the Bible; and thus, in the most interesting manner, brings divine truth into immediate contact with the understanding and the conscience. All this it does to the teacher. But, beside all this, the Sabbath School is imbuing what will, twenty years hence, be the active population of this country, with the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is teaching that class of the community, into whose hands so soon the destinies of this country will fall, the precepts of inviolable justice, and eternal truth. But more than all, it is implanting in the bosoms of millions of immortal souls, "that knowledge which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus." How transcendently glorious are the privileges before us! Who will not embark in this holy enterprise?

One remark more, and I have done. I see before me the representatives of a very important portion of the Christian church. We are assembled in the midst of a city, renowned for its deeds of mercy. The effects of our decisions may be felt in the remotest hamlet in the land. To us is offered the high honor of giving an impulse to this work, that shall afford cheering promise of its speedy consummation.

Suffer me, then, in the name of the omniscient Savior, to ask, What will you do? Let every minister of the Cross here ask himself, Why, even during my own lifetime, should not the millenium commence in my congregation? Here, then, before the altar of God, let us dedicate ourselves anew, and in the strength of Christ resolve that we will henceforward live with direct reference to the immediate coming of his kingdom. Professional men, before you rest to-night, will ye dedicate that intellect, with which God has endowed you, with all the means of influence which it can command, to the service of your Redeemer? Men of wealth, as ye retire from this place, will ye collect the title-deeds of that property, which Providence has lent you, and write upon them all, "Holiness to the Lord?" A thousand times have we said that we would do all this. Let the Spirit witness with our spirits, that we do it now in view of the judgment-seat of Christ. Henceforth, in the Sabbath School, in the Bible Class, and in the use of all the means which God has placed in our power, let us labor to bring this world under the blessed reign of the Redeemer—or let us cease to pray, "Thy kingdom come." May God enable us to act worthy of his cause; and to his great name shall be the glory. AMEN.

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SERMON LXXXVIII.

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WHY THE WICKED ARE SUFFERED TO LIVE.

JOB, xxi. 7.—*Wherefore do the wicked live?*

THE existence of sin, and the frequent prosperity of the wicked, have in every age presented ground for much speculation and great diversity of opinion. Job has not been the only one, who, on beholding these things taking place under the eye of the Omniscient and Holy One, has inquired with anxiety, *wherefore do the wicked live?*

An answer to this inquiry I shall attempt, by stating some of the most obvious *reasons why the wicked may be suffered to live.*

In morals, a safe standard of judging is to be found only in the Scriptures of truth:—there we find but one line of distinction laid down to determine the character of men; all are either righteous or wicked,—friends or enemies to God: guided by this infallible rule, we find that not only the openly vicious, but every unbeliever, must be ranked with the wicked. The impenitent and unbelieving, however amiable as men and useful as citizens, must eventually sink under the frown of an offended God, as certainly as the openly abandoned, the unjust, the deceitful, and the profane. Why then are the wicked suffered to continue in life?

I. TO PROLONG THEIR OPPORTUNITY FOR BECOMING RECONCILED TO GOD.

Every sin, whether of action, word, or thought, is a violation of God's law, and exposes the transgressor to his curse. No man can plead *guiltless*: all are already under sentence of condemnation, as rebels against God. But by the mediation of Jesus Christ, men are brought into a new condition of trial: the terms are no longer do this and live; but to those actually under sentence of condemnation a reprieve is granted, while proposals, rich in grace, are held out, acceptance of which reverses the dreadful sentence, brings the transgressor into favor with God, and more than repairs the ruins of the fall: rejection of these proposals seals the curse irrevocable, and ensures aggravated condemnation. Now, "God," who "is not desirous that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth"—spreads these gracious terms before men, wherever the Gospel is preached, and "*commands all men, every where, to repent.*"

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The wicked, although even now under condemnation for their sins, are yet suffered to live that they may enjoy the benefit of this provision. A full view of their guilt and their alarming prospects is spread before them in God's word, the entreaty to turn and live is perpetually sounded in their ears, and motives manifold and urgent, meet them on every hand, to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. They are on trial, and trial implies the power to neglect duty, if we choose so to do. At death, this trial terminates, and all possibility of restoration to the Divine favor, if not secured before, then ceases for ever.

The wicked have souls; for whose cleansing a Savior's blood will avail, if they but seek to have it applied to them; souls endowed with vast capacities to suffer or to enjoy; souls, whose interests are enduring and indestructible as the throne of God; souls, whose condition for eternity is suspended on the issue of this life, brief at best! No wonder, then, since their removal, while impenitent, would plunge them at once into remediless wo, that the wicked are suffered to continue many years, that their trial may be prolonged, and every possible advantage afforded them, to escape the doom they deserve, and take refuge near the throne of mercy! Let us, then, keep in view the vast capacities of the human soul, the nature of probation, and the unutterable interests involved in its issue, when with Job we inquire, *wherefore do the wicked live?*

But the wicked may be suffered to live,

2. FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS :

Some, who have contemptuously spurned the offer of mercy, and are already ripe for destruction, may, nevertheless, be suffered to live many years for the sake of their families, to provide for and educate their children, among whom there may be those whom God shall claim as his; and who, he discerns, could not be so well disciplined and prepared for the stations he designs them hereafter to fill, as they will be by having just such an education, and witnessing just such an example, as the continuance of the parent will furnish. Possibly the scoffs and blasphemies, the cold formality, or the worldly life of the parent, may excite the most salutary emotions in the minds of the children. The stoical indifference of one parent to all the solemn interests of the soul, contrasted with the uniform fervor, the trembling solicitude, the conscientious simplicity of the other, may be the instrument of awakening reflection in the minds of the children, unmasking the world to their view, and kindling within them effectual desires after a better portion.

Some among the wicked may be suffered to live at ease, till every thing is ready to render the circumstances of their death widely impressive upon their acquaintances. Others may be suffered to live and prosper, because of the influence they are exerting for the good of society, in promoting the education of the young, furnishing the pious poor with employment and sustenance, and indirectly preparing the way for the approach of those glorious times, predicted in the Bible, when all shall know the Lord. The dispensations of God's providence are conducted on a regular and an infinitely wise plan: and it may yet be seen, that all the writings of infidels, all the discoveries and the frequently blasphemous perversions of science, all the revolutions of empire produced by ambition, were only preparing the way for such a state of

society as will be found needful for the general diffusion of the truth, and the conversion of the world to holiness : and consequently, that all the proud, and ambitious, and blasphemous, who took part in those preparatory measures, were suffered to live, notwithstanding their wickedness, for the sake of the beneficial results, which, in spite of their different intentions, will have been made to arise from their doings.

Cyrus knew not God ;—but he was suffered to live and prosper, for the sake of the good he would accomplish to God's people Israel. The Romans knew not God, but they were suffered to prevail, and prepare the way for the spread of the Gospel. So it may be now with many who know not God : they may be continued to aid in supporting the institutions of the Gospel, where they live ; which, though they themselves reject it, may prepare their children for a place in heaven. Or they may live, that, by the influence which they indirectly exert, and with intentions just the reverse, they may aid in fulfilling God's purposes of mercy to bring in the latter day glory. Just as Joseph's brethren, in the very steps they maliciously took to prevent his anticipated elevation, were only smoothing the way for its more speedy accomplishment.

The wicked live, then, I would remark,

3. THAT THEY MAY CONTRIBUTE TO MATURE THE PIETY, ELEVATE THE CHARACTER, AND HEIGHTEN THE FUTURE FELICITY OF THE SAINTS.

This world is a scene of trial to all its inhabitants : the ungodly in Gospel lands are under trial to determine whether they will embrace the Gospel and be saved ; and every act affects their final destiny, just so far as it tends to prepare them to accept or to reject salvation. The righteous are also under trial, to decide what advances they will make in holiness.

If the Christian had no difficulties, no opposition to contend with in his course through life, he could not possibly make such advances in holiness as now he may. Trial strengthens all the powers of the regenerate nature. It *invigorates faith*. When Abraham's faith had been subjected to the trial of offering up his beloved Isaac, it was not only shown to be genuine, by his cheerful obedience, but it was strengthened by the discipline which that obedience included. He would, thenceforth, have a firmer faith in God's power, and in his faithfulness to his promises than ever before. Thus it was, that "his faith wrought with his works, and by works (i. e. by acting under the influence of faith) was his faith made perfect," or established.

Job was a patient man, before his severe afflictions ; but those trials at once discovered the greatness of his patience, his submission to the will of God, and strengthened these dispositions in his soul. The Prophets, who lived in times of prevailing wickedness, and whose blood was shed in the service of God ; the Apostles, and the martyrs of the primitive Church, who suffered persecution, famine, nakedness, the loss of all things, and laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus ; in so doing not only evinced the reality of their faith, but they were strengthening it by every trial. The act of relying habitually on the word of truth, amid discouragements on every hand—submitting to self-denial, and loss, and pain, and ignominy, for the sake of Christ, could not fail to nourish a more vigorous faith, a deeper humility, a

more heavenly temper, than if they had met with fewer difficulties, if they had lived in less perilous times. And even where no bloody persecution rages,—and no open opposition is urged against the Gospel or its professors, just so far as the wicked prosper, does the very spectacle of their triumph call forth in the righteous a firmer faith in God's word, where alone is found the true solution to all the difficulties involved in this state of things. And just so far as the influence of the wicked is felt in any community or in any family circle, against true religion in all the fulness of its demands, in all the heavenliness of its spirit, it calls into more active operation, not only the faith of Christians, but also their forbearance, patience, and meekness. The more ensnaring are the allurements of the world, the firmer will be the purpose, the more determined the resolution required of Christians to resist them. And since every true Christian will resist them (however few they may be among the number of graceless professors, whose love waxes cold, when iniquity abounds), it follows that the existence of the wicked becomes incidentally advantageous to the righteous, whom they despise. The very contempt they exhibit towards Christians, the enticements they employ to ensnare them, the calumnies they propagate against them, the opposition they make to the accomplishment of their plans of benevolence, all become means to render them more firm in faith, and more uniformly humble, self-denying, and circumspect. Every disappointment, and every instance of opposition they meet with is contributing to render true Christians more holy, more spiritual, more like Jesus Christ: and of consequence, because inward holiness is the spring of true enjoyment, it is contributing to heighten their felicity. Hence the Scriptures call upon Christians to rejoice in trials;—"that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" which manifestly implies, that the Christian, when he has passed honorably through trials, will obtain a higher felicity as the consequence. So that, if the wicked are the means of presenting such trials, they are thereby unintentionally toiling to heighten the present, and more especially the future felicity of God's people, in preparing them to reap a richer reward on high. This thought our Lord himself presents in that memorable passage, "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake:—rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Were the wicked early cut off in their career of wickedness, were the ebullitions of their hatred against God's truth and against God's people uniformly restrained, the saints would not be subjected to this salutary discipline; they would fail of that great and peculiar reward in heaven, which, in this way alone, they can obtain. If, then, at any time, my Christian friends, you behold the wicked prospering in their wickedness, setting their mouth against the very heavens, and with desponding heart you begin to inquire, "Wherefore do the wicked live?"—remember, that if faithful to your Lord, to his cause, and to your souls, they are only toiling to render you more holy,—and prepare for you a brighter crown on high.

4. Another reason why the wicked may be suffered to live is,

THAT THEREBY AN AFFECTING EXHIBITION IS PRESENTED OF THE LOVELINESS OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.

The forbearance of God is hereby strikingly discovered. God is *immutable*; he is now as irreconcilably opposed to sin as he was when he first promulgated his holy law, and pronounced its awful sanction: as he was, when for their sin, he hurled the arch-apostate and his rebel angels down to the gulf of perdition. Towards them, so far as we are informed, no forbearance was exercised, but vengeance followed close on the act of transgression. And had God inflicted like speedy punishment on the transgressors of *our* race, it would have been strictly just; all heaven would have approved it well: but then the long-suffering of God would not have been brought to light.

It is not because sin is less intrinsically evil now than at any past period; not because sin is not as truly hateful in men as in angels, as truly deserving God's wrath in us as in them; but because God is "willing to show the riches of his forbearance" towards men, that the wicked are suffered to live. It is not because God does not see and abhor the wickedness of the wicked, that they are suffered to proceed to such lengths in iniquity as are sometimes witnessed; not because God has not a tender regard for his afflicted people, that the wicked are permitted sometimes to rage against them, and cause their bosoms to labor with grief;—not because God has not a lively feeling for the honor of his name, that men are sometimes heard to blaspheme that holy name, rail at his adorable perfections, and even deny his existence, while no sudden vengeance stops their breath;—but it is, because God will give undeniable evidence of his amazing long-suffering. What then, if God "endure with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Having taken occasion, from their wickedness to magnify the riches of his forbearance in time, eternity will be long enough to exhibit his justice in their punishment.

Not only, however, is the long-suffering of God illustrated by the continuance of the wicked on earth,—his goodness is equally shown in the unmerited and unrequited beneficence he expends upon them.

God not only bears with the wicked, for months, and years, in long succession—forebears to inflict merited punishment; but he loads them with the choice bounties of his providence. God is truly "kind to the unthankful and to the evil: he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good—and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust!" How affecting the lesson here presented to us, when the Omnipotent God, whose frown would make the wicked pine and wither in unutterable anguish—the Omniscient, whom no secret thought of evil can escape—not only bears with the wicked, amid all their bold rebellion, and withdraws not the bounties of his providence from their persons and their possessions, but pours temporal favors—all that can render life desirable, into the lap of the wicked, as commonly as into the lap of the saints! How powerful the motive hereby urged upon us in the example of God's rich beneficence towards his enemies, that we, by loving our enemies,

and doing good without expecting an equivalent in return, evince ourselves to be the children of so benignant a Father in heaven!

And when the question arises in our minds, "*Wherefore do the wicked live?*" let us answer it by the lovely spectacle which, from their continuance here, God takes occasion to exhibit in this guilty world, in which the enemies of God, the bold transgressors of his holy law, are not only patiently borne with, but daily loaded with the unrequited bounties of his hand—as though he were determined to subdue their opposition, and melt their obduracy by his unspeakable goodness:—truly, "*the wrath of man shall praise him!*"

5. The end to be answered by the continuance of the wicked, is found in

THE EVIDENCE THEREBY FURNISHED OF A FUTURE STATE OF RETRIBUTION.

This life might still be a state of probation, even were the first actual transgression followed by instant death; or, were a certain amount of iniquity (far less than is now commonly perpetrated) the utmost that should be tolerated without bringing down certain destruction. But such manifest and uniform infliction of punishment on transgressors could scarcely fail to give birth to the opinion, that this life is the whole period of human existence. It would certainly leave far less evidence corroborative of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, than the present arrangements of God's providence furnish. It is, indeed, true, that "godliness is profitable unto all things:" and, generally speaking, each one who tries it for himself will find, that "in keeping God's commandments there is great reward:" "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness—and all her paths are peace." True religion brings in its train more genuine happiness than can be attained without it. Yet it is equally true, that every where, riches, honor, and influence are to a greater extent found in the hands of those who, if judged by Scripture rules, must be pronounced wicked, than in the possession of the pious. It is an undeniable fact, that the wicked, yea, the notoriously wicked, are often known to enjoy great and uniform prosperity till their death: "they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men: they set their mouth against the heavens; their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart can wish;"—while not unfrequently it is found, that "many are the afflictions of the righteous; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them." There have been times, when in the bitterness of their spirit, the afflicted righteous have been tempted to exclaim, "is there knowledge in the Most High?"—"verily we have cleansed our heart in vain, and washed our hands in innocency!"—and this state of things has ever been regarded by reflecting men, whether Heathen or Christians, as furnishing satisfactory ground, in view of the justice of God, to argue a future state of retribution. From the course of providence in this world, we can derive no conclusive evidence, "that the Judge of all the earth will do right;" and hence we feel a livelier interest, and a firmer confidence in the information furnished us in the Scriptures, of a "day which God hath appointed, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his works." When, therefore, perplexed by the apparent confusion around us, we feel the inquiry

rising, "*Wherefore do the wicked live?*" let us meet it with the thankful acknowledgment of the evidence we thence derive, that a day is approaching, when every difficulty will be removed by an impartial judgment.

Lastly, The wicked live TO FURNISH MORE DECISIVE EVIDENCE OF THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN THE DISPOSAL HE WILL FINALLY MAKE OF THEM.

The events of every day are doing something towards trying and proving us ; calling into exercise some of our moral feelings, and giving distinctness and prominence to the several features of our moral nature. As trial exercises, and thus invigorates the right feelings of the good, so it exhibits and confirms the wrong feelings of the wicked : while the truly good are advancing every day in goodness ; the evil are progressing every day in wickedness. The longer the righteous live, and the more they advance in holiness, the more abundant is the evidence they will furnish, of the reasonableness of that distinction to which God will graciously advance them. In like manner, the longer the wicked live, the more they will grow in wickedness, and consequently the more manifest will be the reasons why God consigns them to eternal darkness.

No doubt, there will be evidence to show satisfactorily, that every one receives a righteous award. But with those who have lived long, and have fully developed the wickedness of their hearts in the actions of their lives, the reasons of their doom will be more palpably obvious. If Pharaoh had not lived so long, he could not have acted so wickedly, and would not have been so conspicuous a monument of God's righteous vengeance. Now, God does give us to understand, in his holy word, that when men have long disregarded the admonitions of conscience, and the strivings of his Spirit, and all the means of amendment, and thus show that they are intent on their own destruction, he withdraws his Spirit, and leaves them to their own hearts' lusts, that they may press on rapidly in wickedness, and prepare themselves for more signal punishment. Thus for their great wickedness the Amorites were forsaken of God, till they should fill up the measure of their iniquities. God's forbearance had been tried to the utmost ; the very land groaned under their wickedness ; and signal vengeance fell upon them. Our blessed Redeemer said to the Jews, when they plainly showed that they were determined to resist all the evidence of his mission from God, "fill ye up the measure of your fathers : " which they did by crucifying the Lord of life, and persecuting his disciples ; so that upon that generation was visited, in fearful judgment, all the blood of the prophets before shed. In like manner, when under the light of the Gospel, men live and die in unbelief, the longer their lives have continued under these advantages, the more undeniably plain will their wickedness appear, in that they have passed through their whole probation, growing only worse instead of better ; in that all the bounties of God's providence were abused with an unthankful heart ; all the gracious invitations of the Gospel rejected, the movements of the Spirit resisted, and the very forbearance of God perverted into a motive to sin the more stoutly against him, just as we are in his word forewarned that it would be, "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*" If any of my hearers

shall be found among those unhappy despisers, that "behold, and wonder, and perish," the privileges they have enjoyed, the knowledge they have possessed, the motives they have resisted, the affectionate entreaties they have slighted, the solemn providences they have disregarded, and the urgent and frequent remonstrances of conscience, which they have neglected, as well as all their sinful actions, will be spread before an assembled world, and satisfactorily show that God has employed every suitable means for their reformation; that their ruin is chargeable to themselves alone; while their own lips will loudly attest the justice of their fearful doom; and through all eternity, the remembrance of these advantages perverted, will sting like the adder, and bite like the scorpion.

Since, then, so long as the wicked live, they are enjoying the opportunity to become reconciled to God; their continuance may be greatly beneficial to others; they may, even in their greatest wickedness, be doing that which shall invigorate the piety, and brighten the crown of the saints; they are furnishing clear illustration of the riches of God's forbearance and of his unparalleled kindness;—and they are giving undeniable evidence of that future judgment they often deny, and yet dread; and are hourly treasuring up materials to render more abundantly conspicuous the equity of that sentence, which shall cover them with eternal confusion; let us hush every murmur, and banish every complaint; nay, raise the song of praise, while we ponder the question, "*Wherefore do the wicked live?*"

With one remark, I close:—*we here discern the folly of remaining unreconciled to God.*

However bold and hardened in sin, however forgetful of God, and heedless of his soul's welfare, a man may be, he is, nevertheless, in the hands of God, and he will be made to subserve God's glory, and the welfare of God's true people, whether he wishes it or not. The trial of each sinner is going on every day; and continually is he becoming more fitted for the doom that awaits him: and that doom, unless he become a new creature in Christ Jesus, is everlasting wretchedness. No correctness of morals, no inoffensiveness of life, can wipe out the guilt of rebellion against God, or screen from the curse consequent on rejecting the Savior. Nothing will serve as a substitute for a contrite heart, and a living faith. We may hesitate, and object, and delay, and scoff as we please;—such conduct will, indeed, ripen us for destruction; but it does not alter God's terms, nor relax his hold upon us. *We are in his hands*; and if we do not choose to submit to him, and just on his own terms too, we but pull down vengeance on our own heads: we make a bed for ourselves in hell. By every sneer, and every cavil, we are but inscribing in the archives of heaven the evidence that our condemnation is just.

We may as well hope to silence the roaring ocean with a frown,—we may as well attempt to blot out the sun, or to chain the winds, as to rush beyond the reach of the Almighty, or to change the conditions on which we hold our being. It is the message of the Gospel, it is the song of heaven, it is the glory of the church,—it is the confession of hell's deepest caverns, "*There is no safety, but in Christ.*" AMEN.

SERMON LXXXIX.

BY WILLIAM MITCHELL, A. M.
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THE FACILITY WITH WHICH SINNERS GO TO DESTRUCTION.

MATTHEW, vii. 13. *Enter ye in at the strait gate ; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.*

HE who made the human soul, and laid down his life for its redemption, knows perfectly well what is necessary to salvation, and knows our liability to be ruined by a delusive hope. In the greatness of his compassion, with his omniscient eye upon the deceitfulness of the heart, and the many temptations of the world, he has clearly described the Christian character, and the character of every traveller in the broad way. He has exhibited the features of the carnal man and the spiritual man in the nicest shades of distinction ; presenting to the vision of the one unclouded immortality, and to the vision of the other the horrors of everlasting death. The path of life is made so plain that “ the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein.” But notwithstanding all the light shed from heaven on the ways of wisdom, there are “ *few that be saved.*” Such is the blindness and desperate wickedness of men, that the multitude throng the broad way, bent on their own destruction, in despite of the entreaties and the mercies of the Lord. The very fact that Christ and the apostles have mingled their instructions to the churches with so many warnings, and enjoined the same upon their successors in the sacred office to the end of the world, implies that all men are extremely prone to slide in the downward road to perdition, and implies, too, that “ many there be which go in thereat.” The text is a direct assertion of this truth. In this and the preceding chapter, Christ had fully taught his disciples the necessity of personal holiness—had taught them what duties to perform, what errors to avoid ; and then, setting before them in one distinct view the dangers that awaited them, and the importance of strenuous effort, he said, “ Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it. —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. 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." If all this is said of those who profess to be disciples, and who stand high in the esteem of men for sanctity and eminent gifts, what will the end be of the multitude who openly despise religion? "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The text, as we said, is a direct assertion of the truth that many will be lost. And this is the reason assigned by the Redeemer, why the few who are saved should strive for entrance at the strait gate. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for [because] wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

The passage then leads us to consider the facility with which sinners go to destruction. This will appear,

1. FROM THE FACT THAT IT IS AGREEABLE TO THE NATURE OF MAN TO PURSUE A SINFUL COURSE.

The natural character of all men as delineated in the Scriptures is this:—*They roll sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue. They love darkness rather than light. Their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. They possess the carnal mind which is enmity against God. They are dead in trespasses and sins. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* Now if the heart of man in its natural state, "out of which are the issues of life," is thus in love with sin, and thus at enmity with holiness, it is obvious that he will continue on in a course of sin, till aroused to his danger and transformed "from fool to wise, from earthly to divine." But how few, in comparison with the multitude, are thus aroused, and turn their feet into "the narrow way." The desire of happiness, including with it the inseparable desire of avoiding misery, is an essential part of our constitution. And the things agreeable to our nature seem to be the only things which can make us happy. Accordingly, with the heart wholly in love with sin, and the understanding blinded to the chief good, holiness—the natural man is fully persuaded that the pleasures of sin will make him happy, while godliness would rob him of his present enjoyments. He is thus persuaded, because sinful pleasures are agreeable to his depraved nature, and the pleasures of holiness are contrary to his nature. And therefore after all his reflection, he still clings to the belief that holiness in this life would make him at least less happy than the pleasures of sin; and consequent upon this belief he holds on in his course of depravity, choosing in his own estimation the greatest apparent good. And now, if "the wages of sin is death," and "to be carnally minded is death;" and if sin is altogether agreeable to the natural heart; and if it is very difficult, impossible indeed without grace, to persuade the transgressor to exchange the things he dearly loves, for things which he cordially hates, then it is easy for him to continue in sin, and go to destruction. *How easy* it is, is manifest from the fact that so vast a multitude disregard the warnings of the Gospel for the present, and slide into the grave unrenewed; cheated by "the thief of time" out of the convenient season on which they relied for repentance.

2. The facility with which men go to destruction is apparent FROM THE SPIRITUAL SLOTH OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

This dreadful insensibility to eternal things natural to all men, is represented in Scripture by the words sleep and death. They are significant epi-

thets when applied to the moral condition of man. A man sleeping on the brink of destruction is in a dreadful state. A man spiritually dead to his everlasting welfare—dead while the day of grace is gliding away—is in an awful condition. And such is the state—such the condition of the sinner. The summer and the harvest are passing by, and if he do not soon sow in righteousness he can never reap in mercy. But how shall he be aroused? He has the word of God in his dwelling, and hears from Sabbath to Sabbath the promises and precepts and denunciations of this word illustrated and enforced. The spirit of grace strives with him. He experiences the mercies and the judgments of the Lord. He sees the power of religion in the conversion and subsequent life of his friends. Means various and abundant are employed to awaken him; but still he sleeps. The thunders of wrath above do not arouse him, nor the wailings of the lost beneath. The Spirit of life agitates and alarms him; but he sinks again to his slumbers, and foldeth his hands to sleep. The entreaties of his pious friends linger a moment on his arrested ear, and then pass away like a tale that is told. He dwells, it may be, where God grants a refreshing from his presence, and many enter in at the strait gate, but *he* is only a despiser of mercy, and a reviler of the just. How dreadful is the spiritual sloth of the sinner! How inefficient are the means of grace to arouse him from his lethargy, and bring him to newness of life! How awfully sure that he will sleep, and sleep, and perish everlastingly, unless God quicken him by the energies of his Spirit, and call him from death to life! Look at all the facts in the case, and you will see how deep is the slumber of the natural man, and how easy it is for him to continue in his slumbers till he awakes amid the realities of eternity to sleep no more.

3. The truth of the text is illustrated BY THE BLINDNESS OF THE CARNAL MIND.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” There is no passage of Scripture better illustrated by matters of fact. The Gospel is foolishness to the sinner. He shows that it is by ridiculing every anxious inquirer after the way of salvation. He says ‘it is foolish for any to be alarmed, and in great distress concerning their future condition. There is no ground for such terrible apprehensions of wrath from a merciful God; no occasion for such abasement, and repentance, and earnestness in religion.’ The Gospel view of sin and its consequences is therefore foolishness to him. And the joys of the new-born soul are foolishness also. The saints at the Pentecost “are filled with new wine,” said the mockers standing by, and witnessing the wonders of grace. The happy convert, in the simplicity of his love, faith, and zeal, is foolish, says the sinner still. And he says a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, resembling the first great revival of religion, is a scene of confusion, and enthusiasm, and folly. His views are equally blind in regard to the missionary enterprise—the conversion of the world. And all the great objects of modern Christian benevolence are also foolish. It is folly to disturb the mass of unbelieving men, and to attempt to break them off from their sinful courses, and

reclaim them to "the wisdom of the just." From his own daily confession, pure and undefiled religion, in all its bearings and energies, is foolishness to the sinner. And how blind are all his views; how erroneous all his conceptions of God and the heavenly kingdom. He thinks that what men call morality will save him; and therefore he needs no repentance, faith, regeneration. He thinks that his good deeds counterbalance the evil he hath done, and therefore he needeth not salvation by grace through faith, the gift of God. He thinks a thousand erroneous things, and builds his variable hopes on many sandy foundations. Talk with him, and you will find, that "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." You will find him benighted in all his views of God; of duty; of Christ; of holiness; of the great salvation. How easy is it for him to remain in this spiritual darkness, and be illuminated too late only by the light of eternity.

4. **THE STRENGTH OF UNBELIEF—THE MANY ALLUREMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND THE DEVICES OF SATAN,** show with what facility sinners may go to destruction.

If they would believe the eternal and tremendous truths which God has revealed, they could not remain destitute of the good hope through grace. But they will not believe. And "this is their condemnation." Their whole guilt is summed up in the single word "unbelief." And the difference between the righteous and the wicked all along, in the Scriptures, consists in the fact, that the one is a believer, the other not. The unhumiliated, unrepented sinner does not believe revealed truth. And Christ says to him, "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Unbelief, then, is the ground of the sinner's condemnation, and the cause of his ruin. And how strong is this unbelief—how credulous of error! It resists all the warnings and exhortations, all the judgments and mercies, all the strivings of the Almighty. It collects all errors, and converts them into a strong-hold of defence against the truth. A great multitude of facts from the promulgation of the Gospel to the present hour, show us how inveterate is the prejudice of the transgressor against the truth; how strong his enmity against the light; how ineffectual are all the means of salvation to reclaim him from the error of his way, without the subduing and transforming power of the Holy Ghost. Now, with what facility may the sinner continue in the broad way and perish, thus enveloped as he is in spiritual darkness, and intrenched as he is within the strong fortress of unbelief.

The allurements of the world too, which tend directly to confirm the sinner in his unbelief, are in number almost like the stars of heaven. There is the legion of enticements which feed the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. There are the many inducements to sinful honor and ambition, every one of them a lure to the carnal mind. There is the combined influence of ungodly companions, and the persecution and derision of a wicked world. All these, and more, are the opposing obstacles in the way of salvation, and many a sinner do they draw away from the very gate of heaven, back again into the broad way of destruction. Add to this *the devices of Satan*. He commenced his wily labors in Paradise, and will

pursue his prey, till he shall be finally bound with the great chain of the angel, who has the key of the bottomless pit.—(Rev. xx. 2.) If we resist the Devil, as directed by the Bible, he will flee from us. But the sinner does *not* resist him, because he has no desire to gain the victory over sin. Of his own free will and consent, he “walketh according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” And if there be hope that any out of the multitude of sinners shall escape from the course of this world, and the prince of the power of the air, that hope rests on this foundation; “if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” We cannot ascertain with any degree of accuracy the extent of influence exercised by this great adversary, over the minds of men; nor can we understand the mode of his operation. But the Scriptures assign him a conspicuous place in the work of man’s destruction, from the defection in Eden to the present time. Paul says, Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. And on one occasion he said, For your sakes forgave I it, lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil, &c. Peter, too, thus exhorts the saints: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Now if the saint need to guard himself so vigilantly against the wiles of the Devil, how great is his influence over the children of disobedience? And this influence, united with the strong unbelief of the sinner, and the allurements of the world, must render it easy for him to continue in the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

5. THE EFFECT OF THINGS PRESENT, COMPARED WITH THE INFLUENCE OF THINGS DISTANT, still further illustrates the truth of the text.

Present good exerts a strong influence against the importance of distant good. The child will prefer a small gift to-day, to a greater one to-morrow. And this is one of the traits of natural character. The sinner seizes on the present good, and regards salvation as a distant thing. Sinful pleasures may be enjoyed *now*, but heaven seems to be afar off; and this exerts no small influence in determining his present choice. If eternal things were present equally with earthly things, the natural man would view them differently, but he considers eternal things as distant, and for this reason they lose much of their importance in his esteem, and he turns his attention and pursuit to the things at hand, intending hereafter to attend to the distant concerns of his future state. It is true, indeed, that he may die at any moment, and be ushered instantly into the unseen realities which appear to be afar off. But he regards these unseen and unfelt realities as distant, because he counts, presumptuously enough, on length of days, and the forbearance of God, and the opportunity of being saved at the eleventh hour. With this groundless belief, the things of redemption appear to him to lie quiet and secure, in the regions

of futurity. And when time shall have drifted him along to the confines of this futurity, he believes that he shall lay hold on the hope of eternal life, and enter on the rest which remains for the people of God. Under the influence of these erroneous views, he chooses the present good, and how easily may he drop into the "everlasting burnings," from this dying world, while relying for safety on future amendment! It were well if the Christian should inquire, how far, in this respect, his conduct and views correspond with the sinner's presumption.

6. THE IMPERFECTIONS AND SINS OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, make the broad way still broader.

"Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth," said the Savior. These are very significant comparisons. If the Church is the only light of the world; and if this light become dim, the transgressor will discern the narrow way very obscurely. The men of God will seem "like trees walking," as in the case of the blind man beginning to recover his sight. If the light of the Church be wholly extinguished, or if it be put under a bushel, "a horror of great darkness" will descend upon the world. *Ye are the salt of the earth.* If the Church only is the salt, and this salt shall lose its savor, then the whole mass will go to putrefaction together, and the unsavory salt will hasten on the process of corruption. For what purpose has God cast the salt into the fountains of evil, and kindled a light in this dark world? "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let *your* light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

If the Church universal felt the full import of this language, and lived in accordance with these precepts, the broad way would be much narrower, and trodden by a smaller throng of travellers. But the imperfections and sins of the best Christians are many, and ruinous are the consequences. The sinner is kept quiet on his way, and confirmed in his unbelief. If they who profess Christ, he says, are so bad, and yet will be saved, surely I who am so honest as to make no pretensions to godliness, and yet have done many good works, cannot fail of salvation. Thus encouraged by high example, he stumbles, and falls to rise no more. Merciful God! keep the skirts of thy people's garments from being stained with the blood of souls!

7. THE EXAMPLE OF THE MULTITUDE demonstrates the facility with which men go to destruction.

This is the very reason Christ assigns, why the disciples should agonize to enter in at the strait gate. The way to life is narrow, and the gate is strait, and "few there be that find it." The way to destruction is broad, and the gate is wide, and "many go in thereat." This multitude, going in company the broad way, mutually encourage each other. They are the great majority—the *world* is pursuing this course, and the merciful God, say they, cannot destroy so many.

Encompass'd by a throng,
 On numbers they depend ;
 They say, so many can't be wrong,
 And miss a happy end.

The simple fact that so great a multitude are crowding along through the wide gate, furnishes a reason why they continue in their ruinous course. They imagine their safety to be in proportion to their numbers. As if a host could contend with the Almighty, and wrest from him the sceptre of dominion, or prevail on him to change his unalterable purpose "by no means to clear the guilty." Thus they go hand in hand, strengthening each other's bands, till "the destruction of the transgressors, and of the sinners, shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

Another reason why the multitude encourage each other in the broad way, is found in the *stillness which broods over the grave and the world of departed spirits*. It is natural for us all to feel, and desire to believe, that the grave is a place where all the weary are at rest, and all troubles find their end. But the Scriptures assure us, that the conscious spirit enters, at its departure from this world, into happiness or misery, according to the works done in the body ; and that the body itself lies in its resting place, till it awakes to the resurrection of life, or the resurrection of damnation. The departed Lazarus, in the parable, is said to be "in Abraham's bosom"—"the rich man in hell, being in torments." On the mount of transfiguration, Moses and Elias were with Christ and the three disciples, constituting an assembly from earth and heaven. The grave, then, is, for all, the suspension of *bodily*, but not of *spiritual* suffering. But the multitude will not believe these revealed truths. They say, none have returned from the unknown world to inform us of their state. We do not know but all are happy there, and we will hope in the mercy of God, without disquieting ourselves with things beyond our knowledge. The pious Baxter has well illustrated this subject, the security of the sinner from his ignorance of the fate of those who have departed from the present state. "A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, upon a bridge over the Severn. Something meeting them and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream ; the rest, seeing him, did, one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions ; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way ; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone. Oh ! but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world ; then what would they give to be where they were !"

Very evident it is, then, that the gate is wide, and the way is broad that

leadeth to destruction, and many go in thereat. *A sinful course is so agreeable to depraved nature—so great is the spiritual sloth of the natural man—such the blindness of the carnal mind—such the strength of unbelief—so many are the allurements of the world, and the devices of Satan—such the effect of things present, compared with the influence of things distant—so numerous are the imperfections of professing Christians—and such the force of example, the example of the multitude,* that the facility with which men go to destruction is tremendously fearful. And if so, how terrible to the sinner is the declaration of Christ concerning the wide gate, and the broad way!

We now close the subject with one reflection: *It is a very difficult thing to be saved.*

The many obstacles we have enumerated must be overcome, or we inevitably perish. And we may well ask, with the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" But men in their natural character will believe that it is *easy* to enter in at the strait gate—that it is a thing to be accomplished whenever it suits their convenience. That the world may be sought *first*, and the kingdom of heaven *last*, and yet the soul be saved. Ah! do you know more of these things than Christ? Do you dispute the truth of his word when he says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and *many there be which go in thereat*: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and *few there be that find it*?" The righteous "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven"—"the righteous scarcely be saved," and if so, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Have you considered, that while you neglect salvation, time is hurrying you to that world where no ray of hope can penetrate the everlasting darkness—where despair, surveying the walls of her prison house, shall, age after age, lift up her broken voice, and ask, *how long?* and on the anxious ear shall come back no answer, but,—*for ever!* Awake, awake now, lest you knock at heaven's gate when none shall open. To-day, harden not your heart. Behold, *now* is the accepted time; now the day of salvation. Escape for thy life; tarry not in all the plain, lest thou be consumed!

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SERMON XC.

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INFLUENCE OF THE ATONEMENT ON THE BELIEVER'S CONSCIENCE.

HEB. IX. 13, 14.—*If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

THE law of Moses was but a shadow of good things to come. It could do little more than watch over the infancy of true religion, and keep alive the hope of a new and far better dispensation. It consulted the infirmities of man; it wore a drapery adapted to his senses; its rites belonged to the twilight of an early age; and all its types were designed only to prefigure the realities of a brighter and more glorious era. It was but a pioneer of Christianity; a schoolmaster to teach a few of its elementary principles, and thus prepare mankind for a prompt and cordial reception of the Gospel.

But aside from this prospective connection with Christianity, had the ritual of Moses any power to sanctify and save? It did indeed prescribe rites to cleanse the body from ceremonial impurities; but could it purify the soul, and provide an antidote, or anodyne, for the anguish of a wounded spirit? It taught that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; but was it possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away the sting of guilt? Could all the gifts and sacrifices, prescribed in the law of Moses, make the comers thereunto perfect, and disarm a guilty and exasperated conscience of its power to disturb the sinner's peace? No; the

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blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, could sanctify only to the purifying of the flesh; but the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself a spotless victim for the sins of mankind, speaketh far better things than the blood of ancient sacrifices, and has a power to purge the conscience from dead works, and put an end for ever in the believer's bosom to those pangs of remorse which so naturally attend the commission of sin.

Let us then dwell on this grand peculiarity of the Gospel, and consider THE INFLUENCE OF THE ATONEMENT IN RELIEVING THE BELIEVER'S CONSCIENCE FROM THE ANGUISH OF REMORSE, and thus preparing him to serve and enjoy God for ever.

We are all more or less acquainted with the nature of remorse. It is the natural consequence of sin. It is inseparable from guilt, and springs from the very constitution of man.

“No being, once created rational,
 With sapience of right and wrong endowed,
 However drunk, delirious and mad
 With sin's full cup, or with whatever cursed,
 Unnatural diligence he work and toil,
 Can banish goodness from his sight, or once
 Forget that she is fair. Hides he in night,
 In central night? Takes he the lightning's wing,
 And flies for ever on beyond the bounds
 Of all? Drinks he the maddest cup of sin?
 Dives he beneath the ocean of despair?
 He dives, he drinks, he flies, he hides in vain;
 For still the eternal beauty, image fair!
 Once stamped upon the soul, before the eye
 All lovely stands, and as he looks, and must
 For ever look upon her loveliness,
 Remembrance dire of what he was, of what
 He might have been, and bitter sense of what
 He is, polluted, ruined, hopeless, lost,
 With most repenting torment rend his heart.”

Every where may we discover the traces of a guilty conscience. Why did the heathen offer the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls? Why did even the mother throw her own child into the burning arms of Moloch, and smile with a sort of fiendish satisfaction as she saw the flames curling around it, and heard its last expiring shriek? Why do pagans still continue these inhuman sacrifices, and inflict on themselves tortures sufficient to make a savage shudder and weep? It is all to satisfy the demands

of an accusing conscience, and shows with what tremendous severity it often sways and scourges the soul.

Every day witnesses the secret workings of remorse. Why does the reckless mariner in the hour of danger call upon his God, and strangely mingle his prayers with his blasphemies? What makes even the unsuspected villain turn pale at the looks of virtuous men? What drives the murderer to his dark, lonely den, and there causes him to start so often from his unquiet slumbers, and tremble at the whistling of the wind, at the rustling of a leaf, at the throbbing of his own guilty bosom? What fills the awakened sinner with such anguish of spirit, and overwhelms him in a dying hour with horror and despair? It is conscience stirring within him, and "harrowing up his soul with the iron tooth of remorse."

"The mind that broods o'er sinful deeds,
Is like a scorpion girt by fire.
In circles narrowing as it glows,
The flames around the captive close,
Till inly parched by thousand throes,
And maddening in his ire.
So does the guilty soul expire,
Alike to scorpion girt by fire;
So writhes the mind remorse-hath riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed to heaven:
Darkness above, despair beneath;
Around it, flame; within—'tis death."

But have we not all felt in our own bosom the workings of a guilty conscience? Have we never done, or said, or thought, or felt any thing that filled us for a time with bitter remorse? Did conscience never reproach us as offenders against God? Alas! when we reflect on our manifold and aggravated transgressions of his holy law; when we remember how many duties we have neglected, and how many sins we have committed; when we think how much goodness we have abused, how many means of grace we have failed to improve, and how many motives to repentance we have wilfully resisted, or carelessly disregarded; we can easily conceive, though we may never ourselves have felt, those paroxysms of remorse, those horrors of despair, which made the dying chambers of a Newport and an Altamont a very vestibule of perdition!

Such is the natural and necessary connection of sin with the miseries of remorse. Is it possible then to separate them, and dry up this fountain of unmingled and everlasting wo? If sin will be followed sooner or later by remorse, then must conscience be disarmed of its sting, or we shall all be-

come a hopeless prey to the worm that dieth not. But can this be done? The sinner has put the scorpion of remorse in his own bosom; and is it possible now to lull this undying scorpion asleep, or disarm it of its power, or neutralize the venom of its sting?

Yes; thanks to redeeming grace! it can be done. The Bible tells us so; and it has actually been done in the case of every Christian on earth, and every saint in heaven. Go to the new convert, and behold his bosom, once writhing in all the anguish of remorse, now calm as the surface of an unruffled lake, and enjoying a peace of conscience, a repose of soul, a joy of heart that pass all understanding. Attend the Christian in his progress from one degree of perfection to another, until he attains the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Visit his closet, and there witness his seasons of intimate and delightful communion with his heavenly Father. Accompany him through all the scenes of his earthly pilgrimage; mark his peaceful, triumphant departure from a world of sin and sorrow; follow him up to those realms of light where all tears are wiped from every eye, and there gaze on the countless throng of saints, once weeping in the bitterness of godly sorrow for their sins, but now redeemed by the blood of Christ from all the miseries of remorse, and prepared to serve and enjoy God for ever with the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands that compose the general assembly and church of the first born in heaven.

Thus does the Gospel deliver the penitent believer in Jesus from the pangs of remorse so naturally consequent upon sin. But how is this done? Is it by *dethroning or destroying his conscience*? Is the Christian exempted from compunction for the sins which he continues to commit? Could David or Peter, after their conversion, sin without remorse? No; they felt it far more keenly than an impenitent sinner could have done. No unbeliever has a conscience so enlightened, so sensitive, or so faithful as that of the Christian. And will he not carry his conscience with him into eternity? Yes; and should the highest saint or seraph in heaven indulge one sinful thought, it would kindle a hell in his bosom, even amid all the glories that encircle the throne of God and the Lamb.

Is the Christian, then, relieved from remorse by *forgetting his sins*? But has he forgotten them? Does he not retain a most vivid recollection of them even when rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory? Go to the recent convert; and when you see his bosom thrilling with the raptures of a better world, ask him then, whether he has forgotten his past transgressions. The tears through which his joy smiles, will return you an answer.

Does the saint, amid the bright and blissful visions of his dying hour, become unconscious of his past and present sins? Will he in heaven retain no remembrance of a world so long filled with the bounties of divine Providence, and all the matchless wonders of redeeming grace? Will the saints in glory forget all their former ingratitude and rebellion? No; they will remember them for ever, and gather from them all fresh motives to warm their bosoms with love, and strike louder and still louder notes of praise to him who died to save them from the power and penalties of sin.

Is the Christian, then, freed from the corrosions of remorse *by becoming unconscious of ill-desert*? But is it possible for a pardoned sinner, a penitent believer in Jesus, ever to lose his consciousness of deep demerit? Can the man who has been led to inquire with agonizing solicitude, what he must do to be saved; can the publican who has smitten on his breast and cried, *God be merciful to me a sinner*; can the prodigal, who has returned with a broken, bleeding heart, to confess, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*; can the saint who frankly and penitently acknowledges, *Against thee, O God, against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest*;—can such men ever cease to be conscious of their ill-desert? No; never. Their consciousness of demerit is interwoven with almost every recollection of their life, and implied even in their gratitude to that grace which has redeemed them from the miseries of sin. No man on earth can be more thoroughly conscious of his ill-desert than the Christian; and every saint in heaven, even while joining in the song of Moses and the Lamb, must feel as truly as any sufferer in hell, that he too deserves to be lifting up his eyes in the endless torments of remorse and despair!

In none of these ways, then, can the burden of conscious guilt be removed. Still the Gospel does remove it from the conscience of every penitent believer, and permit him to rejoice in the favor of a reconciled God. But how does the blood of Christ thus purify and relieve his conscience?

I. BY PREPARING THE WAY FOR HIS REPENTANCE, AND HIS ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE FROM ALL SIN.

This purification is absolutely essential. Sin produces misery as its natural, inevitable result; and the sinner must therefore become holy, before he can be happy. Repentance is the beginning of holiness; and so far as it makes the sinner holy, it tends to promote his happiness. It cannot indeed alter the fact of his having been a sinner; nor can it ever

destroy the remembrance, or conscious guilt of his past transgressions ; but it will check the progress of sin, and thus prevent the future increase of its miseries.

Mere law, however, makes no provision for repentance ; nor could it consistently permit the pardon even of a penitent transgressor. It is a system of pure, unmingled, uncompromising justice. It acknowledges no principle but that of righteous retribution ; it denounces death to the man who offends in a single point ; and the soul that sinneth but once, can never live again under a system of mere law. A single deviation from this principle would destroy the influence of the divine government, and lead its subjects to calculate on impunity in transgression, and ere long to set at defiance the moral Governor of the universe. God has also rendered the ultimate execution of his law absolutely certain, by giving man such a conscience, or moral constitution, that the sinner, if unrenewed, must ere long suffer the pangs of remorse, just as inevitably as arsenic poisons, or fire burns.

But the Gospel so far modifies the government of mere law, as to prepare a way for the consistent reformation and forgiveness of sinners. It renders repentance possible, encourages it by the promise of pardon, and provides means, motives, and divine influences sufficient to restore the sinner to the lost image of his Maker. The believer's spiritual renovation is begun at the time of his conversion ; it is carried on from one degree of perfection to another ; and ere long will be consummated in the perfect purity and bliss of heaven.

I am fully aware, however, that repentance alone can never restore the sinner to the favor of his Maker ; because it cannot repair the evils he has done to God, to himself, and the universe. Can mere penitence undo what sin has done ? Can the assassin's sorrow heal the heart he has stabbed ? Will the incendiary's tears of regret quench the fires he has kindled ? Can the reformation of a drunkard reclaim all whom his example may have made the victims of intemperance, or rescue from an untimely grave his abused and broken-hearted companion, or fully restore his own lost reputation, his squandered property, his wasted health, his shortened days, or the scorched and withered sensibilities of his soul ? The late imperial ravager of Europe might, at the close of his bloody career, have wept bitterly for what he had done ; but could tears even of blood, call back to life the millions sacrificed on the shrine of his mad ambition, and repair all the unnumbered evils he had done ? Alas ! these evils had gone far, far beyond his reach ; and now he could only wait in fearful

expectation of meeting the victims of his reckless spirit before a higher than human tribunal, and there receiving a sentence according to the deeds he had done on earth.

How utterly impossible then, for repentance alone to repair the evils of sin! An angel once formed the purpose of rebellion against God; and from that single purpose have resulted all the sins and all the miseries we have witnessed, or of which we have been told, throughout the dominions of Jehovah. The spirit of disaffection and revolt spread wide in heaven and earth; and had it not been checked by an almighty hand, it might have extended through the universe—made it one general theatre of rebellion—one boundless hell. Could the penitence then of the first rebel have atoned for evils so immense, so appalling, so interminable?

True, a sinner on earth could not do so much mischief; but has he not joined this foul and desperate conspiracy against the Majesty of heaven, and done all that his powers would permit to break that golden chain which binds intelligent creatures to the throne of God? Yes, he has acted on a principle which, if universally adopted, would dethrone Jehovah, destroy all happiness, and fill the universe with sin and wo.

Well may the sinner weep in view of all this; but can his tears repair the evil he has done? Alas! that has gone beyond his reach; it may diffuse its baleful influence through the world; it may go to millions of worlds, and myriads of beings unknown to him; and God alone knows where it will stop, or how its terrible ravages can be checked. Here is what the sinner himself can never undo, nor ever repair; but after having opened such a flood-gate of sin and misery, can his conscience find repose, unless he sees these evils counteracted and overruled to the glory of God, and the greatest good of his kingdom?

II. Here the atonement of Christ comes to relieve the believer's conscience BY COUNTERACTING THE EVILS OF SIN.

We may not see all, but we can easily see some of the ways, in which this great expiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind may prevent, or repair the evils of transgression. Sin tends to tarnish the character of God, to shake the stability of his throne, and destroy the influence of his moral government over his intelligent creatures. Had he permitted a single sinner to go unpunished without providing some other means equally effec-

tual to express his abhorrence of sin, and immutable regard for his law, his subjects might have suspected him of conniving at transgression—deemed him altogether unworthy of their love and obedience, and calculated on sinning with impunity. The pardon of a single sinner, under such circumstances, might have endangered the welfare of the whole universe. And what penitent man could desire to be saved at the certain hazard of such consequences? Would he go up to heaven trampling on the ruins of God's throne, and on all the interests of his moral kingdom? Could he be willing to destroy the confidence of intelligent creatures in the government of God, and thus poison the very fountain from which all happiness flows? Thus do the general interests of his kingdom absolutely require, that God should preserve the moral influence of his law, either by inflicting its penalty on the transgressor, or by devising some other expedient of equal power to maintain his authority, secure the obedience of his subjects, and accomplish all the other purposes of his moral government.

Such an expedient is the death of Christ. It counteracts the evils which sin had done or threatened, and thus becomes a sufficient and satisfactory substitute for the penalty of the law. It upholds the authority of Jehovah, confirms the moral influence of his government, and accomplishes even more important results than could have been secured by inflicting all the penalties of the law on transgressors. It expresses in the strongest manner God's deep and unchanging abhorrence of sin, his steady regard for his law, and his inflexible determination to preserve its influence unimpaired, by enforcing all its claims and all its sanctions. If he spared not his only Son, but from his own bosom gave him up even to the death of the cross, rather than relax one iota of that law on which are suspended the dearest interests of the universe, can any of his subjects now hope for impunity in transgression? If God spared not his own Son, will he spare the impenitent rebel against his throne?

Thus does the death of Christ counteract the evils of sin. It restores to the violated law all its moral energies, repairs the injury done by sin to the character and government of God, and prepares the way for him consistently with all his attributes, with the honor of his throne, and the great interests of his kingdom, to pardon every one that believeth in Jesus.

III. BUT THE ATONEMENT DOES EVEN MORE THAN REPAIR THE EVILS OF SIN. By this I cannot surely mean, that it will restore to the favor of God more than all, or even all that have sinned; but that it will event-

ually bring more glory to God, and a greater amount of happiness to the universe, than would have resulted from the punishment of every transgressor, or even the prevention of sin itself.

I know very well how difficult it is for us to conceive of such a result being accomplished without restoring every sinner to the image and favor of God. We are so engrossed with the interests of our own little world, as to overlook other parts of the universe, whose welfare, equally with our own, depends on the character and government of him who doeth his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. But reflect on the vast extent of his dominions, and the countless number of his subjects. When we look abroad over the wide fields of creation, and imagine the whole immensity of space filled with planets, suns, and systems, can we suppose that a God of infinite wisdom has spread out all those glories merely for a puny race of rebels to gaze upon and admire? Are all yon myriads of worlds but one boundless scene of barren, unpeopled waste? Is our little world, whose very destruction would be felt amid the immensity of his other works, no more than the loss of a single grain of sand by our globe itself, the only spot in all the dominions of Jehovah, that teems with life, intelligence, and joy? I cannot believe it; but feel constrained by the strongest reasons, to suppose, that those countless planets, suns, and systems, are all peopled with intelligent creatures of God, whose happiness, like our own, depends on his character, on the stability of his throne, and the moral influence of his government. Ought he, then, to overlook all his other subjects, and confine his regards to the few grovelers on this dark, and distant, and paltry footstool? Is he not bound, as an impartial Sovereign, to consult alike the interest of all worlds? Shall he, for the gratification of a few hell-deserving rebels, sacrifice or endanger the happiness of all the unfallen beings scattered through his boundless empire?

Consider, then, the vast extent to which the atonement of Christ may diffuse more or less of its benign influences. Its *redeeming efficacy* is probably confined to our world; but *the story of its wonders* will be known through the universe; and so far as it displays the glory of God, and strengthens the moral influence of his government, just so far will it tend to promote the holiness and felicity of all his faithful subjects.

And is not this the actual effect of the atonement? Yes; it makes a new and most glorious display of that character which forms the confidence, hope, and joy of the whole universe. It developes traits which must

otherwise have been for ever concealed from the view of God's creatures. They had before witnessed his power as Creator ; they had acknowledged his authority as Lawgiver ; they had felt his kindness as a parent to his obedient children ; they had also seen him, as a righteous Governor, rewarding his faithful subjects, and punishing the rebels against his throne ; but had they beheld, or could they, without an atonement, have ever beheld his justice and mercy consistently united in pardoning transgressors, and restoring them to the full and everlasting enjoyment of his favor ? Here was the master-work of Jehovah ; and from the cross of Christ is poured upon his character an effulgence of light and glory, that could never have beamed from the mightiest works of his hand, or even the brightest radiance of his throne.

Pause for a moment on this glorious theme. When the Father gave up to death his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life ; when he who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, because he was the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, and himself God over all blessed for ever, left his throne on high to take upon him the form of a servant, and become obedient even unto the death of the cross ; when he thus stooped from heaven to the manger, agonized in the garden, and on Calvary bore the mighty burden of a world's atonement, in order to open a way whereby God could be just, and yet justify every one that believeth ;—was not here such a blended display of his mercy and justice as must send a thrill of admiration through the entire universe of intelligent and holy beings ? If the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy at the birth of creation, with what emotions of wonder, and love, and bliss must the bosoms of all his faithful subjects glow on beholding the operations and results of redeeming grace ! May not the Gospel thus promote, to an extent altogether inconceivable, the holiness and felicity of the universe ? May not its blessed results far outweigh all the evils that sin will ever inflict on the comparatively small number of its unreclaimed victims ?

Thus may we imperfectly see how the death of Christ prepares the way for the restoration of mankind to the image and favor of God. It modifies his moral government over our world, and adapts it to our ruined condition. It provides a power to renew men to his image, an anodyne for the anguish of remorse, and a sovereign remedy for all the maladies of sin : It renders our repentance possible ; it furnishes means sufficient for our entire purification ; it not only counteracts and repairs the evils of sin, but accomplishes additional purposes of great importance to the general interests of the uni-

verse ; and thus does it render our salvation not only consistent with the justice of God, but subservient to his glory, and the happiness of his whole moral kingdom. Our forgiveness now infringes on no principle of his administration. Our salvation, so far from tarnishing the lustre of his character, shaking the stability of his throne, or putting in jeopardy the great interests of his kingdom, tends to display his perfections, to enhance his glory, to increase the moral influence of his law, and promote the holiness and happiness of all his obedient subjects.

Here may the believer's spirit find repose. Here his conscience sweetly rests in the arms of a reconciled and forgiving God. He may and must remember his sins ; but the scorpions of remorse, disarmed by the blood of Christ, have lost their power to sting. The evils of sin repaired by his Redeemer, the glory of God, and the interests of his kingdom promoted by his salvation ; his own spirit freed for ever from the dominion of depravity, and the anguish of conscious guilt ; what now can ever disturb the happy repose of his soul ? Shame and confusion of face he may—he *must* accord to himself ; but with what emotions of gratitude, love, and joy will his bosom glow as he dwells on the wonders of that grace which can raise even the chief of sinners to mansions of eternal bliss, and there put in his mouth a new and never-ceasing song of praise to the Lamb that was slain to redeem him by his own blood !

I cannot, however, suppose that every Christian understands the precise manner in which the death of Christ accomplishes these glorious results ; but his filial spirit rests in the simple assurance of the Bible, that God will in some way render the salvation of every penitent believer in Jesus consistent with his own glory, with the principles of his government, and all the interests of his moral kingdom. The subject is, indeed, peculiarly mysterious. I tremble, and yet am eager to examine it ; but I would not, in the twilight of this world, push my inquiries any farther than just to sooth the solicitude which I cannot help feeling on a point so essential to my peace of conscience here, and all my hopes of happiness hereafter. I cannot penetrate to the bottom of a subject so fathomless ; and I deem it quite possible, and perhaps probable, that the atonement of Christ operates on the believer's conscience in a way unknown to us, and at present beyond our power fully to comprehend.

But whatever be the way, I know—and this is enough for any of us to know—that the blood of Christ does relieve the believer's conscience from remorse, and leave him to enjoy the full and everlasting favor of

God. The Bible tells me so; every saint on earth and in heaven knows it by his own experience; God himself has kindly condescended to assure me of it; and may not my spirit safely rest in such an assurance? Is not God able in some way to purify and relieve my conscience? Can he not render my salvation consistent with the attributes of his character, with the honor of his throne, and all the great interests of his kingdom? He assures me, that he has done so, and with this assurance I can cheerfully wait, until eternity shall pour the full blaze of its light and glory on all the deep mysteries of redemption.

But let no man, on account of my present imperfect acquaintance with the subject, dissuade me from attaching so much importance to the cross of Christ. Say not that his death can never lead to results so mighty. Tell me not that the babe of Bethlehem could never have acted a part so conspicuous in the history of the universe; and that our world itself is too narrow a spot—too small and distant a nook in Jehovah's boundless empire, for a transaction of such importance as to attract, for ever, the delighted and admiring gaze of all his holy subjects. I know very well, how often philosophy has been staggered by the preaching of Christ crucified. But shall I distrust my Bible just at the point where my reason fails me? Shall I abandon my divine guide merely because he leads me where I could not have gone without his guidance? If the weakness of human reason could not discover how the death of Christ will produce results so immensely important, not only to fallen man, but to all the unfallen subjects of Jehovah, shall I question the possibility of its producing these great and glorious results? It was a small act, a feeble hand that plucked the forbidden fruit; but it ruined a world. When the Saviour was born, few among the sons of men paused in their worldly pursuits to gaze upon his manger-cradle; but angels, who had been wont to bow before his throne on high, came from their celestial abodes to hail his birth; and they raised a sweeter song of glory to God and good will to men, than ever before had met the ear of earth or heaven. When he expired on the cross, scarcely any, save the rending rocks, and quaking earth, and weeping heavens, sympathized with the dying Lamb of God; but his death changed the entire prospects of our world for eternity; it will most deeply affect the moral interests of the whole universe; and on it will all the hosts of heaven for ever dwell, as the most wonderful and most important event that ever occurred in the dominions of Jehovah.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Let the Christian then *dwell with devout admiration on the cross of Christ*. Begin on earth what you hope to continue for eternity. Meditate on the glories of his character—on the wonders of his love, and all the benign influences which his death will exert, not only on the destinies of our world, but on the great interests of the whole universe. Imitate the angels who desire to look into these things, and catch the spirit of the innumerable hosts around the throne of God, who cry, “Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests for ever.”

2. *Make the cross of Christ, also, a source of consolation*. It is the great fountain of blessings to a guilty and self-ruined race. It is the surest antidote against the ills of life; the sweetest solace of our earthly sorrows; the only balm for a wounded spirit; the last cordial for the fears of guilt and the phrensies of despair. Here rest until the storms of life shall have passed over, and left before you the bright and cloudless sunshine of a blessed eternity. Cling, like the saints of better days, to the precious and consoling truth of Christ crucified for our redemption, and bearing our sins in his own body on the cross. Let it be to you, as it was to them, a source of peace and unfailing joys. It comforted them amid the loss of all things; it made them welcome toil, reproach, and danger; it cheered them amid all the horrors of the dungeon, and enabled them to smile and sing even amid the flames of the stake and the tortures of the cross. Then imitate the martyr, and bind the Savior’s dying love to your heart. It will assuage your remorse; it will sooth all the sorrows of your earthly pilgrimage; it will give you many a sweet foretaste of those joys which eye hath not seen; it will cheer you even in that hour when flesh and heart fail you; and when you reach those mansions which a risen Redeemer hath gone to prepare, you will delight to join with saints and angels in admiring the wonders of that grace which made the cross of Christ the gateway to heaven for a fallen race, and his death the source of so much happiness to the whole universe.

3. *Use this precious truth, also, as a means of promoting your spiritual improvement*. Dwell upon the death of Christ until your heart is melted into penitence, gratitude, and love. Think of what he has done for you, until you are willing to do, and sacrifice, and suffer any thing for him. Meditate on the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and think how low he stooped to reach and redeem a fallen world. Think on the lowly

manger of his birth; think on his life of toil, reproach, and sorrow; think on his prayers, his tears, and bloody sweat in the garden; think on all the untold, inconceivable agonies of his cross; think on the sepulchre through which he passed to prepare for you mansions of celestial and everlasting bliss; think on all these until your heart melts in godly sorrow for your sins, and your bosom glows with the warmest emotions of gratitude, love, and praise.

4. Let me also assure the awakened sinner, *that his burden of guilt can be removed only by applying to that blood which will purge his conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* Are you oppressed with such a sense of sin and ill-desert, as leads you to inquire with deep solicitude what you must do to be saved? When you consider how long you have lived without God, or prayer, or hope; how long you have enjoyed the bounties of his providence, and all the privileges of his grace, without making any returns of gratitude and love; how often you have broken his law, slighted his gospel, and done despite unto his Spirit; does your conscience in view of all this smite you? How then can you silence its reproaches? You may pray—you *must* pray; but will your prayers hush its clamors? You may, and must weep in godly sorrow; but can even such tears wash the stains of guilt from your soul? You may renounce your sins, and live a new life; but can even an entire change of character erase from God's book of remembrance a single one of the numberless offences you have committed against him? How then can you escape the endless miseries of remorse? Apply to that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Come to the cross of Christ; for here, and only here, can you find a balm of sovereign power to heal your wounded spirit, and give your conscience perfect and everlasting peace. The Savior himself invites you: "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The Spirit and the bride say, come; let him that heareth say, come; let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

5. But a *cordial acceptance* of these invitations is indispensable to the sinner's salvation. Here is a sovereign remedy; but can it, without being applied, heal the diseases of sin? The banquet of the Gospel is spread before you; but if you refuse to taste, must you not famish for ever? Can a physician cure the patient that will not follow his prescriptions? Can food untasted refresh the body, or light unseen charm the eye, or music unheard regale the ear?

Consider then the absolute necessity of purifying your conscience by an

actual application of atoning blood. If the blood of Christ does not here purge your conscience from dead works, can you reasonably expect to serve and enjoy God for ever in heaven? Can you, with a heart unsanctified, and a conscience unappeased, be happy any where under the reign of Jehovah? Have you then forgotten the great, immutable law of his empire—" *The soul that sinneth, it shall die!*" Can you, under such a law, ever be happy in your sins? Happy while cherishing the deathless worm of remorse in your bosom! Happy while drinking at the fountain of all the miseries in the universe! Alas! can a man take fire in his bosom, and not be burned? Can the dead share the pleasures of life? Can the deaf enjoy the melodies of music; or the blind gaze on the sublime and beautiful scenery of nature? While blind to the glories of a Savior, a stranger to the transforming power of his Gospel, and dead in trespasses and sins; can such a man, without a radical change of character, avert for ever the stings of remorse, or relish the holy enjoyments of religion?

True, you may even in your sins enjoy a kind of happiness in a world of probation through which God is pouring the full tide of his temporal and spiritual favors. You may here gaze with delight on the beauties of nature and art; you may taste all the sweets of society, friendship, and domestic life. If remorse corrodes, you may mitigate its pangs by a thousand objects. You may frequent places of gay and fashionable resort; you may plunge into the vortex of sensual pleasures; you may engross your mind with the cares of life, and the perplexities of business; you may regale your taste with the flowers of literature, or feast your intellect on the banquet of science, or cheer your heart with all the sweet reciprocities of friendship and domestic affection. Oh! there is in these a siren charm to lull asleep the bitter recollections and dark forebodings of guilt! But scenes far more congenial to remorse and despair are fast approaching. And in that lone land where no rills of mercy flow; where no ray of hope glimmers on the blackness of darkness for ever; where no ties of kindred, no sweets of friendship, no endearments of home are known; where no song of mirth is heard, no object of beauty strikes the eye, no pleasures of sense allure the taste; where nothing is found to sooth remorse, or alleviate despair; but every thing conspires to turn the mind upon its own guilty recollections, and fill the whole soul with a sense of its past and still increasing guilt;— can the sinner be happy there? Does he then dream of being happy in his sins? Alas! he may one day wake from this delusive dream to all the dread realities of endless, hopeless, unmitigated remorse. God grant that he may awake before he reaches that world where he will find no atoning Savior, no sanctifying Spirit, no balm of Gilead for the wounds of sin. His conscience may here sleep awhile; but it cannot sleep for ever. In the

hour of death, if not before, it may awake like that of the phrensied Alfat-
mont; and in eternity it must and will awake in tenfold rage, to kindle those
fires which shall never be quenched.

“ Look round, and see those numbers infinite,
That stand before the throne, and in their hands
Palms waving high, as token of victory
For battles won—these are the sons of men
Redeemed, the ransomed of the Lamb of God :
All these—their virtue, beauty, excellonce,
And joy, are purchase of redeeming blood ;
Their glory, bounty of redeeming love.

“ O love divine ! harp, lift thy voice on high !
Shout, angels ! shout aloud, ye sons of men !
And burn, my heart, with the eternal flame !
My lyre, be eloquent with endless praise !
O love divine ! immeasurable love !
Stooping from heaven to earth, from earth to hell,
Without beginning, endless, boundless love !
Above all asking, giving far to those
Who naught deserved, who naught deserved but death.
Saving the vilest ! saving me ! O love
Divine ! O Savior God ! O Lamb, once slain !
At thought of thee, thy love, thy flowing blood,
All thoughts decay ; all things remembered, fade ;
All hopes return ; all actions done by men
Or angels, disappear, absorbed and lost :
All fly—as from the great white throne, which he,
The prophet, saw, in vision wrapt—the heavens
And earth, and sun, and moon, and starry host,
Confounded fled, and found a place no more.”

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SERMON XCI.

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HUMAN DEPRAVITY, AND ITS REMEDY.

JOHN, xv. 3. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

THE word *clean* is often figuratively used in Scripture to express moral or spiritual purification. In this sense it is evidently used in this passage. The disciples, to whom Christ originally addressed the text, were once depraved, destitute of holiness, under the power of sin, prone to evil, and averse to all good. But they had all been cleansed from this original depravity, and had become habitually holy. The means or instrument by which this great moral change had been wrought upon them, was the word of Christ.

The same is true of all who are now the real disciples of Christ; they were once depraved, and they have been cleansed or made holy through the instrumentality of the word of Christ.

The text teaches, by implication, man's depravity; and instructs us how it may be remedied.

The object of the ensuing discourse will be,

I. To establish the fact of human depravity.

II. To speak of the remedy presented in the Gospel.

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I. As to the fact ; this is implied in the text. That the disciples had been made clean through the word of Christ which had been spoken unto them, evidently implies that they had previously been unclean, or destitute of holiness, and positively corrupt or depraved and this is true of all mankind. By nature, or in their natural state, all are depraved—destitute of holiness—prone to evil, and averse to good continually.

This is proved by the declarations of the word of God, and by facts.

In the Scriptures we read, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." "What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?" "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." Such is the testimony of God, in his word, respecting the native character of man; and it does unequivocally establish the universal and total depravity of human nature.

This testimony is abundantly confirmed by facts. The history of the world, in all ages, is a history of human depravity. The historic page is continually polluted with human crime.

But we need not recur to ages past for evidence of human depravity; the painful proof is ever before our eyes; we meet it constantly in our intercourse with our fellow-men. What do the deceptions and frauds so frequently witnessed in the commerce of men with each other, and by which multitudes are injured, and even ruined in their estates prove? They prove human depravity. The same is proved by the lying, and slander, and backbiting, and tale-bearing so common in society, and so destructive of social enjoyment. Mingle in society, and your ears are often assailed with oaths, and curses, and blasphemies—every one of them painfully illustrating the depraved and ruined character of man. Look at the awful profanation of

the Sabbath, in disregard of the solemn command of Jehovah, to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" and here again we behold striking evidences of man's depravity, and alienation from God. On every steamboat moving upon our waters on this sacred day, freighted with worldly and pleasure-seeking mortals, may be seen, written in broad capitals, **HUMAN DEPRAVITY**. The same is inscribed on all public and private vehicles, used in violating the Sabbath; and on every field, and shop, and dwelling where this day is profaned by secular business. And it is written on the forehead of every stroller in our streets and elsewhere, on this holy day. If men had the fear of God before their eyes they would not act thus; and were they not depraved, they would reverence God supremely.

Behold the multitude of human beings, who are impairing reason and destroying health, usefulness, reputation, property, peace of families, and life, by intemperance; and here again you may see abundant evidence of human depravity. Look at the numerous dram shops in our cities, towns, and villages, which, for the sake of gain, afford the means, and hold out temptations to this destroying sin—they are so many monuments of human depravity. Read the accounts weekly, and almost daily published, of forgeries, and thefts, and robberies, and murders, and then say, is not human nature depraved; and that to a dreadful degree?

Pass through the land, and survey our numerous prisons.—Every one of these is a monument of human depravity; for if man were not depraved, there would be no need of such places of punishment or confinement. The watchmen who patrol the streets of our cities and towns, and the very locks and bolts on our doors—all prove human depravity; for there would be no need of these, if men were upright and pure.

I might proceed multiplying facts in proof of human depravity. But it must be unnecessary. Every person must be convinced that man is a corrupt being; and that many have gone to dreadful enormities.

It is acknowledged, there are degrees in human depravity; and that some manifest much more than others. Still, however, depravity is universal. All, by nature, are vile. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," or "carnal." Many who condemn the conduct of others, would, in similar circumstances, act as they do. If they had had the same education, and the same temptations, they might have acted out the vileness of the vilest. And even now, a change of circumstances would probably lead many a moral man,

by degrees, to criminal conduct, at which he would at present shudder. Hazael, the servant of Benhadad, repelled with indignation the predictions of the prophet Elisha respecting the cruelties of which he should be guilty towards the Israelites, saying, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" In this he was doubtless sincere. But Elisha explained the whole matter, by telling him his circumstances would be changed. "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

Indeed the truth is abundantly evident, both from Scripture, and the conduct of mankind, that, in their natural state, men are universally destitute of holiness. Selfishness, and not the love of God, or a regard to his authority and glory, rules in the heart of every natural man.

This native depravity is the source of all the numerous evils which distress mankind. It is the source of the wretchedness which exists in society. It makes the individual unhappy in whose heart it reigns; it keeps him a stranger to all the enjoyments of religion; it brings upon him much positive misery in this world; it often leads him to do much injury to others; disturbing and sometimes destroying their happiness; and while it continues to reign, it seals him up under the curse of God; and should he die in this state, he must be completely, unspeakably, and for ever miserable.

II. We ought, therefore, with deep interest, to inquire, is there any remedy for this diseased state of the human soul? and if so, what is it? Our text answers the question, and presents a remedy devised by infinite wisdom.

This remedy is, *the word of Christ*—"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." It was through the word of Christ that the apostles were cleansed from their native depravity, and made holy and fit for the service and enjoyment of God. And it is by the same word that sinners are now changed, the reign of depravity put down in their hearts, their evil propensities subdued, and they made holy.

By the *word of Christ* we are to understand, not only the instructions he personally gave when on earth, but also those of his inspired apostles; and, indeed, all the instructions of the Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments. They are all his word. For "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Now the Holy Ghost acted in subserviency to Christ in giving the Scriptures. The whole of them may therefore be called the

word of Christ. It is by means of the truth of Christ contained in the Holy Scriptures, that the depravity of man is removed, his evil propensities corrected, and he made holy.

But this is done by the word only *instrumentally*. The word, of itself, will never effect this great moral change in the human heart and character. The depravity is too great, and too deep-rooted to be thus overcome. The sinner is "dead in trespasses and sins," and he must be made spiritually alive. He is destitute of holiness, and a principle of holiness must be formed within him. This will be effected only by an Almighty power. The power that does effect this change is the Holy Spirit. He convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment; renews the heart; sanctifies the soul; works within it the Christian graces, and preserves and strengthens these graces. But in performing this work he makes use of "the word," as the instrument.

The word of Christ is the fire and hammer, by which the Holy Spirit breaks and melts the rocky heart. The word is the sharp two-edged sword, which, in his hands, proves quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and becomes a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is by the perfect law or word of the Lord, that the soul is converted. We are born of the Spirit; but "of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*;" and we are sanctified by the word; as our Savior prayed for his disciples—"Sanctify them *through thy truth*; thy word is truth."

The word of God, revealed by Christ, the great prophet of his Church, is, in the hands of the Divine Spirit, the grand remedy for the moral maladies of our world, which we have so much cause to deplore: and it is the only remedy. The fountain is bitter, and bitterness; and the streams which issue from it will also be bitter and poisonous, until the fountain be made good. And the Holy Spirit only will ever make this bitter fountain sweet, or change the depraved heart; and this he does through the instrumentality of the word of Christ.

Nothing else will ever work an effectual change. Philosophy will not do it. It was for ages tried, and men grew worse and worse. Education which rejects the truths of the Bible will not do it. This also has frequently been tried by men who have presumed to be wiser than God; but it has uniformly failed. Human laws will not do it. They may, and in a measure do, restrain wicked men, and prevent many overt acts of wicked-

ness ; but they do not correct the depravity of the heart ; and men who are disposed to do wickedly, whenever a temptation is presented, and they have the prospect of eluding detection, will be likely to act out their depravity. Punishment will not do it. The inmates of our penitentiaries, instead of being reformed by their sufferings, when they have finished their term of confinement, often return to society more hardened in depravity, and prepared for increased atrocities.

We have heard of a great moral change having taken place, and still in progress, in the state prison of Connecticut. But if it is genuine, and this time must test, it has been effected, not by punishment, but avowedly by the Bible, read, and preached, and explained, and enforced, accompanied with the special operations of the Holy Spirit.

Partial reformations may, and doubtless sometimes do, take place, in individuals, under the influence of some affliction, and from other causes, without the instrumentality of the truths of the Bible. But these reformations are seldom permanent ; the subjects of them, generally, soon relapse into their former habits ; and they never produce holy action. Depravity still reigns in the heart,

The word of God, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the only effectual remedy for human depravity ; and this has effected great moral changes. Many facts might be adduced in support of this position. At the first introduction of the Gospel, notwithstanding the multitudes who rejected it, the general change in favor of morality was very great. The same was true in regard to the countries in which the principles of the Reformation were promulgated and generally received. And in the present day, very great changes for the better have been made and are making, in society, at missionary stations in pagan countries. This is the case in the Sandwich and Society Islands ; in Ceylon ; and among the Hottentots in South Africa.

Farther, the power of the word of Christ to correct human depravity may be seen from a comparison of the state of society in general, in places in Christian lands where the stated and faithful preaching of the Gospel, and other means of acquaintance with the word of Christ, are enjoyed, with places where these means are not enjoyed, or only occasionally. And farther, the same is proved by the great and total changes, which we have seen this word, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, produce in individuals. We have seen it make the drunkard sober ; the profane

swearer fear an oath ; the covetous man liberal ; the fretful patient ; the quarrelsome and revengeful mild ; the vindictive forgiving ; and the fraudulent honest. We have seen it restore peace and prosperity to suffering families ; and we have seen it restore to the fond embraces of parents, a prodigal son, over whom they had often wept with almost hopeless anxiety.

Thus the word of Christ, contained in the Scriptures, through the power of the Holy Spirit accompanying it, has effected numerous and great changes for the better, in individuals; neighborhoods, and nations. It has effectually corrected human depravity; and it is the only thing that will do it. Both the Scriptures and the history of the world abundantly prove this position.

We ought therefore highly to prize the Bible. It contains the only remedy that has ever yet been found, or that ever will be found, to cleanse a depraved man from his pollutions, and heal his moral diseases. It is the only thing which will allay and remove the vicious fever of his mind; restore him to righteousness, to his God, and to happiness; and fit him for heaven hereafter. And it is the only thing which will effectually meliorate the condition of society, and remove the evils which disturb its peace, and which many, even of those who are not the real disciples of Christ, deplore.

What enemies, therefore, to human happiness must those be, who slight the Bible, and who will not lend their aid to measures to diffuse a knowledge of it? and still more, those who reject it, and would lead others to do the same? Or who, while they profess to believe its divine authenticity, pervert its truths, and teach as its doctrines sentiments subversive of its convincing, renewing, and sanctifying influence? Such are scattering through society arrows, firebrands, and death. It is to the influence of the principles of those who oppose the Bible, or who, while they profess friendship for it, pervert its great truths, that we are to ascribe the prevalence of crime in the present day.

Would you, my hearers, arrest human depravity, and lessen crime in society? then diffuse, by every means in your power, a knowledge of the word of Christ. Not only a spirit of benevolence, which should lead you to seek the present and eternal good of others, urges to this; but also the peace and happiness of yourselves and your families. Let men universally be brought under the influence of the principles of the Gospel, and the crimes which now disturb society will be in a great measure unknown. Our ears will not then be pained with the language of profane men, nor our eyes with the sight of fellow-beings, reduced below the brutes by intoxi-

eration. Parents will not have their hearts wrung with agony over prodigal children ; nor wives and children be starved and abused by profligate husbands and fathers ; and our property and lives will be safe. No person under the influence of gospel principles will rob you of your property or good name, or burn your house, or commit violence upon your person.

The only effectual remedy for the numerous evils we deplore in society then is, the diffusion of a knowledge of the word of Christ. Let the Bible, therefore, be put into the hands of every family. Let competent and faithful ministers of the gospel be stationed in every part of the land, to proclaim, illustrate, and enforce the truths of the Bible. Let the dissemination of religious tracts on important truths of the Bible be generally encouraged. Let means of education be provided for the ignorant and destitute ; and in every school let the principles of the Bible be taught and inculcated. Let Sabbath Schools be every where established and patronised : and teachers be faithful to the pupils committed to their charge. Let parents and heads of families be faithful in the religious education of their children and household. Let every thing in society which turns men away from the instructions of the word of Christ, and prejudices and hardens them against them, be discountenanced. And let all these means be used with a sense of dependence on the Holy Spirit to give them efficiency, and with prayer for his influences to accompany them. Such a course will meliorate the character and condition of society, and correct the moral evils we deplore ; and this alone will do it. Every friend of man, therefore—every friend to the peace, order, and happiness of society, will be an efficient friend to institutions for inculcating and diffusing a knowledge of the word of Christ : while, on the other hand, the man who would hinder the influence of Gospel principles, is alike the enemy of his country and his God.

SERMON XCII.

By BENNET TYLER, D.D.

PORTLAND, MAINE.

PERSUASIVES TO IMMEDIATE REPENTANCE.

ACTS xxiv. 25. *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answered, Go thy way, for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

FELIX was a Roman governor over the province of Judea. Paul was his prisoner, delivered to him by the Jews to be judged. He had already been subjected to a partial trial, but the cause was postponed for a farther hearing. In the mean time, from motives of curiosity, Felix sent for him that he might hear him concerning the faith in Christ. It was on this occasion that Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

In perusing this portion of sacred history, we are forcibly struck with the boldness and fidelity of this apostle. He was placed in circumstances of no ordinary temptation. Felix was a man of distinction, high in office and authority, and accustomed to be addressed only in the style of the most fulsome adulation. He was a man of profligate character, notorious for his injustice and licentiousness. Paul was his prisoner, and completely in his power. In such circumstances, how powerfully must the apostle have been tempted to humor the prejudices, and flatter the pride of the Roman governor. Had he been governed by the maxims of worldly wisdom, how carefully he would have selected his topic of discourse, how cautiously he would have avoided the least allusion to the vices of Felix, lest he should excite his displeasure, and bring down upon himself the weight of his vengeance. But Paul was not governed by the maxims of worldly wisdom. He acted under the influence of a nobler principle. He knew to whom he was responsible, and he feared God more than man. Duty, in his view, was a higher consideration than personal safety. He never made it his object to please men. To honor God, and to promote the salvation of

his fellow-men, were the great objects to which he constantly aimed. Influenced by these motives, he was raised above the fear of man. He thought little of the perils to which he was exposed. He thought little of the grandeur and dignity of the Roman governor. His mind was occupied by more weighty considerations. He thought of death and judgment, and an eternal state of retribution. He saw before him a sinner doomed to die, and he felt it to be his duty to make one effort to rescue him from the perdition to which he was hastening. He was acquainted with the character of his hearer, and he selected a topic suited to his case. Felix was an oppressor and an extortioner, therefore, he reasoned of *righteousness*. He laid open the law of God, and showed the obligation which rests upon all men, to do to others as they would that others should do to them. He descanted on the guilt and fearful condemnation of those who disregard the rights of their fellow-men, and who delight in acts of cruelty and oppression. Felix was a libertine. Paul, therefore, reasoned of *temperance*, or (according to a more literal translation,) of continence. He laid open the law of purity and its awful sanctions. And to enforce his reasonings, he appealed to the judgment to come. He pointed his hearer to that solemn day, when God will judge the world in righteousness, and reward every man according to his deeds.

This solemn and pungent discourse of the apostle was not without effect. Felix trembled. He was pricked in the heart. He felt that he was a sinner justly condemned and exposed to the wrath of Heaven. He saw that he must repent or perish; and, for the moment, he was half-persuaded to abandon his vices and yield to the claims of the gospel. But his proud heart resisted. His corrupt inclinations pleaded for longer indulgence. There was now an awful struggle between his heart and his conscience; and, to end the strife and soothe the pangs of remorse which had seized upon his soul, he resolved to waive the subject for the present promising to give it, at some future time, all due consideration. Accordingly, he said to the apostle, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

We have no evidence that this convenient season ever arrived, or that the resolution with which he quieted his conscience was ever fulfilled. The probability is, that having resisted the Holy Ghost, he was given over to a reprobate mind, and was suffered to walk in the way of his own heart, and the light of his own eyes, till he had filled up the measure of his sin.

The experience of Felix, my hearer, has been the experience of thousands. There are few individuals who have enjoyed the privileges of the gospel, whose minds the world has not at times made a powerful

impression. Most men have seen the time when they have trembled like Felix. But how many, like him, have yielded to the strength of a sinful inclination, and stifled the convictions of conscience with the promise of future repentance. This disposition to procrastinate a preparation for death is deep-rooted in the human heart, and forms a striking trait in the character of men. It is seen in the child, in the man of middle age, and in the gray-headed sinner. All are looking forward to a more convenient season, and flattering themselves with the hope of future repentance. This is the fatal spell which is ruining the world. It is the deadly opiate which is lulling men into the sleep of death.

It will be my object, in this discourse, to urge the duty of immediate repentance. And this I shall do, by presenting to your minds three considerations.

I. *Nothing is gained by delay.*

II. *Much is lost.*

III. *Every thing is hazarded.*

I. *Nothing is gained by delay.* Here permit me to appeal to my impenitent hearers, and to ask, What do you expect to gain?

Do you expect at a future time to be more able to repent than you are at present? What more ability do you need? And what new powers do you expect to possess? God has endued you with understanding to perceive the rule of duty, with conscience to feel obligation, and with will to choose between good and evil. Possessing these powers, you are complete moral agents, and have all the ability to obey the commands of God, that you ever will have, or ever can have; and if you cannot repent now, it is certain that you never can.

Do you expect to be more willing to repent at some future time, than you are now? What reason have you to flatter yourselves with this presumption? Do you find that your inclinations are changing for the better? Are your hearts becoming more susceptible of religious impressions, or more open to the influence of evangelical motives? Does continued impenitence tend to break the force of sinful habits, and create a relish for the service of God? On the contrary, are not your hearts daily becoming harder? is not your aversion to holiness increasing? and are not your habits in sin becoming more and more inveterate?

Do you expect that, at a future period, you will find fewer and less powerful temptations to encounter? This is a delusive hope. The adversary will never grow weary in his attempts to ruin you; and the farther you proceed in sin, the more completely you fall under his power. You are

advancing into an enemy's country, and every step you take renders your retreat more difficult and more hazardous.

Do you expect that, at a future period, there will be fewer crosses to take up, in entering upon a religious life? Go, ask the aged; they will tell you, that crosses multiply as life advances, and that no period, in this respect, is so favorable to the commencement of a religious course as the period of youth.

Do you expect that you shall hereafter find stronger inducements to repent than you do at present? What stronger inducements can be presented to your minds than have already been presented? You are now urged to repentance by all the motives which can be drawn from the world that now is, and that which is to come. You are urged by the command of Jehovah, by the dying love of the Savior, by the scenes of death and judgment, by the glories of heaven, and by the terrors of hell. And is not this enough? Is it not enough to know that you must live for ever; that you are sinners against God, and must repent or perish; and that the eternal state of your souls depends on the decision which you shall make in this little space of uncertain time? If you are not persuaded by these motives, what motives could influence your minds?

Do you expect, that at a future period more powerful means will be employed to effect your conversion? What more powerful means can be employed? You now enjoy all the means which God ordinarily blesses to the salvation of men. The very means which you enjoy, and which you have hitherto resisted, have been made effectual to the salvation of thousands. You have the Bible in your hands, you have heard the gospel preached from your childhood, and you have been warned by solemn and affecting dispensations of Divine Providence. If these means produce no effect upon your minds, you have no reason to suppose that any means will be effectual. No—"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are LOST. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Do you expect that God will hereafter be more willing to save you? Can you flatter yourselves with such a vain delusion? Can you believe, that persisting in a course of disobedience is the way to propitiate the Divine favor, and to render God willing to save you? Is he not of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" and has he not declared that he is "angry with the wicked every day?" Depend on it, God will never be more willing to save you than he is now. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Come, for all things are now ready." God is willing to save you now: but that he will be hereafter you have no evidence. Before to-morrow your probation

may close, and your doom be sealed up for ever. Nothing therefore is gained by delay. But,

II. *Much is lost.* And, in the first place, you lose all the present happiness which religion is capable of affording. If you were sure of future repentance, you deprive yourselves of much rich enjoyment by delay. Perhaps, however, you flatter yourselves that this loss is more than compensated by the pleasures of sin. But what are the pleasures of sin? Are they substantial? Are they permanent? Do they afford peace and satisfaction to the mind? Do they allay the tumults of passion? Do they soothe the corrodings of care, and yield support and consolation under the bereavements and disappointments of life? Or are they not transient and unsatisfying? And are they not usually followed by the stings of remorse? Have you not found it true in your own experience, that "there is no peace to the wicked"—that their minds are "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest?" But there is joy and peace in believing—a peace which passeth all understanding. The Christian's hope is an anchor to the soul, which moors him safe amid the billows of this tempestuous world.

I am aware that many are in the habit of associating gloom with the subject of religion, and of imagining that should they become religious, they must sacrifice all their temporal enjoyment. But why, my hearers, do you form this opinion of religion? Who has told you that piety is incompatible with happiness in the present life? Are they not those who know nothing of its influence on the mind? And will you go to such for information on this subject? Would you ask a blind man, how colours appear? Or a deaf man, what pleasure music affords? Just as competent judges are they of these things, as the unrenewed sinner is of the effects of religion. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Ask the experienced Christian. He knows what are the pleasures of sin, and what are the pleasures of religion, for he has tasted them both, and is therefore a competent judge of their relative value. And what does he tell you? Does he not say, that one hour spent in the enjoyment of God transcends a life of sinful pleasure? To this testimony, which, in all other cases, would be deemed sufficient, you have superadded the testimony of God. He has told you, that "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come;" and that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Now all this happiness you sacrifice, by delaying repentance.

Nor is this all. How many opportunities for usefulness do you lose. Suppose you should postpone repentance five years longer. In this time, how much you might do for God and his church. How many souls you

might be instrumental in saving, whom, if you continue impenitent, you may perhaps be instrumental in destroying. How much remorse of conscience, how much work for bitter repentance, you might avoid. Besides, how much you might do to accumulate a treasure in heaven, to increase your stature in holiness, and to prepare yourselves to become larger vessels of mercy, and more distinguished stars of glory, in the firmament above. Do you, my hearers, intend to be saved—and do you wish to be dwarfs in the kingdom of heaven? Do you wish *just* to be saved—to go to heaven covered with everlasting shame because you set out so late? O, my hearers, if you should finally arrive at heaven, for your present delay you will suffer endless loss. But,

III. You not only gain nothing, and lose much, by delay, but *you hazard every thing*. You hazard your souls: and “what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul.” You know, my hearers, that you must repent or perish. You know also that this life is the only season of probation;—that “there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, in the grave whither you are going;” and that if repentance is delayed till life closes, all is lost for ever. And need I tell you that life is uncertain? You have witnessed the ravages of death. You have seen one after another dropping around you into the world of spirits. And who are those that are daily summoned to the grave? Are they always the aged, the sickly, or the pious? Does death always give notice of his approach? Does he stop to inquire of his victim whether he is prepared to die? On the contrary, are not persons of all ages, and of every variety of character, promiscuously swept away by the stroke of death? Does not death often come as a thief in the night, and execute his commission without the least premonition? How many within the circle of your acquaintance have been suddenly surprised, and taken from the world in the midst of the most flattering prospects of earthly happiness. In an instant, all their plans were thwarted, and all their expectations blasted. Youth and beauty, health and vigor, are no security against the approach of death.

“Great God, on what a slender thread,
Hang everlasting things!”

“The spider’s most attenuated thread,
Is cord, is cable, to man’s tender tie
On earthly bliss.”

Go to yonder grave-yard. Take a view of the graves with which you find it crowded. Do you not find them of every size, from six feet to a span in length? Read on the tombstones the ages of those who people that land

of silence, their occupations in life, and the circumstances of their death : and tell me, is not life uncertain? Can you put confidence in the prospect of future days? How dare you then risk your salvation on the hope of future repentance?

Besides, consider in whose hand your life is. It is in the hand of that God against whom you have rebelled, and who now commands you to repent—that God whose mercy you have long abused, and whose patience you have wearied. Dare you provoke him farther? At any moment, he can sunder the thread of life, and you fall to rise no more. That he will not do it, he has given you no assurance. That he will do it, he has given you much reason to fear. In great mercy he has spared you hitherto while you have disregarded his commands, his entreaties, and his warnings. But there is a limit to his forbearance. He is just and true, as well as merciful; and *the day of vengeance is in his heart*. And I ask again, dare you provoke him farther? You know that you are absolutely dependent on God for the continuance of life; and if you have resolved to defer repentance another year, will you not earnestly beseech him to spare your life another year? But dare you offer that prayer? Dare you fall down in the presence of God, and solemnly beseech him to spare your life another year, that you may spend it in sin? With such profane mockery on your lips, would you not expect to be smitten dead like Ananias and Sapphira? But are you not virtually doing this while you postpone repentance? You hope to live. You ardently desire to live. It is the prayer of your heart that God would spare your life, for the express purpose that you may live in disobedience to his commands. O, my hearers, do you know how fast you are filling up the measure of your sin?

But the danger of deferring repentance arises not merely from the uncertainty of life. Were you sure of future days, it would be infinitely hazardous to delay. You are in danger of being given over to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. There is a point, beyond which if the sinner goes, his case becomes desperate. No means can reach him. No motives can effect him. He is abandoned of God. The Holy Spirit has ceased to strive with him, and has bidden him an everlasting farewell. God has said concerning him, he is joined to idols, let him alone. Now, to this point, every impenitent sinner is tending, if he has not already reached it; and every day's delay brings him nearer to it. His heart is growing less susceptible of religious impressions—his conscience is becoming seared as with a hot iron—the means of grace are losing their power to affect him—his enmity to God, and aversion to holiness, are gaining strength—his neglect of duty is ripening into a confirmed habit; and the prospect of future repentance becomes darker and darker, till it is finally shrouded in eternal night.

If, my hearers, you are not willing to repent now, you have fearful reason

to apprehend that you never will be willing. Dream not of a more convenient season. Such a season you will never see. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.* Now is the best time you will ever enjoy to secure your immortal interests, and it may be the only time. And why is it not a convenient season? All the difficulty lies in the wickedness of your hearts; and that difficulty is not diminishing, but increasing. The same motives which influence you now to delay, must operate with redoubled power hereafter. O, then

"Be wise to day, 't is madness to defer;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life."

I have now laid before you the three considerations which I proposed in the beginning of this discourse; and I ask you to bring them distinctly before your minds. Weigh them candidly, and come now to some decision. *Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.* You see that nothing is gained, that much is lost, and that every thing is hazarded by delay. Will you not then solemnly resolve that you will delay no longer? that from this time forth, you will renounce every idol, and devote yourselves to the service of the living God? I pause for you to decide.—Remember, God is present, and is looking upon your hearts. Attending angels are waiting in awful suspense. Remember also that the choice which you now make, may decide your destiny for ever.—Have you decided? What is your determination? Have you resolved that you will serve the Lord—that henceforth religion shall be the first and the great business of life? Are there not some at least in this assembly, who have formed this resolution? Or have you, my dying fellow-sinners, resolved still to delay—to venture on a little farther in the road to ruin—to presume a little longer on the forbearance of your Judge—and a little longer to run the awful hazard of losing your souls? O, have any of you come to this rash conclusion? Have you told your Maker ("for thoughts are heard in heaven"), that you will not now yield to his demands—that you will still persist in your rebellion? O, retract that rash resolution, lest it prove your ruin. Perhaps, while you have resolved to persist in impenitence, God has resolved that you shall never enter into his rest. Beware, I beseech you, how you trifle with your Maker. Beware, lest that come upon you which is written; "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and 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 they shall not find me."

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SERMON XCIII.

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BY THOMAS DE WITT, D. D.

NEW-YORK.

THE GOSPEL HARVEST, AND CHRISTIAN'S DUTY.

MATT. ix. 37, 38. *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.*

THE history of the world in all ages exhibits the extended prevalence of ignorance and error, of sin and misery. The mind of the philanthropist feels oppressed with the contemplation, and naturally inquires, Shall this state of things always continue? Will the time never arrive when truth, and holiness, and peace shall pervade the earth? Philosophy, falsely so called, has speculated on the perfectibility of human nature, while in infidel rejection of truths the most simple and sacred, she has ministered by her spirit and by her instructions to the pride and corruption of our nature. The legitimate fruit of her theories and of her practical influence, appeared in that harvest of pollution and wo, which is still vivid in the remembrance of many. The humble Christian, whatever may be for the present his griefs and disappointments, cherishes the confidence that a brighter scene will yet be unfolded through the world; a scene of blissful reality, succeeding the darkness and depravity which now abound. He believes that this will be accomplished through the word of divine truth. *He believes this*, because this truth is precisely adapted to the state and wants of human nature, as it unfolds the true character of God and man, reveals the way of salvation, prescribes a perfect rule of duty, and is accompanied by an influence adequate to subdue the heart and life to holy obedience. *He believes this*, because numerous instances are presented of its efficacy in renovating the heart and character, and thus becoming the "wisdom and power of God unto salvation." *He believes this*, in view of the numerous and emphatic promises of *Him* who is infinitely true and faithful. Promises like the following remain to be fulfilled, and claim and deserve the Christian's faith and hope:—"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "For from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering." "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." *The Christian believes this*, because the Redeemer, for his obedience unto death, is promised "the heathen for his inheritance, and

the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." Jesus now sees of the travail of his soul in the victories of his grace among men; and the full fruit of that travail will be enjoyed when the earth shall be rendered tributary to his glory, and filled with his salvation. For this purpose, exalted as Mediator, he has authority in heaven and on earth, and rules in the kingdom of providence, as well as grace, rendering all events subservient to the fulfilment of his counsels, and to the final and universal diffusion of his kingdom, which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The ministry of the Gospel is the great instrument for accomplishing these results. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." In organizing his church, he has committed (if we may so speak) into her own bosom the principle of her perpetuity and universal triumph. From the faithful discharge of the trust committed to her, under the blessing of God, stability and enlargement will assuredly result. The words of our text were spoken by Jesus to his disciples as he contemplated the multitudes destitute of the means of religious instruction. "He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted, and were as sheep without a shepherd." The compassion that dwelt in the heart of Jesus is not foreign to the hearts of his people, for they are of one spirit with him. The text,

I. PRESENTS AN ARGUMENT FOR MISSIONARY EFFORTS. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

II. URGES A DUTY IN REFERENCE TO THEM. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

I. An argument for missionary efforts. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." "This harvest will be gathered when the Christian religion shall universally prevail. It is well denominated *great* in view of,

1. *The field which it will cover.*
2. *The blessings it conveys.*
3. *The instrumentality it requires.*
4. *The means and prospects now furnished by Providence.*

1. It is GREAT in view of the field which it will cover. "The field is the world." As yet Christianity has extended its influence to but a small part of the earth; and where that influence has been found, it has been partial in its character. Here and there a spot has appeared in some degree verdant, amid a surrounding, wide-spread, arid desert. But this desert in all its extent will be cultivated and rendered fruitful. All obstacles will be overcome, and the whole earth exhibit the triumphs of truth. Benighted, degraded, and oppressed Africa shall become enlightened, elevated, and disenthralled;—the wall of China (like that of Jericho) shall fall at the sound of the Gospel;—the castes of the Hindoos shall be broken, and one bond in the faith and service of Christ shall unite them;—the Heathen shall every where cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, and worship the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;—the worship of the false prophet shall cease, and the pure light and peaceful influence of Christianity shall spread over the regions where now Mohammedism exerts its sway;—the isles shall receive the law of the Lord;—all the perversions of the religion of Jesus shall be removed, and the truth shall be received in love, and exhibit its fruit wherever professed! Then shall be realized

"Scenes surpassing fable,
Yet true!—scenes of unexpress'd bliss!"

2. The harvest is GREAT *in view of its many blessings.* The religion of Christ blesses the life which now is, and prepares for happiness in the life to come. It exalts the intellectual character of man. It restores that balance and harmony in the intellectual and moral powers of man, which are so important in the proper cultivation of both. It corrects those prejudices, and subdues those corruptions which prevent the investigation and reception of truth. Its truths, when rightly viewed, come home to the duty, interest, and affections of all; and claim among the many proofs of their divine origin, their wonderful adaptation to the character and wants of men. It was at first a peculiar distinction of the Gospel that it was "preached to the poor," and it will ever remain so; while it is the only source of spiritual instruction, and can alone instil that influence which will lead to mental cultivation in the mass of the people. Where the Gospel is not known or embraced, whatever intellectual culture may exist among a privileged few, the multitude will be found in ignorance and degradation. The spirit of Christianity has wrought itself into the frame of civil government, and in connection with the diffusion of its light and power, we trace the existence, growth, and stability of civil and religious liberty. The religion of the Gospel refines and purifies the social affections, hallows the domestic scene, and while it dries up the sources of defilement and bitterness, it opens springs of pure and refreshing peace and joy in the various relations of life. Take the map of the world, and select those countries where Paganism, Mohammedism, and Popery bear sway, and let the following inquiries receive an answer. Are knowledge and intellectual cultivation generally diffused? Are civil and religious liberty enjoyed? Is the female character elevated and respected? Are the duties of domestic life discharged, and its delights mutually participated? Do purity and peace pervade the community? The negative to these inquiries appears in full view. As we take the contrast, and mark the countries where the Bible has shed its influence, we discover the blessings adverted to all following in the train.

But the religion of Christ sustains its distinguishing and commanding value as a revelation of truth and grace, and as the great instrument of our deliverance from everlasting death. The truths peculiar to it respect man's fallen and ruined state; redemption through the atoning merits of the divine Savior; the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit in restoring to that holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord." These truths, and others immediately connected with them, constitute the vitality of the religion of the Gospel. Without them its glory departs, its influence ceases, and spiritual death continues to prevail. Under their influence the sinner, awakened and renewed, returns in penitence to his God; gratefully embraces the salvation which is in Christ Jesus; takes up feebly yet sweetly the song of redeeming love; cultivates purity of heart and life, and devotes himself, in reliance upon divine strength, to active exertions for the promotion of the divine glory, and the best interests of his fellow-men. These are the truths which give life to benevolent effort in seeking the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. When they are not cordially embraced, the wants of men as sinners, and the value of the remedy provided, cannot be duly estimated, and an awakened interest and cordial and efficient co-operation in the cause of missions cannot be expected. The history of the church clearly shows, that whenever they have been denied or kept out of sight, there has been an indifference to the spiritual wants and interests of men, and the cause of missions has languished or died. In the first age of Christianity, the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his

erucified, "to the Jew a stumblingblock, and to the Greek foolishness," proved the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation to every one that believed; and so it has proved in every age. In recent missions we find the value and efficacy of these truths witnessed by their success in elevating character, promoting order and happiness, and preparing sinners for heaven. The lapse of a few years has exhibited in the South Sea Islands, the seat of British and American foreign missions, a very signal and convincing contrast in the state of knowledge, social and civil order, domestic purity and happiness, and true religion. The wisdom of the world reiterates the assertion, that it is vain to attempt to Christianize, unless we first civilize Pagan nations—that it is vain to expect their religious improvement, unless some steps are previously gained in the process of mental culture. Facts refute this theory of infidel wisdom, and evince that Christianity, while it inspires the only pure and abiding principle of benevolent effort, at the same time alone furnishes the truths which come home to the hearts and consciences of men in all ages, ranks, circumstances, and characters of life. Divine truth, imparted by Christian missions, has proved the great instrument of mental and moral as well as spiritual culture. The Moravian brethren, as if studious to select a field most fitted to test this point, chose nations most debased in ignorance, superstition, and pollution, and the result of their labors has furnished decisive evidence in this matter. This lovely band of believers have furnished an example worthy of imitation by the whole Christian world. In the smallness of their number and the feebleness of their resources, they have gone forth in the love of Christ, disregarding toils and sacrifices, and in unwearied devotion to their work, delivering the Gospel message in all its simplicity and purity. In every place fruit has sprung up, honoring God and blessing man. Had a similar spirit prevailed throughout the Christian church, and a correspondent amount of contributions and efforts been furnished, a far different aspect would have been presented. Many a field now desolate would have blossomed as the rose; and many a place now solitary would have been made glad. The spirit of the world, whether directed in the form of commercial enterprise, literary research, or projects of ambition, can never furnish the proper stimulus to benevolent effort. Commerce and science can never supply the proper means for curing the moral diseases and woes of men dwelling in darkness and sin. Philosophy ministers her lessons in vain, and employs her efforts without effect. She may irritate, but cannot cure the wound. "Leviathan is not so tamed."

When the truth of God comes with power from on high, it proves "a dis-cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" sets men free from the bondage of error and corruption, and places them in the liberty of truth and holiness. To learn the greatness of the harvest in the value of its blessings, we should contemplate its temporal gain in the contrast of the ignorance, error, pollution, vice, and misery, which it removes, with the knowledge, purity, peace, and happiness, which it introduces through all the relations and conditions of life. And we should contemplate its eternal gain in the contrast of the everlasting loss of the soul in ever-enduring corruption and wo under the wrath of God, with its everlasting life to the pardoned, sanctified, and saved. When the whole earth becomes filled with divine truth, great will be the harvest in the magnitude of the blessings thus secured.

3. *The harvest must appear great, in view of the instrumentality it requires.* The great result is to be accomplished by the faithful use of those means which God has in his wisdom and goodness appointed. As in the natural

world, means must be used in preparation for harvest; and, as ordinarily, the product will correspond to the skill and diligence with which the means are employed; so, also, in the spiritual world, means are equally necessary; and a like correspondence in the product will exist. "It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." "How shall they hear without a preacher; and how shall they preach except they be sent?" God will, indeed, as the latter day glory advances, open more numerous avenues, and multiply facilities for missionary labors; and will more abundantly bless them in the outpouring of his Spirit. But, at the same time, he will shed forth his Spirit into the bosom of his church, and arouse her energies for promoting the work of the Lord, by all the means within her province. Zion strengthens her stakes, and lengthens her chords at the same time. When the glory of the Lord rises upon her, she arises out of the dust, puts on her beautiful garments, and goes forth in his strength, and receives abundant increase. The necessity of a ministry well qualified in mental, literary, and spiritual endowments, thoroughly trained to become teachers and guides to the flock of Christ, and to resist the assaults of every foe, whether secret or open, is evident. The character of the ministry, in the combination of the requisite qualifications for the skilful, successful, and devoted discharge of their work, should be equally the subject of anxious prayer and diligent attention with the increase of their number. A weak, undisciplined ministry may do injury, as well as an unsanctified one. The opinion may sometimes have been entertained and expressed, that the same qualifications are not required in the missionary going among the ignorant and degraded heathen, as in the pastor of a Christian flock intelligent and refined. The opinion is very erroneous. If, indeed, a distinction is allowed, surely the higher requirements are in the case of the missionary. Unaided by the associations and advantages which the minister enjoys in Christian society, he goes forth to build, not upon another man's foundation, but as a master-builder, to lay the foundation. What a combination of qualities are requisite for such laborers; sound, disciplined intellect, various knowledge, elevated piety, and much acquaintance with human nature; uniform meekness, unwavering courage, and unremitted devotion to his labors of love.

In advancing the kingdom of Christ, the prejudices, interests, and policy of the world rise in opposition. In what various forms, and with what power, have they hitherto appeared! What is not required in those who go forth to meet the foe, and fight for the cause of truth and holiness, with weapons which "are not carnal, but mighty through God." How plainly do we behold verified, in the condition of the world, our Savior's declaration, "The laborers are few." In our own favored country, while, as we hope, a new spirit and new efforts are appearing in the church, still what exertions are needed to provide and train a supply of ministers adequate to meet the wants of our waste places, our weak and destitute churches, and our rapidly extending population. We cordially greet the efforts employed for increasing the number and qualifications of ministers. And we call upon the churches for redoubled zeal and activity; for "the harvest is still great, but the laborers are few." We look over the regions of Christendom, and mark its many and extended wastes and wants. The laborers are manifestly "few." As we look farther, through the heathen world, how large and waste is the field; while, in parts remote from each other, a solitary laborer is found. The regularly ordained missionaries from the different Christian denominations, among the six hundred millions

of heathen in different parts of the world, as far as ascertained, amount to about six hundred and fifty. They are in some cases aided by assistants and native teachers. Still how emphatically is the harvest great, and the laborers few : while some parts of the field are already white for the harvest.

4. *The harvest is great, in view of the means and prospects furnished by Providence.* God, in advancing his kingdom on earth, prepares the way, in arranging the events of his providence. He raises up instruments qualified for his work ; and often opens the way before them, as they go forth crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord ; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." When the disciples were assembled, on the day of Pentecost, waiting for the promise of the Spirit, they were endued with power from on high, and the gift of tongues rested upon them. They went forth, working miracles as a proof of their divine commission, at the introduction of the new dispensation ; and with the gift of tongues fulfilling the Savior's injunction when ascending on high, "Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature." How well was this adapted to the times and circumstances in which the apostles were placed. When, in subsequent ages, the fine gold had become dim, and the glory had departed—when religion had become united with the power and policy of state, and converted into an engine of despotism—when the Bible was confined to a few, and the maxim was enforced, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion"—when thick darkness had for centuries brooded over the nations ; it pleased God signally to prepare the way for the Reformation. The art of printing had been invented ; the mariner's compass was in use ; the revival of letters had commenced. Luther translated the Bible into German, saying, "Let there be light ;" and the press multiplied its copies. The struggle of the Reformation was in a great measure to recover Christianity from human usurpation, and to restore it to its rightful Lord. The revival of letters furnished means for elucidating the word of God, and clearing it from corruptions. In succeeding times the reformed churches fell into a deep slumber. While they "slept, the enemy sowed tares." We well remember how plenteously they sprang up. Infidelity presented a bold front, and threatened to destroy every thing sacred. In such troublous times the true people of God were revived in spirit ; and, as they trembled for the ark, mourned over the sins and woes of Zion, poured forth their intercessions, and said to each other, "Let us rise and build," the pool which had become stagnant, was stirred by the Angel of the covenant, and afforded a refreshing and vivifying influence. When reviewing the last forty years, we acknowledge with admiring gratitude the various institutions of Christian benevolence, which are now in harmonious operation, exerting a mighty moral influence, and furnishing facilities and means to missionaries before unknown. The Bible Society multiplies copies of the Scriptures in the various languages of the world, and supplies the place of the gift of tongues.—It is needless to specify the various forms of Christian charity, which, commencing with infancy, lays the basis of a scriptural and religious education, and follows man in every course and state of life ; and seeks to apply the best relief of sin, and want, and wo.

The efforts of the present day for arresting and turning back that fell destroyer, intemperance, which has annually slain its thousands and tens of thousands, and which has interposed such formidable obstacles to the success of the Gospel, are of incalculable worth.

The spirit of missions, which characterizes the present period, commenced with the revival of religion in the churches. Domestic and foreign missions

have grown and strengthened in connection with the power of religion. The era of foreign efforts is identified with the prosperity of religion at home.

The events which have recently transpired mark the present as an interesting crisis in the history of the world. The Christian will with care study the page of prophecy, and the movements of Providence, and mark the light which they mutually shed on each other. Though humbly conscious that it is not for him "to know the times and the seasons, which are in the Father's hand," he will carefully watch the signs of the times, and discharge the duties to which Providence invites. By common consent it is universally admitted that the prophetic period of twelve hundred and sixty years is drawing to its close, preceding the universal prevalence of Christ's kingdom in the world. Meanwhile, momentous and interesting events must transpire in the civil and ecclesiastical world; and far mightier efforts must be employed by the church. Do we not now perceive the high and holy One "shaking not the earth only, but also heaven; that by the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, those things that cannot be shaken may remain?" The Mohammedan power is declining, and "the waters of the Euphrates are drying up." The Christian colonies on the coast of Africa furnish a presage of the entire extinction of one of the foulest blots on Christendom, the slave trade; and the regeneration of long-afflicted and degraded Africa. Papal institutions and governments, which have pressed heavily upon the interests of civil and religious liberty, are also shaken. Literature, science, and true religion are extending their benign influence. The angel is flying in the midst of heaven, with the everlasting Gospel. God is giving proof that his word "shall not return void." The voice of Providence, then, is, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Such is the harvest, great in the extent of its field, in the blessings it conveys, in the instrumentality it requires, and in the means and prospects furnished by Providence.

II. The text urges our duty in relation to missionary efforts: "*Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.*"

The spirit of the Christian is that of love to Christ and to Zion; his life is in sincere and unreserved devotion to his Savior's glory and Zion's prosperity. Prayer is his vital breath. In proportion as his own soul prospers will intercession constitute a leading part in his addresses to the throne of grace. It should never escape our remembrance, that of the six petitions in the summary of prayer furnished us by our Savior, three respect the display of his glory and the extension of his kingdom on earth. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." The discharge of the duty enjoined by our Savior supposes,

1. *That we cherish a deep and constant sense of our dependance upon divine grace.* The private Christian, in the divine life, "is clothed with humility," lives a life of faith in the Son of God, and seeks continued supplies of the grace and help of the Spirit. So the Christian church should always be found in the attitude of leaning on her Beloved; and should realize that "all her springs are in God." "The treasure is in earthen vessels: the excellency of the power is of God." When this sense of dependance has been lost, and yielded to self-complacency and self-confidence, how often has it proved that the very instrumentality which should have promoted the purity and growth of religion has tended to its corruption and decline. How many places once beautiful are now desolate. "They said they were enriched with goods; and they were poor." As we contemplate the spiritual building, whose base is to cover the earth, and whose top shall reach the

heavens, and look forward to the time when the top stone shall be laid, with shouting, Grace, grace unto it; and at the same time consider the difficulties that attend the work, the weakness of the instruments employed, and the malice and power of opposing foes, we are ready to ask, How can this be? A voice from heaven speaks, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." Is there not danger lest, in the midst of action, the church should forget the proper spring of action? Where will be the glory and value of the tabernacle, if the ark of the covenant is removed?

2. *This duty requires habitual and fervent remembrance in our private devotions.* Love to the Redeemer's cause is not a transient emotion in the Christian heart; but it is a fixed principle and growing habit of soul. "He prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy." He should then be frequent, fervent, importunate, and persevering in his intercession. Do we not greatly fail in this point? How often is Zion forgotten, or remembered only with coldness? In this we may find a test of our spiritual state. In asking for personal blessings, our deceitful hearts may betray us. When, in freeness and enlargement of spirit, we seek the good of Zion, we have the best proof that we are born from above. Oh, that from the closets and habitations of the righteous the smoke of incense, in fervent, effectual prayer, may continually ascend before the mercy seat, as a sweet-smelling savor unto the Lord.

3. *This duty requires union in Christians.*—Addressing his assembled disciples, Jesus said, *Pray ye.* The true disciples of Jesus are united in spirit and service. The words of our Savior's prayer are memorable; "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." What Christian can be reluctant to engage in a service so delightful and animating, as united prayer for the coming of Christ's kingdom on earth? Who will not say, I will go also? The monthly concert observed by various evangelical denominations, is greatly to be valued. Were it to inspire a deeper interest, and meet with a more general, punctual, and appropriate attendance, the fruits thereof would be manifest in our own bosom, and be seen spread around us. The first suggestion of a concert similar to this, was made to the American churches by one (President Edwards) who, "being dead yet speaketh," in the fruit of his labors, and in his writings transmitted to us, and who possessed the rare combination of the acutest and most vigorous intellect, with the most simple and tender piety. His treatise on this subject deserves most careful perusal. "On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were with *one accord* in one place, continuing in prayer and supplication." It was there that the Holy Spirit descended upon them, and they went forth and preached the Gospel of the kingdom. The same truth which they preached is committed to us;—the same Spirit which descended on them, and crowned their labors, is promised. Fervent prayer will lead to corresponding effort;—united prayer will lead to united effort. Among those who embrace the same fundamental truths which humble the sinner, exalt the Savior, and promote holiness, there exists a diversity in smaller points which properly leads to distinct organization. Here harmony is best promoted, and strength gained, by each cherishing a sacred regard to the rights and interests of others, and rejoicing in their prosperity. It is remarked by Montgomery, that the efforts of distinct denominations in promoting the cause of religion, are like the light of the sun reflected in the rainbow, a token of peace and salvation to a lost world, while their *common exertions* are like the rays blended in light. While faithful in im-

proving their particular spheres, there is a common cause in which all the servants of Christ should join:—the cause of truth and righteousness, against error and sin. When tempted by the pride of opinion, in matters comparatively unimportant, or by the clashing of selfish interests, let us, found laboring with the host of Israel, say, “I cannot come down, I am doing a great work.”

4. *This duty requires the use of all proper means for suitably training laborers for the missionary field.* A suggestion has been advanced, as to the expediency of instituting a seminary or a distinct department especially designed for this object. It is worthy of serious consideration. It is believed, that such a seminary would not only furnish greater advantages to its members, but that it would more directly, and distinctly bring the cause of foreign missions before the Christian public, and inspire a deeper interest in its favor. In our favored churches, where the Spirit's influence is enjoyed, let the subject of foreign missions be presented in just prominence. In our theological seminaries, let a careful inquiry and deep interest be cultivated and cherished among their members, who shall soon go forth to preside in the churches of our own land, to give a tone to their sentiments and feelings, or else to enter themselves upon the glorious work.

5. *This duty requires that all the churches of Christ should systematically and efficiently aid in the promotion of the cause of missions.* It cannot be necessary to argue the duty of professed Christians to give their prayers, their property, and labors to this cause. The Christian judgment needs not be convinced, but the Christian conscience needs to be awaked, and the heart affected. Christians should learn to give, not from the impulse of momentary excitement, but from the deliberate conviction of duty, in the discharge of which the heart seeks its highest joy.—Systematically, I say, because it is to be regretted, that so many churches so readily relax their efforts, until some new impulse be given, which again soon spends itself. These are like the mountain streams, fed by sudden showers, which soon pass away. The efforts and contributions made by the enlightened judgment and disciplined heart, are like the majestic river, fed by living springs; which heeds not the drought of summer, but passes on, widening and deepening. It is the genuine spirit of religion, to prize and promote foreign Missions; and every proper effort to promote them advances religion at home. It is here true, as in other things,—“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.” “He that watereth shall be watered himself.” And, on the other hand,—“There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” Where the churches are blessed with the Spirit's influence, cherishing the graces of the pious, and converting sinners to Christ, there will be found free will offerings brought liberally, cheerfully, and continually, in behalf of this cause.—Look, on the other hand, to the churches indifferent to this cause, and neglectful of duty: there mildew and blasting spread, and spiritual barrenness reigns. When the churches of Christ shall harmoniously exert their energies, what, under the Divine blessing, may not be accomplished?

We have reason to acknowledge, at this returning anniversary, the continued favor of Providence toward this board of foreign missions. Twenty years have elapsed since its organization. The circumstance of a few pious youths devoting themselves to missions among the heathen, led to its formation. It has exerted a most salutary influence on the internal state of our churches; and its continued prosperity stands identified with the glory of the church and the welfare of our nation. If there be a nation on earth

more indebted to the Gospel than all others, it is ours; and shall we not testify our gratitude by contributing to extend its blessings to other nations? Every thing in our history and circumstances, reminds us of the invaluable privileges and mercies handed down by our ancestors, the puritan pilgrims and others, and the responsibility resting upon us. One theme of regret, however, presents itself, in the very considerable deficiency in the revenue of this year, compared with that of last year, while new missionary fields are opening. The march of Christian charity and munificence should be ever onward. Let every pastor present the claims of this cause prominently before the people, and feel that its prosperity is identified with the success of his labors at home. Let information be generally extended, and every means to excite interest and combine effort be employed. While in opposing the march of truth, various errors and conflicting interests combine, let the church of God arise in her strength, and in unbroken columns march onward under the banners of the great Captain, from victory to victory. While the enemy opposes and rages, we remember, "More are they that are for us, than they that are against us." God's truth is great, and must finally triumph.

SERMON XCIV.

BY REV. JOSHUA LEAVITT.

NEW-YORK.

THE LIVING EPISTLE.

2 COR. iii. 2. *Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men.*

In writing this letter to the Corinthians, one object the apostle had in view was the vindication of his own authority as an apostle. The false professors, who had crept into that church, and caused so much evil, had been rebuked so severely in the former epistle, that they had now no refuge but in denying his authority. This question, therefore, became the turning point in the debate with the false teachers. As one voucher of his authority, Paul appeals to the effect of his preaching on the Corinthians themselves: *Ye are our epistle.*

In the preceding verse he asks, "Need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" By this form of expression he declares emphatically, and appeals to themselves, that he did not need any testimonials to his character as an apostle, either when he came among them, or when he went from them to other churches.

The reason why he did not is also given. "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." When he came among them, their mutual affection and confidence was a testimonial which could be felt in their hearts. When he went to other places he could point to the Corinthian church as a monument of the divine efficacy of his doctrine.

The way these Christians became thus a proof of the divinity of the Gospel is stated in verse 3: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to

be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." Their lives were such as no instructions could have made them, if Christ had not added the influences of his Spirit. And this he would not do to confirm the doctrines of an impostor. In this way,

"They let their works and virtues shine,
To prove the doctrine all divine."

And this kind of commendation affected the minds of observers in a different manner from common testimonials. It was written "not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." The example of a pious life would commend religion to the affections, and make an impression on the mind in favor of the reality and desirableness of experimental piety.

It hath indeed "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Preaching the Gospel is the main instrument of salvation. But notwithstanding this, the concurring weight of a Christian example is necessary to the proper effect of a preached Gospel. It is not merely needful that Christians should avoid counteracting the influence of the Gospel by unholy lives: they must help it forward by a living exemplification of its appropriate efficacy.

A CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIVING EPISTLE. The importance of this living epistle to the advancement of religion, is the subject of discourse.

I. The necessity of the living epistle appears *from the nature of language*. Preaching is an attempt to produce an impression by means of language; and words have their influence according as they are understood, i. e. by their received meaning. Words have no inherent meaning. They mean precisely what those who use them agree to mean. When a community, or set of people agree to use a particular word to express a given idea, that establishes the meaning of the word among them: and whoever uses their language, makes an impression on their minds just according to the received meaning of the word. Thus when we hear a person of a particular class speak in the terms of his own dialect, it makes an impression on our minds corresponding with what we know they have agreed to understand by those terms.

Religion has its peculiar dialect—it speaks in a language of its own. Religious people speak of a change of heart, of being born again, and of being reconciled to God; of pardon and peace; of finding peace of conscience through the blood of Jesus Christ; of having the spirit of adoption, enjoying the presence of God and the light of his countenance; of holding communion with God, and having the witness of his Spirit; of living to the glory of God, and seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; of having the terror of death taken away, and of triumphing over the grave; of receiving the earnest of the Spirit, and a foretaste of the joys to come. Now what are people to understand by all this phraseology? According to the principles laid down for understanding language, people will understand by it just what those who use this dialect *agree* to understand by it. It is to be expected that those who hear it will be impressed by it, just according to the common consent of those whose language it is. The great body of mankind will not receive any further ideas from it, than *the lives of Christians exhibit*.

These things are indeed spoken of in the Bible as being literal realities; and the descriptions given of them are very bright and magnificent; and preachers often attempt to paint them with something of the colors of reality and glory which they bear in the Scriptures. But no great impression is made, any further than these things are exhibited in the lives of Christians. *Written descriptions have no force without the living epistle. If this is withheld, or*

inadequately set forth, the hearers or readers understand all this high-wrought language as the way in which Christians agree to talk about the languid feelings they exhibit. Christians are then supposed to have an understanding among themselves to use these lofty expressions, not in their literal and obvious meaning, but as rhetorical dress, to set off such feelings and principles as they possess. It thus passes as a sort of current phraseology, which Christians have got up, to make a show, as if their religion was something more than it is. The peace, the hopes, the love, the joys, and so also the penitential regrets, the trials and inward conflicts, of which the Bible makes so much, are received by the world at large just as the body of professing Christians exhibit them. And therefore it is indispensable to the proper understanding of revealed truth, that Christian example should be so high and holy as to make it evident that the high-wrought phraseology of religion is designed, not as a rhetorical flourish to hide the leanness of Christian experience, but as simple and literal narrative, expressing only the reality of what Christians themselves actually see, and feel, and exhibit. Thus will they be "manifestly declared to be the epistle of Jesus Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

The importance of example to the success of the preached word, may be illustrated in another way.—Words are of no force excepting as they are significant of things. And we cannot take the force of words unless we know the things which they signify. Thus we can have no distinct conception of the modes of spiritual existence. So a discussion upon colors, their shades, and beauty, and harmony, would convey nothing definite to the mind of a man born blind. Just so it is in the case of religion. An irreligious person has never experienced in himself the things which the language of religion describes; of course he cannot be expected to have any very just ideas attached to the language of religion, unless he derives them from what he *sees* in others. The great portion of mankind undoubtedly get their actual ideas of religion in this very way. They may read differently in the Bible; they may speculate differently; they may plainly understand that the language of Scripture, in its natural import, means more than they can see in the professors around them; but the *lively impressions*, such as affect their minds, are precisely the impressions which are produced by the lives of professors. They can understand the living epistle. And all the art and eloquence of man do not convey any thing more to careless minds, than they *see* in Christians. The most powerful exhibitions of divine truth always pass with common hearers just according to the impression produced by the lives of professing Christians.*

II. A second reason for the importance of the living epistle to the success of the Gospel, is found in *the nature of religion itself*.

True religion consists in holy affections. Its essential ingredients are,

* At an evening lecture, in which the author discoursed on the importance of the "living epistle," there was present a pious elder in the church, who five days afterward was summoned to meet his Savior. As the assembly was retiring, he took the preacher by the hand, and said, "I am very sensible of the truth which you have been inculcating. I know it is by the living epistle that we get our lively impressions of religion, its reality and its importance. When I was a boy, ten or twelve years old, I was once passing through the woods, and saw an old man, whom I knew, riding along on his horse, *engaged in prayer*. He did not see me, and I knew he could not suppose any mortal eye was upon him. I felt that he, at least, was not praying to be seen of men, but was holding communion with the unseen God. And it made an impression on my mind of the reality of experimental religion, which nothing could ever efface. It followed me continually, and more than thirty years afterward, I hope, brought me to Christ."

What must have been the feelings of this praying man on meeting in heaven, as a *fruit of that prayer in the woods, the glorified spirit of PETER HAWES!*

the hatred of sin, and the love of God, and a hope of salvation only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And of all these feelings the human race are by nature wholly destitute. In order to bring men to an experimental acquaintance with religion, they must have these feelings. It is not sufficient that they be alarmed with a view of their danger, and humbled under a sense of their wickedness: they must be subdued and melted into love; they must be affected with a tender sense of the goodness of God; they must realize the beauty of holiness, so as to love it for its own sake. In order to this, it is necessary that religion should be presented to them in a winning way, such as will commend it to their hearts; and this no written language can do in an adequate manner. Nothing but the living epistle can make religion appear desirable for its own sake. Under other influences men may wish to have religion. They may desire it as a refuge from the compunctions of conscience and the apprehensions of coming wrath. But they can hardly be expected to be smitten with the love of holiness, or to desire religion for its own sake, until they see its divine lineaments drawn out and exhibited in the living epistle. Then the beauty of holiness is written, not upon tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart; not only to be seen, but to be felt:—and the eloquence of a holy life is never wasted; it arrests the attention, and carries conviction to the heart, of the reality and value of religion; it makes an impression on the mind which neither sophistry nor sin can obliterate.

III. The influence of the living epistle *removes many difficulties* which prevent men from embracing religion.

The grand object of Christianity is to convert men to God. The direct aim of all evangelical efforts is to influence men to change their object and course of life. And it is to convert them, not by appeals to their interest, or by arousing and employing some one of the passions, but by entirely changing their hearts. It is to bring them to enter upon a life of self-denial. Of course we may expect to wake up to wrathful opposition all the passions and appetites which religion proposes to restrain.

It is to make men new creatures. Of course it shocks all their prejudices in favor of their present course of action and enjoyment. And without any worldly consideration whatever, it aims to lead them humbly to Christ. This goes directly in the face of that inherent pride of independence, which spurs at the idea of being *led*. And the design must be plainly avowed. Men may gain influence over their neighbors, for other purposes, and mould and lead them to their will, unsuspected, and without this shock upon their pride. How often are men led, and never know it? But the friend of religion can never gain converts by a concealed influence. Nobody can expect to convert his neighbors and lead them to religion, without their knowing it. The laborer in the Gospel must proclaim distinctly, that Christians alone are right, and all the rest of the world wrong.

He has, moreover, nothing to offer, but a salvation consisting in the first instance only of free pardon to an humbled rebel. He must enforce acceptance also, by the evangelical alternative: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." He says, in plain terms, "My object is to bring you all to follow me, as I follow Christ. It is to make you ashamed and sorry for those courses which you are now so well pleased in pursuing; to make you feel, and confess too, that you are all in the wrong."

In the shock of this encounter with passion, and pride, and sin, the advocate of religion finds all his arguments and persuasions rebutted. The inward reluctance of the heart to yield and confess, is only confirmed by

all the efforts of eloquence. Nothing carries a sway to the mind but the influence of the living epistle. The mind by all these prejudices is barred and fortified against the Gospel. There can be no hope of success till this prejudice is removed. And nothing will open the door like the mild influence of a life of simplicity and godly sincerity; such as shall make Christians manifest, not only to God, but to the consciences of men.

This grand difficulty has a peculiar bearing in the case of Gospel ministers. The tide of prejudice sets strongest against their efforts. The cry of "priestcraft" has been raised so loud, and sounded so long, by infidels and wicked men, and the misconduct of a corrupt priesthood in days of darkness has given so much color to the reproach, in the view of superficial minds, that timid men *dare not* open their hearts to the full and proper influence of religious truth, for fear of being made the victims of priestcraft. They shut their eyes and close their ears against the most solemn declarations of God in the Bible, for fear of the reproach of being led or frightened by the clergy. Nothing can overcome this difficulty, but the living epistle. The best reply which ministers can make to the calumny about priestcraft is a life of usefulness. Let the minister himself exemplify his preaching, and show in men's eyes the holy, self-denying nature of his religion. Let him labor, "in season, out of season," till the most faithless acknowledge his sincerity. Let him show his hearers, till they cannot help seeing it, that he would "gladly spend and be spent for them; though the more abundantly he loves them, the less he is loved." And then let him be fully sustained by the concurring example and influence of the church. Let them support and stand by him, as their servant for Christ's sake, who is doing work for them. Let it be evident that the church and the minister have no other than a common interest and a common end, and that end a benevolent one—the salvation of souls. Let it be so that he can boldly appeal to his brethren, and say, "Ye are my epistle, written in my heart;" and can point the world to them and say, "These are my letters of commendation, known and read of all men." In such a state of things, truth will make its way to men's hearts like a two-edged sword.

IV. The value of the living epistle, in promoting the cause of religion, is *abundantly confirmed by facts.*

How important an auxiliary it was to the ministry of the apostles. They could appeal to their own lives, and say to the people, "Ye are witnesses how holily and unblamably we had our conversation among you." They could point to many living proofs of the efficacy of their doctrine, as the "seal of their apostleship in the Lord." Under their ministry the "word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified," for it was helped, and confirmed, and magnified by the living epistle.

Why was the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church? It was because, that when "they counted not their lives dear unto them," the surrounding world read the evidences of true religion in the pages of the living epistle.

In modern times nothing awakens the sensual Hindoo, or opens the mind of the ignorant savage, or the stupid Greenlander, to the benign influences of the Gospel, like the evidence which he sees of sincerity and benevolence in the devoted missionary.

A striking instance of this is found in the case of Christian Henry Rauch, a Moravian, who commenced a mission among the Indians near the Hudson river, almost a hundred years ago. When he first spoke to them on the subject of religion, they laughed him to scorn. But he visited them in their huts, and labored among them from village to village in a state of

great poverty and want. Soon the Indians began to feel interested in him; and two of the most abandoned of the tribe would weep, when he told them the sufferings of the Redeemer.

But as soon as he began to produce some little effect, the wicked white people in the vicinity, seeing that their craft would be in danger if the Indians should become religious, raised a report that his object was to carry off the young Indians beyond the sea for slaves. The ignorant savages, jealous and timid, as very ignorant people are apt to be when any improvement is proposed, believed the story, and threatened to shoot the missionary if he did not go away. Even *Tschoop*, one of those who had manifested a concern for his soul, threatened to kill him.

But, not dismayed by all these difficulties, he pursued his work, and at length the Indians began to relent in their opposition, and to admire his courage, patience, and kindness. He used to spend his time among them, as if nothing was amiss; and even lay down to sleep in the midst of them, with the utmost composure. This made a deep impression upon the mind of *Tschoop*, who had so often sought an opportunity to kill him. One day, as the missionary lay asleep in *Tschoop's* tent, the savage thought thus within himself—"This cannot be a bad man; *he is not afraid*. He puts his life in the hands of a drunken mad Indian, and lies down to sleep in my hut. I could kill him, and throw him into the wood, and nobody know or care what become of him. But he is not afraid. He cannot be a bad man." He thus read the living epistle, and it unbarred his mind, and opened his heart to the truth. He soon renounced his pride and his drunkenness, and fled to the blood of Christ for salvation.

The same remark holds true, in places where the church has long been planted. If the Gospel is preached with any tolerable degree of clearness and fidelity, sinners bow to Jesus, whenever the living epistle appears so lively, as to be "known and read of all men." 'Take away the dimness of its pages, so that there can be no remaining uncertainty about the reality of religion in the church, and those out of the church will awake to the importance of salvation. Facts crowd upon the mind of every one who is acquainted with the history of revivals. There is probably not an instance of any considerable work of grace, while the body of the church are asleep, or in a state of conformity to the world. Nor an instance in which a church, however small, have continued for any considerable time to hold up to men's view the testimony of the living epistle, without effect.

1. The subject shows the grand obstacle to the progress of religion, where the Gospel is preached. It is the indistinctness of the living epistle. It is because ministers and other Christians do not live better. I do not speak of places cursed with the labors of those who preach another gospel, or of places where no voice sounds among the dead to call them to spiritual life in Christ Jesus. I mean those places where there is held forth something of the real Gospel, of salvation in Christ Jesus, and in no other; and where yet religion does not seem to prosper. The word of God is there. But it is not quick and powerful. The sword of the Spirit is there. But it is not mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. The reason is, it is not seconded and enforced by the influence of the living epistle.

There may be a great deficiency of knowledge, or of skill, in the preacher. We who are called to the work of the ministry, act under a fearful responsibility for the manner in which we preach the Gospel. No doubt our deficiencies in clearness, skill, and earnestness, form a great obstruction to the success of our labors. But that is not the grand difficulty.

God put this treasure in earthen vessels on purpose that the excellence of the power might be of God, and not of man. He knew ministers would be imperfect, and has provided accordingly. The grand difficulty is, a defect in the *living* testimony. For under the labors of those whom we perhaps call poor preachers, religion is still seen to flourish whenever it is seconded by the living epistle. A preacher may be professedly a Roman Catholic, and yet if he preaches salvation by Jesus Christ, and lives accordingly, his labors will not be in vain. This was remarkably the case under the preaching of Xavier, Fenelon, and others of like spirit. It has also been exemplified in Germany, within these few years. A man may urge the doctrines of human dependence to the very borders of Antinomianism. Or he may carry his views of human freedom almost to the extreme of Pelagianism. He may be a person of weak mind, or of a dull temperament. And yet if he lives in the spirit of the Gospel, and has a church who exhibit evident proofs of Christ dwelling in them, vital religion uniformly prospers. On the other hand, you may have what an enlightened judgment would call the best of preaching, and yet if it is contradicted by the living epistle, it will be almost powerless. Unaccompanied by the living epistle, the boldness of Peter, the earnestness of the sons of thunder, the reasoning of Paul, and the eloquence of Apollos, are insufficient to give the Gospel its proper influence. Poor preaching is bad enough in its influence, but poor living is much worse.

2. The subject shows the vast responsibility which rests upon professing Christians, for the lives they lead before the world. They are God's witnesses. And the bulk of mankind take the Gospel just as it is set out before them in the lives of Christians. They are the lights of the world. God has scattered them through the wilderness. And if the light that is in *them* be darkness, how great is that darkness? How great his guilt, who bears false witness for God, by misrepresenting Christianity in his life.

Religion *never* can make extensive progress until it is clearly exemplified. Mankind keep aloof from it. Sinners are afraid religion will hurt them. They are afraid to know and to confess their sins, and to take shame and blame to themselves for all they have done. They are afraid to admit their *lost* condition by nature, and to trust wholly in Jesus Christ for salvation; lest he should prove insufficient. They are afraid to take up the cross of a religious life, and adopt a high standard of Christian action; throwing themselves entirely upon Divine grace for support. They are afraid to become entirely reconciled to all the ways of God, so as to leave themselves in his hand, as the clay is in the hand of the potter. They are afraid of religion. And therefore it is necessary that Christians should exemplify it, by doing visibly the very things which sinners are called upon to do, in order to show by facts that religion will not hurt them.

Brethren, we must be more holy. We must live down the suspicions of jealousy. We must live down the reproaches of calumny. We must live down the cavils of infidelity. We must live down the indifference of stupidity. Talking, and preaching, and wondering never will do it. We must "*study by well-doing*, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." If we wish to see religion making progress, we must live a life of religion, and it will not fail to prosper. For God has said, "*Then shall the heathen know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.*"

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SERMON XCV.

BY REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON.
NEW-YORK.

CALL TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS ON TEMPERANCE,

JAMES, iv. 17.—To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

ACTS, xvii. 30.—The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

LUKE, xxii. 32.—When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

MALACHI, iii. 11.—And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground.

IN professing the religion of the Bible, we covenant with God to make his word our rule of life. This requires us, to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God;” to “purify ourselves, even as he is pure;” to “give none occasion of stumbling to any brother;” to “give none offence to the church of God;” to “love our neighbor as ourselves;” to “do good to all as we have opportunity;” to “abstain from all appearance of evil;” to “use the world as not abusing it;” and, “whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.”

If any think these precepts too strict for frail men, be it remembered, God is too benevolent to prescribe rules of action less holy. He has given them, and they are “the same that shall judge us in the last day.” Any indulgence, therefore, not consistent with these divine precepts, is actually sinful, is inconsistent with a holy profession, and must disqualify us for “standing in the judgment.”

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Such a sin, very obviously, is the habit, which some professing Christians still indulge, of drinking and tempting others to drink distilled liquor, in this day of meridian light. To those who admit the binding authority of God's precepts, and whose minds are not clouded by "sipping a little," this sin must, on examination, be perfectly manifest.

1. The use of such liquor, instead of enabling us to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable," *actually degrades, impairs, and prematurely destroys both body and mind.* The most eminent physicians uniformly tell us it is poison. Dr. Rush, after enumerating various loathsome diseases of mind and body, adds, that these are "the usual, natural, and legitimate consequences of its use." Another eminent physician says, "The observation of twenty years has convinced me, that were ten young men, on their twenty-first birth day, to begin to drink one glass of ardent spirit, and were they to drink this supposed moderate quantity daily, the lives of eight out of the ten would be abridged by twelve or fifteen years." When taken freely, its corrupting influences are strikingly manifest. And even when taken moderately, very few now pretend to doubt that it operates as a slow, insidious poison, and inevitably shortens life. But nothing can be clearer than that he, who, by any sensual indulgence, wilfully cuts short his probation, five, ten, or twenty years, is as truly a suicide, as if he slew himself violently. Or, if he knowingly encourage his neighbor to do this, he is equally guilty. He is, by the law of God, "a murderer." And perhaps worse than the common murderer, as his course of guilt, instead of appalling, insidiously leads multitudes to the same crime. And can this character be consistent with that religion which teaches, that *no murderer shall inherit eternal life?*

But besides impairing and prematurely destroying the body, distilled liquor stupifies and debases the immortal mind; and thus destroys its capacity for usefulness, and for the clear perception of truth. To illustrate the blinding and perverting influence of a small quantity of such liquor on the mind, let a strictly temperate man spend an evening, or an hour, with a dozen others, indulging themselves "moderately;" they will be sure to say things and do things, which to *him* will appear silly, if not wicked; and which will appear so to *themselves*, on reflection; though at the time they may

not be conscious of any impropriety. And if this "moderate indulgence" be habitual, there must, of course, be a corresponding and increasing mental debasement, till conscience is "seared as with a hot iron," and the mind is lost to the power of being affected by truth, as well as to the capacity of being useful to others. And is this destruction of the talents God has given, consistent with the injunction to "stir up the gift that is within you," and to "glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his?"

2. This habit of drinking *is incompatible with that desire of eminent holiness and growth in grace, which a consistent profession implies.* The great Founder of Christianity enjoins, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." This will be the true Christian's daily desire. And a soul animated with such heavenly desire, and aspiring to the image of God, will have no relish for any counteracting spirit.

Does any one say, that for eminently holy men to be found "mingling strong drink," may seem inconsistent; but not so for those less spiritual? This is making the want of spirituality an excuse for sensuality; thus manifestly adding sin to sin, and provoking the Holy One to anger. His mandate is universal; "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*" And all professing Christians are solemnly *pledged* to abide by this rule, and make it their constant effort to be like God.

To this end they are charged to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul;" to "mortify their members which are upon the earth;" to "exercise themselves rather unto godliness;" and to "be kindly affectioned toward all men." But who does not know, that distilled liquor not only "eats out the brain," but "taketh away the heart," diminishes even "natural affection," and deadens all the kindlier feelings; while it cherishes those very passions which the Holy Spirit so pointedly condemns? And how can one "professing godliness," and aspiring to the divine image, drink that which thus tends to destroy all that is pure, and spiritual, and lovely, while it kindles in body and soul the very flames of hell?

3. The use of this liquor *is inconsistent with any thing like pure and high spiritual enjoyment, clear spiritual views, and true devotion.* A sense of shame must inevitably torment the professor, who, in such a day, cannot resist those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul;" his brethren will turn from him in pity or disgust; and, what is infi-

nately more affecting, the Holy Spirit will not abide with him. And thus, without an approving conscience, without the cordialities of pure Christian intercourse, and without the smiles of the blessed Comforter, how can he enjoy religion?

Abstinence from highly stimulating liquor or food has ever been regarded as indispensable to that serenity of soul and clearness of views, so infinitely desirable in matters of religion. Hence the ministers of religion were solemnly commanded not to touch any thing like strong drink, when about to enter the sanctuary. And *this*, adds God, *shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations; that ye may put difference between holy and unholy*; clearly showing his views of the effect of temperance on spiritual discernment.

On the principle of abstinence we may also account, in part, for that holy ecstasy—that amazing clearness of spiritual vision—sometimes enjoyed on the death-bed. “Administer nothing,” said the eloquent dying Summerfield, “that will create a stupor, not even so much as a little porter and water—that I may have an unclouded view.” For the same reason Dr. Rush, (who so well knew the effect of strong drink,) peremptorily ordered it not to be given him in his last hours. And probably for the same holy reason, the dying SAVIOR, (“who knew all things,”) when offered “wine mingled with myrrh”—“received it not.” The truly wise will not, in the trying hour, barter visions of glory for mere animal excitement and mental stupefaction. Then surely not, in the meridian of health.

Equally illustrative of our principle is the confession of an aged deacon, accustomed to drink moderately; “I always, in prayer, felt a coldness and heaviness at heart,—*never suspecting it was the whiskey!* but since that is given up, I have *heavenly communion!*” O, what an increase of pure light and joy might there be in the church, would all its members understand this, and be “*temperate in all things.*”

4. The use of ardent spirit by professing Christians is *inconsistent with the good order and discipline of the church.* A minister of great experience in ecclesiastical concerns, gives it as the result of his observation, that *nine-tenths* of all the cases calling for church discipline are occasioned by this liquor. This is a tremendous fact. But a little examination will convince any one that the estimate is not too high. And can it be right to continue an indulgence that is bringing tenfold, or even fourfold more trou-

ble and disgrace on the church, than all other causes united? Do not these foul "spots in our feasts of charity" clearly say, "Touch not the unclean thing?" Can we countenance that which is certain to inflict the deepest wounds in the body of Christ? "It must needs be that offences come; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh."

5. The use of distilled liquor by professors of religion is *inconsistent with the hope of reforming and saving the intemperate*. The Christian knows that every soul is inconceivably precious, and that *drunkards cannot inherit eternal life*. He knows also that hundreds of thousands in this land now sustain, or are contracting this odious character; and that if the evil be not arrested, millions will come on in the same track, and go down to the burning gulf. But the Christian who drinks just so much as to make himself "feel well," cannot reprove the drunkard, who only does the same thing. The drunkard may say to him, "My appetite is stronger than yours; more, therefore, is necessary in order to make me 'feel well;' and if you cannot deny yourself the little that seems needful, how can I control a more raging appetite?" This rebuke would be unanswerable.

All agree that total abstinence is the only hope of the drunkard. But is it not preposterous to expect him to abstain, so long as he sees the minister, the elder, the deacon, and other respectable men, indulging their cups? With mind enfeebled, and character lost, can he summon resolution to be singular, and live even more temperately than his acknowledged superiors?—thus telling to all that he *has been a drunkard!* This cannot be expected of poor sunken human nature. No; let moderate drinking be generally allowed, and in less than thirty years, according to the usual ratio of their deaths, armies of drunkards greater than all the American churches will go from this land of light and freedom to "everlasting chains of darkness." If, then, the drunkard is worth saving, if he has a soul capable of shining with seraphim, and if there be in members of the church "any bowels of mercies," let them give him the benefit of their example. Professing to "do good to *all* as they have opportunity," let them be consistent in this matter. By a little self-denial they may save millions from hell. But "he that denieth not himself, cannot be Christ's disciple." He that will not yield *a little* to save his fellow-sinners from eternal pain, has nothing of

the spirit of Him, who, for his enemies, exchanged a throne for a cross; nor can he consistently bear his name.

Could all the wailings of the thousand thousands slain by ardent spirit come up in one loud thunder of remonstrance on the ear of the churches, they would then, perhaps, think it inconsistent, by their example, or by any act, to sanction its use. But "let God be true," and those wailings are as real, as if heard in ceaseless thunders. But God hath no pleasure in the death of the drunkard, and the drunkard can have no pleasure in the second death; it cannot, therefore, be consistent, either with love to God or love to man, to add to the multitude who shall swell the eternal wail.

6. The use of distilled liquor by professing Christians *is inconsistent with the hope of ever freeing the nation from intemperance.* All former efforts to arrest this alarming sin have failed. A glorious effort is now making to wash it off for ever with pure water. Thousands of patriots and philanthropists are rejoicing in the remedy. Not a sober man in the nation really doubts its efficacy and importance. Who, then, that regards our national character and our glorious institutions, can hesitate to adopt it? O, who, that loves his neighbor or his God, can still thirst for that which has darkened the pathway of heaven, threatened our liberties, desolated the land, and peopled hell? Who can be expected to adopt this substitute, if they do not who have sworn allegiance to the Holy One? If they withhold their example, will worldly and sensual men, and the enemies of all righteousness, take up the work, and reform themselves, and purify the land? For professors to expect this is preposterous; and *to pray* for it, while *they* cling to the abominable thing, is gross insult to the Most High. His manifest language to the churches, then, is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground."

Is it said, that the influence of a small church is unimportant? Not so: it is "a city set on an hill;" "the glory of the Lord is upon it;" its light may save the surrounding region; its example may influence a thousand churches. And let the eight hundred thousand professing Christians in this land resolve on **TOTAL ABSTINENCE**—let this great example be held up to view—and it

would be such a testimony as the world has not seen. Let such a multitude show that ardent spirit is useless, and reformation easy and the demonstration would be complete. Few of the moral would continue the poison; thousands of the immoral abandon it at once; and the nation be reformed and saved. Hence,

7. The use of this liquor by professing Christians *is utterly inconsistent with the proper influence of their example*. The Savior says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." But will men esteem Christians the more for *drinking*? and thus be led to glorify God on their behalf? Or will the Savior praise them for this, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe?" Rather, will not their drinking lead some to excess, and thus sully the Creator's work? Nay, is it not certain, that if professing Christians thus indulge, the example will lead *millions* to drunkenness and perdition? And, on the other hand, is it not morally certain, that if they would abstain, their combined influence might save millions from infamy and endless ruin? But every professor shares in this mighty power of example. How, then, in prospect of a day when all the bearings of his conduct shall be judged, can he hesitate on which side to lend his influence? This is not a little matter: for who can conceive the results of even *one* impulse, among beings connected with each other and with infinity by ten thousand strings!

8. The use of ardent spirit by a part of the church *is inconsistent with that harmony and brotherly love which Christ requires in his professed followers*. He requires them to "love one another with a pure heart fervently;" to "be all of one mind;" to be "of one heart and one soul." But who does not see the utter impossibility of this, if some members continue an indulgence, which others regard with abhorrence? Since public attention has been turned to this subject, thousands have come to the conviction that drinking distilled liquor is a wicked as well as filthy practice. The most distinguished lights of the church, and all such as peculiarly adorn their profession, decidedly embrace this sentiment. And how can such have any thing like cordiality with those who continue a habit, now so extensively viewed with disgust? Ah! the professor of religion, who, in a day like this, "will have his glass, not caring whom he offends," *must have it*; but with it, he must also *have*

his reward." For, judging from his fruits, he differs as widely from Paul as heaven from hell. That holy apostle, speaking on this very subject of appetite, says, "Give *none* offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, *nor to the Church of God.*" And the Savior also says, "Whoso shall *offend one of these little ones which believe in me*, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck."

9. The use of distilled liquor by members of the church, in this day of light, *is incompatible with their receiving any general effusion of the Holy Spirit.* Christians are allowed to hope for the Spirit to be poured out, only in answer to prayer; and only in answer to true, spiritual, believing prayer. "If they regard iniquity in their heart, the Lord will not hear them." If they wilfully and habitually cherish any sin, they cannot have faith, and it would be inconsistent for God to show such approbation as to answer their prayers. Nay, is it not most solemn mockery, for any to cry, "Revive thy work, O Lord"—while by example they are perhaps seducing thousands to perdition! Indeed, how odious the spectacle of a company assembled professedly in the name of Christ, and looking toward heaven, but, in this posture of devotion, all breathing forth the foul, fiery element! This is literally "offering strange fire before the Lord." And, instead of mercy, I hear his terrible remonstrance, "*Ye are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*" I see the lightning of his anger, ready to smite such impious mockers. It should never be forgotten that the men whom the Almighty struck dead when they "offered strange fire," were excited by liquor; and that his *feelings* toward such as thus unfit themselves for pure worship must be the same now. Oh, how can his pure Spirit descend and mingle his holy influences with that, which worketh all manner of iniquity, and pollutes the very air we breathe?

God may have "winked at" such inconsistencies, in "times of ignorance;" but he cannot do it in such a day of light, without disgracing his holy throne. We are not, then, to expect his Spirit to come down "like showers that water the earth," till we put away that, which we know tends to wither and consume all the "fruits of the Spirit." But "let us draw near in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water," and "he is faithful that hath promised." He "will open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room to receive it."

10. The waste of property in the use of distilled liquor is *inconsistent with the character of faithful "stewards for Christ."* The "contributions" of the church are among the appointed means for converting the world. But allow each of our eight hundred thousand professing Christians only two cents' worth of spirit daily, and the annual cost is about SIX MILLIONS OF DOLLARS! which would be sufficient to support constantly, at least *fifteen thousand missionaries!* Let professed "stewards" of the Lord's treasury, then, who would consume this "*little*" on sinful appetite, ponder and blush for such inconsistency; and let them hasten to clear off the heavy charge, "*Ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*"

11. For Christians to indulge in the use of ardent spirit is *inconsistent with all attempts to recommend the gospel to the heathen.* Nothing has done more to prejudice our Indian neighbors, and hinder among them the influence of the gospel, than those poisonous liquors, which we have encouraged them to use. The more thinking among them have perceived these liquors to be fraught only with mischief. Several tribes have set the noble example of excluding these articles by the strong arm of law: and it is only by convincing them that really consistent Christians do not encourage such evils, that our missionaries have been able to gain their confidence, and to introduce our literature and religion.

The same feeling must prevail in more distant heathen nations. They can not but despise the Christians who use and sell a polluting drink, which *they*, to a great extent, regard with disgust and abhorrence.

Suppose our missionaries should go out with a Bible in one hand and a bottle in the other; what impression would they make? Even nature herself would revolt at the alliance. And nothing but all-powerful habit and fashion have reconciled any among us to similar inconsistencies.

But not only must our missionaries be unspotted, they must also be able to testify, that *no real Christians* pollute themselves with this or any other unclean thing. With *such* testimony they might secure the conviction, that our religion is indeed purifying and elevating, and that our God is *the true God*. For, saith Jehovah, "Then shall the *heathen* know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." Let the church, then, instead of dallying with pollution, shine forth in her heaven-borr

purity, and soon would the general acclamation of mankind be, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men!"

12. The use of ardent spirit by the church *is inconsistent with any reasonable hope, that the flood of intemperance would not return upon the land, even should it for a season be dried up.* The same causes which have produced it would produce it again, unless there be some *permanent* powerful counteracting influence. Temperance Associations throughout the land are unspeakably important, as means of reformation. But they are not permanent bodies. Their organization may cease, when intemperance is once done away. And unless the doctrine of **TOTAL ABSTINENCE** be incorporated with some great association that *is to be perpetual*, it will in time be forgotten or despised; and then drunkenness will again abound. Such an association is found only in "the Church of the living God." This will continue while the world stands: for God has promised to support it. Let the principle of **ENTIRE ABSTINENCE**, then, be recognised with one consent by the church, and adopted by future members; and you have a great and increasing multitude to sustain the temperance cause, till "time shall be no longer." And can the real Christian think it hard thus to enlist for the safety of all future generations? If parents love their offspring, if Christians love the lambs of Christ's flock, if philanthropists love the multitudes coming into Sabbath schools, will they not gladly hasten to secure them all from the destroyer? Has he a shadow of consistency, who will rather do that, which if done by the church generally, would lead millions of these children and their descendants to hopeless ruin?

13. The use of distilled liquor as a common article of luxury or living, *is inconsistent with the plain spirit and precepts of God's word.* It furnishes no warrant whatever for such use. Nothing, indeed, is said in Scripture of distilled liquor, for the very obvious reason, that the art of converting God's gifts to such a malignant poison was unknown till the ninth century. Nor does our present object admit discussing the subject of "wine:" (which, however, among the ancients, being the simple juice of the grape, and not mixed, like most of our wines, with ardent spirit, was comparatively mild.) But the "*strong drink*" of the ancients was, in its effects, somewhat analogous to ardent spirit; though not so pollu-

ting or so poisonous. And the use to be made of it is so distinctly pointed out, that men need not mistake and poison themselves. It was to be used as a *medicine in extreme cases*. "Give strong drink unto him that is *ready to perish*." Its common use is condemned, as awfully pernicious. "Strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby, is not wise." "They are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision; they stumble in judgment." Such passages show clearly the mind of God with respect to the nature and use of this article. And they apply with double force to the more fiery element of modern invention.

Moreover, it is said in another passage, "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbor drink." But does not every man who manufactures, or sells, or openly uses ardent spirit, encourage his neighbor to drink? And if he do it with the Bible in his hand, does he not contemn God's authority? And if a Christian professor thus "giveth his neighbor drink," either directly or indirectly, does he not contradict his profession of "love to God and love to man?" Does he not deny God's testimony and "make him a liar?" Does he not aggravate his guilt by sinning against great light? And would he not aggravate it still further, should he charge the blame on God? Oh, what a blot would it be on the Bible, should one chapter or one sentence be added, encouraging the general use of intoxicating liquor! "If any man thus add, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

14. To manufacture or use ardent spirit is *inconsistent with a grateful reception of the bounties of Providence*. When God had formed man, and spread out before him this beautiful world, he kindly said, "Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; *to you it shall be for meat*." God, then, it seems, intended that men should use the fruits of the earth for food. But "they have sought out many inventions." And one of these "inventions" is, to take these gifts of God, and convert them into a poison, most insidious in its nature, and most destructive both to soul and body! The distiller, the vender, and the consumer of ardent spirit, encourage one another in this awful perversion of God's gifts! And is this "receiving his gifts with thanksgiving?" Better, infinitely better, to cast them at once into the fire, or the ocean, and say unto the Almighty, "We have no need of

these." But the ingratitude does not stop here. When men, in abuse of the divine bounty, have made this foul poison, to justify its use they call it one of the "*creatures of God!*" With as much propriety might they call gambling establishments and murderous weapons his "*creatures;*" and thus encourage their general use! But how awful the *impiety* of thus ascribing the worst of man's inventions to the benevolent God! In "times of ignorance" many have done thus. But "the darkness is past," "the true light now shineth." And should a professor of religion now inscribe on his barrel or his decanter of intoxicating liquor, **GOD MADE THIS, MAY GOD SEND IT PROSPERITY**—the whole church would be indignant at his blasphemy. Nay, his own conscience, a wicked world, and Satan, would blush for such impiety. Think of this! Make the inscription if you can! But if you dare not write it before men, can you countenance the vile traffic before Him "whose eyes are as a flame of fire!"

15. For a professor of religion to *persevere in making, selling, or using ardent spirit, as a common article of luxury or living, while fully knowing its effects, and possessing the light Providence has recently poured on this subject, is inconsistent with any satisfactory evidence of piety.* "By their fruits ye shall know them." And what are *his* fruits? Why, as we have seen, he wilfully cuts short his own life, or the life of his neighbor; he wilfully impairs memory, judgment, imagination, and all the immortal faculties, merely for sensual indulgence or paltry gain; he stupifies conscience, and cherishes all the evil passions; he prefers sordid appetite to pure spiritual enjoyment; he is the occasion of stumbling to those for whom Christ died, and of dark reproach on the Church; he neglects the only means Providence has pointed out for rescuing thousands from drunkenness and hell; he wilfully encourages their downward course; he refuses the aid he might give to a great national reform; he lends his whole weight against this reformation; he is the occasion of offence, grief, and discord among brethren; he grieves the Holy Spirit and prevents his heavenly influence; he robs the Lord's treasury; he makes Christianity infamous in the eyes of the heathen; he disregards the plain spirit and precepts of the Bible; and, in fine, he perverts even the common bounties of Providence. Such are his fruits. And the man, surely, who can do all this, in meridian light, and while God is looking on, *does not*

give satisfactory evidence of piety. He manifests neither respect for God nor love to man.

And now should such an one come to the Lord's table, without first washing his hands in tears of penitence, and abjuring the unclean thing, would he not "eat and drink unworthily," and thus "eat and drink damnation to himself?" "For this very cause," adds the apostle, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." And must the church be a nursery for death and hell? Must not those who persist in introducing such unworthy members, be "partakers of their sins, and receive of their plagues?"

"The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God." Let conscience, then, solemnly review our whole argument by the infinitely holy law. Is it indeed right, for members of the church to impair body and mind by sensuality?—to defile the flesh, cloud the soul, stupify conscience, and cherish the worst passions? Is it right to bring occasions of stumbling into the church? Is it right to encourage drunkards, and let them perish, when God hath said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" Is it right to treat with contempt a great national reform? and to hinder the progress of such a reformation? Is it right to offend and grieve such as Christ calls "brethren?" and right to grieve the Holy Spirit, and prevent his blessed influence? Is it right to "consume on lust" what would fill the Lord's treasury? and right to make religion odious to the heathen? Is it right to leave the land open to new floods of intemperance? to disregard the manifest lessons of Scripture and Providence? and to convert food to foul poison? Is it indeed right, for the church of Christ to sanction practices fraught only with wounds, death, and perdition? Will *real Christians* propagate such shocking heresy? Such, however, must be the temperance creed of those who would encourage the distiller, the vender, or the consumer of ardent spirit in his deadly course.

Let it not be suggested, that our argument bears chiefly against the *excessive* use of ardent spirit. For common sense and candor must admit, what has been a thousand times demonstrated, that the *moderate* use of the poison is the real occasion of all its woes, blasphemies, and abominations. Who was ever induced to taste by the disgusting sight of a drunkard? Or who ever became a drunkard, except by moderate indulgence in the beginning? In-

deed, this habit of moderate drinking, in professors of religion, is, perhaps, tenfold *worse*, in its influence on society, than occasional instances of drunkenness. For these excite abhorrence, and rather alarm than betray; while moderate indulgence sanctions the general use, and thus insidiously betrays millions to destruction. O, never, since the first temptation, did Satan gain such a victory as when he induced Christians, by their example, to sanction every where the use of intoxicating liquor. And never, since the triumph of Calvary, has he experienced such a defeat as God is now summoning Christians to accomplish. Let them, at once, withdraw the sanction they have given, and, *by generously diffusing light on this subject*, do half as much to expose, as they have done to encourage this grand device of the devil, and rivers of death will be dried up, Zion look forth in grandeur and beauty, streams of salvation be multiplied, and the sanctifying Spirit bless all nations.

The *duty* of professing Christians, then, in regard to distilled liquor, is very plain. If their vision be not clouded by reason of the poison, they cannot but see, that it would be pleasing to God, happy for themselves, beneficial to the world, and conducive to the highest interests of Christ's kingdom, for them to adopt with one consent the principle of TOTAL ABSTINENCE, and make generous efforts for disseminating this principle.

And now, if they *know* their duty, will they *do it*? Will they *do it*? Can any, in the name of Christ, still pray, "A little more of the poison; a little more pernicious example; a little more disgrace on the church; a little more grieving the Holy Spirit; a little more encouragement to all the abominations and woes of intemperance?" Is this religious consistency? Is this what God must expect, when his will is known? Is this what is demanded by the exigencies of the times? When iniquity abounds; when infidelity, oppression, and sabbath violation, are challenging the wrath of Heaven on the land; is it a time to hesitate and compromise in regard to *known duty*? If "the battle of the great day of God" is at hand, must the church be weakened by indulgence, and the enemy be made bolder and stronger by her aid? Or will her triumph be gained without warfare or self-denial? and the millennium find her asleep in pollution? O, ere *that day* come, the church must have, in *all* respects, a loftier character. This too, ere our land can be relieved from any of its

great sins. Is the time, then, for consistency not come? How many millions of sacred trust must the churches yet consume on sinful appetite? how many souls must they send to the abyss? how many fresh wounds inflict on the Redeemer's cause, ere they can resolve to "be on the Lord's side?"

Are any for reforming in a more *gradual* and silent way? Possibly, meanwhile, they may silently descend to the pit! Then "a great ransom can not deliver them," nor a drop of water "cool their tongue." Are any too proud to confess they have countenanced this degrading sin? He only "that confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy."

Do any still say, we carry the matter too far?—requiring *total* abstinence! *Do unto others, as ye would they should do to you*, is the eternal law. But suppose your own child, your brother, your sister, the wife of your bosom, were in imminent peril from the example or temptation of others,—would you be pleased with this? No. Well, the example of moderate drinkers and the temptations of retailers, you admit, have ruined, and must continue to ruin, vast multitudes. Can you then justify such by the "golden rule"—the eternal law? Ah, let the burning tide *actually desolate your own family*; and then answer.

Is it said by some, that should they give up the traffic in ardent spirit the sacrifice must be very great, and perhaps occasion serious embarrassment? This is indeed hard; but is it not *harder* to sin against God, and the church, and the whole community? Calculate for *eternity*, as well as time. For "God shall bring every work into judgment;" and "what is a man profited if he thus gain the whole world?"

Is it said, there is no *express* Scripture warrant for the Church to decline receiving any one who habitually sells or drinks ardent spirit? Neither is there for excluding the gambler. But the Bible is addressed to men of conscience and common sense, who are to be governed by its general spirit; and in no other way can the churches make suitable acknowledgment of the wounds and the deep damnations they have inflicted through intoxicating liquor, but by *recording their decided testimony against it*. In no other way can they *manifest to the world* a becoming sense of its odiousness; and thus "let their light shine before men." But let the churches do this, with deep and general humiliation before God, and prayer

for the divine forgiveness and blessing, and though some few may "gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven, and repent not of their deeds," yet there would be "joy in heaven" over great multitudes repenting; and soon would it be echoed with thanksgiving from every land, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

In hastening this blest consummation, all have yet a part to act. Do you exult in the consciousness of being wholly freed from the unclean thing? Then think of the millions still contaminated; and reflect, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed"—ye are rescued from the pollution. God "hath made you to differ." Now then his injunction is, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Strengthen those few who are pouring out their breath or spending their treasure in this cause. Every man can do this to some extent, and every Christian surely must feel constrained by gratitude to God, as well as love to men, freely to extend the means of reformation. And in so doing, there is no loss, but infinite gain. For "whosoever shall give to drink, unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward."

Finally, Christian Brethren, "be sober, be vigilant, be of one mind;" for "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about." I tremble lest possibly through apathy, or discord, or indiscretion, or treason in the church, "Satan should yet get an advantage," and turn our fair morning into a heavier night of darkness, and tempest, and war. But wo to that man, who, at this crisis of the reformation, shall knowingly encourage the *exciting cause* of such evils. And heaviest wo to him who shall avail himself of a standing in the church for this purpose. I hear for such a loud remonstrance from millions yet unborn; and a louder still from the throne of eternal Judgment: and if they heed not the warning, I see for them "the wine of the wrath of Almighty God poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation."

But "though we thus speak," we hope and expect better things from the decided followers of the Lamb of every name;—"things which make for peace; things wherewith one may edify another; and things which accompany salvation" to a dying world.

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SERMON XCVI.

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CONVICTION BY THE LAW.

ROM. vii. 19. *I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

THERE have been but two ways ever revealed, in which man may obtain eternal life—the law and the gospel—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. By the first mode, Adam, had he remained innocent, might have secured everlasting felicity. But, on his apostacy, this way to heaven was barred for ever; and, to show the impossibility of being thus saved, cherubim and a fiery flaming sword guarded all access to the tree of life. To fallen man there is no hope, except through the sovereign grace of God, by the Redeemer revealed in the gospel; there is no hope till, sensible of his deep guilt, and trembling at the curse of the broken law, he penitently betakes himself to that Savior who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

Yet many who acknowledge these fundamental truths are careless and unconcerned, while they have no interest in the Redeemer; are hoping for heaven, though they have never fled to the Savior, and accepted his righteousness for justification.

Let all such listen to the text, in which the apostle gives not only his own experience, but that of all true believers: “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

These words will lead us to consider,

I. The character and sentiments of the unregenerate.—“*I was alive without the law.*”

II. The nature of those convictions which sweep away false hopes, and make the Redeemer precious.—“*Sin revived, and I died.*”

III. The instrumental cause of this change of feeling and character.—“*The commandment came.*”

I. The character and sentiments of the unregenerate.—“*I was alive without the law.*”

Three inquiries here arise—*What is that law of which the apostle speaks? How was he without it? And what is implied in his having been alive?*

1. The law to which St. Paul refers is evidently the *moral* law ; that law which was impressed upon the heart of man at his creation, and which was published with such solemnity from Sinai. It consists of a system of precepts, and of a sanction for their enforcement. The sum of its precepts is perfect obedience to the divine Lawgiver. Its sanction is an assurance of eternal life to the obedient, and of death to those who " continue not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

2. How was the apostle " without the law ?" Not that he was *under no obligation to it*. From its very nature it must always be in force. It was binding upon Paul ; it is obligatory upon every child of Adam ; since it is founded in the perfections of God and the relations he sustains to us. While these perfections and relations continue, the law cannot be abrogated ; Jehovah can no more free us from its obligation than he can renounce his Godhead.

When the apostle is said to be " without the law," it does not imply that he was *unacquainted with its letter*. A clear speculative knowledge of it he no doubt possessed ; for he was brought up at the feet of the celebrated Gamaliel ; there studied it ; there made in it the greatest proficiency.

Neither does it imply that he *paid no regard to it in his external life*. He himself tells us that he *outwardly* complied with its precepts ; that " as touching the law," that is, the formal and external observance of it, he was " blameless."

But to be " without the law" implies an ignorance of its extent, spirituality, and purity ; implies that the apostle had no proper sense of its commanding authority, or of its condemning power.

3. In what sense was Paul, before his conversion, " *alive* ?" Not in the estimation of God and angels ; they beheld him " dead in trespasses and sins." But he was *alive in his own estimation* ; he thought himself upright and holy, and entitled, by virtue of these qualifications, to life eternal. He entertained the strongest confidence of his high standing in the favor of God. He " verily thought he was doing God service," and advancing toward heaven. This case is common with the unregenerate. They are " without the law ;" without any knowledge of its strictness and purity ; without any sense of its dignity and perfection. While thus ignorant, as the apostle once was, like him they are " *alive* ;" alive in their feelings, unapprehensive of danger, unconcerned about the terrors of the Almighty.

Some of the grounds of this security in sin are natural ignorance, abuse of the Savior's grace, false evidence of the love of God, incorrect views of the privileges of the church, and the hope of a long and protracted life. These are so many springs to feed and maintain this life of delusion in the unregenerate.

We proceed,

II. To consider the *nature of true conviction*. " *Sin revived*," adds the apostle, " *and I died*."

A clear and lively sense of sin impressed his soul; he saw himself chargeable with aggravated guilt; in consequence of which his vain conceit fled, and his presumptuous hopes expired. This is the experience of all who have had true conviction of sin. They see the depth of their guilt; they behold themselves lost; they acknowledge that they are justly liable to eternal death.

There are few, if any, in a gospel land who have not occasional convictions, some misgivings of heart, some apprehensions that all is not right, some purposes of amendment, some fears of hell, some desires for heaven; impressions produced by the faithful preaching of the word, or by the alarming providences of God. But we must distinguish between these occasional fears and those genuine convictions which end in conversion. The former generally arise from the apprehension of God's power and justice; the latter from a sense of his goodness, love, and infinite hatred to sin. The former endure but for a season, the latter are permanent. In the former there is a view only of the penalty of the law; in the latter of the propriety of this penalty. The sinner who is truly convinced perceives the odious nature as well as the awful consequences of sin. He feels *his own sins*, and sees the punishment they merit; he feels some drops of the Divine wrath falling upon his soul; he feels, what he never before felt, that if sovereign grace interpose not quickly, he must be lost for ever. Earthly concerns, sensual pleasures, which once gave him rest, are now painful and irksome. Now his great inquiry is, "How shall I escape the wrath to come? How shall I be reconciled to God? How shall I save my poor, neglected, perishing soul?" Ah! *he* knows what Paul meant when he exclaimed, "*sin revived.*" Sins that had been utterly forgotten, which had long ceased to disturb his conscience, which he once regarded as slight and venial, now rush upon his mind with all their aggravations. He sees the intimate connection between them and misery, and trembles at the anticipation of the just judgments of the Almighty.

Let us,

III. In the next place, consider the *cause of this conviction*. "The commandment came;" shining in its purity, and operating with power. In this manner only can the sinner be effectually convinced; by the law sent home to his heart, not in the "deadness of the letter," but in all the energy of the Spirit.

The moral law insists upon an obedience that is perfect—perfect in its principle, perfect in its parts, perfect in every degree—and denounces condemnation upon the least violation. When it is thus revealed to the sinner, in its wide extent, in its high demands, in its rigorous sanctions, it must convict and humble him before God. It convinces him of the nature of sin, shows what a righteous law it violates, what an awful majesty it affronts, what infinite purity it opposes, what rich mercy it abuses. It has also an

awakening influence upon his conscience, and brings him to deep and feeling apprehension. He was before easy and secure, but when "the commandment comes," he is roused from his slumbers—startled by the view which it presents of the impurity of his heart, and the sinfulness of his life.

There is another intention of the law equally useful; it "reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Having set before the sinner his innumerable offences and enormous guilt, it denounces the doom which he deserves; it unsheaths the sword of justice, and threatens him with "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." And then, when his heart is wounded, and when he looks around for some deliverer from "the wrath to come," he learns that the law can give him no salvation; it only thunders in his ear the dreadful sentence,— "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

But let us remember that this power which the law has is not inherent, but is derived solely from the Spirit of God. Without his influence it never did, and never can savingly convince the soul. It is the sword that pierces the heart, but the Holy Spirit must wield it. When the sinner is enlightened by that Spirit, then "the law enters, that the offence may abound;" that he may perceive the multitude of his iniquities, the impurity of his heart, the utter imperfection of his best services. Thus "the commandment comes," to accuse, to convict, and to condemn; to prepare him for the reception of the Mediator's righteousness; to drive him to the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. "By the law," saith the apostle, "is the knowledge of sin." "I, through the law," saith the same apostle, "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

In applying this subject to practical purposes, I remark,

1. It teaches us that *we may live in this world without apprehensions and fears, and yet perish for ever*. Is not this the case with the generality of men? Their conduct evinces that they have no sense of God upon their souls, no preparation for death and eternity, and yet they are careless and gay; they indulge in pleasure and mirth; they confidently expect everlasting felicity. Do you ask, "why is this?" Not because they have no ground of alarm; "the wrath of God abideth on them;" the bottomless pit is open beneath them; and death is continually lurking in ambush to cut them down. The true reason is, they are "*without the law*." They never reflect upon its nature, its requirements, its sanctions; they never hear the awful curse which it denounces; they never listen to the threatenings of an incensed God; they see not the tempest of divine vengeance, ready to burst upon their heads: or, if they do reflect upon the divine law, they consider it as regarding only their *external* conduct, and not reaching to the motives, the temper, the sentiments of the soul. For this reason they think

it easy to attain heaven ; they excuse and palliate their sins ; they disbelieve what Almighty God declares in his word. "The commandment" has never come to them in all its purity, in all its spirit, in all its power, as a solemn reality.

2. This subject addresses those who are *under conviction of sin*.

By the holy Spirit, the law has in some degree come home to you ; shining in its purity, and operating on your conscience. You have seen its demands to be reasonable ; you have heard its curses ; you have acknowledged the justice of its sentence ; you have felt the desert and aggravations of your sins. In view of the desperate wickedness of your hearts, your contempt of God's authority, and your rejection of a Savior's love, I hear you exclaiming, "For these things I deserve to die ; I deserve to be for ever damned." Remember, there is no necessary connection between conviction and conversion. You know it when you open the Scriptures and see the numerous examples of those who were convicted—who trembled—who wept—but who continued strangers to regenerating grace. You know it, when you look around you and see those who were once deeply affected on the subject of religion now careless and unconcerned. Let such instances be a warning to you, and lead you to beware how you trifle with the Spirit. Your situation is most critical ; your conviction should humble you, should strip you of all self-righteousness, should urge you to accept of the Savior. "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." It arraigns, and proves us guilty ; shows that we have come infinitely short of our duty, and teaches us that there can be no salvation by our own works. It thus drives us from every false refuge, and urges us to flee to him who is "the end of the law for righteousness." Convinced sinner, let it have this effect upon thee ; let it drive thee to despair ; not to despair of salvation, but of being saved by any works of thy own. Then you will see your need of a Savior's death ; then, "weary and heavy laden," you will go to Christ and "find rest to your soul."

3. The subject before us should excite the gratitude of those *whose conviction of sin has issued in true conversion*. Bless God that you are *experimentally* acquainted with the language of the text ; adore him for his distinguishing grace ; and show by all your conduct that you indeed know the real purity of his character, that you indeed feel the true nature of sin. Though the law has "no condemnation" for you if you be "in Christ Jesus"—yet as a rule of life it is still binding, and has lost none of its authority. Having driven you to the Savior for salvation, it serves as a rule for your conduct, and shows you how to order your conversation and to adorn your profession ; how to glorify God and express your gratitude to Christ. You are bound to observe it in every tittle ; to render to it perfect obedience. Love then the law—pay the highest regard to it, and "delight in it after the inner man." Such obedience will be a con-

stant testimony of your gratitude to God, and of your concern for his glory. If any man pretend to be justified by Christ, to love his name, and to enjoy communion with him, who does not habitually regard his commands, "he is a liar, and the truth is not in him;" for our Lord says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words."

Finally; this subject addresses those who are *insensible of their guilt*. Remember, sinners, it is the law of God you are contemning; that immutable law which is the transcript of the divine perfections; that holy law which has broken the hearts of thousands, and driven them to the only citadel of safety, the Lord Jesus Christ. I tell you, upon the authority of him "who cannot lie," that you are under the curse of this law; daily, hourly exposed to the infinite wrath of Almighty God. From your childhood you have been in this awful state. The cloud of divine vengeance, big with awful thunder, has long been hovering over you, and nothing but the restraining hand of God's sovereignty has prevented it from suddenly bursting upon you. But this wonderful forbearance cannot always continue; the sentence, denounced, may soon be executed: acknowledge then and feel your dreadful guilt, and desert of hell; acknowledge and feel that in strict justice God never has been under obligation to exercise mercy towards you. There is but one way of escape—the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." Guilty as you are, you are invited to this refuge; an opportunity is now offered for securing pardon and salvation; the uplifted arm of vengeance is suspended; the collected wrath yet waits for a moment. Oh, then, flee to that Redeemer who can "save to the uttermost," flee quickly, ere the majesty and the justice of the Eternal overtake thee. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, tarry not in all the plain, lest thou be consumed."

SERMON XCVII.

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SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE OF SAVING FAITH.

JAMES ii. 18.—*I will show thee my faith by my works.*

THE mode of instruction here proposed is the philosophical method of scripture. It is to develop the character of faith by the test of experiment. In placing before us this prime Christian grace, the Spirit of inspiration makes little use of abstract terms and formal definition, which the learned as well as “the unlearned and unstable might wrest to their own destruction.” As if despairing of success in this way, he takes us directly to the field of battle, where our own eyes may see “the good fight of faith” in various circumstances; he points to some peculiarly distinguished in the spiritual warfare; shows us their many and brilliant victories; and thus gives us the most correct and vivid impressions of a genuine faith: he shows us what it is *by its works*. Adopting the same course, we may notice,

I. SOME OF THE OPERATIONS OF FAITH IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS FITTED TO BRING OUT ITS NATURE; AND

II. SOME OF ITS LEADING FEATURES AS THUS DEVELOPED.

On the former point, the records of scripture are very ample. They exhibit faith triumphing gloriously over the strongest principles of depraved nature, and resisting alike the allurements and threatenings of a wicked world.

It triumphs over that deep-rooted feeling, the *dread of ridicule*. For proof, look back and see a man employed in constructing a large vessel, as if he really expected a flood of waters to cover the earth, and drown its guilty inhabitants. He dares to be singular. He takes his right-forward course in the face of public opinion. He spares neither time nor property in an enterprise which draws upon him the laugh of the world. And he prosecutes his purpose for the long period of “one hundred and twenty years.” What could have prompted him onward? The Bible informs us. “By *faith*, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” He was more afraid of the coming deluge than of the present sneer of the multitude. He believed God, and so his faith was victorious.

Is the love of *home and of country powerful*? Does it reign in every heart? Still we see Abraham tearing himself away from home, and kindred, and country, strong as were his attachments. God has promised him “a better country,” and bidden him depart. He believes the promise—commits himself cheerfully to the divine guidance, and goes forth, he knows not whither. His faith triumphs over the tenderest ties.

Is *paternal affection* a very influential principle? Is it peculiarly so,

when fixed on an only child, and that the son of old age? Strong as is a parent's love, faith is yet stronger. Look at this same venerable patriarch, as he moves up the mountain with his tenderly beloved Isaac. Look at him, as he calmly builds an altar and places the wood upon it. See him with unshaken firmness bind his son and lay him on the wood. See him stretch forth his hand and take the knife, with full purpose to slay the dear child. God has so commanded—and he dares not refuse. He believes God is able to raise him even from the dead. O how triumphant his faith! If we except the actual sacrifice of an only-begotten Son, some centuries after, by a still more tender Father, where shall we find a scene so sublime!

The love of *wealth* is another strong principle in man. Persons of every age and rank are seen under its control. Its empire in the world is very broad. It has despotic sway. Yet how complete and glorious the victory which faith has been known to achieve over this passion! My eye fixes at once on Moses, when "by faith he forsook Egypt," "esteeming the reproach of Christ *greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.*" It was as if the possessor of an immense fortune were at this day cheerfully to relinquish the whole, that he might the better labor and suffer for Christ, and then go to inherit "durable riches" in heaven.

And now look at this man of God once more. He was called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter." The honor and the power of a prince were his: within his reach, the gay but guilty pleasures of a court. How then shall we account for his voluntary abandonment of these glittering objects? The love of *power* alone has often drenched whole kingdoms in blood. In the persons of conquerors and despots what fearful havoc has it made of liberty, property, and life! The love of *honor* is also a very strong passion by itself. The love of *pleasure*, too, controls its millions. But here is a man in favorable circumstances to feel in all their force and to gratify these strong propensities of our nature; and yet he gains a complete conquest, not merely over some one of them, but over them all. Yes, by faith Moses obtains an easy and triumphant victory over the combined influence of these four strong principles in human nature—love of money, love of power, love of honor, love of pleasure. He turns from the whole array of earthly allurements to the service of God,—lifting his eye to a brighter crown, to wealth more abundant, and to pleasures more pure and enduring.

Perhaps the strongest principle in our nature is desire of *self-preservation*, called love of life or dread of death. It seems to be a sort of instinct common to all animals. But even *this* has yielded to faith. Yes, the maxim, "all that a man hath will he give for his life," does not always hold true. To the devoted servant of God there is one thing more dear than life itself—the *divine favor*. Look at Daniel. With all his love of life, he chooses rather to be cast among the lions than to incur the frown of God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, also, were men of like passions with us: equally capable of horror at the sight of a furnace open to receive them. Yet mark how faith gives them victory. In defiance of the king's wrath, they say meekly, but firmly; "God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king;" we *believe* he will. "But if

not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." With this noble resolve, they surrender to his fury and the flames.

Thus far, we have noticed *detached* victories on inspired record, which faith has achieved in very unlike circumstances. We turn, now, to a *series* of triumphs in the case of Paul, which, if not more signal than the preceding, may yet show in a stronger light the long *continued* operation of this grace. For, in common warfare, the prowess of a soldier is better exhibited in a long, perilous, bloody campaign, than in one or a few battles, however tremendous. No sooner does the proud youth of Tarsus become a disciple of the despised Jesus, than he undervalues the lessons which he has learned in the school of Gamaliel, and renounces without a sigh all his flattering earthly prospects. His lofty mind is at once humble and docile, and he ever afterward finds his delight at the feet of Christ, receiving his instructions as a little child, satisfied with his bare testimony on all subjects above his own comprehension. His late pride of intellect subdued, he is willing to be called "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things"—he can even "rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus." Nor can any array of dangers daunt his spirit, or any endurance of sufferings lessen his ardor. From the date of his conversion he goes forth a champion of the cross, in the face of poverty and contempt, authority and threats, imprisonment and death itself. And he goes fearlessly, he is "bold as a lion." The following summary of evils which he was allowed to suffer in honor of his Master, is from his own pen: "Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often; in perils of waters; in perils of robbers; in perils by mine own countrymen; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness."—What a catalogue of sufferings is here! And by what mighty principle was the apostle carried forward through the whole? How shall we account for the fact that "he fainted not?" that in the midst of his sufferings we even hear his songs? He himself has told us: "The life which I now live in the flesh *I live by the FAITH of the Son of God.*" Yes, it was faith working by love, its "twin sister." This gave him victory in every conflict. He had no doubt of the great system of truth, and the unseen realities which God has revealed. He went forward as one who saw and knew these things to be realities. And he therefore knew that all the "light afflictions" he could suffer in the present life were not worthy to be compared with that "weight of glory" which he had in prospect. So long as none of his trials could "separate him from the love of Christ," he was quite willing to endure them all. "None of these things move me, neither count I my *life* dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." He saw his crown, *by faith*, as clearly as if hung out of heaven, and declared to be his by the immediate voice of God. And he saw, too, how every affliction would add new splendor to that crown:—he saw it daily brightening.

and thus he went forward joyfully, "fighting the good fight of *faith*." Moreover, he saw an infinitely *brighter* crown than his,—and he was eager to return love for love, and suffering for suffering, in gathering new jewels for the diadem of his Almighty Redeemer.

Here, then, we see the operation of faith to great advantage;—not in one victory, however splendid, nor yet in a series of brilliant triumphs of a single *class*:—no, here is victory upon victory—triumph upon triumph, in every variety of conflict, through a long course of years. Not one defeat in the whole time. Not one inglorious wound. Not one tremor of cowardice;—as if God would show how much a single Christian can do and suffer under the strong impulse of *gospel faith*.

From the preceding *works* of faith it would seem not difficult to ascertain,

II. SOME OF ITS LEADING CHARACTERISTICS.

In the first place, it is a *belief in divine testimony respecting unseen things, with corresponding affections, purposes, and actions*. So far as the things believed are lovely and desirable, "faith works by love" to obtain them. So far as they are unlovely, or objects of dread, faith works by aversion or fear to avoid them:—thus Noah's faith operated through the passion of fear, when he built the ark. So far as the things believed afford ground of confidence, faith leads the soul to trust in them. So far as they relate to Christ, the bright center of revealed truth, and the hope of a lost world, faith prompts to a reliance upon him, as a divine, all-sufficient, altogether lovely and glorious Savior. So far as they require outward action, faith urges on to this result; and without *external works* is not made perfect. And as the entire system of truth presented to the eye of faith is most pure and holy, persons under its influence do of course "purify themselves by faith." Do any object to this definition as too complex? I ask, if one more simple would include the whole idea of faith, as gathered from its works? Is it defined, "the simple belief of the simple truth?"—an exercise of the understanding merely—separate from affection, volition, and action—having complete existence by itself? Such faith, "being alone," an apostle has declared "*dead*." It is not the thing we are now considering. *That*, as we have seen, has vitality. It works. It brings into action the various faculties of soul and body. In its higher exercises, it exerts a controlling influence over the whole man. This "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" it leads its possessor, in his feelings, purposes, and actions, to regard "the things that are seen and temporal," far less than "the things that are unseen and eternal." It conducted Noah, Moses, Daniel, and Paul up to heaven: it will be a safe guide thither in all future time.

2. Faith is a *reasonable* thing. Some, with a contemptuous smile, would mark it as the essence of fanaticism—a delusion of the weak or the ignorant. But is not the process highly rational, by which its nature is ascertained? Is it not the favorite mode of sound philosophy to learn the properties of things by their effects? Besides, what is more rational than a belief in the sayings of Him who cannot lie? a belief, too, that wakes up the affections and controls the life? And what more rational than a sacrifice of present good for something better in sure prospect?

Such faith, enthusiasm! Far from it. No, it is the perfection of reason to believe, not this false world, not the father of lies, but God; and especially to believe Him on subjects of too large grasp for our puny minds, and quite beyond the range of our senses, not excepting his declarations on the high mysteries of the Trinity, and the atonement of his well-beloved Son. It is the perfection of reason to prefer the more excellent things; and such are the objects of faith—in kind and duration far superior to the objects of sense, and better suited to our deathless souls. The way of faith is then the way of truth and soberness. The man who takes it has no cause to blush. No, it is the opposite character—he who believes not “the true sayings of God”—he who feels not and acts not in accord with these announcements of Heaven; this man’s course is glaringly irrational; for he rejects the very best of testimony.

3. Faith is *bold* and *unbending*. It gives decision and inflexibility of purpose and action,—not from obstinacy, ambition, or other unworthy motive—but simply because it rests on immutable truth. A child of stern principle, not of circumstances, its *recreation* is to meet and surmount obstacles. The hardy plant can flourish amid snows, and mountains, and tempests. Yet a person under its influence may be meek as Moses, while firm as Daniel. He may even imitate “the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” with none of that pliancy of conscience which sacrifices the plain will of God to considerations of interest or expediency. The man of sterling faith has his eye raised from earth to heaven. His ear is less open to the voice of man than of God. In time of emergency, he asks not, with pale and palpitating solicitude, What course will expose me to least danger? What will best secure my own ease, reputation, or pecuniary interest? What will gratify friends? What will this man of wealth or that man of influence approve? What will be popular in the community? Were these the chief questions, Noah had never built an ark, Moses had not turned his back on the glittering throne of the Pharaohs, and Daniel had failed to be “greatly beloved” of God. But, with the man of faith, the first and the last great question is, What is the mind of God? This point settled, he lays his course, and turns not to the right hand to grasp a crown, or to the left to escape a wheel of torture.

4. Faith is very *powerful*. We have seen the proof, not in abstract reasoning, but in facts—in its actual *works*, exhibited by sundry devoted servants of God. Here is not theory but experiment, triumphant experiment, in accord with the inspired declarations; “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”—“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that *believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God?” We have just now seen how faith prompts its possessor to take his elevated course, in spite of the world’s frown or smile, and to overcome all that is in it, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” It is thus a conqueror of the world, not like Alexander, but in the highest and best sense.

Let the world bring out her whole array of power. Let her display the nameless attractions of home and country, and add to these the strongest endearments of relationship, and attempt to confine within such limits the affections and the desires: what can it avail with one who has

taken Christ for his Master and Lord, and who hears him say ; " He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me ? " Or let the world spread out her hills and valleys, her flocks and herds, her gold and silver and diamonds, her ease and her luxuries ; let her come, too, with her learning and titles, her crowns, her pompous magnificence, to allure the man of faith from the path of duty ; and let Satan concentrate in one fascinating spot " all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," and offer immediate and full possession—the bribery utterly fails ;—faith lifts the soul above the whole, as if they were children's toys : it counts them as nothing and vanity in its eager pursuit of the real, endless glories of heaven.

Unsuccessful here,—let the world now suddenly change her smiles for frowns. Let her point at the believer her finger of scorn, and toss up her head, and look down upon him with contempt, and add poverty to reproach ; let her bring forth the terror of her laws and customs, with the strength of her kings and armies, to compel obedience ; let her set open the foul and dark recesses of her prisons, and show her instruments of torture, and heat her furnaces, and make her lions roar fearfully : 'tis all in vain. Faith, like the servant of the son of Shaphat, still sees a more powerful array with her than against her. She has often triumphed over such foes ; and she can again. Yes ; and if the world could bring out far brighter charms and darker frowns than are now in her storehouse, faith would still get the victory.

5. Another attribute of faith is *sublimity*. The scene spread out before its eye, how vast ! how boundless ! even the whole circle of revealed truth. For " faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Here is the unseen world in all past ages—so far as the Scriptures place it before us—and added to this, the unseen world as it now exists ; and then the prophetic view, down to the end of time, and onward for endless ages. Yes, the eye of faith ranges back to the beginning, and forward for ever and ever, upward to heaven, downward to hell. What length, and breadth, and height, and depth ! And then, the stupendous exhibitions of power and wisdom, of grace and justice, of bliss and wo, that come within the view ! The perfections of Jehovah, with their grand results ! Here are things vast to be admired, things excellent to be loved and sought, things revolting to be shunned. How unlike the trifles of earth ! How suited to expand the intellect, to improve the moral feelings, to ennoble the whole man ! Here is room for the largest grasp of mind. How then can the believer, whose " eye affecteth his heart," dwell amid these scenes—be familiar with them, and not be wakened to intense interest ? How can his mind fix, as in a trance, upon his own Redeemer, the bright center of this scene of magnificence, and his soul not burn with a holy desire to be clothed in his likeness ? Such was the fact with Paul, and such has been the truly heroic and sublime course of not a few kindred spirits. The sons of earth may misname the objects and the works of faith low and contemptible ; but the light of a burning world will show alike the dignity of these and the vanity of all inferior things.

6. Another obvious characteristic of faith is its *moral excellence*. The

gospel has had to encounter much obloquy from the allegation, that it offers its blessings on a condition which has no moral quality. The objector defines faith an exercise of the understanding simply—a necessary result of evidence presented to that faculty, and without connection with the heart or practice. Hence a favorite maxim of infidelity; “No matter what a man *believes*, if his *practice* be good.” But genuine faith is not thus “dead, being alone.” It is a most efficient principle. We have seen how it “wrought *righteousness*.” “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Faith has then a part in all actions pleasing to God. And in no case can the existence of saving faith be proved, where there is no moral excellence—nay, without this, it *has no existence*; For, “with the *heart*”—not with the understanding merely—“man believeth unto righteousness.” What! *no moral quality* in a belief which never exists without holy feelings! which is always in happy accord with sound and enlightened reason! No moral quality in a faith which secures the mortification of all the unholy affections and lusts! None in a faith which always prompts to that right-forward course, which the finger of God points out for man, through this crooked and ensnaring world! Where is moral excellence to be found, if not here? if not in the Noahs, and Abrahams, and Pauls? And what more suitable condition of eternal life could be proposed, than a faith which influences the wanderer from God and happiness to return, with true penitence and love, to his Father’s house?

Yet, *justification* by a holy faith is not of works, but of grace. For it is the faith of a transgressor; and when a person has once broken the law, no *subsequent* obedience, however strict, can avert the curse. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them.” By the law, then, “no flesh can be justified.” Besides, every believer regards his own imperfect righteousness as “filthy rags.” In his best deeds, he sees no meritorious ground of acceptance with God. He fixes his eye solely on the merit of Christ. Here is all his dependence for pardon and eternal life. He therefore expects salvation, not by deeds of law, but entirely by grace, through the precious blood of a Redeemer.

Such, brethren, as appears from its operations, is the Christian grace, to which, in the matter of salvation, the Bible has given a marked pre-eminence. And now, in conclusion, we may notice,

First, its *divine origin*. If it were not classed with “the fruits of the Spirit;” if it were not expressly called “the gift of God;” if Jesus were not styled “the Author and Finisher of our faith;” its very works and leading features would reveal its high source. Who can fail to see the broad, deep stamp of Heaven on a principle so entirely at variance with the spirit and course of this world, so stern and uncompromising, so holy, “so unlike every thing human?” Truly, “this is the finger of God,” the result of his transforming power. Nor does the fact excuse unbelief. For, a refusal to believe the well-attested, “true sayings of God,” so as to feel and act in accordance with them, can have no apology. It is manifestly irrational. It betrays great perversity of heart. “He that believeth not God hath made him a *liar*.” The sin is “red like crimson.” And the fact, that “all men have not faith,” proves an unwillingness to have it—demonstrates human depravity.

A second remark is, that saving faith is *the same in every age and nation*. It may differ in the number of its objects, and in its degree of strength; for our Savior speaks of "great faith," and "little faith." The *form*, also, of its conflicts and trials may vary with circumstances. But its distinctive character is invariable. It is always an influential belief in divine testimony. We have found it in Noah before the flood, and in Abraham and Moses before the giving of the law; in Daniel and his companions under the Jewish economy, and in Paul under the Christian dispensation. These specimens of faith, selected from the different dispensations under which God has seen fit to train men for heaven, are of course genuine. They come attested by the hand and seal of Jehovah. With the exception of Paul, the examples have all been taken from those worthies so happily grouped in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as "having obtained a good report through faith." The marked agreement between them alike supports the apostle's definition of faith, at the opening of the chapter, and evinces the fact that there is but "one faith," as well as "one Lord." They are in truth of a high order, but not too high for imitation. While we may well inquire, if we have "the like precious faith," we should consider that these ancient saints had far less light and privilege than ourselves. We have not only "Moses and the prophets," but Christ and his apostles, together with the more abundant "ministration of the Spirit;" and shall our faith be of a slender and sickly growth? shall it suffer in comparison with those bright specimens from less favored times?

Thirdly, contemplate some of the victories which faith is called to achieve at the present day, and in future. And what are the leading forms of opposition *in our beloved country*? Not a tyrant's dungeon "with bread of affliction and water of affliction." Not a despot's heated furnace; for this is a land of religious freedom. She is neither called to "stop the mouths of lions," nor to "quench the violence of fire." Her foes are of quite other stamp—less terrific, yet more subtle, and possibly more dangerous.

Sitting as we do under our vines and fig-trees, the enemy appears with deceitful smiles, kind looks, and "words softer than oil." Now, he displays, with not a little address, the pleasures of sense. Now, ease, or honor, or property, is the lure. And now, again, he puts on the grave and wise look of philosophy, and doubts the divine origin of the Bible, offers a plea for vice, casts a sneer at divine institutions, or in some other way encourages departure from truth and holiness.

Under our free government, we hear much of the omnipotence of public opinion. If this opinion quadrate with *Christian* doctrine and practice, *well*; the greater its influence, the better. But if it take its shape in no small measure from *worldly* men and *worldly* maxims—if it is in fact the opinion of a corrupt community, and a standard of moral sentiment and conduct quite unlike and quite *below* the high standard of Scripture, it becomes a *rock* on which there is great danger of making "shipwreck of *faith* and a good conscience." And such it has ever been, to large extent, in this unholy world. Even on these fairest plains of Christendom, where our lot is kindly cast, public opinion, especially of late, has seemed to make silent and gradual departure from the pure and unbend-

ing word of God. Now, it has a little softened down one offensive feature, and now another. Here, it has given a polluting touch to the snow-white purity of the Sabbath; there loosened the reins of family government, or shortened the lessons of family instruction. Here, it has warned away from the pulpit a severe or a mysterious doctrine; there mingled a little vain philosophy with heaven-descended truth. Here, it has taken from some vice a portion of its deformity; there disarmed the rod of church discipline of half its terror, and plead for a conformity to the spirit of the age. It has even exalted the favorite and pliable doctrines of expediency and interest above the plain commands of God. These officious and profane intrusions of public opinion into our holy of holies, faith is called to resist. She must make a bold stand in the name of the Lord. She must insist on the punctilios of revealed truth, fearless of consequences.

But our faith has other foes to encounter. See you not those giant forms, Infidelity and Popery, the enemies alike of God and man? They lift up their heads to the clouds. They stretch abroad their arms from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They "speak great swelling words." They defy the armies of Israel. They threaten extermination. What has faith to do now? She looks in her Bible. She reads: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"—"Upon this Rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—"Then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." 'Tis enough. She takes the sword of the Spirit; fixes upon the foe her steady eye; it brightens, as she cries to God for help. The Most High gives strength and skill. The champions, locked arm-in-arm, fall to the ground.

Look again. See vice, gross and shameless, stalk through the length and breadth of the land—Sabbath-breaking and intemperance, with their whole natural, numerous family of evils. Shocking sight! Faith opens her Bible, and reads a glowing description of the time, when nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; when holiness shall be universal. She sees no cause to tremble. She puts forth new efforts against these combined and formidable foes, sure that they will yet wither before the breath of the Almighty.

But the faith of Zion has victories to gain on a far broader scale. Before we gaze in rapture on the full glories of the Millennium, we may expect many hard-fought battles. Look away to the pagan world. Is the darkness of ages broad and deep? Are Satan's strong holds, which he has been forming and fortifying for centuries, "walled up to heaven?" Are his legions—nerved with uncommon wrath—prepared at all points for desperate conflict? Faith reads the charter which gives to Christ "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," and takes courage. She reads again; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"—and now farewell ease, and wealth, and honor. The missionary breaks away from every tie, like the father of the faithful, and from earth's strongest allurements, like the deliverer of Israel's tribes. I see him as another Paul, "in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea; in weariness and pain-

fulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness." Yes, he penetrates fearlessly to the very center of Satan's earthly empire. He counts not his life dear. He takes the most difficult, hazardous posts. He soon falls in glory, or rather ascends to his reward. A kindred spirit follows, and another, and another. Unbelief calls it a wanton waste of life. It insists that youth should reserve themselves for better services. It urges the abandonment of these perilous stations. But faith, consulting the record, finds no spot on earth, trodden by the foot of man, excepted by our Savior as too hot or too cold, or too fatal to health or life, to receive the gospel. His command is, "Go ye into *all* the world." And why should it be disobeyed? Shall a Parry be lauded for his enterprise, while he wraps himself in triple furs, and ventures amid the eternal ice of polar seas? Even after repeated failure, shall he be met on his return by the loud applause of a world? And must the devoted missionary receive the sneer of this same world for his perils, and sufferings, and toils among the shivering and depressed Esquimaux? Shall men dare the blaze of a tropical sun in Asia for luxuries, and fortunes, and posts of honor, but not for souls? Or, in Africa, to fasten the chains of slavery, but not to loosen and remove the heavier chains of sin? Or, in South America, to bring away silver, and gold, and diamonds, but not to carry thither the unsearchable riches of Christ? Shall the thinned ranks in deadliest battle be promptly filled, and must a dangerous missionary post be relinquished, because the men to occupy it are mortal? No, while love of the world can crowd stations of greatest peril, let faith show itself an equally powerful, as it is a more noble, principle of action. Go, then, some Hall, some Fisk, some Martyn; go, take the places of these loved missionaries. These pioneers had a short campaign. Their indulgent Captain took them early from the conflict to the crown. And if others are alike faithful, they too may receive an early discharge.

The church must not hold back these daring, elevated spirits. Christ bids them go. He shows them his torn hands and bleeding side, and, pointing to the dark world of idolatry, asks, in a tone of love and pity, if they can suffer nothing in a cause which has cost him life. Yes, he engages to be their company.—"*Lo, I am with you alway.*" 'Tis enough. Their eyes sparkle to be away. Faith disregards every obstacle, and urges their departure. And shall we stay them now? It would be treason against the King of kings. It must not be. In this day of religious revival and holy enterprise the voice from heaven is, "ONWARD, ONWARD TO CERTAIN TRIUMPH."

Faith has yet to gain her noblest victories. We look forward, and see the circle of her influence rapidly widening, and widening to earth's remotest bounds. Thrones of despotism all crumble. Temples of idolatry fall. Human sacrifices cease. The darkness of ages rolls off from the face of the earth. The empire of Jesus becomes universal: and the nations rejoice in his reign:

And now, who among you, my brethren, is "*doing what he can*" to hasten this blest consummation? Who "*shows by works,*" that he really *believes*? Here is the eternal standard—"the same that shall judge you in the last day." O, "JUDGE YOURSELVES NOW, THAT YE MAY NOT BE CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD!"

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SERMONS XCVIII. & XCIX.

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**THE DUTY, THE BENEFITS, AND THE PROPER
METHOD OF RELIGIOUS FASTING.**

DANIEL, IX. 3. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer
and supplication with fasting.*

THIS is the language of the prophet *Daniel*. He is speaking of that which occurred in *Babylon*, where he and his brethren were in captivity. It was a dark and distressing day. Religion was at a low ebb among the professing people of God. Even their deep adversity had not led them to repentance and reformation. And idolatry, attended with the most deplorable moral corruption, reigned among the heathen around them. Every thing, to the eye of sense, appeared in the highest degree discouraging, not to say desperate. But this holy man trusted in God; and in the exercise of faith, saw, beyond the clouds which encircled him and his people, a ray of light which promised at once deliverance and glory. He perceived nothing, indeed, among the mass of his Jewish brethren which indicated a speedy termination of their captivity; but he "understood by books," that is, he firmly believed, on the ground of a recorded prophecy, delivered by *Jeremiah*, that the period of their liberation was drawing nigh. In this situation, what does he do? Instead of desponding, he "encourages himself in the Lord his God." And, instead of allowing himself to indulge a spirit of presumption or indolence, on account of the certainty of the approaching deliverance, he considers himself as called to special humiliation, fasting and prayer; to humble himself before God under a sense of the deep unworthiness of himself and his companions in captivity; and to pray with importunity that their unmerited emancipation might be at once hastened and sanctified. Such is the spirit of genuine piety. It neither despairs in adversity, nor is elated with pride at the approach of help. On the contrary, the firmer its confidence in the Divine fidelity, the lower does it lie in humility and penitence, and the more powerfully does it excite to holy action, and to holy desires to be a "worker together with God." It was when this man of God distinctly understood that the desolations of seventy years were coming to an end, that he "set his face to seek unto the Lord God by prayer and supplications with fasting."

The captive Jews in *Babylon*, as a body, seem to have been in the habit, before this time, of observing certain stated days of fasting and prayer; but they were evidently observed in a formal and heartless manner; and, therefore, instead of proving a blessing, had but increased their guilt. The exercise of the servant of God, to which our text refers, was of a very different character. It was with him a season of special, earnest, elevated devotion; prompted by special feelings; consecrated to a special object; and accompanied by those special circumstances of humility which indicated a soul deeply abased before God, and fervently engaged in pleading for his blessing.

I shall take occasion from the example of *Daniel* to consider the duty of FASTING, as a suitable and very important accompaniment of special humiliation and prayer. And in pursuance of this design, I shall request your attention to the DUTY, the BENEFITS, and the PROPER METHOD of RELIGIOUS FASTING. After which the way will be prepared for some remarks more immediately practical.

I. The DUTY of religious fasting will claim our attention in the first place.

It is unnecessary to say that fasting is abstinence from food. It is not, however, every *kind* of abstinence that constitutes a *religious fast*. Some abstain from their usual aliment because, from indisposition, they loathe it; others, because they cannot obtain it; and a third class, because abstinence is enjoined by medical prescription. But the *Christian*, as such, refrains from choice, denying his appetite from religious principle, and with a view to spiritual benefit. Now, when it is affirmed that occasional fasting, in this sense, and with this view, is a Christian duty, it is not intended to be maintained that it is one of those stated duties which all are bound to attend upon at certain fixed periods, whatever may be their situation, or the aspect of Providence towards them. There is no precept in the word of God which enjoins the observance of a particular number of fast days in each year. It is to be considered as an *occasional*, or, perhaps, more properly speaking, a *special* duty, which, like seasons of *special prayer*, ought to be regulated, as to its frequency and manner of observance, by the circumstances in which we are placed. But although the times and seasons of religious fasting be left, as they obviously must be, to the judgment and the conscience of each individual, it may be confidently affirmed that it is a DIVINE INSTITUTION; that it is a duty on which ALL CHRISTIANS are BOUND, at PROPER SEASONS, to attend. This, it is believed, may be firmly established by the following considerations.

1. The LIGHT OF NATURE seems to recognise this duty. Abstinence from food, either as an aid or an expression of piety, has been common in all ages, and among all nations. Those who have attended to the various forms of Paganism, know that in all of them fasting has had a place, and in some of them a very prominent place. In entering on important undertakings, and in preparing for sacrifices of more than common solemnity, their fasts were often protracted and rigid to an almost incredible degree. Now, the question is, how came this practice to be so general, nay universal, among those, whether polished or barbarous, who enjoyed no written revelation? Was it a *dictate of nature*? Then our position is established. If abstinence from food be a natural expression of deep humiliation and mourning, no further argument is necessary to show that it ought to accom-

pany seasons of special prayer, and peculiar approach to God. Was it the result of *tradition*, handing down to all generations the practice of the first parents of our race, received from Him who made them, and placed them, with the knowledge of his will, under a dispensation of mercy? Then is our position still more firmly established. From one or the other of these sources, the practice *must* have been derived; and either of them will go far towards furnishing the warrant in question.

2. The EXAMPLES of religious fasting recorded in the word of God, are multiplied and very decisive in their character. Out of many which might be selected, the following are worthy of special notice.

Joshua, and the Elders of *Israel*, evidently kept a solemn fast, when their people were defeated by the men of *Ai*; for they remained all day, from morning till eventide, prostrate on their faces before the ark, with dust on their heads, in exercises of the deepest humiliation and prayer. *David*, we are expressly told, fasted, as well as prayed, while he humbled himself under a heavy judgment of God, sent on him for his sin in the matter of *Uriah*. Even the hardened *Ahab* fasted and cried for mercy, when the judgments of God were denounced against him by the prophet *Elijah*. The pious and public-spirited *Nehemiah*, while he was yet in *Babylon*, set apart a season of special prayer accompanied with fasting, when he heard of the desolations of the city and people of God:—and afterward, when he came to *Jerusalem*, he proclaimed a public and solemn fast, to deplore the low state of religion, and to pray for pardoning and restoring mercy. *Jehoshaphat*, king of *Judah*, appointed a day of fasting and prayer throughout his kingdom, when the confederated forces of *Ammon* and *Moab* came up against him. The inhabitants of *Nineveh*, though Pagans, when the prophet of God proclaimed his approaching judgments, immediately set apart a season of special prayer and fasting, in which not only all the adult inhabitants, but also their *infants*, and the very *beasts* that served them, were required to abstain from all aliment. “For it was proclaimed and published by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,—Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God.” When queen *Esther* felt herself and her people to be in danger from the conspiracy of *Haman*, she set apart a season of solemn prayer and fasting; that is, as she explains it, neither eating nor drinking for three days in succession, in which all her maidens in the palace, and all the Jews in *Shushan*, were united. The devoted and inspired *Esra*, when setting out on his important mission to *Jerusalem*, assembled the returning captives at the river *Ahava*, and there “proclaimed a fast, that they might afflict themselves before God, and seek of Him a right way for themselves and their little ones, and for all their substance.” And it is remarkable that the blessing of God attended the exercise of fasting in every one of these cases. The armies of *Joshua* were, thenceforward, victorious. *David*, though deprived of the child for whose life he prayed, was forgiven his great sin. *Ninevah*, though exceedingly guilty, was spared. *Jehoshaphat* was made to triumph over his formidable enemies. Even the impenitent *Ahab* was favored with the delay of that dreadful judgment which had been denounced against him. *Esther* and her people experienced a signal deliverance. And *Esra* obtained the blessing which he sought with such humble importunity.

After the coming of Christ, we find the same practice continued, and making a part of almost every extraordinary season of devotion. Jesus Christ himself entered on his public ministry after a long season of preparatory fasting. And although there is no doubt that his was a case of miraculous abstinence, still the general principle held forth and countenanced is the same. We find also the apostles, in almost every instance of setting apart candidates for the gospel ministry, accompanying the ordination solemnities with fasting. The pious *Anna*, the prophetess, was engaged in "serving God, day and night, with fastings and prayers." When the Lord appeared to *Cornelius*, the "devout" centurion, and imparted the knowledge of his will to him, we are informed he was engaged in fasting and prayer. And the apostle *Paul* speaks repeatedly of his habit of waiting on God by fastings, as well as by prayer, and other means of divine appointment. In short, we scarcely find in all the scriptural record, either in the Old or New Testament, a single example of an extraordinary season of humiliation and prayer which was not accompanied by the abstinence of which we speak.

Now, I ask, can it be supposed that a fact so frequently repeated concerning pious people,—in so great a variety of situations, from early periods of the Bible history to its very close,—could have occurred by mere accident or caprice? It cannot be. That which stands forth sanctioned by the example of the people of God in all ages, and by the Author of our holy religion himself, is surely no human device, but an institution of Heaven.

3. Again, we may infer that religious fasting is a divine institution from a variety of *precepts and direct intimations* found in various parts of Scripture, especially in the New Testament.

And here I shall say nothing of the fixed periodical fasts solemnly enjoined under the ceremonial economy; as all grant that these are superseded by the new dispensation, and that no specific days have been divinely appointed to succeed them. But it is remarkable that, even under the ceremonial economy, besides the stated fasts, occasional ones were ordered by the express command of God. Thus Jehovah proclaims to the people of *Judah*, by the prophet *Joel*, in a day of great political and moral desolation—"Sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord." But there are more than intimations to the same amount in the New Testament. Take, as an example of these, that remarkable passage in our Lord's sermon on the mount. "Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, (evidently taking for granted that they *must* and *would* fast)—anoint thine head and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Again, our blessed Savior, in speaking of some of the higher attainments in Christian character and power, says—"But this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." And again; when some persons asked him, "Why do the disciples of *John*, and of the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not?"—he replied—"Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while *the bridegroom* is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with

them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and THEN SHALL THEY FAST IN THOSE DAYS." And, accordingly, as I have already hinted, we find a number of striking examples of fasting, on occasions of special prayer, after our Lord ascended to heaven, and before the close of the inspired history. And the apostle *Paul*, in the seventh chapter of the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, in speaking of Christians withdrawing for a time from the ordinary concerns and relations of life, gives it his sanction,—and assigns as a reason for it, "that they may give themselves to prayer and fasting."

But the duty of religious fasting will be still further illustrated and confirmed, when we consider,

II. In the second place, the BENEFITS which may be expected to result from the proper performance of this duty.

And in reference to this point, it behooves us to be ever upon our guard against the dictates of a vain superstition. For, as the practice of fasting for religious purposes has probably been in the world ever since the fall of man, and we have every reason to suppose was thus early received from the Author of our being; so this practice began very early, like every other divine appointment, to be perverted and abused. The Heathen evidently considered it as highly meritorious, and as purchasing for them the favor of the deities whom they vainly worshipped. And some of the ancient heretics, supposing that there was, as they expressed it, a certain "malignity in matter," and that the less they had to do, in any shape, with material objects, the better,—taught their followers to consider abstinence, as far as possible, from all aliment, and especially from animal food, as in itself constituting the highest merit in the sight of God, and as one of the most important and essential of all duties. Hence they imagined that the more any one mortified, enfeebled, and emaciated his body, without destroying life, the nearer he approached to moral perfection. But not only did the early heretics fall into the grossest superstition on this subject, the great body of professing Christians, very soon after the apostles' days, began to pervert the practice of fasting to superstitious purposes. Christians, in fact, began very early to be corrupted by Gnostic dreams, and Pagan habits. As early as the close of the second century, they seem to have commenced the practice of observing Wednesday and Friday of every week as days of fasting. Not long after, we find them observing one great annual fast, to commemorate the death of the blessed Savior. This fast was kept, after its commencement, for different periods of time, by different persons; plainly showing, as indeed many of them confessed, that it had no divine appointment for its origin, but was a mere uncommanded invention of man. Some kept it for one day; but the more common practice was to keep it for precisely *forty hours*, because they supposed it was just about forty hours from the time of our Lord's death until he rose from the dead. And hence it was called, in the ancient calendars, the *quadragesimal fast*, or the *fast of forty*. This time, however, as early as the sixth century after Christ, was extended, by human superstition, to *forty days*, instead of *forty hours*; and the reason assigned for this change was, that the Savior himself fasted forty days and forty nights. Of this annual fast, as well as of all the Fridays in the year, the Romish Church has long been in the habit of making a most superstitious use. The more serious and devout among them make themselves, without any divine warrant, the perfect slaves of

this observance, and consider eating meat in Lent, or on Friday, as a mortal sin. Still more servile, if possible, is the rigor of Mohammedan fasting. The votaries of that imposture consider periodical abstinence from food as forming a large part of the duty of an exemplary Mussulman, and perhaps, next to the pilgrimage to *Mecca*, as the most important part of the price of heaven. And, in conformity with this delusion, the whole of their month *Ramadan*, the ninth in their year, is a great fast, during which the law of their religion is that no one shall eat or drink, or suffer the least particle of aliment to pass his lips, from the commencement to the termination of light, on each day.

Now, all this is weakly and criminally superstitious. For "meat," as the inspired apostle expressly tells us, "commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse." And, therefore, in estimating the benefits of religious fasting, we ascribe to it no mystical charm, no sanctifying power. We have no idea that there is any merit in macerating and enfeebling the body; nor can we regard with any other sentiment than that of abhorrence, the doctrine that abstaining from particular kinds of food ever did or can make expiation for sin, or serve, in any form, as the price of our acceptance with God.

But we consider religious fasting, when properly conducted, as attended with the following *benefits* :

1. *It is a natural and significant expression of our penitence for sin.* We may say, perhaps, that the primary design, the most obvious and immediate object of fasting is to mortify and afflict the body, as a token of our penitence before God; as an acknowledgment of our entire dependence upon him for all our comforts, and also of our utter unworthiness of them as sinners. For as few things more effectually destroy the inclination for food than great distress of mind, so there seems to be no more suitable emblem of real mourning for sin, than voluntarily refraining from food. Fasting is also a proper expression of penitence, inasmuch as it carries with it an implied confession that all our comforts, even to a morsel of bread, are forfeited by sin; and that we might justly be deprived of them all, if a holy God "should deal with us after our sins, or reward us according to our iniquities." To which may be added, that the inconvenience to which abstinence from food gives rise, is well adapted to make us feel how entirely dependent we are on the bounty of Providence, not only for our enjoyment, but also for our very existence, from day to day.

2. Another very important benefit of religious fasting is, that by denying the animal appetite we "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection." The tendency of the flesh in our fallen nature to gain the mastery over our better part, is that great standing evidence of our depravity which the word of God every where recognises, and which all history, and daily observation, with melancholy uniformity, establish. This unhallowed dominion is first broken when the "reign of grace" commences in the heart. But still the carnal principle, "the flesh," as the Scriptures call it, has too much influence even in the most pious; and to mortify and subdue it is the great object of the spiritual warfare, from its commencement to the last moment of the conflict. When, therefore, the professing Christian indulges the flesh, and pampers appetite over a plentiful table, from day to day, he nourishes this unfriendly principle, gives it strength, and,

of course, increases its power over his better part. It is undoubtedly found by universal experience, that when the body is constantly gratified by fulness of aliment, it is more heavy, more sensual, and imparts to the mind a more fleshly and lethargic character, than when the appetite has been wisely denied. Hence it will always be found that habitual luxury, in direct proportion to the degree in which it is indulged, is unfavorable to deep spirituality. Probably they were never found united in any individual since the world began. On this principle is founded the importance of that self-denial, which our blessed Savior requires as a distinguishing characteristic of his disciples. Upon this principle rests that great gospel maxim delivered by the apostle; "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Now, one of the most obvious means of effecting this purpose is to deny the appetite for food. This tends emphatically to "keep under the body;" to restrain animal desire; to counteract sensuality; and to promote a holy superiority to all those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Accordingly, it may be asserted, that in all ages, those Christians who have been most distinguished for "mortifying the deeds of the body," bringing it "into subjection," and "setting their affections upon things above," have been no less remarkable for the frequency and seriousness of their seasons of religious fasting.

3. A third benefit to be derived from fasting, when properly conducted, is, that it renders the mind more active, clear, and vigorous. The connection between mind and body, however mysterious, is yet manifest and familiar. And there is, perhaps, no fact in the whole history of this connection which experience more uniformly attests, than that repletion is unfriendly to the highest and most successful mental operations. The seeming exceptions to this law of our nature are so few, and of such a character, as rather to confirm than contradict it. He, therefore, who desires to attain the highest efforts, and the best products of his intellectual faculties, must often abstain, either in whole or in part, from his usual amount of bodily aliment, even though that amount be habitually moderate. Fasting, then, is, beyond all controversy, one of the best preparatives for high intellectual effort. It imparts a degree of acuteness to the understanding, of vigor to the imagination, and of activity and promptness to the memory, which are not experienced in other circumstances. Hence, it is well known, that some of the ancient Pagan philosophers, when about to meet their adversaries in public debate, were in the habit of entering on the conflict *fasting*, that their intellectual powers might be more awake, acute, and active. Did *they* cheerfully submit to this privation, for the purpose of preparing their minds for meeting with advantage a fellow worm? And shall Christians refuse to submit to the same privation, for preparing them to wait upon God with alacrity, and with holy elevation of sentiment and affection? If any man be desirous of preparing his mind for the highest acts of devotion; for the most complete withdrawal, for a time, from the world; for being lifted above the vanities and sensualities of life; for collecting and fastening his whole soul on God and heavenly things,—among other means of attaining his hallowed object, let him not omit to accompany them with real fasting. He who neglects this precious auxiliary to devotion, (for so it assuredly deserves to be called,) has not well considered either the structure of his own frame, or the spirit of the work of God.

4. A further advantage accruing from well conducted religious fasting is, *that it ministers essentially to the bodily health.* Few things are more severely trying and ultimately undermining to the human body than habitual repletion. A statesman and philosopher of our own country, distinguished at once for his talents, his practical character, his vigorous health, and his long life, was accustomed to observe a fast either total or partial, one day in every week; assigning as the reason of it, no religious motive, but that he wished "to give nature a holyday." And he had no doubt of its solid benefit to his bodily health. The practice, I am persuaded, was founded in the clearest and soundest principles of physiology. Truly our nature needs such a "holyday" much oftener than we are willing to yield it. The most enlightened physicians have given it as their opinion, that thousands accounted temperate, and really so in the popular sense of the term, are bringing themselves to premature graves for want of such a frequent respite from the burden of aliment as an occasional day of fasting would furnish. It is plain, then, that any sacred religious habit which secures such a respite; which tends, in the course of each month and week, to preserve us from the effects of habitual indulgence and repletion, cannot fail of contributing to the preservation and vigor of our bodily health, as well as preparing our minds for prompt and active application to the most important of all objects.

5. There is one more advantage of frequent religious fasting by no means to be despised. I mean *making it systematically subservient to the purposes of charity.* Some pious persons, whose pecuniary circumstances were narrow, but whose love to God and their fellow-men was uncommonly fervent, have practiced fasting, in part at least, upon this plan. They have constantly omitted one meal in a week, and sometimes more, that they might be able to give to those who were still poorer than themselves, what the meal or meals in question would have cost them. I have no doubt that this will strike some wordly-minded, sensual professors of religion as an extreme, and as almost a ridiculous, if not a contemptible effort of benevolence. But I will say, in the language of a narrator of such a case—"Such charity, instead of being contemptible, shows a strength of principle and a greatness of soul beyond the ordinary standard; and a self-denial so applied, adds magnanimity to benevolence." And I will venture to say, further, that if every professing Christian in the United States, would consent to omit as many meals in each year as upon every principle he ought, and would honestly throw the value of them, annually, into the Lord's treasury, for sending the gospel to the benighted heathen, and to the destitute every where; not only would his bodily health be better, his life probably longer and happier, and his soul more richly fed and edified; but were *nothing else* cast into that treasury, there would be pecuniary means sufficient for sustaining all the Bible and Missionary operations that American zeal and instrumentality could carry on, for the benefit of every part of the world.

Let me entreat you, then, my friends, to lay these considerations seriously to heart. A duty so manifestly founded on the Divine will, and attended with so many important benefits, cannot be disregarded without both sin and loss. Remember that it involves interests concerning which you are not at liberty to "confer with flesh and blood." And remember, too, that in this whole concern, you have to do with Him who "weigheth the spirits"—*who "cannot be deceived and will not be mocked."*

SERMON XCIX.

THE PROPER METHOD OF RELIGIOUS FASTING.

HAVING in the preceding discourse considered the *Duty and the Benefits of Religious Fasting*, we are now to

III. Consider, in the third place, that **METHOD OF OBSERVING A RELIGIOUS FAST** which will render it truly profitable.

And I begin this head by remarking, that the *frequency* with which every individual Christian ought to fast, and the *extent* to which he ought to carry his abstinence, on each occasion, are questions concerning which no definite rule can be laid down. The word of God prescribes no precise law as to either of these points. The whole subject is left, as the subject of almsgiving is left, to every man's conscience in the sight of God. No one can open the Bible without perceiving that we are bound to give alms to those who need them; that "we have the poor always with us, that whenever we will we may do them good." But *how often*, and *how much* we are bound to give, is nowhere said. Yet I have no doubt that in the great duty of fasting, as well as of alms-giving, where the heart is right with God, and where there is a sincere and humble desire to walk in that course which is adapted to promote our best interest, there will be no material mistake with regard to the path of duty. That degree of abstinence which is salutary and not uncomfortable to one, would be deeply injurious as well as painful to another. The great END of the duty is to be regarded. God "will have mercy and not sacrifice." Fasting, like the Sabbath, was made for man, and not man for fasting. No one, therefore, ought to carry abstinence to such an extreme as to impair or endanger his bodily health; of which there have been, undoubtedly, some mournful examples, both in ancient and modern times. We have no more right to injure our bodies, than we have to enfeeble or derange our minds. Yet this, it must be acknowledged, is by no means the extreme to which the mass of professing Christians, at the present day, are inclined. On the contrary, it is manifest that the tendency in general is to *deficiency* rather than *excess* in this important duty. For one who injures himself by the *excessive* frequency or protraction of his seasons of abstinence, thousands, it is probable, either wholly neglect this self-denying duty, or perform it in a most superficial and inadequate manner.

The abstinence in religious fasting may be either *total* or *partial*. When it is continued for a single day only, it ought in many cases to be *total*; and, with most persons, may be so, not only without injury, but with profit. Of this every one must conscientiously judge for himself. But when the fast is continued through several successive days,—as it sometimes ought to be, in a great physical or moral crisis of life; then, it is obvious, the abstinence should be only *partial*; that is, alms-giving ought

to be sparingly taken, not to gratify appetite, but merely to sustain nature. The prophet *Daniel*, in a period of protracted, pious humiliation, tells us, that he "ate no *pleasant bread*, neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth." Nor let any one imagine that it is not *his* duty to fast, because the abstinence of a single day, and even from a single meal, in some degree incommodes his feelings. This is no valid objection to the duty. In fact, as you have heard, one great design of the privation is to "afflict the soul," to humble us under a sense of our weakness and dependence, and to remind us, by a feeling of want, of the purpose for which we submit to the privation. If no such feeling were induced, an important purpose of the exercise would be defeated. Thousands were fully persuaded a few years ago, that total abstinence from that fell destroyer, *ardent spirit*, would weaken their bodies and injure their health. But no man ever honestly made the experiment, without finding that his fears had all been delusive. No less delusive, be assured, is the plea, that you cannot comply, in an enlightened manner, with the Christian duty of fasting, without injury, either physical or moral. To those who think otherwise, I would say—Have you ever FAIRLY MADE THE TRIAL? If you think you have, MAKE IT AGAIN, in the fear of God, and with humble prayer for divine direction. And imagine not that a mere feeling of emptiness, and even of importunate hunger, must necessarily mark the approach of mischief. So far from this, they are feelings which you often need, for your physical as well as moral benefit; and no injury will be likely to flow from them, when carried to a *proper length*, unless unguardedly followed by an *excessive indulgence of appetite*.

The duty of fasting may be considered as devolving on men in all the circumstances and relations in which they are placed. Seasons of devout fasting ought, undoubtedly, to be observed by INDIVIDUALS, in private, with a special reference to their own personal sins, wants, and trials; by FAMILIES, who have often much reason as such, for special humiliation and prayer; by PARTICULAR CHURCHES, whose circumstances are frequently such as to call for seasons of peculiar mourning, penitence, and supplication; by WHOLE DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS, who have very often occasion to humble themselves before God on account of the absence of *his* Spirit, and the prevalence of some great evils in the midst of them; and, finally, by NATIONS, when suffering under the righteous displeasure of God, or when sensible that, for their sins, they are exposed to his heavy judgments. Of all these we have examples in the word of God; and if the spirit of the gospel were reigning in the midst of us, we should often see examples of them all at the present day.—But to pursue the inquiry.

In delineating the METHOD in which a religious fast ought to be kept, let it be observed—

1. First of all, that it will be outwardly kept in vain, *unless the heart be sincerely engaged in the service*. Let Pagans, Mohammedans, and nominal Christians, flatter themselves, as you have heard, with the dream that the mere physical observance of abstinence, independent of the state of the soul, will recommend them to God. But let us remember, that the character and exercises of the inner man are every thing here. Yes, my friends, in fasting, as well as praying, the engagement of the heart is the great and essential matter. There is no piety in merely abstaining from food, aside from the spirit and the purpose with which it is done. It is in

this case as in the observance of the Sabbath. A man may shut himself up from all the world on that day; or he may spend the whole of it in the house of God; and yet, if his heart be all the time going after the world, he does not sanctify the Sabbath at all, in the most important sense of the term. So it is in the case before us. We may keep multitudes of fast-days, with all the external exactness of Popish, or even Mohammedan rigor, and yet be nothing the better for them;—nay, instead of receiving benefit, may contract guilt by them all. A holy God might, and doubtless would, still say unto us, as He did, in substance, to his professing people of old—“Is this such a fast as I have chosen? Have ye fasted to Me, even to Me, saith the Lord?—This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me;—their appointed fasts are an abomination unto me; I am weary to bear them.”—The primary consideration, then, in keeping a religious fast, is that the whole soul be truly engaged in the work; that while we use the outward symbol of humiliation and penitence, we labor to have our minds deeply occupied and affected with the humbling realities which we express with our lips. A heartless and hypocritical prayer, in any circumstances, is a virtual insult to Him to whom it is addressed:—but a **HEARTLESS AND HYPOCRITICAL FAST** seems to be a **DOUBLE INSULT**, because offered under the guise of double solemnity and humility. In searching, therefore, for the characteristics of an “acceptable fast,” we must begin here. The more deeply, feelingly, and constantly the heart is engaged in the service, the more pleasing to God, and the more profitable to ourselves will it ever be found.

2. While the state of the heart is every thing here,—*a real abstinence from alimnt is also essential to the proper and acceptable performance of this duty.* Such a remark as this may appear to many unnecessary; and I should certainly so deem it, were there not some serious persons who adopt, and endeavour to inculcate, the strange notion, that nothing more is implied in the duty in question, than “fasting,” as they express it, “in spirit:” meaning, by the phrase, mere moral abstinence, or “abstinence from sin.” Hence, those who adopt this opinion suppose that a regular and acceptable gospel fast may be kept, while the animal appetite is fully indulged as usual, provided there be an effort made, for a season, greater than usual to shut out evil, and to maintain a spiritual and devout frame. In this sense they interpret that solemn passage in the fifty-eighth chapter of the prophecy of *Isaiah*;—“Is not this the fast that I have chosen—to loose the bands of wickedness, &c.?” In this pointed appeal it is manifest we are to understand Jehovah not as saying, that “loosing the bands of wickedness” includes *every thing* that belongs to a religious fast; but that true penitence, and moral reformation, form, as we have before intimated, its best accompaniment, and its most essential fruits. I am constrained, then, to consider the notion which I am opposing as a mere evasion, and not a very plausible one, of a plain Christian duty. It is nothing less than egregious trifling with the heart-searching God, and cheating ourselves by a miserable subterfuge. We might just as well talk of giving alms “in spirit,” or paying our debts “in spirit.” No, my friends, real abstinence from food is, no doubt, intended in all the examples and precepts which are given us on this subject in the word of God. And we “rob Him,” and “wrong our own souls,” when we shrink, from the literal self-denial implied in the ab-

stinence in question. In fact those who decline submitting to the literal privation of food of which we speak, not only contravene both the letter and spirit of Scripture, when describing an acceptable fast; but they entirely give up some of the most important benefits to which, as we have seen, this privation is naturally subservient.

3. It is important to the proper observance of a religious fast, that we *retire, during its continuance, as much as possible from the world, shut out its illusions, and endeavour to break its hold of our hearts.* One grand object of observing such days at all is, that we may occasionally come to a solemn pause; that we may break the spell which is so apt to bind us down to the grovelling pursuits of time and sense; and take an honest retrospect of our infirmities, failures, and sins. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that in solemnities which have such an object, we should *sacredly withdraw, for the time, from all worldly cares and allurements; that we should put a firm negative upon every appetite and passion which might tend to drag us down to the dust of earth; and try to get away from the snares and entanglements of this passing scene.* With the utmost propriety, then, when a public fast is proclaimed, it is commonly recommended that all servile labor and recreation be laid aside. This is no less important to the spiritual observance of the day, than as a testimony of outward respect. And quite as indispensable is it, when an individual or a family resolve to fast in private, that every occupation be as far as possible suspended, which may even remotely tend to draw off the mind from an entire and unreserved devotion to the appropriate exercises of the day.

4. Days of religious fasting are to be *devoted to a deep and heartfelt recollection of our sins, and unfeigned repentance for them.* It is true, indeed, that in all seasons of special as well as ordinary prayer, our *mercies* as well as our *sins* ought to be recollected and acknowledged. And, therefore, in celebrating a religious fast, *thanksgiving* is by no means inappropriate or to be forgotten. It is matter of thankfulness to a sinner, in any situation, that he is out of hell; and, surely, the sinner who is truly penitent can never see greater reason for gratitude, than when he is deeply pondering before God the number and aggravation of his sins; and remembers, that to such a rebel, life and glory are offered. Still it is evident, that the primary object of a religious fast is evangelical *humiliation.* To attempt to keep such a fast, then, without entering deeply into the consideration of our sins, and mourning over them, is really to place out of sight the most prominent object of the observance. This is peculiarly "a day for a man to afflict his soul" for all the pollutions of his nature, for all the evil he hath done, and for all the abominations which are committed around him. This is a season in which it is incumbent upon us, if ever, to call to mind with cordial penitence our personal sins, our family sins, the sins of the church, and of the nation; to labor, if I may so speak, with concentrated effort, to take strong, profound, and abasing views of their heinousness in the sight of God; to meditate upon them again and again, until the heart is in some measure broken and contrite; to repent, as in dust and ashes; and to apply anew to that atoning blood, by which alone our guilt can be washed away, and to that "Holy Spirit of promise," who alone can destroy the reign of corruption, and "heal all our backslidings." Such exercises, though humiliating, "do good as doth a medicine." Blessed are they who *thus mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

5. As days of religious fasting ought ever to be marked by a special recognition, and a deep sense of our sins; *so this recognition, if it be of the right stamp, will ever be followed by genuine reformation.* That confession, which is not succeeded by amendment, is worse than vain. It is manifestly heartless, and, of course, adding sin to sin. Where the heart is really broken and contrite on account of transgression, that transgression will be sincerely loathed and forsaken. If, therefore, a season of humiliation and fasting leave us as much in love with sin, and as hardened in habits of iniquity as it found us, there is abundant evidence, not merely that we have failed of being profited, but that we have contracted guilt by the observance. Hence we find a holy God expressing his righteous displeasure, and denouncing his severest judgments against his professing people of old; because, while they wearied Him with their fastings and prayers they remained as obdurate and disobedient as ever. To such He declares—"When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offerings and an oblation, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence."

6. In keeping a religious fast, *every thing like ostentation, or self-righteousness, should be put far from us.* The Jewish hypocrites, in the days of our Lord's ministry, displayed much of this unseemly spirit. As they loved to "pray standing at the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men;" so even in their *private* fasts, (for to these the Savior seems to have had a particular reference in reproving them), they put on "a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear to men to fast." And when the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray, it was one of the grounds of his boasting, and his confidence toward God, that he "fasted twice in a week." In both these cases, our Lord denounces the spirit which they manifested, as diametrically opposed to all true religion, and warns his disciples against it. And, truly, if there be any exercise in the Christian's life, from which a spirit of ostentatious display and of proud self-dependence ought to be shut out with abhorrence, it is when he is prostrate before the throne of mercy, professing to mourn over his sins, and to acknowledge his ill-desert in the sight of God. Then, surely, if ever, the most unfeigned abasement of soul, the most cordial self-renunciation, the most heart-felt application to and reliance upon the righteousness of the divine Surety, as the only ground of hope, ought not only to be expressed in every word that is uttered by the lips, but to reign in every feeling, affection, and hope of the inmost soul. The only language ever becoming the redeemed sinner, and especially in such a season as this, is, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

7. Once more: Christian fasting *ought ever to be accompanied with more or less of sympathy and benevolence to the destitute.* This point has already been alluded to; but a distinct notice of it in this connection is indispensable. The word of God lays much stress upon it as a concomitant and evidence of acceptable fasting. "Is not this such a fast as I have chosen," says Jehovah by the prophet, "that thou deal thy bread to the hungry; that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" What occasion so appropriate to ~~sympathy with~~

those who are *hungry from necessity*, as when we submit to the privation *from choice*, and as an aid to prayer, in approaching Him who is the common Benefactor of the rich and the poor? With many people, it is almost as much a matter of mortification and self-denial,—that is, it requires almost as much, and, in some cases, even more, of painful effort,—to give a trifle to the poor, as it does to abstain, when hungry, from a favorite meal. It appears peculiarly proper, then, for all professing Christians, and especially for those who feel this backwardness to an important duty, always to make their seasons of special prayer occasions of liberality, in some form, to the indigent. Surely there are few things more reasonable and becoming than that, while we are engaged in mourning over our sins, and confessing our unworthiness of the least of all our comforts, we should practically show mercy to others, as our heavenly Father has done to us. Then is the time to devise plans of mercy and benevolence; to cherish forgiveness of injuries; to make restitution to those whom we may have injured; to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and cause “the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” *Above all, such a solemnity is an appropriate season for devising the best of all charity to the benighted, perishing heathen:—*FOR OPENING THE HEART IN PRAYER AND CONTRIBUTIONS, THAT THE PRECIOUS BIBLE AND THE LIVING TEACHER MAY BE SENT TO THE MILLIONS WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THAT “FAITHFUL SAYING, AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS.”

The foregoing discussion suggests a number of *practical reflections*; to several of which your serious attention is requested.

1. From what has been said, it is evident that *the great duty of religious fasting is by far too much neglected*. It is a self-denying duty; having nothing in it adapted to gratify either the reign of appetite, or the love of praise. It is an unfashionable duty. Even many serious professors of religion have no taste for fast-days. Indeed, they are agreeable to the natural inclination of no man. They are seldom, there is too much reason to believe, observed *in private*; and when recommended by public authority, either in Church or State, the *honest* and *faithful* observance of them is confined, I fear, to a small part even of those who profess to take the word of God for their guide. This is deeply to be lamented. It argues a low standard of piety in the Church generally. If the spirit of the apostolic days were more prevalent, if we had more of the spirit of *Baxter*, and *Flavel*, and *Brainerd*, and *Edwards*, and *Payson*, there would be a much more frequent recurrence than there now is, to this important auxiliary of special prayer. It would be much oftener resorted to by individual Christians, and more especially by ministers, in bewailing before God the small measure of their success. We should never hear of an ORDINATION SERVICE being DISGRACED BY A SUMPTUOUS DINNER, instead of solemn fasting. We should be told of Churches in every direction availing themselves of this rational and gospel means of adding interest, and feeling, and humiliation to their seasons of special prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit. In a word, we may say of deep and spiritual piety—“This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” And until the latter shall be extensively restored, we cannot rationally expect to see the former revived and prevalent. Dear brethren, we pray in words, we pray abundantly, for the universal revival of religion and the dawn of millennial glory; and, when we hear of those triumphs of the Holy Spirit’s power in various parts of our land, over which,

we doubt not, there is "joy in heaven," as well as on earth,—we feel as if we had ample encouragement to prayer. We *have* the highest encouragement. But we have no reason to expect that we shall receive these blessings, and certainly shall not be suitably prepared for their arrival, unless we are found waiting for them with that deep contrition and humiliation, as well as longing importunity of spirit, which belong to the frequent and faithful discharge of the duty now recommended.

2. We are led to reflect, by what has been said, *on the reason why fast-days, even when appointed, and decently observed, are productive of so little beneficial effect.* The plain reason is, that religious fasting, when attempted, is seldom attended upon *honestly and sincerely, in the appropriate spirit of the institution.* The abstinence from food; the deep and peculiar humiliation of soul, which professedly accompanies it; and the solemn vows and efforts to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," which it implies,—are all so distasteful to the carnal principle, that they are seldom sincerely, much less thoroughly, carried into effect. The exercise is made, for the most part, a formal and superficial one; and leaves those who undertake to perform it, perhaps, more cold and unfeeling than before. So that, I fear, many of our fast-days, in modern times, as was certainly the case in times of old, become the means of hardening, instead of softening the heart; and of drawing down the hotter displeasure of God upon us, instead of averting his wrath. Unless we enter cordially and in good earnest into the real design of such days, we had better never pretend to observe them. They are but solemn mockery. And, perhaps, on no occasion have we more reason than on the approach of such a season, whether private or public, to pray fervently that the Holy Spirit may enable us to sanctify it in a manner well pleasing to God, and to the furtherance of his cause in our hearts, and around us.

3. Another reflection suggested by what has been said is, that *every part of the service enjoined upon us as Christians is a reasonable service.* None of the commandments of God are grievous. For every duty that He requires of us, there is a just and adequate reason; and a reason which makes as much for our own true welfare and happiness, as for the glory of Him who lays the duty upon us. We see, for example, that religious fasting is not enjoined for its own sake; or because it has any inherent power to recommend us to God; or because He delights to inflict upon us the pain of privation; but because, when properly conducted, it tends to promote the benefit of both our souls and our bodies. It is favourable to our bodily health. It is friendly to the culture and strength of our intellectual faculties. It is an important means of mortifying and subduing our corrupt passions, of weaning us from sin, and of promoting our true happiness here and hereafter. Thus the wisdom as well as the goodness of God appears in all that He requires of us. If our nature were not morally diseased, we should not stand in need of so much discipline, and discipline of the corporeal as well as of the mental kind. But as our nature *is* deeply diseased, we must not wonder at our constant need of medicine; which, though not commonly pleasant to the taste, is always salutary when properly applied. Instead of repining that we need it, or, needing it, that our heavenly Sovereign has placed us under a dispensation which requires us to use it; let us be thankful and submissive. The principles of his government are as

benignant as they are holy. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

4. Finally; from the foregoing view of the subject, the reflection is obvious, *that we have no less reason for fasting and humiliation than our fathers of former ages.* Let us not imagine that there was some special character either in the men or the events of ancient times, which rendered the exercise in question more needful to *them* than to *us*. By no means; human nature is the same; religion is the same, and the causes of Christian mourning are the same now, as they were when *Joshua, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Paul* fasted and laid in the dust before the mercy-seat. What though the number of the hopefully pious be greater in our day than in theirs? What though the God of all grace has gladdened the hearts of his people in many places, by "pouring out his Spirit," and "reviving his work?" How many millions of our fellow men around us still remain in hardened rebellion! How many churches in our land, notwithstanding all the precious revivals with which it has pleased God to favor us, are to this hour as cold, as desolate, and almost as lifeless, in a spiritual sense, as the tombs which surround their places of worship! How many personal, domestic, ecclesiastical and national sins press heavily upon us, as a people, and cry aloud for the judgments of a righteous God! Think of the abounding atheism, and various forms of infidelity, the pride, the degrading intemperance, the profanations of the Sabbath, the fraud, the gross impiety, the neglect and contempt of the Gospel, and all the numberless forms of enormous moral corruption, which even in the most favored parts of our country prevail in a deplorable degree, and in the less favored hold a melancholy and undisturbed reign;—think of these abounding sins,—and think also in how small a degree multitudes even of the professing people of God seem to be awake to the great responsibilities and duties of their high vocation;—and then say, whether we have not reason for special humiliation and prayer? My beloved hearers, if we see no cause on account of these things for weeping and mourning and fasting before the Lord, it is because we have never had our eyes opened to see the evil of sin; never yet taken our stand among those who bear Jehovah's "mark upon their foreheads," and who "sigh and mourn for all the abominations that are done" in the land. Professing Christians! whatever name you bear, unless you be really found in these ranks of the faithful, how can you expect, when the angel of Jehovah's judgment passes by, (as pass by he assuredly will,) that your habitations will be spared; or that, amid the surrounding darkness, there will be "light in your dwellings?"

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SERMON C.

BY REV. JOEL PARKER,

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THE CONVICTION OF SINNERS AT THE JUDGMENT.

JUDE, 14, 15.—*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

THIS passage, as we are informed, is a prophecy of Enoch. It obviously refers to the day of judgment. It places before us in one view the solemn majesty in which God the Judge will appear, the universal personal interest with which men will attend, and the conviction of all the incorrigibly wicked. I invite your attention to but one of these thoughts.

THE UNGODLY WILL BE CONVICTED OF SIN IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

The text asserts that it is one of the ends of that great trial "to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds." It will not only satisfy all holy beings with respect to the perfect rectitude of God's moral government, but it will also fully convince all those who remain his enemies. It will be seen, as we proceed, that the day of judgment will afford peculiar means for producing such a conviction.

I. It will exhibit scenes of such an interest as *will arrest the sinner's attention, and fix it upon his character.* A principal difficulty in convicting sinners in this world arises from their being so much engrossed with other subjects as to prevent a serious contemplation of themselves. This difficulty will be entirely removed. Before the bar of God, that wealth which was once looked upon as the treasure of the soul will have lost its value. Those fashions which once occupied the mind with their ever-changing vanities will be all forgotten, or only remembered as having been the occasion of ceaseless levity and folly. Ties of earthly attachment will have been sundered. The distinctions of rank will have given place to the distinction between the righteous and the wicked; and the soul will be emptied of all those worldly interests which have diverted the mind from the consideration of its real character and condition. To a mind thus divested of all earthly interests the scenes of the judgment must possess the most affecting character.

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If a man be on trial for a single crime of which he knows he is guilty, he turns pale at the sight of a well-known witness. The absence of his diversions, the solemn process, and the open testimony call his attention to his character and conduct with a power which cannot be resisted. How much more must the impenitent sinner's attention be fixed upon himself when he stands arraigned before the infinitely holy and omniscient God. The chief motive for self-deception, that of concealing his character from others, is now taken away. Whether he forms a correct estimate of himself or not, he knows that God and angels and men now see him as he is. All idea of concealment is given up; and while his heart sinks under the expectation of being condemned by all, he cannot conceal from himself the ground of that condemnation. He knows he deserves it. He can no longer refrain from dwelling upon his own character with an unbiassed mind.

He knows, also, that his trial will fix unalterably his eternal state. Whatever pretexts he may have raised in his mind for self-justification, the period has arrived when he must feel that they can avail nothing. There is no motive left for concealing from himself his real character, and indeed no *means* of doing it. It is not in the nature of the human mind, thus arraigned, to avoid an impartial attention to its own character. When a soul is separated from all earthly attachments; when scenes of such solemn and amazing interest are rising before it; when its own most secret acts are all unfolded; and when its destiny is about to be settled for ever—how certainly will every wayward passion be hushed, and the whole soul be fixed with keenest intensity upon its guilt.

II. To increase this conviction of guilt, *the perfect law of God will there be held up to the sinner's mind.* One difficulty in convicting sinners here arises from the fact, that they set aside God's law, and adopt other rules of conduct. Take one who will have no law but that of honor: undertake to convince him of sin against God. How can you convict him? He admits no divine law. His only law is that of honor. Open the Scriptures and show him that he habitually breaks God's law; still he feels no guilt. That is not his rule of action. Become earnest with him; charge him with sin, and urge him to fly to the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon,—he is offended,—he fancies you represent him as mean and vulgar. In short, take what course you will, and just so far as his law of honor sets aside God's law, true conviction is prevented.

So, if one makes the common standard of morality his only rule of conduct, you cannot convict him. Talk to him of guilt; he is astonished,—he is perhaps angry. He asks, what have I ever done that is wrong? who can accuse me of any impropriety? And, according to his standard, he is, perhaps, guiltless. That law which reaches to all the thoughts and intents of the heart is cast out of his mind, and the guilty rebel is pleased to see how well his conduct accords with the rule he has adopted—that of mere morality.

But a far different standard will be produced on another day. When the *great God is enthroned*, and worlds are assembled, these standards, mere *morality and worldly honor*, will appear very small. It will no more be in-

quired before that tribunal, whether a man has been honorable or whether he has been moral, than it will be asked whether he has been respectable or whether he has been fashionable. The great question there will be, Has he followed "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord?" To decide this question, the infinitely holy law will be produced; that law which says, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." This will wake up thought in the sinner's bosom. He will at once compare with it his life—his heart. His full conviction will then be, *By this holy law I am damned for ever.*

III. Another source of conviction in the day of judgment is *the manifest preparation for the immediate execution of justice.* When a judicial process is going on, if the criminal supposes that he may possibly escape punishment, or that a temporary respite at least will be granted, he finds a slight relief. The least hope of impunity enfeebles the convictions of a guilty mind, and the delay of punishment exerts, in some degree, a similar influence. But suppose his trial is to take place this hour, and his execution the next. Suppose, that while the criminal faces the court, and the testimony is condemning him, he sees before him the fatal block, and a grim executioner sitting upon it with his axe in his hand, waiting to do his office; do you not see that this prospect of the immediate execution of justice must tend strongly to fix his mind upon his guilt, and to give him a lively sense of ill-desert?

Precisely like this is the condition of the sinner before the bar of God. Mercy has been spurned before the judgment arrives. All hope of pardon is extinguished. Not the least respite is expected. The execution and conviction are simultaneous. "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly,"

Our Savior also represents himself as seated upon his throne, assembling the whole race before him and dividing them into two great classes, calling the one immediately to heaven, and commanding the other to depart at once into everlasting fire.

The sinner at the judgment bar, therefore, expects nothing else but the immediate execution of justice. As he comes up near the gates of the New Jerusalem, and sees its glories, and hears its songs, and casts his eye over the shining hosts just entering upon its endless joys, he looks down also into the eternal prison. Its billows of fire rise before him: its filthy society is seen: its wailing and its blasphemy fall upon his ear, and all its unutterable torments rush upon his view. How can he possibly avoid the most perfect conviction of sin? Nothing can sustain him under such circumstances. He has no hope of impunity—no expectation of a respite. He sees that his "judgment lingereth not and his damnation slumbereth not." His heart must sink under a full and overwhelming conviction of his guilt.

We have only to suppose the principles of the human mind to remain unchanged, and it is easy to see that the judgment will place the sinner in such circumstances, and exhibit such scenes, and hold forth such prospects, *as must produce a full conviction of sin.*

Sensual pleasures and earthly attachments cease to divert his mind from moral consideration. Scenes of the most solemn and impressive nature awaken his attention and fix it upon himself. A knowledge of the fact that his character must be disclosed, and his destiny settled for eternity, leads him to an impartial examination and an unbiassed decision. Every false standard of conduct is thrown aside, and the pure and simple law of God is produced as the rule upon which the judgment shall pass. Added to all this, the last call of mercy has been heard and spurned, and the execution of justice only waits for the sinner's doom to be pronounced.

Surely, when "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all," he will "convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."—Thus the ungodly will be fully convicted in the day of judgment.

1. We learn from our subject, first, *that conviction of sin is no evidence of conversion*. A mere sense of guilt does not imply any thing like a filial grief for having offended, nor any desire for amendment. The wicked will experience a more full and perfect conviction at the day of judgment than any ever feel in this world, yet they will not be converted to God, but will remain his enemies for ever. Judas and Simon Magus were convicted of sin, but instead of being converted, their conviction was, like the convictions of the judgment, succeeded by the desperation of hell.

Very many of the most remarkable instances of apostacy at the present day have been preceded by deep convictions. There is a disposition in many to look back to distressing emotions, once felt in view of guilt, as an evidence of conversion to God. If their distress was great, and the relief which they experienced striking, they are satisfied that they have been born again and possess a title to eternal life. No reasoning can be more fallacious. Mere conviction furnishes no evidence of an humbled subdued temper.

If your religious principles and feelings do not possess such a vitality as to lead to an implicit obedience and to a living faith, and to a daily communion with God, no amount of conviction can furnish evidence of your good estate. Convictions which do not lead to a life of humble piety, are but premonitions of the judgment and foretastes of damnation.

2. *The most pungent conviction does not necessarily lead to conversion.*

If the ungodly will be convicted at the judgment, certainly there can be nothing morally good in conviction. We never count it meritorious in the murderer, that his conscience remonstrated loudly while he was plunging the knife into the bosom of his fellow-man; nor do we commend him for the remorse which follows the awful perpetration. On the contrary, we say, that such an one is more guilty, because the voice of God within him has remonstrated in vain. Neither can it be counted a virtue in the transgressor of God's law, that he is distressed and even overwhelmed with a sense of guilt. If he has not been reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *however deep his convictions*, he stands as really in the attitude of a rebel *against his Maker*, as the convicted sinner at the judgment or in hell. There

is nothing, therefore, in conviction which can commend the sinner to God, and induce him to change his heart.

Indeed this distress could not exist for a moment under the gospel, if the sinner were not obstinately maintaining his opposition against God. Let him only yield to the gospel, and that distressing conviction would be exchanged for joyful hope. Let him only yield to the gospel, and that law which is now a ministration of death, would be delighted in as the rule of cheerful obedience. That gospel which at once promises life everlasting to those who embrace it, and denounces a double curse upon those who reject it, would become the theme of his glorying. The hard impenitent heart, which grew still harder under a discovery of its own vileness, would break and melt, and the soul would turn to God with confidence, crying, "Abba—Father."

But can a conviction which involves opposition to the gospel *necessarily* lead to the acceptance of it? It is true that conviction is important to sinners, as it is plainly impossible that they should be converted without it. A man cannot repent of sin while unconscious of guilt. But it by no means follows, that if he be convinced he will repent. Facts teach us abundantly that conviction of sin may be deep, distressing, and long-continued, and yet the soul may remain in the gulf of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Look, then, convicted sinner, to your real condition. All your tears are unavailing—all your distress arises from sin which you will not forsake—all your trouble of mind arises from your unwillingness to go with an humble heart to your Savior, and accept his freely offered grace. Nurture that conviction to ever so great a degree, and it will by no means secure your preparation for heaven. It may rise to the agonies of death—yea, the terrors of hell may take hold of you, and still your conviction may be only an introduction to the convictions of the judgment. If then you would make your salvation sure, put no trust in your convictions. Repent and "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

3. *Sinners may become convicted of sin if they desire it.* Though conviction does not necessarily lead to conversion, it is nevertheless of great importance to the impenitent sinner. With it he may indeed be lost, but without it he can never be saved. He may be the subject of deep conviction for years, and neglect to repent, but without it repentance is impossible. Under this view of the importance of conviction, the impenitent often flatter themselves that they desire to be convinced of sin. But to show that this conviction may be attained, let me call your attention again to the condition of a condemned criminal. While he is pressing on in the career of crime, he drives the convictions of guilt from his bosom by mingling with dissipated company and filling his mind with other thoughts and other emotions. Think of him now that he has advanced another step in crime, and imbrued his hands in blood. The intoxicating cup, the merry company, the jovial song, and the loud laugh are resorted to, to drive from the mind all thoughts of guilt, and law, and justice.

But now the scene is changed. His songs of revelry are stopped by the arrest of an officer; the flow of sensual pleasure has ebbed away within the

solitary dungeon. You see him grow pale at the sight of well-known witnesses, and upright jurors, and an impartial judge. When he comes into court his loins are loosed, his knees smite together, and he is only just able to stammer out a plea of "not guilty."

But what is the matter? Is it the fear of suffering? No: he has stood in the imminent deadly breach, and faced death without a shudder. What then is the matter? Why, his circumstances compel him to reflect. Things with which he was formerly engrossed are taken from him. The solemn trial, the violated law, and the prospect of the execution of justice awaken his attention, and fix it upon his character, and deprive him of every motive to estimate that character falsely. As his sentence is pronounced, he sinks under the sense of conscious guilt.

Yet that same criminal, before he was arrested, perhaps felt no more conviction than the most thoughtless sinner does for his sins against God. Other objects diverted his mind; the law had little place in his thoughts; and the hope of impunity stayed up his soul. But *could* not he have felt the pangs of conviction? Might he not have brought voluntarily all those considerations to bear upon his mind which the court of justice has compelled him to think upon? Every one must see that he might, and that he *ought* to have felt a sense of his guilt.

Just so may sinners, before they are arrested for the judgment, bring the very truths to bear upon their minds which that day will compel them to dwell upon. Indeed they may do this at any period. They may *now* voluntarily lay aside those engrossing cares and interests by which their minds are perpetually diverted from the consideration of their guilt. They may throw away their low standards of conduct, and compare their heart and life with the holy law of God. They may contemplate the awful penalty of that law. They may dwell upon the provisions of mercy and the aggravated doom of those who despise it. In short, they may resort to the Scriptures, and bring upon their character such a flood of light, that they cannot help discovering their guilt.

It is the greatest folly imaginable for men to pretend, that they want conviction, but cannot obtain it. The truth is precisely the reverse. The Gospel presses upon their minds considerations which would overwhelm them, if they would only reflect.

Indeed, the criminal never resorted to his merry companions and his song of mirth more surely to drown the admonitions of conscience, than the impenitent sinner does to his worldly associations and interests to stifle the conviction of sin against God. Instead of seeking for conviction without finding it, "he loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

4. We learn from this subject, *that the character of God will appear glorious in the final condemnation of the wicked.* Should an eminent lawgiver arise among men, and frame a system of criminal jurisprudence which should render absolutely certain the detection and the punishment of every crime; and

should this system be adopted all over the world, and its operation secure the approbation of every friend of good order, such a man would be looked upon as a great benefactor of the human race. Every detection and every punishment of crime would reflect honor upon that lawgiver. But suppose, now, that he has not only secured the detection and punishment of every crime, but the operation of his law is such, that every criminal becomes convicted of his own guilt, and bears his dying testimony in favor of the law under which he suffers. Do you not see that this universal moral approbation, this hearty consent of the good, and this full concession of the wicked, reflect honor on the character of that lawgiver?

But just such a lawgiver is God. He has introduced a system which secures the detection and punishment of every unreclaimed offender. The principles of this system commend it at once to all holy beings; its operation produces a full conviction in the minds of sinners. While heaven breaks forth in a song of admiration on discovering the perfect vindication of the divine character in the execution of justice; while ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of voices swell the anthem of "salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments," hell responds by its deep, eternal wail, and its loud laments, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." While all heaven shouts "Alleluia," hell responds "Amen." All the holy *see* the justice of God, and all the wicked *feel* it. As often as the one look down, and see the justice of God, and shout "Alleluia," the groans of the other, as a responsive "Amen," are borne upward upon the smoke of their torment. O, what an unspeakable lustre will be thrown over the divine character when the whole universe, righteous and wicked, friends and enemies, shall consent together in bearing testimony to the wisdom and goodness of God in the vindication of his law.

How much better is it, dying sinner, that you should *see your guilt and repent, before you are compelled to stand before the bar of God*. Then conviction will be unavoidable. The soul-stirring scenes of that day will awaken the most careless. The law of God will be exhibited in its simplicity. It will make its resistless appeal to your conscience, and its tremendous penalty, just ready to fall upon your head, will awaken your mind to the enormity of your guilt. But then, alas, conviction will do no good. It will only be as the commencement of the pangs of death eternal. The time is drawing near. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment, and to convince all that are ungodly." O what a throng! Are you among them? Their faces gather paleness—they are speechless—conviction—conviction, deep, despairing, and eternal—seizes upon their souls, and they are damned for ever. O sinner, would you now turn, your fainting soul might look up to Christ and live. Though covered with shame, you might accept a pardon, and be adopted into the family of God. Think *now*. Take a full view of yourself as a sinner against God, a transgressor of his law, and a despiser of his mercy. Come, come to the refuge provided for the guilty.

SERMON CI.

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THE SINNER, AND NOT THE BELIEVER, DERANGED.

ACTS, XXVI. 24, 25.—*And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.*

It is a singular fact, that earnestness and activity in the things of God, and holiness of life, have always subjected good men to the charge of some form or other of mental, if not moral irregularity. Men have been called enthusiastic, singular, unnecessarily strict, superstitious, visionary; when the simple truth was, that they had clear heads and warm hearts, lived "as seeing Him who is invisible," and were ever ready and efficient in the service of their "Lord and Master."

Paul, as such a servant of Christ, was standing before Festus, and giving an account of his former life and his conversion to the Christian faith, and pouring forth the strength of argument and the eloquence of Christian truth and fervor, when the disturbed Roman governor interrupted him with the charge of madness or derangement.

On that great day of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Christian church; when Peter preached so boldly, and Christians were so wide awake to the interests of religion; some, "mocking, said, These men are full of new wine." In later times, Whitfield would gather thousands around him in the fields, and preach as though he "saw heaven opened," and the world of perdition too; and his hearers would be at one time in a glow of admiration, at another bathed in tears, and at another in consternation. Some thought this man a fit subject for the hospital,—while others would have sent him to prison as a disturber of the peace. That beloved and devoted missionary, Martyn, lived, prayed, and preached like a heavenly-minded minister, and carried upon his tender spirit the anxious care of millions of perishing heathen. And his religion has been pronounced, by literary scoffers, to be nothing more than "devotional hypochondria." The energy with which a good man prosecutes some great plan of benevolence, and pleads its claims to support, often brings upon him, from cold, calculating men of the world, the charge of being in a state of mental derangement. Revivals of religion have been stigmatized by many as mere popular or animal excitement, and their active friends as bigots and fanatics. Ministers of the gospel, in the earnest discharge of their duties, are often accused of letting their zeal get the better of their judgment—of pushing things to extremes—of being uncharitable, unreasonably strict, gloomy in their views of religion. In the more retired walks of life, persons of active piety, accustomed in their intercourse with dying fellow-men to say *serious things, urging on the unconverted an attention to the duties of religion,*

and seeking to excite their fellow Christians to greater faithfulness, are often called imprudent, and charged with meddling in things which do not concern them. Christian benevolence, in our own days, is prompting large contributions to aid the great design of "preaching the gospel to every creature." And there have been men, wise enough to sit in state legislature and in congress, who have talked of moving for legislative enactments to restrict these doings, and make legislatures a kind of conservators over the devisers of "liberal things."

But we are "not to think it strange" concerning these trials of the servants of Christ, "as though some strange thing had happened unto them;" for their Lord and Master was treated in like manner. On one occasion when he was moving on with his great work, his friends after the flesh "went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself." Though declared "the Light of the world," and "the Son of God, with power," there were those who said of him, "He hath a devil, and is mad (i. e. deranged); why hear ye him?"

This charge is, however, brought against some who are not Christians. The sinner under a conviction of his guilt inquires, with trembling anxiety, "What must I do to be saved?" "Poor man," say thoughtless ones about him; "he has fallen into a gloomy way,"—or "he has been among the superstitious,"—or "he seems a little out of his mind." Here is an unconverted man on the bed of sickness and death, in terror at the prospect before him—conscious of having no hope—going into eternity in the lively agonies of despair. Perhaps he has lived under a ministry of error, and found it out at this terrible hour; or he may have spent life a careless and unprofitable hearer of the truth. Now he begs for the prayers of God's people; reproaches himself for his wicked waste of the day of grace; warns those around him to beware of following his example. Those who surround him say one to another, "He is nervous,"—or "it is a part of his disease,"—or "he is wild, the mind wanders;" and they seek to lull the mind, while the soul is in agony and terror.

I. It is proposed in this discourse to offer some explanations of the conduct of those upon whom are cast such imputations as those to which we have adverted; and to show that theirs is in truth the soundest state of mind,—that men who feel and act in the manner we have described really give better evidence of the full possession of reason and moral discernment than any of the rest of the world. "I am not mad," said the eloquent Paul; "but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." "I have not a devil," said our divine Lord; "but I honour my Father; and ye do dishonour me."

Let it be first observed, in reference to the awakened sinner, that he is like one who has long been deranged, and who gives some evidence of returning reason. The Holy Spirit is unveiling him to himself, "convincing him of his sins, of righteousness, and of judgment." He is beginning to estimate his own character and conduct, as contrasted with the holy character and law of God. Truth has begun to get hold on his heart, and the precepts of God's word to stir up his conscience. The Holy Spirit is on a visit to his breast, to manifest him to himself, and to call him to repentance; and it is not the spirit of delirium, nor the shipwreck of the faculties. And here let it be remarked, that it becomes *skeptical men to beware of sinning against the Holy Ghost, by calling the*

solicitude and conviction of the awakened sinner derangement, or by treating with levity and contempt the work of Him who comes "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

Let it be also here remarked, in reference to the man alarmed on the brink of the grave, that neither is he beside himself. On the contrary, in this honest and awful hour of approaching death, he justly pronounces his past course of life as one more allied to derangement than reason. "How madly have I lived!" is the distressing burden of his soul. Those rays of awful brightness which flash upon him are the precursors of a restoration to reason, opening his mind to the overwhelming horrors of an undone eternity.

But we are more particularly concerned to vindicate the sanity of active, fervent-spirited Christians.

They act *understandingly*; and this, not by the feeble glimmer of unsanctified human wisdom, but by the broad daylight of divine revelation. They know what they are doing, for they have "the mind of the Spirit"—the teaching of Him who can make the most ignorant to "know all things." They take no steps in the dark, for "his word is a light to their feet and a lamp to their path." They have "become fools that they may be wise," as the Scriptures shew to be necessary; and their wisdom is turning to account. What other men reproach as degrading their faculties, is, in reality, their elevation, expansion, and increase of strength, under the instruction of Him who teacheth as no man can teach, and whose "strength is made perfect in weakness."

Their minds are entirely *balanced and regular*. Because a devoted, heavenly-minded Christian—his heart burning with intensity of interest in the great things of Christ—goes into a different field of thought, and finds satisfaction there with which an unconverted man is unacquainted; is it of course to be concluded that a wild imagination has the reins? As well might an untutored Indian say that the ship, which is moving on the broad sea, is at the sport of the winds and waves, because he knows and believes nothing about the chart, compass, helm, and skill of the pilot, which are in use for its safe direction. Or as well might the worm, which crawls upon the earth, say that the eagle, in his flight above the mountains and the clouds, is at the sport of the breezes on which he ascends, and moves without direction or power. It is a truth on which reliance may ever be placed, and to doubt which is akin to blasphemy, that the grace of God does most effectually order and rule the mind of the Christian; and gives balance, direction, certainty, beyond what can ever belong to the unconverted man, be his talents, natural and acquired, what they may. If ever it be otherwise with real Christians, it is not because they are the subjects of divine grace, but because they have yet remaining the frailties and imperfections of men, and the liabilities to be tempted out of the path of Christian prudence and simplicity, by the devices of the great adversary.

They are acting *conscientiously*. This moral faculty—the conscience—is in no man's breast in so enlightened and healthy a state as in his in whom the Holy Spirit has taken up his dwelling. His estimates of duty come far nearer to the spirit of the divine requirements than those of other men. The law of God is spread out before his eyes in its broadness, spirituality, strictness,

The impulse by which he is borne on in a faithful obedience is the impulse of grace, stirring up conscience, and giving energy to all its decisions and doings. His tender sense of obligation is not prejudice, nor slavishness of spirit, but pious conscientiousness. His perseverance in difficult and self-denying duty is not ostentation, nor pride. It is the decisive action of a healthy and sanctified conscience. His tenderness respecting the encouragement of error, and his shrinking from sin, are not squeamishness, nor pretence, nor sanctimoniousness: they are the exercises of an enlightened and healthy conscience, venerating the truth of God, and saying to every sinful allurements, "how shall I do this great evil, and sin against God?" His sorrow for sin is not childish melancholy nor causeless grief; it is the "brokenness of heart," the "godly sorrow," which conscience, taught by the Word, insists upon as reasonable. And this moral faculty in the human breast where grace reigns, carries its impulse into all the feelings and doings of the Christian, and makes him, not a lunatic nor an enthusiast, but a man of thorough, active, immoveable principle.

Again; these persons, so often misjudged, are acting *in view of the most exalted motives*. What were the grand exciting motives in the mind of Paul, when thus reproached by the Roman governor? You find a true answer in those affecting declarations, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or if we be sober, it is for your cause;" "for the love of Christ constraineth us;" and "that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified." Here are disclosed the motives under which he acted. These were the things which excited his feelings, and put his mind upon such a march of eloquence, and made him forget his chains, his humiliation, and the poor and fleeting dignity and splendor of his titled hearers. If this were madness, would that it poured itself from all the pulpits in Christendom, and quickened the movements of every son and daughter of Adam.

Such are the motives which give energy to the piety of all those of whom the world are constrained to "take knowledge" as the children of God. What, in comparison with these, are all the motives of which men of the world boast as praiseworthy and exalted? Let the philosophers and wise men—the rich men and mighty men—talk largely of their motives, and give them names and epithets sounding and lofty. After all, none of them lift men a whit above themselves and the vain things of the world; nor do they answer the requisitions of a conscience which has been enlightened by a ray from the Word of God. But these raise the Christian above the sordidness of selfishness, and lead him to act for God and for his fellow men. Here is, in fact, the secret of devoted Christians living in such "holiness of conversation and godliness;" so habitually "looking unto Jesus;" so earnestly praying, "Father, glorify thy name." Here is the secret of that pious liberality in many, which "casts bread upon the waters;" which is ever giving that the poor may have the Gospel preached to them; and, with some, forsaking of father, mother, brothers, sisters, home, country—"all things," and welcoming toil, privation, danger, suffering, and death itself in carrying the Gospel to the "dark places of the earth." And here, too, is the source of the faithfulness which, in some, is so industriously put forth in exhortation, counsel, and warning, that sinners may be won to Christ, and made heirs of eternal glory.

Again, They are acting in the manner *most worthy of immortal beings*. "I paint for posterity," said an eminent artist, who took unwearied pains with his pictures; while many a man, without a relish for the beauties of painting, would probably look on and say, "poor enthusiast of art!" The Christian improves upon this declaration and example, and says, by his "manner of life," *'I live and act for eternity.'* The man of the world asks, 'why do you so undervalue the good things of this life? Why do you not get property, and honor, and interest yourself more in our pursuits; live more as other men do?' In other words, 'why do you not countenance us in falling down and worshipping our god?' This is the Christian's answer, 'I am living for eternity. I feel myself to have just commenced an existence which is to have no end. Before me is "infinite joy or endless wo;" an "inheritance in heaven," or "a bed in hell." I have a soul, and my fellow men around me have souls, which, I believe, must be filled with bliss before the "throne of God and the Lamb," or overwhelmed in wretchedness unutterable and eternal.' His faith makes these "things not seen as yet," to his mind and feelings, solemn realities. His mind enters into their greatness. They occupy his field of moral vision. They constrain him to be serious. He lives as seeing Him in whose hands are the destinies of all. He

" Walks thoughtful on the solemn, silent shore
Of that vast ocean he must sail so soon."

Eternity! eternity! is the mighty and overpowering subject of his meditations—the years that for ever roll onward—the ages which follow one after another beyond the numbering of man or angel; the millions on millions of centuries which are to come and go must find and leave him; and those for whose eternal life he is here to labor, blessed in the presence of God, or wretched in the prison of eternal justice. And is this man beside himself, if deeply interested and ever active? Then was Stephen, while rejoicing in the enrapturing visions of his departing hour. Then are Abraham, Isaac, David, Paul, John, and all the arrived in heaven, while ravished in contemplating the blessedness, glory, and solemnity of the place where God resides. Then also, "beside themselves," are all the glorious hosts of angels, cherubim and seraphim, who veil their faces before the throne, and rejoice in the praises of "Him who sitteth thereon." No, brethren. He who lives in such a manner has caught the spirit of heaven; is living somewhat as an immortal should on his way through such a world as this to such an eternity.

Once more. Such men are living and acting in the *manner most likely to be approved at the close of life and at the final judgment*. The main question with the Christian, as about his heavenly Father's business, is not 'how shall I please myself and other men now?' but 'what will my conscience approve, when I come to look back from the bed of death upon what I have done? and what will my God approve, when I shall stand before his judgment seat?' These inquiries, with many others of a like character, have an influence upon *his whole course of conduct*. They lead him in a direction entirely opposite to that in which a spirit of self-pleasing and men-pleasing would dictate. *They take him out of the smooth, wide, easy, popular path, in which the man*

of the world moves forward so quietly, and lead him in a path often thorny, laborious, calling for great patience, perseverance, self-denial, conflict. And the opinions and judgments of other men at one time censure him—at another, deride; at one time oppose, and at another condemn. But what is all this to him? While other men look to the tribunal of each other's judgments, he looks to the tribunal of conscience, and of God. He is after peace of conscience in the hour of death; peace with God in the final day; and the joys of reward which "pass all understanding." He acts from elevated principle, while other men act from the impulse of unsanctified feelings. He is looking to the law of God as his rule of action, while other men look to the law of their own corruptions—"the law of sin and death." He submits, for the present, to be esteemed of men singular, that he may be found of God faithful; to be misunderstood, at present, by men, that he may be "made manifest unto God;" to suffer, at present, that he may be safe hereafter; to go through this world, if so it must be, under its light esteem and scorn; that he may be able, at last, to lift up his head with confidence and triumph. He is willing to make sacrifices now that he may have his portion hereafter; to labor and wear himself out for God's service, and men's salvation; to live, for the present, anxious, watchful, in godly fear, in agonizing conflict, in intense pressing forward in the Christian race, that he may find that "rest which remaineth for the people of God," and that joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory," at the "coming of the Son of man." On the end of such a manner of living and acting he has no shadow of doubt. On the word of divine promise he is confident of approval at last, and rests in happy certainty that the benediction shall fall sweetly on his ear, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

These are some of the grounds on which we defend active, serious, devoted Christians from the imputations to which we adverted in the introduction of this discourse. And in this defence we are not either defending extravagance, nor hypocritical pretensions, nor parade, nor sanctimoniousness, nor sectarian cant, nor bigotry. We are only defending Christians in "walking worthy of their high vocation,"—living as becomes "the sons of God;" the ransomed of Jesus.

II. But we have now a question to ask. Are the men of this world,—they who suspect the sanity of active Christians—are *they* in their right minds? Deranged men sometimes think themselves to be sane, and other men beside themselves. The poor maniac, from the window of the hospital, looks out on the passing traveller, and says, 'there goes a crazy man.' Men of the world, immersed in their cares, and distracted with the various feelings which work in the breasts to which God has said "there is no peace,"—even these venture to pronounce heavenly-minded men "beside themselves." Does the assertion of course make the fact?

But it may be said that every man is likely to be a prejudiced witness in his own favour. True. Then we will get testimony, the impartiality of which shall not be questionable. And we will go up to the throne of the universe for it. 'Thus saith God, of "the sons of men," "*madness is in their hearts while they live.*" If God be "a God of truth," and if his eye be the eye of omniscience, *this world is mainly filled with men who, in a moral sense, are*

"beside themselves." "The sons of men," says he of them, as in their natural state, and the collective body of them, with but comparatively few exceptions, have "madness in their hearts while they live;" the moral madness which began at the apostacy from God, in Eden, and has come down from generation to generation to this hour, a moral disease, most melancholy. This world, as viewed from the throne of heaven, is pronounced as one vast insane hospital, with here and there one restored, in a measure, to right reason; laboring, in compassion, for the restoration of the rest, and waiting the desired day of his own discharge. The parishes, towns, cities, and congregations, of even a Christian country, are but groups and crowds of immortal men, a melancholy proportion of them with "madness in their hearts." They fancy themselves happy—are scheming, driving, grasping for "trifles light as air"—bubbles, which burst at the touch; and over them "angels weep."

‡ Does this need proof? We have it in affecting abundance. Would you call him beside himself who dances on the brink of a precipice which overhangs the roaring ocean? What will you say of him, who, if the Bible is true, is sporting on the "slippery places" which overhang the gulf of eternal perdition? Is he a maniac who rushes into the flames consuming his dwelling? What say you of him who is running into eternal burnings; and that, too, with the voice of redeeming mercy beseeching him, "Stay sinner, stay!" Would you pity him as not knowing what he does who should refuse the gift of an estate, and choose the perplexities and miseries of poverty? What think you of him who refuses "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," "eternal in the heavens," and chooses the few poor fleeting things of earth, of which he is ever complaining that he has not enough; and which, in a few days, are to "melt with fervent heat," in the flames which shall "melt down the skies." Would you call him beside himself who would refuse a post of honor and office which he might fill, and choose to be a beggar upon a dunghill? But what is he who refuses a crown of eternal life, offered by a bleeding Savior; and chooses "shame and everlasting contempt?" What is the case of every unconverted person, in a Christian country, but that of one living at war with his own convictions? With his Bible open before him, he will even confess himself convinced of many a solemn truth, and yet "resists the truth;" convinced of his duty, and yet goes, every hour, in the face of duty; convinced that he is "guilty before God," and yet, in impenitence, goes on to aggravate his own guilt; convinced of danger, and yet steadily advancing into danger; convinced of his true interests, as a candidate for eternity, and yet lives in a fearful trifling with those interests; convinced that there is a heaven, and yet turning his back upon it; convinced that there is a hell, and yet moving on towards it with steps as steady and firm as though he thought himself on the way to paradise. How do unconverted men prefer temporal trifles to eternal glories! How wise are they in pursuing and carrying into effect the purposes of vain and sinful hearts; while they forswear the wisdom which looks to the great and solemn purposes of eternity. How *wary and sharp-sighted*, that they may not mistake or be deceived, or overreached, in the business of this world, to the value of a farthing, while they

permit Satan, and one another, and their own deceitful hearts, to flatter them, and cheat them out of a heavenly inheritance and out of their very souls, and to blindfold them, and without resistance to lead them down to eternal wo! How do they act from the motives of vain and unholy hearts, while God is mercifully calling upon them to act from the high and holy motives of the gospel of his Son! How do they live as though this world were to be their eternal home; or as though death were the end of their hopes, fears, and existence! And how lost to the "great and terrible day of the Lord," and to the judgment then to sit, as though they had in it no concern. And are these the characteristics of reason? the habits and doings of men in their right minds? It was in view of such facts, that God pronounced the affecting truth, "madness is in the hearts of the sons of men, while they live."

"*While they live.*" This reminds us that the time is coming when this madness will be broken up, and give place to a reign of reason which will last to eternity. But oh! not in men's becoming the subjects of spiritual healing, for it will then be too late. It will be only a state of mind produced by the bursting of the light and the fearful scenes of eternity upon their minds; when they will no longer have a vain world on which to fasten their affections. Could imagination "paint the moment after death," as it is, to the spirit departed from a life of "madness," by a death of hopelessness; what would it show of consternation, agony, and despair! Much more, how fearfully is the curtain actually lifted in the divine revelation of the scenes of the judgment. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world." "Then will he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." When these scenes shall open, then will come a solemn close to the delirium of this distracted world. Then will be felt, by each contemner of the grace of God, *madness was in mine heart while I lived.* But oh! the sorrows, agonies, terrors, which overwhelm him who has misinterpreted and derided the manifestations of the Spirit of grace in God's faithful people; and who sinks into perdition with a mind fitted to be a vessel of wrath.

Brethren, we are admonished by the subject to be active and earnest in all the duties and business of the Christian life. We must be jealous of that false modesty and fear of man which "bringeth a snare;" and which would keep us hesitating and inquiring 'what will the world say? shall we not be singular? will they not deride and censure?' when we ought to be in a course of fearless and faithful acting for Christ. What says the Word? "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." If other men misjudge the faithful Christian, that is not his affair. Duty is his; and God will attend to the conse-

quences of his doing it ; and sooner or later set forth his vindication. Our purposes, my brethren, must be too firm to be shaken by the skepticism or reproaches of a whole world ; our seriousness too deep to be overset by its derision ; our faith in things " within the veil " too lively to admit of devotion to the vanities which the world is pleased to call realities, to the foolishness which unrenewed men call reason. If zeal for Christ be called madness, so be it. If devout and heavenly-minded piety be called gloom, fanaticism, delusion, so be it. If to be serious, watchful, prayerful, plain in speech respecting the things of God and holiness, is to purchase the reputation of being too strict, overmuch zealous, so be it. " I serve a strict God," said a man of devoted piety when thus charged. We must take heed, my brethren, of being chilled in our affections, low in our graces, limited in our enjoyments, and feeble in our influence on " the children of this world," through fear of acting out religion, — manifesting the grace of God in our life and conversation. Be as singular as the apostle John ; as enthusiastic as Peter ; as strict as James ; as superstitious as Paul ; as visionary as the dying Stephen ; and as much " beside yourselves " as your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. The time comes when He who searches the heart and knows the motives will correct all misjudgments respecting you, and will bring forth your righteousness as the light ; and your judgment as the noon-day."

Does any unconverted person hear me, who is in any measure disturbed and anxious on the subject of his coming eternity ? To such an one we say, you have serious reason for solicitude, and there is nothing strange or needless in your feelings. You really have occasion, as a ruined sinner, to feel ten thousand times more unhappy about yourself than you do, or ever have done. For if God were to show you just what you are, as you appear in his sight, the view of your own guilt, thus disclosed, would be enough to drive you to despair. Seek " Christ the Lord," who can heal you of this disease of sin, threatening your soul with eternal death. You have been beside yourself all your life, and are beginning to find it out. Go to the Savior of sinners ; seek a place where you may " sit at his feet, clothed and in your right mind." Go, beg of him healing of your moral " madness," and he will give you grace to reign in your immortal spirit.

To you who are possessed with the idea that you are the wise and rational men of this world, in that you walk " by sight," not " by faith,"—" we pray you in Christ's stead," and for your own souls' sakes, hear the counsel of God. The Bible is not fiction ; it is truth, solemn and eternal. Anxiety about the soul is not madness, nor melancholy ; it is the consequence of the strivings of the Holy Spirit with the sinner, to lead him to repentance and to Christ Jesus. Serious religion is not enthusiasm, nor singularity, nor bigotry, nor fanaticism, nor delirium ; nor is it a thing to be derided with impunity. It is right-mindedness, health of soul, preparation for heaven.—*You* are beside yourselves in neglecting it. You are madly pursuing shadows and vain imaginations along the broad way to hell. God is remonstrating with you ; *beseeching* you by his word to return to him ; and striving with you, by his *Spirit*. " *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die ?*"

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SERMON CII.

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ALBANY, N. Y.

THE PROBABILITY OF PERDITION INFERRED FROM PRESENT
IMPENITENCE.

REVELATION, XX. 11.—*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.*

THERE is a depth of meaning in the descriptions which the Bible has given of the final condition of the ungodly, which the boldest human mind is utterly inadequate to fathom. There is the most fearful imagery employed on this subject which lies within the compass of human language. There is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. There is the smoke of the torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever. There is the worm that always gnaws and never dies. There is the pit over which hangs the blackness of darkness. There is the resurrection of damnation, and the lifting up the eyes in torment, and the being trampled under foot by Jehovah in his righteous indignation. I say that in this imagery there is a depth of meaning which we cannot fathom; but this circumstance renders it not the less but the more dreadful; for the implication manifestly is, that the woes which are to constitute the portion of the ungodly, and which are to break upon them in an everlasting storm, are really out of the bounds of our present conceptions; that no one can know all that is implied in the loss of the soul, until he learns it by experience.

That the statement now made will generally be assented to by this congregation, even by that part of it who are not professedly the followers of Christ, I cannot entertain a doubt; and if each individual were interrogated as to the fact whether he really believes what the Bible has said on this subject, I should expect, at least in nearly every case, to receive an affirmative answer. Why then, I am ready to ask, this entire unconcern which prevails in so many minds in respect to the salvation of the soul? If there be a fearful hell before the ungodly, wherefore is it that the ungodly do not fear it? How is it that these probationers for eternity, who, in acknowledging the truth of the Bible, acknowledge that they are themselves exposed to an eternal perdition, are after all apparently as much at ease, and move about in circles of levity with as entire thoughtlessness, as if they were really only the creatures of a day?

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will tell you the solution of this ; it is that they do not after all expect to perish. They have some loose calculation in their own minds that at some period or other they shall become religious : the precise time may be or it may not be determined upon ; but at all events it is to precede their entrance into eternity. I doubt not, my friends, that all of you who are conscious that this great work is yet upon your hands, are at this moment precisely in this condition ; fully intending to wake up and attend to it before you die. But it is my business, in this discourse, to attempt to show you that this will probably prove to be a delusion ; in the language of my text, that those of you who are unjust now will be unjust still ; that those who are filthy now will be filthy still ; in other words, that **THE FACT THAT AN INDIVIDUAL IS AT THIS MOMENT PUTTING OFF RELIGION, FURNISHES GROUND FOR A STRONG PROBABILITY THAT THAT INDIVIDUAL WILL PERISH.**

I know, my friends, that this may seem to many among you a startling doctrine ; and really it is so : but if I can prove to you that it is true, I hope you will not refuse to look at it seriously. May I not hope, too, that each one will hear for himself ; and if the argument should be sound, that each of you, as I pass along, will bring home to his own conscience the appalling reflection, "this proves that, humanly speaking, the chances are in favor of my destruction ; that it is fearfully probable that death will to me prove the gate of a dark and wretched eternity !"

I say then, that the fact that any of you are at this moment putting off religion, furnishes ground for a strong probability that you will perish. Listen, and see if it is not so.

1. For, in the first place, *you can never expect that any better adapted means will be used for your salvation than have been used already.*

Look back upon your life, and see how God has been dealing with you. Many of you were in infancy dandled on the knee of piety ; were brought to the altars of God for baptism ; were instructed and counselled to fear God, by the lips of parental affection ; and were privileged to come morning and evening to the domestic altar. All of you have, from your earliest years, had access to the word of God, in which the path to heaven is so clearly marked out that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not mistake. You have also enjoyed the privileges of the Sabbath and of the sanctuary ; have heard from the pulpit, in instances almost innumerable, the most solemn appeals and the most tender expostulations ; have listened while the prayers of God's people have been going up as a cloud of incense towards heaven ; have frequently witnessed the celebration of that most impressive ordinance in which are represented the love and the death of Christ ; and have had the obligations to join in this celebration tenderly urged upon you. Most of you, I have no doubt, have passed through scenes of special religious attention, in which many around you, and not improbably some of your near friends, have been the subjects of renewing grace ; *seasons in which the path to heaven was thronged by inquiring multitudes, and*

the gates of immortal life seemed to be thrown wide open. Moreover, God has dealt with you variously in the ordinary course of his providence ; on the one hand, has poured mercies innumerable into your cup, and on the other, has blasted your fond hopes, has caused your dwellings to be hung in mourning, and brought you, by sickness, it may be, to the very margin of the grave. And with all these means he has been constantly offering you his Holy Spirit ; and when you have bid this Divine agent depart from you, he has whispered in your ear in accents of kindness, " why will ye die ? "

Now I ask, when do you expect that any other or better means will be used for your salvation than have been used already ? When can you expect that the invitations of the gospel will be urged upon you with more persuasive tenderness than they have been in years that are past ? What will there be in the administration of the ordinance of the supper to impress you with the love of Christ hereafter, which there has not always been hitherto ? What effect will the sight of others pressing into the kingdom be likely to exert upon you in coming years which it has not exerted already ? And wherefore should you look for any different effect from mercies and afflictions than you have already experienced ? All these are the means of God's own appointment for bringing sinners to repentance : these means you have hitherto enjoyed, and by your own confession they have not accomplished their object. Suppose you should enjoy them to your dying day, where is the ground for concluding that they will hereafter be more effectual ? If they have done nothing for you up to this hour, when you have enjoyed them under the most favorable circumstances, is it not rash to hope that they will do more for you hereafter, when your circumstances will, in all probability, have become far less favorable ? I speak as to wise men : judge ye.

2. Another consideration to prove the truth of our doctrine is, that *probably in respect to most of you, the greater part of life is already past.*

It will be acknowledged, on all hands, that life is the only period of probation ; that whatever is done to secure the salvation of the soul must be done on this side the grave. The average length of human life is estimated, I believe, at twenty-eight years ; of course an individual who has lived fourteen years, has reached half-way to the average limit of man's probation ; and if he has passed that period, he has entered upon the latter half of the whole space (estimating it on the common principles of human calculation) which God has given him to prepare for eternity. But, lest it should be said that this is an unfair estimate, as the greater number of conversions do not take place under fourteen, we will substitute the age of twenty ; and this, surely, is more favorable than facts will warrant, for not only is it considerably beyond half of the whole period, but it includes the season in which the number of conversions is far greater than during any other portion of life. You, then, who have lived to the age of twenty strangers to religion, will probably go to the grave strangers to it ; because you have lived out more than half the ~~course~~

period of probation, and that part of it too, in which, judging from all analogy, the chances for your conversion were most numerous. Far be it from me to say that you never will be converted. It is not for me to decide what may be done in God's adorable sovereignty; but if we form our conclusions on this subject as we do on other subjects, in relation to which we can reason from facts, I see not how you will avoid the conclusion, that the probability is much against you. And if this be true of those who have lived only to the age of twenty years, and even less, what shall be said of the condition of those who have already passed the ordinary limit of life—who have attained to forty, fifty, or even threescore years? There are those here who would have reason to tremble, if human life, instead of finding its common boundary at the age of twenty-eight, should ordinarily be extended to threescore years and ten; for they have already gone far into the latter half of this period. Tell me, ye men of all ages, can you reasonably expect to live as much longer as you have lived already? If not, does not the fact of your being unreconciled to God at this moment, have a fearful bearing upon your probable destiny throughout eternity? Is it not manifestly a delusion that you are embracing, when you sit down at this late hour and count upon the hope of future repentance?

3. The probability that those of you who are unconverted will always remain so, is to be inferred *from the nature and power of habit.*

You well know that it is the tendency of every habit to grow strong by indulgence. For instance, a habit of intemperance, or of gaming; when it is first commenced, is comparatively feeble; but let it be continued, even for a little period, and it becomes strong; and after having been indulged for many years, in attempting to encounter it, you have to grapple with a giant. You would all of you look with much more hope of reformation upon one who had just turned his feet into these forbidden paths, than upon one who had been walking in them long—so long as to have acquired a desperate hardihood. Now the vices to which I have referred are only particular forms of wickedness; and what is true of these, is true of all others—that habit renders them difficult to be overcome. It is true of sin, even in its most general and least startling forms—such as inconsideration, the love of pleasure, practical unbelief—the longer they are indulged, the harder it is to forsake them. But sin, in any form, habitually indulged,—even the principle of sin in the heart, where its operations are entirely concealed from the world,—I hardly need say, will destroy the soul. Now tell me, you especially who have lived a considerable time in a course of sin, whether you see nothing appalling in this consideration. This habit of impenitence, from the very laws of the human mind, was more likely to be broken up in its incipient state, or at any preceding period, than it is now; for this obvious reason, that it has been constantly, however gradually, gaining strength; and there never was a time in which it was capable of resisting so strong a moral influence as at present. If, then, it has never been broken while it was comparatively feeble, how can you expect that it will be

more likely to yield when it has "grown with the growth, and strengthened with the strength?" If you could not give up the less, is it not presumption to expect that you will more readily yield the greater? Here again, I say nothing of what God, in his sovereignty, may do; but I say with confidence, that upon the principles on which men calculate, there is that in your prospects which ought to appal you.

4. It is probable that those of you who are unreconciled to God will always remain so, from the fact that *the idea of your being converted supposes a change of which there is not at present the least indication.*

Suppose you are, at this moment, entirely indifferent to religion, and you are unwilling even to think of it—this world appears to you so great and good; its honors, or its pleasures, or its wealth, have gained so strong a hold of your affections, that, for the present, you are disposed to regard nothing else. Now I ask you to look, and judge for yourself, and say whether you can discern in your present condition a single symptom of conversion; whether, in all this carelessness, and giddiness, and worldliness, there be any thing which even seems to indicate the prospect of a change? Do you not perceive that in taking for granted a future conversion, you take for granted that you will be willing hereafter to submit to that which revolts your feelings now? But can you give any reason why you should not be as willing to submit to it now as hereafter? or why you should submit to it with more alacrity hereafter than at present? Is not the language of your conduct virtually this,—“I will not embrace religion now, so dear to me are the pleasures of sin; and though there is nothing to indicate that these pleasures will ever be less dear to me than they now are, yet I will embrace it hereafter?” I ask you, will such a conclusion bear to be looked at by the eye of reason for a moment? Surely this is not sober argument, but the sophistry of a deceitful heart.

But suppose that you are in some degree awakened, and are even oppressed, not only with a sense of danger, but guilt, I dare not say that the probability is very much in your favor, even then. That it is a more hopeful case than the one which we just contemplated, admits not of question. But how many times have you been awakened before? Perhaps once, perhaps twice, perhaps thrice, perhaps even more. And notwithstanding these repeated seasons of conviction, you have never been converted. If, then, you have repeatedly been as near or even nearer the kingdom than you are now, and have fallen back into a habit of carelessness, why will you not, to say the least, be as likely to relapse into the same habit from the point which you have now gained? If your own experience, then, is to be taken as the standard, you must acknowledge that the chances are still against you.

But suppose that instead of looking at your own experience, you look at the experience of others, and see if you will be brought to any different result. I appeal then to the testimony of Christian ministers who have been most conversant with cases of conviction of sin,—I appeal especially to the records of revivals of

religion,—I appeal to your own personal observation, for the truth of the fact, that the greater number of persons who are awakened do not become the subjects of even a hopeful conversion. I have known a meeting of inquiring sinners, consisting of nearly one hundred persons, whose countenances wore the solemnity almost of the world of spirits—and when a few months after I looked at the individuals of whom it was composed, and saw a large part of them walking in the broad road, and only here and there one who seemed to have found the way towards heaven, I could not forbear to exclaim, “Lord, what is the wheat to the chaff?” If this be so, then it is surely rash to build very confident hopes of conversion on the mere fact that you are awakened; for if the mass of those who are awakened are not converted, you cannot but perceive that the probability is still against you.

Once more: The truth which I am endeavoring to establish is evident from the consideration that *at any given period, far the greater number of individuals in a Christian land are, to all human appearance, unconverted.*

It is true we are always liable to mistakes in the estimate which we form of men, as we know nothing of the heart except by the external conduct; and that is often of so mixed a character that we are at a loss whether a principle of holiness or of sin is predominant. But though there are cases in which the application of the scriptural rule may be attended with great difficulty, yet this difficulty does not exist in respect to persons who are immoral, or who are manifestly thoughtless of religion, and seeking their whole enjoyment from the world. We say unhesitatingly, and even with their own consent, that *they* are unconverted. It is fair too as a general rule, at least it is sufficiently charitable, to take the opinion which people express, either directly or indirectly, in respect to themselves; and inasmuch as, by not confessing Christ before the world, they virtually acknowledge their unfitness to do so, they ought not, and for the most part they do not, complain if we acknowledge the correctness of their judgment, and set them down as not being on the Lord’s side. Taking either of these standards of judging, then, either the conduct or the profession, is it not manifest that far the greater part always have been—are at this moment, even among ourselves—in an unconverted state? How few are there, comparatively, who even profess to be the followers of Christ; and may I not add, with fearful emphasis, how much fewer who give evidence of being his followers! Take out of the church all the lovers of pleasure, all who make religion a mere matter of form, all, in short, whose Christian character is in any way equivocal, and how large a number do you honestly believe would be left? How large a proportion of the individuals who walk our streets, and enter our churches, and I must even say, come to our communion-tables, do you really believe the Searcher of hearts sees to be his faithful followers? If the proportion of the whole number be very small, and if so far as we can judge it has always been so, I ask again, whether there is nothing here that looks ominous in respect to your own destiny? You are now among the *unconverted*; and the unconverted are the majority, and always have been the

majority: far the greater part who have come down to the bed of death have given the most melancholy evidence that they were unprepared to die. Do you not perceive then that the analogy against your being converted is just so much stronger than it is in favor of it, as the^v proportion of those who are not converted is greater than of those who are? Is not the conclusion equally irresistible and overwhelming?

I here close my argument. And now I appeal to you whether I have not dealt fairly and honestly with your understandings; whether the doctrine which I proposed to establish, startling as it might at first have seemed, or as it may still seem to you, is not sustained by considerations which it is impossible to gainsay? If, then, you can discover no flaw in the reasoning by which we have been brought to the fearful conclusion that the fact of your being unconverted now, renders it probable that you will always remain so, and will finally have your portion in everlasting burnings, I entreat you as wise men to hold this conclusion to your minds; to look your own condition full in the face; and not, as you have done a thousand times before, to turn away from it because it is alarming. Rely on it, when you have been calculating on a future conversion, your depraved feelings have got the better of your understanding; sober reason, as I trust you are now satisfied, conducts to a directly opposite conclusion. I ask again, will you not hold this conclusion to your minds? Will you not let it mingle itself with your thoughts after you have retired from this house, and in coming days and weeks? Will you not suffer it to have its legitimate influence on your conduct?

But methinks I hear some one say, "that would be a discouraging influence. If the fact be really so that there is a probability that I shall perish, then it were useless to attempt any exertion: I will fold my arms, and sit down, and submit to my fate as quietly as I can." But my friend, you are taking counsel here of the depravity of your heart, and not of reason or common sense. You do not act thus in your worldly concerns, and you would say of the man who should act thus that he was at least on the verge of insanity. Suppose you were to hear that a large estate of yours was in danger of being lost, and that the chances were even much in favor of its being lost, but that still by timely efforts you might possibly secure it—would this intelligence lead you instantly to abandon all concern for it, or would it not rather rouse you to the most diligent exertion to prevent its passing out of your hands? Or suppose you were to learn that your child at a distance was dangerously ill, and that for want of some medicine which you had in your possession he would probably die, and that with your utmost diligence there was only a chance of your reaching him before the fatal crisis, would this discourage you from all effort, or would it cause you to speed your way towards the beloved object, that if possible you might reach him seasonably to save his life, and if not, that you might have the satisfaction to reflect that you had done all that was in your power? And wherefore should you adopt a different course in respect to the salvation of your soul? Why should you act with earnestness on a small degree of

probability where some temporal good only is to be secured, or some temporal evil averted, and build an argument on the same degree of probability for the utter neglect of your soul's salvation? If your case were absolutely *hopeless*, why then indeed there would be nothing to be done, and there would be no motive to attempt any thing; but so long as there were even a ray of hope, you would stand convicted of madness in not waking to effort; for the loss on the one hand, and the gain on the other, defy all the powers of human calculation.

There is another thing here to be considered: it is that notwithstanding the chances according to all the rules of legitimate calculation are against any individual sinner being converted, yet we do know that many will be converted, though we cannot designate them; and here is a ground for encouragement. Let it be remembered also that notwithstanding the truth of our doctrine, yet the reason why it is true, is not that men are doomed to perdition by an arbitrary decree that has no respect to their own character; (*that* were a perversion of the true doctrine of providence;) but because they choose death, or the course which leads to death, rather than life, when life and death are both set before them. The probability, then, that you will perish, results not from the fact that you cannot be saved, but that you will not be saved; that you will continue till you die to reject the offers of eternal life.

And now, beloved hearers, if I do not mistake, the subject on which we have been meditating, has, as it respects some of you, raised a conflict between your judgment and conscience on the one hand, and your inclinations on the other. On the one hand, you cannot resist the conviction that these things are so; that the probability is decidedly in favor of your being doomed to an eternal communion with the wailings of the lost; and reason tells you that this is an appalling consideration. On the other hand, you shrink from the effort necessary to escape this tremendous doom,—and there is the plea of business, and the plea of pleasure, and the plea of carnal apathy, all united in favor of some future more convenient season. In this conflict shall reason or feeling be triumphant? In respect to most of you I have reason to fear that it will be the latter; and to every such case I may appeal for a further confirmation of the truth of what you have heard. Such a course will prove that you can still hold out against warnings and exhortations; that you can practically determine, even after this subject has been brought distinctly before you, that you will still stifle conscience and insult Jehovah. In short, it will be an important item in that evidence which proves that you are probably to suffer for ever. We shall expect to hear of you again, not indeed perhaps plunging into gross excess, but losing yourself in the haunts of thoughtlessness or in the whirl of business, apparently and really unmindful that you are in the least jeopardy. But there are those among us who will look upon you with an eye of compassion; who will wish we could lay hold of you and save you from perdition; who, when we think of you with respect and kindness, will feel our hearts throb and sink at the reflection that you are probably to have your por-

tion among the lost. I have said, you may refuse to look at this subject now, but the day is coming when it will urge itself upon you, and you will not be able to turn away from it. When sickness shall have taken you out of the ranks of pleasure and business, when death with its clustering horrors shall look you in the face, and show you his mandate, and point you to the door of the pit; and one step farther onward—when the everlasting abyss opens beneath the eye, and the sound of wailing ascends from it, and the storm and the lightning of God's wrath are blazing and raging over it,—Oh tell me, how will the subject of this discourse appear to you then!

SERMON CIII.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

THE WICKED SURPRISED BY THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION.

LAMENTATIONS, I. 9.—*She remembereth not her last end : therefore she came down wonderfully.*

THE occasion of the writing of this book was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the consequent dissolution of the Jewish state. In this first chapter, the prophet bewails the miseries which had come upon his much-loved city; contrasting her deplorable condition with her former state of prosperity and magnificence. And in the verse which contains our text, he speaks of the fearfulness of her ruin, and charges it upon her own guilty inconsideration. "*She remembereth not her last end; therefore SHE CAME DOWN WONDERFULLY.*"

The tremendous calamities that now came upon the Jewish nation, seem to have been an occasion not only of great distress, but of great surprise. Jerusalem came down wonderfully, inasmuch as she came down at a time when she did not expect it, in a manner which she did not expect, and to a doom which she did not expect. From having been the joy of the whole earth, she became a field of utter desolation.

There are certain great principles in the divine administration, the operation of which gives a degree of uniformity to the divine proceedings. For instance, it is the manner of our God to visit with signal destruction those who have proudly set at naught his authority in a course of prosperous wickedness. Such was his treatment of Jerusalem. From the haughty elevation to which she had risen, she was suddenly brought down into the dust: her pomp, and her glory, and the noise of her viols, all departed. So it has been with individ-

uals. Witness the case of Nebuchadnezzar, and of Herod, and a multitude of others. Destruction came upon them, not only in a terrible form, but at an hour when they did not expect it; and it was the more awful because it came as a surprise. And let me say, the same thing will hold true, in a greater or less degree, of all sinners, as it respects their final doom; while it will be especially true of those who have sinned against great light, and with a high hand.

The precise point, then, which I propose to illustrate in this discourse is, that **THE DESTRUCTION WHICH WILL OVERTAKE SINNERS AT LAST, WILL BE TO THEM A MATTER OF AWFUL SURPRISE.** It will be at once unexpectedly dreadful, and dreadfully unexpected.

1. This will appear, in the first place, from the fact that *God's wrath against the wicked is constantly accumulating.* If God's word be true, one sin exposes the soul to eternal perdition. We shall not stop here to vindicate God's justice in this constitution of things, for that were unnecessary, inasmuch as he himself hath said, "the soul that sinneth"—not that sinneth a thousand times—not that sinneth through a whole life, but "that sinneth, shall die;" and it is enough for us to know that such a declaration never could have gone out of the mouth of the Lord, unless it had been just. If, then, a single violation of God's law exposes the sinner to an eternal punishment, tell me what must be the effect of a state of impenitence continued during a whole life? If the first sin you ever committed provoked God, do you think that the second provoked him less; and that as he saw you become accustomed to sin, he came to think as little of it as yourself, and has not even charged your sins against you? Do you not remember that the Bible speaks of the sinner treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath? And can you reflect a moment without perceiving that reason and conscience both decide that it *must* be so? To suppose that it were otherwise, would be to annihilate God's moral government, and to trample the Divine character in the dust.

Now, sinner, take God's law for your standard, and enter into your secret chamber and commune with yourself; and see to what conclusion you come in respect to the number and the aggravation of your sins. Perhaps you are appalled at the undertaking, and are ready to shrink from it on the ground that most of your sins, especially your sins of heart, have escaped your remembrance. Take then a single week; or if you please, bring it down even to a single day, and see how many sins of omission and of commission, of heart and of life, rise up before you. Where has been your love to God? Where your faith in Christ? Where your gratitude for mercies received? Where your penitence for past offences? Where your earnest and importunate prayers? Where your faithful efforts to advance the spiritual interests of your fellow-men? On the other hand, have you not excluded God from your thoughts? Have you not refused to listen to the calls which he has sent you in his word and in his providence to attend to the things of your peace? Have you not *even resisted the strivings* of his Spirit, and driven away serious impressions

by rushing into the cares of the world, or into scenes of gaiety, when, if you had cherished them as you ought, you might have been brought into the kingdom? I do not pretend to say that it is possible that you can, by any effort of mind, recall *all* your transgressions—*that* I know were impossible; but of this you may be certain,—that the more you think of your sins, the more sins you will find to think of; it will be a field on which you will never lack for something new; for all the conduct of your life and all the operations of your heart will bring up to your view something omitted which you ought to have done, and something done which you ought to have omitted.

Bear in mind now that the progress of God's wrath has exactly corresponded with the progress of your guilt. He has been no idle spectator of any thing that you have been doing or leaving undone. If, then, the first sin which you committed was enough to ensure to you eternal perdition, to what an aggravated perdition must you be doomed for a whole life of transgression; transgression, too, persevered in amidst even the tender expostulations of dying love? If God's wrath against the sinner has been accumulating during all this time, Oh, who can estimate its fearful amount?

Now when all this comes to strike upon the sinner, may it not be justly said that he has "come down wonderfully?" It is most likely that his thoughts concerning it have hitherto been few; but even if he has dwelt upon it frequently, and has exerted his imagination to the utmost to conceive what the final condition of the lost must be, his strongest conceptions have fallen infinitely short of what he finds to be the reality. His sins have been accumulating faster than he had ever conceived, and by means upon which he had never spent a thought. And God's wrath has been accumulating just as fast. Oh, must he not sink under it, when the whole catalogue of his sins are spread before him, and the whole amount of wrath comes down upon him?

2. The destruction which will come upon sinners will be to them a matter of fearful surprise, inasmuch as in the present life *God's wrath, for the most part, seems to slumber*; at least, they receive no direct expressions of it. It is true, indeed, that God is giving them warnings enough both in his word and providence; and if they did not close their ears against them, they could not fail to be alarmed; and they will never be able in the day of their calamity to charge God with having concealed from them their danger. Nevertheless, he treats them here as probationers for eternity; he sets life and death before them; but he does not unsheath his sword, and point it visibly at the sinner's heart. The sinner reads perhaps of the awful terrors of God's wrath, but he does not now experience them. He does not find that the elements are armed for his destruction. The thundercloud rises, and rolls, and looks terrific, as if it were borne along by an avenging hand; but the lightning that blazes from it passes him by unhurt. Pestilence comes; and if he sees it cut down the sinner, he sees it cut down the saint also; or perhaps the saint dies, and the sinner lives. He sleeps quietly upon his bed: no invisible being whispers in his ear any thing in respect to the wrath to come; and he dreams perhaps of beauty, and

of pleasure, and of mirth, without the intrusion of a solitary image of gloom. In short, not one of the vials of God's wrath can be said to be open upon him. There is nothing which he interprets as an indication of anything dreadful in the future.

Now must not all this be a preparation for a fearful surprise at last? If God had taken the sinner directly in hand at the commencement of his career, and had made him a visible object of his indignation, and had all along given him a dreadful foretaste of the future in the present, why then the destruction that awaits him might be substantially what he had disciplined himself to expect; but after having had no premonitions of it, or rather nothing which he has regarded as premonitory, it cannot but produce awful consternation. If you see a cloud rising, and approaching, and growing thicker and darker, you are not surprised if there comes a peal of thunder that shakes the earth; but if when the sun was shining in his strength, and there was no cloud visible, and the atmosphere was serene and fresh, and the sky all over beautiful—if at such a moment, the voice of God's thunder should suddenly be heard in the heavens, and the world should seem to move from its foundations, you would be horror-struck at the unusual phenomenon. The same thing substantially will be true of sinners at the last. Destruction will burst upon them like a wild tempest in a serene and cloudless morning.

3. Not only have the wicked during the present life, received no signal expressions of divine vengeance, but *they have been constantly receiving expressions of the divine goodness*: and this is another circumstance which will serve to increase the surprise that will be occasioned by their destruction. You cannot look around you—you cannot recur to your own experience, without finding abundant evidence that God is continually showering favors upon the evil and the unthankful. How many blessings do sinners enjoy growing out of the constitution which God has given them in connexion with the circumstances of their external condition! They have food, and raiment, and houses, and friends: they have the means of intellectual improvement—of regaling the taste and imagination among the beauties of nature: they have the comforts of social intercourse; and the endearment connected with domestic relations; and, little as they profit by them, they have the means of grace—the Bible, the Sabbath, a preached gospel, and even the influences of God's Spirit—every thing that is necessary to fit them for heaven. They have as many temporal blessings, and sometimes more than the real children of God; and from the dispensations of God's providence towards them, it would be impossible to infer that there was to be any thing dreadful in their destiny hereafter.

Now these numberless expressions of divine goodness which the wicked are continually receiving, have a tendency to lull them into a yet deeper security, and to prepare them for a more fearful surprise when the day of calamity and wrath finally comes. The mere absence of any signal manifestation of God's displeasure, as we have seen, actually has this effect; much more will it be

likely to follow from their being the subjects of numerous positive blessings. They secretly flatter themselves that it is impossible that a God who does them so much good here, should inflict any great evil upon them hereafter : or if they are too thoughtless of the whole subject even to make this inference in form, still their long experience of God's mercies must prepare them for a tremendous disappointment when the change actually comes. What a fearful transition will it be from this world, in which there are so many blessings, to a world in which existence itself becomes a curse ! Oh, will not the sinner feel that he has "come down wonderfully," when he finds his doom fixed among the lost, and thinks how lately he was in a world of hope, and was cheered by a thousand expressions of the divine bounty ?

4. God sometimes not only gives to the wicked a common share of temporal blessings, but *distinguishes them by worldly prosperity* : hence another reason of the surprise which they will experience at last. It is no uncommon thing for the wicked to be greatly prospered in the accumulation of wealth. Sometimes they become rich by inheritance, without any exertion of their own ; and sometimes their own ingenuity and enterprise in acquiring property are crowned with signal success ; and they rise from absolute poverty to the possession of millions. Sometimes they acquire an extensive influence ; are elevated to stations of high worldly honor ; and are even permitted to rule over a state or an empire. Sometimes they are gifted with distinguished intellects, and rise high in the scale of mental improvement, and their productions are sought for with avidity even beyond the limits of a continent. And sometimes their naturally amiable qualities, and discreet deportment, and it may be their deeds of benevolence, (for many a wicked man performs such deeds,) render them extensively and deservedly the objects of esteem and even of admiration. Now under these various influences the wicked become inflated with their self-importance, and think of themselves far more highly than they ought to think, and I may add, far more highly than the world think of them. All this is a sad preparation for the approaching change. It is fitted to keep the thought of that change out of mind ; and to keep them so absorbed in present gratification, and especially in the indulgence of pride, that if the thought of what is future is forced upon them, it still makes no abiding impression. There never was a fairer example of the case of which I am now speaking than Herod, as he sat upon his throne, making an oration to the populace, and snuffing up their phrensied adulation when they would have made him believe that he was a god and not a man. The event, you know, proved that he was set in a slippery place ; and so it has proved in respect to many others of the splendidly wicked.

Do you not readily perceive that these worldly distinctions, of which the wicked are often the subjects in this life, are fitted to heighten their surprise when they come to experience God's wrath in another ? Think of the rich, and the great, and the noble, of this world, who have been accustomed to receive a homage which has sometimes fallen little short of idolatry, finding

themselves in the prison of despair, with no sound but the sound of their **OWN** wailing—with no society but the society of the reprobate—with no light but the light of everlasting burnings! Have not these persons come down wonderfully? When they compare what they once were with what they are now, and what they are to be through eternal ages, will they not regard the change as supremely dreadful and overwhelming?

5. I observe, once more, that the destruction which will finally overtake the wicked will be to them a matter of great surprise, inasmuch as *they will in some way or other have made confident calculations for escaping it.* It will be found, no doubt, that many of them had flattered themselves with the hope that the doctrine of future punishment might turn out to be false; and some will have been left through their own perverseness to believe the lie that the good and the bad will at last be equally happy. There will be others who will have wrought themselves into a conviction that destruction might be averted by some easier means than those which the gospel prescribes; and may have chosen to trust to the orthodoxy of their creed, or the kindness of their temper, or the morality of their life. There will be others who will have intended ultimately to escape destruction by becoming true Christians, but who were looking out for some more convenient season. One thing will be certain in respect to all: they will have intended to come out well at last. Not an individual among all the sufferers in hell but will have expected finally to be saved.

But mark now the disappointment! The Universalist dies; and behold, that awful doctrine of future and eternal punishment, which he had once disbelieved, proves true; and he lifts up his eyes in that very torment which he had perhaps derided as a dream of fancy. Unfortunately, he could not be cured of his Universalism by any remedy less pungent than the flames of hell. The good-natured moralist dies, and to his astonishment he finds that there was truth in the doctrine of regeneration; and that the proper element of an unholy heart is the world of wo. The self-confident hypocrite dies, and he finds that all his high professions, and arrogant denunciations, and undoubting hopes, were consistent with his lying under the wrath of God, and will be consistent with his feeling the strokes of that wrath for ever. The delaying sinner dies; and he finds that he has delayed too long—that the period of his retribution has begun long before he expected that the season of his probation would terminate. The youth had expected to live to middle age, and the middle-aged man had expected to live to old age, and even the old man had expected to live a little longer; and while they were severally deferring their repentance, each died, and found out by an appalling experience that this is the only world of probation. There are probably those in this house who will hereafter be examples of the awful cases to which I have now referred; but I venture to say there is not one here who really expects it, and has made up his mind to encounter this dreadful doom. The gayest youth before me does not intend to perish—the greatest worldling before me does not intend to perish—the oldest sinner before me does not intend to perish; and you never will intend to; but

notwithstanding all your intentions, there is great reason to believe that such will be your doom; and Oh, what a surprise would it be to you, if you should really find yourself in the arms of the second death!

1. In the review of our subject, we may see, in the first place, *how blinding is the influence of depravity*. We have seen that the surprise which sinners will feel when destruction overtakes them at the last, will be in consequence of their blindness and insensibility to their actual condition. It will not be because they have had no warnings of their danger, for God has warned them faithfully both by his word and by his providence; but it will be because they would not heed the warnings; because they flattered themselves either that they were not true, or that the punishment to which they related might be escaped in some other way than that which the gospel points out, or else that they would repent and turn to God at some future more convenient season. On some one or other of these grounds, they go on strengthening their habit of carelessness, rejoicing in the way of their heart and the sight of their eyes, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. How is it that these same persons are rational, and many of them eminently wise on subjects in which this world alone is concerned, and yet in relation to this most momentous concern display the folly of madmen? The secret of it lies in the fact that in respect to their spiritual interests they are blinded by sin. The devil whispers falsehood in their ears, and they believe it; the great God who cannot lie thunders truth in their ears, and they doubt it. They do not see things as they are; and there is danger that the film will not be removed from their eyes until the adversary can lose nothing by their being undeceived. Dare you cherish in your hearts an evil which, while it will certainly bring destruction upon you, will serve to keep the woes which are preparing for you out of sight until all efforts to escape them will be to no purpose!

2. Our subject teaches us that *it is a most awful calamity to relapse into a habit of carelessness after being awakened*. For the sinner to awake out of sleep is to take the first step towards escaping from the wrath to come. It is by no means certain that he will secure the salvation of his soul even though he be awakened; but so long as he remains asleep his condition is absolutely hopeless. The fact, therefore, of his being awakened is a fact of deep interest to him; and if he should relapse, he would go back into a state, continuing in which there is no hope for him: he would in all probability sink into a deeper slumber than ever. Here then is an admonition to you who are awakened not to trifle with your convictions. If I were to designate the greatest calamity that could possibly befall you, I should speak of your going back to a habit of carelessness. And if any of you have actually gone back, God only knows whether you have not sealed your own reprobation.

3. We learn from this subject that *there is no class of men so much to be pitied as those who are perhaps most frequently the objects of envy, and none whose condition is so much to be envied as those whose circumstances are often looked upon as the most undesirable*. I have no doubt that there are many who regard the proud, opulent worldling with envy; while the humble,

pious child of want is perhaps only thought of for his supposed degradation and wretchedness. Wait a few years and see how these two characters will change places ; or rather how inconceivably degraded and miserable will be the former, how inconceivably happy and blessed the latter. He who had wanted nothing that this world can give, comes to his dying bed, and there he wants what this world cannot give ; and in his way he supplicates it ; but it is too late. He who had lacked the common comforts of life, but had been rich towards God, finds in his last extremity grace sufficient to disarm death ; grace sufficient to brighten the prospect as it opens upon his dying eye. Ah, he had treasures laid up which the world did not see ; treasures which he could command when he needed them most ! And at the end of the dark valley, heaven opens upon him with all its strains of melody, and all its crowns of gold, and all its thrones of glory ; and in that world he finds his everlasting home ; and in all that happy community there is not one who is not his friend ; and through eternal ages he will mingle in their joys, their thanksgivings, their alleluias.

But the poor sinner, on the other hand, who had made gold his god, and who had proudly triumphed in the distinction it procured for him,—oh, how he will curse his own infatuation ; how he will reprobate that idolatry of this world to which he has sacrificed his soul ! Oh, how poor he will feel, who once felt so rich, when he finds himself stripped of everything but his guilt, and thrown into the prison of God's wrath ! Let no one then be, so foolish as to envy the proud and prosperous sinner. Rely on it, better be any thing else than he. True, indeed, he walks now at ease, and in self-security ; and so he may continue to walk a little longer ; but these dreams in which he is indulging are a preface to his plagues. If you should ever stand by his death-bed, it will be strange if you do not see something to appal you. It would not be strange, when his spirit has fled, if you should seem to hear a fresh sound of wailing coming up from the pit.

4. Lastly: *Who of you will turn a deaf ear to the warning which this subject suggests to flee from the wrath to come?* To this wrath, need I say, every one of you who is impenitent, is exposed every hour? While I am speaking you are in jeopardy. Who among you is so brave that you dare to encounter it? Who among you can measure or attempt to measure this awful perdition, and yet use no exertion to escape it? I pray you, my dying hearers, to dismiss this infatuation. I charge you not to slumber another night upon your beds, until you have done something to avert the doom which now stares you in the face. I am anxious to know whether this warning is to be lost upon you or not. Do you sleep still? Is there no sign of waking? Are you resolved that you will go away and be just as you have been before? Go, then ; but remember there will ere long be a change : remember that as God's word is true, you will at last *come down wonderfully*.

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OR,

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MONTHLY.

EDITED BY
REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON,
NEW-YORK.

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace.—*Isa. lxi. 6.*

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THE
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VOL. 6.

SERMONS CIV. & CV.

Preached on the Day of Annual State Fast, 1831.

BY EBENEZER PORTER, D. D.

President of the Theological Seminary at Andover.

DUTY OF PRAYING FOR RULERS.

1 TIMOTHY, ii. 1, 2.—“ *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;—for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*”

MANY of the first Christians, being Jews, imbibed the sentiment common to their countrymen, that no civil magistracy could lawfully be acknowledged but that of God himself. Of course their principles were inconsistent with quiet submission to the Roman authorities; and the case was rendered still worse, by the fact that these authorities enjoined some things inconsistent with the paramount obligations of religion. It was not strange that men, who, without a shadow of reason, accused Christ of being an enemy to Cæsar, should on any plausible occasion prefer the same charge against his followers. Already had Paul seen the Christians involved with the Jews in a decree of banishment from Rome, which had but recently been remitted. This state of things accounts for the often repeated injunctions towards the close of the apostolic age, that Christians should abstain from turbulence and faction, and exhibit an attractive example of obedience to lawful magistrates. These injunctions, requiring as they did submission to rulers who were pagans and idolaters, apply with augmented force to Christians generally, and especially to those who are free from the cruel persecutions which overwhelmed their brethren in the days of the apostles.

More emphatically than any other duty towards rulers, that of *praying for them*, is one of universal obligation. That Paul meant to be so understood, is evident from the language used in the text. After enjoining prayer for all men, he does not specify, in reference to rulers, the emperor and the several officers of the Roman court, but says, “for kings,” and because this was too restricted, he adds, “and for all that are in authority,”—a designation broad enough to include every form of government in any age or country. The precept is enforced, too, by a *reason* that is general, viz. “That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

In conformity with the plain import of the text, the subject to which I shall now invite your attention is, the DUTY OF PRAYING FOR RULERS.

In discussing this subject, if I may succeed in any good measure to impress on my hearers what are the honest convictions of my own mind as to its importance, the selection of it will not seem inappropriate to the solemnities of this occasion. There is one preliminary point, however, on which I am anxious

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to be well understood. As a citizen of a country which glories in its freedom, I claim the right to form and to express my own opinions relative to its public affairs, subject only to those restrictions which common sense as well as religion ought to impose on every man. But while I assert this claim, I do from my heart abjure and hate *party politics*; and I would not willingly degrade the Christian pulpit by making it in any way subservient to the angry passions which are inflamed by the rivalries of selfish and aspiring men.

Certainly I do not concede to such men the right of prescribing what I may believe or say on topics which they are pleased to *class with party politics*; as this would preclude the exercise of private judgment on every point of national concern. But whatever may be my opinions on many subjects of earnest debate among professed politicians, it is of little consequence that they should be known to others. It is on *principles* of permanent and general interest to my native country, *principles* that cannot safely be counteracted or forgotten by a Christian people, that I shall now with perfect freedom offer my opinions.

We proceed, then, to consider the *grounds* of our obligation to *pray for rulers*.

1. It is only a becoming acknowledgment of that superintending Providence which overrules the affairs of nations. Prayer is in all cases a direct acknowledgment of God and his government. Prayer for national blessings, is an acknowledgment that his government extends to the concerns of nations. The reality of such a superintending Providence, is often taught in the Bible. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." "He is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth, and governor among the nations;—putteth down one and setteth up another, and bringeth to nothing the princes." From the commencement of our national government, this doctrine has been distinctly recognized by all our judicial tribunals, and by each successive chief magistrate on his induction into office. Indeed, it has always been admitted, by all except atheists, that the care of an all-pervading Providence extends to the great affairs of our world, even though *small* things have often been supposed exempt from such a supervision. On this general doctrine pagan systems of mythology and divination were built. The movements of cabinets and armies were conformed to the decision of oracles. Poetry and history represent statesmen in great emergencies, and heroes on the eve of battle, as supplicating the favor of the gods, with a devout reverence, that may well put to shame irreligious statesmen and heroes in Christian countries.

The doctrine so generally admitted, that the providence of God extends to the concerns of nations, is not founded on superstition or imagination, but on substantial reality. Since the apostolic age, the civil institutions of the world and the whole course of human affairs have been modified more by the influence of Christianity than of all other causes. Yet the rulers of the world early "took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The most gigantic empire of antiquity, combining in array the policy of cabinets, the prowess of armies, the bigotry of the Jews, and the philosophy of the schools, led on the opposition against this religion. What was the result? Its disciples were "scattered every where preaching the word." Far and wide, the seeds of truth, wafted by the tempest of persecution, took root and sprung up, to bear fruit an hundred fold. Eternity only can disclose the thousand forms in which the history of modern ages has taken its complexion from the *violent measures* of the Sanhedrim and the Cæsars, overruled by infinite wisdom for the good of mankind.

Sometimes the interposition of Providence is direct and conspicuous. Most men of reflection are aware to what extent the light, and liberty, and good government, which now exist on the globe, have resulted from the Protestant Reformation. When the Spanish monarchy, in the height of its power, undertook as the organ of papal Rome to crush that Reformation, by the profanely vaunted *Invincible Armada*, He that ruleth among the nations lifted his hand, and the enterprise was dashed at a stroke. "He did blow with his wind, the sea covered them ;—they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

Sometimes there is a gradual developement. When England shed her own best blood, and drove her best sons into exile, God meant by all this to evangelize a new continent, and to establish a new empire of liberty, and law, and religion in the west.

Sometimes great results in the affairs of nations stand connected in the scheme of Providence with apparently fortuitous and trivial causes. When the storm of civil war was gathering over England in the seventeenth century, two men who saw its approach resolved to escape its violence by emigrating to New-England, and actually took passage in a ship for this purpose, but were providentially frustrated in their design. These men were Hampden and Oliver Cromwell, both prime actors, as you know, in the scenes of revolution which followed. Had their purpose not been counteracted by Providence, who can tell what changes would have been occasioned in the subsequent current of British history?

While the heart of philanthropy long bled for the woes of that people whose children were sold in the markets of other countries, who would have thought that the *slave-trade*, not less the shame of Christendom than it is the curse of Africa, would turn out to be, more than any thing besides, the probable instrument of intellectual and moral renovation to that ill-fated race? Surely an all-pervading Providence directs the affairs of nations.

A train of causes operating unseen for half a century, among which the blasphemies of Voltaire bore a prominent part, produced the greatest national convulsion of modern times. The throne and the altar, royalty, nobility, the whole fabric of political and religious institutions, fell with one mighty crash ; and the civilized world felt the concussion. From all this wreck and ruin, we trust infinite wisdom designs that a new edifice of constitutional government shall arise, as well as a more pure Christianity. But what became of Voltaire, and his press, and his boastful prediction that one man was able to overthrow what twelve apostles had built up? That same press with which this champion of infidelity waged war against God and his truth, and threw a continent into commotion, is now employed in printing Bibles.

When we find in the history of the world so many proofs that the providence of God overrules the devices of men, controls human governments, and blesses or blasts their counsels, we see one strong ground of obligation to pray for our rulers.

2. This obligation is enforced by considering the *ends* of civil government, and the *agency of rulers in accomplishing or frustrating these ends*.

That the existence of civil government is agreeable to the will of God, and in conformity with the general arrangements of his providence, every man knows who has read the Bible, or is at all conversant with human affairs. That government is designed for the benefit of the people, and not chiefly of rulers, is a maxim, which, though it has been practically denied over nine-tenths of our globe, and through all time, has come at last to be undisputed in every enlightened country. The whole doctrine of the Bible on this subject

is summed up in one sentence, "He is the minister of God to thee for good;" that is, government is designed for the public benefit.

But whether the ends of government shall be accomplished or not,—in other words, whether prosperity or calamity shall be the allotment of any people,—depends chiefly, under the providence of God, on the instrumentality of rulers. This instrumentality consists primarily in the *influence* they exert on the character of the community.

Suppose a man in elevated office to be intelligent, and at the same time unprincipled; suppose him to embrace *opinions* vitally subversive of good morals and good government; who can be answerable for the deadly mischief of his opinions on the minds of other men? Or, to make the case still worse, suppose that his *example* too is adapted to unhinge society, and is exerted with all the deleterious influence which conspicuous station can give it; clearly, if all men in public office were such as he, government, as to all its beneficial purposes, must be frustrated.

Besides this perverted moral influence, there are many ways in which *office*, committed to bad men, may be instrumental of public calamities. Office is associated with *power*. To say nothing of the minor forms without number in which power may be abused, and *will* be when intrusted to ambitious politicians, only suppose a country to be placed upon the edge of some perilous conjuncture, where its great interests are suspended on the measures of a day, and where a few men, or one man, may *sacrifice* those interests, irretrievably perhaps, for generations to come. Then suppose those few men, or that one man, to have no higher motive of action than the sinister purpose of self-exaltation,—and what is to rescue that country from ruin, if God in his mercy does not interpose?

Now this train of remark brings us to the point where the obligation to pray for rulers rests upon us with its full weight. Just so far as it depends on them to accomplish or frustrate the purposes of government, it becomes important that their minds and measures should be under the guidance of heavenly wisdom. If it is our duty to pray at all that God will bless our country, it is our duty to pray that he will do it in his own ordinary way, by the instrumentality of good rulers, whose opinions and principles of action shall be such as to render the public interests safe in their hands.

3. We are bound to pray for rulers, because their duties are often *difficult* as well as important.

Supposing their general intentions to be upright, they are liable to fail, and, without divine guidance, to fail greatly, in fulfilling the purposes of their appointment.

They are liable to fail, from incompetence or negligence, in the examination of great subjects on which they are called to decide or to act. They are liable to fail, from the insidious bias of *prejudice* perverting their own minds; from want of firmness to meet the prejudices of others; from the apprehension of sacrificing their influence even to do good, by opposing a popular current that is wrong.

Rulers, however distinguished for capacity or integrity, are liable, like all other men, to *mistakes* in judgment. They cannot anticipate the thousand ways, in which the results of their own measures are to be affected by hidden causes, which lie beyond their control or knowledge. They need, therefore, the guidance of Him who sees "the end from the beginning." Why did our fathers pray for the patriots and sages who were called to guide the destinies of the country in a period of storm and revolution? Because they knew that

fallible men might *mistake*; and that in such a case, the mistakes of one hour might lead to calamities for ages. A hundred wrong measures, in that season of extremity, were quite possible, any one of which might have dashed to ruin the whole enterprise. As a single example, had the post assigned to Washington been given to some ambitious chieftain, who, like Napoleon or Cæsar, would have made it a stepping-stone to supreme power, what would have become of this great country? God interposed to shield us from those perils, because our praying fathers besought him to interpose. Let any page of our history be blotted out, rather than this. Our country's triumph in that eventful contest is to be ascribed, not so much to the sagacity of her statesmen, or the patriotism of her citizens, or the patient endurance and fearless bravery of her soldiers, as to the fact, that devout men through all her tribes, in their closets, in their families, in their solemn days of humiliation and prayer, invoked the God of heaven to guide her counsels.

At a later day of momentous interest, why did Christians pray for the men who assembled to form our national Constitution? Because these men, pre-eminently gifted as they were with human wisdom, needed wisdom from above, in a work of unmeasurable difficulty. When that body had been in laborious session for several weeks, the venerable Franklin rose, and made a solemn address to the President; in which, after adverting to the fact, that they had been examining constitutions, and searching for models of government, through all history, ancient and modern, and still were groping in the dark, to find political truth, he proceeded thus:—

“In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily *prayers* in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard; and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend?—or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time;—and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, *that God governs in the affairs of men*. And if a sparrow cannot fall without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests, our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.

“I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly, every morning, before we proceed to business.”

That august assembly, composed not of ephemeral politicians, but of first-rate men, was yet liable to mistake. They were called to act where all the lights of experience failed. No such government as they wished to frame had existed on the globe. Suppose they had been so divided in sentiment that no constitution had been formed;—what would have become of this great country? Or suppose that they had formed a system, complete in most respects, but with some single elementary defect, so essential, that the whole machinery, after

moving laboriously on, for ten years, had come to a full stop;—what, I say again, would have become of this great country? The framers of this government were indeed wonderfully guided by Heaven, in adjusting its principles to the complicated and conflicting interests of so many sovereign states. But the experiment of near half a century has shown, that the *management*, as well as the formation of this vast machinery, is attended with difficulty. To soothe party asperities and rivalries; to prevent collisions between the different co-ordinate authorities of the national government, among themselves; or between these authorities and those of the States; is a work too difficult to be accomplished, I do not say by weak and wicked men, but by the wisest statesmen, without the constant aid of a gracious, interposing Providence.

But the difficulties to be encountered by rulers, entitling them to an interest in our prayers, consist not merely in the magnitude of their duties, and their liability to mistake; they are exposed to unmerited censure and opposition, when no mistakes are committed. Place any man in a conspicuous station, and who can promise that the most upright and able discharge of his duties will shield him from reproach? Who can say that purity itself shall not be branded with suspicion; and wisdom itself assailed with the imputation of folly? Where men are at liberty to think, they will differ in opinion; and where they are at liberty to speak, they will often speak falsehood. It is an abuse of freedom, for which no adequate remedy can be found, that the tongue of slander, for its own purposes of mischief, will misrepresent the best measures of the best rulers. One fact may stand as a mournful example of my meaning, a fact which cannot be forgotten, and cannot be remembered without shame; that the only man of modern ages who could properly be called the *Father of his country*, had enemies, base and bold enough to style him “a hoary-headed traitor!” Yes,—the very pre-eminence of a ruler in talent, honesty, and devoted patriotism, becomes to wicked men a ground of reproach and opposition. Surely the *difficulties* which surround men in exalted stations, entitle them to our prayers.

4. The habit of praying for rulers is important to the welfare of our country, by its tendency to make good citizens.

This tendency is founded in the established connexion between moral causes and effects. He who supplicates divine aid for rulers, because they are *imperfect*, will not demand in them *perfection*. Errors which they commit he will not ascribe to bad motives, when candor can find room for honorable apology. Nor will he demand *impossibilities*. With an impartial regard to the difficulties often attendant on public measures, he will aim to extenuate and obviate, instead of magnifying these difficulties. Deliberate in forming, and fearless in expressing his opinions, he will yet be conciliatory; because he knows that without a spirit of concession and compromise among individuals, social relations cannot exist. When this man, who prays for rulers, thinks their measures decidedly wrong, he says so, but not in the language of acrimony and misrepresentation; his opposition runs into no slanderous and inflammatory statements, it is not violent, factious, desperate,—but enlightened, dispassionate, temperate, founded on sober convictions of right and duty.

But what if this man after all, sees his temperate opposition to be unsuccessful? What if he is outvoted at an election, and sees men elevated to office whom he honestly thinks unworthy of public trust? What if he sees laws enacted which he honestly thinks unwise, or oppressive? Will he trample on those laws, or enlist in treasonable enterprises? No;—this would be to rush away from a present evil, which patience and an approving conscience

might render tolerable, into others tenfold greater ; instead of waiting for time and Providence to bring a remedy. He who has learned from his Bible to pray for rulers, has learned also, that "the powers which be, are ordained of God ; that he who resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God." Why did Christ and his apostles require the early Christians to obey Cæsar,—a heathen and an idolater ? He was the head of the civil government under which they were called to live. It is a settled principle of the Gospel, applicable to all ages, that the form of government regularly established in any country must be obeyed. Do I mean to say then, that there is no exception ?—and that an unlimited, passive obedience to rulers is the duty of pious men ? There is an exception. Human authority can never make that a duty, which is morally wrong. The captive Jews in Babylon obeyed the laws of the country, and prayed for the king. God had said to them, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it ; for in the peace thereof, ye shall have peace." But when the royal decree was published, that no man in Babylon should *pray*, except to the king, Daniel "went into his chamber and prayed, and gave thanks to God three times a day, as he did aforetime." What !—disobey the king ?—Yes. When the question came to this, "shall I disobey the king of Babylon, or the King of heaven ?" it was no question at all with Daniel. Not all the authority of Persia, backed by the terrors of the lions' den, could make him hesitate. Show me a man of prayer, and I know that he is a good citizen, a man of conscience ; who cannot be made a tool of faction ; who cannot be awed by threatenings, nor bribed by money, nor flattery, nor promise of preferment. The laws of his country he will religiously obey, when they do not require what is impossible or sinful. The same temper which inclines him to pray for rulers, inclines him to "lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty."

SERMON CV.

1 TIMOTHY, ii. 1, 2.—"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ;—for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

In prosecuting the subject introduced in the morning, I observe,

5. The duty enjoined in the text is important, from its *salutary influence on rulers.*

In the first place, this is but a proper reliance on the direct influence which God can exert on the *hearts* of rulers. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water ; he turneth it whithersoever he will." The thoughts and purposes of the mightiest monarchs he guides, consistently with their perfect moral liberty, as rivers run freely in the channels which he chooses. When some great good is to be accomplished for a nation by the instrumentality of its rulers, or some great calamity is apprehended from their misguided counsels, the good citizen will look up to Him who has their "hearts in his hand." So did the patriot Nehemiah. When he conceived

the noble enterprise of rebuilding the desolations of Jerusalem, and the place of his fathers' sepulchres, and saw the thing to be impossible without patronage from the court of Persia, how did he begin the work?—by a direct appeal to the king for letters patent? “He sat down certain days, and wept, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.” Apparently it was a *desperate* case. The reputation of Jerusalem with the Persian government was that of a “rebellious city,” from the rebuilding of which they would anticipate nothing but trouble. When the time came to offer the petition, Nehemiah *prayed* that God would “grant him favor in the sight of the king;” and in the very act of offering the petition, he “prayed *again* to the God of heaven.” Mark the result. The prejudices of the monarch strangely subsided;—he listened with kindness; gave Nehemiah passports, and a broad commission, with orders for timber and building materials that he should need;—in short, granted *all* his requests. Thus prayer *unbars iron gates*, removes *mountains*, and controls potentates and cabinets by an unseen influence from heaven.

Another way in which its influence on the character of rulers is important, in a *free* government, consists in its tendency to regulate the right of *suffrage*. Who should reign in Babylon, did not depend on the vote of Daniel or Nehemiah. Christians under the Roman empire, whom Paul exhorted to pray for its rulers, had no agency in their appointment, and no responsibility for their character. But the Christian patriot who lives in a *republic*, while he prays for its rulers, will not deliberately frustrate his own prayers. Acting under the obligations of an oath, to give his suffrage as he honestly believes will best promote the public interest, can he vote for a candidate, who he is aware neither understands nor regards that interest? He *knows* that unprincipled men in office will be ready to sacrifice the *general* welfare to their *own* views. He knows that there is no solid ground of *confidence* in such men; that their personal influence will be wrong; that their official influence will be wrong; that their authority will either not be used, or will be used in subserviency to *sinister* ends; that the vital interests of the community will be neglected, counteracted, and exposed to constant jeopardy. He knows that he commits to rulers the protection of his property, his family, his character, his rights of conscience, and his life; that the laws, good or bad, when constitutionally made, he must obey. And can he, with all these motives arrayed before him, and all these bonds resting on him, trifle with his conscience, and give his vote in direct opposition to his own *convictions* and *prayers*? No;—the man who comes from his closet to give in his suffrage, gives it, remembering that the eye of God is upon him. Mistake he may, but he means to vote for good men; and no artful appeals to his prejudices, his fears, his interests, or his party excitements, can make him do what he knows to be wrong. If all the electors of a country were such men, who can doubt, brethren, what would be the character of its rulers?

There is still another way in which the same kind of salutary influence would be felt. A man chosen to office by such an influence, even if he had no higher motives than a selfish ambition, would be constrained to act for the public good, because he would act under the control of a regulated and elevated public opinion. This suggestion is too obvious to require enlargement.

6. Prayers for rulers tend to prevent the prevalence, or to diminish the mischiefs of *party spirit*. This it does by the operation of principles which I have aimed to illustrate in the foregoing heads. Just so far as a genuine Christian patriotism prevails, it will diffuse a spirit of candor, integrity, and *good will*, through a community, instead of suspicion, cabal, and wrathful

excitement. Every wise man in our country is fully aware how much the sanctifying influence of such a patriotism is needed among us.

The great men who framed our national constitution had seen the warning inscribed on the page of history, "FACTION IS THE GRAVE OF REPUBLICS." To guard against this one danger, their anxious precautions were chiefly directed in the instrument itself. And the wisest of these worthies, having conducted the ship of state through an eight years' arduous and perilous experiment, resigned the helm into other hands, most evidently with solemn presentiments that the best hopes of this government are liable to be dashed in some tempest of popular passion. To this point the eyes of our most keen-sighted statesmen were directed, and that with unutterable solicitude, during the first years of this momentous experiment. And one among the most sagacious of these said of that period, "The peace of America hung by a thread, and factions were sharpening their weapons to cut it."

But why are free governments exposed to calamities so fearful, from party spirit? Because this is the instrument by which the worst men aim to accomplish their purposes. To subserve their own ambitious designs, they wish to promote popular ignorance and credulity, since enlightened citizens are not easily made the dupes of flattery and falsehood. They wish to prostrate the barriers of conscience, and to sink to their own level the standard of public sentiment and public morals. To farther these views, they corrupt the press, destroy confidence in public sources of information, controvert established principles, asperse men of integrity, —in short, hold all measures to be lawful which will aid their own advancement. With such unprincipled partisans it is an object of unceasing effort to frustrate all sober remonstrances against their own measures, and especially to assail the motives, and decry the influence of *religious* men. Under their management freedom of election becomes a farce. The rights of private opinion in voters, consist in obeying the will of their leaders, and marching like feudal slaves in the ranks of a party. What is right, what does the public good require, is not the question; but, What has the *party decided*? What does the *integrity of the party* require?

When such men obtain power, they deal out proscription and vengeance on their opponents. It is with a mingled sentiment of respect and detestation, that I always think of Cæsar. In the full career of prosperous ambition, and amid his triumphs over the liberties of his country, Cæsar was *magnanimous*. When Pompey was vanquished and beheaded at the battle of Pharsalia, he took the signet of that general and wept. The statues of his rival, which had been thrown down, he ordered to be restored; and the soldiers, who had borne arms against himself, instead of punishing he forgave and honored with his favor. In this way he assuaged instead of inflaming party animosities. But when successful aspirants to office, strangers even to a dignified ambition, cherish a rancorous hostility towards opponents, and lavish their confidence and rewards upon sycophants, at the public expense, the nation is inflamed with malignant passions, perhaps convulsed to its centre.

Weak and visionary men, intrusted with power, or rash unprincipled men, may so embarrass public affairs by want of skill or honesty, as to render violent excitement unavoidable. In such a case, the *prosperity* of a country, perverted, becomes its curse. It arms fellow citizens with a more fatal power of warring on each other; it facilitates the almost instantaneous transmission of impulse by the press, over the whole land. Thus by artful demagogues the passions of the people may be blown up to flame and outrage, "and phrensy be left to finish what folly began." Experience may utter her warnings with

trumpet tongue, but her voice is not loud enough to be heard, amid the general uproar. The eloquent writer whom I lately quoted, says, "He who expects to disperse a mob of a thousand men by ten thousand arguments, has certainly never been in one. A mob-government is a Briareus, with a thousand hands, each bearing a dagger. It is a Cerberus, gaping with ten thousand throats, all parched and thirsting for blood. It is a hurricane that strews the earth with ruins, and turns the sky yellow with pestilence. It is an earthquake that loosens foundations, burying in an hour the accumulated wealth and wisdom of ages."

Thus have all republics before our own perished. And is there no redeeming power that can preserve this one republic from the common grave of popular governments? Yes, *God* can preserve it. The God in whom our fathers trusted can interpose, in answer to the prayers of his people, and shield us from threatening calamities. He can turn the hearts of rulers at his pleasure; can allay the fierceness of political strife; can *prevent* the hurricane and the earthquake;—or say to the tempest in all its fury, "Peace, be still."

Permit me now to call your attention to some *practical results* growing out of this subject.

In the *first place*, we may see why it is important that national habits should be formed under the influence of religious principle.

No permanent basis for enlightened social order can exist in a community, unless public sentiment recognises the government of God as extending over all the affairs of men; and unless this sentiment has the force of national habit, in commending to the blessing of God the public interests of a country.

It is not single events or qualities, but *habits*, that constitute national character. Britain has never been accounted an infidel nation, because she had one Hume; nor Spain an enterprising nation, because she had one Columbus. The character that continues and pervades a community, and becomes habitual, is national character. Whatever causes contribute to the formation of this, more than to all other things, it is to be ascribed to the *religion* of a country. This is illustrated in all history, but peculiarly in the history of these United States. The principles developed in our revolution, and in the form of our national government, resulted from a train of causes that had operated for ages before the settlement of this country. These causes are to be found in the elements of the Saxon character, called into action, and matured by the Protestant reformation. To the leaders of that reformation the world is indebted for all the liberty, civil and religious, that has existed in modern ages. It was a distinguished philosopher who said, "Loyola would have governed the world, but for Luther and Calvin." Let any man look at the Catholic countries, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and South America, where the human mind has stood still, if it has not gone backward, for centuries. Then let him look at the Protestant countries, Britain, Holland, and the United States, in which the progress of intellectual and civil improvement has been more rapid than the world has ever witnessed in the same period; and then let him tell,—I do not say as a Christian, let him tell as a philosopher, as a statesman,—what has made this mighty difference in national character.* There is but one answer. In Catholic countries, men are so held in bondage, by a dire system of superstition and arbitrary power, as scarcely to know that they have souls. In Protestant countries, the Bible has taught men that they *have* souls; and that they have

* The reader who would see this general subject discussed with much ability, is referred to an address of Hon. T. S. GRIMKE, delivered before the Literary and Philosophical Society of South Carolina.

rights of opinion, rights of conscience; that no human authority is obligatory if it contravenes the authority of Heaven; that rulers exist for the people, not the people for rulers. The first foundations of our republic were laid by men trained in the school of the Bible. Men whose spirit of liberty, no sanguinary laws, no terrors of the prison or the stake could extinguish. The sword of power might hew them in pieces, but could not subdue them. Death or exile they could endure for their principles, but could not *abandon* their principles. Such were the men from whom we are descended. Had the puritan ancestors of New-England landed on the shores of South America, and with their light and inflexible love of liberty, planted republics there, O what blessed communities think you would now inhabit those fair regions, blessed with civil and religious liberty, blessed with the light of Bibles, and revivals, and Sabbath-schools, instead of the ignorance, and anarchy, and bloody violence in which they are overwhelmed! God be praised, that our national institutions have been reared on foundations laid in faith and prayer; laid by a patriotism enlightened and exalted by the sacred Scriptures. And wo to us, if in our madness we prove recreant to the principles of such fathers.

In the *second place*,—we see what is the *true connexion between religion and government*. It is a practical result from the subject that good government is dependent for its success on true religion, while religion is not in any proper sense dependent on government. When each man is left to choose his own mode of faith and worship, voluntary civil contracts to support religion doubtless ought to be enforced by law. But without any aid, and even against opposition from government, experience has proved that religion can prosper. Perhaps it is not strange that this subject should have been constantly misunderstood, in a world where there has been so little either of good government or of true religion. Unquestionable as the proposition is, that government is dependent on religion, the converse by no means follows, that religion is dependent on government. Yet this mistake has been a common one in Christendom for ages; and from this one mistake, since the days of Constantine and Theodosius, half the miseries of Christendom have resulted.

This principle has come from the maxims of ancient states, where governments have been hereditary and military; and where religion has been made an instrument of state policy. The tendency of such a system is seen in Catholic countries, and Mahomedan too. It is seen, with more or less of its direful influence, in all countries where there is an established religion, and a hierarchy, associated with the court as a state machinery. The church is secularized. Archbishops become officers of the state, with immense revenues; cunning, avaricious,—ambitious. The entire system of which this is a part, is framed so as to debase the people, that they may be managed by their rulers.

As the world is constituted, state patronage of the church will be the death of religion, and of civil liberty too. But leave the church untrammelled with secular alliances, and she will diffuse a vital energy around her. Religion, like the air and the light, is an element not subject to the regulation of government. Subjects have as good a right to see and breathe as rulers; both are absolutely and equally dependent on God for this privilege. Just so, as to rights of opinion and of conscience. Human governments do not confer these rights, and have no concern with them, except to protect individuals from violence in their enjoyment, and to prohibit any extravagant abuse of these rights to the public injury. My animal life, though not derived from human government, may be forfeited by gross transgressions against society. For

my *actions*, that are wrong, I am responsible, even to the abridgement or entire loss of personal liberty. But my *rights of opinion* merely, for which indeed I am accountable to God, are as independent of human authority as my immortal existence. Religion stands in its own strength, or rather stands by leaning on Omnipotence. Government stands, if at all, by leaning on religion. Take away from a free community belief in a God and a final retribution, and you cut all the cords of conscience and moral obligation. Tell me then, what principle remains that can give efficacy to laws in that community.

Can it be done by the mere *authority* of good laws? The penalties of the statute book,—the array of tribunals, and executive officers, and prisons, all are frail as the spider's web, to restrain the passions of men let loose from the ties of religion. Besides, how are good laws to be *enacted* in such a community? Would theft and drunkenness be punished in a republic consisting of thieves and drunkards?

Can the force of *example* give efficacy to good laws? Example of whom? Once in an age some illustrious model of excellence might arise, but the general current of example sweeps *downward*, in an overwhelming tide of licentiousness.

Can *standing armies* do it? In a despotism, the sword may enforce obedience; but no people, retaining the rights of self-government, will feed and pay armies to keep themselves in subjection.

Can *education and intelligence* diffused among a people do it? So our orators and politicians have told us a thousand times; and doubtless knowledge among a people is an indispensable auxiliary to moral principle, where government depends on popular suffrage. But is this *enough*? The men of Greece and Rome were enlightened; yet Greece and Rome were convulsed with endless revolutions, and to escape the fires of faction that consumed them, took refuge in despotism. Satan is enlightened; yet a community actuated by his spirit, however enlightened, would not make a good republic; no, nor a good monarchy; for they would never agree who should be the monarch.

Will *patriotism* and the love of *national glory* do it? I know that this is a principle of great efficacy, to which warriors and poets are wont to appeal. The soldier, that marched under the banner of Cæsar, gloried in the fame of eternal Rome. The Briton glories in the navy of his country, and in the names of Marlborough and Nelson. The American, peasant though he be, glories in the names of Bunker-Hill and of Washington. It was a salutary sentiment and honorable to our country, that poured forth its population with a common impulse, from the shop and the cottage as well as the splendid mansion, to unite in the welcome of La Fayette. But this sentiment of itself is no basis for good government. Whose tongue does it keep from perjury? whose hand from theft or murder? Follow this crowd of patriotic men, as they disperse from the public assemblage, and mark how many of them go to the dram-shop, to the lottery office, to scenes of riot and blasphemy, and then you see just how much this vaunted patriotism comes short, as a foundation for social order; yes, and you see why, without a radical transformation of the people, in Italy or Spain, and I grieve to add, South America too, the existence of a republic is impossible. *Conscience*,—a *public conscience*, that regards God with reverence, can make good citizens, and nothing else can do it. Short of this, theories that presume on the perpetuity of our institutions, because the people are enlightened and free, may do for political declaimers, but they are mere *talk*. There must be some principle that goes deep to the springs of moral *action*, and derives efficacy from a perfect law, and an eternal retribution

Do I then overlook the noble charities, by which gratuitous education is given to the children of the poor? Do I forget that thousands of village libraries, and village schools, and lyceums, and twice as many newspapers and periodical publications as are printed in the whole of continental Europe, are spreading knowledge through the land? No,—I look at these facts with exultation and hope. But besides and beyond these, I would look for an all-pervading sense of religious obligation among the people. I would gladly see them all bow the knee in fervent supplications to heaven, for their country and its government. Then might coming generations say of this goodly edifice, which our fathers built, “The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon it, but it fell not,—for it was founded on a rock.”

In *the third* place,—good men have an important part to act as citizens.

Is it their duty then to become noisy politicians?—to cherish angry passions, and mingle in the storms of party strife?—No,—but it is their duty to pray “for all in authority,”—and to “lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.” What if the praying man undervalues his own usefulness, and is undervalued by the eager candidates for public honor? Perhaps the *shepherd of Salisbury Plain* did more to promote his country’s welfare than her *first minister of state*. But does the *whole* duty of Christian citizens consist in prayer for rulers, and quiet submission to the laws? In a *republic*, certainly not. For the right of *suffrage*, they are accountable to their country and to God. Have Christians then the same right to think, and speak, and vote, in civil matters as other men? Is it their duty to do so? In theory, no one is hardy enough to deny this; though practically it is denied by multitudes.

The principle which bars out for ever an established religion, is a main pillar in the fabric of our national government. This is, perhaps, the only principle in the system in which there is perfect unanimity of sentiment among the people. Every intelligent, pious man, without one exception, as I presume, would now regard an alliance with the state as no more a privilege to the church than it was to the three worthies of old to be thrust into the fiery furnace, where nothing but Omnipotence could preserve them.

But the pendulum has swung to another extreme. Ambitious and selfish men, perceiving that religion promotes honesty, and that honesty in public sentiment is adverse to their own advancement, maintain that all connexion with religion is dangerous to government. Because alliance between the throne and the hierarchy once held the noblest faculties of men in chains, and shrouded the world in night, political declaimers have abjured all dependence of government on religion, and have deemed the very *existence* of religion, at least such religion as exerts any sanctifying, *public influence*, dangerous to our free institutions. The silence of good men, construed into acquiescence in these doctrines, for the last twenty years, has been gradually giving an aspect to our public affairs, that is ominous to the welfare of our country. The propagators of these doctrines, encouraged by this presumed acquiescence, have proceeded to bolder assumptions, till they virtually say, that *pious men* have *nothing to do with politics*. Certainly the pious man should stand aloof from all the rancor of party passions. But is he not a man, a moral agent, a citizen? Can he withdraw all the powers of his understanding, and the sensibilities of his heart from the interests of his country? With these interests are not his own and those of his family identified? Show that it is no matter to him whether the rights of property and of conscience shall be protected or sacrificed; no matter whether his house is secure from the incendiary, his person from the assassin, and his country from anarchy, and then I will grant

that it is no concern of his under what sort of government he shall live, and by what sort of men it shall be administered. While Christians have liberty to speak, they will say that he who spurns the obligations of religion is not fit to be the ruler of a Christian country. While they have liberty to vote, they will not vote for that man; because there is in him no adequate ground of confidence. "Grapes do not grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles." But should the day come when the Christian may not speak or breathe without license from a fastidious party spirit, and when he forfeits his civil rights by doing his duty as a moral and immortal being, it will be idle to talk of liberty in this land of the pilgrims. If he who fears God loses his rights of private opinion in civil affairs; if he may not give his vote and utter his sentiments on public men and measures,—the cause of free government is desperate. The principle fundamentally overturns the fabric of society. For if the devout Christian has fewer rights as a citizen than the sober infidel, the latter has fewer than the blasphemer and the atheist; and the complete title to citizenship is superlative wickedness.

What is to be said then of the clamor, lately raised, that the church is aiming at civil power? Doubtless, the men who have raised it understand their own meaning. If this fear is really entertained by any (and perhaps in some dark corner of the land, there may be some men ignorant enough to entertain it sincerely) —it is the fear of childhood. If it is a mere pretence, it is a wicked attempt to disfranchise Christian principle; to lay godliness under an interdict, and to shut God out of his own creation. Honesty could not hold up its head in Rome without rebuke, when the maxim was, "This world was made for Cæsar." The church aspires to no secular dominion; it asks from government but this one privilege, *to be protected in religious rights*; and in return promises to do for government, what nothing else can do, and what the church in its legitimate influence cannot fail to do,—namely, to make an atmosphere fit for the respiration of freemen; an atmosphere which will impart firmness to every pulsation at the heart, and vigor to every muscle, and the glow of health to every feature, of the body politic.

Now this is a result which unprincipled politicians aim to frustrate;—and how? They know that every pious man wishes to lead a "quiet and peaceable life;" and that thousands of such men will *forego* their rights of suffrage rather than mingle in the acrimony and clamor of elections. Just in this way the experiment has been going on, to see how far good men can be induced to relinquish their rights and influence as citizens. That this experiment has already succeeded to a fearful extent is evident from two facts, at which I can but barely glance. One is, that the religious men of the country have been gradually withdrawing, more and more, from exercising their right of suffrage, especially in regard to the most important offices. The other is, the intolerant spirit with which their *motives* are assailed, whenever their influence is felt on public affairs. The question of the *Post-Office regulations on the Sabbath* is an example. On this subject Congress had enacted a law, which was regarded by very many as contravening the law of God, and infringing the rights of conscience. After much painful delay, the friends of the Sabbath, of various denominations, from all parts of the country, in the winter of 1829, spontaneously poured in petitions to Congress, asking,—what?—that this one enactment, requiring the agents of government in the Post-Office department to violate the Sabbath, might be *repealed*;—asking, in other words, that the government would provide the same shield against the profanation of *the Sabbath, by its own officers, in this department as in other departments.*

And who were these petitioners? A few restless spirits,—the refuse of the land? or a few uninformed people, who “were induced to sign the petitions without reflecting on them?” Their list of many thousand honored names, speaks for itself, without apology or eulogy of mine. But without disparagement or disrespect to other men, it cannot be doubted that, in this list of petitioners was comprised as great an amount of intelligence and solid worth, as ever was embodied in any similar appeal to the national legislature. And how were these petitioners treated? In one house of Congress, the honorable committee who reported on the case, and several of the members who took part in its very brief discussion, treated the *character* and *motives* of the memorialists with sufficient respect. Their *wishes*, too, were perhaps treated with as much respect as was consistent with an apparently predetermined purpose of the majority to do nothing on the subject.

And how were they treated in the other house? Not with civil neglect, but with *indignity*. It is with deep regret that I speak thus, in a case where all my habits, and all my heart, incline me to use only the language of respect and approbation; but it is a case involving *principles* of vital importance. Yes, freemen of a Christian country approach the halls of legislation, which they have contributed to build, and ask the men who sit there, as servants of the public, not to legislate away the Christian Sabbath, nor to *do* more or less on the subject of religion, except to *undo* a single act of their own, invading the religious institutions of the land; and then are met with taunts and opprobrium, as men that wished to see religion established by law; as a “dangerous combination,” tending to subvert the government, and to introduce “religious despotism.”

And to render the case more painful still, among the intelligent and honorable men, listening to such imputations, and knowing them to be groundless,—with a few exceptions entitled to grateful remembrance,—scarcely a tongue was heard in those halls, to correct the *mistake*, shall I say?—or rather must I not say, to *repel the outrage*?

And here begins the cry that is echoed through all our borders, “Union of church and state.” *What church* do these clamorous accusers mean? Some single denomination of Christians aspiring to exclusive favor from the government, at the expense of all other denominations?—while other denominations are joining in the plot against their own existence? To believe this is credulity, worthy of the dark ages!

Union of church and state?—*what church*? The community of pious men, of all denominations? These live together, indeed, as citizens of a common country; they submit to the same laws; and share in the same public blessings or calamities. Their example and influence tend to make their country Christian in character as well as in name. They wish to see all its *citizens* pious men; all its *rulers* pious men; and every neighborhood blessed with the influence of Bibles, and Sabbath-schools, and revivals of religion. Truly here is a formidable combination!—formidable, not to our republic, but to the despotism of ignorance and sin! I should beg pardon of my hearers for any passing notice of so senseless an accusation, but for its bearing on the solemn question which is pending, whether the great body of religious men in our country shall claim the rights and do the duties of citizens, or shall relinquish both at the dictation of such accusers?

And now, brethren, what has this subject to do with this day of public humiliation and prayer? Much every way. The tendencies of party strife are to drive pious men from all concern in public affairs. Gradually they have

come to forget, if not even to doubt, the obligation of praying for rulers. It seems to be felt that this is an improper meddling with politics. But is it wrong to obey God? Has not He commanded us to pray "for all in authority?" Did not our fathers do it? It is not thirty years since rulers were devoutly mentioned in almost every prayer offered in the pulpits and families of the whole country. Am I mistaken or not, in supposing that of public prayers offered now, scarcely one in ten, perhaps not one in fifty, makes any distinct mention of rulers? How far this neglect extends to our own prayers, you know, brethren, as well as I. It is my painful belief, that this neglect is far more prevalent now in this country than in any other country of Christendom. And why, I ask, is it so? Do not the rulers of this country, as much as of any other, need guidance from heaven? The flames of war are kindling anew in Europe, and we are liable to be involved in its calamities. Volcanic fires of faction are rumbling beneath our own republic, and threatening to shake into ruins the fabric of our institutions. Our wisest and firmest statesmen are filled with apprehension at the portentous aspect of the times. More than all the rest, to fill our cup of trembling, *God is angry with us*. He looks down upon this great and guilty nation, which his own right hand has planted and prospered, and sees us "a people laden with iniquity." Oh, what idolatry of wealth;—what profanation of his Sabbath;—what scenes of out-breaking, depravity, brutality, blasphemy, does he witness every week in our towns and cities? To bold contemners of God; to political zealots and madmen of all parties, I say nothing. But to those who fear God, I speak in his name to-day. Men of prayer! forget not your country. Mourn for its sins; pray for its rulers; obey its laws; cherish good-will towards all its inhabitants. Meekly, but inflexibly maintain the rights of conscience. Discourage party violence, the curse and shame of the land. At every lawful hazard stand by the *constitution* of your country. Should parties rage, should the mainsprings of authority come into collision, should the wheels of government stop, even for a season, then you will pray for your country;—then you will fall upon your knees, and look upward to God for help. But in such a fearful moment, should it come, abstain from rash resolves and measures of desperation. Hold on, and hope, to the last. Be calm in every emergency;—watch and pray, and wait for some heaven-commissioned hour of deliverance.

And should the day come, which may Heaven avert, when the tempest of desolation shall sweep over this fair heritage of our fathers, for you, men of prayer, a refuge will be provided. He who rides on the whirlwind will say,—"Come my people, enter into your chambers, and hide yourselves till the indignation be overpast; for behold the Lord has arisen to shake terribly the earth."

"Therefore, will we not fear, though the earth be removed; though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." 'Blessed, O Lord of Hosts, is the man, blessed is the nation, that trusteth in thee.'

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SERMONS CVI. & CVII.

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EARLY PIETY.

1 SAMUEL, iii. 19.—*And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him.*

THE celebrated lamentation of David over Absalom, his son, has often been alluded to as a striking example of parental affection. It is indeed striking. But perhaps it is surpassed by another passage in the same narrative, less frequently appealed to—his question, *Is the young man Absalom safe?* This unnatural son, with an ingratitude which would be incredible were it not so exceedingly common, had raised a rebellion against his father, and, with the double turpitude of a traitorous subject and an undutiful son, had levied war upon his parent and his king. After a long period of suspense and anxiety, a great battle is fought; a messenger comes with tidings of the result; David meets him eagerly,—and with what question? Does he ask, *Has my army been victorious? is my government established? are my kingdom and my country saved?* No. As every other parent would have done in similar circumstances, he merges every other feeling in that of interest for his son. No matter about my government—no matter about my country—no matter whether friends or enemies have been victorious. The only question which the eager parent could utter was, “*Is the young man Absalom safe?*”

This is human nature. It portrays the strength of the affection by which God has bound the parent to the child. This is, perhaps, the strongest feeling of the human heart. How early does it begin to operate! how does it stand uninjured by the thousand shocks which it receives, not chilled by unkindness, not weakened by time!

And yet this affection is not founded in *reasoning*. It is not founded in *gratitude*. The son is not the friend and protector of the father to such a degree as to awaken this attachment in the parent's heart. The protection and the benefits flow all *the other way*. We might have expected that *filial* affection would be strong, being based upon gratitude and a sense of dependence, and that if indifference should be manifested at all, it would be the parent's indifference towards the child. But no. The coldness is always on the part of those who *receive* the favors. It is the hearts of those who bestow them which glow unceasingly with affection and love.

Whence comes, then, this feeling so strong and so unaccountable? God has engraved it upon the human heart; and by doing this, he has communicated his intention, *that the parent should be, to a great degree, responsible for the welfare and happiness of the child*. By fixing this feeling so indelibly in the heart, he has meant to be understood as *reposing a trust, as assigning a duty*. He

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might easily have so formed the race, that each individual would have been ushered into existence without the long period of helplessness and dependence. But it is not so; every human being *must have* for many years a human friend; and by the strength of that parental love which he has implanted, God has declared who he wishes that friend to be, and what duties he wishes him to perform.

I shall take it for granted that all the parents whom I now address are aware of the greatness of the obligation under which they are thus placed. I shall presume that they are satisfied, that among the innumerable connections which exist in this world between mind and mind, there is not one which exhibits more influence on the one side, and more dependence on the other, than that which binds the parent to the child. Consequently, if there shall be a single case on the great day in which the blood of a ruined soul shall be required at the hands of its watchman, that case may be expected to be one of a child lost through the neglect of its father or its mother.

Supposing, then, that these things have been fully considered, and that your only wish is to discover the best way of fulfilling your duties as guardians of the spiritual and eternal interests of your children, I proceed to present some considerations of a directly practical tendency.

And here let me call your attention to the words of the text: "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him." *And the Lord was with him!* This points out the nature of the duty which you have to discharge. It is to secure for the hearts of your children *the presence and the influence of the Lord Jehovah*. Now, if children are willing to come to God, God will come to them. Your object, therefore, is to lead, to win, to allure them to their Maker and their Savior.

In pursuing this subject, I shall aim at the following objects:—

I. To describe the way by which you may endeavor to win the hearts of your children to God.

II. To caution you against some dangers which will lie in the path.

III. To urge you to fidelity in the discharge of these duties.

In entering upon the discussion of the first topic, I must remark, that the time which limits me requires that I should now speak only of the *first* efforts for this purpose—the instructions given in the *earliest* years—when the light of the intellect and the conscience is just beginning to dawn. The task of watching the mind and giving direction to its powers at this period devolves chiefly upon mothers. I address myself, therefore, principally to them; and if I mean to be clearly understood, I shall be under the necessity of resorting to a familiarity of illustration which, on ordinary subjects, is not necessary in the pulpit. This, I hope, will be readily excused.

I would also remark, that parents cannot take a single step to advantage in endeavoring to train up their children to piety, without first obtaining their *unlimited, unqualified, entire submission* to their authority. The *very first* lesson to be taught the child is to *submit*, to *obey*. There are various methods of obtaining this ascendancy. In some cases it is to be done by kindness, in some cases by severity; but in some way or other it *must be done*. Your children must be habituated to do what you command, and to refrain from what you forbid; not because they can see the reason for it, but because you *command* or *forbid*; submission, not to your *reasons*, but to your *authority*. If a child is in the habit of disregarding parental injunctions,—if it is necessary to repeat them,—or if obedience is slow, or reluctant, or ill-humored,—I mean if this is so *habitually*,—there is something radically wrong in the parent's *management*. No parent can, under such circumstances, expect success in any

efforts to promote piety; for be it remembered, insubordination is the essence of irreligion. I repeat it—*insubordination is the very essence of irreligion*. Men are not willing to submit to God. The mother, therefore, who habitually tolerates, and thus encourages disobedience in any of its forms, and yet hopes for success in her religious instructions, is pulling down with one hand while she is endeavoring to build up with the other; and judge ye how the edifice of piety will advance under such circumstances.*

But some one will say, I shall alienate the affections of my children by governing them with too strong a hand. Never. There never was a child alienated from a parent by means of a steady, just, and efficient government. If you seek for a family of alienated hearts, you will find it where government is lax and obedience never required: and peace, and happiness, and mutual affection reign where parental authority is most highly maintained. It is so with men as well as with children. There never was a commander more popular among his soldiery than Napoleon; and was his a flexible or a trembling arm? No. Be kind and uniform, and act, not from irritation or momentary impulse, but from steady principle, and you need not fear; but if this part of your duty is neglected, there is no hope for the rest. If your child is ungoverned at your fireside, the question of salvation or ruin is as much a matter of *mere chance*, that is, as much under the control of circumstances, fortuitous so far as human agency is concerned, as any thing can be which takes place in this world.

The ascendancy above described being obtained,—the great duty which you have to discharge is to establish and to maintain a constant intercourse between the heart of your little one and its Maker. A child is capable of maintaining this intercourse, and of enjoying the happiness which springs from it, at a very early period; perhaps before it is old enough to understand half of the fundamental truths of the gospel. There are *some* truths, indeed, which must be fully comprehended and felt, as a preparatory step. If these are understood, the child may be a child of prayer; his morning and evening offering may ascend acceptably to God, from a renewed spirit, while in regard to many of the great truths of the Christian dispensation he is entirely uninformed.

One of the first subjects to be presented to the mind of the child, is its dependence on its Creator for life and all that it enjoys. And this is to be impressed, not by making *general* statements, but by pointing to *particular facts*.

* It is important that precisely what I mean by obedience should be understood. A mother sees a child playing with something which it ought not to have, and commands him to bring it to her:—

“Oh, mother, I want it,” says the child, turning with an imploring look towards its parent.

“I cannot help that—you must bring it to me.”

“Why,” says the child, “do let me keep it a little while.”

“No,” insists the mother, “you must bring it to me immediately.”

“Well,” says the child, yielding a little, “I will go and put it where I got it.”

“No,” repeats the parent, slowly and decidedly, “I tell you that you must bring it directly to me.”

The child advances towards the mother at last, and reluctantly allows the plaything to be taken out of its hand.

This, now, is the kind of obedience which, it is to be feared, a vast number even of Christian parents exact from their children; but it is not obedience—it is *gross disobedience* and contempt of parental authority. The mother who is accustomed to see such slow, and reluctant, and tardy compliance with her wishes, may be sure, either that she is entirely ignorant of her duty as a mother, or else that she greatly neglects it. Until those who are under your care obey your commands *with cordial and ready alacrity*, you may be sure that the first step in Christian education is not yet taken.

Direct his notice to his beating pulse, and let him observe that he has no power over its movements, and while his attention is absorbed by the subject, say to him ; " You cannot live unless your pulse continues to beat. It is God who keeps it in motion. If he lets it stop you will die." Or interrupt his breathing for a moment, and let him notice the inconvenience and suffering occasioned. Then say ; " If your breathing should cease for a little longer time, you would die ; and who is it that continues it while you sleep ?" A few simple instances of this kind will make a far more vivid and permanent impression upon the mind of a child, than any labored and general description of our dependence upon the Creator.

The next truth to be taught the child as a preparation for leading it habitually to God in prayer, is that this Being is *holy*, and that he is consequently displeased with sin. This too, like the former, is not to be *first taught* by the general language of a creed or a catechism ; for this language, however logical and accurate, and however valuable for other purposes, is not suitable for *first communicating the idea*. The child must obtain its conceptions of sin by first looking at a particular and striking instance. The first step is to make it feel that it has *itself* done wrong in a particular and striking case ; then that *others* do wrong and offend their Maker ; and the general truth that God is displeased with sin, expressed in comprehensive terms, will *conclude*, and not *commence* the process. To impress a child then with a sense of its accountability to its Maker, we are first to convince it, that in one clear and decisive instance it has itself displeased God by committing sin. Let us suppose such a case.

A child quarrels with her younger brother at play. The mother interposes to quiet the contention, and then leaves them with a sorrowful countenance, which tells them that she is displeased, but without any direct reproof. The day passes away ; the child forgets the occurrence, and supposes that the parent has forgotten it.

When the evening approaches, and the calm and still hour which precedes the time of rest has arrived, and all the excitements of the day are allayed, and the mother, alone with her child, is about to leave it for the night,—she says, in a serious, but kind and gentle tone ; " My child, do you remember that you were angry with your little brother to-day, and that you struck him ?" The sin thus called to the recollection, will come up distinctly to view, and the fact that the mother remembered it so many hours, invests the transaction with an importance in the mind of the child, which no language could attach to it. The time and the circumstances too, in which it is recalled, open the whole heart to the impression which the parent desires to make. " God saw you do this, my child," continues the mother, in a kind but serious tone, " and he is much displeased with you. How can you go to sleep to-night, without asking him to forgive you ?"

There are few young children who will not be affected by such an appeal as this ;—who will not feel sincerely sorry for the wrong,—be ready to ask God's forgiveness, and to resolve to do so no more. If it appears that these feelings exist, let the mother express them, in a short and very simple address to God. She may then close the interview by saying, " Now, my child, God has heard our prayer. He knows whether you have *felt* what I have been saying. If you have, he has forgiven you, and he will love you, and take care of you to-night, just as if you had not done wrong."

A watchful parent will soon find, after such a lesson as this, an opportunity to *convince the child*, that to make good resolutions is not an infallible pre-

servative from sin. Another and another transgression will soon occur, and the pupil may be taught, by pointing to its own experience, that its own daily sins call for daily penitence and prayer.

Proceeding on the same principles, one religious truth after another may be implanted, by seizing cases in the child's own history which illustrate and establish them. This inductive method, so valuable in teaching any branch of knowledge, is peculiarly adapted to the inculcation of religious truth. The natural progress of the mind is from one particular fact to another and another of the same kind, and thence to the general law. The reverse of this—endeavoring to establish first the general proposition, and then to deduce from it its particular applications,—is much less fitted to impart knowledge, and altogether less for the purposes of producing an impression. In order to illustrate my meaning more fully, let me suppose one or two more cases.

“God is benevolent,” says a Christian parent to her child, “He loves to do good, and he does good to all mankind, therefore you ought to be grateful to him.” The effect of such general statements, upon the heart of a child, must be very vague and superficial.

“You are a great deal better this morning,” says another parent, to a child who has spent the night in sickness and suffering. “Your fever is gone, and you seem to be getting well very fast. Do you know who made you so much better? It was God who pitied and relieved you, and we must thank him heartily, this morning, for his goodness.” If then there is, in the morning prayer, a distinct and particular allusion to the case, coming from the father's heart, the child will be affected. In a few days, some other proof of the divine goodness towards *itself* may be pointed out,—then some of the most marked examples of his goodness to others; and thus a knowledge of the Universal Benevolence, which forms an unchanging trait in the divine character, will come *last* in the series of steps, and will be fully established only after a considerable time, and the presentation of many particular instances.

Let us take another subject;—the evil nature and tendency of sin. This described formally to the child, in general terms, will produce little impression upon the heart. But let the parent wait until some instance favourable for this purpose shall occur in *the child's own history*, and point out the operation of sin in that particular case; and she will perceive a very different effect.

Perhaps it will be falsehood: and after a little delay, and without any feelings of anger or impatience at the sin,—perhaps after it has been kindly and cordially forgiven,—let the mother point out its evil tendencies. “It destroys my confidence in you. I cannot believe you so fully when you speak again; it made you feel uneasy and unhappy from remorse for the guilt and fear of detection;—it displeased God; and unless you sincerely ask his forgiveness, he never will forgive you.” After a suitable interval, present some cases in which the consequences of sin are strikingly displayed in the case of others,—the intemperate man, or the dishonest man—and point out the consequences which guilt brings upon men in this world, and with which it threatens them in the next. Teaching thus from *particular cases* will have far greater influence in producing vivid and abiding conviction, than any *general* instruction, however simple and true.

The same principles are to guide you in explaining the deeper and higher subjects to which you will gradually advance. Be not, however, in haste to approach them. God delayed revealing fully to the human race, the plan of redemption through Jesus Christ, for four thousand years. During this time, multitudes were doubtless saved by penitence and faith, rendered available by

an atonement of whose nature they know nothing ; and we must remember that a child may be penitent, and may have its sins forgiven through Jesus Christ, long before it is old enough to understand those principles of God's government by which the way of forgiveness is regulated.

These principles are, however, to be gradually explained. Let us take one as a specimen. The necessity of a sovereign's requiring something more than merely the penitence of the criminal, before he allows crime to go unpunished.

If you say, "It was necessary that Jesus Christ should die for men, in order to satisfy divine justice, and maintain the majesty of the law ;" and explain the language as fully as you please, it will convey no idea to a youthful mind, and produce no impression. But take some actual case of real occurrence which brings this principle into view, and it will all be easy.

"Some wicked men went in the night into a chamber where an old man was sleeping, and killed him. They wished to obtain his money. They did it secretly, but they were discovered, tried, and condemned to die. While one of them was in prison, his wife, with her children, went to the governor, and begged and entreated him to pardon her husband. The governor might have pardoned him if he had chosen, but he would not. Do you think he was a hard-hearted man ?"

"Yes, mother," most children would answer.

"He was *not* a hard-hearted man. He was very far from it. He treated the wife and children very kindly, and told his friends that it made his heart bleed to see them, and to hear their entreaties. Can you think of any good reason why he would not forgive the poor criminal ?"

The children will be at a loss ; but the parent can, by the help of such an incident, give them, in a few moments, some very clear ideas on the necessity of a steady and efficient government, and of laws executed firmly, which will help them very much to understand how hopeless was our condition until Jesus came to save. The story of Dr. Dodd, the English clergyman, is admirable for this purpose.

But we must curtail these illustrations ; they might be extended beyond any limits. It is, however, to be observed, that in all these exercises, a constant effort should be made to cultivate a reverence for the Word of God, and a conviction that it is the guide of life. It is not necessary that you should formally tell them that it is a sacred book, whose decisions are authoritative. It will produce a much greater effect if they see that you regard it so. Appeal to it constantly in all the cases of the kind which I have described above. When you inculcate a duty, show in what words *God* commands that duty ;—when you reprove for a fault, show what sentence God has pronounced upon such a transgression ;—and in all proper cases bring in the authority of God's word, in such a manner as to show that it is the foundation upon which you stand.

It is of great consequence that you pursue a proper course in endeavoring to interest your children in the study of the Scriptures. Upon a proper use of this volume every thing depends. There are some parts which children can at a very early age understand and appreciate. Others, from their style or subject, will act efficiently on mature minds alone. From the former, which ought to be early read and explained, an immediate and most important religious influence can at once be expected. Selections from the latter should be fixed in the memory, to exert an influence in future years.

For the former of these purposes the *narrative parts*, if judiciously selected, are most appropriate in early years. But, great care ought to be taken to select those which may be easily understood, and those in which some moral

lesson is obvious and simple. Let it be constantly borne in mind that the object in view in teaching the Bible to a child is to *affect his heart*; and it would be well for every mother to pause occasionally, and ask herself, "What moral duty am I endeavoring to inculcate now?" "What practical effect upon the heart and conduct of my child is this lesson intended to produce?" To ask a young child such questions as, "Who was the first man?" "Who was the oldest man?" "Who slew Goliath?" may be giving him lessons in pronunciation, but it is not giving him *religious instruction*. It may teach him to articulate, or it may strengthen his memory,—but is doing little or nothing to promote his piety. I would not be understood to condemn such questions. I only wish that parents may understand their true nature. If the real or supposed dexterity of the child in answering them is not made the occasion of showing him off before company,—thus cherishing vanity and self-conceit,—it may be well thus to exercise the memory; and some facts, which will be useful hereafter, may be fixed in this way. But it must not be considered as *religious instruction*;—it has not in any degree the *nature* of religious instruction.

What, then, is the kind of instruction which is to be given from the Bible? I will illustrate the method by supposing a case which may bring the proper principles to view. We will imagine the child to be two or three years old.

"Come," says its mother, "come to me, and I will read you a story." It is Sabbath afternoon we will suppose; the mind of the child is not preoccupied by any other interest.

"Sometimes," continues the mother, "I tell you stories to amuse you. But I am not going to do that now. It is to do you good. Do you understand how it will do you good to hear a story?"

"No, mother."

"Well, you will see. It is the story of Cain and Abel. Do you know any thing about it?"

"Yes; Cain killed Abel."

"Do you know why he killed him?"

"Because he was wicked."

"No, I mean what did Abel do to make Cain angry with him? Did you ever see any body angry? Were you ever angry yourself?"

"Yes, mother."

"And I suppose you had some cause for it. Now I will read the account, and see whether you can tell what made Cain angry. *And Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.* Do you know what the fruit of the ground is?"

"No, mother."

"It means any thing which grows out of the ground. Cain was a farmer; he planted seeds and gathered the fruits which grew from them, and he brought some of them to offer them to God. *And Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock.* Do you know what that means?"

The child hesitates.

"Abel did not cultivate the ground like Cain. He had great flocks of sheep and goats, and he brought some of the best of those to offer to God. So that you see that Cain and Abel did almost exactly the same thing."

"Now God does not notice merely *what we do*, but *how we feel*, while we are doing it. If I should ask you to go and shut the door when you are busy, and if you should go immediately, but feel ill-humoured, God would be displeased. He looks at the heart. Do you ever feel ill-humoured when I wish you to do what you dislike?"

"Yes,—sometimes."

"Now Cain, I suppose, did not feel pleasantly when he brought his offering, and God was dissatisfied with him. But God was pleased with Abel's offering and accepted it. Should you have thought that Cain would have liked this?"

"No;—did he like it?"

"No, he did not. He was very much displeased; and it is very remarkable that he was displeased, not only against God, but *he was angry with his brother*, who had not done him the least wrong. That is the way with us all. If you should do wrong, and your sister do right, and I should blame *you*, and praise *her*, you would be tempted to feel angry with her, just because she had been so happy as to do her duty. How wicked such a feeling is!"

"Cain, however, had that feeling; and little children have it very often. It shows itself in different ways. Cain, being a strong man, rose against his brother in the field and killed him. But young children who are weak and small would only strike each other, or say unkind things to one another. Now God is displeased with us when *we have these feelings*, whether we show them by unkind words, or by cruel violence. There is a particular verse in the Bible which shows this. Should you like to have me find it?"

"Yes, mother."

"I will find it then. It is in Matt. v. 22. Our Savior says it. It is this, *Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* This is not the whole of the verse. I will explain the other part some other time."

The reader will perceive at once that the kind of instruction here exemplified, consists in drawing out the moral lesson which the passage is intended to teach, and in giving it *direct and practical application* to the circumstances and temptations of the child.*

Go on in this way as your child advances through its earlier years;—inculcating thus practically the truths and doctrines of the gospel, by making each one a comment upon some portion of its own little history. Aim especially to make the feelings of the heart keep pace with the advance of the understanding. Judicious efforts of this kind God will bless, by leading the heart of the little one who is the subject of them to daily habits of communion with him. Christian influence is increasing its power over the young. Every year is carrying the banner of piety nearer and nearer towards the earlier years of human life,—and it is not impossible that it may hereafter be proved, that there is not a single hour in the whole existence of a human soul, so favorable to its conversion, as the hour when it is first able to understand that there is a God in heaven to whom it is accountable.

* Parents ought at such times to make ingenious efforts to learn what thoughts and feelings are passing in the minds of children; for sometimes the whole tone and manner of the instruction is to be modified by it. Draw the pupil if possible into conversation. Encourage his questions, and try by every means to get a clew at the train of thoughts passing in his mind. The following anecdote illustrates the great diversity of emotion which is produced in different minds by the same narrative. Two children were looking at a picture of the murder by Cain. Abel's crook was lying upon the ground. After contemplating it a moment in silence, one says, with a thoughtful and serious expression of countenance, "I wonder if God could have made Cain as good a man as Abel if he had wished." Another pause;—and then the other said, shaking his head, and throwing into his countenance a look of stern defiance. "Ah, if I had been Abel, and could have got hold of that stick, I would have laid it upon Cain well." How entirely different, now, the course of remark, judiciously adapted to the condition of the latter mind, from *that which would be suitable* to the former.

SERMON CVII.

1 SAMUEL, iii. 19.—*And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him.*

WE have thus far considered the leading principles by which parents should be guided, in their efforts to affect, by religious instruction, the hearts of their children. But perhaps some one will say, it will require a great deal of time and pains, and more intellectual skill than I possess, to watch my child, in all its course, and thus endeavor to ingraft religious truth upon the events of its little history. It does indeed require time and pains; and God means that all parents should *find time*, and *take pains*, to train up their children. If, however, any of us are so engrossed in the business of the world,—in public life, —in eager efforts for wealth or fame,—or in pleasure,—that the home and the fireside are neglected, we must expect to fail. As to its requiring intellectual superiority, it is a mistake. It requires only *moral* superiority. The sincere and humble Christian mother, who is resolved to be faithful in duty, and who humbly endeavors to ascertain what duty is,—will, in all probability, succeed.

II. I come now to the second part of my subject, in which I was to present cautions against some dangers which lie in the way.

1. *Do not neglect to cultivate as highly as possible the amiable, affectionate, and honorable feelings which may adorn the natural character.* It is unwise to give the *whole* attention directly and exclusively to securing a change of heart. Improve, by all your ingenuity and skill, the natural temper and disposition. Cherish in your child feelings of respect and attachment to yourselves, kindness to others, and constant habits of cheerfulness and good-humor. There are two important reasons why you should aim at this. First, these feelings, if you succeed in implanting them, will assist you most powerfully in your efforts to keep the heart of your child accessible to the inducements which the gospel presents. If he has been so educated that he shrinks from the infliction of unnecessary suffering,—that he is pained to witness an act of injustice or oppression, by some little tyrant among his playmates,—or that he is deeply grieved when he has incurred parental displeasure,—if such has been the education of your child, his heart and conscience will probably be, in all respects, tender. He will be more easily awakened to deep concern at the displeasure of God,—and will more readily and more cordially enter into the spirit of Christianity, which inculcates love to all mankind. It was for the possession, probably, of such qualities as these that our Savior *loved* the young man to whom he said, “*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*” There was a *hope* in his character and condition, which the case of the proud and hardened Pharisee did not afford.

These feelings, then, will render you much assistance in your religious instructions through the whole period of childhood and youth, if the grace of God should not renew the heart of your child in its earlier years. They will enable you to retain a strong hold upon it while it shall remain under your roof, when perhaps it might otherwise become insensible, long before its maturity, to any religious influence in your power to exert; and if it should go

forth into the world without having become reconciled to God, these traits of disposition and character will go with it,—keeping in some degree its conscience tender,—preserving it, in its intercourse with a wicked world, from being hardened so fast, and polluted so deeply, by the contaminations to which it must be exposed.

But there is another reason why the amiable traits of the natural character should be carefully cherished; and it is, that *they will contribute so much to the perfection of Christian character*, when that character shall be acquired. The growth in grace will be much more rapid; for some of the greatest obstacles to that growth will be removed. The influence exerted over others will be much increased. These traits of mind are in universal estimation among men; and they give to their possessor an access to human hearts which scarcely any thing else can obtain.

But perhaps some may say, Every one is convinced of the truth of these views, and so detailed an exhibition of them is not necessary. We fear that it is, in many cases, necessary. Many Christian parents, we believe, do very little to improve and perfect the *temper* and *disposition* of their children, but direct their efforts almost exclusively to urging upon them the duty of immediate submission to God. In such cases, if they fail for a few years in accomplishing their object, they find that the child is becoming gradually hardened against the influence of religious truth, while they have failed to secure any other hold upon it; and the case becomes one of the thousand melancholy instances, where the pious instructions of the parent are followed by no apparent fruits, but the inveterate vices of the son. If at last God should bring such a child into his kingdom, half his Christian effort is expended in struggling against dispositions and habits, which have become inveterate by so long an indulgence, and which will remain, through life, a weight about his neck, and a thorn in his side.

Great care must be taken, however, to avoid leading the child insensibly to suppose that these feelings are all which are necessary to prepare him for death and the judgment. Your children must distinctly understand, that to be kind and gentle and compassionate are duties which we owe to one another; and that God claims something altogether beyond this from every heart.

2. *Be not too eager to have your children say, that they hope they have commenced a life of piety.* To present religious truth to a child, so as actually to influence its mind and its heart is one thing,—and to have the child *describe*, in his own words, the extent of that influence is another, and a much more difficult thing. It is much more easy to produce the *feeling*, than to draw forth an *expression* of the feeling. This is a distinction which is too seldom made. We often weary our children with the subject, or alienate their hearts from it, not by the fidelity of our religious instructions, but by pressing them too eagerly for an admission that they feel their force. The human heart, especially in youth, shrinks from a description of its feelings, and we should not, by requiring the effort, increase the obstacles with which the path of youthful piety is already filled.

But you will say, If my child feels any very strong interest in the subject, he will be willing to lay aside that reluctance, and talk with me freely about it. True; but suppose the interest he feels is not very strong. Will you rudely quench the smoking flax? or will you gently fan it to a flame?

3. *Be not too ready to believe that your children's hearts are changed.* You cannot know this, with any certainty, for many years. It is best that you *should not*. If you were to be fully satisfied on this point, you would relax

your efforts, and diminish your watch and care. Thousands of instances have occurred, where parents have been deceived by specious appearances, and have reposed their hearts fully on hopes of their children's piety, which time has only blasted and destroyed. If your children express strong interest in religious truth and duty for a time, be pleased with it; but place little confidence in it. If they continue for months apparently under the influence of Christian principle *in their conduct*, you may hope,—but never feel,—that their salvation is *sure*. The feeling of security can do no good, and may do much injury.

4. *When you have once cherished hope of your children's piety, be very slow to abandon it.* If they begin at all to love God, they will doubtless wander from him again. And their wanderings will be very much exposed to your view. Expect this, then. Calculate that, even if their hearts are really renewed, they will say and do on many occasions what would be decisive evidence of want of piety in a maturer mind. We are deceived on this subject from not taking sufficiently into view the difference between the youthful and the mature, in respect to the incautiousness of their conduct. A Christian of middle life will wander very far from God, while his external conduct preserves the habits which long-continued previous piety has formed. The child acts as it feels at the moment;—he *manifests* openly and without restraint the indifference or the unholy passions which the middle-aged Christian only *feels*.

5. *Take care lest the influence of your example or of some of your measures of government, should encourage evil principles in the hearts of your children.* The influence of parental example is very seldom fully appreciated. We notice it in infancy,—but we gradually forget it in maturer years. Children spend the first few months of existence in gazing with a bewildered look upon the objects which surround them,—then they begin to *imitate* what they see. At first they catch and repeat every little external act and personal habit; but, as years advance, the disposition to copy leaves the *exterior*, where it is apparent and almost harmless, and goes *within*. The inward character is controlled by its powers; and thus a change, which gives it tenfold importance removes it from the view, and causes it to be forgotten. The child of *eighteen months* mimicks the motion of your hand, or the expression of your countenance,—but at *ten years*, it adopts the principles of your conduct, and imbibes the spirit of your heart.

Be very careful, then, not to neutralize the effect of your instructions by an example of a contrary tendency. You can teach *any thing* easier by example than by precept,—and you can teach sin, in any way, more easily than holiness. If, therefore, you encourage the former by your own conduct and character,—and inculcate the latter by cold instruction only—your child will march with double rapidity down the descent. You will teach him more fretfulness and impatience, by a single irritated look or hasty word to a domestic or to your children, than you can eradicate by many moral lectures on the advantages of a calm and contented spirit. Make a remark which shows a disrespectful or irreverent feeling towards the Word of God: it will catch the attention of your child, and penetrate his heart like an arrow; and your cold instructions will endeavor in vain to close the wound.

The efforts, however, to set the child a bright moral and Christian example must be *honest* efforts. See that your hearts are right, and then let your conduct fairly represent your hearts. The attempt to keep up good appearances merely, *will certainly fail*. We cannot deceive children long in regard to our real characters. We may exhibit false appearances of piety, or of benevolence or of honesty, to our neighbors;—we may deceive our pastor,—we may

deceive the church ;—but we cannot long deceive children, who are in daily and constant intercourse with us. They watch us at all times ;—see us in every unguarded moment. The tone of voice and expression of countenance, which we did not notice, speak volumes to them. Let us not therefore spend our time in watching our *conduct* and *words*. We will watch our *hearts*. We will keep them right, and learn not to *seem* patient under the ordinary vexations and trials of life, but to *be* patient. Our children will easily discover it, if we are so. In a word, parents must *actually be*, in heart and life, what they wish their children to be. Be as kind and amiable yourselves as you wish them to be. Be as fretful, and impatient, and cold-hearted in religion, as you wish them to be. What you do cordially they will imitate, and the spirit which really animates your heart, they will easily imbibe.

Be careful also that the spirit of all your measures of government be such as to promote and not retard your moral and religious influence. Let your instructions be always well timed.

When your child is strongly desiring an indulgence, his heart is so engrossed with the desire, that persuasion and reasoning have no effect. Unless the indulgence is of such a character that you are willing he should try it, and experience its ill effects, you must *command*, not attempt to persuade. Let me illustrate my meaning. A boy comes to his mother for permission to go out into the street to play during the evening.

“No, my child,” says the mother, “I had rather you would not go. They are bad boys, and you will learn bad habits. I think you had better stay in.”

“But, mother, I do not think they are bad boys. William and John are there, and I don’t see why I cannot go.”

“They use bad language and are rude. Besides, it is cold. I don’t think it would be pleasant for you to-night. I think you will be much happier if you stay in with us.”

“Why, mother, if they use bad language I will come away. They are going to have a fine game, and I want to go very much.”

Thus there is a protracted discussion which probably ends in the victory of the boy. The mother does not perceive that all her arguments are entirely nullified by the boy’s strong desire for the indulgence. That completely intoxicates him. It is perfectly idle, at such a time, to attempt to convince him. He is blinded completely ; and the only proper course is to say mildly, but firmly, “No, my child, you must not go.” “Why not, mother? I want to go.” “I cannot tell you why not now. I will talk with you about it another time.” Then let the mother wait until her son has spent some evening happily at home, and just before he retires to rest, while his conscience is at peace,—and his mind predisposed in favor of domestic duty and happiness,—let her point out to him the reason why she keeps him from the circles of pollution and sin.

Let all similar requests for sinful or dangerous indulgences always be decided by authority and not by persuasion, unless, as was mentioned above, you leave your child to decide for himself, that he may learn from experience. This, however, ought to be done very seldom, and with great caution ; or else you will find that while you were endeavoring to disgust him with the *evils* of sin, you will have been hardening his conscience against its *guilt*.

Be perfectly honest and sincere with your children at all times. It is truly surprising to what an extent there prevails, even in Christian families, parental dishonesty. How many threats which were never really meant to be executed ! How many promises never designed to be fulfilled ! There are some subjects upon which parents seem to feel privileged to practise every art of deception

and falsehood. I will take as an example of the rest, the administering of medicine in sickness.

"Come, my child," says the mother, bringing the nauseous potion,—“here is something good for you.”

The child shakes his head, and turns murmuring away, showing by his conduct, that his mother has often told him similar falsehoods before.

“It is good—and you must take it, or else you will not get well; come, take it quick.”

The child still refuses, and the parent after a feeble struggle gives over the contest; inwardly resolving to accomplish, by secret artifice, what she has failed of doing by an open lie. Sugar, and sweetmeats, and pleasant drinks are resorted to to disguise the bitterness of the medicine, and every means taken to induce the little patient to receive the necessary remedy. But the child, who has hardihood enough to disobey a command, will generally have cunning enough to detect artifice, and he will contrive to keep the family in suspense for hours, while he eludes every effort to deceive him into an inadvertent compliance with parental wishes. It is truly affecting at such a time to see, by the looks of suspicion and distrust with which every approach of his parents is regarded, that they have so often deceived him that his confidence in them is entirely destroyed.

But the question will arise, “What shall be done in such a case?” Be open and sincere, and trust to your *authority*, not to deception. “My boy, here is some medicine for you—bitter medicine; I am sorry that it is necessary for you to take it.” If he demurs, bring in the authority of a command; and if that should fail, settle the controversy at once by a mild and calm, but decided appeal to force. If your previous management is what it ought to have been, this last will not be necessary, unless the child is very young; and a few examples of authoritative decision on your part will soon make him as docile and obedient on a sick bed as in any other scene. You say, perhaps, that it is very hard, when one you love so tenderly is writhing with pain, or perhaps in danger of death, to thwart his wishes, or add to his suffering. This is true; and duty is in many other cases very painful; but it must be performed.

This case where deception is so common I have taken only as an example. Be honest, and sincere, and scrupulous in fulfilling your word in all things. Never issue a command and annex to it a penalty with the expectation that the fear of the penalty will be enough, and that you will consequently not be obliged to execute it. Children will generally try you once or twice, to see if you are in earnest. Never make a promise without seeing how you are to fulfil it, and always fulfil it to the utmost,—cordially and readily. Never disguise the truth in any way—never underrate evils which your children have to bear, or difficulties with which they will have to contend—and never exaggerate the advantages which you have procured for them, or the pleasures of the course which you wish them to pursue. Be open and honest in every thing; you have, or ought to have, authority to command;—why will you then ever resort to sophistry to persuade?

6. Above all things, *be honest and sincere* in your efforts to promote the piety of your children. You can do nothing without sincere piety yourself. The mother who endeavors to impress her children with a feeling of gratitude to God, because she coldly thinks it her duty, will fail. Instead of gratitude, she will excite only weariness and loathing. But if the feeling itself glows in her heart, it will readily kindle up in theirs.

But perhaps some of the parents whom I am addressing are unreconciled to God themselves. They have children whom they are commanded to bring up to piety. If sincere and devoted piety in the parent is an indispensable requisite, what shall they do? It is a hard question—a very hard case. An individual is placed in this world of probation, and God says to him or to her, "Come, and be mine, and in a few years I will call you to a home of perpetual peace and happiness." The beings thus invited hesitate,—look upon the world—upon heaven,—linger a little, and then decide against God, and begin to walk deliberately on in the downward road. They have proceeded for some distance on this awful descent, when a helpless dependent one is committed to their care. They take him by the hand, and lead him on. He knows not whither he is going. He loves his parents—confides in them—and believes fully that they cannot lead him into any danger. He clings, therefore, closely to them, and walks heedlessly on. But the parents feel not entirely at ease; a mother cannot, under such circumstances, if she at all understand them. They accordingly hesitate a moment in their course, and then try to send back their child. They give it religious instruction—they teach it the Bible, and send it to the Sabbath-school, in hopes that it will be prevailed upon to return, while *they* go forward in the road to ruin. What madness! Stop, infatuated parent, stop! Seek God yourself, and your child may perhaps accompany you. But he will not enter the "strait gate," if you go on in the broad way.

III. Some general considerations, urging you to fidelity in duty, will close these discourses.

1. *God has placed in your hands an influence over your children which is almost boundless.* We underrate this power. You observe that your child has some fault which you endeavor to remove. Persuasion, entreaty, punishment—all perhaps fail, or secure only partial success; and you say, "How little influence have I, after all, over my child." But you forget that there is an influence of conduct and example as well as of precept, and that very probably, by your own previous neglect or sin, you may yourself have riveted the chain which you now strive in vain to break by a word.

We can see the influence of parents by observing how national characteristics are preserved from generation to generation. The population of Turkey, of China, of New-England, and of every savage island, will in one hundred years be slumbering in the ground, and their places will be filled by others, who will all be substantially alike when they enter the world. The millions of infants who are to compose the next Turkish generation will not, *as infants*, differ from those who are to be our descendants in this happy land,—or from the future throng which will fill the Chinese empire,—or from the babes which open their eyes in the wildest hut or wigwam. And yet how certainly will every one of these classes, as they come forward into life, receive the traits of mind and the characteristics of their fathers. How certainly will the next generation in Turkey be substantially like the last, and China in the twentieth century be like China now, unless some extraneous cause comes in to produce a change. The power of parental influence is almost unbounded.

2. *The influence which you now exert upon your children will react, after many years, with prodigious power upon yourselves.* It is natural that in early life parents should have no conception of the extent to which their own peace and happiness are placed in their children's hands. See that infant: weakness and helplessness itself, it has scarcely strength to sustain its own tottering footsteps, or courage to look without agitation into a stranger's face; dependent for every want, and completely submissive to every command, it can scarcely

be said to have a separate existence. It knows nothing—it does nothing, but through parental permission; and if there is throughout the world an instance of complete, unlimited, absolute power on the one hand, and most entire and helpless submission on the other, it is to be found in the empire which such a parent holds over such a child.

But how long can such an empire be maintained? The child advances with an irresistible progress up through the years of childhood and youth; and as it passes on from year to year, the ascendancy which you held over it melts away. One band after another, with which he had necessarily been bound, must be loosened, or it must be broken. You cannot stop the progress of years; you cannot check the advance to maturity; the mind of your child will expand beyond your grasp; the powers of the being, once so helpless, will rise slowly, but irresistibly above your control; and he will, ere you are aware, stand forth mature, independent, and free,—to carry forward with an impetus which you might once have guided, but which now you cannot stop, his course of happiness or suffering; to bring down upon your own head the blessings or the curses which you have taught him to procure.

It must be remembered, too, that the bonds by which you are bound to your children,—and through which any fidelity or unfaithfulness which you may now exhibit will return with tenfold power upon your own head in future years,—you cannot sunder. You cannot, should you ever desire to do it, banish affection from your heart. You cannot say, when hereafter he comes to a course of sin and suffering, I will leave him to his own chosen way, and be myself indifferent about his joys and sorrows. No; the cord which binds you to him is too strong. God has fastened it; and the more his wayward propensities may pull upon the knot, the tighter it will be drawn. Even his death will not sunder it. You will linger over his grave, and busy memory will bring back to you the long passed scenes through which you may have accompanied him. The neglected duty will come up again to view; the indulgence which ought to have been denied will reproach; the recollections of unfaithfulness will sting; and, on the other hand, the severity of affliction will be assuaged by the remembrance of all your sincere and earnest efforts to do your duty, and to prepare your departed child for heaven.

3. You will be excited to fidelity in duty by *looking forward frequently to your approaching separation from your children*. The ties which bind you, however closely; to them, must soon be sundered by death. You must, before many years, see *them* deposited in the grave, or you must bid them farewell, while they stand weeping around *your own* dying bed. They may be summoned first; and you will find, as every bereaved parent well knows, that mourning for their loss is the bitterest cup of sorrow which you can drink. You may have wept for other friends before; you may have followed your own beloved parents to the grave; but, in the emphatic language of an afflicted father, you will find “*parental* anguish more deep and keen than *filial*.” At such an hour, you will need consolation; and nothing will have greater power to assuage your sorrow, than the recollections of your past fidelity, in training up your child for heaven.

If these efforts have been made, and have been attended by the ordinary blessing of God, your child may give evidence at a very early age of his affection for his Savior, and of his preparation for another world.

But although you *may* survive your children, they will probably survive you. You will have to leave *them* in a world of temptation and danger, with no sufficient protector, unless you can have secured for them the protection of

friend above. When your last hours are passing, and the world begins to recede from view, its various ties will, one after another, be sundered and broken; but, after all others are gone, the bond which connects you with your child will still cling. That link will be the last to be severed; so that when you are willing and desirous to leave every thing else that is earthly, your heart will still linger about your fireside, and affection for a beloved child will make you cling to life. How happy will it be for you at such a time, to feel that God will be a parent to the orphans,—and that you separate from them only for a time. If your faithful instructions have instilled the principles of piety into their hearts, you can have this happiness; and you can with peaceful resignation commit them to God's care, assured that he will be their supporter in the temptations of life, and their refuge in its storms.

Let these thoughts dwell with you to encourage and to strengthen you in your present duties. While you are making strenuous and faithful efforts to improve the character and strengthen the moral and religious principles of your child, be encouraged by the assurance, that long after these struggles shall be over, you will think of them and dwell upon them with pleasure. On the other hand, remember, that if you set it an example of sin, or act in your management under the influence of indolence or irritation, consulting present convenience, without attempting to follow any fixed principles,—Oh, remember, that though an act of unfaithfulness may be over in an hour, its memory will last, and it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

And now let me ask how you are fulfilling the trust reposed in you? When you are surrounded by the family circle, of which God has made you the center and the support—when you are seated at your fireside, with those loved ones whom God has committed to your charge, looking up to you for guidance, and example, and instruction,—do you feel the responsibilities which God has laid upon you? Do you preside over those committed to your care, as if you were hoping and expecting to present them at last before the throne of God, that they may be admitted with you to the happiness of heaven? Or is God a stranger in your households? Is the day commenced without asking his blessing; and do you extinguish your evening fire without acknowledging the goodness and mercy by which you have been preserved? In a word, are you training up children for heaven? or are you doing all in your power, by your example and your neglect, to make them neglect God, forget the judgment, and suffer life to pass away, without preparation for the scenes at its close?

A word, before I close, to children. You see the greatness of the load of responsibility and care which God has laid upon your parents. Will you lighten the load, or will you add more and more to its weight, until it presses down your father or mother to the dust. Oh! help them. Be dutiful and affectionate; remember their many labors for you with gratitude; listen attentively to their instructions; and help, by your interest in religion, their own progress in piety. Thus will you smooth their paths here, and be united with them in perpetual peace and happiness hereafter.

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SERMON CVIII.

PREACHED ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF
JEREMIAH EVARTS, Esq.

Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

By **LEONARD WOODS, D.D.**

ANDOVER, MASS.

ACTS, x. 38.—“ *Who went about doing good.*”

WE have assembled, brethren and friends, to manifest our respect to the memory of a beloved servant of Christ, and our sorrow at his death. The respect and the sorrow we manifest on this occasion are all from the heart. Yea, we feel more than we can utter. Nor shall we cease to feel when the usual season of mourning is past. I say this in behalf, not only of the particular relatives and friends, and of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, but of all those in our community who love the cause of Christ. I say it, too, in behalf of the missionaries we have sent forth, and in behalf of the multitudes who have been profited by their labors. In Palestine, in India, in the wilderness of America, and in the isles of the Pacific, there will be great mourning for the beloved EVARTS. The very sound of his name excites the love of ten thousand hearts. It is the name of a *well-known friend to the heathen,—a benefactor to the world.* Where is the man who holds a higher place in the estimation of the wise and good, or whose death would cause more tears? Long will Christians remember, and love, and honor him; and their children, taught by their example, will rise up and call him blessed.

Far be it from me to bestow lofty and unmeasured applause upon any man, especially upon the man whose death we now deplore. The highest honor I would give him is, to say that he was a CHRISTIAN; and that, in imitation of his Lord and Master, *he went about doing good.* Higher praise than this I should feel to be incongruous. For our departed friend was of an humble heart and contrite spirit. In lowly prostration before God, he confessed his sins, mourned his unlikeness to Christ, disclaimed all personal worthiness, and abhorred himself. Even while he remained with us, he was among the last to seek or to desire applause. But now that he is gone to a world of perfect holiness, he will be for ever deaf to all praise except that which is ascribed to God and the Lamb.

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In this solemn service my wish is, first of all, to glorify God, as the author of all goodness and usefulness in man; and then to contribute something to the improvement of Christians, particularly of those who now occupy, or who are hereafter to occupy, important public stations, and to promote the sacred interests of Christianity at home and abroad. And this I shall attempt to do by showing, as far as my limits will admit, *by what attributes of character, and by what arrangements of Divine Providence, we are to account for the eminent usefulness of our lamented brother, the late Corresponding Secretary of the American Board.*

The statements I shall make respecting him might be amply verified by a narrative of his life. But this does not fall within my design. Such a narrative, however, involving, as it naturally would, our Foreign Missionary operations for twenty years, and other interests of great moment, will, I hope, be seasonably given to the public by some man who has time and qualifications for so important an undertaking.

In executing my design, I shall, in the *first* place, notice the *intellectual* character of our departed friend. This, as developed during his collegiate course, and in his subsequent life, was of a high order. The faculties of his mind were originally strong and active, and were improved by a thorough literary and scientific education, and a regular course of study in law. There are few men whose acquisitions are more extensive or more solid. On all subjects to which he turned his attention, whether literary, political, or religious, he formed clear and comprehensive views; and whether he undertook to write or speak, he exhibited the riches of his mind in a diction uniformly natural, perspicuous, and manly, and occasionally elegant and sublime. The extemporaneous addresses he made on public occasions were, as to manner, peculiarly modest and plain; but always full of vivid, pertinent, and weighty thought. His eloquence was often impressive, and sometimes powerful. He was distinguished by patience and fairness in his investigations, by the clearness and force of his reasoning, and by correctness and dispatch in business. In all his habits, whether of thought or action, he showed as little liability to mistake as can be expected of any man in this state of imperfection.

Such were his original powers of mind, and such the acquisitions he made, and the habits he formed by well-directed, persevering study.

Now, it is upon the character of the mind that our ability to do good in a great measure depends. If a man in this respect is superior to others, he will in all probability accomplish more good; if inferior, less good. The usefulness of his labors, unless prevented by special causes, will be very much in proportion to the amount of his intellectual powers and acquisitions.

This is a subject on which young men, in different stages of their education, frequently entertain very erroneous views. They look forward to their future profession with impatience, and are in haste to engage in its labors, because they apprehend that spending so much time in preparation will detract from the good they might accomplish. This is a great mistake. For all experience shows, that the whole of a man's usefulness is not so much accord-

ing to the length of time in which he is engaged in active service as to the amount of his qualifications; and that if any one would be sure to rise to the highest degree of usefulness of which he is capable, he must spend more time than is common in preparation, leaving so much less for action.

The principle I have suggested is directly applicable to the case under consideration. The whole time which MR. EVARTS devoted to classical, scientific, and professional study unquestionably contributed to his usefulness. Even those acquisitions which might have been thought less necessary proved to be decidedly serviceable in some part of the work assigned to him. For example, the knowledge he acquired of jurisprudence qualified him to perform that work of benevolence in behalf of the suffering Indians which will be so lasting an honor to him in the view of all who love justice and feel for the oppressed. And if some of his previous studies did not in the same manner come into direct use in the cause to which he was devoted, they still had an important influence in giving strength and elevation to the character of his mind, and excellence to his style of writing, and in preparing him better to devise and execute the measures which were necessary to the accomplishment of his great object.

In the *second* place, I shall notice what belonged to his *moral* and *religious* character.

In the strict evangelical sense, MR. EVARTS was a good man. His life afforded the most satisfactory evidence that he had experienced the renewing of the Holy Ghost; that he repented of sin; and, from a deep sense of guilt and misery, believed in Christ as the only Savior; and that he rendered sincere and habitual obedience to his commands.

Now this spirit of Christian piety, flowing from the renewal of his heart, contributed in the highest degree to his usefulness. It was this which gave a right direction to his intellectual powers, and led him to make a right use of his acquisitions. It was this which constituted the great inward motive to a useful life. Had he possessed the same intellectual furniture without piety, his influence, instead of being beneficial, might have been directly mischievous. Like some very gifted men, he might have spent his life in spreading moral pestilence. And even if he had avoided this excess of iniquity, and honestly devoted himself to the business of the profession which he originally chose, what more would he have done than to pursue his own private interests? The enlargement of the church, the universal spread of the Gospel, and the salvation of the world, would have had no power over his heart. If you would see what in that case he would have been, look at the multitude of those who are possessed of richly furnished minds, but are destitute of religious principle. The lives of such are spent in worldly indulgences. Even those actions which have a show of generosity are dictated by a more refined selfishness, while their minds are strangers to holy love. Behold, then, the work which sovereign grace accomplishes! When God renews the hearts of sinners, he does a work of great love, not only to them, but to the world. He acts as a friend to the universe. They who are renewed have the spirit of sincere and active benevolence, and so are led, by a motive of exhaustless energy, to seek the highest interests of man. They bear the image of him *who went about doing good*. When that

beloved friend whose death we now mourn was renewed by the Divine Spirit, his heart, being turned from worldly, selfish objects, was brought under the influence of love to God and love to man. At his conversion he commenced a course of action which was to fall in with a great system of benevolence, and in the end to promote the salvation of untold multitudes in Christian and heathen lands.

But holy affection, in order to produce its proper effects, must not only exist, but must exist in a lively, active state. Benevolence, feeble and dormant, or active only on particular occasions, can accomplish but little. The good to be accomplished by the agency of Mr. EVARTS required a mind enlightened and purified to an uncommon degree; it required a benevolence steady, ardent, and invincible. And such was the character to which, through the grace of God, he was formed. The affection which predominated in his breast, next to a supreme love to God, was compassion to the souls of men, and strong desire for the salvation of the heathen. This was the inward power which moved him. It was not a feverish heat, but the even pulsation and glow of health. What others might do from sudden excitement or the spur of the occasion, he did from *principle*,—principle which was strong, uniform, and enduring,—which was the same morning and evening, at noon and in the wakeful hours of night,—the same at the beginning and the end of the year,—the same in prosperity and in adversity. The moral principle which actuated him was as permanent as the faculties of his soul; yea, as permanent as that indwelling Spirit of God which caused its existence. Such a principle of action is essential to the highest degree of usefulness in any condition of life; and in any condition it will have a salutary influence. It is the object of God's complacency; and, through his wise and immutable constitution, it will secure happiness to the possessor, and diffuse it among others. In whatever degree or in whatever circumstances it may exist, it will not be lost. Though it lies concealed in the shades of private life, and shows itself only in the little circle of domestic duties, or in the exercises of secret devotion; still it contributes to the blessedness of the universe.

But the religious principle of which I speak was specially important and necessary to the chief agent in our Foreign Missionary enterprise. In connection with others, he had to accomplish a work of uncommon magnitude, and to encounter numberless and formidable difficulties. He was called to guide the vessel over a tempestuous and dangerous sea, when strong counter-currents were to be stemmed, sudden changes of the elements to be encountered, and rocks and shoals to be avoided. In such an enterprise it was indispensable that he should possess a principle of great firmness and strength,—a principle which would enable him to meet difficulties calmly, which would raise him above all discouragements, and contain within itself an exhaustless power of excitement when all the natural springs of action failed. Such a principle he had. It consisted in the *religious affection* which the Spirit of God produced and cherished in his heart. It was an affection which allied him to apostles and martyrs, and to Christ himself, and prepared him to endure any labors or sufferings which were necessary to the welfare of his fellow-men.

But I must notice one more particular attribute of his moral and religious

character which was of great importance to his usefulness ; and that *is, his scrupulous and inflexible integrity.*

This trait in his character was so manifest, that it raised him above suspicion. All who had an opportunity to know his character acknowledged him to be *an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.* The name of JEREMIAH EVARTS was associated in the public mind with a feeling of safety in regard to any interests which might be committed to his care. This evident simplicity and uprightness of character freed him from the embarrassments and obstructions which the suspicions of others always throw in the way of a man's usefulness, and secured to him the unwavering confidence and cordial support, not only of his particular associates, but of all those in the community who were attached to the cause of missions. And let me say, that this manifest uprightness of character, which was indispensable to his success through the whole period of our Foreign Missionary operations was so in a pre-eminent degree, when, at the commencement of those operations, he was intrusted with the pecuniary concerns of the Board. To carry into effect, in any good measure, the great design of the Board, it was necessary that large sums of money should be contributed, and sent in charity to various and distant countries ;—a business hardly known among us at that time, and not easily accomplished even in the most favorable circumstances. Now, who can suppose that both the rich and the poor would have voluntarily united from year to year, as they actually did, in raising the requisite funds, had they indulged a suspicion of the integrity or disinterestedness of the man to whom the funds were to be intrusted, and who was, from the beginning, one of the principal agents in conducting all the concerns of the Missions.

Having thus described the *intellectual*, and the *moral*, and *religious* character of our lamented brother, and shown its important connection with his usefulness, I proceed to say, *thirdly*, that he had *a remarkable completeness and symmetry of character.*

We not unfrequently meet with men, who are distinguished for particular virtues, while in regard to others they are notoriously deficient ;—who have prominent excellences, and prominent faults. There are some who are endued with ardor, boldness, and disinterestedness, and other shining qualities for public life,—who are not to be subdued by opposition, nor daunted at the prospect of suffering, nor corrupted by bribes ; who yet are subject to obvious failings in their private character. Some, who possess a variety of estimable qualities, have an irritability of temper which is excited on the slightest occasion. They are wanting in meekness and gentleness, in patience, and sympathy, and forgiveness. Some show that they are governed by selfishness, pride, and ambition. In regard to others, it is evident, that the applauses bestowed upon them have produced an uncommon growth of self-complacency and vanity, and that, in opposition to a divine precept, they *esteem themselves better than others.* Some, again, have a covetous, or a suspicious temper ; or they are slaves to their bodily appetites ; are wanting in Christian simplicity ; or subject to rashness, fickleness, or indiscretion. Such is the lamentable fact in regard to the generality of those who in various respects exhibit valuable traits of character. But may I not say with propriety, it was other-

wise with MR. EVARTS? Every one acquainted with his public life knows full well that he was possessed of manly resolution, firmness, and activity. But he was possessed, in an equal degree, of humility, forbearance, and gentleness. He had as much of the amiable as of the dignified. Who ever acquired a more perfect control over his passions, or maintained a more unruffled, equal state of mind? And he was, I doubt not, as solicitous to govern himself according to the precepts of God's word, in his thoughts, and feelings, and most secret actions, as in those parts of his life which were open to public scrutiny.

The attribute of character which I have now described was of the highest consequence to his usefulness. By securing the approbation and favor of God, and the esteem and confidence of the community, it invested him with power to do good. Surely it was no small matter, that he should carry a character of such completeness into that high station which was allotted to him, and should bring it to bear upon all the interests with which he was intrusted.

But I am to speak also of the *symmetry* of his character. He not only had the various qualities which belong to a good character, but had them in *just proportion*. How different was he from those who seem to have an exact conscience respecting one class of obligations, but are inattentive to others; from those who manifest much regard to that which is appropriately religious, and but little to that which relates to common life,—who reverence the Sabbath, and regularly attend to its public services, but are chargeable with irregularities of temper and conduct during the week. And, on the other hand, how different was he from those who are exact in respect to their domestic and social obligations, but regardless of those which are of a more public nature, or more directly religious. Let me not, however, be understood to imply that he had an excellence of character which was free from all deficiency and all blemish. To say that he attained perfection, or that he was *near* being perfect, would be to contradict the deep inward convictions he had of his own failings and sins, and his sincere confessions, and penitence, and self-abhorrence before God; and it would be to overlook that pure and spiritual law which no Christian on earth perfectly obeys in heart and in action, for a single day, or a single moment of his life. But if the character of MR. EVARTS is viewed in comparison with that of good men generally, I think it must appear to great advantage in respect to completeness and symmetry. Who that knew him ever thought that any part of what constitutes a good character was wanting in him, or that some of his intellectual or moral qualities grew to excess, while others, equally important, were below their proper measure? This excellence of character was doubtless owing in some measure to the influence of favorable circumstances, and more to his own diligent and skilful efforts; but it was owing chiefly and ultimately to the good pleasure of God, and the operation of his Spirit. To this divine cause we must attribute all human excellence, and all the efficacy of human exertion.

The public character of MR. EVARTS exhibited the symmetry above mentioned, in one very important respect. With as much *ardor* as was necessary to the highest degree of effort which could be permanently sustained, he united

a sound judgment. Had the momentous concerns of our Foreign Missions been committed to a man of more zeal and less discretion, the consequence might have been disastrous. There is a degree of heat, which is apt to discompose the mind, and to produce disorder. If a man's ardor goes beyond the bounds of moderation, and his zeal breaks loose from his judgment; the world will be afraid to trust him. He may have more active power, and for a time accomplish more good, than any other man. Still it will be dangerous to confide in him; because, in one rash hour, he may expose to ruin all the interests committed to his care. The zeal of Mr. EVARTS did indeed rise to a high degree of warmth; but it had no enthusiastic effervescence, no convulsive starts, no violence. It was just sufficient to put his mind into the fittest state for deliberation and effort;—just sufficient to afford the necessary excitement to his reason, his invention, and all his active powers. It was invariably associated with the most tranquil operations of a well furnished intellect; and it led him to adopt a system of measures of as high a character as existing circumstances would admit; a system which he pursued from year to year, and through successive years, with unflinching resolution, and with increasing evidence that it was both wise and practicable.

Permit me to add, that the general aspect of his mind which I have noticed appeared in the sober and scriptural views he entertained respecting the doctrines of Christianity. No man was more free from sectarian prejudice, and a pertinacious attachment to old opinions. And yet no man was more open and determined in opposition to novelties in religion, or more grieved at any departure from the simplicity of the gospel. On all questions of controversy at the present day, whether of primary or secondary consequence, his habit of thinking was at once cautious and decided, and was conformed to the settled orthodoxy of New-England, and, in my apprehension, to the dictates of reason and revelation. His knowledge of theology was so extensive, and his manner of reasoning, both on polemic and practical points, was so candid and perspicuous, that his conversation was highly prized by the most intelligent Christians, as a source of pleasure and improvement. It is hardly necessary to add, that the sober and judicious opinions which he was known to entertain on the subject of religion procured for him a still higher place in the esteem of the community, and gave an additional influence to his efforts in the cause of Missions.

I have noticed the chief of those intellectual and moral properties which prepared our departed friend for eminent usefulness. But of what utility would all these excellent properties have been, had they not been brought into actual exercise? How little good comparatively would he have done, had he been left in the shades of private life, or had he been chiefly devoted to the acquisition of wealth by professional labor? But the God who made him, and who ordered all the circumstances of his early life, and furnished him with so many valuable qualifications, designed him for a particular work, and in due time prepared the way for him to enter upon it. It was a short time after he came to this vicinity, that a Foreign Mission from America was commenced, and the management of its interests committed to a Board of Commissioners. From the first, Mr. EVARTS was employed in the executive business of the Board. Besides being Treasurer, he was intimately associated with Dr. WORCESTER,

the Corresponding Secretary, in conducting the correspondence, and in all the concerns of our growing Missions. By this course of labor for about ten years, he became well qualified for the office of Secretary, when it was vacated by the death of Dr. WORCESTER, and when the burden of its responsibilities and cares had been so much increased by the increase of missionary interest in our country. This was the station for which Divine Providence raised him up, and to which the peculiar structure of his mind was every way suited. In this station all his intellectual powers and moral principles were brought into constant and vigorous action, and his whole character, as might have been reasonably expected, experienced a sensible and rapid growth. It was by the labors of this station,—for which he had been so long preparing, and for which he was so eminently qualified, that he helped to produce those great results which have been witnessed, and arrived at his proper degree of usefulness.

After Mr. EVARTS entered on the station assigned him, he consecrated his time and influence to the cause of Missions among the heathen. This became his object. Towards this his thoughts, his studies, his exertions directly tended. I need not tell you how much it would have detracted from his usefulness, had he connected other things with this, as favorite objects of pursuit; had he, for example, indulged a literary ambition, a taste for the fine arts, or a fondness for wealth. But he had chosen his object; and in point of excellence, the world had nothing that could be compared with it. To this he devoted his life. Not that he disregarded any private obligations;—not that he undervalued any other object of Christian benevolence or patriotism, or lost his love for literature and science, or for any thing which could adorn the mind, or promote the comfort of society;—not that he was wanting in punctuality, or inattentive to any of the courtesies which belong to social or domestic intercourse. He showed, that a man in the most important station has no occasion to neglect his less important duties. He showed, that a great man has no need to have either great faults or little faults. But to whatever other objects he occasionally turned his attention, he never lost sight of the cause of Missions. To this he devoted his first thoughts, his warmest affections, and his best labors. He acted on the principle, that if a man would accomplish the highest degree of good, he must have only one great object, and must pursue that object with steady resolution, and zeal, and perseverance.

The object to which he thus devoted himself, and the efforts which he made, were of such a nature as to be followed by *durable* effects,—by a *continuity* of good. This may perhaps be called Christian, or spiritual *economy*. We have but limited powers of body and mind, a limited time, limited means and opportunities to do good. Now it is the dictate of Christian wisdom, that we should fix upon that mode of doing good, which will, on the whole, turn to the best account. A man may successfully employ his time and his talents in promoting the *temporal* welfare of his fellow-men. But the object he seeks is not durable. It may be something now; but soon it passes away, and is forgotten. Such is the transitory nature of all worldly interest and worldly pleasure. Though we expend ever so much time, and talent, and labor upon it, what is it but vanity in the end?

Now, certainly, it is not good economy, it is not according to sound wisdom,

that we should fill up the little space of time, and use the little power we have in pursuit of a good which has no solid worth, and will last but a moment. If there is a good which is really excellent and durable, let us choose that. It was the appointment of Christ, that his apostles should bear much fruit, and that their fruit should *remain*. What they did produced *permanent* effects ;—it conduced to a good which was *spiritual* and *everlasting*. Our beloved Secretary labored for the same object. He was of one heart with the apostles, who labored to save those that were lost. His efforts, like theirs, were upon a large scale. Had he promoted the salvation of a single individual, he would have done a great and good work. But his efforts were directed to the highest good of communities and nations ; to the salvation of the world. And if respect is had to the wisdom of the measures which were adopted, and which were all calculated for permanent effect ;—if respect is had to the fact, that the extensive and systematic operations, in which he was so intensely engaged, and which have already been attended with such animating success, are to lead on to other measures, far more extensive, and far more successful—that the missionary zeal which he helped to kindle up in the church is to burn with a still purer and brighter flame ; and if respect is had to the unquestionable fact, that his labors were, by the gracious appointments of heaven, closely connected with the ultimate overthrow of idolatry, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom in pagan lands ; the good resulting from his agency will appear too great for human language to describe, or an angel's mind to comprehend.

In pursuing the object which was so dear to his heart, he was particularly aware that he needed the cordial assistance of fellow Christians around him, and of the community at large. The influence of a man in any station, especially in one that is public and very difficult, may be increased in a degree above computation by being skilfully united with the influence of others. We are social beings, and by the very constitution of our nature are mutually dependent. Let human agency in any case be completely insulated, and it can have no efficiency. To accomplish any thing important, we must act together. What is deficient in one man, is to be supplied by others—who, though not superior to him in the general attributes of character, may be able to afford him the counsel and aid which he needs. MR. EVARTS successfully availed himself of this important principle ; and he always did it with evident satisfaction. Who was ever more unassuming ; or more free from that self-sufficiency and folly, which makes a man reluctant to acknowledge himself indebted in any way to the judgment or foresight of others ? Who ever came nearer to a full compliance with the direction of the apostle, that, *in lowliness of mind, each should esteem others better than himself* ? His truly modest and humble disposition, joined with his deep solicitude that every thing should be done in the best manner, rendered him very desirous of counsel and aid from his brethren, and heartily willing to own himself under obligation to them, even where it was evident that he was the man who possessed the best information, and the highest degree of wisdom, in regard to the subject under consideration.

But while he looked to his fellow Christians for counsel and assistance, it conduced still more to his success, that, *in humble, fervent prayer, he sought help of God*. This might have been mentioned as belonging to his religious

character. But I have rather chosen to mention it here, as constituting an important part of those efforts, by which he contributed most effectually to the success of the Missionary cause. He had a deep sense of his weakness and dependence, and of the utter fruitlessness of all human endeavors without the divine blessing. In a manner very far removed from all extravagance, and at the same time furnishing the strongest motives to devout importunity, he believed in the efficacy of prayer. And his belief was grounded on the best possible reasons,—the immutable promise of God, and the actual course of his providence. The devout supplications which he and his associates in office presented to God in all their meetings for business, together with the monthly, and weekly, and daily prayers of the great body of Christians in this land, and in other lands, have undoubtedly exerted a higher and more efficacious influence than any other means in promoting the spread of the gospel and the conversion of the heathen world. Without the spirit of prayer, and the blessing of God which it secures, other efforts would have proved abortive. Suppose prayer had been omitted, and the time spent in this duty by the officers and members of the Board, by ministers and all the friends of missions, had been spent in some other way, yea, in any other way; what would have been the consequence but a total failure of the Missionary enterprise? Judging by the word of God, we cannot doubt, that sincere, fervent prayer, though by an unseen influence, really does more towards accomplishing the great objects of benevolence, than all human endeavors beside.

Thus, in attempting to perform the part assigned to me on the present occasion, I have noticed those attributes of character, and those other circumstances, which contributed most directly to the usefulness of the beloved and honored man whose death we deplore.

Let us now endeavor to derive profit to ourselves from the subject which we have contemplated, and to bring it to bear, with a salutary influence, upon all the sacred interests with which we are connected.—Among the many useful lessons which it is suited to teach, I can suggest only the following.

1: We see how Christians may *grow in grace and become eminently holy.*

On this point permit me to address myself particularly to those young men who are coming forward to labor in the cause of Christ. Our departed friend attained to eminent holiness; and why may not you? What advantages had he to grow in grace, which are not within *your* reach? What motive urged *him* to diligence in the service of God, which does not urge *you*? What divine assistance did he obtain and enjoy, which you may not obtain in the same way, and enjoy in the same measure? As God has provided for you the same Bible, the same Sabbath, the same throne of grace, the same salutary discipline of his providence, and the same influences of his Spirit; why may you not, by proper diligence, attain to the same degree of holiness?

But there is one particular view of this subject, which I consider to be of special importance. The *employment* of MR. EVARTS was unquestionably among the most powerful causes of his growth in piety. He was active in doing good—was continually consulting and laboring for the salvation of men,

particularly the heathen. This brought into lively exercise all the pious affections of his heart, and so contributed to increase them. And if he was occasionally so engrossed with his great object as to forget himself; his sanctification was not impeded on that account.—If a Christian wishes to advance in holiness, let him engage with all his heart in some benevolent and pious work. As far as may be, let him choose his calling with a view to this important end. At the present day, there is a great variety of ways in which good may be done. There can be no lack of opportunity to any. Let every Christian, then, be devoted to some work of benevolence. And if he aspires to improve his character in the highest degree; let him be active in such a way as will require him to exercise zeal and fortitude, to practise self-denial, and endure sufferings. This is the way, and according to the wise appointment of God, the only way, to rise high in spiritual attainments. If then we covet the best gifts of heaven, let us use the right means to obtain them. If it is our desire to mortify sin, and to cultivate a spirit of elevated piety; let us engage with ardor in works of piety. And let us take care to pursue a course which will not only be favorable to the good dispositions which we wish to cherish, but directly opposed to the sinful propensities and habits which we wish to overcome. Are we conscious of a culpable indolence? Then let us do good in a way which will require diligent personal effort. Have we an inordinate love of money? Then let us be frequent and liberal in our contributions, and so diminish those treasures which are the idols of our hearts. And if any are exposed to feelings of vanity on account of their making donations which are public and honorable, let them abound also in smaller gifts, in private charities to the destitute, *not letting their left hand know what their right hand doeth*, and thus guarding their minds against the hurtful influence of applause. If it has been our habit to treat ourselves softly and delicately, and to make our own gratification a special object of pursuit; and if, in consequence of this, we are deficient in the more-manly, noble virtues;—then let us prefer services which are somewhat severe, and never start back from any toil, hardship, or danger which may meet us in the path of duty. If our hearts are prone to indulge feelings of distrust in regard to the perfections or the providence of God, it will be of particular importance to us to pursue a course which will often compel us to give up every ground of confidence but the promise and faithfulness of God, and to rely on him alone for the supply of our wants, the relief of our distresses, and the success of our undertakings. The same might be said in regard to other particulars. Now it is obvious, that such a work as that in which our departed friend was enlisted is eminently fitted to promote the divine life. Any one who from pure motives makes a full surrender of himself to the cause of missions, and either at home or abroad devotes his talents and his life to the salvation of the heathen, will be under the best advantages to grow in the spirit of piety. And it will doubtless appear in the great day, when all characters and all which has helped to form them shall be revealed, that the holiness which eminent saints in all periods of the church have attained was owing in no small degree, under God, to the exertions they made and the sufferings they endured for the present and eternal welfare of their fellow-men.

2. We see that *sincere devotion to God and diligence in doing good are followed by the most happy results.* Great peace have they who love God's law.

'They who forsake all for Christ shall receive a hundred-fold even in the present time. Our deceased brother found this true in his own case. He enjoyed the cordial affection and confidence, not only of the Prudential Committee and the American Board, but of all the friends of missions and the friends of Christ. And he had the respect of the public generally, not only of those who agreed with him in religious opinion and feeling, but of those who differed from him; and not only of those who favored the interest he sought, but of those who opposed it. In addition to all this, he had the pleasure of being continually conversant with objects which were congenial to his taste,—objects which were gratifying to his benevolent and pious heart; and the pleasure of witnessing the unexpected success of the missionary cause. He was also favored with a quiet, contented mind, with the consolations of hope, and with many tokens of the divine presence and approbation. He was blessed of God in his family, and in his own soul. And when we come to the closing scene of his life we may well exclaim,—“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.” The inward composure which he habitually enjoyed after he devoted himself to the service of Christ, he continued in a remarkable degree to enjoy during his last sickness. The prevailing state of his mind may be learnt, in some measure, from the following paper, which he wrote Feb. 27, 1831, it being the Sabbath, half-past eleven, A. M. He was on board the ship *Fama*, in sight of Abaco, one of the Bahama Islands, twelve days after he sailed from Boston for Cuba.

“Daily, and many times a day, I have been disposed, I trust, to acknowledge the goodness of God, and to consecrate myself anew to his service. I had thought of making a formal and written consecration of myself to the Lord this forenoon; but my mind is so weighed down by my feeble body, that I can write nothing except of the simplest kind, and cannot adequately dwell upon the amazing theme of being a servant of God and of having Him for my portion for ever.”

At half-past 3, P. M. he wrote thus:—“We have turned the south-west end of Abaco. I have looked at this work of God, which it is not likely I shall see again; and have turned my thoughts many times to the great and blessed Creator of all.

“Here, in this sea, I consecrate myself to God as my chief good;—to Him as my heavenly Father, infinitely kind and tender of his children;—to Him as my kind and merciful Redeemer, by whose blood and merits alone I do hope for salvation;—to Him as the beneficent renewer and sanctifier of the saved. I implore the forgiveness of my numerous and aggravated transgressions; and I ask that my remaining time and strength may be employed for the glory of God my portion, and for the good of his creatures.

“Whether I make my grave on the land, or in the ocean, I submit cheerfully to Him. It will be as He pleases; and so it should be. I pray that the circumstances of my death, be it sooner or later, may be favorable to religion; that I may not deceive myself in the great concerns of my soul; that I may depart in peace, and be received, through infinite mercy, to the everlasting kingdom of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: Amen.”

In the near prospect of death he showed a most happy tranquillity. He had that peace of God which passeth all understanding. Who would not think himself rewarded for the toils and sufferings of a whole life, yea, of a thousand years, by what this faithful servant of Christ was permitted to enjoy just before his decease, when God caused so wonderful a light to shine upon his soul. He was at that time in a kind, Christian family in Charleston, S. C., but far removed from his beloved partner and children, whom he had just before particularly and most devoutly commended to God. Seeming to be nearly exhausted, he very tenderly expressed his affection for his Savior.—Soon after he burst forth with expressions of rapture which cannot be described. “Praise him, praise him, praise him in a way which you know not of.” And when it was said, “You will soon see Jesus as he is, and will then know how to praise him;” he exclaimed, “Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful glory! We cannot comprehend! —Wonderful glory! I will praise, I will praise him!—Wonderful—glory, —Jesus reigns.”

This was no vision of enthusiasm—no feverish excitement of passion—no delirium of a heated brain. What man was ever better shielded than he against all mental delusion, and all undue excitement? At that time, in particular, a variety of circumstances, which might be related, proved beyond any doubt, that he was perfectly rational and self-possessed. That which he experienced was, doubtless, like what apostles and martyrs and eminent saints have often experienced in a dying hour, when, through the special influence of the Holy Spirit they have had clear views of the glory of their Savior, and of their eternal inheritance, and have earnestly desired to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. May God give me, in my last moments, what our dear brother enjoyed when that vision of glory burst upon his astonished view, and I will gladly bid farewell to all that the world contains. The joy he tasted was unspeakable and full of glory. Even before he left the body he seemed to stand upon the threshold of Heaven.

And what, think you, must be the enjoyment of such a Christian in heaven, —with a capacity so enlarged,—with the powers of reason so active,—with affections and desires so pure and so elevated,—what must be his enjoyment in the presence of Him whom his soul loveth, in the society of angels and saints, and in the society of no small number brought to that happy world by means of his faithful labors! Neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive what such a saint enjoys when he comes to be where Jesus is. Oh! what rest after years of wearisome labor, and toil, and conflict with sin! Oh! what quietness and ease, after so much sickness and pain! Oh! what blessedness to be free for ever from the feeling and the sight of moral pollution, to be like the Savior, and to see him as he is, and to drink of the river of pleasure which flows at the right hand of God!

To the mourning widow and children and other relatives there are unfailing sources of consolation. They have sympathizing friends; a present and merciful God; the great and precious promises of his word; and a throne of grace. They have the happiness of knowing that *Jesus reigns*, and that all things will work together for good to them who love God, and are called according to his purpose. Through the mercy of heaven, these are the rich

consolations which afflicted Christians commonly enjoy, and they are sufficient to quiet the agitated breast, and to sooth every grief. But the mourning relatives in this case have consolations which are *not* common. When a man dies, yea, when a good man dies, how seldom is it the fact, that he leaves a character entirely unblemished, even in the view of his most affectionate and partial friends! And if in the fulness of their hearts they begin to speak of him in the language of high respect and honor, they are soon checked by the recollection of something which marred his Christian reputation. They do, indeed, cherish a most cordial esteem and love for his amiable and virtuous qualities; but they sigh that their thoughts cannot range with delight over his *whole* character and life. They cannot but regard it as a subject of deep regret, that he fell so far short of that complete excellence which they wished him to attain. But, through the grace of God, such was not the fact in regard to our departed friend. The sorrow which the afflicted relatives feel for the loss of one so dear to them, is not embittered by the recollection of any noticeable failings in his character, or any palpable errors in his conduct. Theirs is the happiness of knowing that the beloved partner, parent, and friend, who has been removed from their sight, was not only adorned with a combination of excellences, but was remarkably free from blemishes. They must ever regard it as a precious blessing, that they have been so closely allied to one whose example was so pure, so shining, and so attractive. And they must ever find the events of his private and public life a subject of the most delightful and improving reflection. It was a life that will bear to be examined, and that deserves to be copied. What a rich inheritance to his bereaved family! While they remember the great goodness of God in this respect, and their hearts overflow with gratitude,—the bitterness of their grief will pass away. The Lord grant that they may be so happy through the remainder of life as to imitate the lovely example which has been placed before their eyes, and by humble, active piety, to follow that dear friend, who through faith and patience inherits the promises.

To the members of the Prudential Committee and other officers of the Board, this occasion is connected with so many subjects of intense interest, that I know not where to begin, or where to end. It must, dear brethren, be a source of the sincerest satisfaction to us, that the chief agency in directing and executing the momentous business of our Foreign Missions was committed to a man who possessed such qualifications, and in whom not only his immediate associates, but the Christian community had such confidence. In this great and difficult work, it has been our happy lot to be united with one whose high intellectual endowments were combined with the most lovely social qualities;—whose friendship was uniform and undissembled,—not overstrained in ardor, but pure, impartial, and truly Christian; and who was a pattern of meekness, patience, and fidelity. You well know it has long been the public sentiment, that no man can be found whose character is more upright and disinterested than that of MR. EVARTS. After twenty years' intimate acquaintance with him, and after having been, most of us, associated with him for ten years in conducting the concerns of the Board, we can give our united testimony to the justice of this sentiment; and can say of him, as truly as of any man, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world."

But the man whose name is so dear to us, and whose labors have been so useful, has been removed from us by the stroke of death. Neither the high importance of his office, nor his eminent endowments, nor the affections of his friends, nor the prayers of those who love Zion, could prevent or delay his departure. He is gone from us, and we shall see his face no more. The death of such a man, at such a time, we feel to be a very afflictive and distressing event. But though in itself so afflictive, it naturally suggests subjects which are fitted to awaken lively gratitude to God, and to encourage us in the work of spreading the Gospel. For we cannot but remember, that God in mercy *gave* what he has now taken away. And is it a small matter, that, at the critical period when the Foreign Mission from America was commenced, and during the first years of its progress, divine Providence raised up such men as WORCESTER and EVARTS to be the chief agents in the work? Where is the society,—where the benevolent enterprise which has in this and other respects enjoyed more visible tokens of the divine favor? The services of such a man as our late secretary must be important to any cause, at any time. But the work which the friends of Missions undertook twenty years ago, was a work of vast magnitude and difficulty. A mere kindling up of temporary zeal,—a few desultory efforts could accomplish nothing. There was a necessity for a system of operations, wisely planned, and ably and perseveringly executed. The undertaking called for men of large views and sound judgment,—of devoted piety and invincible resolution; men trained to sober deliberation, and efficient action, and not likely to fail either in concerting or in executing measures; men of so much fire as to warm the hearts of others, and yet so cool and discreet as to secure their confidence; men, too, who could bring weight of character to the work instead of depending on the work for character. Now that God in his providence raised up just such men as the new and arduous enterprise required, and that he continued one of them ten years, and the other twenty, as principal agents of the Board, and with a success which has filled the Christian world with admiration and joy; this, brethren, we must record as among the most visible and encouraging tokens of God's special favor.— Shall we then faint under the stroke of his hand? Shall we look forward to the future with distrust and fear, and be ready to abandon the cause of Missions? Shall we even pursue that cause with less zeal or less hope of success? No. Far be it from us that we should thus dishonor the name of God. It is enough for us that, although good men die, the Lord lives, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The cause to which we are devoted is his cause. We have engaged in it in obedience to his command. And we go forward in our endeavors to promote it with full reliance on his promised aid. We are confident, that he who has all power in heaven and earth, will be present with us in every emergency; that he will prepare men for every post of usefulness; that he will crown with success whatever is done for the enlargement of his church; and finally cause the gospel to triumph in every place.

How often, brethren, have you seen the worthlessness of a life devoted to ambitious and worldly pursuits! See now, how useful and happy is a life devoted to God! See how much one man of fervent piety and active benevolence may accomplish in a short time! The character we have contemplated is a good pattern for all men in public stations. Let us copy it faithfully. Let the sober maxims, the principles of enlarged and disinterested benevolence

which governed the conduct of our beloved Secretary, pervade all our counsels and labors.

Every hour we are employed in a work so benevolent and sacred, should remind us of our high obligations, and increase our endeavors to be holy as Christ is holy. When we look back upon days and years that are past, and remember how near we have been to an eminently good man, now in heaven; we should be incited to do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do, and to be ready for the coming of our Lord. In imitation of our beloved brother, who now rests from his labors, let us strive to have our great work so finished, and all our affairs, whether public or private, so arranged and settled, that when our last day comes, we may be free from anxious cares, and may be able to say with a peace which the world cannot give, **LORD JESUS, receive my spirit.**

To conclude. Dear brethren and friends, we have been calling to mind the piety and usefulness of a fellow-mortal, and have been considering him as a suitable pattern for our imitation. The time we have devoted to the contemplation of so excellent a character, will, I hope, conduce to our improvement.—But be it remembered, there is a character vastly more exalted. There is an excellence and glory, both intellectual and moral, infinitely surpassing all that is human. It shines forth in this fair creation above us and around us. It shines forth especially in the face of **JESUS CHRIST**. Now while we look with delight upon human excellence, shall we close our eyes to that which is divine? While we gaze upon a dim taper, shall we be blind to the light of day? Are we filled with admiration at the endowments of man, who is of yesterday? What adoring thoughts then should we have of the *high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity!* Before that great and glorious Being, the greatest of men, and the greatest of angels, are *as the small dust of the balance.* The brightest excellence we behold in creation is only a ray from the inexhaustible fountain of light.—Have we confidence in a child of earth, because he evinces a small degree of intelligence and faithfulness? What unwavering trust then should we repose in God, whose understanding is infinite, and whose faithfulness never fails! And finally: do emotions of gratitude rise in our hearts, while we recollect the benevolent and useful actions which a feeble, imperfect man performed during a few fleeting years? Oh! how much warmer, nobler gratitude should glow within us towards that infinite Being, from whom cometh all the goodness and all the usefulness of his creatures, and all the happiness of earth and of heaven;—whose love has a length, and breadth, and depth, and height, passing all understanding; and who is so great in power and so excellent in working, that he accomplishes more good in a single moment, and by a single act of his will, than all created beings can accomplish in ten thousand ages! “Blessed, then, be the **LORD GOD** of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” **AMEN.**

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FARMINGTON, CONN.

SINNERS AVOID CONVICTION.

JOHN, iii. 20.—*For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

THE gospel is adapted to the condition of mankind as sinners. It contemplates them as having done evil. It supposes them to have done such evil that the vicarious sacrifice of God's own Son alone could expiate it; and to be so inclined to evil, that, except by the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, they will never do good. That they may value and receive the gospel, therefore, they must be convinced of sin. Without a heartfelt conviction both of their great guilt and their radical depravity, they have no perception of the suitability, no estimation of the grace, no realizing persuasion of the truth of the gospel. Accordingly, all the means which God employs for their salvation are adapted to produce this conviction. But to the success of those means there is an alarming obstacle. Those very principles of sin which the truth of God is suited to expose, prevent the application of the mind to the truth. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." In this description we remark three things. First, it comprehends unrenewed men of every class. In the judgment of God "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Secondly, the charge against them is, that they hate the light, and do not come to the light: that is, they dislike the truth of God, and will not honestly bring their minds to the apprehension and application of it. Thirdly, they do this, that their deeds may not be reproved; or, in other words, that they may not be convinced of sin. The text, then, contains the sentiment that *impenitent sinners choose not to be convicted of sin.*

Conviction of sin is a painful sense of violated obligation; and more particularly of obligation to God. It supposes a heartfelt sense of his being and government; of his holiness and dominion; of the obligation of his law and its sanctions; of personal unconformity to that law and exposure to his just eternal wrath. Those who are convicted of sin really see that they have been blindly sporting with their everlasting destiny; that they have provoked the displeasure of the

eternal King; and that, by sinning against him, they have destroyed themselves. They find that they are condemned before him, not only for acts of open transgression, but for the state of heart in which those acts have originated; that their whole conduct has proceeded from a governing choice and disposition which the commandment forbids; that they have not rendered that love in which obedience essentially consists; and, consequently, that even their external performances of duty have, to his view, been only sinful. They find at the same time no hope that a change of heart will originate in themselves. They perceive that repentance and love to God are very different things from what they had supposed; that these will not spring up, at the bidding of selfish desire, in the moment of necessity; and, at the same time, they see that their dependence is not an inability to repent, since the only thing which prevents their repentance is the prevalence of contrary dispositions; their selfishness, pride, and worldly desires. They find themselves so filled with dispositions contrary to the holiness of God and the rule of duty, that there can be no amendment but in a change of heart, to which all their predominant feelings are averse. Such is the state of mind familiarly denoted by the phrase, *conviction of sin*, as distinguished from conversion. It is a state of mind which exactly corresponds with all the descriptions of the natural character and condition of mankind in the Bible. It is the state of mind to which a considerable part of this assembly have been brought, many of whom were originally as confident of their moral integrity, and as careless of their prospects for eternity, as the most presumptuous among us. It is the state of mind to which every sinner must come, that he may seek or receive the salvation of God. To this impenitent sinners are unwilling to come. They choose not to be convinced of sin.

In illustration of this sentiment I would offer the following considerations:

1. Resistance of conviction is a natural consequence of indulged sin. No person chooses to be condemned for the course which he allows. To subject one's self to the sentence of his own condemnation, and feel himself at variance with that awful Being whose is the prerogative and the power to punish, no person can quietly endure. But, to avoid this, men must either renounce the sins which contravene the truth, or avoid the truth which condemns their sins. In choosing the latter, they only follow principles the operation of which is familiar in the daily intercourse of life. Where is the little child that has done wrong, and does not wish, until it becomes penitent, to have the offence pass unnoticed; that is not reluctant to hear mention made of it; that is not backward to admit the obligation violated, and to view the crime in the clear daylight of truth? Where is the profane man, the Sabbath-breaker, the hard drinker, the prayerless person, that is willing to entertain a sense of those laws of the eternal God which he is every day treading under foot, and to view himself as God views him? Where is the man who yields himself more speciously to a course of worldly gratification, and is willing to be disturbed with the upbraidings of conscience, and the sense of divine displeasure on that account? From the nature of a sinful principle, it results, that he who doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

2. *Only to this cause can it be ascribed that mankind generally, under the gospel, are not convicted of sin.* To what other cause can their security be ascribed? Not to their want of light; for in the volume of nature, and much more in the book of grace, the light shines as with the splendor of noonday. The law of God is light; and, were it not evaded, would enter the chambers of every man's heart, and disclose the sins that are hidden there; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." It is "quick and powerful;" penetrating as a two-edged sword the mind that allows it to enter. It cannot fail of proving so in its effects, wherever it is received, for it is the law of the most high God; it condemns the very thought of sin, and its penalty is eternal death. Every man must see, whenever he seriously endeavors to frame his heart and his doings according to it, that his sins are innumerable; that his natural inclinations are the reverse of what it demands; and that, as certainly as it is the law of God, he lies naked to the execution of the sentence. The moment a sinner brings himself into comparison with it, according to its real nature, obligation, and sanction, he perceives that he is a guilty, polluted being in the sight of God, and, without relief by grace, must be undone. These discoveries also prepare him to discern the importance of the gospel, to feel the obligations laid upon him by the grace which it reveals, and to be convinced of sin "because he has not believed on the only begotten Son of God." It is not then for want of sufficient light, that so many impenitent sinners among us have no deep and abiding conviction of sin.

Nor can this be reasonably ascribed to their want of sufficient faculties to apprehend the light. They can understand the law of God as easily as they can understand any other rule of conduct. They can feel the obligation of this law, as easily as they can feel the obligation of any other precept that is binding upon them. And they can as easily bring their moral feelings and conduct into comparison with that rule as with any other standard. The case is so perfectly analogous to other cases in human life where no want of faculties is perceived, that pretence of wanting them here is futile. No child can more easily come to a conviction of sin for an outrage of duty done to the kindest of parents, than sinners can come to a conviction of their sins against God. If then they do not come to the light that their deeds may be reproved, the cause must be their disinclination to this. With light before them sufficient for their conviction, and with reason and conscience to apprehend the nature and feel the influence of that light, they could not fail of conviction, did they not refuse to come to the light.

3. The truth of this sentiment is illustrated by *the history of impenitent sinners as it is recorded by the pen of inspiration.* Had our first parents chosen to be convinced of their sin, would they have evaded, as they did, the charge of guilt brought against them directly by the voice of their Maker? Had their firstborn son been open to conviction, when his hands were crimsoned with his brother's blood, would he have denied, in the presence of his Judge, that he lay under any particular obligation to his brother? Had Ahab been willing to come to the light that his deeds might be reproved, would he have gone to false prophets to obtain a divine sanction to the expedition which he was determined, whether right or wrong, to prosecute? or would he have said concerning an acknowledged prophet of the Lord, "I hate him because he doth

not prophecy good concerning me, but evil?" And had not the world in general been unwilling to be convinced of sin, under the ministry of our Savior, would he have had occasion to say of it, "Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the deeds thereof are evil?" Many are those who insist that every person is glad to receive truth wherever he can find it. But what said our Savior to those who did not believe on him? "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Christ then could obtain no credit among the impenitent sinners of his age, not because he did not tell them the truth, but because he did. He presented obligations which they could not be persuaded to comply with, and exposed and condemned sins which they had no mind to renounce. Therefore they would not believe him, but obstinately adhered to the errors and ignorance which left them undisturbed in the courses which they chose to pursue. Such, throughout the Bible, is the delineation of the natural character of man. Its history is a continued illustration of the sentiment in the text.

4. That impenitent sinners are unwilling to be convinced of sin is evident from their spirit and conduct, as these are open to the view of their own consciences, and are often manifest to the eye of observers. Appealing to the consciences and observations of those who hear me, I ask, Is it not a fact that skepticism and unbelief are indulged by many under the gospel, in regard to those truths especially, which, if seriously believed, would alarm and convict them? Is it not common to find men of this class readily admitting a thousand traditionary sayings, with very slight evidence of their truth, while yet they are disposed to call in question the authority of the Bible, or of particular doctrines of the Bible, without pretending to invalidate any part of the multifarious evidence of its being a revelation from God? Have there not been a thousand instances of persons confessing that they formerly did this merely because they could not bear to feel themselves under the restraints which the Bible imposed upon them? And who can fail to see that those who persist in unbelief painfully feel that if the Bible is true, they are under obligations at war with the dearest inclinations of their hearts? Whence is it that men—young men—men of scanty knowledge—men who have never examined the subject, and are grossly ignorant of it, sneer at truths which offend them, and affect to look down on serious religion as the offspring of weak minds? Is it not from the principle asserted in the text? *Put out that light*, a ruffian would say, when about to commit a deed which he would dread to have known. *Put out that light*, the sinner says of the Bible, until he consents to forsake his sins.

Is it not another fact concerning the great body even of those who admit the Divine authority of the Bible, and of the doctrines which are preached to them, and who yet remain without conviction, that they habitually neglect a diligent and inquisitive study of the Bible? They have in their hands a book which they acknowledge to be given them by inspiration of God, as a revelation of his will and their guide to eternal life. The motives which urge them to become acquainted with this book, and with themselves in comparison with it, are plainly momentous. But how many of them are far less acquainted with it than with almost any other that is put into their hands, and because they devote to it less time, thought, and inquiry! And to what shall his be ascribed, if not to a settled aversion to whatever would show them the holiness of God and their own sinfulness.

Is it not another fact, that such persons impatiently bear the inquiries of their serious friends concerning the state of their hearts towards God?—that they wish to avoid those pious acquaintances of whom they might expect questions and remarks suited to turn their thoughts upon themselves? and that the requital which they make for such kindness is sometimes worse than a merely cold reception? And whence their reluctance to be thus approached? Are they afraid of being misguided? or do they really believe it to be wrong for others to speak to them in relation to concerns compared with which their temporal interests are infinitely insignificant? Are they not rather apprehensive that the office will lead to disclosures (disclosures to their own view I mean) of sins and dangers which they are neither willing to avoid nor disposed fairly to examine?

Is it not another common fact that such persons are forward to question the sincerity of those acquaintances who profess to have been converted to God?—that they are rather sad and their countenances fallen, than glad and lifted up in thanksgiving when they hear of such a change in one who has been their associate in worldliness? and that they are even disposed to consider as self-deceived or hypocritical the very same persons whom they had been accustomed to honor as intelligent and estimable companions? Is there no evil eye in those who thus judge? Do they feel no interest in the conclusions which they form? Have they no wish to evade the conviction which struggles for being, that *they* too must change or must perish?

Is it not another fact common among the impenitent, that they directly resist the convictions which they feel? Is it not a fact with some of you, my hearers, that you endeavor to think God less angry, his law to be less extensive, his threatenings less absolute, judgment less certain, hell less terrible, and your danger of taking up an everlasting abode there less imminent, than in your sober estimation you believe? that you thrust the impression of such things from your contemplation—brace your minds against the arguments and persuasions which are designed to impress you with them, and after all have more solicitude on account of them than you are willing to bring to the test of a fair and solemn inquiry?

Once more, I ask, to what but to a voluntary resistance of conviction shall be traced the excuses for sin which the impenitent indulge? Why does the worldly-minded man plead that it is his duty to be industrious, and the libertine that his appetites were given him to be gratified, and the prayerless person that there are other duties no less important than prayer, and the neglecter of religion that he is not a hypocrite like such a one? Do any of these persons believe that such a plea will avail us at the bar of God? For what purpose are they indulged, but to shield the conscience from a full impression of guilt? Why does the irreligious father of a family allege that he finds no precept in the Bible for family prayer? Is it because he is really afraid of substituting the commandments of men for the ordinances of God? Is it not because he is neither willing to perform so reasonable a service as that of calling with his family on the name of the Lord, nor to carry with him a conviction of sin in the neglect of it? Why does the anxious sinner allege that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord? Does he un-

pear to be equally scrupulous about neglecting a thousand other things which he knows are an abomination to the Lord? or does he really believe that a serious attempt to pour his griefs into the bosom of his God would more offend him than to restrain prayer? Why does the sinner, when he begins to see the fact of his radical sinfulness, justify his impenitence and hardness of heart with the plea that he cannot change his own heart? What is the change of heart which he needs? It is humility, repentance, submission, faith, love. And does that sinner really wish to be humble who is indulging feelings of pride? or to be reconciled to God, who is full of opposition? or to be stripped of excuses, who is drawing them close about him? Ah! there is a fallacy here which even convicted sinners are not apt to perceive. They are ready to conclude that, whatever may be said of others, it is not true of them that they are unwilling to be convicted of sin. No doubt they may be so far sensible of the importance of conviction, that their judgment shall decide in favor of it. But their hearts are as much opposed to it as they ever were, and suggest a thousand expedients which hinder it. It is not from any love to God or the truth—not from any hatred of sin or disposition to turn from it, that they come in any manner or degree to the light; and even while, as they imagine, they wish for more conviction, they adhere to those self-justifying pleas which tend only to prevent the progress of it. So that if we speak of the choice of the heart, the sentiment of the text is no less true of them than it is of others. It is the sense of blame which the natural heart would avoid; so that if this be evaded, the fact of transgression is scarcely painful: if the sinfulness of sin be covered, the deed is admitted; if obligation is not felt, the remembrance of transgression is not dreaded. It is, then, a universal and most indubitable truth, that he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

From the sentiment which has thus been illustrated, I derive the following

REMARKS.

1. *We have no reason to wonder at the diversity of religious opinions among men.*—Many are in doubt as to the truth on this account. They imagine that on subjects which so much divide the learned and the zealous, there is no possibility of distinguishing the truth; that all religious opinions are alike uncertain; that however confident we may be that we are in the right, there is a possibility that we may be in the wrong; and that upon the whole a good moral life is the best religion. Mere confidence in our opinions does not indeed prove that they are true; yet there is a confidence, arising from a consciousness of our having come to the light, which we may be as sure will not prove delusory as we may that our perception of objects by the light of the sun is not a vision of the night. There is a principle in the human heart which sufficiently accounts for the delusions in the world, without the need of our calling in question either the sufficiency of the Bible to guide us, or our ability to know what the testimony of the Bible is. That principle is, *the natural aversion of men to be convinced of sin.* Light has come into the world—light, more and brighter than they wish, and they have only to open their eyes that they may see. **But if they do this they discover what gives them pain, and therefore they resort to every expedient which sophistry can devise, by the help of the Bible**

where they can bend it to their purpose, and by false reasonings where they cannot, to make out a scheme that will cover their sins. It is a remarkable fact that Socinians, Universalists, Antinomians, and licentious enthusiasts, however unlike to each other they may be in the outward form and aspect of their religions, all agree in considering the perfect law of God too strict and severe. None of them acknowledge the unqualified obligation of the precept, or their desert of the penalty. None of them allow that Christ died to honor the law, and that it is only on this account that sinners are saved. None of them consider a change of heart in submission to this law indispensable. All consider the law their enemy—unconformity to it their calamity—and no good dispositions as they naturally possess, if cherished as they may be sufficient for their salvation. It is of choice, not necessity, that men are delinquent. It is because they will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be re-

2. *Teachableness of mind is good evidence of a change of heart.* A person who really desires to know the whole will of God that he may obey it and to have his sins exposed,—whatever may be the sacrifice or the mortification which the conviction may occasion—that he may forsake them; the person who honestly submits himself to Divine guidance, and brings his views, his feelings, his motives, and his life to the light of revealed truth, that they may be formed and regulated by it; and still jealous of his deceitful heart sincerely prays, “Show me thy paths, O Lord; search me, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting;” that person may be sure that he will be kept from fatal delusion. “For good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he guide sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek shall know his way.” If every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved, it is not less certain, that he that doeth truth cometh to the light, and by the light his deeds are made manifest that they are wrought in God. We do not say that this disposition of mind procures grace. It is itself the effect of grace. Thus *the Lord opened the heart of Lydia*, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and so attended that she believed, and was morally transformed. And whosoever heart is in like manner opened to give the same earnest, impartial, obedient attention to the things revealed of God, will certainly know by the nature of those things, and by their effects upon himself, that they are divine, that his perception of them is true, and his experience, so far as it is clearly distinguished by him, that which accompanies salvation.

3. *We have cause to admire the grace of God in conversion.* Conviction begun and carried on in a mind which naturally is not only dark, but averse to the light, is a wonderful display of grace. To what but the power of God could be ascribed the conviction which the jailer at Philippi felt, a little before so ruthless towards those servants of God at whose feet he now fell trembling? or the conviction of the thousands at Pentecost, a little before around the Prince of life, shouting, *Crucify him! Crucify him!* now, stung with guilt, asking, What shall we do? Or to what else shall we ascribe the conviction of sinners now, brought up from infancy in the view of Jesus Christ, as it were crucified and slain among them, and all along till now sporting

themselves in a careless and wanton rejection of him? or what but **grace** can it be which moves the infinitely glorious God in this manner to show a rebellious worm what he needs to know against the perverse inclinations of his heart, take off the coverings in which he wraps himself, and break down the pride and self-confidence in which he exalts himself! And if in this there is **grace**, then how rich the grace by which he at last humbles that sinner at his feet, speaks to his trembling heart in accents of forgiving love, and fills him with the consolation of his covenanted favor! Who among all the ransomed, then, will hesitate to adopt the sentiment, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Full well they know that if grace had not made them to differ, never had they differed from those who go down miserable rebels to the pit.

4. Impenitent sinners are destroying themselves. They choose the ignorance, errors, doubts, and excuses which quiet them in the road to hell. They avoid the conviction without which it is impossible that they should repent or believe unto salvation. The light comes to them without their seeking, and like the beams of Heaven would enter at every passage, if they would admit it; would convince them of sin; would lead them to Christ; would sanctify them unto eternal life: but they will not admit the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.

Little cause have they to blame God because he does not convince and convert them. They do not choose conviction or conversion. They adhere to principles and cherish feelings incompatible with either. The truth of itself would convince and convert them, if they would let it. Their way is their own, and it is their folly. "Madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

Little does it become them to blame the supineness or neglect which they observe or imagine in professed Christians, as though these were the cause of their remaining unconverted. For however criminal professed Christians may be, it ill becomes those to reflect the blame who will not come to the light clearly shining before them, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and be converted and saved; who love their sins, and will not let go of them; and who do not love God, or Christ, or their duty, and will not submit to them.

Sinners, why will ye do this? Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? God has said, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." Why will you persist in the course which pride, unbelief, and love of sin suggest, when God, in whose hand your breath is, forewarns you that so you shall not prosper? Why will you not take the course of humility, penitence, and submission, when the same God assures you that, how numerous and aggravated soever your sins may be, you shall find mercy? What do you hope to gain? Will you extinguish the light by closing your eyes against it? Will you even avoid its convincing power at last, by turning away from it now? Miserably disturbed, as well as transient, is all the quiet which you can procure by refusing to know the truth,

while you remain in the present world. Many secret misgivings, many boding apprehensions, many struggles against conviction must you endure before you can settle down in hardened insensibility; and even then you will be liable, without a moment's warning, to have all the terrors you would avoid come rushing upon you, as an armed man, in death; or if, even in death, you can hold fast delusion, no sooner will your spirit have gone to the eternal world, than delusion will be all over. Then will the radiance of the divine character and counsels shine upon you with overpowering energy; and if here you cannot bear its feeblest reflections, how will you bear the disclosures which the full light will make to you for ever! Behold yon fallen mortals under conviction! Behold them, at the very time when God comes to bless them in turning them from their iniquities! How often are they made to feel a power of conviction which drinks up all their spirits, and withers their frames, and is as the pangs of death to the soul! O, then, what must be the agony of that conviction which unsubdued sinners must for ever feel, where hope can never come! Sinners, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Wo, wo to him that striveth with his Maker. Awakened sinners, hasten your submission. Terms of reconciliation, by the blood of the cross, are offered you. Delay not to accept them. Admit no excuse for sin. Submit yourselves to God. Fly to the throne of grace, supplicating mercy there. Sinners of every class, take the law of God, and by its light think on your ways. "See, now, and know that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the Lord." Search to the bottom the deep corruption of your spiritual and immortal natures; for now "there is balm in Gilead and a Physician there." Now if you will be convinced of sin, you may know the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven. But if not, yet "be sure of this, your sin shall find you out."

SERMON CX.

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THE PROGRESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED COMPARED.

PROVERBS, iv. 18, 19.—*The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble.*

A CONTRAST is here presented between the lives of the just and the wicked. The life of the just is compared to light, that beautiful emblem of truth, holiness, and joy; and the life of the wicked to darkness, the emblem of ignorance, sin, and wretchedness. While there is this contrast in the nature of the courses pursued, there is in one particular a resemblance: they both are pro-

gressive. "The path of the just is as the shining light." A glimmering of divine illumination breaks in upon the darkness of the mind, and some holy desires are formed in the heart. By slow degrees this illumination is advanced, knowledge is increased, faith is confirmed, peace and hope are established, and holy desires and purposes are accomplished in active usefulness. Thus the rising light shines more and more, until it is perfected in a heavenly and an eternal day. But "the way of the wicked is as darkness." Dark at the first, it becomes continually more so. What impressions of truth had been made upon the mind are effaced! What aspirations after the privileges of the just had been felt are stifled! What semblances of goodness and reasons for hope had appeared are lost! The character becomes more depraved, and the condition more hopeless. The sinner falls into one danger, and another, and knows not at what he stumbles. He loses the sense of guilt and the fear of consequences, and at length plunges unawares into the blackness of darkness for ever. This progress in sin is intimated by the terms of comparison in the text, and is more directly asserted in other parts of the Scriptures. "Evil men and seducers," an apostle says, "wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

It is my design to trace the steps of this progress in the lives both of the just and the wicked, and to present them to your view side by side, as an encouragement to enter immediately upon the one, and to avoid the other.

1. *At the commencement of both there are difficulties to be overcome.* When we say that wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, we would not intimate that there are no obstacles to be overcome, or conflicts to be sustained. On the contrary, we forewarn you that you must strive, if you would enter in at the strait gate; that you must summon your powers to the race if you would win the crown; that you must engage in a warfare if you would gain the victory. Especially in entering upon the path of the just are you to expect resistance. The pride, the worldliness, and unbelief natural to the heart, the fear of men, the desire of esteem, the scenes, the interests, and connections of the world, and the concurring influence of "the god of this world" are combined to oppose you. Only by the grace of God can you overcome, and only by a steadfast purpose in dependence on his grace can he be expected to be on your side. Even though you endure, it is not wonderful if sorrows are mingled in your experience. You may be led unconsciously into dangerous paths; your lamented imperfections may occasion doubts of your sincerity; and your unaccomplished resolutions may harass you with fears of the result. It is with many struggles of light with darkness, of faith with unbelief, and of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus with the powers of evil, that the righteous hold on their way.

But are there not obstacles also in the way of the wicked? Especially at the outset, is there no opposition kindly interposed, no moral resistance to be overcome, no struggle to be sustained, no sorrow or fear to be experienced? Is it nothing that God has impressed upon the conscience a natural sense of obligation and accountability, and connected with transgression the feeling of guilt, the dread of his displeasure, and the leading apprehension of a miserable hereafter? Is it nothing that by his revealed word he has more manifestly

interposed his authority in the sinner's path, accompanied his command with the denunciation of his wrath and curse upon the transgressor, and, together with the terrors of his law, employed the persuasive accents of forgiving mercy and redeeming love, to call back the wanderer from his way? Is it nothing that he strives with the sinner by the ministry of his living messengers, as well as the declarations of his written word; and not only by their stated messages, but also by the affectionate counsels of parental piety, and the examples and persuasions of the pious in all the tender intimacies and intercourse of life? Is it nothing that their testimony is so often enforced by the dispensations of Providence,—the death of companions, the pains of disappointment, and the hours of sickness and danger? And is it nothing that all these persuasions and admonitions are conveyed to the conscience and the heart by the more immediate influence of the Holy Spirit? What a power of moral resistance must every impenitent sinner, in such a land, and at such a time as this, overcome! And can he do this with no pain, no regret, no fear, no misery of feeling? Can a rational being easily and pleasantly forego the peace of an approving mind, the joy of reconciliation to God, and a warranted hope of eternal life? Can he, without a struggle, press onward in the path which his own conscience and an authenticated revelation from God assure him leads to eternal shame and woe? O, tell me not of obstacles and conflicts in the path of the just! The way of *transgressors* is hard. If you must strive to enter in at the strait gate, you must also strive to proceed on in the way to destruction.

2. *These difficulties, by perseverance, are gradually diminished.* The just, by increasing knowledge of the Gospel, learn to rely more implicitly upon its grace, and to apply more readily its provisions for their establishment and peace. By experience, also, they are better acquainted with their dangers, and become more familiar with their refuge. They see more of the vanity of this world and more of the glory of the future. Things seen have less power of temptation, and things not seen increasing ascendancy; their renewed dispositions and purposes acquire steadfastness and vigor, and the power of the sinful principle is proportionably diminished. Their old companions, also, seeing them determined, withdraw their intimacy and cease their solicitations, and the scenes of temptation to which they had been used to resort lose their allurements. Hence, although perhaps in some of their individual acts they may seem to fall short of their early efforts, their course becomes more uniform and consistent. If they have less transport, they have more peace; if they are more sensible of sin, they can better measure the power engaged on their side with the power which they are called to resist, and, with more determined opposition and more unwavering triumph, say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So, also, those who are entering upon the way of the wicked may take the comfort, if comfort it can afford, of knowing that the resistance which they now meet will gradually yield as they proceed. The conscience, lacerated and scarred in every part by the violence which it receives, becomes callous. The awful and the melting truths of God's word, long unheeded, fall powerless upon the ear. Parents and friends, mourn and weep as they may in their solitary hours and midnight reflections, are too much disheartened by often repeated repulses to renew their painful applications. The Spirit of God unites in the

abandonment, and says, "They are joined unto idols, let them alone." Providential warnings also become too familiar to awaken serious reflection. The dying bed, the opened grave, the funeral knell, excite no deep emotion. Delusion, too, is not unfrequently embraced to confirm the empire of sin. Truths which only condemn and alarm are unwelcome; and what the heart repels the judgment easily finds a pretext for rejecting. First one soothing error is admitted, and then another, until a scheme is embraced which leaves the mind undisturbed in its corruptions. Thus do all things concur to accomplish the judgment written, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." O, how many in all our congregations seem to be in this fearful state! In the way of the wicked, as in that of the just, resistance is diminished as progress is made.

3. *Similar, also, in some respects, are the means by which they both are advanced.* They are alike subject to the power of habit. It seems to be the constitution of God, that what we do habitually should be done easily and spontaneously. This is true of moral conduct as well as of physical action. The good man becomes so accustomed to religious contemplation, devotional exercises, and social duties, that it would be a painful departure from his regular course on any proper occasion to omit them. Habit concurs with disposition and choice to bind him to the observance of them. Not only in regard to external actions, but also in respect to moral feelings, the power of habit is exerted to form him for heaven. Accustomed to the objects of faith, his judgment, his dispositions, his aims, acquire permanency and strength under their influence. Humility, patience, meekness, submission, trust in God, and cheerful self-denial in well-doing become the settled temper and decided character of the man.

So he that enters upon the path of the wicked finds himself urged onward by habit as by a giant power. Does he indulge himself in profaneness, falsehood, impurity, intemperance, or other acts of profligacy? His propensity to these, by nature strong, becomes by habit ungovernable. He indulges them as he breathes, without consideration, and in spite of solemn engagements. Or, though restrained from these, does he yield himself to covetousness, ambition, revenge, or any other selfish desire, as his ruling passion? That passion acquires such power, its gratification is so firmly associated with his supreme good, it so forms his judgment and choice, and all his habits of thought and action, that you might almost as easily divest him of the essential properties of humanity as mould him to the benevolence, humility, and heavenly-mindedness of the gospel. Not in vain is the awful appeal of inspiration, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

Kindred associates aid our progress, whether it be in the path of the just or the way of the wicked. Those who have entered the former cannot long delay to avow their choice, to declare plainly that they are seeking the heavenly country, and to join themselves to the company of the pilgrims. In this manner they mutually bind and aid each other in a course of progressive holiness. By the sense of their sacred covenant, by their dread of bringing reproach upon

the name by which they are called, and by their reluctance to wound the hearts and lose the confidence of those "in whom is all their delight," they are severally compelled "to live no longer to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Their public fellowship, also, and their ordinary intercourse, and their united labors of love contribute reciprocally to encourage their hearts, and strengthen their hands, and brighten their graces; or if one of them wander from the path, or loiter by the way, they who are spiritual do not fail to restore such an one, and to bind him to their hearts with new and stronger cords of affection.

Nor less efficient is companionship in the way of the wicked. For if "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise," not less certainly "shall the companion of fools be destroyed." No person can long be contented to walk alone; and, in the course of this world, every one easily finds like-minded associates. While yet under parental guardianship, the youthful traveller falls in with those whose feelings are congenial to his own; with them he reciprocates the sentiments of his heart, and, having joined himself to their intimacy, feels that he cannot go back. There it is that he throws off the habits of a pious education, and the yet lingering feelings of moral restraint; is urged on, by dread of singularity, to acts which his conscience condemns, and learns to scoff at scruples which his bosom has felt; steels his heart against the entreaties and remonstrances of friends, and is finally embittered against them as the enemies of his peace. There it is emphatically that evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived; or if any are ever compelled to see the river into which they are plunging, they judge that it were better to be out of the world than to be separated from those to whose sentiments and feelings their own are allied.

In no small degree is our progress advanced, also, in whichever path we tread, by our endeavors to gain others to it. Those who are going to heaven cannot be contented to leave their dear connections and bosom companions behind. "Come thou with us" is their solicitation with one and another, in the hour of free and affectionate intercourse. Nor are their desires on this subject expressed in personal solicitations alone. They are zealously engaged in diffusing the knowledge of the gospel, in forming the minds of the young, in promoting every measure favorable to the cause of truth and holiness. By such means they keep the object of faith in view; they invigorate, by its appropriate exercise, every holy affection; draw near to God in enlarged and fervent supplication, and enjoy a conscious communion with him in the great designs of his love. So also it is by deceiving others, as well as being themselves deceived, that the wicked become worse and worse. Having been themselves seduced and hardened by corrupt associates, they become in their turn the apostles of wickedness to seduce and harden others, and, in proportion to their zeal and success, are embittered against the truth and emboldened in opposition. Having taken their stand, they consider themselves bound in honor to maintain it; are urged on by pride and passion to employ their whole influence in sustaining it; and, as described by the pen of inspiration, "sleep not unless they cause some to fall." Shocking contrast to the character and prospects of those who, having "turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever." "Cursed children," exclaims an apostle, "that speak evil of things they understand not, because

unstable souls, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever and ever."

4. There is also this other point of resemblance in the paths of the just and the wicked, that *as they approach their end they afford clearer and more decisive indications of the eternal states to which they lead.* The just, by long and familiar contemplation upon the heavenly world, are enabled to apprehend it with realizing and joyful faith; while, by their habitual walk with God, their doubts respecting their inheritance there are removed; their hope becomes sure and steadfast, and their warrant for this hope is often not less plain to the apprehensions of others than it is to their own minds. Blessed men! With what tenderness of gratitude do they look back to that state of darkness and guilt from which grace has ransomed them! With what joyful anticipations do they begin the song, "Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood—unto Him be glory!" With what serenity in their dying moments do they exclaim, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O thou God of truth!"

But often scarcely less decisive of an opposite result is the closing scene of the wicked. For if there can be no communion between light and darkness—no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness—no concord between Christ and Belial, what but separation from God, and the suffering of his wrath, can be the eternal state of that man whose life, under the full operation of the only means of salvation, has exhibited a steadily progressive strength of purpose in apostacy from God, rejection of the gospel, and devotedness to covetousness, pride, and worldly desire? He himself may not see this. His way is as darkness, so that he knows not at what nor into what he stumbles. Yet he may be compelled to see it. The delusions which he has loved may be dissipated as eternity draws near. Conscience, in the more immediate prospect of the decisive tribunal, may awake from her slumbers, and plant a conviction in the departing soul, which nothing can remove and nothing alleviate, that for the heaven of the just he has no preparation and no hope. Miserable man! With every passing day the light of worldly joy is receding, and eternity spreading out in dark, immeasurable prospect before him. Who shall duly commiserate his state? Who shall pour into his dark soul the light of life?

Men and brethren, what path are you treading? Travellers to eternity, as you certainly are, this inquiry cannot be unworthy of your most serious regard. The Scriptures divide mankind into two classes—the righteous and the wicked. They describe their different courses as terminating in two corresponding states—heaven and hell. Every attempt to confound or neutralize this difference of character or of state is a vain and ruinous presumption. God has declared it; the whole scheme of redemption involves it; and your own eyes and ears, if they are open on what is passing around you, may discern unquestionable evidences of it. There are the just, whose path is as the shining light; and alas! under the best means of salvation, there are the wicked whose way is as darkness. What then is your way, and whither, if you proceed, will it conduct you? Do some of you, review the long suffering of Christ towards you, dwell with wondering gratitude

on a season when he apprehended you amid an unthinking multitude, convinced you of sin, unveiled the excellency of Christ, and drew you to him by the cords of love? Do you find that, from that memorable hour, a divine energy has been forming you, amid many conflicts and various experiences, to a growing conformity to his perfect will? Have you, upon the whole, been putting off your former character of covetousness, pride, and self-will, and putting on the new character of humility, submission, and love? Has a life of devotional, self-denying, and active piety become more and more habitual and delightful, and sin, as viewed in yourselves and in others, more hateful and painful? Are you in consequence associated in affection and communion with the friends and followers of the Redeemer, and with them cheerfully devoting the powers and talents conferred upon you to the advancement of His cause? Are your contemplations upon the heavenly state becoming more realizing, your aspirations for it more fervent, and your desires for earthly objects more moderate? In a word, can you perceive that, notwithstanding all your imperfections and inconstancy, the love of God and the love of man, the faith, the humility, the meekness, the prayerfulness, the disposition to do good, the patience in bearing evil, and the respect unto the recompense of the reward, which mark the followers of Christ, are becoming more and more your temper, your habit, your character? How shall I suitably congratulate those who are such! How will you express your obligations! How worthless all earthly treasures and distinctions, in comparison with the heavenly calling! "For he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ?" The light which here has dawned upon you in darkness will shine more and more unto the perfect day. Your remaining sorrows and sins will lessen, and recede, and fade, and your graces and consolations will expand and improve, until the imperfect good which you now enjoy shall be lost in everlasting glory. Go on without fear, relying on the faithful word, "Even to old age I am He; even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you."

And are there those of you, on the other hand, who have no such experience, but are obliged to acknowledge that whatever semblance of goodness you may have had, it has vanished—whatever tenderness of mind, it is lost—and whatever struggles against sin, they are abandoned? that you have no disposition to prayer, to serious consideration, or Christian converse; that instead of being joined to the followers of Christ, you have associated only with the worldly; instead of conferring with the pious on the concerns of eternity, you have become so averse to their persuasions as to have discouraged their applications, and are glad to be let alone; are so far from taking a liberal part in the great work of extending the kingdom of Christ, that you cannot patiently endure a respectful invitation to contribute for that purpose; and indeed are so far from being Christians, in the Scriptural sense of the term, that you have abandoned the serious intention and endeavor of becoming such, and would fain believe that there are none around you, but that the profession is mere delusion or pretence? O let not your hearts deceive you. Call to mind the decisions of conscience, when it was allowed to speak. "Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and when ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it grow darkness." Your way is darkness

and every step you take involves you in deeper shade. If now your return be difficult, it is becoming more so. Every hopeful principle is losing its power, every obstacle to be overcome is increasing; the time is short, God is angry, the judgment is prepared, and you, unless you repent, must eternally and most fearfully perish. Awake, I entreat you, to consideration and repentance while hope remains.

Youthful travellers, the path of the just and the way of the wicked are before you. They open on the right hand and the left; they recede from each other continually, and will do so for ever. For you it remains to take your choice. Oh, enter now the path of the just. It is pleasant as the morning light, and as the morning light it shines more and more unto the perfect day. Supremely delightful, even to angels, is the character of the youthful penitent. Delightful too are the persevering struggles of the penitent against the powers of evil for the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let this character be yours. Let this struggle be now commenced and ardently prosecuted. So every difficulty shall yield to your constancy, and every duty become easy and delightful in your course. Heaven shall rise in ravishing prospect on your view as you advance, and the light of an eternal day shall illumine before you the darkness of the tomb. But if you intend ever to enter that path, choose it now; for "the way of the wicked is as darkness." Self-delusion, sin, and wretchedness mark its progress, and the blackness of darkness for ever and ever is its sure and dreadful termination. *Remember now, therefore, your Creator in the days of your youth.*

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NECESSITY OF DIVINE INFLUENCE.

ZECARIAH, iv. 6.—*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*

WHEN Cyrus, king of Persia, issued his decree, giving the captive Jews permission to return to their own land, and rebuild their city and temple, a pious remnant, under Zerubbabel, gladly availed themselves of the opportunity. Their enterprise, however, involved great difficulties. They were few in number; their city and temple were in ruins, and could not be rebuilt without great labor and expense; and they were surrounded by numerous and powerful enemies. Shortly after they commenced their work, their adversaries, in a spirit of most determined hostility, endeavored by stratagem to interrupt it. After years of unavailing opposition, the rulers of Samaria, by gross misrepresentation and falsehood, procured from the Persian monarch a decree for the suspension of the work. To the great grief of Zerubbabel and his pious associates, they were obliged, after years of labor and peril, to abandon their undertaking. About three years afterward, by the reproofs and remonstrances of the prophets sent among them, they were brought again to apply themselves to the rebuilding of the temple. The writer of the text was commanded to encourage Zerubbabel and the Jews to prosecute their work, and assure them of success. Had the completion of it depended solely on them, their own weakness, the magnitude of the work, and the number and power of their enemies, might well have produced despondency. But God, by the prophet, assured them that the work was His, and should infallibly be accomplished. He directed the prophet to go to Zerubbabel, and say, for the encouragement of himself and his associates, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Accordingly, he influenced the Persian kings successively to favor their undertaking, defeated the opposition of their enemies, and enabled them to persevere till the temple was completed, and his worship in it restored. The whole history of this work, as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, is a complete verification of the text. Nor has its truth been evinced only in those events. The temple at Jerusalem was a type of the church of God. In the erection of this spiritual building, he has from the first employed, and his word assures us that he will continue to employ, instruments

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which in themselves are utterly powerless. By mere human might no soul ever was or will be converted, and no saint has grown, or will grow in grace. Without the special blessing of God, all efforts to introduce pure religion into pagan lands, and augment its power where it already exists, will be unavailing. This is more than implied in the text.

The import of this inspired passage we shall endeavor to place distinctly before you, by showing,

I. THE REALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE ; and,

II. THAT THEY OWE ALL THEIR EFFICACY TO SPECIAL DIVINE INFLUENCE.

That means are employed in the conversion of sinners, and the increasing sanctification of the saints, are positions supported both by Scripture and fact. And equally evident is it from the same authority, that revealed truth is the chief instrument employed to produce these blessed effects. It is written on the pages of that volume, which was sent from above to teach the science of salvation,—“The law of the Lord is perfect, *converting the soul*—Of his own will begat he us with the *word of truth*—Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the *word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever—I am not ashamed of the *Gospel of Christ*, for it is the *power of God* to salvation—Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the *word of God*.” Christ, the true and faithful witness, prayed for his followers, “Sanctify them through *thy truth ; thy word is truth*.” These passages teach, beyond all contradiction, that revealed truth is the grand instrument in the production and increase of holiness.

The methods by which Divine truth is made to produce these effects, however, are exceedingly various. The dispensations of Divine Providence—both benign and afflictive, the religious education of children, Christian example and effort, the reading of the sacred Scriptures, prayer, and the preaching of the Gospel, are all employed in calling attention to Divine truth, and in fastening it upon the conscience and the heart. By all these and other methods have sinners been roused from spiritual slumber, convinced of their exceeding criminality, and converted to God. Among these means of conveying Divine truth to the mind, and rendering it effectual to the conversion of the soul, the preaching of the Gospel and prayer occupy a place of paramount importance. “Faith cometh by *hearing*.” “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Prayer, too,—humble, believing, fervent; and submissive, especially when offered in concert,—is attended with unspeakable efficacy. Hence the numerous promises made to prayer in the sacred Scriptures, the answers to it there recorded, and precepts like the following ; “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” But enough has been said to show that God has appointed means of grace—means which he has in every age employed in the conversion of sinners and the increase of holiness in his people, and which he will continue to employ for the attainment of these momentous ends, till “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.”

And in the simple fact that these are Divinely appointed means, we have proof complete of their great importance. The same wisdom which devised, and benevolence which adopted the stupendous scheme of redemption, have made the best selection of means for its accomplishment. Nor is it difficult, even with a partial knowledge of the nature of God’s government, to see their admirable adaptation to produce the desired result. What the Scriptures reveal concerning the character of God and his government both providential

and moral, the astonishing exercise of his benevolence in providing salvation for sinners, the terms on which it is offered, their duty and their danger, and the awful retributions of eternity, are eminently calculated to arrest their attention, to awaken fear, and influence them to make an immediate and unre-served surrender of themselves to God. And the benign tendency of such revelations is vastly augmented when they are pressed upon the sinner's conscience by the tenderness and importunity of Christian friendship, and the significant look and impressive tones of the faithful ambassadors of the Lord Jesus.

The importance of these means, with reference to the conversion of sinners and their advancement in holiness till matured for heaven, is likewise evinced by a long series of indisputable facts. God could, indeed, accomplish his purposes of mercy without them. And were he disposed thus to employ his power, he could, without the labor of man, transform barren wastes and dark untrodden forests into fruitful fields. He could, too, have raised the temple from its ruins, and restored his worship in its hallowed courts, without the instrumentality of his servants. And it is equally true that he *can convert* men and mature them for glory without means and instruments; but when and where has he thus employed his power? The history of all nations unblessed with the light of revelation, and of communities nominally Christian, among whom the Heavenly record has been disregarded, and the Sabbath has made no pause in secular pursuits and amusements, and the voice of the faithful ministers of Jesus has seldom or never been heard, confirms the inspired declaration, "Where no vision is, the people perish." Where have sinners been converted to God, but by the presentation of revealed truth to the mind by means of the benevolent efforts of the pious, a religious tract or book, or the written or preached word? Was a moral wilderness ever converted into the garden of the Lord without the labors of the spiritual husbandman? And after having been thus transformed, has it flourished and brought forth the fruits of righteousness without religious culture? These blessed effects never have been, and never will be produced by other means, because God will not bring his own institutions into disrepute. From this view of the reality and importance of the means of grace, we pass to show,

II. THAT THEY OWE ALL THEIR EFFICACY TO SPECIAL DIVINE INFLUENCE. This is evident,

1. *From what the Scriptures teach concerning the character of man by nature.* They do not represent him as needing merely the urgency of those motives which are embodied in the system of revealed truth, and the common influences of the Holy Spirit, to subdue his rebellious will and fit him for Heaven. They do not, indeed, deny that he may have a high sense of justice and honor, and possess humane and social affections in a high degree; but they *do teach*, in language which it would seem admits neither of denial nor evasion, that his moral depravity is *entire*. The testimony of Him, who knows the character of man perfectly, and whose truth is everlasting, is, that "The whole world lieth in wickedness;—There is none that doeth good, no, not one:—And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This total reign of sin in the human heart was not peculiar to those who lived before the flood. Nearly two thousand years after that event, it was written by the pen of inspiration, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." An inspired apostle also affirms, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." *From this fountain*

of impurity proceed all the unholy actions of men ; nay, it pollutes and renders unacceptable to God their most specious performances. Hence it is written, "The ploughing of the wicked is sin ;—The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord ;—They that are in the flesh cannot please God." And can any thing short of Divine grace improve such a heart as this ? What will means, unaccompanied by the power of God, do towards prostrating the strong empire of sin in the soul ? Can unparalleled deceit lead to holy ingenuousness ?—desperate wickedness, to conformity to God's law ?—enmity to his character, to love ? and death in sin, to newness of life ? It is clear as a sun-beam, that the heart, unsubdued by Divine power, would resist all the motives to holiness which heaven, earth, and hell could furnish. Its renovation never has been, and never will be effected by human might ; and only by the special agency of the Holy Spirit.

2. That means are rendered efficacious only by special Divine influence, is evident from the fact, that *the Scriptures ascribe to God the entire glory of the sinner's salvation, and of the predicted triumph of truth and righteousness in the earth.* The means selected by infinite wisdom for the attainment of these most important ends are, in the estimation of a vainglorious world, weak and contemptible. This fact, with the reason for it, is thus stated by an inspired apostle :—"God has chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence." This Divine procedure, though foolish in the eyes of men, is worthy of God. Had he chosen means and instruments for the accomplishment of his stupendous purposes of mercy distinguished for what commands respect and veneration among men, the effect produced by the unseen efficient cause would doubtless be chiefly ascribed to them. That they are entitled to no share of the glory, attached to the effects produced by them, the oracles of truth abundantly testify. Why else is so much said of salvation by grace to the praise and glory of God, and the utter exclusion of boasting on the part of the creature ? Why those man-abasing and God-exalting interrogations, "Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ?" And why else is it written, "Let no man glory in men—He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord ?" Moreover, we are taught that the objects of God's electing love, are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will ; to the *praise of the glory of his grace.*" The prayer of his redeemed people in every age has been, and while eternal ages shall roll will be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." The Apostle Paul, having shown that by the church redeemed from among men God would show unto the principalities and powers of heaven his manifold wisdom, concludes a most fervent prayer for the Ephesians with the following devout ascription of praise. "Unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.—Amen."

That the Lord Jesus is destined to receive the honors of universal empire and everlasting renown ;—that "He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth ;—that all the ends of the earth shall *remember* and turn unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations shall *worship before him,*" no believer in Divine revelation will deny. That in

recovering his empire over our world's population which "the prince of the power of the air" has usurped, he will employ means, we have already shown. But to whom will the glory of the conquest belong? to the instruments, or the hand that wields them? The evangelical prophet, when predicting the universal reign of the Prince of peace, says, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." And will not the undivided glory of the work belong to him! Let the anthem of the whole redeemed church in heaven answer. "They cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.—Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever." And the whole church on earth and in heaven unite in the doxology,—“Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever.”

3. The Scriptures most explicitly and forcibly teach *that all the holiness consequent on the use of means is produced by special Divine agency.* Take the following as a specimen of multiplied passages inculcating this truth. "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase." "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy *He* saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Such passages certainly prove beyond all contradiction, that the renewal of the heart is not produced by the power of natural causes, but by the special agency of the Holy Spirit. This truth, however, which has arrayed against it all the prejudice, and pride, and enmity of the carnal mind, should be presented in the clearest light possible. Allow me, therefore, to call your attention for one moment to the stress which the inspired writers lay on the power by which the change under consideration is produced. It is described by language borrowed from those works of God which furnish the most striking exhibitions of his power. What more stupendous acts of power has he ever exhibited than those of communicating sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, the instantaneous production of light in the midst of total darkness, and the creation of all things? And yet these are the acts by which the renewal of the heart in the Divine image is described. "And in that day shall the *deaf* hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the *blind* shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." "You hath *He quickened*, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Nay,—the renewal of the heart in the Divine image he denominates a new *creation*; "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." "That ye may know—what is the *exceeding greatness of His power* to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his *mighty power*."

On these arguments we rest the proposition, that the means of grace owe all their efficacy to special Divine influence. With this truth, however, and indeed with every other which God has revealed, we have something more to do than merely to establish it by argument. It is adapted to make us holy; nor can we innocently fail to apply it to this end. Let us then attend to some practical deductions from the one we have just considered. From it we learn,

1. *That the only hope in regard to the salvation of sinners is in the sovereign mercy of God.* The means of grace to which multitudes trust while they only abuse them have no efficacy. They are indeed important. Without them the attainment of salvation is not to be expected. The enjoyment of them,

however, is no certain evidence that those thus favored will "inherit" the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory;" for thousands exalted to heaven by privilege have sunk down to hell. No degree of *that attention* which the unrenewed give to means, and no degree of anxiety which they feel about their souls, furnish any certain evidence that they will finally be saved. From every degree of conviction multitudes have gone back and perished. We do not say they would not be saved were they to do their duty. Were they to use means with a penitent, believing heart, instead of abusing them, they certainly would. Their sin consists, not in maintaining the external form of duty, but in doing it with unholy affections. They are wholly destitute of love to God, of repentance for sin, and faith in Jesus Christ, without which it is impossible to please him. So long as they refuse to submit to him and from the heart obey his requirements, all their actions so far as they are of a moral nature are an offence to his holiness. Of course nothing which they do has any promise of a blessing. They obstinately refuse to submit to him, and will for ever, unless subdued by divine power. This God is under no obligation to exert. Of course the only hope in their case is in his sovereign mercy.

Do you say, as some did who heard the humbling doctrines of the Gospel from the lips of its adorable author; "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" If you do we cannot innocently neglect to disclose your danger, and point you to the only place of safety. Do you say, Then we may as well sit down in despair and neglect the means of grace as attend upon them? Nothing we have said warrants such a conclusion. If you thus pervert the truth of God, and convert the word ordained to life into an instrument of death, you must answer it to Him. Observe, we are not now speaking of your *duty*, but of the only ground of hope that you will do it and be saved. It is your immediate duty to love God, repent of sin, trust in Christ, and live to his glory. This is fairly within the limits of your ability; and if you do it, the veracity of God is pledged for your salvation. But this your stubborn hearts will not do unless constrained by Almighty power. You are therefore thrown, ruined and helpless, on the sovereign mercy of God. If he leave you, as he justly may, to follow the inclinations of your own deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, you will as certainly perish as he sits upon the throne of the universe; for the rescue of the soul from perdition is not effected by human might, but by his Spirit. If he please, he can soften your obdurate heart and make you an heir of glory. In the hands of this holy, just, merciful, and sovereign God I leave you, beseeching you in Christ's stead to become reconciled to him.

2. The subject we have contemplated suggests *one important reason why the means of grace are attended with so little success*. Too much reliance is often placed on them, and too little on God. Whenever this is the case, very little is to be expected from them. He will not give his glory to the instruments by which he works. When the necessity of special divine influence to render means successful is overlooked and reliance is placed on human power, he withholds his blessing, disappoints the misplaced confidence of his people, and rebukes their presumption. How did he disappoint the hopes of the projectors of the first mission to the Society Islands! The enterprise was marked by great zeal, and the most confident hopes of immediate success. These hopes were to a great extent evidently founded on mistaken ideas of the character and inhabitants of these islands, the nature of their government, the strength of their attachment to their system of idolatry, and especially on the *readiness* with which missionaries offered themselves for the service, and the

interest of the Christian community in the undertaking. No one who has attentively read the history of that mission can doubt that, connected with the Christian benevolence and faith by which the enterprise was distinguished, there was a criminal reliance on human efforts. Hence God withheld his aid, and for a long time it was visited with most appalling difficulties and trials. One calamity after another befell the mission, till the eyes of its friends were withdrawn from every other ground of confidence and intently fixed on God. When the pride of human effort was brought down to the dust, he took the work into his own hand, and the revolting system of idolatry was soon overthrown, and great numbers were made to feel the saving power of the Gospel. The failure of other similar enterprises, and the little success with which the means of grace are often attended, are doubtless to be ascribed chiefly to the unhallowed confidence which is placed in the wisdom and power of man. Brethren, in all our efforts to cultivate personal piety and promote the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, let us beware that we do not defeat them by presumptuous self-confidence.

3. From what has been said we learn *the great importance of giving due honor to the Holy Spirit*. Since the means of grace produce no saving results unless accompanied by his special influence, our dependence on him should at all times be felt and acknowledged. Nothing can more directly tend to arrest his sacred influences, than to withhold from him the honor to which he is entitled. Never were the obligations of the American church to the Holy Comforter greater than at the present period. The numerous and powerful revivals of religion, which within a few months past have brought such large accessions to her communion, form a new and most blessed epoch in her history. To the Author of this glorious work she owes an everlasting debt of gratitude. To refuse to acknowledge it would be highly criminal and dangerous. Ingratitude so base would in all probability be followed by dangerous error in doctrine, practices unauthorized by the word of God, the utter termination or fearful corruption of those glorious revivals with which our land is now blessed. And we cannot rid ourselves of the unwelcome apprehension that these dread evils may yet be experienced. While we rejoice in the belief that much of the obscurity which has heretofore rested on the subject of human obligation has been removed, and the duty of immediate reconciliation to God is urged with great ability and faithfulness, and honored with signal success, we fear that the indispensable necessity of the special influences of the Holy Spirit to incline sinners to do their duty, is too much overlooked. A necessity it is, to be sure, created and prolonged by their own voluntary rebellion. Still it is such as to suspend their eternal destiny upon the sovereign pleasure of Jehovah. And it is as important to them as salvation to see and feel their dependence. And we do fear that in this day of mercy some sentiments are gaining currency which are little adapted to abase human pride, and render due honor to the Holy Ghost. In these circumstances let the watchmen of Zion exercise the utmost vigilance. Let a note of alarm be sounded in the ear of the churches, lest being dishonored and grieved he should retire, and his work among us should cease. Should such a day arrive, the church, like Sampson when shorn of his locks, may go forth to her warfare as aforesaid, but like him she will find that her strength is gone, that without the assistance of God's insulted spirit she can do nothing. Let none fear that a faithful presentation of the cardinal doctrine of man's absolute dependence on God for holiness will cut the nerve of exertion. If presented as it should be, in connection with his entire freedom and accountability, it will discourage no exerce-

vors but those of pride and self-righteousness; and such efforts cannot be discouraged too soon.

4. The subject we have contemplated teaches us that *when the means of God's appointment are diligently used in humble reliance on him, his blessing may confidently be expected.* He may for a season withhold it in order to try the faith, and patience, and humility of his people; but in due time they "shall reap if they faint not." The diligent use of the means which he has appointed, in humble dependence on him to render them efficacious, honors his wisdom, and benevolence, and authority, and power. Did success depend solely on them or on an arm of flesh, we might well yield to the paralyzing influence of despair. We might then abandon the cheering hope that the spiritually dead in Christian lands will be raised to newness of life; that the Jews will be converted from their infidelity; and the nations long bound in the chains of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry emancipated and introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? Let the energy of the Divine Spirit be exerted on that aged sinner, who has enjoyed but abused the means of grace till the last sands of life are running, and his obdurate heart will instantly relent. Let the same influence touch that man of the world, who has hitherto lived as if he had no soul to be saved or lost, and he will renounce the service of mammon and become a devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let God but speak the word, and those graceless parents who have hitherto felt little or no concern about their own salvation and that of their beloved offspring, will regard both with the most intense interest. Touched by the grace of God, that child on whom the instructions, the entreaties, the prayers, and the tears of pious parents and the solemn services of the sanctuary have made little impression, will, with the repenting prodigal, cry out in the bitterness of his soul, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Let the Spirit in his quickening influence descend on the youth of our land, and they will pause in their career of thoughtlessness and vanity, and make an unreserved consecration of themselves to God. Let him but grant pastors and teachers a heavenly unction, and their activity will be followed by the most happy results. And the same influence can with perfect ease raise up instruments and work by them, till the whole world is subdued to the obedience of the faith. And his word authorizes the belief that, when the means of his appointment are used in humble reliance on him, this influence will to a greater or less extent be granted. None, however humble their sphere, and apparently feeble their efforts to promote the cause of Christ, need despair of success. Let them diligently improve the talents committed to them, and confidently look to God for his blessing.

Say not, We are such weak instruments and have so few opportunities of usefulness, that we can do little or nothing for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. You can through Christ do all things required of you; and the strongest can do no more. It may not be your duty to perform the same service which is demanded of others who are gifted with superior advantages for usefulness. Some are required to act a prominent, and others a more retiring, but perhaps not less useful part. Many by their contributions, and all by a holy life and importunate prayer, may render to the church of Christ essential service. Indeed, all her children must in some way or other contribute to her prosperity. There are no useless stones in this spiritual temple.

If any of you, however, who profess to desire her advancement and final triumph, wish to be excused from all instrumentality in the work, you can, on

your own responsibility, have the unenviable lot of doing nothing. Christ can do without you. If you choose, you can remain inactive till roused by some tremendous judgment of God, or by the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." And no marvel if you then make the agonizing discovery that your lamps are unfurnished with oil, and that upon you must rest for ever the curse of the servant who knew "his master's will and did it not."

SERMON CXII.

BY REV. GIDEON N. JUDD.

SINNERS URGED TO A RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

II COR. v. 20.—*We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

THIS passage exhibits by implication the standing of our race toward God as their righteous moral Ruler, and opens to our view the unsearchable riches of his condescension and love. The entreaty which it contains is based upon the implied fact, variously and explicitly stated in other parts of the inspired volume, that mankind by nature are enemies to God. Were they not in a state of alienation from him, the entreaty in the text would not only be irrelevant, but most manifestly unrighteous. While they were benevolently affected toward his character and administration, it would implicitly charge them with the fearful criminality of being adverse to both,—a supposition utterly incompatible with the infinite rectitude of Jehovah.

To exhibit the evidence that "there is none," until "born of the Spirit," that doeth good;—that all by nature are "alienated and enemies by wicked works;"—that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," in the abstract, forms no part of our present design. In the text, man's native alienation from God is assumed as a fact not to be disproved; and on the authority of this apostolic and inspired assumption, we shall proceed in God's behalf to urge the overture of reconciliation which it contains. That the reasonableness of this plea, and the importance of yielding to it may be duly appreciated, we propose,

- I. *To state the ground of the controversy between God and man.*
- II. *To consider the terms on which it may be settled,—and*
- III. *To urge a compliance with those terms.*

The ground of the controversy between God and his revolted creatures on earth is a claim for supremacy on the part of both. This, doubtless, many will be "slow of heart to believe," and others will unhesitatingly deny. It is a statement, however, characterized by the soberness of truth. God comprehends perfectly his own being and attributes, and the relations which exist between himself and all moral beings. Nor is it less certain that his unlimited excellences and righteous supremacy over them, justly entitle him to their highest love and cordial and unreserved obedience. This he authoritatively demands. Every subject of his moral kingdom he addresses, saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

And on all the population of our world, favored with his holy oracles, are the commands obligatory, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel—Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." In requiring them to love him supremely, to repent and believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and render every interest subordinate to his glory, he demands nothing which is not his most righteous due,—nothing which does not directly tend to promote their own happiness and the highest good of the universe. His requirements, all founded upon principles of eternal righteousness, he has enforced by the most weighty and awful sanctions. To the obedient he has promised the perfect and ever-enduring felicities of heaven; those who impiously invade his rights and refuse submission to his authority as exhibited in the claims of the law and gospel, he has threatened with the eternal torments of hell.

These claims, though characterized by infinite justice and benevolence, mankind by nature resist. They set up their own wills in opposition to the will of God. They refuse to love him, to repent of their sins, to seek for remission and eternal life through the atonement made by his beloved Son, and to subordinate their inclinations and interests to the honor of his name and kingdom. By doing this, whatever they may profess to the contrary, and however seemingly respectful their deportment towards him, they practically declare that they *will not have God to reign over them*. Here the parties are fairly at issue; and the point in dispute is, whether the will of men or their Maker shall be done;—whether the rights of infinite sovereignty shall be maintained, or sacrificed to the wishes of a proud, selfish, rebellious world.

II. *The terms on which this controversy may be settled next demand our attention.*

Parties at variance can become reconciled only in one of the three following ways.

1. Without rendering any satisfaction for injuries done, or even investigating the grounds of the controversy, or the manner in which it has been carried on, *the parties may agree to exercise mutual forgiveness, and ever after treat each other as friends*. In settling disputes among men, this in some cases is unquestionably the best method. Controversies, however, can with propriety be terminated in this way only when the injury done is limited to the individual or persons on whom it was directly inflicted. If it be an offence against one clothed with authority, and of a manifest tendency to subvert his authority and prostrate the law which it is the design of his office to maintain and enforce, to pass it by and treat it as personal and private, would be obviously unjust. Such a procedure would tend directly and powerfully to weaken the motive to obedience and introduce disorder and misery into the community. It would be to sacrifice the interests of its virtuous members to the lawless wishes of the vicious and refractory.

In this way the controversy between God and rebellious men can never be settled; not, however, from obstinacy, or any want of benevolence on his part. Insuperable difficulties oppose;—difficulties arising out of the relations which the parties in this controversy sustain to each other, and the influence of such a procedure on the moral kingdom of Jehovah. To suffer the transgressions of men to pass without any acknowledgments on their part, or token of displeasure on his, would be a practical declaration either that his demands were unrighteous, or that he had not goodness enough to enforce them. This course of conduct in the Ruler of the universe would weaken the confidence of *holy beings* in the stability of his government, and foster a spirit of rebel-

lion. It would be to sacrifice the good of his extended and everlasting kingdom to the depraved inclinations of his revolted subjects on earth.

2. Another way in which contending parties become reconciled is by *mutual concessions* and forgiveness. This method of terminating differences among men is in most cases not only expedient, but perfectly equitable. With very few exceptions, both parties are to a greater or less extent deserving of blame, and under obligation to make mutual acknowledgments. But it is not thus in the controversy between men and their Maker. The entire blame rests upon *them*. He has never given the least provocation for their disobedience and enmity, and consequently has no concessions to make.

3. Another method by which controversies are terminated among men, is *for one of the parties to concede all, and make peace on terms proposed by the other*. Thus, and thus only can a peace be concluded between God and alienated offending men. As he is guiltless, they must justify him, condemn themselves, and close their unrighteous controversy with him on his own terms. And let it not be forgotten that their compliance with the terms of reconciliation he proposes must be *sincere*. In the settlement of controversies among men, there is often a professed, and so far as the eye of man can discern, a real compliance with the conditions of peace proposed, when the subsequent conduct makes it perfectly evident that there was no cordiality. Thus the controversy between God and sinners can never be terminated. He searches and requires the heart. A professed compliance with the conditions of pardon and peace revealed in his word, where the heart is wanting, is mere hypocrisy, and an affront to his infinite majesty and holiness. With him, the nature of actions depends on the motives which prompt them. Hence in order to terminate the controversy between them and their Maker, mankind must *cordially* comply with his terms of reconciliation.

Let it also be distinctly borne in mind that their compliance must be *unreserved*. It must have respect to every feature of his character and act of his administration. Cordial reconciliation to the mercy of God, while his infinite holiness, justice, and sovereignty are regarded with rancorous aversion, is impossible. Among the attributes of Jehovah there is not the least discordance. They sweetly harmonize, shed lustre upon each other, and unite to form a character supremely lovely and adorable. Every feature of this character must be the object of complacency, or there can be no cordial reconciliation to God. The native enmity of the heart must give place to the ennobling and felicitous affection of holy love.

Genuine reconciliation to God also includes unreserved *submission to his will*. All the statements of his word and dispensations of his providence are but varied illustrations of his character, and are equally entitled to our cordial approbation. No exceptions must be made to doctrines revealed, however abasing to our pride, nor to duties required, whatever self-denial their performance may cost. Like his character, which they serve to illustrate, they are "holy, and just, and good." Such too are his providential dispensations. Whatever their aspect toward individuals and communities, they are the fruit of his adorable sovereignty and his boundless wisdom and benevolence;—necessary parts of his perfect plan of administration, which seeks and secures for the universe the greatest amount of good. The reconciliation which the text demands has equal respect to every part of the divine counsel and government.

This must necessarily be connected on the part of God's reconciled enemies with an *ingenuous acknowledgment and utter detestation of their former feelings*!

and conduct. If truly reconciled to his holy character, law, and dispensations, their former feelings of hostility toward him, and overt acts of disobedience will be viewed with abhorrence. They will feel no inclination to conceal or palliate their sins, but will penitently confess and freely forsake them. In them will be verified the prediction concerning God's ancient rebellious people. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings which were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations."

Another branch of true reconciliation to God consists in a *cordial approbation of his revealed method of saving sinners.* To this mankind by nature are no less opposed than to his character and law; though from mistaken views of it and from ignorance of their own hearts, they often profess to regard it with approbation. Deliverance from punishment itself they do indeed desire; but salvation from sin through faith in a crucified Savior, to the utter exclusion of human merit, has no attractions for those who are under the dominion of pride, selfishness, and enmity to God. This method of salvation furnishes the most glorious exhibitions of the Divine character; and while it secures to the penitent believing sinner pardon and eternal life, it sustains and magnifies the law. "Grace reigns through righteousness," and sheds ineffable glory upon the character of God as the righteous Ruler of the universe. Without submission "to the righteousness of God by faith;"—without a cordial reliance on Christ for pardon and eternal life, and a spirit of obedience to the requirements of the Gospel, there can be no true reconciliation to its Author. This includes complacency in every discovery which God has made of himself in his works of creation, providence, and redemption by his beloved Son.

Having noticed the terms on which the controversy between God and men can be settled, we pass,

III. *To urge a compliance with them.*

1. *They are reasonable.* God requires no more than is his most righteous due,—nothing, which a proper regard to his own honor as the supreme Ruler, and the best interests of the universe do not imperatively demand. Those, to whom these terms of reconciliation are proposed are the sole aggressors. Their enmity to his character and government is wholly unprovoked. It is exercised toward that which should call forth their most fervent admiration and praise. Ought not infinite excellence to receive their highest esteem? and what is infinitely vile their abhorrence? Ought not authority supremely righteous and benevolent to be treated with the profoundest respect? And does it not become the eternal Majesty to fix for his rebellious subjects such conditions of securing his favor? To these inquiries reason unbiassed by prejudice can return but one answer.

Do you say these terms of reconciliation are unreasonable, because you have *no ability* to comply with them? Can you make good this plea? Is it true that you are really unable to love God, submit to his will, repent of your sins, trust in his Son for salvation and obey his commands? Do these exercises transcend the limits of your powers as free and accountable agents,—the proper subjects of government by law and motive? Do not all your embarrassments spring from your voluntary aversion of heart to them? To these interrogations, an enlightened conscience can give no other than affirmative answers.

Do you say the terms are unreasonable, because you *cannot conquer your unwillingness* to comply with them?—that God affirms, it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," and the Savior himself said, "No man can

come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him?" It is undoubtedly true that you will not comply with the terms of salvation, unless made willing by Divine power; and this is all that the passages just cited and others of similar import are designed to teach. And it is no less true that you, by your voluntary aversion to holiness and love of sin, create the necessity for this special Divine interposition to incline you to do what God requires. And are his requirements unreasonable because you have no heart to comply with them? Then does the reasonableness of all law depend upon the willingness of the subject to obey; and where this is wanting obligation ceases. Upon this principle Joseph's brethren were guiltless, because they could not from mere hatred speak peaceably to him; and so is the drunkard, because he cannot from love to his cups abandon them; and the highway-robber and the assassin, because hurried on to their deeds of darkness by the strength of vicious inclination. But this you will not admit, nor will you admit that the laws which require in them the opposite course of conduct are unreasonable, because they are unwilling to obey. And "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Out of your own mouths will God condemn you. It does not appear that we speak otherwise than truly and soberly, then, when we affirm that the terms of reconciliation with God are reasonable. They are such as it became him to propose, and a compliance with them is fairly within the compass of your ability. Act not, then, a part so unnatural and guilty as to refuse to accede to them. By the reasonableness of the conditions of pardon and peace proposed in the Gospel, "we pray you,—be ye reconciled to God."

2. We press the entreaty by the consideration that *the terms are immutable*. Where controversies exist among men, overtures of reconciliation are sometimes rejected in anticipation of their being made easier. But all hope of a change in the terms of reconciliation with God, is vain. "He is in one mind; and who can turn him?" Should you wait till the last sands of life are running;—till you are convulsed with the final agony, no cries or tears will move him to "alter the thing that is gone out of his lips." He cannot substitute other terms of reconciliation, nor make the least change in those stated in his word, without detriment to the universe, and rendering himself unworthy of the love and confidence of his subjects. They are as easy as infinite goodness can make them, and unchangeable as their glorious Author. A final refusal to become reconciled to him we presume forms no part of your present calculations. Since, then, you design not to prolong your controversy with God to the end of life, and other terms of concluding it than those now laid before you will never be proposed, be entreated to comply without delay. If you are not deliberately and madly resolved to contend with God forever, accede now to the unalterable terms of reconciliation proposed in the Gospel.

3. We urge a compliance with them by the consideration of what *God has done to prepare the way for overtures of pardon and peace*. The necessity of such provision, previously to any proclamation of mercy from him, did not arise from any implacability in his nature, but from his boundless benevolence. His unbending majesty as the moral Governor of the universe could not allow him to make proposals of peace to the guilty, except through a medium which should put honor upon his violated law, and make him appear venerable and glorious in the view of all accountable beings. This the good of the intelligent universe, which looks up to him as the assertor of eternal holiness and order, demands. In order to open a channel through which his mercy might flow to our revolted race,—to constitute a medium of

reconciliation between him and them, he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for their offences. In order to prepare the way for proposals of reconciliation, the glories of the Redeemer's Godhead were mysteriously concealed by a veil of flesh. He appeared in our world, deeply stained as it is with the guilt of rebellion, in the form of a servant. He assumed our nature in the weak and suffering state of infancy, became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and for about thirty-three years sojourned as a stranger in a world which he created and furnished for himself. And his immaculate, laborious, and self-denied life, was closed by a depth of humiliation and severity of suffering, which utterly surpasses our powers of comprehension. He was assailed by the malice of earth and hell. The Father mysteriously concealed the light of his countenance, till the agony of his soul caused him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." And in order to complete the great work of atoning for the sins of men, he endured the inglorious and excruciating death of the cross. By this wonderful expedient of redeeming love, by the costliness of the sacrifice which was offered to expiate human guilt, by the depth of the Savior's humiliation, and by the variety and intensity of his sufferings, "we pray you, be ye reconciled to God."

4. *A rejection of God's terms of pardon and peace is fraught with the most revolting impiety.* The tendency of all the dispensations of his providence is to influence you to be at peace with him. His judgments show you how utterly unable you are to contend with his omnipotence. They urge you on the ground of expediency to accede to his will. His providential kindness is a moving appeal to all that is ingenuous in your nature, urging you to desist from opposing him "who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." A refusal to become reconciled to God counteracts the melting, subduing tendency of all his providential dispensations; it also pours contempt upon the sacrifice of the cross—the unsearchable riches of divine benevolence. Thus to treat Jehovah, your Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and King, who, at infinite expense, provided the way for your return to him is a crime which no finite mind can duly estimate. It is breaking asunder every bond of duty to your sovereign. It is despising his infinite excellences, and the inestimable blessing of his friendship. Nay, it is a wanton violation of authority, no less righteous than absolute. All who are under the dominion of "the carnal mind which is enmity against God" are peremptorily *required* to accede to the terms of reconciliation. It is not left to their election, under any responsibility, either to accept or reject them. God not only entreats, but *commands* them to love him with an enlightened and supreme affection, and repent and believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. A refusal to become cordially reconciled to him is no ordinary act of impiety. It is marked with all the hateful characteristics of the basest ingratitude, the most unyielding obduracy and rebellion against a government, whose principles and administration are infinitely wise and benevolent. Will you deepen those dark shades of guilt which now pollute and debase your souls, by persisting in your rejection of the terms of reconciliation? By the exceeding *criminality* of such a course of conduct, "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

5. Your reconciliation is urged in the text and verses immediately connected with it, by considerations of *amazing tenderness and interest*. It would seem most reasonable that measures for settling the controversy between you and your Maker, should originate with *you*, and that peace should be sought *by pledging yourselves to comply with any terms within the limits of your*

ability. But the overture of peace, the plea for reconciliation in the text, comes from him whom you have wickedly made your enemy. He might glorify his holiness, and justice, and power in your everlasting destruction. But such are his amazing condescension and benevolence, that instead of addressing you in tones of infinite majesty and authority as your supreme and eternal King, he places himself before you in the attitude of a suppliant. In the text, he does not *command*, but *beseeches* you by us, to become reconciled to him.

And in whose stead do we deliver this message of infinite mercy and love? Instead of his beloved Son, the great Days-Man, who, by a mysterious union of deity and humanity, is fully qualified to act as Mediator between the offended Majesty of heaven, and his rebellious subjects on earth. In *his* stead, who, though he knew no sin, "was made sin for us;" who stooped from a throne in heaven to the manger, the cross, and the tomb, that proposals of pardon and peace with God might be made to guilty, self-destroyed men. It is in *his* name and stead, "who bare our sins in his own body on the tree," that we urge a compliance with the gospel terms of reconciliation. And shall arguments, drawn from the everlasting, boundless love of the Father and the Son, prove unavailing? A heart that is uninfluenced by motives like these, could sorrow find admittance into celestial bosoms, would cause grief in heaven. I add,

6. *That your everlasting destiny depends on the manner in which you treat the gracious overture of reconciliation.* Nothing can possibly be gained by persisting in your enmity to God's holy character and service. It is an unequal controversy, perseverance in which must end in defeat and ruin. Your knowledge compared with his is ignorance; your wisdom, folly; and your strength, weakness. "Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?" He can roll a tide of desolation over the universe. With infinite ease he can blot every creature, and world, and system from existence. "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke." "This holy, just, eternal, and almighty God holds you in his hand, and can destroy both soul and body in hell." Nor is it at all doubtful, should you refuse to become reconciled to him, that he will glorify his justice in your eternal overthrow. In that imperishable volume, which he sent down from heaven to teach us the way thither, it is written, "Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished. I will render vengeance to mine enemies and will reward them that hate me." He has solemnly admonished those who may die unreconciled to him, that "they shall come forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation;" that in the great decisive day, he will say to the executioners of his vengeance, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." "These," he has assured us, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." They "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The tremendous evils threatened in these and other passages of the inspired word, you will escape by becoming reconciled to him. Nay, the act will secure to you blessings immeasurably rich and eternal. It will be followed with the pardon of all your past offences, by peace of conscience, peace with God which passeth all understanding, and a well-founded joyful hope of victory over death and of eternal holiness and felicity in heaven. Your relations to God will undergo a change in the highest degree honorable and advantageous. He will no longer regard you as enemies, but friends. You will be the

objects of his love, members of his holy and blessed family. He will watch over you, guide and defend you, and make all things work together for your good. In your conflict with the last enemy, he will bring you off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him who has vanquished death and hell both for himself and his followers. While your bodies lie mouldering in the dust, your ransomed spirits shall be with him in paradise. When the trumpet of God shall sound, he will redeem your bodies from the grave, make them glorious and immortal, like that of your adorable Savior, acquit you before assembled worlds, and put you in possession of "a crown of glory; a kingdom which cannot be moved; an inheritance incorruptible; a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

We have now delivered our embassy. We have placed before you the terms of reconciliation proposed by your offended God. By their reasonableness and immutability; by the consideration of what he has done to render forgiveness and peace possible; by the heinous crime of rejecting his proposals; in the name of his beloved Son, who died for our sins; by his precious mediation and your own eternal interests, we have urged your acceptance of them. On you now rests the fearful responsibility of deciding whether you will yield to the claims of duty; to the entreaty of infinite love, and be blessed with God's eternal friendship; or reject them, and sink beneath his frown for ever. This responsibility no doctrine of his word, nor plea of inability, can remove or even weaken. In vain do you attempt to throw it off, by pleading the coercion of God's decrees and the indispensable necessity of divine influence to break down the dominion of sin in your souls. You carry about with you continually in the consciousness of your own bosoms, the evidence of your freedom and accountability. And the necessity of the special agency of the Holy Spirit to make you willing to comply with God's requirements, is created and prolonged by your own voluntary and unyielding enmity to them. All your embarrassments are wholly self-induced. In vain do you strive to break away from your obligations. No power in the universe can release you from the responsibility of becoming reconciled to God, nor can you offer a single valid plea in extenuation of the guilt of refusal. And do you know what you are doing when you attempt to rid yourselves of this responsibility? It is but an effort to counteract what God has done, and is still doing to reclaim and save you, and to bring upon yourselves the woes of a lost eternity.

And now, perishing fellow-sinner, what is thy decision? Soon thou must make it, or the power of doing so will be taken from thee forever. The period of God's forbearance has its limits. The mediatorial hour hastens to its close. Soon the last lingering call of mercy will sound in thy ears; and if it die away unheeded, in thee will be verified the fearful threatening of insulted majesty and Justice; "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught 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."

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HINDERANCES TO THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

ISAIAH, lxiii. 1, 2.—*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth. And the gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory.*

SUCH was the love which the evangelical prophet felt for Jerusalem, and such his desire that its glory might be extended. It was a desire which gave him no rest, but prompted him to incessant labor and prayer for the accomplishment of its object. Desires similar to this have been felt, and similar efforts made by the faithful servants of God from age to age, for the propagation of the Christian religion. Since the commencement of the present century, the spread of Christianity has been a subject of growing interest to the friends of religion. Good men have been excited, in an unusual degree, to unite their efforts and prayers for the enlargement of the church. The God of heaven has shown, by the promises of his word and the dispensations of his providence, that he regards this object with the highest favor, and that it is his unalterable purpose that the earth shall be filled with his glory. It would certainly be reasonable to expect that the cause of Christianity, thus aided and supported, would soon prevail through the world; that the reign of righteousness and peace would speedily be extended from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. And it becomes a subject of serious inquiry, why this is not the case. Why has not this blessed cause, which is eminently the cause of God, become universally triumphant? Why has not the inherent excellence of the Christian religion, united with the power of all holy beings in heaven and earth, brought the whole world to feel its influence and receive its blessings? No doubt this would long since have taken place, had there not been some mighty obstacles in the way, some opposing causes powerful enough to counteract the strong tendencies of Christianity itself, and all the influence which has been exerted in its favor.

That the world is not converted to Christianity cannot be ascribed to the operation of any one cause exclusively. In this, as in most other things, a
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variety of causes are at work. The chief of these are found in all un sanctified men, consisting in their sinful affections and pursuits. These are referred to in the parable of the sower, as the great hinderances to the good effect of divine truth. The seed which fell on good ground sprang up and bare abundant fruit; while the fruitfulness of the other seed was prevented by the state of the ground, and other unpropitious circumstances. The hinderances referred to in the parable were the unholy dispositions of the human heart, together with those temptations and snares which beset unrenewed man, and which derive their influence chiefly from his moral corruption. Besides the general causes just mentioned, there are causes which are peculiar to particular classes of men; such as the superstition and ignorance of the Hindoos, and the power of caste among them; the intellectual and moral state of Jews, Mahometans, and Papists. By these and such like causes, the minds of men are closed and barred against the truth. Preaching the gospel to them in their present moral state generally proves like sowing seed upon the face of a rock, or upon the snows of winter. Other hinderances may be found in the hostile and persecuting power of civil governments; and others still, and perhaps the most difficult of all to be overcome, in the radically erroneous impressions made upon the minds of men in different parts of the heathen world, and even in countries blessed with the light of the gospel, by the flagrant errors and vices of nominal Christians. A greater obstacle to the spread of true Christianity can hardly be conceived, than the influence which the emissaries of the church of Rome have exercised by their attempts to make proselytes. To account fully for the little progress which has been made by Christians in their endeavors to evangelize the world, it would therefore be necessary to bring into view all the obstacles just alluded to;—obstacles so many and so great, that they have left but a small measure of success to the most faithful servants of Christ in any age.

But there is another class of hinderances to the spread of the gospel; I mean those which are found in *Christians themselves*. It is this class which I propose particularly to consider on the present occasion. The members of this Board, together with a large portion of the ministers and people of these United States, have been engaged for twenty years in sending the gospel to the unevangelized parts of the world. What we and our fellow-laborers have performed in this great work has not been in vain; and we are encouraged to go forward in our endeavors to spread the gospel through the earth. But still how small the measure of our success compared with our desires! How little has been done compared with what remains undone!

Remembering that I am never again, on such an occasion as this, to address my beloved brethren, the members of this Board, and other friends of missions now present, and confiding in your candor, I shall use an affectionate plainness of speech, endeavoring with sincerity of heart to promote that precious cause which, I trust, is the supreme object of our desires.

Our particular inquiry is, *What obstacles to the conversion of the world are found among those who, in different ways, are enlisted in the cause of Foreign Missions?*

The first obstacle I shall mention is, *the defect of our Christian character, or the want of a higher degree of holiness.*

In order to form a just estimate of our religious character we must examine ourselves by the standard of God's perfect law. And what is the fair result of such an examination? When, in the hour of retirement and stillness, we honestly compare our affections and lives with those divine precepts which require us to love God with all the heart, to love every human being as we

love ourselves, and to be holy as Christ is holy ; what can we do but adopt the language of humble confession, and say, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Before him who searcheth the heart and knoweth all things, and in whose sight the heavens are not clean, we must, every one of us, be filled with shame and self-abhorrence, and penitently cry out,—*Behold ! I am vile ; what shall I answer ?*

That this imperfection of our Christian character must prove a great hinderance to the success of the cause we are endeavoring to promote, appears from the *very nature* of that cause. It is the cause of *holiness*. And no one can be a fit instrument to promote such a cause, except in the degree in which he himself is holy. The proper agents to be employed in this work are men who walk in the Spirit ; men dead to the world, and alive unto God. Without holiness, no right efforts for the enlargement of the church and the propagation of true religion through the world will ever be made. Without holiness, we are unfit to have any agency in this undertaking. The work of converting sinners and building up the church is a holy work, and should not be touched with unholy hands. We may be willing to employ our time and our worldly substance in the cause of missions, and to do this in the highest degree which can be justly demanded of us. Still if we contribute these external services *without love to God in our hearts*, how little shall we be likely to accomplish ! The system of means necessary to the spread of the gospel is indeed partly *external and visible* ; but it has also an *inward invisible* part, consisting in compassion to the souls of men, and in strong desires, and fervent unceasing prayers for their salvation. However important may be the outward means above mentioned ; these inward operations of holiness, these benevolent desires and fervent prayers, which are visible only to the eye of God, are still more important. It is this *inward, invisible machinery* (if I may so call it), which gives efficiency to these external means. It is this spiritual, devout, fervent action of a purified heart, which exerts the most certain and powerful influence in promoting the salvation of men. Who can estimate the amount of good which twelve men, possessing the character of the twelve apostles, might accomplish at the present day ?

Let it be remembered, brethren, that if we fall short of the proper degree of holiness, our success in the cause of missions will be essentially hindered. And though we may give a portion of our time and our substance to this cause ; though we may stately meet to deliberate and act in behalf of the perishing millions of our race ; yet those humble Christians who live in retirement, and who take no part in these more public transactions, may in reality stand higher than we do as instruments of good to the world. By their pure affections and fervent prayers in secret, they may do more for the advancement of Christ's kingdom than can be done by any outward means, unaccompanied by the spirit of holiness. The God who rules over all will so conduct the affairs of the church and the world, as to make it manifest that he is the immutable friend of holiness.

Secondly. If the mere want of a proper measure of holiness detracts from our success in spreading the gospel, this unhappy effect must result in a still higher degree from *the direct indulgence of affections which are selfish and earthly*.

Selfish, earthly affections aim at a selfish, earthly interest. But the spread of the gospel through the world is a benevolent and spiritual interest. These two interests are directly opposite to each other ; and the dispositions and efforts which are suited to the one are not suited to the other. If then, while we seem to be laboring for the spread of the gospel, we give a place in our

hearts to pride, ambition, or any selfish affection, we throw an obstacle directly in the way of our success in promoting that benevolent object. This is true, even where the sinful affections we indulge do not make themselves visible by any irregular conduct. If, when we retire for secret devotion, or kneel around our family altars,—if, when we meet in the sanctuary, or at the monthly concert, there should be in our hearts a predominance of worldly affections;—especially, if we should bring these affections with us, when we engage in more public and more important transactions relative to the interests of Christ's kingdom;—such a state of mind would prove a mighty clog to the cause of benevolence. With the outward man we might indeed be laboring to advance that cause; but the inward man would be a hinderance in the way;—a hinderance invisible, perhaps, to man, but none the less real. Indeed such a secret, invisible counteraction is attended with peculiar danger. It is a concealed enemy, whose power cannot be successfully opposed, because it cannot be seen. When, therefore, the cause in which we are enlisted is at a stand, and our various missionary operations are attended with no encouraging success; it will become us to enquire very seriously, whether this may not be owing, in a great measure, to some unholy passion which finds indulgence in our hearts, and which, like the sin of Achan, provokes the displeasure of a holy, heart-searching God.

But the operation of these counteracting causes is not always concealed. If worldly and selfish passions prevail in any considerable degree, they will have a *visible* influence. And we may be somewhat aided in getting a *just* conception of what this influence will be, and also of the opposite influence, by taking a comparative view of two public bodies of men, one of which is influenced by right motives, the other by those which are worldly and selfish.

Look then, first, into an assembly of ministers and Christians, who have come together to consult for the salvation of their fellow-men, and who are influenced in all their deliberations by holy affections. Delightful, happy assembly! Their object is one. Their hearts are one. They are knit together in pure and fervent love. They consult, not for their own interest or honor, but for the cause of Christ; and they do it in the spirit of Christ. Each one contributes to that cause all the intelligence and all the active power which he possesses. Each one is gratified with all the talents and influence which belong to his brethren, for the same reason that he is gratified with his own. And if others are able, by their *superior* talents and influence, to contribute more than he to that object which is dearest to his heart, the more is he gratified.—No one expends his zeal in favor of any measure because he was the first to propose it. And no one has such confidence in himself as to suppose that a measure must be right because it originated with him. No one is pertinacious, or self-willed. The wisdom which reigns among them "is *from above*; and is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." In such an assembly, all is candor and kindness. The inquiry is, what will please Christ? What will promote the prosperity of his kingdom? If on any subject the members for a time differ in judgment, they still agree in feeling; and in the end are likely to agree in judgment too; so that important measures are not commonly carried either by a small or a large majority, but with perfect unanimity. Thus pursuing their object with Christian love and condescension, and singleness of heart, and with earnest prayer for Divine guidance, they enjoy the presence and favor of God. He graciously superintends their deliberations, and gives them success in promoting the Redeemer's kingdom.

Look now at an assembly professedly engaged in promoting the same cause,

but among whom a selfish, earthly spirit prevails. A regard to reputation, or some worldly policy, may perhaps preserve them from open disorder and violence, and induce them to pursue such a course as will render their assembly respectable and honorable. But when their business is specially important, and when circumstances are such as to try men's souls, and to require special effort and self-denial; they are likely soon to show what their ruling passions are. Being without any common affection to unite them, they will have division and strife. Individuals will strenuously oppose a measure, though altogether salutary in its tendency, because it is not calculated to gratify their personal feelings, or to promote their private or local interests. It is manifest from their transactions, that they have lost sight of the great object of Christian benevolence. And as they do not truly consult for the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, their measures are not suited to promote it. And if the cause of Christ is in any measure advanced, yea, if it is not essentially injured, it will be owing to that sovereign providence of God which brings good out of evil.

The same selfish spirit which has such a blasting influence upon ministers and Christians in their public transactions will show itself also in their private life, and will hold them back from those labors, and sacrifices, and prayers which are the appointed means of extending the reign of Christ. Men will act according to their ruling passion. If the love of any worldly object predominates, their thoughts and efforts will be directed to that object. As to the measures which ardent, devoted Christians are pursuing for the salvation of men,—they will look upon them with coldness or aversion. What influence can such men be supposed to have in promoting the salvation of the world?

Thirdly. The advancement of Christ's kingdom is essentially hindered by *division and strife among his followers.*

The cause of missions must be promoted by the *united* exertions of ministers and Christians. The good actually accomplished must be the result of such exertions. If then any disunion prevails among those who are enlisted in that cause, the amount of good they will be able to accomplish will certainly be diminished. The injury which division occasions is *twofold*. First, it detracts from the benevolent efforts of the individuals concerned. Though the subject about which they disagree may be ever so unimportant, it is likely to occupy no inconsiderable portion of their thoughts, and to turn off their attention from the cause of Christ, which is the great end of their united efforts. In consequence of this, each one will have less affection for that cause than he otherwise would have, and will do less to promote it.

Besides this, there is a *clashing of influence*. The efforts actually made for the cause of Christ by one part will be more or less resisted, and their good effect prevented by the counter efforts of another part. Just as it is with an army, divided and contending among themselves. The different portions of it, instead of making a united assault upon the common enemy, are broken and exhausted by annoying each other; and the few efforts they may make to gain a victory over the enemy are rendered powerless by division and counter movements among themselves.

As the want of a cordial union among ministers and Christians is such a hinderance to the spread of the gospel; how great is the evil of whatever tends to produce division. By indulging such feelings or pursuing such measures as have this tendency, by unscriptural novelties in doctrine, by abstruse or eccentric speculations, or by any such disputes as are likely to gender strife among the friends of evangelical religion, we may throw an obstacle in the way of the success of the gospel, which our most painful efforts will not be able to

remove, and which will be a subject of deep regret to us through the remainder of our life.

Fourthly. We may hinder the cause of missions by the *unnecessary excitement of popular prejudice*.

The missionary enterprise must fail of success, without the cordial affection and support of the Christian community. It essentially needs the aid of their efforts, contributions, and prayers. Now if those who are intrusted with the sacred interests of missions, are chargeable with any misconduct or any manifest indiscretion, such misconduct or indiscretion, proclaimed, as it will be, in the ears of the public, may cool the affections, excite the prejudices, and prevent the contributions and prayers of thousands. In this way, our power to do good may be greatly diminished, and a lasting injury be done to the cause which we are striving to promote.

Fifthly. We hinder the spread of the gospel, *so far as we fall short in our duty in regard to the benevolent use of property*.

Just in proportion to the magnitude and excellence of the object, should be our liberality in contributing of our substance for its promotion. It is the dictate of sound judgment, as well as of piety, that we should use our worldly property in such a manner as will afford us the greatest pleasure in our future reflections. Now let any Christian consider how he will view this subject, after the delusions of the present world shall have passed away, and the light of heaven shall reveal things as they are. Let him inquire with himself;—*Will it be most pleasing to me in the mansions of the blessed, to remember that I devoted this particular sum, be it larger or smaller, to the cause of Christ in heathen lands, or to remember that I used it for the purpose of self-gratification, or the aggrandizement of my family? Shall I have the greatest pleasure then in reflecting, that such an amount of property was made the means of advancing the kingdom of Christ, or the means of increasing the wealth of my heirs?*

Brethren, suffer me to speak freely. The Christian community has of late years been waking up, in a measure, to better views in regard to the proper value and use of money; and many examples have been exhibited of a very honorable liberality in contributing to benevolent objects. But is not the prevailing practical sentiment still very far below the right standard? Can it be that men of wealth make the cause of Christ their *great object*, when they generally give to it so small a proportion of their substance? They love religion, no doubt, and wish to communicate its precious blessings to those who are ready to perish; and with a view to this object they contribute from year to year, and contribute liberally too in comparison with the generality of those around them; and then make legacies to some charitable societies. For these acts of Christian love we sincerely honor their memories; and we thank God who gave them the ability and the disposition to do good. But after all, what is the real amount of their charities, compared with the whole of their property? In a few instances, after a comfortable provision for their families, they devote the residue of their estate, which is the greater part, to the service of God. This is as it should be. But how is it generally with them that are rich? Have we not often occasion, after they are gone, to regret their mistakes, and to mourn that they did not entertain such views of the value of wealth while in this world as we are sure they must in the world above? After the decease of one good man and another, are we not constrained to say,—*How happy would it be, had they, while here, anticipated the feelings they now have as to the right use of their property, and had their contributions and legacies done full justice to their own hearts, and made it manifest, not only that they loved the cause*

of Christ, but that they loved it SUPREMEPLY.—Alas! it is evident that ministers and Christians generally need stronger faith, more deadness to the world, and a clearer view of eternal things. They are not as spiritually-minded as they ought to be. They have not fully emerged from the darkness of a worldly life. In this state, do they not look at their property chiefly as the means of pleasing themselves, and promoting worldly objects? And if they use it in some measure for the interest of Christ's kingdom, is it not still manifest that they make that no more than a secondary object? Now, whether we have more or less of worldly substance, if we entertain mistaken or inadequate views of our duty respecting the use of it, and fall short of the high standard of self-denial and benevolent action set before us in the word of God; if we give one dollar when we should give ten, or ten when we should give a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand;—this deficiency will be sinful in the sight of God, and will directly hinder the success of the missionary cause. This is one of the great hinderances which now stand in the way of the propagation of Christianity. Ah! brethren, there are better times approaching. Generations of Christians will ere long rise up in the different walks of life, who will remember that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and that the silver and the gold are to be devoted to his service. The time, we trust, is not far distant, when the church and its ministers will have higher views of duty, more self-denial, more simplicity in their modes of living, more devotion to that blessed cause for which the Son of God became poor. And those better ministers and churches will look back upon us in this our season of twilight and heaviness, and will wonder that we did so little for so great an object, and that the work of evangelizing the world was carried forward so slowly in our day. Through the mercy of God, there is to be a visible growth of Christian character. Our children and children's children will, we doubt not, rise far above the highest zeal and devotion of the present time; will be heartily grieved at the remembrance of our deficiencies, and will say among themselves;—*We honor the memory of our fathers, who lived in the former part of the nineteenth century. We bless God that they had such a measure of zeal for the spread of the gospel and began to labor and pray in earnest for the salvation of the heathen. But it is truly a matter of regret, that they had so imperfect a view of their obligations in regard to the use of their property, and that they contributed so little to the march of Christianity through the world.*

The only remaining obstacle to the spread of the gospel which I shall mention is, *the want of a proper feeling and acknowledgment of our dependence on God for the success of our efforts.*

There is nothing which stands in more direct opposition to the truth than the spirit of pride and self-dependence. For whatever importance we may attach to our own efforts in the work of evangelizing the world, and whatever good we may expect from the faithful labors of missionaries, yet all success comes from God. The gospel, which is to be preached among the heathen, does indeed contain the most interesting truths, and urge the most powerful motives. But such is the moral state of man, that the preaching of it, even by the most faithful ministers, will be, as it always has been, utterly in vain, unless it is made effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit. The word of God teaches, and universal experience teaches the same, that the unrenewed heart is enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. There is in man a loftiness of spirit, a love of the world, a selfishness which pertinaciously resists the influence of divine truth and all the attractions of divine love. So that the gospel, both in Christian and pagan lands, will be preached in vain, unless this resistance in the hearts of

men is effectually subdued. But it is too strong to be subdued by any power short of Omnipotence. In the most favorable circumstances, therefore, nothing can be effectually done to bring men into the kingdom of Christ except by the special operation of God. And we depend equally upon the divine blessing for the success of those measures which we adopt as preparatory to the extension of the church. The efforts we make to stir up the people of our country to compassionate those who are in moral darkness, and to contribute of their substance to the salvation of the world; and all our efforts to train up young men for the missionary service, and to send them forth to different fields of labor, will entirely fail of their effect, unless they are accompanied with the divine influence. As friends to the heathen world, we are engaged in a benevolent, holy work. The unrenewed heart is against us. The spirit of the world is against us. The remaining ambition and selfishness of good men is against us. The whole current of earthly interests and pursuits is against us. These hostile powers, which form such a mighty combination both without the church and within it, are unceasing in their opposition. They never sleep. They are always watching for opportunities to obstruct the progress of the Christian religion. And even when we seem to be the most prosperous, and when the prospect before us is the most bright and animating, and we may begin to congratulate ourselves as though the victory were won,—we may soon find that there has been some counter current beneath—some malignant cause working and gaining strength in secret; and this malignant cause, thus concealing itself till it becomes powerful, may mix itself with the self-interest, the passions, and the prejudices of the irreligious, and with all that is earthly in the pious, and so a torrent of dreadful force may be formed, which will scorn all restraint, and be ready to overwhelm us and our cause. The hostile powers of which I now speak meet us every where. Whatever measures we adopt for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, in our own or in foreign lands, we must look for resistance from the thousand forms of depravity existing in the world, in the church, and in our own hearts; resistance so subtle and determined, as not only to check our success, but entirely to dishearten us, and to constrain us to abandon our object, unless God interpose to strengthen us, and to turn back the power of the enemy.

Now, as we are thus encompassed with dangers,—as we are so feeble and imperfect ourselves, and are laboring to promote the spiritual kingdom of Christ in a world where self-interest, and pride, and numberless other forms of sin are constantly arrayed against us,—and as the unsanctified hearts of men are every where full of unyielding opposition to the holiness of Christianity,—we ought ever to remember and to feel that our success depends ultimately on the mercy and power of God. If we do not feel this; if we do not remember that we are nothing, and that God is all in all; if we rely upon the wisdom of our measures, upon the strength of our arguments, or the persuasiveness of our eloquence, or even upon our prayers, and forget Him, whose Spirit prompts all wise counsels and all holy endeavors, and whose blessing alone renders human efforts effectual; we place ourselves in opposition to the truth, we rob God of his glory, and make ourselves an offence and an abomination in his sight; and so we cut ourselves off from that divine blessing on which our success absolutely depends. For how can we expect that he will give us success in such a way as will minister to our pride? If we bring into our transactions for the promotion of Christ's kingdom a spirit of self-dependence, we create an obstacle to the progress of our cause; we act against our prayers, and bring a blast upon our labors.

Beloved brethren of this Board, and all friends of the missionary cause :— The great object for which we are unitedly laboring is, the establishment of Christ's kingdom in heathen lands. This is the object for which the Savior submitted to suffering and death. This is the cause which the prayers and labors of the saints and the ministration of angels are intended to subserve. It is the cause to the promotion and ultimate triumph of which God is directing all the movements of his providence. With such labors and prayers on earth, and such powers and operations in heaven in its favor, we should think this glorious cause must make rapid advances. And it certainly would make rapid advances, and would speedily triumph in every part of the world, were it not for the many and mighty obstacles which resist its course. These obstacles, so far as they arise from ourselves, we have now taken into serious consideration. We have seen that those who are engaged in promoting the kingdom of Christ may obstruct its progress by the want of higher degrees of holiness ; by the indulgence of selfish and earthly passions ; by division and strife among themselves ; by unnecessarily exciting popular prejudice ; by falling short of duty in regard to their worldly substance ; and by the want of a proper feeling and acknowledgment of their dependence on God for the success of their efforts. If then we would effectually advance the reign of Christ, we must take care not to put any of these hinderances in its way, nor to leave them there. We must rise above that low and defective state of piety which tends to obstruct our success ; and by higher attainments in holiness, prepare ourselves to be better instruments, and to exert a higher and better agency in extending Christ's kingdom. We must oppose and subdue all selfish and earthly passions ; as these passions, so far as they prevail, will array themselves against the benevolent spirit of the gospel, and will turn us off from our great work to those interests which are private or local, and which ought never to be permitted, and which I trust never will be permitted by us, to come into competition with the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. We must look upon division and strife among the friends of the missionary cause as a great evil ; and for the sake of preventing it, we must watchfully guard against all indiscretions, all rash and doubtful projects, all in our modes of thinking and acting which would be needlessly offensive, all love of pre-eminence, and all aiming at personal or selfish objects. We must earnestly seek the wisdom which is from above, and endeavor to be followers of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. In pursuit of our object, we must form a just conception of the real value of property, and faithfully use it as a means of doing good. We must endeavor to have our wants few, and cultivate a taste for Christian simplicity. As to the objects of benevolence, our hearts should be large. We should make it our maxim to be sparing in self-gratification, but liberal in giving ; to save what might please the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, that we may contribute more bountifully to the cause of our blessed Redeemer. And finally, in regard to the building up of the church, and the conversion of the world, we must remember that we are nothing, and that the blindness of man's understanding and the perverseness of his heart will baffle all our efforts, unless God is pleased to interpose, and accomplish the work by his own omnipotence. While we devote ourselves unreservedly to Christ, and make faithful exertions in his service, we must watchfully check every tendency in our minds to self-esteem and self-dependence, and rely wholly upon the grace of God to give us success. This renunciation of self-dependence, this deep sense of our insufficiency, and humble, childlike confidence in divine grace, is more pleasing to God, and will have more influence in advancing his kingdom, than the highest intellectual powers and the most

splendid actions without it. For God resisteth the proud, but bestows favor upon the humble.

We have now seen what are the obstacles on our part to the accomplishment of the great and excellent work we have undertaken. Let us only keep these obstacles out of the way, and the religion of the gospel will soon make more rapid progress. For the causes which operate in its favor under the administration of a benevolent God, are numerous and powerful. And, in my view, there never was a time when they were so numerous and powerful as they are now, or when the accomplishment of the great and precious promises in favor of the church was so manifestly approaching. If we and our fellow-laborers only keep in our place and do our work faithfully, and throw no hinderances in the way, the cause of our Redeemer in Christian and in heathen lands will prosper. Powers human, angelic, and divine are united in its favor, and will press it forward. All the perfections of Jehovah, all the principles of his merciful administration, all the truths of his word, the power of his Spirit, the glowing benevolence and swift obedience of myriads above, and all that is pure and holy in the affections and labors and prayers of Christians on earth, conspire together to bring forward the salvation of the world. See what a mighty influence these various causes are exerting! See what a bright prospect there is that things will soon be accomplished for the salvation of men, which prophets, apostles, martyrs, and reformers never saw! Behold the Son of God coming to inherit all nations! Oh! take care, brethren, not to cast any hinderance in his way. I charge you and myself not to clog the motion of any of these wheels of divine providence. If we have put a hinderance in the way, let us quickly remove it. And if any one finds *himself* a hinderance, let him remove himself. Better be an exile from creation than to stand in the way of God's work.

Finally. Let us never forget that it is owing to the grace of God that the cause of Christianity, with so many obstacles in its way, has made such progress in the world. Is it not rather a matter of wonder, that this light of the world has not been totally extinguished, than that it does not shine more brightly? I might have pointed you to the general perverseness and obduracy of man, the whole current of the world, and the powers of darkness, as obstacles to the progress of Christianity. But I have dwelt only upon our own deficiencies. We who profess to be friends to religion, and to act in its favor, how little have we done to promote it, and how much to hinder it? May not some of us have reason to fear that the cause of Christ has been more injured by our failings than benefited by our services? Oh! what would become of this precious cause if left in our hands, and if its success rested ultimately on our faithfulness? What would be the consequence if the salvation of men had no better security than our own efforts? Were all our affections devoted to it, and all our powers exerted in its behalf; still how feeble we are, and how little should we be able to accomplish? But have we devoted all our powers and affections to this holy cause? Has not the greater part of the little we possess been on the wrong side? And it becomes a very serious inquiry, whether, taking our whole character and life into view, the spiritual kingdom of Christ might not have been better without us than with us? Is it not a miracle of divine power, that religion maintains a place in the world, and is making any progress, when there is so much to oppose it even among its friends? For, go where we may, what Christians are there who do not mingle great imperfections with all they do in the service of Christ? Let it then be the abiding sentiment of our hearts, that the cause of religion cannot ~~be~~ *be* trusted to man; that it is safe only in the hands of Him who is the author

and finisher of our faith; that whatever we may do, and whatever our missionaries may do, the heathen will never be enlightened except by the power of Him who first caused the light to shine out of darkness; that not a soul will ever be quickened and saved except by that sovereign energy which raises the dead. Let then the pride of man be abased; let every high thought be brought low, and let God alone be exalted.

SERMON CXIV.

By REV. THOMAS S. BARRETT,

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THE FOOLISH RICH MAN.

LUKE, xii. 16-20.—*The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

By reading the context, we learn the object as well as the occasion of this parable. Our Lord, surrounded by a great multitude, was engaged in one of those solemn addresses, the tendency of which is to cause man to forget his connection with this world, and to fix his thoughts on the momentous concerns of the soul and eternity. But though the Divine teacher was thus employed, and though, perhaps, thousands around him were the subjects of the emotions his preaching was calculated to produce; yet there was *one* of the company whose heart remained wholly engrossed with the interests of this world; and who, regardless of all rules of propriety, said to our Lord, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." To this ill-timed interruption our Lord replied, "Man! who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" Then turning to his audience, he said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life" or happiness "consisteth not in the abundance which he possesseth." This proposition our Lord proceeded to illustrate and support by the parable just read. It is not improbable that, though our text is introduced as a parable, yet it is strictly and truly a narrative of facts; and that our Lord could have stated both the name and the place of this man's abode. However, as this could not subserve any useful purpose, he simply states the facts in the form of a parable; which we will proceed to illustrate and apply.

The first thing which claims our notice is, *the worldly circumstances* of the man mentioned in the parable—*he was rich and prosperous*. "A certain rich man." The means by which he acquired his wealth are not particularly stated, and charity requires us to believe that his riches were attained by means just

and honorable. There are two statements in the parable from which we may infer that he had been distinguished for industry and economy. The first is, the productiveness of his lands; and the second, the address to his soul, "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The productiveness of his ground must have been the result of care and industry. And in the address to his soul, he seems to anticipate a course of ease and luxury to which he had not been accustomed. These statements warrant the conclusion, that industry and frugality were the sources of his riches.

Wealth is no mark of guilt, unless acquired by unlawful means. But, if a man become rich by injustice; by oppressing the poor; by defrauding the widow and fatherless; or by any abuse of divine bounty; then indeed his wealth is stained with guilt; and it has a voice which cries to Heaven for vengeance on the soul of its possessor. Let such hear the words of James, "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you: your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped together treasure for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Wealth is an object peculiarly fascinating, from the independence which it promises, and from the respect and honor which it often secures to its possessor. But if you feel the desire of it becoming inordinate, if the desire render you restless, if it inspire resolutions of being rich at all hazards, then hear the words of Paul; "They that will be rich," that are determined to be so at all events, "fall into temptation and a snare; and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." This solemn caution, calmly considered, might prevent that "covetousness which is idolatry." But if your desire of wealth be suffered to grow and ripen into habitual covetousness, then is your condition hopeless indeed. Then the words of our Lord are applicable: "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 God."

But the man in the parable was not only rich, but also prosperous; *his grounds brought forth plentifully*. Hence we learn, that it is not possible to judge of a man's moral state from his circumstances and condition in this world. This is a truth which unassisted reason could never have discovered; she would conclude that the favored sons of fortune must be the objects of the divine approbation. But the parable under consideration shows conclusively that the fact may be otherwise: and the same sentiment is uttered by the wise man, "No man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is done before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not."

The increasing wealth of this rich man was *a source of perplexity to him*. "He thought within himself, What shall I do? I have no room where to bestow my fruits." As he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow, so he who increaseth his worldly substance procures for himself additional cares and perplexities. Indeed, the rich cannot render their wealth productive without trusting its management to others: and here their cares and anxieties begin. "What shall I do?" Where is the man that I can trust? Where, and how will my property be secure, and most productive? These, and similar inquiries occupy their minds, and distract their hearts. And where

trusts are reposed, a thousand fears and alarming suspicions arise. This department must be seen to ; and that agency must be watched ; and in this way the unhappy possessor is kept in a state of perpetual solicitude. To all this must be added disappointed hopes and blasted prospects, arising from unfavorable seasons, wasting commerce, unfortunate debtors, designing knaves, and a thousand adverse circumstances. These cares and disappointments multiply upon the unhappy possessor of wealth ; they drive sleep from his eyes, and often extort the melancholy exclamation, "What shall I do ?" Let the industrious and virtuous poor, who enjoy a competency, survey this faint exhibition of wasting perplexity, and say whether they can envy the man of the world *the pleasure and ease of wealth* ; let them look on it, and learn to thank Heaven for the peace and security of competency. "And having food and raiment, let them be therewith content."

There is one way in which this rich man might have relieved himself of his perplexity ; that is, by "*giving to the poor.*" Had he resolved on feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and honoring God by administering to the spiritual as well as temporal wants of his fellow men, he had been relieved from the cares of his superabundance, and his righteousness had been remembered with God : but unhappily his perplexities led to very different results. He resolved, "This will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

It is proper that the rich should deliberate on the best method of securing their increasing wealth. But at the same time let them remember the words of our Lord.—"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." In this way they might lay up for themselves treasure in heaven. The Scriptures teach that "he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord ;" and that "he will repay it again." This, then, is the way to render estates secure and productive. Solomon says, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." And the Prophet Isaiah adds, "The liberal deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things shall he stand." If we believe in the doctrine of divine Providence, we cannot hesitate to receive these sayings. We believe that our health, our capacity for business, our facilities for acquiring property, are all from God. Is it not, then, consistent with these principles that we consider ourselves as only *stewards* of the divine bounty ?

The *objects* of this rich man's resolutions were his own personal ease, luxury, and pleasure. "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years : take thine *ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*" Whatever may have been his former character and course of life, he now appears determined on a life of ease and sensuality ; he says to his soul, "*eat, drink, and be merry.*" What a madman ! How appropriate to him was the appellation of "*fool !*" He resolves to *quit* the course which had secured to him health and independence ! He thinks to free his heart from anxiety and care by *eating, drinking, and making merry !* No wonder the God of wisdom should say, "THOU FOOL !" Can the fruits of the earth satisfy the immortal mind ? What *kind* of earthly possessions, or what *amount* of them, can fill the desires, and set the soul at rest ? Alas ! every sublunary thing exclaims, "Satisfaction is not in me !" and all experience corroborates the testimony, "Vanity of vanities ; *all is vanity.*" How extremely wretched, then, is the condition of such as seek their portion in this life ? What certain disappointment awaits those whose highest pleasure is found in the gratifications

of sense! The beasts of the field have greatly the advantage over most human sensualists: their powers of this kind are more ample, and their indulgences are not followed by such a train of frightful and afflictive maladies!

The course to which this rich man urges his soul is such as must inevitably terminate in the loss of all that is valuable on earth, as well as in heaven. Health, reputation, peace, and even *life*, will soon be lost to such as give themselves up to eating, drinking, and making merry. The life of the epicure must necessarily be short. He cannot retain credit with the sober and active portion of the community; his health cannot withstand his habits of excess; his property will waste like the snow before the vernal sun; and he will finally quit the scene of his luxury and pleasures unhonored and unlamented! Truly, "the pleasures of sin are but for a season."

The exercises, the joys, and the hopes of religion are the proper food of the soul: they are the pleasures of the *rational* mind. Here, to adopt the language of inspiration, here is, "a feast of fat things." The Christian has every way the advantage over the mere sensualist. It is his to *enjoy* the bounties of Providence. He makes the creatures of God to subserve his happiness, while he becomes the slave of none. He eats and drinks; but, using the things of this life as not abusing them, he defiles not the temple of God, but preserves it unto "sanctification and honor." And "blessed are the undefiled—who walk in the way of the Lord." But can the sensualist who has been born and educated in a Christian land be happy? Could he but see the relation which he sustains to God and eternity, he would turn pale, and would confess himself the most wretched and degraded of men!

From the conduct of this rich man we learn the fatal propensity of sinners to *deceive* themselves. He says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for *many years*." Yes, it is this infatuating hope of *many years* to come which renders thousands so improvident of present time and privileges, and so unmindful of future and eternal interests. Let them once apprehend that they are standing on the verge of death, and that a few hours will introduce them into the presence of their Judge; and they take the alarm, and instantly become all solicitude about the interests of the soul! The world is now a *mere trifle*, its pleasures and possessions lose all their charms. They stand ready to make any sacrifice, and to weep rivers of blood! They summon the ministers of the sanctuary; they call for the emblems of the broken body, and the shed blood of the neglected Savior; and their tongues become eloquent in the language of penitence. But why all this hurry of movement now? Alas! they discover the work of years before them; and but a few fleeting moments in which they *can work*! "O that men were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their *latter end*."

Contemplate now the *sudden and unexpected end* of the wretched man in our text. While he was flattering himself with the prospect of *many years* of ease, pleasure, and enjoyment, God said unto him, "Thou fool! *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee." This man appears to have wholly neglected God: his single object had been the attainment of riches; riches which he now purposes to spend in ease and luxury. But mark, on the very day he resolves to finish his toils, and to begin his pleasures;—on that very day God calls him to account! He promised himself many years: perhaps he felt no symptom of decay, nor infirmity of body; on the contrary, he possessed all the energy, and the flow of spirits naturally resulting from an active life. Surely if any man could promise himself many years of earthly happiness, he was the

man; but "God said unto him, *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee." This must have been heavy tidings to a man who had busied himself in preparing for a *long life* of ease and happiness! And how terrible also must have been the consternation excited in the bosoms of his relatives and friends! Medical talent and wisdom might have been summoned; but what could this avail when *the decree had gone forth*?

How uncertain at best is our stay on earth: how feeble is our hold on life! Our youth, our health, our condition in life, our place of residence avail us nothing: they promise no security against the shafts of death. The time, and place, and manner of our death are in the hands of God. Whenever He shall pronounce the decree, inexorable death will execute the sentence.

"*This night* thy soul shall be required of thee." Death, under the most favorable circumstances, is a period of great solemnity. The hour, even to the good man, is a *trying hour*. What then must it be to the man who is taken by surprise? to him who has never thought of God, of heaven, of salvation, of death, and of eternity, but as objects at the greatest distance? Death, indeed, is an evil which might be endured, and to which we might submit, if there were not eternal considerations connected with it. Looking upon death as simple *extinction* of life and consciousness, we might perhaps assume confidence to meet it with composure. But when we consider it as an event which places the soul before Him who is of purer eye than to look on sin, and who can by no means clear the guilty; when we consider that it separates us *for ever* from all the means of grace and salvation; when we consider that "as the tree falls so it lies," then, indeed, death becomes a subject the most terrific and alarming to sinners; and this is the only correct view of the subject; for "after death is the judgment."

Let us now briefly advert to the *total loss* which the miserable man sustained when God summoned him out of life. God said, "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" We see here his dreadful reverse of fortune. One moment he finds himself surrounded by every thing that can minister to his vanity and appetite; but the next he sees the whole departing from his grasp, receding from his view! One moment his heart swells with the pleasing consciousness that every thing is his; but the next his spirit sinks down with the painful assurance that every thing is *lost*! His toils are ended; but so likewise are his enjoyments! He takes one exulting view of his only means of happiness; but mark! God draws over him the curtains of death, saying, "*It is thy last!*"

"Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Perhaps some worthless and ill-deserving heir stepped forth, seized the fruit of his labor, rioted on it for a season, and then dropped unprepared into eternity, to curse the unhappy wretch who had furnished him with the means of self-pollution and destruction.

Is this, then, the dreadful result? Do men toil and economize to lay up that of which they shall never themselves partake; and which may become the fatal source of crime and ruin to their thoughtless and improvident heirs! Then let the busy and active, who are led on only by the prospect of wealth and independence, consider well what they do. Let them anticipate the terrible consequences which may result from the affluence to which they aspire. We do not say that the calamities which befel this rich man were the natural result of his wealth. They resulted from his want of *piety*. Whether a man be rich or poor, if he be wanting in this, he will sustain a *total loss* in the

hour of death. Death will be to him the termination of joys, and the beginning of sorrows. In this matter there is no respect of persons with God ; for " He will render to *every man* according to his works."

Finally. The men who seek their portion in this life, may learn from the history before us the vanity of all their expectations and dependence. " What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ! " This is a total and irretrievable *loss* ! The life, the soul, *all* is lost, and *lost for ever* ! Say not, then, " a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Alas ! sinners, you have slept too long already ; let sober reason now assume her throne ; and let the word of God direct your future course. Heaven and hell are solemn realities, and there is but a step between you and your endless abode. A few more fleeting moments, and we either *rise* to the joys of heaven or *sink* to the miseries of hell ! And if so,

" Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how we may escape that death
Which never, never dies ;
How make our own election sure,
And when we fail on earth secure
A mansion in the skies."

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SERMON CXV.

BY REV. CHARLES JENKINS,
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THE SPIRITUAL AND ELEVATED NATURE OF TRUE PIETY.

PROVERBS, XV. 24.—*The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.*

IT might have been expected, apart from the express testimony of revelation, that a religion whose appropriate agency it is to raise men to heaven, would be something very far above the common range of worldly virtue and morality. And yet, if we take our estimation of that religion from the sentiments, tastes, and pursuits of very many who are professedly its subjects, it will by no means be found remarkably lofty in its character. An opinion formed from a knowledge of the agency which this religion is designed to execute, will certainly find but little to give it strength in the character and lives of most of its professors. Indeed, were we to look solely at this exhibition of its nature and effects, we should be constrained to admit that no peculiar purity and power belong to it, and that after all, it is no marvellous thing to become truly religious. Happy for the world we are not thus limited in our means of ascertaining the nature of true religion. In the word of God it is so variously described and defined, that however strangers we may be ourselves to any experience of its power, and rarely as we may meet with any thing like a full representation of it in real life, we may yet acquaint ourselves with its distinctive features. This we are urged to do by the most affecting considerations of duty and interest.

If we glance at the pages of the Bible, we shall perceive that spiritual religion is there presented as an abstract and elevated concern. Its one great and obvious feature, as there delineated, is its opposition, at once to the predominant temper and bias of the native human heart, and to the controlling maxims and pursuits of the world. The Bible represents the subjects of saving piety as seeking present and endless felicity in a way far above "the common walks of virtuous life." Let our text be taken as an example of the brief, plain, and striking manner in which the Bible uniformly represents that religion which is *pure and undefiled before God*. *The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath*. Here, it is thought, are suggested certain views of an exalted piety as exemplified in the principles, feelings, and aims of men, which it must ever be interesting and profitable to take. *The way of life* is the way of saving piety. It is eminently a high way. They are *wise* who find and pursue it,—they who do not continue to tread the way that leads to death.

In following out the views here presented, I will notice several particulars in which *the way of life is above to the wise.*

I. *It is elevated in principle.*

No sentiment is more unscriptural or unphilosophical than that a person may feel and conduct right, when the speculative views and governing considerations of his mind are decidedly erroneous or defective. Every one who will carefully examine the train of his own thoughts and emotions, will perceive that the feelings take their character from the views of the mind; and that the feelings always impress their own image on the course of conduct to which they lead. Accordingly it will be found, that no one is better than his principles. *As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.* Strictly speaking, no one can be called a person of principle, who is not decidedly religious according to the standard of the Bible. For that cannot be called with propriety *principle* in morals or religion, which has not a fixed character and invariable tendency. And none but the consistently religious have motives or grounds of action which are settled and uniform in their influence. But as they who live strangers to the power of an inward piety are influenced by a certain class of considerations, inconstant and fluctuating indeed, it is admitted by universal consent that they have their principles. What I am concerned to show is, that the motive or ground of action with the truly pious is far more elevated than that which prompts the conduct of others.

I observe, in *the first place*, that their religion is *elevated in principle above the received maxims of worldly prudence.* Such a prudence is actually nothing more than a selfish and time-serving policy. It extends solely to interests of a personal and temporary nature. Its views are narrowed down to a class of objects which have connection with nothing beyond earth, and time, and self. If we examine those prudential considerations which have an ascendancy where religion has not, they will be found exceedingly low and confined in their reference. Prudence may be defined, in general, to be that department of practical wisdom which consists in the discovery and pursuit of things that should be sought, and the detection and abandonment of things that should be avoided. Now it is obvious, that while there can never be but two great classes of objects, one of which *ought* to be sought, and the other avoided, the views and feelings of men may be such as to lead them in practice to substitute one of these classes for the other, and to seek what they *should* avoid, and avoid what they *should* seek. This is the case with those whose conduct is governed by the *maxims of worldly prudence.* Theirs is a mistaken prudence—mistaken through the influence of minds darkened and tastes vitiated by sin. The class of objects which all men *ought* to seek includes the divine glory and human salvation. But men of worldly prudence neglect this, and thus contribute to dishonor God and destroy the souls of men. They neglect this high end of all created action, because their minds are not lifted up to take distant and comprehensive views, and especially because they want sensibilities to the value and importance of this end. With objects of present personal reference they keenly sympathize; of these they gain a distinct perception; these they regard with a wakeful interest in their course of life. But not being the objects which they were formed to seek and enjoy, their narrow views, their confined sympathies, and their limited aim fail to yield them even the present good they seek. While they deem it prudent to live to themselves, even themselves are unblest and unsatisfied. While their maxims of prudence induce them to

seek their own and not the things that are Christ's, their own best present good is not secured. While they are endeavoring carefully to lay up for themselves a comfortable portion here, their endeavors are substantially fruitless; for their possessions become only the occasion of increased solicitude or of new and keener disappointments. It is among the maxims of worldly prudence to compromise religious principle, rather than encounter opposition, or incur censure from the world—to withhold truth rather than meet reproach—to cry peace rather than give pain—to leave men to perish rather than cease to please them. Now the truly *wise*, who are pursuing the *high way of life*, are so raised *above* the influence of these maxims, that, if they feel it, they do not obey it. They feel strongly in view of the *great things* that are to be sought, and the *great things* that are to be avoided. Theirs is that sublime principle of prudence which prompts them to *lay up treasures in heaven*—to live to him who died for them—to sacrifice human approbation to heavenly acceptance—to subject men to present pain, rather than that they should experience endless punishment. Is not this the only true prudence?

It may be observed, *in the second place*, that the religion of the truly wise is *elevated in principle above the accredited standard of worldly morality*. When the native human character is considered, and the slow progress which man, under the most favorable circumstances, makes towards any true sublimity of sentiment, it should not surprise us that the form of this world's ethics is low. Where no influence from revelation is felt, there is scarcely any progress at all in this direction. And where the more common influence of the gospel extends, so numerous and unyielding are the obstacles in the way of its full operation, and so slow and reluctant are men to bring their minds to contemplate spiritual things, or to look steadily at a rule of duty which is fitted to show them with an alarming distinctness the guilty depths in which they lie, we should not be startled to find the great body of men governed by principles of action which can scarcely be perceived to have any affinity to those which Christianity suggests and produces. Such, in truth, is the mournful fact in relation to the mass of almost every Christian community. And what is a far more painful fact, not a few who may be hoped to have experienced even the saving power of the gospel, are seen so strongly to sympathize with the surrounding mass, as to substitute its rule of right and duty for that which is presented in the holy gospel they profess! Indeed, instead of the universal and everlasting principles of action which Scripture reveals, the professedly religious are seen to adopt and act upon those which are received among men who are not privileged with an opportunity of borrowing their rules from the word of God. My limits forbid even a passing notice of the numerous defective points in that scheme of morality which is current among men. It may be sufficient to say, that its grand defect, and one that stands out conspicuously in its every feature, is its utter disregard of the character of motives. With the world, if the outward form of an action does not conflict with any of its loose and unsettled rules of conduct, it meets the full demand of its morality. No matter what is transpiring in the heart; no matter how much of malice, and murder, and lust, and envy are rankling there, if their image is not impressed on the visible deportment. No matter if the very bitterness of hatred is within, if the smile of kindness appears without. No matter how much we wrong our fellows by the secret feelings and opinions we cherish, provided there is no expression of them by actions or words. But God looks on the

heart; he requires *truth* there. And it is by reference to its state, that all those who have been taught of God estimate character and conduct. Whatever mere nominal Christians, or such as walk in darkness because they live not up to their privileges, whatever these may do, the truly *wise* who are decidedly in *the way of life*, are in principle raised above the thought of estimating their character by the rule of this world's ethics, or of regarding any action right while the heart is wrong.

Let it be observed, in *the third place*, that saving piety is *elevated in principle above the authority of prevailing opinions*. It might doubtless be safely assumed, that a religion which is from God, would involve principles of action much more fixed and invariable than the opinions of erring and mutable man. And it is one obvious proof that our holy religion is of divine original, that it furnishes motives to action of a nature constant, independent, and unvarying. The subjects of the proper efficacy of this religion, adopting in heart the great truths of Scripture as the canon of their sentiments and the grounds of their conduct, are lifted above the conflicting and unsettled opinions of the unbelieving world. If they feel, they do not yield to the power of such an influence. And it *has* power—a power which more or less sways every one—a power which has been impiously likened to the mighty energy of that voice which brought the created universe into being. Yet they who dwell “fast by the Oracle of God,” and amid the pure regions of faith enjoy spiritual contemplations, are not disturbed by it. They live in a sphere *above* it. *The way of life* along which they are advancing, lies indeed within sight of the tumultuous fluctuation of views and aims which disturb the world; but lies at a safe distance. And it is not only *safe* to be aloof from such a conflict, but there is present consolation in the consciousness of security amid so much that is proving disastrous to others.

'Tis sweet to stand, when tempests tear the main,
On the firm cliff, and mark the seaman's toil!
Not that another's dangers soothe the mind;
But from such toil how sweet to feel secure!
Yet sweeter far on Wisdom's height serene,
Upheld by truth, to fix our firm abode;
To watch the giddy crowd that, deep below,
For ever wander in pursuit of bliss,
Amid opinion's ever-varying strife.

II. *The wise who are in the way of life are elevated in taste.*

There is a much closer connection between sound religion and good taste than is generally considered. The person of true piety, other things being equal, is better qualified to judge of merit in all the various departments appropriate to the exercise of taste, than one who is a stranger to the power of experimental religion. The contrary I know is sometimes insisted on; but there is every thing in religion to purify and chasten, to elevate and strengthen all the faculties of the mind. It must give a quickness to discern, and a sensibility to feel the beauties and deformities in objects of every kind, especially those of a moral and religious character. But when those in the high way of *life* are said to be elevated in taste, a *religious* taste is chiefly intended—a taste which is occupied in judging of, and relishing or disrelishing objects, as it respects their moral and religious qualities. In this respect I proceed to observe,

In the first place, that they who are eminently *the wise unto salvation*, are *elevated in taste above the more external decorations of their persons or dwellings*. Special solicitous attention to these is pretty generally regarded as a mark of a mind limited in its range and feeble in its powers. An intelligent mind would be above it. And even a proud philosophy could despise it. But a mind deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel, and conversant with the high walks of spiritual contemplations, cannot descend to it without doing violence to its purest feelings, and interrupting its most sacred delights. Such a mind resembles that *which was in Christ*: and all who possess it must be entirely superior to any feelings of self-gratulation, or secret complacency in being able to adorn their perishing bodies, or to add to the splendor of their earthly habitations. They will think so much of being speedily *arrayed* in heavenly robes *clean and white*, that they will be comparatively indifferent to what they now put on. So familiar will they be with the glories of the *mansions* in their *Father's house* on high, that it will seem at once foolish and vain to their enlightened judgments, and disgusting to their quickened sense of beauty and grandeur, to attempt to accumulate circumstances of magnificence about those perishable structures here, which they are on the eve of quitting forever, and which the flight of a few years must wholly deface and destroy. O they who are in their high career heavenward along *the way of life*, cannot come down to such trifles, cannot be attracted by the dim glitter of earthly splendor, cannot heap useless appendages on the body which to-morrow will be in the grave, or expend on the dwelling they to-day inhabit what might send the word of salvation to perishing thousands. And if they *cannot*, what must be thought of many avowed followers of the Savior who hesitate not to do all this?

Again, they who are decidedly in *the way of life* are *elevated in taste above the desire of human applause*. Men destitute of such a taste are sometimes brought to perceive the emptiness of mere worldly estimation. They see it does not charm away sorrow. They see it does nothing at all towards reaching the core of human wretchedness. But they who have been cheered with the tones of divine compassion breathing forth the accents, *Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace*, have no longer an ear for the sweetest music that ever sounded in the language of human praise. Once it was grateful to them. No melody waked up intenser raptures than the voice of applause from their fellows. Once they could live on the breath that wafted it to their ear. Now it comes grating harsh dissonance with the tones of every fibre in their heart-strings. It is not barely because they have detected its emptiness. It is not so much because they have experienced its impotency in yielding sober quiet to the mind. But it is because their very heart sickens at the idea of being applauded for what, in the view of God, merits rather shame and reproach; because it savors of the devices of him who would tempt them from the path of life by presenting to their minds something to foster a feeling of self-exaltation. Indeed, so far are the eminently spiritually-minded from desiring tokens of worldly estimation and honor, they deprecate them; such tokens are disgusting to their taste—they are like daggers to their hearts.

It may be further observed, *that the elevated spiritual taste of such as are in the way of life renders them superior to the admiration of merely talented men*. Every age and country has been distinguished by some few individuals who, aided by certain favorable circumstances, have been brought under the public

eye, and raised to stations where extraordinary powers were demanded. Such men, towering above the level of ordinary minds, have attracted the wondering gaze, and shared the indiscriminate homage of all who have not learned from Scripture the true method of estimating human greatness. They, however, who are wise according to the testimony of inspiration, look for something better—something higher than intellectual grandeur alone, on which they can bestow their meed of admiration. It is the moral majesty of man which draws and absorbs their interested regard. It is the spiritual alliance of created with the uncreated mind that wins their homage. It is intellect bearing the fresh impress of heavenly features that secures their cordial esteem and veneration. It is impossible their minds, familiar as they are with what faith discovers of celestial wonders and glories, should be carried away with admiration of the mere splendor of intellect. It cannot dazzle and bewilder them, for they are accustomed to contemplate something higher and brighter. But there are other reasons why persons of eminent spirituality cannot relish and admire unsanctified talents. Such talents are always misapplied and abused. They are employed against Heaven. And thus perverted, they must entail on their admired and extolled possessors a deeper degradation—a more bitter retribution than is allotted to less gifted though equally misdirected minds. Instead, therefore, of directing towards them thoughts and feelings of admiring awe, they instinctively regard them with pity, as those who, though *exalted to heaven*, are in danger of being *thrust down to hell*.

Let it just be added that *those who in some good degree are living up to the duties, privileges, and consolations of religion, are raised by their spiritual taste above the feeling of enthusiastic delight in the works of mere art, of taste, or of fancy*. Religion, as it has been already remarked, more than any thing else, elevates and corrects the intellectual taste, and assists its decisions. But it does more: it gives a new taste, and opens a new field for its exercise and gratification. This new taste relates to things as holy or sinful—as possessing qualities of moral beauty or deformity, grandeur or debasement. The whole range of spiritual truth and spiritual scenes is the legitimate sphere for its exercise. They who imbibe this new taste have an exquisite relish for all the great marked features of divine truth, and find an exhaustless source of delight in the objects of heavenly contemplation. Thus gifted with a taste adapted to things of a higher and purer character, they become comparatively indifferent to that class of things which before interested and delighted them. Though their taste for this latter department of objects is no less correct than heretofore, it yields a delight less exquisite and absorbing; because it has come to be connected with a perception of what is more sublimely pure, and for that reason more attractive and gratifying. So that they would cease to be as deeply charmed as once with things which properly belong to the department of mere literary and intellectual taste, if it contained nothing positively offensive to a religious mind. But it is not so. Throughout the walks of literature, of art, and of fancy, ravishing beauties are mingled with disgusting deformities. Flowers lie thickly scattered over a mass of pollution. The heavenly-minded believer cannot, therefore, as he once could, range these walks with unmingled and enthusiastic delight. He had rather ponder some great truth of Scripture, than gaze at the clustering beauties which adorn the most splendid page of human literature. He had rather contemplate any

single feature in the inspired delineation of the New Jerusalem, than all that is grand and lovely in the efforts of genius and art.

III. *The way of life is above to the wise, in that they are elevated in pursuit.* Their practice is no less sublime than their principles and taste. They are as much above the common walks of worldly men in the character of their efforts, as they are in the views and relish of their minds. On this topic I can only very briefly observe,

That such as are in *the way of life are elevated in pursuit above what might be deemed their worldly interest.* The ground of their action, it has been observed, is the divine glory in the purification and salvation of men. This is the predominant motive that prompts their efforts. The end of their efforts is *the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.* Heaven is *the prize of their high calling.* The pursuit of this is no selfish aim, for it is the direct means of securing the great end for which man was created. Nor is the pursuit of heaven actually any dereliction of the best good which this world has to afford. For it is not to its most eager devotees, but to the aspirants after heaven, that the world yields its greatest benefits. It pours its richest blessings upon those who keep it beneath their feet. It rewards with all its real good those who despise it. While the followers in *the way of life* are seeking those things which might be deemed an abandonment of worldly interests, because they are superior to its pleasures, its praises, its opulence, and its honors, all that is valuable in these things comes into their possession and goes to accumulate the materials of their blessedness. Their pursuit is *above* these things, and yet the substance of them comes into their possession.

Again, *they who are wise unto eternal life are elevated in pursuit above the present benefits of religion.* They are less solicitous to find *the way of wisdom the way of pleasantness,* than to find it the way of holiness, and its end the fruition of God. It is things invisible for which they labour and endure, and not things seen and temporal. True, religion has its present benefits infinitely surpassing all other worldly and temporal good; but they are not worthy to be thought of, in comparison with the *eternal weight of glory* to be revealed and enjoyed in heaven. Far *above* the thought of these the genuine heirs of God are pursuing their incorruptible, undefiled, and unfailing inheritance.

Thus, my friends, in following the suggestions of the text, I have given you some of the more important features of *their* character who are evidently in their progress heavenward. They are elevated in *principle* above *the received maxims of worldly prudence,* above *the accredited standard of worldly morality,* and above *the authority of common opinions.* They are elevated in *taste* above *the mere decoration of their persons and dwellings,* above *the desire of human applause,* above the feeling of *an absorbing admiration of merely talented men,* and above the feeling of *an enthusiastic delight in the works merely of art, of taste, or of fancy.* They are elevated in *pursuit* above what might be deemed *their worldly interests,* and above *the present benefits of piety.* In view of all that has been said I cannot but remark,

1. That true religion, by which I mean that which is connected with the salvation of its subjects, *is vastly more abstract, elevated, and holy than is generally supposed.* Men think it what it is too commonly seen to be in the lives of its professors, and not what it is declared to be in the book of God. And its professors take up their notions of it from its more imperfect devel-

opments on earth, and thus rest at a point vastly below the one they are required to reach. It is impossible not to entertain the most painful apprehensions respecting the future destiny of great numbers who would seem to be in the *way of life*. They manifest scarcely a single genuine mark of a spiritual elevation of soul. I am concerned that all of my hearers who are yet able to hope that they are the subjects of so sublime a religion, would once more institute a most solemn investigation into their state. It is not improbable that such an inquiry would lead to discoveries fatal to the hopes of not a few, who will cheat themselves into a persuasion that they are in the way of life, while they are evidently not rising in principles, taste, or pursuit, to *depart from hell beneath*.

2. Saving religion *is above the conception of worldly minds*. They cannot comprehend its sublime principles. They know nothing adequately of its purity and sublimity of taste. The end it proposes, and which all its real subjects pursue with singleness of aim and unwavering determination, is altogether beyond the reach of their grovelling powers. The great desires and designs of the godly are apart from the range of their thoughts. Ah! none but those who feel the power of this religion, understand how unearthly it is. Let those who wonder at these strange assertions, and marvel that so common a thing as religion should be thus represented as above their conception, only learn its first principles, only taste of its blessedness, and their astonishment will cease. Though the ungodly cannot as such estimate its value, though they cannot send their thoughts to the high point of vision, of feeling, and happiness which the spiritually minded attain, let them only drink into its pure spirit, and they will begin to learn something of *the length and breadth, the height and depth* of its exceeding worth and importance.

3. Saving piety *is above the reach of worldly accident and changes*. The most serious and disastrous of these, are such as assail the mind and heart of man. But they whose treasure is *above*, cannot be subject to harm on this account, from whatever occurs here below. They *set their affection on things above*; and consequently the dearest objects to their heart cannot be withdrawn for ever from them, or at any time, so as to occasion them hopeless grief. Even should the world and all the lower works of God be blotted out of being, the subjects of *undefiled religion* will sympathize but little with the catastrophe—will suffer little by the change—will lose actually nothing by the mighty destruction. O how safe and blessed are the saints of God! Why does not such a view of their condition constrain the wicked to strive to make it their own?

4. To present them with an additional motive to do this, I add in conclusion, that *all who are not with the truly wise advancing in this elevated way to heaven ABOVE, are hastening their steps to HELL BENEATH*. There are but two great ways, *the strait and narrow way of life* and the *broad way of death*. These two ways conduct to two immensely different ends. The one is an eternal heaven, the other is an eternal hell. Fellow-sinners, we may judge which of these ends we are about to reach, by the way which we now pursue. No truth is more plain, none more invariable, none more necessary, than that the way of every one is declarative of the end of that person. Ye who know that you are in the way of death, how can you proceed one step farther? I beg you to stop. You may yet arise and dwell with God. But if you resolve to go on your hitherto chosen way, you must sink to deep darkness and hopeless wo!

SERMON CXVI.

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THE CHARACTER, CONDUCT, AND DESTINY OF THE JAILER AND FELIX CONTRASTED.

ACTS, xvi. 29—34.—*Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

ACTS, xxiv. 25—27.—*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.*

THESE passages of Scripture contain each a concise account of the religious character and conduct of an individual. And my object in presenting both before you at the same time is, that we may contrast the character and conduct of the trembling jailer at Philippi, with those of the trembling Felix at Cesarea, and derive instruction from the contrast. In relation to the Jailer and Felix, I observe,

1. *They were both sinners.* With regard to the jailer we have no information, except that contained in the text and context. That he was a sinner, is evident from the fact that all men are sinners; and that he possessed a character less desirable than that of many other unsanctified persons, is inferred from two circumstances. The first is, he was probably educated a heathen, and would, of course, be addicted to the vices and cruelties so common among those who are not under the restraining influence of the gospel. The second circumstance from which is deduced an inference unfavorable to his character, is his treatment of the apostles when they were committed to his custody. He thrust them into the most uncomfortable part of the prison, fastened their feet in the stocks, and, leaving their wounds undressed, retired to rest. That he might have treated the apostles with less severity, in consistency with his duty as keeper of the prison, is apparent from his subsequent conduct towards them. From our scanty knowledge of the jailer we must conclude

that at the time he took Paul and Silas in custody, he was not only a *wicked*, but a *cruel* man.

Of Felix, before his interview with the apostle, the Bible gives us no account. That he did not sustain a character as exemplary as that of many other heathen, is the universal testimony of historians. He lived in an illegal manner with Drusilla, the lawful companion of another; and in administering the government of provinces, over which he was placed as procurator, he was oppressive and cruel. Felix was a man of more consequence than the jailer; and in proportion to the elevation of the station which he occupied, appears to have been his wickedness. Still there was a resemblance somewhat striking in the moral characters of these individuals. Both were sinners, and sinners of a cast more unpleasant than usual. I observe,

II. *They were both brought in an interesting manner within the reach of religious instruction.* In violation of law, and with cruel hands, were Paul and Silas committed to prison at Philippi. Their jailer, during the night, was roused from sleep by an earthquake, and seeing the doors of the prison opened, he supposed his life to be forfeited in consequence of the flight of his prisoners. In the phrensy of despair, when about to seal his condemnation for ever by the act of suicide, Paul gave him the pleasant and timely information, that though the doors of the prison were opened, and the bands of the prisoners were loosed, yet no prisoner had escaped. At this juncture the apostles preached to him the gospel. "They said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

In an illegal and cruel manner was Paul apprehended at Jerusalem, and sent to Felix at Cesarea, who detained him in custody. In making his defence against the false accusations of the Jews, Paul preached to Felix the doctrine of the resurrection. At another time, in the presence of Felix, Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. He doubtless gave him that instruction which was necessary for his salvation. We know not but the gospel was as fully and as clearly preached to Felix, as to the jailer. Both being Gentiles were taught the truths of Christianity by the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul preached to both. And while a prisoner he preached to both.

Thus far there was a coincidence in the providence of God in relation to these men. In the way of each was Paul cast; and cast too without their solicitation. In the first place he was called upon by the providence of God to communicate unto each the truths of our holy religion, without being requested; and afterward, in compliance with their wishes, he preached to them the same gospel of Christ. In relation to the jailer and Felix, I observe,

III. *They were both convicted of sin under the instructions which they received from the apostles.* The jailer and Felix each gave a listening ear to what was said by the inspired preacher. They doubtless regarded what Paul communicated as being the truth of God. At that critical and solemn period—the period of death temporal, and death eternal—when the jailer heard from the lips of Paul the mild and timely caution, "Do thyself no harm," with the addition, "we are all here;" then was he brought to view himself a sinner. The deadly weapon dropped from his hands: he sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. But what occasioned this trembling? The danger resulting from the supposed escape of

the prisoners was past; and all pertaining to the prison, and to himself as keeper, was now safe. He did not plead with the apostles to aid him in closing the doors of the prison, or in replacing the bands of the prisoners. The effects of the earthquake on the prison did not occupy his attention. "And he sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas." His terror was great. And what caused this terror? The friendly conduct of the apostles, in connection with the extraordinary occurrence which had just taken place, were made effectual, by the Holy Spirit, shed down from heaven to convince him of sin; and he trembled lest he should experience the second death. The jailer was now a convicted sinner.

And while the Roman governor was listening to the reasoning of Paul on the subject of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, he too was disquieted. "Felix trembled." And what caused the hardened Roman to tremble? He was Paul's judge, invested with the power of life and death, and Paul was in bonds. Was it the sight of the unarmed prisoner before him, which caused Felix to tremble? No violence was offered. No threats were uttered. But Paul reasoned, and Felix heard him. And as he listened to the truths of God, as exhibited in the simple reasoning of the Apostle, his sins, like an angry cloud about to burst upon him, came to view. Then was near Felix an invisible agent, whose office it is to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He now saw himself to be a sinner, and he felt the sting of a guilty conscience—the distress of a self-condemned sinner—and looking unto a judgment to come, he trembled. While in the presence of Paul and listening to his words, both the jailer and Felix became convicted sinners. I observe,

IV. *They both resolved to engage in the concerns of their salvation.* Convinced as they were of the importance of salvation, they could do nothing less than resolve to give it their attention. And that they did thus resolve, is evident from their conduct. The jailer, with trembling solicitude inquired, what he must do to be saved? This he would not have done, under existing circumstances, had he not determined to engage in the concerns of his soul. He was evidently resolved, when he had learned what to do to be saved, *to do it.*

And from the manner of Felix's speaking to Paul, as well as from the state of feeling which he manifested under the exhibition of truth; we derive evidence, that it was not his intention when he dismissed the apostle, to abandon the subject of religion; but it was clearly his purpose to resume it, and give it his particular attention. "And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go thy way *for this time*; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Here we find his resolution, not only to engage in the concerns of his soul, but to employ the apostle as his religious teacher.

Thus far the two men whose characters we have been contemplating, appear alike. There was a striking resemblance between them. They were alike sinners, and sinners of a cast more unpleasant than usual. They were both religiously instructed by the Apostle to the Gentiles, while he was in bonds to them. They were both convicted of sin, and caused to tremble in view of the wrath to come. And they both resolved to engage in their salvation. Yet there was a period when a dissimilarity between them commenced. Hence, I observe,

V. *The jailer resolved to delay no longer his immortal interests, while Felix*

put off the subject to a future period. The jailer's conduct at this time is worthy of serious regard, and of imitation. So soon as convicted of his sins, he earnestly sought the way of salvation. No time was lost in needless conversation respecting the earthquake. No care of the prison or of the prisoners was suffered to divert his attention. No cavilling spirit was indulged in relation to the instructions of the apostles. Prostrate before the ambassadors of Christ, he sought the way of life with a solicitude deep and earnest. He evidently felt in his own heart the import of that scripture, "Behold *now* is the accepted time: behold *now* is the day of salvation." The needful repose of night could not call him away from this interesting subject. Every word, every motion indicated that his soul was intent on securing, without delay, his immortal interests.

But it was far different with Felix. Though trembling in view of his sins and the wrath to come,—though resolved to attend to the interests of his soul,—he was not yet determined to make religion his first business. Hence he did not, with the jailer, inquire what he should do to be saved? But he said to the preacher, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Difficulties in the way of reformation in his conduct, or business, or pleasure, induced him to postpone the subject to a future period. And the subject was postponed to give place for that which was more in accordance with the unsanctified feelings of the Roman governor. I observe,

VI. *The jailer soon gave evidence of piety, while Felix afforded evidence of increasing hardness of heart.* Ere the sun had streaked the east, the jailer believing, was joyful in the Lord. To his solicitous inquiry: "What must I do to be saved?" the apostles replied: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And now, instead of the severity and cruelty which he had manifested towards the apostles on their commitment, he showed himself to be a friend of God's persecuted servants. The same hour of the night he took Paul and Silas, and washed the stripes which the day before were inflicted upon them. And he was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And he received the apostles into his own house, and treated them with all the kindness of a brother's love. And in the morning, when the magistrates sent to have Paul and Silas set at liberty, thus to escape the reproach of their illegal and iniquitous proceeding, the jailer, in friendship, gave Paul information of their base intentions. The change which was thus suddenly wrought in the character of the jailer, was that new birth which is essentially requisite for the kingdom of heaven. He afforded full evidence of possessing a new nature, and of being enrolled with the sons of God.

But how was it with Felix? When divine truth was urged upon his conscience by the energy of the Holy Spirit, did he say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief?" This was not his language; but he said, "Go thy way for *this time*." He unquestionably expected that a convenient season was not far distant. And did the expected season soon arrive? He subsequently enjoyed opportunities for communing with Paul; but were righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, topics of his conversation with the apostle? We hear no more of Felix's trembling under divine truth. When, by a resolution to improve a future period in relation to his soul, he stifled his conviction of sin, and calmed the agitations of his troubled breast; he not only caused Paul to go his way for that time, but the Holy Ghost to depart. He afterward conversed with the Apostle, and sent for him the oftener, because he hoped

that money would be given him for Paul's freedom. And to secure some pecuniary advantage to himself, he kept that persecuted servant of Jesus two whole years in bondage. And when his office expired and he was succeeded by Festus, to gratify the malice of the Jews, and prevent them from complaining to the emperor of the injustice and cruelty of his administration, he left Paul a prisoner at Cesarea. The Bible continues the history of Felix for about two years after the time of his trembling before the apostle. During that period, we have convincing evidence of his increasing hardness of heart. While the jailer afforded satisfactory evidence that he was a child of God, the conduct of Felix presented lamentable proof that he became more and more a child of the devil. I observe,

VII. *It is probable that the jailer is now in heaven, and that Felix is in the world of despair.* I know of no reason for doubting any more the salvation of the jailer, than that of any other saint whose name is recorded in the Bible. His conversion appears to have been recorded in the Scriptures as a real conversion, and his conduct to have been such as characterizes the saint. No stigma is cast on the Christian character of the jailer. His name is left on the sacred page as a fair candidate for immortal blessedness. And we are happy in the assurance, that the promise of salvation on condition of faith, made to the trembling Philippian, has been fulfilled; and that he is now with Paul and Silas before the throne of God.

But delaying Felix—unhappy Felix—where is he? History tells us, that his companion, Drusilla, who could hear Paul reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come without being moved, and the child of their illicit connection, were consumed by a terrible eruption of Mount Vesuvius: and that Felix but narrowly escaped the punishment of his crimes from the hand of Roman justice. We cannot find, either in the Bible or in profane history, any indication that his heart was changed before death. All the circumstances attending his life and his conduct, so far as recorded, are calculated to lead the reflecting mind to fearful conclusions respecting his present condition. Were we to hope that he was not now lifting up his eyes in torments, and mingling his wailings with those of the damned; we should hope without evidence. Felix once trembled in view of judgment to come, but he ceased to tremble. His terrors and convictions soon subsided—his passions remained unsubdued, and extended their sway—and circumstances would strongly indicate, that while the jailer was now in Abraham's bosom, Felix was in the pit of endless despair.

From what has been disclosed in relation to the character and conduct of these individuals, we learn:

1. *That persons may resemble each other for a season, who in subsequent life and in eternity shall be vastly different.* The Philippian jailer and the Roman governor were, in important particulars, alike for a season. Alike they were sinners against God. Alike they had long remained insensible to their obligations and to their dangers. Alike they were instructed by an inspired apostle. Alike they trembled in view of the wrath to come. And alike they resolved to give the subject of religion their attention. But they were not always alike. The jailer determined to delay no longer obedience to heaven—he became a rejoicing convert—a kind friend to the apostles—an heir of life—and is now a glorified spirit in heaven. Felix delayed, for a more convenient season, making his peace with God—became a hardened sinner—cherished

his corrupt passions—narrowly escaped the hand of human justice—and is now, we have every reason to suppose, a fiend in hell. The jailer and Felix, for a season, walked the same road. At length the course which each pursued diverged one from the other, and continued to diverge, until the two travellers were separated by an impassable gulf.

And we, my hearers, have seen persons listening to the same religious instruction, alike believing its truth, and experiencing its power. We have witnessed them alike trembling in view of their sins, and heard them alike resolve to serve God. But they are now far different in character and conduct, and the present prospect is, that in the eternal world their states will be far different.

And you too may have seen persons convicted of sin; you may have witnessed them making haste to keep the commands of the Lord; you may have been acquainted with their rejoicing in God, their friendship to the godly, their discharge of Christian duty, and their bright prospects for eternity. And perhaps you may have become acquainted with the fact, that some of them died triumphing in faith. You may also have witnessed others convicted of sin, and resolved to serve the Lord. You may have observed them delaying the period of their reconciliation with heaven to a more convenient season, contemplated the evidence of their increasing iniquity, and their gloomy prospects for eternity, and perhaps you may have seen some of them die without hope of a blessed immortality. Oh, when I reflect, what a vast difference there may be in after-life, and in eternity between my hearers, it excites mingled emotions—emotions of joy, and emotions of sorrow. I rejoice in hope, that some, who are now listening to the instructions of God's word, will afford clearer and brighter evidence of possessing the spirit of Christ,—that hereafter they will be disposed to wash the stripes of persecuted piety, and cherish, in friendly hospitality and cheerful love, the faithful servants of Jesus,—that they will share in the prayers, and labors, and toils, and sacrifices, and hopes, and consolations, and triumphs, and glories of the followers of the Lamb. But oh, what may be the difference in character and state between such, and those who say to the word and spirit of the Lord: "Go thy way for this time!" Are there persons now in the Divine presence who will hereafter be neglecters of his institutions, arraying themselves against his truth, and against his children, and giving fearful evidence of increasing wickedness, and abandonment of heaven. Yes, there may be such persons present, and persons too who are now under the operations of the Holy Spirit. While we trust some before us, having served faithfully their God and generation, will sleep in Jesus, awake to the resurrection of life, and be for ever blessed with the Lord,—we expect nothing else but some of you, who will say to the Almighty Spirit, "Go thy way for this time," will fill up the measure of your iniquity, sink down into despair, be raised to the resurrection of damnation, and be for ever where is weeping and wailing.

2. *The difference between embracing religion now, and resolving to embrace it at a future period, is very great.* Had Paul been an incautious or an indiscriminating observer, he might not have marked the difference between the jailer and Felix, near the time of their trembling before him. The jailer said: "What shall I do to be saved?" and Felix said: "When I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Both heard with interest. Both trembled. Both appeared to be friendly to the subject of religion. And both resolved to give it their attention. The only apparent difference between them was, one then

embraced religion, the other designed to do it at a future period. This difference in conduct may appear to some persons to be indeed small. But mark, my hearers, the difference between him who embraces religion *now*, and him who intends to embrace it at a future period.

In the first place, the one yields to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, and the other hesitates. The language of the Spirit to each individual is, *now* is the accepted time; and the heart of the one cheerfully assents to the declaration, and yields to the impulse, but the heart of the other is still rebellious. And that conscience may be quieted, this individual resolves to obey the voice of God at a subsequent period. There is a great difference between the feelings of that son who obeys his father without delay, and those of a son who says to his father, I cannot obey you *now*; leave me for the present, and go thy way for this time.

In the second place, the person who embraces religion *now* ceases to be under the power of sin. So soon as he begins to obey God, he is a servant of God. But the convicted sinner, however many his tears and deep his distress, who delays making his peace with God, is still a slave of sin. Let the resolution of future repentance be ever so unyielding, the person who formed it is engaged in a different service, and is under the direction of a different master from him who has entered the service of God. One is a servant of Christ, and the other is a servant of Satan.

In the third place, the person who embraces religion *now* may appropriate to himself the promises of the gospel. These promises are made to him. Having given his heart to God, God stands pledged to be his father and his friend. But there are no promises to him who resolves to give God his heart at a future period. He may resolve and re-resolve a thousand times over to give his heart to God; yet there are to him no gracious promises. Notwithstanding all this,

“Alas, I read, and see it plain
The sinner must be born again,
Or drink the wrath of God.”

And again, the person who engages in religion *now* may have assurance of heaven; while it remains fearfully uncertain whether the resolution of the other is ever executed. Fearfully uncertain, did I say! The purpose of Felix to attend to the concerns of his soul at a convenient season, we suppose was not accomplished. Did any of my hearers abide by the resolution to become pious at a future period? Did any of you ever know a person who determined to become pious at a subsequent day, week, or month, who found his resolution to stand? How many resolutions of this character have we all broken? Though there should be found instances of persons becoming pious at times before specified, there never was a resolution like that of Felix which was kept inviolate. All such resolutions are formed with reliance on human strength to the displeasure of God. The resolve of an immediate surrender to God must be performed before any soul will have ground for rejoicing in Christ. It does not then remain merely uncertain, whether such resolutions will be kept. They will be broken. They always have been broken. But it remains fearfully uncertain, whether the person who says to the Eternal, “Go thy way for this time,” however strong and unyielding his present determination to become a child of God at a future period—it remains fearfully uncertain whether he ever has part or lot in the lasting blessings of the Gospel. My friends, those

resolutions of yours to prepare for death and heaven at some future time, are a most insidious snare of the devil, by which you are taken. In the formation there was no yielding of heart to God, no bursting asunder the cords of sin; they contain nothing from which the image of Christ is reflected, nothing on which can be predicated a single promise of the Bible, and nothing which renders your salvation more hopeful. They should not silence a single murmur of your consciences. They should not calm a single rising fear of your hearts. They should not occasion a single tear to be wiped from your eyes. They should not cause you to dream of heaven for a single moment. But that you have to this day formed no resolutions of piety, except such as that by which Felix drove Paul from his presence, and the Holy Ghost from his heart, should fill you with deep regret and serious alarm.

3. *There are periods in the life of all, which appear to be solemnly critical, and of infinite moment.* Had the jailer, when prostrated at the apostle's feet, looked forward to a time for effecting his reconciliation with God, in reference to the message of salvation—had he said, "Go thy way for this time," and thus driven from his presence the Holy Spirit; no finite mind could tell what would now have been his allotment. Had he said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time," instead of having been now on a throne, in the likeness of Jesus, surrounded by heavenly hosts, and engaged in an anthem of praise for redeeming grace; he might have been where peace and hope are unknown. And, my brethren in Christ, had we been suffered to defer our hopeful reconciliation with God another half-hour—had the crisis been passed without the surrender of our hearts to God—had the critical moment on which life and death, heaven and hell, in reference to us were poising, been misimproved: an Omniscient God only could tell, what would have been our present and eternal state. We will thank him, and praise his holy name in hope, that then he was pleased to incline our hearts unto himself.

And had not the heart of Felix, while he was trembling before Paul, suggested a season of delay in making his peace with God—had not Felix, with an inspired apostle before him, his sins in array, and eternity in view, foolishly and wickedly waited for a more convenient season—he might have been this day with Paul and Gabriel in glory. But oh, the state of heart which prompted that one sentence at this critical moment, "Go thy way for this time." Will not this sentence be remembered with interminable anguish?

And had not some of my impenitent hearers breathed the same spirit of delay, their names ere this would have been enrolled, as believers, in the Lamb's book of life. While in the sanctuary of God, they would have held a title to crowns and thrones in the heavens. But like Felix they have said, "Go thy way for this time," and condemnation is still resting upon them.

And may not the present be a period solemnly critical, and of infinite moment to some hearers? My friend, the Spirit of God may, at the present time, be nearer to you than ever after, if he is now resisted. The crisis with you may now have arrived, and the reception or rejection of offered grace to-day may settle your destiny for ever. Will you breathe the request of farther delay? Shall Felix's language be again adopted, "Go thy way for this time?" Oh, how will it tell in your dying hour? How will it tell at the bar of Christ? And how will it tell to all eternity? Cast down your weapon of rebellion, give God your heart, and rely on Christ for pardon and sanctification; and soon you shall *be with the jailer in heaven.*

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SERMON CXVII.

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PHILADELPHIA.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

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

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES are the character and aspect of the passing age; its distinguishing events and productions, preparations and proceedings, doings and projects. Time has been compared to an ever flowing river; but such a river assumes different appearances in different parts of its course, is wider and narrower, now smooth and now ruffled by winds and obstructions in its bed, sometimes moves slowly and softly, and sometimes with haste and noise.—The stream of time never stops in its solemn course; but there are divisions on its banks,—days and seasons, years and ages; and as one day is cloudy and another fair, one season genial and another “horrid with frost and turbulent with storm,” one year fruitful and healthful, and another a year of famine and trouble, so the different ages are distinguished from each other by peculiar marks and characteristics. The characteristics of the present age, those things wherein it is peculiar, or which distinguish it from other ages, are the signs of the times.

II. Now every age receives its impress from the hand of God, who hath put the times and seasons in His own power.—He upholds, moves, guides, controls, determines, works all things after the counsel of His will. The transactions and affairs of the times, though brought to pass by a vast multitude of free and accountable agents, fulfil His counsel and contribute to the perfecting of His plan. Be the signs of the times therefore what they may, they are such as God has stamped upon them, and are significant of

something pertaining to God and His purposes ; and something, of course, most interesting to us.—The context mentions the signs of fair and foul weather ; these are appearances in the sky from which the character of the coming weather may be inferred : “ When it is evening, ye say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red ; and in the morning, it will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering.” The phases of the sky show what sort of weather is approaching, and the phases or distinguishing features of the age, the signs of the times, show what God is doing, and about to do, in fulfilment of His eternal designs.

III. To DISCERN the signs of the times is to mark and comprehend them ; to be acquainted with the true character of the age, and with what it teaches and prognosticates concerning the counsels of God. It includes also a right state of heart towards the moral lessons of the age, and a practical conformity to them. God makes known His will to men, both by His word and His providence : in the one He speaks, in the other He acts ; and actions are instructive as well as language. His word indeed is more explicit, and is our only universal and infallible rule of life, but as His word helps us to understand His providence, so His providence reflects light upon His word, and though it does not originally prescribe our duties, yet does it present new motives to the performance of our duties ; and to certain duties, as fasting, thanksgiving, benevolent exertions and sacrifices, does it present special and extraordinary calls.—He who truly discerns the signs of the times is aware of the obligations which the character of the age imposes on him, and has a conformity in spirit and in life, to the spirit and movements of the age. True discernment of things, according to scripture, implies a sense of their qualities ; and he is ignorant of a matter whose heart and conduct show that it has no practical influence upon him. Not to love and trust in God is not to know Him ; not to keep Christ’s commandments is not to know Christ ; to depart from evil, is understanding ; obedience is knowledge ; sin is darkness, ignorance, madness. The man who does not live as the character and spirit of the age requires, does not discern the signs of the times. Any light which he may think he has on this subject is darkness ; darkness hath blinded his eyes ;—he walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth.

IV. The IMPORTANCE of discerning the signs of the times is assumed in the text, and deserves our consideration. On this point let the Scripture first speak. While it connects the greatest advantages with knowledge on this subject, it threatens ignorance with the Divine indignation ; declaring on the one hand, that whoso is wise and will observe these things shall

understand the loving-kindness of the Lord ;” and on the other, that “ because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them and not build them up.” Elsewhere we are instructed that God’s inexorable anger may be kindled by not giving heed to His providential voice. “ In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth ; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine ; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die : and it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.” God in His word has made some things our daily and stated duties, as devotion, kindness, industry in our callings ; and some things, duties which are not stated and ordinary, but which we must hold ourselves in readiness to perform at the summons of His providence ; as the observance of fasts and coming up to the Lord’s help by special labors and sacrifices of benevolence.—Now these latter duties are as much *duties*, as binding on the conscience, as the former ; and the forecited scripture shows us what may be the consequence of failing to discharge them in their season.—Again, a large portion of God’s word is prophetic :—the times and seasons which are to come, prophecy in its own manner hath characterized beforehand ; and though the main design of this may be to confirm our faith, by comparing the age when it is past with its description in the prophetic word, and observing the correspondence of the one with the other ; yet this is not the only use of prophecy : “ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.” Meditation on the prophecies may be useful BEFORE THEIR FULFILMENT ; it receiveth blessing from God : and if we inquire for the reason, this is what we find :—The times as they come forth at the Father’s bidding, do not come disjointed and isolated, but one draws on another in perfect continuity : one prepares the way for another ; one in a true sense *causes another* :—so too are they connected in prophecy from the beginning to the end of the world. Now if you know well the signs of the present time, you may, even of yourself, form some useful anticipations of the character of that which is next to come ; but as that time is described in the page of prophecy, the study of the prophets may greatly assist your anticipations. You know where you now are, both in prophecy and in fact, and your own reflections guided by the prophets may, to most useful and important purposes, enlighten you concerning the days which are coming upon the world. But it is manifest how all depends on your understanding the true character of the time that now is. Without this knowledge the page of prophecy might as well be blank ; and meditation therein

were but musing upon nothing. What advantage meditation may yield, with this knowledge, we may learn from what is related of Daniel, Anna, Simeon, and others, who were hereby led to be waiting for redemption in Jerusalem when it was coming; and of the disciples of Christ, who, observing the signs of the times as foretold by their Master, made their escape from the destruction which befell the Jewish nation.—He who neglects God's prophetic word, forfeits His blessing; but of what use can the prophets be to him who does not discern the signs of the times?

But there are stronger illustrations of the danger of this ignorance. We select a few out of almost numberless instances. Why did the old world bring upon itself the waters of a flood? They did not discern the signs of the times when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing. Why did Pharaoh bring the ten plagues upon his land, and ultimate destruction upon himself and his army? He did not discern the signs of the times: otherwise he and his people might have escaped. Why did the Jews reject their Messiah, and thereby bring wrath upon themselves to the uttermost? They discerned not the time of their merciful visitation. If they had opened their eyes to see the miracles, the fulfilments of prophecy, and the other evidences of Messiah's presence among them, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Why is it that so many professed christians, at this day, take little or no interest in the exertions which are now made, and the things which are coming to pass, under the divine agency and blessing, in the kingdom of grace? It is because they do not discern the signs of the times. The importance of this duty cannot be too much magnified. Thousands will owe their eternal destruction to the neglect of it. The habitual neglect of it infers the entire want of grace. What is unregeneracy but being without God in the world, and what is being without God in the world but having no impression of His presence and agency on the heart. I wonder not at the saying of the Psalmist, "because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them and not build them up,"—that is, finally and irretrievably destroy them.

V. And equal to the importance is the FACILITY OF PERFORMING this duty. So we gather from Christ's way of reasoning with the Jews. They wanted a sign from heaven, but he referred them to the signs of the times, saying, "When it is evening, ye say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, it will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering: O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not

discern the signs of the times?" No more sagacity is required in the one case than in the other. When men are so void of understanding that they cannot comprehend the prognostics of the weather, then may they excuse themselves for remaining ignorant of the signs of the times.

VI. But do we not read in Scripture that God moves in great mystery and darkness; that his works are great and marvellous; His ways unsearchable and past finding out; and are not men cautioned against presumptuous conclusions concerning the Divine conduct, and rebuked for attempting to scan the Almighty, and admonished to wait till the mystery of God be finished? Yes. But the true inference from such passages is not that *nothing* may be learned from God's conduct; but merely that his conduct in all its relations, bearings, and results, cannot be *fully comprehended*.—God crowns the year with his abundant goodness; you see not all that He intends, or all that is to result from what He herein does; but you see enough to teach you your obligations to thankfulness and praise.—God visits with pestilence and famine: you know not every thing which that visitation may involve; but you know enough to make you stand in awe, and go into your chambers, and shut your door about you, until these calamities be overpast.—God, by the plenteous effusion of His Spirit, revives His work around you; you know not what that revival may lead to or end in; but you may know that now is the accepted time, and that wo is probably your doom for eternity if you now neglect the salvation of your soul.—God walks abroad among His churches, and excites them to great and combined enterprises for the furtherance of the gospel; you do not see, you cannot conjecture the end of these movements,—they reach into eternity, and spread abroad through the measureless empire of the Almighty; but you understand enough for your own condemnation if you refuse to take part in these sacrifices and labors of love.—In all things, the full latitude and extent of God's operation appears only to Himself; but it has meaning which the feeblest intelligence can understand. It does not satisfy man's curiosity, but it loads his conscience with obligation, and its very mystery should make him fear, and keep him ever in a waiting and worshipping posture of mind. God's movements in providence, however unsearchable, call for some holy feeling and activity in us, and the call is so clear, that the ox who knoweth his owner, or the ass his master's crib, rebukes the man who does not hear it. It is not the want of sufficient powers of discernment, but a sensuality which banishes the Holy Spirit, an earthly, godless, atheistical temper,—this it is that hinders men from discerning the signs of the times.

VII. And now, my brethren, if these be just and faithful observations,

they should incline us to serious thought on **THE CHARACTER OF OUR OWN TIMES**. They have truly a character of their own. Never, perhaps, had any times signs less negative, less unperceivable, less unmeaning, than those in which we live. All men are conscious of this general fact; all men feel that there is a spirit—a mighty, commanding, pervading, uncontrollable spirit in the age. But what it is, and whither it tends; what lessons it reads to us, what duties, admonitions, and encouragements, few seem to comprehend. That the Lord God of Hosts doth in this day call to something peculiar, is as certain as that there is a Lord God of Hosts who changeth the times and the seasons, and ordereth all things in His pleasure; and peculiar is their guilt who do not hear this call. Still is it with the multitude of mankind as it was before the flood, and as it has ever been, whatever the signs of the times have revealed or portended: they are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building; but they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands. Some indeed meditate the aspect of the age towards politics, learning, and the arts; but their view excludes God altogether, and they are as blind to all traces of His agency, as deaf to all the admonitions of His providence, as though they disbelieved His existence. Others speak as if they meant to admit the Divine agency, and the high claims of the age to ~~most~~ regard; but they speak not aright, for their tongue is all they employ in acknowledgment of those claims. All these are atheists in heart. They profess they know God, but they deny Him in works; they discern not the signs of the times. In the hope that by the Divine blessing they may animate you to the high endeavor of living as **THE CHARACTER OF THE AGE** requires, I submit the following observations concerning it,

VIII. I premise that a just view of the signs of the times extends to all departments of human action and existence,—to all that is doing and going on among mankind, and in the whole world of nature. God works not only in the church; He ruleth among the heathen that know Him not, and controlleth the wrath of the wicked to His praise; and by all the inventions, schemes, projects, discoveries, learning, and high aspirings of men, in whatever direction, is fulfilling His counsel and revealing His hand as really as in the operations and advances of the kingdom of grace and righteousness. They take but a narrow survey of the signs of the times who confine their observation to the affairs of religion and the church. These, indeed, are the main affairs. All others are important only as related and subservient to them. But in this view they are infinitely important; and if it were unwise in endeavoring to understand the designs of an enemy in war, to limit our notice to his actual entrance into conflict,—if knowledge

of his preparations, and of the number of his forces, and of all his preliminary movements, would help us to interpret his meaning and infer the result of his success; then should the Divine conduct in all the departments of creation, as far as it falls under our notice, be most thoughtfully considered. All things in this world—all the kingdoms, and people, and creatures, as well as the church, belong to God, who works in all things, and works to fulfil one plan—to answer one end—the church's establishment and ultimate extension over the face of the whole earth; whereof we are confident from this Divine assurance, that the Head of the church is head over all things to the church, and will maintain His universal supremacy until He hath brought all things in subjection under His feet, and destroyed the last enemy.

IX. In pondering the signs of the times, therefore, our survey should be broad; but it were of small avail should it be confused or indefinite. Let us fix, then, first on one department and then another, and consider, if it be but in a moment, what peculiar things God is doing in each. And first, What is He doing IN THE WORLD OF NATURE? Here we remark little but proofs of bounty. Famines, pestilences, earthquakes, winds and waves roaring, fearful sights, signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, have marked other times, but are not the signs of ours. The elements are not in any uncommon strife; and the earth not only yields her usual increase, but opens for the augmented happiness of her population, new and astonishing, and exhaustless stores of wealth.

X. IN THE POLITICAL WORLD, God's agency now is wondrously auspicious. In the midst of strange confusions and overturnings, how manifest, how sublime is the advance of liberty! When have the prospects of despotism been so appalling? When have tyrannical governments been in greater perplexity? Light is flashing all abroad upon the darkness of the nations; and revolutions and counter-revolutions are preparing the way for the universal dominion of Christ in the earth.

XI. Next, behold what God is doing by IMPROVEMENT IN THE ARTS. We are bold to say that neither Rome, nor Greece, nor Egypt, ever knew such a day for useful inventions and contrivances as ours. We boast not over them in architecture, sculpture, painting, the monuments of mere taste; but for all the purposes of human happiness and advancement, never have the arts so flourished as in our times. Had our methods of navigation and internal intercourse, and especially of book-making, been made known to the ancients, they would have thought little, in comparison, of their own

chief inventions. Now, is he not utterly blind, or unable to see afar off, who doubts whether in these things the gracious hand of the Lord is to be acknowledged and magnified?

XII. The progress of the arts has been accelerated by that of SCIENCE. In moral science we claim the pre-eminence, while we acknowledge our obligations to former times; but in natural science, especially in one most important branch, our attainments are at once transcendent and unassisted.

XIII. We have not so much to say for the LEARNING of these times. For profoundness, for variety, for extent of learning, there are in these days no rivals of Hooker, or Bacon, or Milton, or Locke, or Baxter, or Howe, or Owen, or of Calvin and Melancthon, and hosts of their contemporaries. None in all the earth, not excepting even the students of Germany, whose claims seem to be the highest. Why it is we cannot stay to inquire; but the fact seems to be conceded, that coming ages will look back upon ours in vain for many monuments of learning. STYLE is in some respects improved, and LITERATURE has been more successfully cultivated, and we have some highly gifted authors; but depth and vastness of learning are not among the marks of our times. But then we are reaping some fruits from the learning of other days. Knowledge is far more general, if it is not in some instances so profound. The mass of men is more enlightened. Our books are more numerous and more easily read and comprehended; and we have more VEHICLES OF KNOWLEDGE. Our newspapers, tracts, magazines, reviews, aided by our wonderful facilities of intercourse, almost annihilating distance, give rapid and universal circulation to knowledge. Never had other times signs like these; and they are not more peculiar than full of gracious promise.

XIV. But when we pass into the enclosure of the church, God's doings here almost constrain us to cry out, "How great are His signs, how mighty are His wonders." For first, *the spirit of intolerance* is bound, whose claim to dominion over men's faith was until lately enforced where it could be by the highest temporal penalties. That furious spirit seems near its end. In some few places, indeed, it is not wholly unrestrained; but generally no one is now in danger from freely expressing his thoughts, unless it be he who holds to the right of forbidding others to do so. Men now view nothing so much like the very doings of diabolical malignity as the imprisoning, the beheading, hanging, and burning of other days for religious opinions.

But Christians now not only forbear threatening and slaughter against one another for differences among themselves; they have learned again

to love one another, these differences notwithstanding. This glory of the primitive times, the predominance of brotherly love, has not yet fully returned, but return it must and will ere the millennium comes; and never since the beginning have any times been so beautified and brightened by this fair sign as ours. It is now more than forty years since the glory of this light began to appear. It has been shining more and more until the present moment. The adversary, knowing that his kingdom of darkness must decline as this light increases, is striving to quench it; but in vain his attempts thus far, and so we trust they will be. All our hopes depend on his not succeeding here. We shall succeed if he does not, and shall fail if he does. Then will the world believe in Christ, and appreciate the character of his disciples, when Christ's prayer is heard, that they loving one another may be all one, as "Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us."

Our times are distinguished also by *improved methods of propagating the gospel.* Our preaching, though not so learned as that of other days, is for the most part more simple, direct, pungent, and, we will add, judicious. Among divines, the puritan, generally, deserve no inferior rank; and there were preachers among them of great power as well as erudition; but their views, especially in some points of much pulpit-moment, were obscured by the influence of their philosophy, and of some ancient errors from which the reformers, not having escaped themselves, could not deliver the church. While we defer to those mighty men as superior to our own in intellectual strength and learning, we should confess ourselves guilty of a stupidity for which they would upbraid us, if, released from the chains of an erroneous philosophy, and tutored by providential doings and discipline for one hundred and fifty years, we had not learned, by their assistance and the help of those events which have been fulfilling the Scripture since their day—they would have cause to upbraid us for a criminal stupidity, if, with these advantages, we had learned in no respect either to think or to speak more correctly than themselves; especially since we have the teachings of God's own Edwards, a burning and a shining light, whom no luminary, whether puritan, reformer, or father, hath excelled in gifts, or equalled in elucidating and enforcing the gospel.—Said the great Dr. Owen, about one hundred and eighty years ago, "Let new light be derided whilst men please, he will never serve the will of God in this generation who sees not beyond the line of foregoing ages." Would not such a man as Owen wonder, if he were now living, to find the church knowing nothing more of Scripture truth,—improved not at all either in her conceptions or utter-

ances, after almost two hundred years ; and two hundred as pregnant years as ever passed over our world.

Let no one misjudge what we say. We are far from alleging that the church has been at any time a stranger to the substantial truth of the gospel. No new doctrines are to be expected,—none to be received. But were it not reproachful to the Divine Wisdom to suppose that no more just and enlarged views of old doctrines may be hoped for by a careful observer and improver of the signs of the times ? since it is certain that the times, as they roll forth to accomplish the Father's will, are ever giving new and more perfect fulfilment of the inspired oracles. God's works in some measure bear the impress of his incomprehensibility ; and he surely is an arrogant man who pretends that he thoroughly knows every thing which the Book of God, whether of nature or revelation, was intended to teach.—Let us not then be judged irreverent to our fathers, or boastful of our own attainments, when we affirm that God has doubtless taught his people a *more useful way of preaching* than has generally prevailed heretofore ; a way which brings the gospel to bear on all the powers of the soul more skillfully and perfectly ; a way embracing more definite views, especially, of the provision of the gospel, man's relations towards it, his obligation and duty to embrace it, and the ground of his dependence on the Holy Spirit. In the statement and application of these cardinal points, the preaching of our days, though still defective, excels as far as we know, that of any except the apostolic.

Besides, we have our own *methods of enforcing the gospel out of the pulpit*. Catechising has been of old, but not our sabbath and infant school, and bible-class operations, and meetings for spiritual inquiry, and other revival measures. These are peculiar signs of our times, in which it much becomes all men to rejoice and be glad.

XV. And we cannot but think that the PERSONAL PIETY, as well as the preaching and instruction of this age, is in some respects improved. We would ever give praise to God for such examples of spiritual religion as those which the puritans and their descendants have left us. They were men of deep experience, of eminent devotion, of profound acquaintance with the Scriptures, of close intercourse with God, of very peculiar uprightness and holiness of life ; and in these things they were greatly our superiors. It is to be feared that the comparatively light reading of our day has tended to lightness of thought, and feebleness of feeling ; and that

much outward action has excluded in some cases deep meditation and heart-searching. But the puritans had their defects also. While they searched their hearts and minded their closets and families so faithfully, they had not just impressions of that grandest duty of the church, spreading the glorious gospel abroad through the earth;—a great point, truly, to be wanting in which is no unimportant deficiency. This deficiency was theirs. What did they to evangelize the benighted and perishing nations? Why, when intolerance robbed two thousand of them of their pulpits and their churches, and hindered them from preaching the gospel to their countrymen, did they not turn to the Gentiles, as did the first preachers when rejected by the Jews? They were spirits not to be restrained altogether; and when they could not preach, they wrote, and their writings are a rich legacy to the church, and on the whole perhaps a greater blessing than their labors among the heathen would have been. But still is it not surprising that they did not go forth lifting up their holy and their mighty voices in the wilderness of the unevangelized world?—Now, far as the piety of our times falls behind theirs in other things, it goes beyond it here. Piety is now crying for the breath of the Lord to breathe upon the slain of mankind. Piety is now contributing its large offerings to carry measures forward which contemplate directly the world's conversion. Piety, in many forms, is now ruaning to and fro, that the knowledge of God may be increased among men. Piety now consecrates itself, in many instances, among ministers and people—and of the latter both male and female—to the exclusive work of making Christ known where He has not been heard of; and, at the hazard of life, is at this moment successfully performing this work in the ends of the earth, and in the islands of the sea. Does not the piety of these times, in one respect at least, look more like that of the apostles and first disciples of christianity?

XVI. But the chief glory of these latter days has not yet been mentioned. It is the ASSOCIATIONS OF CHRISTIANS OF THE VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE ENTERPRISE OF EVANGELIZING THE WORLD. Who since the apostles fell asleep hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Christians of every name forgetting their differences, and banding themselves together,—their hearts, their influence, and their substance,—in societies, for the salvation of the human race!—in bible societies, which are pledged to supply the world with the oracles of God;—in tract societies, which make a sermon for a man;—in sunday and infant school societies, which gather together the

* This exception to the high excellence of puritan piety was suggested to the author by the Rev. Professor Alexander's essay preliminary to a little work entitled "Advice to a Young Christian."

youth on the sabbath and at other times, to impress upon them the lessons of eternal truth and grace, as the schoolmaster impresses the first rudiments of knowledge;—in missionary societies, which support the heralds of the cross in their noblest of all the works of faith and love;—in education societies, which train the sons of the church in the necessary nurture and knowledge, to furnish them well for the work of the ministry; and, though last in this enumeration, not least in their favorable bearing on the temporal and eternal well-being of mankind—in temperance societies, which have undertaken to stem and exhaust that burning flood of inebriation, which has so long been spreading crime and misery in all their forms over the fairest portions of christendom:—free associations of christians of every name and every sect for such purely benevolent purposes. What times except our own had signs like these? In other times, christians contended against one another; now behold again how they love one another! Not indeed as they ought; nor as they must and will before christianity becomes universal; but as they have not done since the early days of the gospel.

XVII. Now these signs are bright marks of the hand of God—tokens of coming good and glory, which may well renew in us somewhat of that exceeding great joy, with which the wise men rejoiced when they saw the star which had conducted them out of the east, offering itself again, to lead them from Jerusalem to where the young Child was; tokens, doubtless, which even the eye of God rests on with great delight; and partly to testify His joy in which He has given another sign, whose light has been all along mingled with the other lights of these times, and has been the main strength and vigor wherewith they have been shining. For from the time the churches began to meet monthly for prayer, about forty-six years since—from that time, when our age had its beginning, God has been granting the EFFUSIONS OF HIS SPIRIT in a measure unprecedented since the apostolical period; and these effusions have been the life and the energy of every gracious movement and doing before mentioned. Our revivals have been so much spoken of that some may be wearied by another allusion to them, but they deserve more consideration than they have received; and God deserves to be more praised and sought unto for revivals, ten thousand times, than He has been, even by those who have had the deepest sense of their importance. Let our revivals cease, and our other signs will soon depart also; and signs may come in their stead, portentous of distress of nations, and men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.

XVIII. I have spoken of little besides things of a most desirable and

enlivening kind; there are things of another character, adapted to infuse trembling into our joy; but on that very account, rather encouraging expectation than otherwise. Satan does not look on the signs of these times without concern: he knows their meaning, and not being yet bound, his subtlety has never perhaps been more deeply exercised to invent contrivances of resistance and frustration. What will ultimately come forth from his wily malice can scarcely be conjectured; but both in the church and in the world there are plain traces of his artful and deep-plotting wrath. In the world he is forming counter-combinations, and raising loud outcries of slander and falsehood. In the church, he is laboriously sowing seeds of division and discord, and strengthening the bands of sectarianism, by means of groundless jealousies and guilty envyings: and he is seeking also, not only to scatter, but devour Christ's flock, by turning into it wolves in sheep's clothing—infidels and heretics we mean, under the name and garb of christian teachers. But God observes these movements of satan, and nothing yet appears to make us doubt whether any thing but good will come out of his evil agency.

XIX. Now, from the survey which has been taken, this inference impresses itself on our thought, not as a dubious conjecture, but as almost a moral certainty, that the millennium is drawing near. Do you ask, watchman, what of the night? We answer, "the MORNING cometh: the night is far spent; the day is at hand, it is high time to awake out of sleep." As our times themselves are nearer those of the millennium, so the signs of them more definitely portend and promise the millennium, than any other that the eyes of men have ever seen or their ears heard of. The signs of the first age were glorious, but they did not promise the millennium. That age did not and could not give the bible to all the world, or lay permanent foundations for even growing knowledge, and hence was room left for satan to bring in upon the church ten centuries of grosser darkness than paganism itself. The signs of the times in the reformation did not promise the millennium. Associations for giving every creature a bible, and our tract, and sunday, and infant school labors were then unknown; and the reformers, while with unrivalled pains and ability they disabused the great truths of the gospel of popish perversions and absurdities, had learned imperfect obedience to the law of brotherly love, and with the truth conjoined some errors of great practical force—whereby the reformation was itself greatly marred and hindered, and was speedily succeeded by strange degeneracies and overturnings. Our age has an influence of a different kind—its aim is to advance and perpetuate knowledge through all orders and nations, and it pursues its aim, not by isolated efforts of individuals, but by the combined

endeavors of christians of all sects and countries—assisted mainly by means of that best of all human inventions, the art of printing. If knowledge is stability, this looks like giving permanence as well as universality to the reign of the gospel. We seem to see the foundations now laying of many generations—work now doing which shall make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth, and shall last a thousand years.

XX. And with this thought impressed on our minds by such and so many converging influences, that we are living near the millennium,—that is in an age which seems to promise it speedily,—what, brethren, should be our model and standard of life? We must not go to other ages for patterns; their signs were their own, and their own were the obligations which grew out of them. We have signs of which they knew nothing, and obligations of course, which in respect to them did not exist. If a man ought not to conduct himself, as at ordinary times, during the prevalence of a plague, or conflagration, or when war spreads desolation through the land; if with death in his house, a man ought not to behave himself as when health and laughter dwell in every face; then ought not we, under the high and unusual teachings of such signs as ours, to live after their pattern who were strangers to such light. Brethren, christian character takes a new die and tint from the aspect of our age, as we have sometimes seen the color of the sky color the face of the earth. A christian now has in some respects a different look from one of former times. The substantial of christian character are the same always, but those substantial show themselves variously, according to various circumstances. And where some variety of manifestation is not seen, when circumstances are various, there is reason to think that the manifestation itself is not of true christian character, but some counterfeit of it. Let a man be self-denied to a certain degree in certain circumstances, and in other circumstances not more self-denied; and you may have cause to think that his former self-denial was not christian, but convenient and selfish. A man who out of his abundance will do something for the poor, ordinarily; and will do no more, when the poor would perish upon ordinary charity, is not a truly benevolent man. Circumstances now put his benevolence to the test, and prove it spurious. So may circumstances show the spuriousness of a man's religion, by making extraordinary exactions of him, which the man will not meet. We ought not then to inquire what a puritan christian did for the promotion of the gospel among the heathen, in order to find out what the gospel requires us to do. A puritan christian living in our times would not have been in this respect just what he was in his own: his piety would have been as transcendent here as it was in other things.—He would have been as much more self-sacri-

ficing and devoted than we are in advancing the cause of missions, as he was more spiritual and prayerful and universally conscientious.—If our times would have obliged a puritan christian to live thus, they oblige us also, and where is our personal christianity if we do not meet the obligation?

Brethren, the spirit of the millennium is breathed forth upon us in some measure by the times which are passing over us; let us not ask how others felt and what others did; let us imbibe and exemplify the spirit of the millennium. O what a mercy to live in this period of the world's duration! Better to live now than to have seen Christ or the apostles. Better to live now than to live in the millennium itself.—Something may now be done to hasten the millennium. God has put into our hands the golden skirts of the millennium, and by exerting our strength we may draw it upon the world sooner than it could otherwise come. Happy is he who, having prayers to offer, substance to contribute, a life to devote for the advance of the gospel, discerns the signs of the times, and doeth with his might what his hand findeth to do.

Suffer then, beloved brethren, a brief word of exhortation. Behold the spirit and manner of life which become all christians now dwelling on the earth: behold that spirit, and imbibe it; that manner of life, and pursue it. At all times, indeed, christians should have nothing else to care for in this world, but the glorious cause of Him who redeemed them to God by his blood. Their own true happiness, and the true happiness of man, temporal and eternal, is bound up in that cause; and moreover, their high vocation, their solemn profession, their openly avowed principles, hopes, and ends of life; and their holy covenant with God and His church so often renewed; most urgently demand always, that they propose to themselves but this one grand pursuit on earth, **THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL, THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD:** but lay it to your hearts, dear brethren—as you would not deny that the Heavens do rule in the affairs of mankind—we beseech you lay it well to your hearts and ponder it deeply—that this constant demand has, with respect to you, a most peculiar and most strenuous enforcement in the very remarkable signs of these times—those wondrous works of the Lord, those high operations of His hands, by which this age is so strikingly distinguished. Give yourselves soberly to this meditation, and let it stir you up to **HIGH AND SINGULAR EXEMPLIFICATIONS OF THE POWER OF GODLINESS.** It will have this effect if you let it have free course in your thoughts. Such exemplifications; and nothing else, will satisfy that call which the Lord of Hosts is at this day addressing to the church out

of the bright cloud of his wonderful providence. And know you not, brethren, that such exemplifications of christianity are of all things most needed? They, after all, are the "light of the world;" and all our plans and enterprises for diffusing light on the earth, will in the absence of these be but as a candle substituted for sunbeams. Light dwells in the Book of God in infinite fulness, and in some measure in its expositions by the ministry; but bible light must fill the hearts, and then shine out pure and bright in the example of living christians, or the mass of mankind will still keep themselves in darkness. Let the world be fully occupied with bibles; and then let there be also some genuine specimens of what the bible can do; of its power to exalt, and refine, and sanctify men; and let such specimens be multiplied as they were in the first days of the gospel, and the work of the world's conversion will cease to linger. But it will linger while christians content themselves with such small and stinted measures of personal holiness as are now general among them. It will linger while christians generally do not love Christ more, and love His church more, and love the souls of men more, and pray more, and move more holily and unblameably in all the walks of life, and show a sincerer faith in that great saying of their Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It will linger, and our bright prospects of approaching millennial glory will grow no brighter, and perhaps be presently overcast. Wherefore, brethren, beloved in Christ, practise we beseech you the just lesson of our subject; come out and be separate from the ranks of careless and customary professors; be not the servants of men; have no fear of singularity; look not around you for examples of spirituality; look not to former generations; but look to Christ, His claims, and His commands; and let your whole heart be open and bare to the influence of the signs of the times; and take the world henceforth to record that you count not your lives dear unto yourselves, so that you may finish your course with joy, and do the very utmost that by you may be done, to have the gospel of the grace of God preached and established among all nations.

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SERMON CXVIII.

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REGENERATION NOT WROUGHT BY LIGHT.

EZEK. XXXVI. 26.—*I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.*

“If I were as eloquent,” said one, “as the Holy Ghost, I could regenerate sinners as well as he;” implying that the whole change is wrought by light, with no power beyond save that which conveys truth to the mind. A similar theory, with some varieties, is spreading itself abroad in our country, and I intend to devote this sermon to an examination of the new doctrine; in doing which I shall be careful to use terms in their accustomed sense and with all needful explanations.

Man sustains two relations to God. He is a moral agent, that is, susceptible of obligations, and he is dependant on God for sanctifying impressions. In the former relation he is active, in the latter he is passive. These two relations are almost entirely independant of each other. That is to say, we are none the less dependant for being under obligations; and on the other hand, we are none the less bound to believe because faith is “the gift of God,” and none the less bound to love because love is “the fruit of the Spirit.” Our obligations rest on the faculties of a rational soul, unimpaired by our dependance or our temper. The only evil chargeable to our dependance is, that in some cases disinclination is not removed: but if disinclination destroys obligation, there can be no sin in the universe, and all punishment is oppression, and the slightest displeasure at the murderer of a father and mother is a prejudice. On the other hand, whether we have a disposition or only exercises, we *must* be dependant on God for holiness, and God himself cannot help it. He cannot make a creature independent of himself. He cannot create another God. And were we independent all would be lost. If God has no power and right efficiently to ensure the holiness of creatures, he cannot ensure the prosperity of the universe; he cannot ensure the continuance of heaven, and if you reach that world you are not certain of remaining there a day. He may be

disappointed of the end of all his works, and be as miserable as he is benevolent. If God cannot effectually secure my holiness, and I may not hope in him and pray to him for that, I feel for one that I must despair. I know I shall never do it myself. But in every case in which we are dependant, we are so far passive. If we are *acted upon* we are passive. We are constantly passive in receiving life, though in many of the functions of life we are active. In *receiving* that influence which causes either a right temper or right feelings, we must be passive, though in the feelings themselves we are active. This therefore must be true whether we have a disposition or only exercises. It must be true unless we are independent,—unless we create our own affections,—unless we do more than God does, who never created any part of his own mind.

By regeneration the Scriptures sometimes mean the change both in the temper and in the exercises which follow; namely, that in which the man is active, as well as that in which he is passive; and perhaps I may add, conviction also. Regeneration in this larger sense is certainly brought about by the instrumentality of the word. To this I refer all such passages as these: "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." "Is not my word like a fire—and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" But the old divines found it convenient to divide this change, (throwing out conviction,) into two parts. That change in the temper, antecedent to exercise, which is produced by the Spirit, they called regeneration; that change which consists in the new exercises of the moral agent, or in his actual turning to God, they called conversion. I shall use both of these words in the sense they did. Conviction is the presentation of truth to the mind, by the Spirit, before regeneration. Sanctification is the continued work of the Spirit after regeneration.

It is admitted on all hands that light is necessary to conviction and conversion. In the first place, it is the instrument of carrying on that preparatory work in the understanding and conscience which shows the soul its ruin and need of a Saviour, and fits it to make a just estimate of things, and to exercise all the Christian graces, when new life comes to be infused: and in the second place, it presents all the objects towards which the mind acts in conversion. Without the word, we have no authority from the Bible to say, there would ever be a saving change on earth.

I admit also that truth is *supernaturally* conveyed to the mind in conviction. But after the most powerful convictions the enmity of the heart often rages. The question now is, *Is the subsequent change in the temper produced by the power of truth thus seen and felt, or by the immediate power of God?* I say it is produced by the immediate power of God.

The advocates of the opposite theory generally speak of truth's being employed in the form of *motives* to regenerate the soul. Now motives are for moral agents, but regeneration, in this restricted sense, is no part of the treatment of moral agents. It is an impression made upon a passive

subject, not as a reward, nor in fulfilment of any promise to the subject himself, nor in answer to his prayers, nor by his help or co-operation, but notwithstanding his strenuous opposition to the last, and in spite of his infinite guilt. Sanctification on the other hand, though an operation on a passive subject, in one respect belongs to the treatment of moral agents. It is a gracious and promised *reward* for preceding faith and prayer.

I. My first argument shall take up this subject of motives; and I lay down this broad proposition, that nothing can be a motive which does not meet a corresponding taste. An invitation to a feast is no motive to one that is full, or whose sickly taste nauseates the provisions. There must be a corresponding taste in the heart before truth can move it to love. But the question is about the production of this very taste. The cause of this must act and exhaust itself before the effect is produced,—before the temper ceases to be carnal,—before it can be influenced by truth.

If you say there is nothing in the soul but exercises, and no taste, temper, or disposition but the *stated manner* in which God calls forth those exercises, then truth can in no sense *cause* love or hatred, but is only the *object* towards which the mind, by a predisposing power, is made thus to act. Seen and felt it may be, and may produce motions of conscience and calculations of interest; but why one mind should act towards it in love, and another, equally convicted, in hatred, is not accounted for by any thing in the truth itself, but must, upon this supposition, be referred to the immediate power of God. In both cases light is equally present, and if it were a cause, ought in both cases to produce the same effect. And how is it that truth *makes* itself *beloved* by a heart that just now hated it? How can a hated object transform the hatred into love, even as an instrument? If there is nothing in the mind but exercises, all its love and hatred must be produced by the immediate power of God. There is nothing to address, nothing to work upon but mind itself,—mind without a character, without a propensity to one thing rather than another. In such a mind there is no cause of love or hatred unless you resort to the self-determining power. Observe we are accounting for the *action* of the mind, and must find a cause *previous* to the action. If there is no self-determining power and no propensity, what is there in the mind to determine it to one thing rather than another? There is no depravity,—what should make it hate the truth? there is no holy propensity,—what should make it love the truth? If God is not the immediate cause of its love and its hatred, what is? A mind with no propensity, no nature, what should make it fall in or fall out with any object, but God's immediate power? Exercise after exercise comes out without any cause in the mind for its being love rather than hatred, or hatred rather than love. If there is a cause it must be in God or in motives. But it cannot be in motives where they are neither adapted nor inadapted to the mind: but to a mind of no propensity how can they be adapted or inadapted? Consider again that we are seeking for a cause previous to the action of the mind,—a mind without propensity,—a mind, of course, which neither loves the truth nor has any disposition or tendency

to love it. To such a mind the truth no more agrees than to a mind with an opposing temper. How then can it cause love? "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" How is it in the widely extended and well known empire of taste? Why do one set of objects please rather than another? Every body will tell you, *because* they are adapted to the tastes of men. But here is no taste, and therefore nothing to which truth is adapted, and therefore truth can be no cause of love; and for the same reason it can be no cause of hatred. Now as there is no cause of love or hatred in the mind before the exercise, nor yet in the truth, nor in any outward object, the cause of both, whatever be their objects, must be found in the immediate power of God.

But there *is* a taste or temper distinct from exercise. There is a *stated propensity* to feel and act thus and thus, which does not lie merely in the stated mode of God's operation, but *belongs to the man* and makes a part of his *character*, even when the temper is not in exercise. In the provision made in our constitution for those passions which depend on the body, you see a preparation to influence the future action of the heart. As moral agency and obligation are concerned, I know not that any difference is made if the predisposing cause is lodged in the body. In the case of habit there is a predisposition contracted, founded on the law of association by which our ideas are made to succeed each other in a certain order, carrying in their train *all the operations* of the mind. I know not that any difference is made if the origin of this order lies in the head. Why are we pleased with one object rather than another? The answer from every tongue is, *because it is adapted to our taste*. Who can doubt that every man has a great variety of tastes, fitted to relish a still greater variety of objects in nature, in art, in science, in literature, in business, in amusements, in society? The long disputed question about a *standard* of taste turn on this, whether in the race at large there is such a similarity of constitution as fits them to relish the same objects and to be disgusted with the same. These tastes, which exist anterior to the pleasure or disgust, are certainly in the mind, and are so connected with desire, love, hatred, and other affections as their cause, that they must be referred to the heart. Allow one of this family of tastes to stand related to divine objects, and I have found what I sought. But it is hard, you say, to suppose a disposition which must be removed by the Spirit before a man can love God: it looks like a chain which binds him hand and foot and destroys obligation. But the basis of obligation, which is none other than natural ability, lies in the faculties of a rational soul, and is not impaired by an opposing temper. And as to the necessity of having the disposition changed, that only makes the man dependant on God for regeneration, the same that he is if he has nothing but exercises. It is no harder to be dependant for a disposition than for affections. Fix in your mind the entire consistency between dependance and obligation, and this difficulty will vanish. You say you cannot conceive what that temper is. But you can conceive of an appetite of the mind antecedent to desire, as easily as you can conceive of an appetite of the body antecedent to hunger. You can conceive of a tendency of

the heart to a *certain kind* of exercise, as easily as you can conceive of a heart prepared to exercise at all,—as easily as you can conceive of an intellect adapted to the acquisition of knowledge,—as easily as you can conceive of any faculty of the mind, or of the mind itself, distinct from exercise. And certainly you can conceive of this moral temper as easily as you can conceive of those tastes which predispose men to relish the beauties of nature and art. You cannot comprehend any of the operations of matter or of mind; and if you deny whatever you cannot comprehend, you will be a skeptic indeed. You cannot conceive what that temper is? What then is *talent* antecedent to the action of intellect? Tell me this and I will tell you that. And then, by the same reasoning, there is nothing in intellect but action; and that one acts more strongly than another, is not to be ascribed to any thing in the mind which we call talent, but to the immediate power of God acting in a stated way. And what is there in any faculty of the mind distinct from exercise? in imagination, memory, perception, judgment, taste? What is there in reason? What is there in mind itself? And where are we now? Like Hume we have annihilated mind, and left nothing, as Stewart says, “but impressions and ideas,”—that worst extreme in which Berkleianism exploded.

But reason as we may, the fact is before all men, that one set of motives must be addressed to one man and another to another, according to the existing temper, which is calculated upon before the exercises are excited. You say the calculation is, that a man will *act* as he *has acted*, and will be influenced by such motives as have influenced him before: that is all. No, the calculation looks beyond action or feeling to a *causal propensity* evinced by action, and which is conceived to belong to the man and to constitute his susceptibility of the impression desired. This is the common sense of mankind. You look upon a man as avaricious even when he is not thinking of his gains, as overbearing even when dissolved in grief; and would you manage him, you adapt your motives to his habitual temper, which you ascribe to him both when he sleeps and when he wakes. In matters of business and the arts and in the selection of society, we ascribe to men diversities of tastes altogether distinct from acts of judging and choosing, and which we regard as the *causes* of those acts and inherent in the character. You ascribe to the sleeping lion the nature of a lion and not of a lamb. It was the old way of thinking that every animal had a *nature* and *acted it out*; that the horse acted thus *because* it had the nature of a horse and not of a serpent; that the different natures of birds, fish, and worms were the *causes* of their different actions. But now it seems there is no cause of any distinctive animal action in the animal itself, except the mere organization of brute matter. Sin has no root in the human soul. The heart acts so because it acts so. To make depravity the reason would only be to make a thing the cause of itself. There is nothing in the fountain which causes it to send forth bitter waters rather than sweet. If you say, the task will be as great to find a cause for the depraved temper, I answer: the well known process of induction is the inferring of a general law from particular facts. That law, which is regarded as the *cause* of the

facts arranged under it, may be resolved into another still more general, until you come to the most general that can be discovered. And for that you can assign no other reason than that such is the will of our Creator. Now the question is, whether, when you have found that the exercises of the heart are sinful, you have come to the most general conclusion possible, or whether, from the universal and continued exercise of sin, we may not infer a sinful nature or disposition in the race, just as we infer the law of gravitation from the frequent fall of heavy bodies. And if we may, and can go back no farther, we are not to be reproached with presenting a fact without assigning a cause. If we know of no cause beyond but the First Cause of all, it is exactly what occurs in every branch of physical science. From repeatedly seeing steel filings drawn towards a magnet, we infer the general law of magnetical attraction. But if we are required to tell the cause of magnetical attraction, we can only say, Such is the will of our Creator. It is an original law of our nature to ascribe every change to a cause. The exercises of our minds involve a change, and therefore we instinctively seek for a cause; and when we have traced them to *nature*, which does not change, we look no farther, we can go no farther. This is more than common sense, it is instinct, it is an ultimate law of the human understanding.

That the belief of mankind is what I have represented it, is proved decisively from their language. How came such words in every tongue as *temper* and *disposition*, if nothing answering to them was supposed to exist? And it is still more certain from the language of Scripture, which accommodates itself to the common apprehensions of mankind. That language constantly refers to something in the mind, good or bad, which is anterior to exercise, and which gives rise to all our feelings and passions. I scarcely know how to make a selection,—it is found on every page. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, *for his seed remaineth in him* and he cannot sin.” “That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*, and that which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*.” “*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 a *heart of flesh*.” “*The spirit that dwelleth in us* lusteth to envy.” “Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and *they enter in and dwell there*.” Indeed every case of demoniacal possession, indicated a diseased state of the mind which was the cause of diseased action. May I not strengthen my argument by analogies drawn from the body? That has appetites distinct from the desires they occasion. The quenched eye has impediments to seeing distinct from *not seeing*, and unremovable by light.

And now what have you to oppose to these analogies, to the language of the Bible, and to the language and common sense of mankind? Nothing but a bare hypothesis, namely, that the mind has no properties, and of course no powers, but exercise;—an unsupported hypothesis, for which not a particle of proof can be adduced,—which is not a thing that admits of proof;—a mere assumption which, logically or illogically, is employed to sweep away some

of the most important doctrines of the Gospel, such as the depravity of infants and supernatural regeneration. It takes the new creation out of the hands of the Spirit and ascribes it to moral suasion, like the Pelagians of other days.

It is impossible, according to any known law of motives, that the presentation of a hated object, (hated in all its character and aspects,) should produce love. You say the object may recommend itself to the understanding and conscience, and so impress the heart. But if any thing is proved by the history of our world, it is this, that the understanding and conscience cannot control the heart. If they could, men would always do as well as they know how, knowledge would carry reformation wherever it goes, and no conscience would upbraid for present action in any world. But understanding and conscience, with all the light of eternity, will never convert a devil.

As certainly as an object is hated in all its character and aspects, it will be hated the more the more it is seen. If it is hated only under partial and mistaken views, and would be loved if seen in all its parts, the object itself, considered as a whole, is not hated. But if it is hated as a whole, it must be hated in proportion to the clearness with which it is seen. What can possibly prevent? Hatred must become greater hatred the more it is perceived. God may make the heart love the hated object, but the object itself is neither cause nor instrument of the *change*. It is the *occasion* of action of *some sort*, but not the cause or instrument of the *change from hatred to love*.

All the truths of revelation respect the character and government of God and his relations to us. The light is only *God revealed*. No such light can bring the natural heart to love the character of God. If it could, the natural heart is not totally depraved. If the more full explanations of the divine character present an object which the natural heart loves, what it hated before was not the true God, but a false image of God, and to have loved it as God would have been idolatry; and what has been called enmity against God, was only a commendable aversion to an idol. But if the carnal heart hates the *true* God, it will hate him the more the more he is seen, as surely as it is governed by motives. Light, so far from extinguishing the flame of rebellion, is only oil cast upon the fire. So it is in hell. The more God is seen the more raging is the enmity, because it is the real character of God that they hate. So it is with convicted sinners. Never was their enmity thus inflamed until they came to have clear ideas of the God of the law. I have seen them ready to gnash with their teeth but a few hours or even minutes before they began the immortal song.

The impossibility that light should produce love to God before the heart is changed by a higher influence, appears farther from the nature of the disease. That consists in supreme selfishness. In the nature of things there can be no rivals for the supreme affection but God and self. Where

God is not loved self must be supreme, and then the God of the law cannot fail to be hated, and hated in proportion as he is seen. When the sinner sees God standing over him with a drawn sword, and saying, If you do not love me better than yourself, I will dash those interests which you so dearly love, to all eternity, he must hate such a God as surely as he is governed by motives. Light cast upon the milder parts of the divine character, may bribe him into a selfish love, but nothing can make the whole character of a commanding and condemning God dear to a selfish heart. The temper must be changed to that of disinterested benevolence, before such an object can become a motive to love. The change must be completed before light can act. It cannot therefore be produced by light.

II. But notwithstanding all this evidence that light can do nothing to the carnal heart but inflame its enmity, it is still asserted that the heart is changed by the power inherent in light, inherent in it at least as a second cause. "If I were as eloquent as the Holy Ghost, I could regenerate sinners as well as he." As much as to say, "Could I lay the truth in clearly before the mind, I need do nothing more, the Holy Ghost needs do nothing more; the truth would do the rest." Whether the truth does it as a god, (for the Holy Ghost does nothing more than put the truth in,) or only as a second cause through which the God of nature works, we are not told. Give it the most favourable construction and say the latter, then regeneration, distinct from conviction, is a mere natural process.

By the course of nature in the material world we understand the action of God through second causes according to invariable laws. Whether the course of nature in the world of mind is always conducted through second causes and by invariable laws, we have not so much the means of judging; though from analogy we generally conceive the two cases to be alike. But here it is assumed that truth, when placed in clear view of the mind, will in *all* cases produce the effect without any other agent, at least without any other than that which acts through truth as a second cause. All beyond conviction then is a pure natural process.

But you say, truth is instrumental in *sanctification*, and yet the process is allowed to be supernatural. This calls for a distinct explanation of the laws by which sanctification is conducted.

In the first creation there was a set of laws established by which God could stately, and perhaps invariably, act through second causes, both in the world of matter and of mind. This is the course of nature. But the whole process of raising a world dead in trespasses and sins to the life of holiness, by the Holy Ghost procured for men by the atonement and obedience of Christ, is above nature. And yet, so far as this course belongs to the treatment of moral agents, it is conducted, for the most part at least, by fixed laws, that creatures may know on what terms they may hope to receive, and may be governed by motives. There were therefore in the second creation certain laws established by which the supernatural process

of sanctification might be carried on by instruments. Passing over those means of grace which only bring truth to the mind, such as preaching, sacraments, and dispensations of providence, I will select four laws which exclusively relate to the supernatural treatment of holy moral agents, but which are analogous to laws established for moral agents in the first creation. The first is, that both in conversion and in the progress of sanctification, holy feelings are called forth by motives addressed to a corresponding taste, and therefore by the instrumentality of truth. The second is, that faith, in proportion to the clearness of its vision, obtains, by promise, greater measures of sanctification. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Views of God are by the Spirit made transforming, somewhat after the manner of imitation, and the medium through which the views are obtained is truth. The third is, that desires after holiness, (which always have truth for their object and guide,) are, in proportion to their strength, followed with increased sanctification, according to the promise, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The fourth is, that prayer for the Holy Spirit, (which is always excited and directed by truth,) is, in proportion to its sincerity, followed with larger communications of the Spirit, according to the promise, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

All these laws are for moral agents,—for *holy* moral agents,—established therefore in the new creation,—and relating of course to supernatural agency. But none of them can apply to regeneration, or the new creation itself. Here the thing done is no part of the treatment of a moral agent, but an impression upon a passive subject, not made as a reward, nor in fulfilment of any promise to the subject himself, nor in answer to his prayers; not brought about by motives, for there is no taste to which a holy motive could be addressed,—no eye to see the glory of God. It is not a case to which the laws of the new creation can be applied, for the new creation does not exist. The laws of nature were not established before the first creation, and *these* laws cannot be applied until the soul is created anew "in Christ Jesus." If light is made a second cause here, it must be according to the laws established in the first creation, that is, according to the course of nature.

That the speculations of the present day about the instrumentality of light, lead to this conclusion, is evident from facts not a few. Among others, an esteemed friend in the Gospel ministry, a man of mind, who has been perplexed by these speculations, though he has not yielded to them, lately proposed to me the following question: "May not the combined power of *conscience* and *hope*, put in operation by light, regenerate the sinner by natural laws?" The natural effects of conscience and hope he illustrated by a murderer humbled by conscience into a sense of deserving the punishment awarded, and reformed by this sense and the offer of pardon on condition of his reformation. In proportion to his conviction his enmity

to the court abates, and when the judge recommends him to mercy, it is changed into love. And if human law and pardon can do so much, cannot God's law and Gospel, working on conscience and hope, produce a still more radical change? "As to devils," he adds, "I know nothing that forbids the belief that they experience all that conscience would thus produce by light, in utter despair; hope making the only and immense difference between them and the human believer." He then asks this sweeping question: "May not the language of the Scriptures respecting the agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, be as compatible with this view of the process, as the biblical forms of speech respecting the acts of Providence are with the natural and invariable operations of the laws of matter and mind?"

To all this I say, (1.) That this murderer's love was only selfish; for as to any other, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." When we love God "because he first loved us," it is moral excellence that we love; and that cannot be loved but by a holy heart. That a selfish heart should be moved by kindness, is nothing new; but that it should be made *holy* by that kindness which pleases a selfish spirit, is a theory which makes holiness itself selfish. You say it is not selfishness but self-love that is addressed. But self-love is necessarily selfishness when it is supreme, as it is in every unregenerate man. (2.) The law of God comes indeed with greater authority and purity and sanctions than the laws of men. It therefore presents greater motives. But as no motives can change the carnal temper, or transform the action of the heart from hatred to love, the law and Gospel of God, no more than the law and mercies of men, can prevail without the Spirit. (3.) According to this hypothesis, the Gospel proclaimed in hell would convert every devil without the Holy Spirit. (4.) According to this construction of the *language* of Scripture, what, I ask, is the office work of the Holy Ghost, since all is done by the God of nature? and why is so much said in the Bible of the Divine Spirit, and of the *outpouring* of the Spirit, in reference to regeneration and sanctification, any more than in reference to the fruits of the earth and a thousand natural changes upon mind? The very ascription of this work to the Holy Ghost, comes in the room of a hundred arguments to prove it supernatural. The Trinity is unknown to nature,—is above nature,—is brought into use and revealed in that great work which was unneeded when the laws of nature were established, the results of which are called a new creation, the new heavens and new earth. No provision was made in nature for the Spirit to come to our world after the fall. The race were sentenced to the curse of perpetual abandonment; and without the atonement of Christ the Spirit could not come to men consistently with the honour of the law, and now comes as the reward of his obedience and in fulfilment of his covenant claims. The mission and operations of the Spirit therefore cannot belong to nature, unless the mission, atonement, and obedience of Christ belonged to nature. Now though Christ's mission, birth, and mediation were above nature, yet he adapted himself to the nature of man in his instructions, in his manner of address, in the proofs of his

mission, and therefore in his very miracles. His death itself was according to nature, though its influence on the destinies of the world was above nature. It is no evidence therefore that a thing is not above nature in its origin and power, because in its course of operation it coincides with nature. The Spirit so far adapts himself to the nature of man that he cooperates with modes of address suited to that nature: otherwise ministers and Christians, in addressing others, would have no encouragement to adopt the manner which their zeal dictates and which their judgment sees adapted to the nature of their hearers. He employs light to convince, and motives, addressed to a corresponding taste, to move the mind. All these things belonging to the treatment of moral agents, are conducted by laws analogous to those established for moral agents in the first creation. But this by no means weakens the proof that the power which he exerts in changing the *temper* of an enemy to that of a friend, not by motives addressed to a moral agent, but by an impression upon one who certainly is passive in *receiving* it, is supernatural. It was proper that the whole treatment of moral agents,—the government, the means of instruction, conviction, and persuasion,—should be adapted to their nature, under both the original constitution and the new; but the power which gives effect to motives and persuasions by an operation on a depraved heart, belongs not to the God of nature, but to one of the Persons of the Trinity, denominated the Holy Ghost because the Author of holiness in fallen man.

If the power acted through the laws of nature it would be uniform, and a person acquainted with all the natural laws of matter and mind, and knowing those which would be brought into action in a certain case, could infallibly predict the result. Why then do persons, the most stubborn and the most exposed to temptation and the farthest removed from the means of grace, often become Christians, while others, the most favoured through life, die in their sins? And why are men, without any apparent natural cause, *suddenly* convicted and converted? And why is a whole town roused, and hundreds converted in a few weeks, by an influence whose beginning had been working for months in twenty different minds unknown to each other, and without the possibility of being traced to any natural cause?

There *are* changes in the disposition which are brought about by natural laws; but these are all *gradually* produced, except in the single case where the change arises from a sudden affection of the body. But here is the greatest of all changes produced in an instant: for it can be proved that a man is an enemy to God *until* he loves him supremely, and therefore must leap from one state to the other in a moment.

This change is set forth in Scripture under emblems and names of things wholly supernatural; such as a new creation, a new birth, a resurrection, the miraculous opening of eyes and ears. Allowing regeneration in these passages to be taken in its widest sense, can it be supposed that the supernatural part is confined to conviction and conversion? That these two are

supernatural I admit and maintain ; but surely the change of the *temper*, so that it shall regularly send forth, at the bidding of motives, supreme love to God, where, before, the same motives called forth nothing but enmity, is much the most wonderful part of the general change. Shall this be pronounced the mere effect of light operating invariably as a second cause ? This would,

III. Detract greatly from the glory of God's power in regeneration. It would make the change no more evincive of special power than restoration to health or the taming of the wildness of youth. All that the Holy Ghost does upon this supposition, is to hold truth to the conscience and heart, and when the sinner struggles to get away, to press it upon him, until the truth by its own power, (which you say is God acting statedly through that second cause,) prevails. What then is the office of the Holy Ghost in this thing, distinct from the God of nature ? Between that thumb and finger I hold a candle to a wet board, and keep it there against all attempts to remove it, until the board is dried and inflamed and consumed. Does that thumb and finger represent all that the Holy Ghost does in regeneration, beyond what is done by the God of nature acting through truth ? That holding of truth to the mind is only conviction. The Holy Ghost then does nothing but convict, and truth regenerates. Where then is the exhibition of mighty power ? The change is spoken of as a manifestation of as great power as the first creation. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is spoken of as a manifestation of no less power than the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know—what is *the exceeding greatness of his power* to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Now is this marvellous power confined to the mere work of conviction ? Thousands are convicted, apparently as much as those who soon afterwards are subdued, and yet turn back ; and no one speaks of the mighty power manifested in their case. Or is it in conversion that this wondrous power chiefly appears ? But this calling forth of holy exercises by motives addressed to a taste already holy, evinces no greater power than the whole process of sanctification. But no such emphasis is laid on sanctification as indicative of mighty power. The greatness of the manifestation lies in subduing an *enemy*, and the chief point consists in breaking his *temper*.

But you say, these texts do speak of the power of God in sanctification. Then your cause is lost. For if sanctification evinces so much power, none will pretend that regeneration discovers less.

But I seem to hear you say again, It is none the less the power of God because it acts through a second cause : what is the influence of a second cause but the stated action of divine power ? This is probably true of

physical or material causes, but not of such a cause as truth. Although physical causes and their essential properties must be allowed to have a real existence, or, like Berkeley, we blot out the material universe; yet, so far as man can see, they are nothing but stated antecedents, and their influence is only the stated action of divine power, and nothing intervenes between that power and the effect. All this is generally admitted by philosophers of second causes in the material world; but truth is quite a different thing, as I hope presently to show. In the mean time it is sufficient to say, that the power of God acting statedly through a second cause, is only what we see in the ordinary course of nature.

IV. But it seems utterly impossible that light should in any way be a second cause of this change, or that God should act through it as he does through a physical cause. There seems no conceivable way in which light can operate even as an instrument, but these four: first, by being the natural means of doctrinal belief and knowledge; secondly, by being the instrument of supernatural conviction, and, as a consequence, awaking natural remorse, fear, desire, and the like; thirdly, by drawing forth holy affections from a holy heart; fourthly, by calling forth from a selfish heart, enmity, and in its perverted forms and misapplications, hope, joy, love, and various other passions. Can you conceive of a fifth way in which it can act? in which it can change the natural temper? What is that way? Look at the thing on every side and tell me.

But you say, Rein me not up so close. If I cannot tell how, the Scriptures pronounce the fact, and your reasoning is only philosophy. But the Scriptures do not pronounce any fact in opposition to my theory. They sometimes speak of regeneration in the larger sense, as comprehending conversion and perhaps conviction, and then make the Gospel the instrument of the general change. To this I fully agree. But if a question is raised about the cause which changes the natural *temper*, no text of Scripture, I believe, contradicts the view which I have given. I press you then to tell me how light can possibly be a second cause, or even an instrument, of this change.

I admit however, what philosophers generally allow, that in the physical world it is impossible to comprehend how any one of two events proceeds from the other as its cause, or in another department, how the will moves the body. Nor can we any better comprehend how the First Cause produces its effects. Yet we must not, on account of this ignorance, say that any thing may be the cause of any thing. A physical cause is defined to be a *stated* antecedent, through which God acts so uniformly that from the cause we may infer the effect. Thus if we see fire falling upon powder, we may confidently expect an explosion. In supernatural operations I know not whether I ought to speak of *second causes*; but even here the course is so far regular and adapted to the known constitution of things, that we can judge what are and what are not *instruments*. Not every antecedent is an instrument, even when it is a professed harbinger of the

event. Thus Moses' rod, though purposely stretched out over the sea, was in no sense the instrument by which the waters were divided. This was done as much by the immediate power of God as though there had been no antecedent. There was no *stated* influence lodged, or apparently lodged, in the antecedent. So, though conviction by the instrumentality of truth precedes regeneration, for purposes obviously distinct from any causality in the change, we must not assign to that antecedent the power of a second cause or instrument if in no conceivable way it can act as such. We can easily apprehend the fact that light can produce belief and knowledge, can work conviction, can call forth holy exercises from a holy heart, can call forth enmity from a heart unholy; but how it can change the hostile temper, no man can tell, no man can conceive. It certainly has no perceivable tendency that way. It cannot influence the event according to any law by which second causes are known to act. In a physical cause there is to all appearance an inherent power; and God's stated mode of action is so much in a line with it, that we commonly call it the action of the second cause; and it requires a mind well disciplined by philosophy to see that the power does not reside in the stated antecedent. So when truth is brought into clear view of a mind which *God has prepared*, it acts or seems to act by its own inherent power. Nothing but the truth is seen, nothing but the truth is felt. But where is there any such apparent tendency in truth to change the carnal temper? where more than in loathed provisions to transmute the aversion to relish? Though unable to explain the action of second causes, we may very often know that an antecedent is not a second cause. You may build a fence before you sow your seed, and that erection may be a *stated* antecedent, but we know it was not the cause of the crop. The birth of the father is a stated antecedent to the birth of the son, but not a physical cause.

But you say, though, like a physical cause, truth can do nothing itself, yet God can give it energy by acting upon it as "the sword of the Spirit," or acting through it as he does through a physical cause. God act upon truth! What possible meaning can there be to such an expression? God *produces* truth by bringing to pass those facts and relations which are the subjects of it. He can produce *new* truths by giving existence to new facts and relations, and can make a proposition which was true of a subject yesterday, not true to-day, by changing that subject. But what has become truth, cannot, while continuing such, be changed in nature or form or pushed from place to place. Of physical causes God does indeed uphold the existence and properties by acting on *them*, and as their influence is only the stated exertion of his power, he acts *through* them. Not so with truth. Truth is what it is, and God can neither take from it nor add to it, but by changing the relations of *things*. The doctrines it contains, after being made true by the relations established in *things*, have in themselves, and without deriving it from any being, such a tendency to affect a given temper as they have. No being can add any thought or relation of thoughts, (without changing the relation of *things*,)—any energy or any property whatever, not found in them before. Truth, in this sense, is eternal and

immutable. God no more upholds the existence and properties of divine truth, (aside from sustaining the relations of things,) than he supports the eternal relations of mathematical verities. But it is not for him to create or destroy the truth that two and two make four. If any thing is done to carry divine truth to the mind, it must be done by an operation, not on truth, but on the mind itself. This is done even in sanctification. Where truth is really made an instrument, the power is not exerted on truth but on the mind. As it is however the truths of the word which enter the soul in conversion, the word is called "the sword of the Spirit;" but the hand which introduces it is not applied to the sword to open a passage for itself, but to the heart to remove its seven-fold plates of brass. What is it that keeps truth from the conscience and heart of a stupid sinner under the Gospel? Nothing but unbelief, arising from hatred of the truth. As then the hindrance lies in the heart and not in the truth, where but to the heart should the removing power be applied? And what saith the Scripture? Not, "I will exert my power upon truth," but, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

Nor is there any conceivable way in which God can act *through* truth, as he does through physical causes *whose influence is only the stated exertion of his power*. The power of truth is *its own*, and all that can be done besides presenting it, is to prepare the *mind* to feel and love it and act under its influence,—its *own proper* influence after the mind is thus prepared.

In this respect truth is altogether different from a second cause in nature. And it is different in another respect, which renders the application to it of the name of second cause of doubtful propriety, even when it is used as an instrument. The stated antecedents in nature are called second causes because to a superficial view they possess the whole power which produces the effect. But truth surrounds itself with no such shadow of an efficient cause. It holds out no appearance of power beyond its own. It drops indeed its own *undeviated* influence upon a heart which God has prepared; but, of two convicted men, it pretends not to make the difference between him that loves and him that hates itself. By a power upon the mind it is made, in conviction, conversion, and sanctification, to penetrate the soul like a sword, and seems exactly entitled to the name of *instrument*.

In short, as truth cannot change the natural temper as a second cause, and as God cannot help out its power but by acting upon the mind, (and thus really doing the work without it,) it cannot succeed in any way.

Objection I.—Upon this plan there is little encouragement to the unregenerate to put themselves in the way of the means of grace, or to the people of God to present truth before them.

Answer.—There is every encouragement that there can be on any plan. Unless there is a body of truth formed in their understanding by the word of

God, and deeply impressed upon their conscience by the convicting Spirit, they are not prepared to exercise a new heart should it be given them, and we have no authority to say that it will in any case be given them, and we know that as a general rule it will not be given them. Without instruction and conviction therefore by the truths of God, there is no reason to expect that the Spirit will ever change their hearts. And when their hearts are changed, without truth before them there are no objects towards which they can exercise their new affections. Here are reasons as pressing as upon any plan to drive sinners to the means of grace, and to persuade Christians to follow them with the sublime and awful and winning verities of the Gospel.

Objection II. But this is dwelling so much on their passiveness and so little on their obligations immediately to accept the Gospel! is contemplating them so much as mere tablets and so little as agents who are to be assailed by "the sword of the Spirit"!.

Answer. I said in the outset that they are both passive and active. This question respects them in their passive relation. But, as much in one view as the other, it leaves them complete moral agents, bound by every obligation to give their hearts to God at once. As much in one view as the other, the pressure of their obligations is the direct and most powerful means to convince them of their guilt and ruin and bring them to the feet of their King. That is, while we are pressing them with their obligations and demerits, and urging them to a Saviour's arms, that is the time when the Holy Ghost is most likely to transform the rock to flesh, to quell them into submission and draw them out to Christ. All this is true, and reveals the very process whose *outward* front has given colour to that notion of instrumentality which I am opposing. All this is true, and warrants me before I stop to turn full upon the enemies of God, and say, O rebels, drop those weapons from your bloody hands. Infinite obligations press you to this. Eternal plagues await a moment's delay. Almighty love has dropped around you from the skies, and written its claims in the bloody inscriptions of Calvary. Heaven pleads as though itself were to suffer. Compassion has wept her ocean full. O sinner, drop that murderous spear that would open all his wounds afresh. Tear out that heart that, unless bribed by prosperity and hope or stupified by ignorance or unbelief, is foaming with the rage of a devil. All that is great, all that is good, all that is lovely and tender, bends to implore you. O submit, or it shall be written on the broad side of heaven and on every corner of the universe, that for that hour's refusal you deserve eternal fire. Amen.

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SERMON CXIX.

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THE DUTY OF RESTITUTION.

LUKE xix. 8.—*Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

NOTHING is more obvious than the antipathy felt by a certain class of professed Christians against the preaching of morality, as if it infringed upon the great doctrine of justification by faith. If it be a cold, pagan, heartless, philosophic morality, detached from religion, and independent of its influence, let it be rejected—let it not be brought into the pulpit. Such a philosophy of morals presents erroneous views of the character of God, and the condition of man; appeals not openly to the revealed will of the Creator, as the standard of right and wrong; and enforces the obligations of virtue rather from the considerations of feeling, honor, and interest, than from those higher, nobler, purer motives which Jehovah addresses to us in his word. But if it be a morality founded upon Christian principle, and looking directly to the will of God as its rule, and the glory of God as its end, it is surely proper for the discussion of the pulpit, and suited to the state of man as a fallen creature. Men need to be reminded of the nature and indispensable necessity of Christian virtues, and to be often urged to the practical duties of the New Testament. The Savior often preached such morality, and the apostles inculcated it in all their epistles. It is enforced by the example of him who uttered the words which we have read to you: "*Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*"

It is the language of Zaccheus, "the chief among the publicans;" that is, either the principal tax-gatherer, who had others under him, or else the most respectable and honorable man among that class at Jericho. To the Jews, the name and profession of a publican were excessively odious. They esteemed themselves a free people, maintained that they ought to have no other king but God, and submitted with great impatience to the Roman yoke. It is natural, therefore, to suppose that they regarded those who were employed to collect the foreign tribute as betrayers of the liberties of their country, and abettors of their enemies. The character of these men was another reason for the enmity which was felt for them. In general, they were persons in whom avarice, rapacity, and fraud were joined with excessive luxury and vile debauchery.

Behold one of this class incited to seek the grace and compassion of the Redeemer! He sees Jesus—receives him joyfully into his house—profits by his instructions—cheerfully obeys his will, and makes the public declaration: "*Behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*" What a noble proof of the sincerity of his conversion! Sighs, tears, groans, fasts, all would have been unavail-

ing without this. God demands *actions* as evidence of our piety; requires us to "*bring forth fruits meet for repentance*;" and issues his command—"*Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil, learn to do well.*" What cheerful and implicit obedience does Zaccheus pay to this command! His penitence is announced by a prompt and firm resolution to do good, and to repair evil; to sacrifice his interest, that ruling passion, which had probably caused him to commit a thousand acts of injustice. He contents not himself with a simple desire—with one of those vain projects, the execution of which is deferred from day to day. He is ready *instantly* to do it; "the half of my goods I give to the poor." The Jews contented themselves with devoting the tenth part of their revenue to charitable purposes, but the penitent publican exceeds them, and gives "the half of" his "goods." He does more than this. He resembles not those who suppose that by their alms they can recover and repair their frauds; and who give to the poor only what they have obtained by injustice. Such men seem to think God a judge whom they can corrupt by a part of their booty, and appear secretly to use to him the language of those robbers mentioned in the book of Proverbs: "*Thou shalt have thy lot with us; we will all have one purse*;" thus hoping to secure a sanction to their injustice and fraud. Not so with Zaccheus. Though he consecrates a large portion of his estate to relieve the wants of the distressed, yet he reserves enough to compensate those whom he has defrauded, and to compensate them with interest;—"If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." This restitution the Roman laws obliged the tax-gatherers to make, when it was proved that they had abused their power by oppressing the people. But here was no such proof. The man, to show the sincerity of his conversion, does it of his own accord.

The duty enforced by the example of Zaccheus is that of **RESTITUTION**, or the act by which we restore to our neighbor that of which we have unjustly deprived him. Let us

- I. *Show on what the duty is founded, and then*
- II. *Inquire in what manner it should be performed.*

I. *The foundation of the duty of restitution.*

1. It is founded on the *very nature of justice*; for justice consists in rendering to every one what belongs to him. If we had no Scriptures to instruct us in the will of God on this point, still natural reason would sufficiently teach us that it is our duty to restore all that we have fraudulently acquired, or unjustly retained. Of all the human virtues, justice is first in importance. This is the cement of human society,—the spirit which connects all its members—which inspires its various relations, and maintains the order and subordination of every part. Without it, society would become a den of thieves and banditti, hating and hated, devouring and devoured by one another. Among many nations unvisited by Divine Revelation, the duty of restitution has been often enjoined, and declared by the laws necessary for the well-being of society. Among the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans it was demanded as a proper regard to the rights of others, and the means of preserving them sacred and inviolate. And among the Mahomedans it is enforced with equal rigor. "It is usual," says a writer familiar with the customs of the East, "when a Turk is near death, for his relations to approach his bed with all the papers that refer to his property, and presenting them to him one by one, to inquire whether his conscience accuses him of any injustice in the acquisition of his wealth. Without this examination, and the consequent reparation of any injury he has committed, he cannot gain admission into paradise."

My brethren, if Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah; will rise up against Jerusalem, and condemn it at the last day, will not these nations, covered as

they were with ignorance and delusion, rise up against those false Christians who live and die in the neglect of a duty so clearly taught by the light of nature, and so plainly founded upon the first principles of justice?

2. *Let us appeal to the Holy Scriptures.* In the 22d chapter of Exodus, in the 6th of Leviticus, and in the 5th of Numbers, we find express ordinances on this subject. "If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." "If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor; or hath found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein; then it shall be, because he hath sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found; or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it pertaineth." "When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty, then they shall confess their sin which they have done; and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal part thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed." In these passages the unjust person is solemnly ordered by God to restore to his neighbor whatever he had taken by fraud or violence. The prophet Ezekiel speaks the same sentiment: "If the wicked restore the pledge, and give again that he hath robbed, he shall surely live;" and consequently, if he refuse to restore the pledge, and to give back what he hath taken away, he shall die. In conformity with this law, Nehemiah required the people to make restitution of all that they had gained from taking advantage of the necessities of their brethren. In conformity with this law, Samuel, about to resign the government into the hands of Saul, says to the assembled people, "Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed. Whose ox or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." In conformity with this law Zaccheus could not appease his conscience until he had made the resolution, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

3. Restitution is a duty so indispensable, that *without it there is no salvation.* At first view this assertion may appear harsh and uncharitable; yet its truth must be evident upon the least reflection. Tell me, can we be saved without repentance? No! "*Except ye repent ye shall perish,*" is the language of your Judge. But do we really repent of an injustice which we have committed, when we refuse to repair it? Do we not, on the contrary, cover with the mask of religious sorrow a real impenitence? Is it not mockery of God to declare to him that we bewail our acts of injustice, while we persist in keeping "the wages of iniquity?" Are not those under the most awful self-delusion who flatter themselves that their sins are forgiven, while they refuse to restore what they have illegally acquired, if it lie in the compass of their power? Tell me, can we be in a state of grace and salvation, when we are in actual rebellion against the orders of God? But whoever retains the property of another sins doubly, both against the law which commands him to restore it, and against that which forbids him to keep it. Tell me, can we be in a state of salvation, when we have no love to God, and no love to our neighbor? But the man who refuses to make restitution loves not God; for he despises his laws and tramples upon his authority—nor does he love his neighbor; for he voluntarily persists in wronging him, and withholding from him his rights. Were he to weep tears of blood, both the justice

and mercy of Jehovah would shut out his prayer, if he made no amends to his neighbor for the injury he may have done him. The mercy of God, through the blood of atonement, can alone pardon his guilt; but no dishonest man can expect this; and he is a dishonest man who illegally holds the property of another in his hand.

We proceed,

II. *To inquire what is necessary for the performance of this duty?*

1. *We must examine with care whether we have ever wronged our neighbor, and in how many modes we have done it.* We cannot too carefully examine ourselves on this subject, nor be too much guarded against the thousand illusions which men form to satisfy their consciences. To elude the duty of restitution, they will shut their eyes upon their conduct, and then plead ignorance. But behold Zaccheus! He perceives that it is very possible that in the exercise of his office he has committed many acts by which justice was violated and conscience wounded. The vow he utters in the presence of the Savior includes an engagement to make the most exact inquiries. "If I have taken *any* thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." He specifies this particular kind of injustice, because it was the crime most familiar to his profession. Do you, in like manner, put your hand upon your consciences, impartially examine your past life, and recall your acts of injustice. Here, you spread a successful snare for the simplicity of another: there, you openly abused his confidence. Here, you took advantage of his ignorance; there, of his extreme need. These you dazzled by fair promises which were never performed; those, in some other mode, you artfully and cunningly deceived. Allege not for your excuse, example—custom—the necessity of acting like others. All this is of no avail now in the sight of the Omniscient—will be of no avail hereafter at the bar of God. No matter what others do—it is true, and as long as there is a distinction between right and wrong, it will be eternally true, that whatever you have obtained from your neighbor by open violence, or insidious over-reaching, is *his* property—not *yours*.

2. Restitution should be *prompt*. Many persons know that they have the property of another, and content themselves with a vague *intention* of restitution, and by this means lull their consciences to repose—"I will at some future time make restitution." But *when*? You as yet know not the time, and perhaps it may never arrive. Do you remember that the state in which you are is one of continual sin—that as many moments as you defer the reparation of the injury you have done to your neighbor, so many acts of injustice you are committing, which aggravate your first offence; and that, as long as you continue in your present condition you are the object of the Divine anger, and exposed to eternal woe? Do you remember that in deferring to make restitution, you render it more difficult, perhaps utterly impossible? Other cares will distract you—a sudden derangement of your affairs may put obstacles in the way of executing your projects—and death, which always arrives sooner than we expect—death may surprise you in the omission of this duty, and give you no opportunity of performing it; and then you are undone for ever. Zaccheus is a model to us of promptness of execution. He forms a fixed, vigorous resolution, which has for its object, not the future, but the present. He says not, "If I have done wrong to any man, I will restore it;" but "I restore it;"—even *now* I am ready to do it.

3. Restitution must be *full and entire*. Zaccheus does more than satisfy those whom he had wronged; for he resolves to restore *fourfold*. Fearful lest he should not fully recompense them, his generous heart makes the resolution, and his piety is ready instantly to execute it.

Your restitution must be exact. Calculate the extent of the damage which

your injustice, or your imprudence has caused to your neighbor—a damage often exceeding the value of the property of which you have deprived him. Calculate the injury which the loss of this property has been to him, the length of time that he has been deprived of it, and the gain hindered by your delay; and let your restitution be full and entire.

Such is the nature of this duty, and the manner in which it should be performed. But how many are there in the world, who, to elude the obligation, allege the most specious reasons—all mere pretexts, vanishing before the command of God.

If I make restitution, I cannot maintain that rank in society, that style of living, to which I have been accustomed. Look at Zaccheus! He lived, without doubt, in ease and splendor; but after distributing the half of his goods to the poor, after restoring fourfold to those whom he had defrauded, could he preserve the same style of living as before? But this does not hinder him from complying with his duty, and thus evincing the sincerity of his repentance. Nor should it prevent others from making restitution. Where do such men learn that the laws of society are to set aside the laws of the gospel, and the duties of justice? Where do they learn that happiness depends upon a certain style of living? No, no! there is no real happiness for them, while justice is continually calling for restitution. *“They shall not rejoice, because they have oppressed, neither shall they feel any quietness.”* *“A little that an honest man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.”* *“Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without justice.”*

But others refuse to make restitution, because they *desire to bequeath their property to their children.* But how can they in conscience believe that they owe to their children what their neighbor may rightfully claim? How can they lawfully leave to them what belongs to others? God tells us something of such property bequeathed to children; he tells us that it is an *“accursed heritage.”* It is to such a parent that he says; *“I lay up iniquity for your children.”* *“Thou hast consulted shame to thy house—for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.”* Miserable indeed are the parents who are transmitting, by fraud and deception, the curse of Almighty God to their children, and their children’s children to *“the third and fourth generation.”*

Some admitting the necessity of restitution, say that they are *ashamed to make it.* But surely it is rather a matter of commendation. In acting, as did Zaccheus, you proclaim, not your shame, but your honesty—not your ignominy, but your fearless determination to comply with the dictates of justice and the commands of God. If the injury be private, let the restitution be private. Provided you do it effectually, you may be as prudent in the manner of accomplishing it, as you please. But *do it,* in some way or other, as you desire peace of conscience, as you dread endless perdition.

As far as I have been able to search the Scriptures on this subject, the duty of restitution knows no other obstacle than impossibility, and no other reserve than what is necessary for the support of life. It admits no other excuse than invincible ignorance, and has no other bound than reparation of the injury committed.

In view of this subject, I remark,

1. *How small is the number of those who are saved.* We have seen that the restoration of all which has been acquired by fraud or violence is indispensable for salvation. We know that thousands of frauds are daily committed; and yet how few acts of restitution do we witness—how many pretexts do we hear to preserve what has been illicitly obtained! *“Where are the Christians,”* asks an eloquent divine, whose opportunities for observation were not limited—

second, until by degrees you come to the bottom of the precipice. Deceit, duplicity, and dissimulation in small matters, have a certain tendency to make you insincere on more important occasions, and may gradually destroy your character of integrity altogether. Fly therefore, I beseech you, from the first approaches of injustice; guard your innocence as you would guard your life. If you advance one step over the line which separates right from wrong—honesty from dishonesty—you know not how far you may wander into the “way of unrighteousness.” Come not then near the territories of sin, but stand at a distance from “the appearance of evil.” In all your transactions inquire *what is right*; and let all things bend to the answer; let every thing be sacrificed to truth and justice; let duty be strenuously performed to the “last jot and tittle” of exactness, remembering that the eye of God is upon you, and that the judgment of God is in reserve for you.

5. Finally, show by your conduct, ye who have in any degree defrauded your fellow men, that you feel the force of conscience and the truth of God; *imitate Zaccheus, and make restitution.* This discourse has presented you with a morality little suited to the taste of the age—with a doctrine terrible to very many modern Christians. But after all, my brethren, the difficulty of the duty which I preach arises not so much from the nature of the thing itself, as from the excessive attachment which men have for this world; from the feebleness of their faith, and the faintness of their desires for the things of heaven. Whoever has a lively and effectual belief in the providence of God, in the threatenings and promises of the gospel, finds nothing austere or painful in this duty. Imitate Zaccheus, then, and make restitution, if you have any regard for the tranquillity of your soul here, or its salvation hereafter. No man can enjoy property without peace of mind, and nothing puts a man more out of the possession of himself than an unquiet conscience; and *no sins lie so heavily upon a man's conscience as those of injustice, because they are committed against the clearest natural light.* Make restitution then, as far as possible, and as promptly as you can; or the remembrance of your injustice will be a perpetual disturber to you; will imbitter all your enjoyments; will “bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.” Conscience keeps a faithful register of your actions, and passes upon them impartial sentence; is invested with authority over you, and armed with stings to punish you when guilty. If you retain the property of others, and refuse to restore them their rights, as certainly as pain follows the infliction of a wound, as surely will you experience this inward remorse. Conscience may be lulled to sleep for a while; but it will one day vindicate its rights, and the rights of the oppressed; it will seize you in an hour when you are not aware, and put you to the torture of an accusing mind; it will turn your visions of joy into scenes of horror; it will plead with you face to face, and declare that the gold and the silver, the houses and the lands, which are in your possession, *are not yours.* You may escape the punishment of the civil law; you may avoid the open opprobrium of your fellow men; you may be sure that no human eye saw your injustice, and that no mortal can discover it; but from this tormentor within you can never flee. If you go into society, it will meet you there, and show you in the countenances of all with whom you associate, a suspicion of your guilt. If you go into solitude, it will meet you there, and haunt you like a ghost; your troubled mind will behold forms which no others see, and hear voices which sound only in the ear of guilt: “*The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timbers shall answer.*” “*You shall find no ease nor rest, for the Lord shall give you a trembling heart and sorrow of mind. In the morning you will say, would to God it were even; and at even you will say, would to God it were morning; for the fear of your heart*

wherewith you will fear, and for the sight which your eyes shall see." O! brethren, if you wish to avoid such pain and anguish, such horror and remorse, make immediate and full restitution. How great are the pleasures of a "good conscience!" How sweet the satisfaction to be able to say with the apostle, "*I have wronged no man, I have defrauded no man.*"

But chiefly from a regard to your future and eternal state, would I urge you to perform this duty. Without repentance you are ruined for ever; and without restitution (as we have already proved to you) there is no repentance. If you continue your oppressions and fraud, and carry these sins with you into the eternal world, as sure as God is just and true, they will "hang as a millstone about your neck," and sink you into endless ruin. He that wrongs his brother, and refuses him his right, hates him; "*and he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*" "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*" "*The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*" There is no alternative, then, but RESTITUTION OF PERDITION.

If these considerations have no effect upon you, and lead you not to restore what you have illegally acquired or detained, I can only say with the Angel, "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still;*" let him continue his injustice at his peril; and let him remember what the Savior adds to the declaration: "*Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.*"

SERMON CXX.

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EVIDENCES OF TRUE CONVERSION.

LUKE XIX. 8, 9.—*And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give unto the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house.*

Jesus was passing through Jericho. A multitude attended him. So great was the crowd, that a certain man, who was little of stature, could not come near enough to see him. He therefore ran before, and climbed up into a tree, that he might obtain a sight of Jesus as he passed by. The Savior noticed him in this elevated situation, and said to him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." He hastened down and received him joyfully. It is stated of this man that he "was chief among the publicans, and that he was rich." A publican was a collector of the taxes, or the tribute, which the Roman government imposed on the Jewish nation. Zaccheus had accumulated a large property, some of which, it may be presumed from his own statement, was obtained dishonestly, by oppression or fraud.

Whatever might have been the views and feelings of this man; whether mere curiosity or some better motive prompted his desire to see Jesus, it is evi-

dent that the instructions of the Divine Teacher had a powerful effect on his mind, and produced a striking change in his character and prospects. There can be no doubt that he had hitherto been a worldling. Love of money and desire of gain had been his ruling passion. He "had made gold his hope, and fine gold his confidence." His supreme object had been to lay up treasures on earth; and not being scrupulous in regard to the means of increasing his possessions, he had been successful. But from the time he received Jesus as a guest into his house, his whole character was changed. He became a new man. He believed in Christ, and showed the sincerity of his belief by a sacrifice of his former inclinations and habits. He adopted voluntarily a course of life which, considering his former character, must have been the strongest effort of self-denial. His avarice gave place to liberality. A benevolent spirit entered his bosom and crowded out selfishness. The entire object for which he had lived was given up as worthless and sinful. A new course of life was immediately arranged, and from the promptings of his own heart, he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Jesus, who saw that this statement was made in single-hearted honesty, immediately added—"This day is salvation come to this house."

In adopting cordially and effectively this determination, Zaccheus gave, considering his previous habits and circumstances, the strongest possible proof of having become a disciple of Jesus—of having been "born again." He stood forth, in view of heaven and earth, a new man; not because he made any statement of the exercises of his mind by which he had been brought to his present feelings and determination; not because he told what is called a *religious experience*, for it does not appear that he related any thing of the kind, but because his ruling passion was subdued; because a spirit of self-denial had taken up its lodgment in his bosom, and dethroned selfishness; because he was willing to forsake that which was most dear to him for the sake of Christ. From the conditions of discipleship which Jesus imposed, he did not shrink. He cordially met and assumed them. This he proved by the sacrifice of his most darling and long-cherished passion. And having thus, with the assistance of divine grace, overcome the love of money, which was his strongest sinful propensity, he would of course be able, with the same assistance, to master every subordinate passion, and to comply with all the requisitions of the gospel. Having vanquished and driven out "the strong man armed," he would be able, with comparative ease, to subdue all the auxiliaries which had assisted the tyrant in maintaining a throne in his bosom.

I shall proceed with this discourse by a series of observations on the text and the foregoing train of thought.

1. *When the gospel is cordially received and fully embraced, it subdues a man's ruling sin.*

In the case of the individual mentioned in the text, this observation is manifestly correct. An avaricious disposition, which was evidently his ruling passion, was subdued, and he became liberal and benevolent. That particular disposition which in him presented the greatest obstacles to his becoming a follower of Christ, was the first that was met and overcome by the influence of religious principle. And when his love of wealth was subdued, which had hitherto been his controlling passion, it would be comparatively easy to hold in subjection all *his other passions*. The gospel had made a conquest of the *man* when it had *slain his covetousness*. Whereas, if some subordinate passion only had received *a check*; if the influence had extended only to the subduing or regulating of *one wrong disposition* which exerted but a feeble control over the character;

the man, in all important respects, would have remained in his previous state. His ruling passion would have been the same; and though some change might have taken place in his feelings and habits, yet the man himself would have been unchanged, unrenewed.

The principle here brought to view is exceedingly important, and should be kept in mind whenever we enter on an examination of the evidence of Christian character. When a man yields himself sincerely and cordially to the influence of the gospel, his strongest and most prevailing sinful propensities are subdued. It is not said that they are wholly eradicated, and will therefore exert no influence over him. But they will be held in check; they no longer give laws to the man, and domineer over him; they are as prisoners bound by One stronger than they. True, they may struggle for liberty and power, and in their struggles may sometimes cause the man to stumble. But if he is a real Christian, he is no longer their slave. He serves another Master, "who will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able to bear," but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape.

Too often, in forming an estimate of Christian character, is this important truth overlooked. Too often, in judging of ourselves and of each other, "the sin which most easily besets" is spared and tolerated, perhaps even justified. As a kind of apology for the indulgence of some sinful habit or passion, it is said to be natural; and therefore it is taken for granted, not only that it will always adhere to the character, but that it is, in some degree, excusable. The man who has a strong appetite for spirituous liquors, though this appetite has been acquired by sinful indulgence, finds a ready extenuation of his guilt in the strength of his desire for intoxicating drinks; and thus the circumstance which most of all aggravates his criminality is brought forward as an excuse. Another man is exceedingly irritable. On the least provocation, and often without any provocation, his angry feelings get the mastery of him. This man, though he may profess to be a Christian, often pleads the strength of his passion as an excuse for its indulgence. Another man is avaricious. He cherishes an inordinate desire of wealth, and makes the object of acquiring property the all-absorbing business of his life. This man, too, may profess to be a Christian, and as an apology for his worldly spirit he pleads that it is constitutional, or, what is more common, he perverts the language of St. Paul respecting the duty of providing for one's own house, and says he is only attending to his duty. Now all this is wrong, deceptive, ruinous. The statements of Scripture, corroborated by a thousand facts, show us that the gospel, when fully received and cordially embraced, subdues and keeps in subjection the ruling sinful propensities of the human heart. This is one grand design of the gospel; and if it does not exert this influence over the man who professes to believe its doctrines and discharge its duties, it is not in his case the power of God unto salvation. He is yet a stranger to its saving power. It is not denied that the true Christian may be more beset and harassed with what in his impenitent state used to be his peculiar and predominating sin than with any other. Against this he may be obliged to keep his most watchful guard. But it is true, also, that at this point of watchfulness and contest the principles of religion will afford him their most efficient aid, for here he most needs their assistance. In such circumstances of warfare and trial, one of the early disciples heard the kind Savior say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And the same cheering promise is made to every faithful Christian in all ages of the world.

On this point of inquiry, therefore, should every professed Christian maintain a habit of careful self-examination. He should look earnestly at that sinful disposition or habit, whatever it may be, which has heretofore exerted the greatest

sway over him, and inquire what influence the gospel has had in subduing and controlling it. Is he naturally passionate? The spirit of the gospel is mild and peaceable, and if he has imbibed this spirit, it will aid him in overcoming his easily besetting sin. Is he naturally morose? The gospel, if he has cordially embraced it, has made him kind and amiable. Is he naturally covetous? The gospel, if he has become a Christian, has taught him to prefer the interests of eternity to those of time—has kindled in his bosom a benevolent spirit, and extended his hand in acts of cheerful liberality. Such, in some degree at least, are the effects of a Christian spirit whenever it takes up its abode in the human bosom. It aids a man in resisting and subduing “the sin which most easily besets him.” And that professed Christian, whose experience and character furnish no evidence of the truth of this statement, remains “in darkness even until now.” A ruling sinful propensity must not be spared; for if left to exert its baneful influence, it will render useless all attempts at reformation in other respects.

2. *Evidence of Christian character is to be sought, not so much in what a man says, as in what he DOES.*

To explain what is particularly intended by this observation, it is proper to remark, that a very common way of judging respecting a man's Christian character is to listen to a statement of what is termed his *religious experience*. If he has had, according to his own statement, certain feelings of anxiety and distress on account of his sins, and has found relief and peace in casting himself, as he supposes, on the mercy of the Savior; it is taken for proof, both by himself and by others, that he is a true Christian. In this manner, what a man *says* respecting his religious experience is made the evidence of his piety, instead of what he *does* in the labors and self-denial of a Christian life. His past feelings, rather than his present doings and determinations, are relied on as proof of his having embraced the religion of Jesus Christ. This is at variance with the rules laid down in the gospel. It is altogether different from the method of judging adopted by our Savior in the text.

It does not appear that Zaccheus related any of the exercises of his mind by which he had been led to the determination of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. He told no story of conviction and conversion. No doubt he had mental exercises—had a religious experience—was convinced of sin and found peace in believing. All this is sufficiently manifested by what he did. But instead of coming forward with a statement of the feelings which had agitated his bosom, and of the mental operations by which he had been induced to cherish the hope and seek the privileges of a Christian, he merely said—“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing of any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” This, in the view of the Savior, was proof that he had cordially complied with the terms of salvation, and had become a new man. Jesus therefore replied, “This day is salvation come to this house.”

In forming and executing this determination, Zaccheus gave the strongest possible proof, in his own case, of the subjection of his whole soul to the influence of the gospel. He renounced his idol, and resolved to honor God. He gave up the world, and determined to live for heaven. He was willing to deny himself at the Savior's bidding, and manifested the sincerity of that willingness by parting with that which had hitherto been most dear to him. He sacrificed at once his love of the world on the altar of Christian benevolence. On such evidence as this the Savior pronounced his salvation secure. And on such a spirit and such sacrifices does the gospel everywhere most strenuously insist. *How often*, in the Scriptures, are we required to *deny ourselves—to sacrifice our worldly interests to promote the kingdom of Christ*. How often are we told

not to love the world, nor be conformed to it; to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth; to regard ourselves not as our own, but as bought with a price, and therefore bound to serve our new Master, and glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are his. A compliance with these duties cannot be rendered without self-denial. Our earthly affections must be held in check; our natural inclinations must be subdued. Instead of living for this world, or living for ourselves, we must live for Christ. To Him belong our time, our influence, our property. And he who *acts* on this principle—whether he can tell the particular manner in which he was brought to act thus, or not—gives incomparably better evidence of piety than any one can do by relating an experience, be it ever so striking or remarkable. Indeed, the latter is no evidence at all of Christian character unless it be accompanied by the former.

Far be it from me, by these remarks, to prohibit any man from relating the manner in which his mind has been exercised on religious subjects, and he has been brought, as he trusts, cordially to accept the terms of salvation proposed in the gospel. Such relations may, many times, be interesting and useful. But they are not, in themselves, to be depended on. There may be deception. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. A man may imagine that he has had exercises of mind which afford him a proper ground for cherishing the hope that he is a Christian, when not a single sinful passion in his soul has been subdued, nor a single tie binding him to the world has been loosened. He may be able to tell a story of his mental exercises to which even true Christians may listen with delight; while he still remains wedded to the world, seeks the honor that cometh from man, and not that which cometh from God only, and neither has, nor honestly seeks to have, any treasure laid up in heaven. There are false, as well as genuine religious experiences; and the language used to describe them may be so similar that man cannot distinguish them. Some of the most striking, and, at the time, most satisfactory relations of mental exercises on religious subjects, have proved, in future time, to be nothing but delusion. How then shall the question, whether a man is a true Christian, be decided? Evidently by looking at his doings. Those acts of self-denial, which the gospel requires of men as long as they live, cannot well be counterfeited. Men do not habitually and perseveringly *do* what they dislike to do. The conduct shows the state of the heart. After all that a man can say respecting his feelings, it is by what he is inclined to do that a judgment is to be formed of his character.

In examining a candidate for admission to the church, I would rather ascertain that he had deliberately commenced a course of self-denying Christian duty and effort, than to hear the most imposing account of the exercises of his mind. Is he disposed to expend time and property in the service of Christ? If he has defrauded any man, will he restore the unjust gain? Will he be prompt and cheerful in attending all those social meetings which are necessary to keep alive the spirit of piety and advance the interests of religion? Will he set aside his worldly concerns, even when it may subject him to some loss, for the purpose of attending to religious duties? Will he consecrate a portion of his time, whatever may be the calls or clamors of the world, to the duties of prayer, of reading the Scriptures, and of exerting a Christian influence over others? Will he freely, cheerfully, and liberally give of his property to sustain the institutions of religion and build up the kingdom of the Redeemer? Or, in other words, will he “deny himself”—will he sacrifice the world on the altar of religion? The man who will do this habitually—though he may not have a flaming experience to relate—has the spirit of the gospel. Jesus owns him as a disciple now, and will take him to himself “when he maketh up his jewels.” But the man who will not do this—who has nothing of the spirit which manifests itself in such doings

—is not a disciple of Jesus Christ. And whatever striking or wonderful account he may give of his own feelings, he is still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.”

I have many fears that the principle developed in the text, according to which Jesus Christ pronounced Zaccheus to be in the way of salvation, is too frequently overlooked, even by evangelical churches, in the admission of members. Adhering to the scriptural rule that men “must be born again” before they are prepared to make a worthy profession of religion, and knowing that such a change does not occur without deep and agitating emotion in the human bosom, our churches have adopted the practice of listening to a recital of these mental exercises from the candidate for their communion, and of judging of his qualifications by what they can discover of the nature of these exercises. And their judgment is often formed without any particular inquiry into the candidate’s habits, and his determinations respecting the manner in which he will employ his time and influence and property. If he can relate a “religious experience” which shall be acceptable to his examiners, it is taken for granted that he is a Christian. Now, as was before remarked, there can be no valid objection against instituting an inquiry into the mental exercises of one who desires the privileges of membership in the church of Christ. Such an inquiry, perhaps, ought never to be omitted. But on the result alone of such an examination we ought never to rely for evidence of Christian character. Could my voice reach every Christian minister and church in the land, I would, with much earnestness and solicitude, say,—My brethren, ascertain the *doings* of the candidate for your fellowship. How does he employ his time? How does he exert his influence? What does he do with his property? Ask him—Will you habitually observe all the known duties of religion? When worldly business presses, will you put it aside for devotion, in secret, in the family, and in the public meeting? Do you deliberately determine that the religion you wish to profess shall cost you something to maintain it? Will you be punctual at the meetings of the church, not only on the Sabbath, but on other days? Will you habitually be present at the monthly concert, and come not only with your prayers, but, as God hath prospered you, with your alms also? Is it your fixed purpose, according to the measure of your ability, to assist the church in the great enterprises of Christian benevolence, by direct personal efforts for the conversion of men, and by contributing of your worldly substance to send the gospel to the destitute? Do you regard all these things as Christian duties? And is it your deliberate and solemn determination to observe them as long as you live? If you are rich, will you do these things? If you are poor, will you “do what you can?” Should the candidate answer these questions, or other questions involving these principles, affirmatively, and you have reason to believe that he means what he says, receive him. He will be a useful member of the church. But if his views and feelings are opposed to such a course of life—whatever story he may tell about his conversion—reject him. In such a case he would not be a help, but a hinderance to the work of the church; and his profession of religion would be nothing but an opiate for his conscience, while he pursued a course of worldly conformity down to the shades of eternal death. The church needs “working men.” No others will aid her. No others are like her Divine Master.

3. *On the disposal of property, there is a wide difference between the opinions of men and the instructions of Jesus Christ.*

Instead of supposing that it would be for the “salvation” of his house, for Zaccheus to give away his property as he did, most men would think it the *ruin* of his family. Were an event of this kind to take place at the present day, the

multitude would exclaim—"What a foolish man! Give away one-half of his property at once, and then make a promise which will take away a large portion of the other half! Why the man is beside himself. He is plunging into poverty. He is injuring his family and bringing destruction on his own house." But what said Jesus Christ on an occasion of this kind? "This day is *salvation* come to this house." Zaccheus became a follower of Jesus, and trusting in him, he obtained "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." He did not purchase salvation with money. He believed in Jesus. This was the ground of his salvation. Then he showed the sincerity and the fruits of his belief, by letting go his hold on the world, and making a voluntary and liberal sacrifice for the good of men and the honor of religion. Such a sacrifice Christ commended. Such a sacrifice the world would condemn. Here the opinions of Christ and those of the world are at variance. And not only the great mass of mankind, who make no profession of serious piety, differ from the Savior on this point; but many professors of religion unite with them in opposing the views and precepts of the Son of God. By many who profess the religion of the gospel, it is not esteemed either necessary or right to make large sacrifices of property for the good of man and the glory of God.

Suppose that a member of this church should come forward, and, from love to Christ and his cause, should give at once one-half of his property to bless and to save his fellow men; would not many of his brethren say—"He has done wrong! He has a family to provide for, and he ought not to deprive them of an inheritance. He is increasing in years, and will want in his old age what he can lay up." But if this would be wrong, why did the Savior commend Zaccheus for doing the same thing? He gives away half of his property at once, and out of the remainder satisfies all the claims of justice against him. Doubtless he had but a small portion left. What would become of *his* family, and what would he do in old age? A sufficient answer to these questions is—that Jesus approved of what he did. Or, suppose that a member of this church, without giving away one-half of his property, should bestow on objects of Christian benevolence an amount which would really make him a poorer man, diminish to some extent his capital, and lessen the sphere of his worldly operations. Would not many of his brethren think he did wrong? Would not the same expressions concerning the duty of laying up property for his children, and of providing for the wants of his own declining age which were mentioned in the preceding case, be repeated in this? But what would the Savior say to such sacrifices made from love to himself? What *did* he say respecting the use of property? "I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." That is, use your property in such a manner as to promote your eternal happiness. What *will* the Savior say at the day of judgment? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*."

There is, I am fully persuaded, an utter variance between the views of Jesus Christ in regard to the use of property, and the views of most of those who bear his name. And to this cause more than to any other it is owing, that Christianity has made such slow progress in the world. The maxims and customs of the world on this subject have been to a great extent the maxims and customs of the church. The professed disciples of Jesus have been so devoted to the object of worldly gain, that they have done comparatively little to extend the kingdom of Christ. When called upon to pray for the extension of his kingdom, their worldly spirit has chilled the spirit of prayer. When urged to contribute of their substance, and to engage in active labors for the salvation of men, the same worldly spirit has paralyzed all the benevolent energies of their souls. There

are, thanks to God, many exceptions to this rule. There are many who do love to pray, and labor, and contribute of their property for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. The exertions of these have, by the blessing of God, wrought much for the salvation of men and the glory of Christ. The Lord increase their number a thousand-fold!

Here, perhaps, some may be disposed to ask—"What would you have us do? Would you say that we must actually give away at once one-half of our property to promote the welfare of our fellow men?" My friends, I should not dare to assume the responsibility of deciding how much any man must give for this object, except in regard to myself; and this I must decide. I should not dare to tell you, in all cases, what portion of your property should be given for the purpose of saving men and advancing Christ's kingdom. It is a question which each man, on his own responsibility, must decide for himself. But this I say on the authority of the Divine word, that Jesus Christ demands your *all*—yourselves, your property, your influence, your time,—all presented as "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." This demand may not require that you sell all your property, and throw the avails of it at once into the treasury of benevolence. But it does require that you cultivate your farms, prosecute your trades, pursue your merchandise, or attend to the business of your office, with the constant design of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ in your calling; and with the fixed purpose of being habitually, according to your means, a liberal and "cheerful giver." The demand of the Savior does require that your object shall be, not to hoard up money, but to "do good—be ready to distribute, willing to communicate." It does require that you stand prepared, with willing mind and ready hand, to give of your substance, "as the Lord hath prospered you," to an amount that will constitute a *sacrifice* for Christ's sake, and make it *self-denial* on your part. So much, at least, does the Lord Jesus Christ demand of every professed disciple. When, therefore, you are settling the question *how much* you shall give to promote the interests of religion, and to save the souls of your fellow men, think of Christ's demands, and think also that you are to render to him an account of your stewardship at the day of judgment.

When, O when, shall the day come in which professed Christians will act fully in the spirit and on the terms of their discipleship? When will they feel that they are to be agents, active, untiring agents, in the work of converting a world? When will they learn to "seek first the kingdom of heaven," and to believe the promise that "all these things shall be added?" When will they give full credit to the Divine declaration, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself?" When will they, with unanimous consent, pour forth a continued stream of benevolence, believing that God will, as he has promised, replenish the fountain? The Lord hasten that day. Come it must; or the shout will never be heard—"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of Christ." Come it will; for the decree has gone forth, that at some future time, "all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." This glorious result is to be effected by the instrumentality of Christians. Awake, then, ye friends of the Savior. Do the Lord's work, and see if he will not take care of you and yours. *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

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SERMON CXXI.

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CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS.

ROM. xiv. 7, 8.—*For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

This passage contains a comprehensive description of Christian obligation and character. The good man refuses to "live unto himself." In all his designs and movements he feels bound to act "with an eye single" to the glory of the Savior and the extension of his kingdom.

Thus briefly explained, this passage lays the foundation for the following statement, which it is my present purpose to illustrate and apply: *The friends of the Lord Jesus ought to devote themselves without the slightest hesitation or the least reserve to the single object of strengthening the interests and extending the limits of the Christian church.* A construction is often put upon the obligations asserted in this statement, which makes them rest easy upon the conscience of the lax professor. This construction may be thus given: We ought *in our hearts* to give up ourselves—all we are and all we have—to the Savior, with the resolution, *if God requires*, ACTUALLY to make the surrender. Thus many a professed Christian is ready to rejoice that he has fallen upon better times, than those in which others have been led to prison and to death. He rejoices, that besides the demands which his religious profession has upon him, he is permitted to have another department of interest and exertion. After devoting a small portion of his income to the support of Christian institutions at home and abroad, he is happy to think that he may expend his strength in enlarging his possessions—in securing the luxuries and elegancies of life—and in accumulating an inheritance for his children. This is a construction of the Christian's obligations, as mischievous as it is false. It has furnished a pillow on which not a few professed disciples lay their heads in deep slumber, while the perils of perdition thicken around them! They are invited to contemplate their obligations under a very different construction. According to this, they ought *actually* to devote themselves, in the strictest sense of the thrilling terms; they ought ACTUALLY to devote themselves "arm and soul," to the interests of the church. The meaning of this language I hope to place beyond the reach of misapprehension.

I know a man belonging to the class which is called *indigent*. For the support of his growing family he depends, under God, upon his daily industry. He is a Christian. And when at the missionary meeting he threw a dollar into the treasury of the Lord, he thus explained the grounds on which he proceeded. "All I am, and all I have, I have joyfully devoted to Him who redeemed me with his blood. I am under the most sacred obligations *to do what I can* to promote His kingdom. From these obligations I cannot, would not break away. I cannot help, then, tasking my ingenuity and urging my powers to the utmost, to furnish my proportion of the means of diffusing far and wide the sweet influence of Christian truth. What that proportion is, it may help me to determine, to reflect upon the exertions I certainly should make to redeem a child from servitude. Poor as I am, I know full well that by practising the most wakeful industry and the most rigid economy, I should be able, besides supporting my family, to raise a considerable sum every year *for such an object*. And, O, can I do less to save a *world* weltering in its own blood, from the horrors of eternal death!"

Another man I know, who has a full competence. He also is a Christian. He thinks it not enough to maintain among his fellow-men a reputable profession. "Bought with a price," how can he think himself his own? Whatever he is and has, he resolves shall be sacred to the Savior. In the general outline and minute details of business he feels himself bound, continually, to act with a direct and honest reference to the welfare of the church. When he sows, and when he reaps his fields; whenever he goes a journey, and whenever he makes a contract; in the style of his living, and in the education of his children, he is governed in every movement by strong desires to extend the kingdom of the Savior. For this he "lives." Here is the spring of his activity—the source of his enjoyment.

The other man, you see, is a "wealthy disciple." He is one of the few, who, in despite of the obstacles thrown in the rich man's course, is making progress in the "strait and narrow way." A happy exposition of the principles on which, as a Christian, he feels bound to act, you may find in a short address once made to his collected family. "It is my distinguished privilege," he said, "to be a Christian. Alas, how few who are held by the same embarrassments, rejoice in the same hopes! May I never for a moment cease to feel the peculiar obligations under which discriminating grace has placed me! What return can I make, as a proper expression of gratitude and love to my gracious Benefactor? I am His, wholly His, His for ever. You would not expect, you would not desire, that your father, held by such obligations, would consult his own ease, or your natural propensities. *Your father is a Christian.* He may not live to himself. The large resources which are placed within his reach, are sacred to the Savior. To appropriate them as an inheritance to you would be little less than sacrilege. Know then, that from your father you may expect whatever may contribute to form your character on the Christian model. The best means of mental and moral discipline he will promptly furnish. He will not fail to do his utmost to prepare you to be extensively useful and happy in the stations which may be allotted you. But further than this he cannot go. The church is required by her Lord to put forth an agonizing effort to save a sinking world. God forbid that I should be wanting to this effort. My time, influence, and property I cannot withhold. It is my duty and privilege to bring forward *whatever acquisitions* I can command, to meet the various claims of my Christian profession." Illustrations such as these may sufficiently explain the obligations asserted in the statement with which this discourse begins.

Of the truth of this statement, strong presumptive evidence may be found in

the fact, that to every professed Christian is furnished in the providence of God a sphere of exertion in building up the church, which demands the highest exercise of all the powers he may possess. A company of firemen with their engineering gather around a house. At different points the smoke already begins to issue through the covering. Here and there the pent-up flame fitfully breaks forth. The proprietor is at a distance—the family are asleep—the neighborhood is unalarmed. These men are trained to the work of contending with the flames—the agency through which they may exert their powers with decision and effect is fully within their reach—a sphere of exertion is open before them, which demands the highest efforts they are able to put forth. Can they doubt for a single moment what they ought to do? Are not their obligations to exert every power clearly written out on the smoking building before them?

Take another case. A surgeon, a physician, and their attendants enter a hospital. Here lies a wretch with a mangled leg, and there another with a broken arm. On that heap of straw lies a poor creature, well-nigh consumed with a burning fever; and at no great distance beyond, a companion in affliction ready to die through mere neglect. Can these men, skilled as they are in the healing art, doubt what they ought to do? Do not the imploring looks, the deep groans, the wasted frames of the sufferers before them urge home their obligations clearly, impressively, powerfully? Will not the sphere of usefulness on which they have entered, constrain them to see and feel that a demand is made for whatever of professional skill and activity they are able to employ?

Contemplate, Christian brethren, the circumstances in which the providence of God has placed you. Behold a world "lying in wickedness." There, at a distance, wrapped in the gloom of the shadow of death, are unnumbered pagans. Here, near at hand, are young communities, growing settlements, feeble churches, "ready to perish" for the bread of life. Does not every object which you see, and every sound which you hear, urge you to do what you can to save a dying world? Are you qualified to preach the gospel? Have you received a discipline, intellectual and moral, which has fitted you to explain, apply, and enforce the truths of the Bible? And can you not see and feel that to this work you ought to devote your time and strength, cordially, skilfully, untiringly? How can you indulge in literary leisure, engage in secular employments, toil for the luxuries of life, while those who are "bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh" are sinking by hundreds and thousands to perdition for want of the aid which you are able to assist in furnishing! How can you help feeling called upon as by a thousand voices breaking on your ears in tones of deep distress, to rise up and toil to the utmost of your powers for guilty, bleeding humanity!

Or it may be that you are distinguished for skill and experience in forming the young mind to habits of correct thought and feeling. You are qualified to arrest and fix their attention, to interest and animate their minds; to urge home with warm affections and arousing pungency the healing truths of the gospel. Extend your view, then, to the "Valley of the Mississippi." Behold the multitudes of youth and children! Here, their education is utterly neglected; there, it is entirely perverted. In one place, they are left to wander in ignorance, and become the prey of some artful superstition; in another, the life-blood is poisoned at the fountain by infidelity. And yet these young minds, thus neglected or perverted, are, under God, at no distant day to give shape to the destinies of this mighty nation! Can you think of this, and not see a sphere of exertion which loudly and imperiously demands the exercise of all your powers? Now extend the limits of your field of observation. A world is before you. Unnumbered millions of young immortals stretch out their hands, and by signs of distress which cannot be mistaken, implore assistance. And can you doubt

whether you ought to make sacrifices, and submit to self-denial—to task every power of mind and body to afford relief?

Or, perhaps, you are distinguished by elevated station; weight of character; extent of influence. Your name is known, your opinions are quoted, your views are adopted by a large circle. Look upon your right hand and left. Wherever you go do you not behold appalling monuments of hostility to the Son of God? At the inn, in the stage, on board the steamboat; in the fashionable circle and the literary club; in the hall of legislation, and on the seat of justice, do you not often see your Savior contradicted, opposed, derided? And can you look on without emotion? Are not appeals thus sent home to your souls, calling you to stand up in defence of the name and truth of your Redeemer? Ought you not to put forth prompt, decisive, untiring efforts to purify public sentiment? Can you hesitate a moment on the question of your obligations?

Or, perhaps, you are affluent. O, then, consider the wants of the church, and the miseries of the world! Mark the condition of the various institutions around you whose object and tendency are to diffuse the light of life. See by what embarrassments their movements are retarded. Can you look upon their exhausted treasuries without feeling your obligations to consecrate your gold and silver to the service of your Lord? Ought you not to lay your accumulated treasures at the foot of the cross—to devote your shining dust to the great work of extending the triumphs of your King?

Whatever, fellow-Christians, may be the stations which you occupy; whatever the means of usefulness you can command; the spheres of Christian effort opened before you clearly and impressively require you to devote all you are and all you have to the single object of building up the church.

A SECOND argument, to sustain the statement at the beginning of this discourse, may be found in the design of the probation, by which the church, considered collectively or individually, is to be trained up for heaven. As individuals, Christians are to be trained up in the church, to find their happiness in the service and enjoyment of God. In this, heaven itself consists. There, the disciples of the Savior behold the glory of their Lord. There, "His servants serve Him." To find in His service the source of eternal blessedness; to find in His presence the fountain of life, our character must be conformed to His. Otherwise, His service would disgust us—His presence would torment us. Now, just so far as we are under the control of that benevolence which appropriately expresses itself in exertions to build up the church, just so far is our character conformed to the Divine. And in whatever degree we are selfish, in the same degree must we be unable to find our happiness in God. And *nothing but selfishness can lead us to cultivate a field of exertion and maintain a deportment of interest separate from the kingdom of heaven.* A just estimate of the different objects to which we are related—of the different interests in which we are concerned, would constrain us to regard ourselves in all our plans and movements as entirely subservient to the glory of His name and the advancement of His cause. Practically to regard ourselves in this light is to be *benevolent—is to be like God.* That discipline which is fitted to bring us thus to regard ourselves, is adapted to the design of the probation in which we are placed. *And this discipline is involved in the obligations which bind us to consecrate ourselves without hesitation or reserve as a living sacrifice to God.* Those who yield to these obligations secure this discipline. Its healthful influence reaches their inmost hearts. The plague which was preying on their vitals is stayed. Life throbs through all their veins. They "are strong in the Lord." The image of the Savior in all its beauty smiles through all their "inner man." They already enter into the sympathies and breathe the spirit of their brethren in heaven.

And when they pass from probationary scenes, they will be prepared to enter into "the joys of their Lord."

As *Christian communities*, if they would answer the end of their probation, the churches must devote themselves altogether to the service of Christ. They are here to be trained up in their collective capacity and social interests, for the everlasting employments and joys of the upper world. This can be done only by a discipline which will bring their feelings to flow forth in the same strain with delightful harmony—all their powers to act in the same direction, in full, unbroken concert. But this precious result can never be produced, while they "look every one upon his own things." While to *any extent* they allow themselves to pursue selfish designs, harsh discord must interrupt or mar the songs of Zion. Separate interests—private objects, will set brother against brother—discord will rend the church. Of the truth of these statements, what frightful illustrations may be found on almost every page of our history.

To be prepared for the harmony of heaven, professed Christians must receive the very discipline which an entire consecration to their Savior's service affords. Mark the movements and study the character of a Christian community, to which a description like the following may be justly applied. The object which attracts their attention, and engrosses their affections, and calls forth all their active powers, is the extension and prosperity of Zion. Every man, woman, and child in this community, keeps his eye upon this object, as the end of his existence. To advance the common design, they all seek and find, each his proper place, the sphere best suited to his own talents and means of usefulness. Whatever of intellectual vigor, of mental acquisition, of impressive eloquence,—whatever weight of authority, extent of influence, amount of property,—whatever sagacity, skill, and energy they may possess, they bring directly and unceasingly to bear upon the great enterprise in which they are engaged. From this they never turn their eyes—never withdraw their hands. Now tell me, is not this community acting under an influence which binds them together as by golden bonds? Must they not see eye to eye? Must not heart mingle with heart? Will they not bow, as by a common impulse, before the throne of Messiah? Will not the same desires move their hearts?—the same songs flow from their lips? Will not the same living peace pervade every heart—soothe every bosom—smile upon every countenance? And when you look upon this community, you cannot help recognising the image of heaven. They are prepared, *as a body*, when they reach the presence of their King, to fall each into his appropriate place and act in concert in fulfilling His sovereign will. They have secured the very discipline which the holy employments and joys of the upper world demand.

A **THIRD** argument, sustaining the same position, may be found in the *conditions on which we are required to lay hold of the benefits offered in the gospel*. Consider, brethren, the import and bearing of the following piercing words, from the Savior's lips. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." Strong language! And yet not too strong to describe the conditions on which the benefits of redeeming mercy may be secured. The glory of your King, the extension of his sway, the fulfilment of his designs, you are to prefer to the dearest earthly gratification—to the highest worldly interest. The ties which bind you to the *nearest relative*—your hold on life itself, you must break asunder, if the interests of the kingdom of heaven demand the effort. Wherever you may go, you must bear around a cross, prepared at any time to "be lifted up upon it." Nor can you think these hard conditions on which to

receive the offer of eternal life till you forget the atoning agonies which broke the heart of our great High-priest.

Now it was a leading object of the Savior to be the "light of the world." To this object His labors and sufferings were directed. The balm of life He would offer to a bleeding world. It is His sovereign will, that to all the human family infected "with the plague of the heart," His healing power should be proclaimed. His gracious heart is set upon bringing all nations under the shadow of His throne. Whoever, then, loves the Son of God more than every other object will feel himself constrained at all times and in every thing, to act with simple reference to the prosperity of His kingdom. This reference will give shape to every plan, and force to every movement. Is he engaged "in business?" He will see that its claims and tendencies do not interfere with his obligations to the Savior. Whatever goes to diminish his influence as a Christian he will promptly avoid. The means requisite to enlighten his understanding, to keep his conscience wakeful and tender—to bring his heart under the full control of Christian motives, he will not fail at any expense of time and strength to employ. Whenever the question arises—and such questions will arise—whether he shall lay out his resources in gratifying taste, in humoring appetite, in pampering passion, in feeding avarice in himself and children, or in efforts to build up the church, he will not long hesitate. He will not forget the cross which his profession requires him to bear. How can he toil for the elegancies and luxuries of life; gratify the demands of ambition or cupidity; or divide his substance among worldly-minded heirs; and still be complying with the conditions on which the smiles of Messiah are dispensed?

In this connection, it may be proper to repeat another declaration of the Savior. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Whoever will examine this declaration in the connection to which it belongs, will see that it involves a clear exposition of the terms of Christian discipleship. Along with this statement it may be well to contemplate the practical application of the general principle it contains, which the Savior himself has given us.—A young man of fair morals and amiable spirit once presented to Him the inquiry, "What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Our Lord first directed his attention to the obligations which grew out of the relations he sustained to his fellow-men. Upon this, the young man assured him that to these obligations he had ever paid a practical regard. The amiable aspect of his character attracted the Savior's love; and he immediately called his attention to the great principles on which Christian character is formed, and on which Christian hopes may be justly cherished. Hitherto only the relations which man sustains to man had been brought to view. The principle, just alluded to, then was presented in a form modified by these relations. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come take up thy cross and follow me." With the condition of salvation, implied in this direction, the youth refused to comply. He clung to his wealth at the expense of his soul. If he must devote himself entirely to the cause of benevolence or make shipwreck of his hope of heaven, his hope of heaven, though with many tears, he was prepared to relinquish.

What think ye, Christian brethren, of this practical exposition of the conditions, on which you are to be admitted to the fountain of life? Say not that its application was peculiar to the poor young man to whom it was first applied. You cannot help seeing, that the exposition just covers the ground furnished by the *abstract principle* already quoted. The principle, then, with its exposition, *belongs to you*—belongs to every professed Christian. Take home, then, to your *inmost thoughts* the condition on which the life of your souls is suspended.

What, friends of the Lord Jesus, will you do with your wealth, your talents, your influence? Will you live merely or chiefly to promote your own private interests? Will you extend your possessions for the sake of exulting in affluence? Will you increase your influence for the sake of bending your fellow-men to your designs? Will you seek an exalted station for the sake of enjoying the pomp of place? Ah, brethren, this you may not do without drawing down the curse of Jesus Christ. If you would have His smiles, you must yield up your souls to the control of that charity which brought Him from the bosom of blessedness to the agonies of crucifixion. You must live for the single purpose of doing good. Whatever strength you have you must freely expend in urging forward the triumphal chariot of Messiah.

In this connection, the last injunction which fell from the Mediator's lips well deserves attention. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The obligations of this command reach every professed Christian. It may be said, that they direct their binding influence especially to *Christian ministers*. It may be so. What then? Are not their Christian brethren held by the same solemn bonds to furnish the ministers of Christ with whatever means are requisite to enable them to offer the "bread of life" to the famishing nations? "Who goeth a warfare at his own charges?" The great work of gathering the human family around the cross lies fully before every friend of Jesus. In this work he is bound by the authority of God to engage with a zeal and resolution proportioned to the magnitude of the task imposed upon him. Remember, then, Christian brethren, that your "field is the world." A frightful majority of the human family are shrouded in gloom, palpable as the darkness which once oppressed Egypt. It is yours to offer them the "light of life." While you linger, myriads fall to rise no more. With your utmost efforts, a multitude "which no man can number" will miserably perish before your hands can reach them. With every breath you draw, they are sinking by thousands into the abyss! Your Savior bids you haste to their relief—to snatch them from ruin, "as brands from the burning." If they die through your neglect, you must answer for their blood! What, then, ought you to do? To stand unmoved amid the ruins of the world! With the censor in your hand, will you refuse to rush in "between the living and the dead," to contend with "the plague" which is every moment sweeping thousands to an untimely grave? And for what? That you may be at ease? That you may heap up golden dust? That you may attract the gaze of admiration? That you may crush your children with the weight of an inheritance? And will you sell "the souls for which Christ died," for trifles such as these? This you cannot do without casting off your allegiance to Christ and breaking the ties which bind you to His throne.

A FOURTH argument adapted to convince professed Christians that they ought thus unreservedly to consecrate themselves to the service of the church *may be found in THE EXAMPLE OF THE BEST MEN, who have risen up from time to time to bless mankind*.—The example of the man *Christ Jesus* shines with peculiar lustre. O, let us keep our eyes upon it! He came into the world to place the church on a foundation which could not be shaken. Now trace His course, from the manger to the cross—from the cross to the mediatorial throne. How is every footstep marked, every movement distinguished by entire consecration to the kingdom of heaven! How did the most vehement desires for the immortal happiness of man move his soul! With what ardor did His affections cleave to this object? How studiously and skilfully did He improve every opportunity and employ every agency, which might promote His design! When did He shun an effort, however expensive; decline self-denial, however trying; shrink from sacrifices, however expensive, which the glory of God and the "saving health of

nations" required? Surely not when in solitary places He poured out His soul in prayer at midnight! or when "He went about doing good!" or when He "endured the contradiction of sinners!" or when He lay prostrate in agony at His Father's feet in the garden! or, when he meekly bore the taunts and jeers and buffetings of His accusers in the judgment hall!" or, when in agonies unutterable, He "gave up the ghost" upon the cross! "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; AND WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN."

And what shall we say of the example which the primitive churches set! Observe with what devotedness they cling to the heavenly cause. Their time, substance, influence are sacred to the Savior. "Of one heart they have all things common." Whatever the common interest demands each in his proper place is forward to supply. They "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods;" they welcome the prison, embrace the stake, when their Christian profession requires the sacrifice. Are these *your own brethren*? Trace their shining course; and answer the inquiry.

Read the history of the apostle to the gentiles. How he breathes the spirit of Christian heroism. Now he encounters the perils of the deep, and now the dangers of the wilderness. He welcomes heat and cold, hunger and thirst in his sacred work. He shakes the lean hand of poverty—meets the frowning face of opposition. He breaks through every embarrassment, and rises above every obstacle. "*One thing he does.*" And to this one thing all he is and has is cordially devoted. "Brethren," you may hear him say, "*be followers of me.*"

And what shall we say of the course of our missionary brethren, who are carrying the lamp of truth to the "dark places of the earth." Were they to keep back aught "that they possess," should we be slow to expose in pointed terms their delinquency? We require them "to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified"—to live merely to extend the triumphs of the cross. But say, brethren, are they held by obligations from which *you are free*? Were they bought with richer blood—with severer agonies than you? Was higher grace displayed in the means employed to bring them to the Savior's feet—to raise them to the hope of heaven, than has been bestowed on you? Do they need a more rugged discipline than you to wean them from the world—to fix their hearts upon an enduring treasure? Do not you live under the same government? Are you not bound by the same laws? Let such inquiries receive an honest answer. You cannot help seeing that you ought, in your own proper sphere, to be as much devoted to the kingdom of heaven, as the most laborious and self-denied missionary.

The truth of all this some of your brethren engaged in secular as well as sacred employments have already welcomed. Their daily business they have learned to transact with an "eye single to the glory of God." They push forward their designs with promptness and energy, merely to be able to do good. These men may be found all along on the declivity from the heights of affluence to the vale of poverty. The Lord increase them a hundred-fold!

Now what is *Christian example*, however modified, and wherever presented, but *human obligation*, embodied in a living and attractive form. Behold the form! Can you resist charms so divine? Can you refuse to imbibe a spirit so heavenly? How can you refuse to tread in the foot-prints of those, who "through faith and patience inherit the promises?"

I see a heavenly vision.—"The ransomed of the Lord," each in his appropriate place, gather around the "Captain of their salvation." None is wanting—none reluctant. Behold the "sacramental host of God's elect!" One object engrosses their attention; one spirit animates their bosoms; one enterprise

calls forth their collective powers. "The one thing they do" is to support the throne and extend the kingdom of their Messiah. To accomplish this, they glory in labors, sacrifices, tribulations. They task every power to fulfil the will of the Majesty by whose behest they are awed and controlled. As it is His will, so it is their steadfast purpose, to bring a world in subjection to his feet. Thus, they welcome the condition on which his smiles are bestowed. Thus, they are receiving the very discipline by which they may be prepared to join the heavenly hosts. Thus, they are breaking the chains in which a world has long been held; and lo, the shout of emancipated myriads, "like the voice of many waters," shakes the pillars of the universe!

The foregoing train of thought involves a *test by which professed Christians may try their own character*. Let each of us, dear brethren, seriously weigh the inquiry, Do I belong to that happy number to whom the apostle applies the graphical description, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's!" This, clearly, is a description of *Christian character*. Am I, then, a *Christian*? Is it the great end of all my designs, plans, and exertions, to glorify the Savior and build up his cause? Do I *rejoice* to live and toil for an object so dear to God? Or do I regard the prosperity of Zion only as an object of *secondary* importance? Do I meet the expenses which are requisite to support Christian institutions at home and abroad, reluctantly and grudgingly? Am I more anxious to enjoy the privileges of the gospel *cheaply*, than to derive from them the highest benefit? When called to incur expense and sacrifices for the sake of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom, am I apt to be cold, impatient, peevish? Am I prone to wish that the friends of God and man, in their efforts to "spread the gospel," would act on plans less comprehensive and expensive? Am I often tempted to suspect the purity of their motives; to misinterpret their language, and misrepresent their conduct? Do I often eagerly and loudly complain of the burdens which my Christian profession imposes on me? Do I sometimes detect in myself sentiments of regret that I *ever joined* the Christian standard? Ah, brethren, these and such as these are serious questions, and deserve a serious answer. They bear directly on the soundness of our religious character. They point to the ground on which multiplied *decent professors* betray the rottenness of their hearts. It is high time for us to urge home upon our souls with searching hand the inquiry whether we are living to God or to ourselves. The apathy and selfishness of thousands in the church have already occasioned the endless ruin of unnumbered millions! Long ago had professed Christians, as a body, yielded to the obligations by which their Lord had bound them—long ago had the "earth been filled with his glory!" Never will His grace and power be universally known, till the church more generally and accurately answers to the description of character given at the commencement of this discourse. Let those who would not in the final day be required to answer for the blood of their brethren look well to this matter. Wo to the false disciple, who, in despite of obligations as sacred as the authority of God, lives to himself—lives for any other object than the prosperity of Zion! He may have his frames—his joys and sorrows; his fears and hopes; and after all miserably perish. Who, then, is he, who while he lays his soul at the feet of Jesus Christ for salvation is ready to devote himself a living sacrifice to His service? He is the man who, in the day of retribution, shall be welcomed to the "joy of his Lord." Be ours the blessedness of and full participation in his labors and rewards!

SERMON CXXII.

BY REV. BERIAH GREEN.

CLAIMS OF THE PRISON DISCIPLINE SOCIETY TO THE SUPPORT OF CHRISTIANS.

MATT. v. 44-47.—*But I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? do not even the publicans so ?*

THIS passage presents one important point, in which Christians are required to rise above others. Every man has his objects of kind regard. Robbers and assassins love each other. And while upon all around them they wage a deadly warfare, they may defend each other's rights with the utmost decision of purpose, and energy of action. Much more do men of elevated morals and taste cherish for the larger circle in which they move, a generous confidence and lively attachment. But Christian benevolence, while it strengthens and refines every amiable feeling natural to man, may also be expected to raise him to a higher, wider sphere of action. It will not permit him to confine his regards to a circle of friends. He may not think it enough to extend this circle, so as to admit the deserving and unfortunate. *Christian principles will lead him to pity and bless such objects of want and woe as his natural feelings would prompt him to overlook or hate.* This statement is clearly supported by the passage which stands at the head of this discourse. *Those forms, then, of guilty suffering humanity which others regard with aversion or neglect, Christians may be expected to pity and bless.* This truth it is my design to illustrate in application to the objects embraced by the PRISON DISCIPLINE SOCIETY. This society was organized in Boston about six years ago. Its great design is to promote the improvement of public prisons. To this design it has consecrated its resources and strength. Its funds have never been large—never risen to four thousand dollars in a year. These are committed to a board of managers, worthy of the entire confidence of the Christian public.

The results of their labors furnish decisive proof that their well-directed efforts have been attended with the smiles of God.

Never, perhaps, does guilty suffering humanity assume a form more likely to be overlooked or despised by the world at large than in the person of the imprisoned convict. But *Christians* may justly be expected to regard him with pity—may justly be expected to make prompt and vigorous exertions to promote his welfare. 'This I argue,

I. *From the character of Christians.* There are three things especially in this character that must lead Christians to be the cordial friends and patrons of the Prison Discipline Society.

1. A *leading attribute* of Christian character is *disinterested benevolence.* Who that reads the Bible needs to be informed that "*love is the fulfilling of the law ?*" Who does not know, that the great principles of the Divine government are exhibited in the same light in the gospel as in the law ? Hence we are bound by the authority of Jesus Christ, as well as by the injunctions pub-

lished from Sinai, to love our neighbor as ourselves. And this benevolence is the very basis of Christian character. "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Now let a man, warmed with Christian benevolence, take his stand for a single hour in the evening near a crowded night-room in one of our public prisons. With what assiduity and skill and energy are the old instructing the young in the science of sinning! How clearly and impressively are the mysteries of iniquity explained! What shrewdness, and sagacity, and foresight, are evinced in giving shape to new plans for committing crimes! With what facts are not the less-experienced convicts tempted to go greater lengths in sin, when opportunity shall permit! With what appeals are they not fired with a deadlier hate to the offending community! What language of obscenity and blasphemy! What nameless abuses do not the older convicts, hardened in crime and dead to shame, practise upon the defenceless bodies of their younger companions! With what deadly threats do not the tyrants of the den forbid their helpless, suffering fellow-prisoners to shed a ray of light on these deeds of darkness! Now could a Christian witness scenes like these without being moved to deepest compassion? Would not every feeling of benevolence be excited? Would not strong desires be awakened to do something for these wretched men, before death shall put its seal upon their guilty characters? And if by any means their "feet might be taken from the horrible pit and the miry clay and placed upon a rock," would not almost any labor, any expense, any self-denial, be cordially welcomed? With what confidence, then, might not the friends of improvement in prison discipline appeal to Christians, and expect their countenance and aid, on the ground of that benevolence which is the leading element of their character!

2. The friends of improvement in prison discipline expect the countenance and aid of Christians, from *the deep sense of personal guilt they habitually maintain*. In the light of the law of God, they have subjected their own hearts to a severe scrutiny. They have seen and felt that they were *sinner*s. When their eyes were first opened upon themselves, they were stung with the conviction "that in them by nature dwelt nothing good." They could not but see, that if the restraining grace of God were withheld, there is no sin forbidden in the divine law which they could not be liable to commit. And even now, though sanctified in part, they deeply feel that they are secure from the danger of committing the foulest crimes, only as they are guided, restrained, upheld by the Savior's hand. Now with such views of their own character—with such a sense of personal guilt, they cannot turn away from the poor convict, as if he belonged to a more depraved and degraded race than themselves. They will not frown him from their presence with affected wonder, that he could find *himself capable of committing crimes*. While they abhor his sins, they will yet see in his face the *features of a brother*. That they have not gone as far in wickedness, they will be forward to ascribe to the discriminating grace of God. Sentiments of contempt and scorn they cannot cherish. They will not say he has disgraced human nature; let him as he deserves pine and perish in his crimes. They will be ready to inquire if something cannot be done to elevate his character, and improve his condition and prospects? Regarding him as a *fellow-sinner*, of all men they may be expected most cordially to countenance, and most promptly and vigorously to aid those who are toiling for his welfare.

3. Especially will the friends of improvement in prison discipline cherish this expectation, when they remember that in their own experience Christians have full and delightful evidence, that *the grace of God is of sufficient efficacy to work a radical and permanent reformation in the character of sinners, however deeply depraved*. Christians will not regard the character of the foulest convict as ruined beyond the hope of reformation. They will not say, when urged to lead

a hand to aid in lifting him from the "miry clay," It is labor lost: he has reduced his soul to such a wreck that no hand can repair the ruin: we will not waste our feelings and strength in so desperate an enterprise. Men who have never found by experience that the gospel applied by the Holy Ghost is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" to salvation, may hold this language. But can those who have *felt in the renovation of their own hearts* the power of the Divine hand despair of the reformation and salvation of the wretched convict? While they remember what God has done and is every day doing for their souls, they will be ready for efforts to save the souls of others with hope of success. And hope, so conceived and so maintained, will impart energy to their exertions. How can they help giving arm and soul to the designs of the Prison Discipline Society?

II. That Christians may justly be expected to countenance and aid the friends of improvement in prison discipline, may be argued from *the means of usefulness they are able to employ.*

They breathe the spirit of prayer. To the precious injunction, *Draw near to God*, they have listened. Their hearts have been moved with the sweet motive by which that injunction is sent home to the bosom—*And he will draw near to you.* With the way to the Throne of Grace they are well acquainted. Every day are their feet in the blessed path. What choice benefits—light, strength, consolation, grace to help in time of need, have they not often obtained through the medium of prayer! And this medium is continually before them. How are they furnished, then, for the difficult, self-denying enterprise in which the Prison Discipline Society is engaged! Other men, when they looked in upon the poor prisoner in his lonely cell; when they thought upon his darkness of mind, his long-cherished prejudices, his "vile affections," his confirmed habits of sinning, might feel that any means of doing him substantial good in their possession must be altogether inadequate. But Christians in these circumstances would lift up their hearts and hands to Heaven. They would be encouraged with the remembrance of benefits they had often obtained from a throne of grace. What difficulties had they not seen removed by prayer! Before this weapon their strongest foes had often fled in dismay. Nor could the stoutest demon of the pit withstand its edge and point. Wielding such a weapon, why should they not attack the "legion" of foul spirits ever hovering around the penitentiary, to haunt and torment its inmates? Surely, he into whose bosom the spirit of prayer has been breathed, is qualified effectually to promote the design of the Prison Discipline Society. Christians have been taught, moreover, that *in their Bibles* they have the *very means which are adapted to secure the benefits* they had been seeking in fervent prayer. The sacred volume, they know, can pour a flood of light upon the benighted understanding; arouse the sensibilities of the seared conscience; root up the earliest prejudices; cleanse and heal the corrupted heart. Those who regard the word of God as "a dead letter," may well look upon the poor prisoner, shrouded in darkness and loaded with chains, as ruined beyond recovery. They will look around them in despair of finding any agency adapted to quicken his dead soul. They may paint, with whatever skill they can, the ugliness of vice and the beauty of virtue. They might as well hope by such means to charm the deaf adder, as to work a thorough reform in the hardened convict. Hence, those who have never felt the transforming power of divine truth, however they may glory in their unstained morals, are apt to look upon the reformation of the prisoner with heartless despondency. They never dream that the Bible, which lies covered with dust upon their table, is the hiding-place of Jehovah's power. They never dream *that it is* the instrument with which, from a shapeless heap of ruins, the Holy Ghost often rears up a glorious temple, fit for the residence of God. They *never dream*, that by the agency of this neglected volume, the Savior calls the

forgotten dead from their graves ! True, they sometimes witness these effects ; but how often with the vacant stare, with which they wonder at the arts of the magician, rather than with the healthful perception of the tendencies of truth, carried out to these results by the hand of God ! But Christians better understand the word of God. They see in the facts it presents ; in its precepts ; in its promises and threatenings, addressed to human fears and hopes ; that it is adapted, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to regenerate, to sanctify, and to save. And the Holy Spirit is their own covenant Helper, ever present to guide and sustain ; to cheer and succeed. Animated with the breath of prayer, with the living word of God in their hands, and upheld and borne onward by the Holy Ghost, are not Christians the very men to attempt deeds of mercy in the gloomy recesses of the prison ? Will not some of them in person publish salvation to the desponding convict, and cry aloud to the wretch sinking beneath his load of guilt, " Behold the Lamb of God ! " Will not others cheerfully furnish the means requisite to carry to the highest improvement the discipline of the public prison ? If, with the means of promoting this great design, so peculiarly and appropriately their own, they refuse to bless the guilty suffering convict, where shall he look for compassion and assistance ?

III. *The commands of Jesus Christ* bind his disciples to labor for the benefit of imprisoned criminals. The number of their fellow-men which every year enter the door of the public prison is not small. A careful estimation places the inmates of the prisons in the United States at about ten thousand. Let the Christian contemplate these thousands in the light of the memorable injunction from the lips of his ascending Lord. To every creature he is bound to do what in him lies to give the gospel. Its thrilling facts, its holy precepts, its overtures of mercy, its appalling threatenings, he is required to urge on the attention—to send home to the " business and bosom " of all his fellow-sinners. Who then may exclude the convict from the benefits of the gospel ? Is not the penitentiary a part of " all the world ? " Was not each prisoner, employed in its shops or confined in its cells, on the heart and in the eye of the Redeemer, when he bound his church to give the gospel to " every creature ? " The paragraph which stands at the head of this discourse may much assist us in ascertaining the *extent* of our obligations to labor for the salvation of the human family. It is very certain that these obligations do not permit us to overlook our enemies. A benevolence which confines its regards to those who love us and *deserve* our kind attentions the Savior pronounces base and spurious. It is a sentiment which may thrive in the most depraved heart. But Christians must rise above the world by imitating the example of their Lord, in caring for the welfare, in toiling for the salvation of their bitterest enemies. He freely poured out his blood upon the cross for those who repaid his kindness with hate and deadly persecution. His shining example demands a careful imitation. Now what if it be alleged against the prisoner, that he has waged war upon the community around him ; that he has broken the most sacred ties that bind him to his country ; that he has trampled on the majesty of the laws ; that he deserves the abhorrence and execration of every man he meets ? What then ? Are you a *Christian* ? Have you forgotten for whom your Redeemer felt deepest solicitude ; went through exhausting labors ; endured the greatest sufferings ? Were they not all, without the exception of yourself, foes of Heaven ; exposed to the wrath of God—bending under a load of guilt which deserved his withering curse ? How then can you regard the crimes of the convict, however numerous and loathsome, as placing him beyond the field of your benevolent exertion ? You cannot so regard him without forgetting the example of your Savior, violating his injunctions, and forfeiting the character and hopes of the *consistent Christian*.

IV. *The providences of God greatly encourage the expectation that Christians will be forward to do what they can to promote the highest interests of the prisoner.* The exertions of the Prison Discipline Society have by no means been in vain. The leading agents of this society have at every step been sustained and cheered by the smiles of Heaven. He has directed *the attention and cordial regard of influential men*, in different parts of the United States, to the great design. The influence of the society has evidently reached, in different instances, the hall of legislation. The principal agent of the society has not only been permitted, but also requested, to spread out beneath the eye of men distinguished for talents, and station, and influence, the facts which had been collected, and the plans which had been formed. Thus the society have found access to the very heart of the body politic; have been permitted to touch the very mainspring of civil society. The means of usefulness which have thus been placed within their reach have not only been appropriate to their design, but also of a highly efficient character. Nor have such means been placed within their reach in vain. *The most important and valuable improvements in the construction of public prisons have in a number of instances been the direct or indirect result of their counsel and exertions.* These improvements have been followed by the happiest consequences. The weak among the convicts have been snatched from the iron grasp of the strong. A barrier has been raised to protect the young offender from the poisonous breath of the hardened villain. Hundreds of victims have been taken from the bony hand of death. Opportunity, in circumstances highly favorable, has been afforded to toil for the thorough reformation of the prisoner; to inure him to habits of industry and frugality; to deliver him from the subtle yet powerful workings of those prejudices which make him the determined foe of human welfare; to awaken in his bosom those generous feelings which may fit and dispose him to sympathize with his fellow-men; to shed the light of wisdom, human and divine, upon his understanding; and to pour the healing influence of heavenly truth upon his heart. Opportunity has been afforded to enrich the unlettered with the elements of useful learning; and in the Sabbath-school and pulpit, as well as in personal intercourse with convicts, to urge home eternal things in all their weight. The prisoner, both by night and day, is placed in circumstances which invite serious reflection, far removed from the deadly influence of ungodly companions. However they may wish to thrust him down deeper and still deeper in the "horrible pit," the strong hand of wholesome discipline restrains them. He may think and pray, "with none to molest or make him afraid." Nay, the deep solitude which prevails around him constrains him to hold communion with himself, and review carefully the pages of his past history. Wherever a prison is constructed on the plan of that at Auburn, or Wethersfield, or Charlestown, I see a monument of God's kind regard for the design of the Prison Discipline Society; a monument on which is inscribed in plain characters, written with the finger of the Savior, "Fear not, I am with you. Go forward, for glorious success shall crown your benevolent exertions."

It is a fact in a high degree favorable to the design of the Prison Discipline Society, *that in the providence of God a deep conviction has been wrought in the minds of multitudes, that religious instruction is an essential part of healthful prison discipline.* This conviction is now fastened on minds formerly opposed to the introduction of religious agencies into the Penitentiary. Of these men the testimony is harmonious and strong, that Christian truth, urged on the heart of the convict, in the affectionate voice of a devoted teacher, has a most salutary tendency. This testimony is working a happy effect upon public sentiment. *Here and there* an individual, well qualified for the station, devotes soul and body, *under Jesus Christ*, to the spiritual welfare of prisoners. Legislatures are be-

ginning to make provision for the religious improvement of the penitentiaries under their control. Thus a new day is dawning on the prison. The rays of a glorious sun begin to pierce the gloom of its cells. Will not *Christians* listen to the voice of God in his holy providence bidding them rise and exert themselves in behalf of their fellow-sinners, justly confined? Especially, may they not be expected so to do, in full view of *the striking displays of his power and grace which Jesus Christ has made, in the conversion and thorough reformation of imprisoned criminals?* There have been seasons when passing along in front of the cells which the prisoners had entered at the close of the day, they might have looked in upon one and another, bending in deep study over the sacred page, and again upon one and another prostrate before God in prayer. One prisoner they might have found stung with a painful sense of guilt; another weeping at the foot of the cross; and a third rejoicing in "hope of the glory of God." The effects which have thus been wrought upon the consciences and hearts of these awakened prisoners have not been transient. I have just taken my eye from a page which shines more resplendently than a diamond amid sunbeams. It gives the initial letters of some eighty prisoners' names, who had been discharged from one of our penitentiaries. Of these, a number had enjoyed their liberty eight or nine years. On the authority of "letters received from post-masters, sheriffs, district attorneys, and other public officers," their character since their discharge is given to the world. Beginning at the top of the column, the description of their character proceeds in the following style: "Honest, fair character; bad; bad; not improved; nothing improper; character good; character good; character good; in jail for larceny; much improved; sober, discreet man; industrious and honest; character and conduct good; very respectable; steady, and industrious; entirely reformed; respectable and pious." What good man can look over such a column without seeing the hand of God beckoning him to join the goodly band now laboring for the reformation of the prisoner? What motive, derived from the arrangements of Divine Providence, can be better fitted to act upon a Christian heart? What Christian can resist such a motive? It is the voice of the Holy Ghost, calling on the churches to arise, and be "workers together with him" in his designs of mercy towards the wretched convict. What Christian will not listen to such a voice?

The grounds, then, on which the friends of improvement in prison discipline may expect the countenance and aid of Christians, are broad and substantial. These grounds we have found in the character by which Christians are distinguished from their fellow-men; in the means of usefulness peculiar to themselves, which are placed within their reach; in the obligations, by which, as the disciples of Jesus Christ, they are bound; and in the indications of divine Providence, which clearly point them to the penitentiary, as a sphere of benevolent exertion.

Prison Discipline, then, in order to be healthful and efficient must be conducted on Christian principles. These principles, imbodyed in the character of the disciples of the Savior, furnish the very agents which that discipline demands. Their disinterested benevolence will open a way to their hearts for the claims of the prisoner on their kind regard; their deep sense of personal guilt will constrain them to look upon him, as they would look upon a brother; and the experience they have had of the efficacy of divine grace, will inspire them with hopes of success in their efforts to reclaim and save him. Are not these the very men who are fitted to labor for the highest—the immortal interests of the prisoner? Will they not of all men be likely to gain a ready and near access to his heart. While they speak to him in the softened tones of warm affection, and in the animated language of good hope, will he not be forward to listen to their words; to weigh their counsels; to make the instructions they may offer the subject of deep and healthful reflection? Of all men, will they not employ such means of usefulness,

as are adapted to work in his character a thorough and permanent amendment! Who else will kneel in his cell, and lift up to Heaven on his behalf the eye of supplication? Who else will employ with a skilful and energetic hand the only motives which can arouse his conscience and purify his heart—motives drawn fresh from the fountain of eternal truth? And who besides Christians seek and enjoy in their labors of love the assistance of the Holy Spirit? And will not they regard the obligations by which the Son of God has bound them to impart the bread of life to every creature? Will not they of all men freely expend their strength in toiling for the eternal welfare of the “evil and unthankful;” of the friendless and ill-deserving? And are they not the men who from the arrangements of Divine Providence are wont to derive lessons of instruction and motives to exertion? And have not Christian principles, imbodyed in the disciples of the Savior and acting upon the understanding, conscience, and heart of the prisoner, been the means of accomplishing the most important good which in any place has resulted from prison discipline? Where have convicts been found to weep for their sins, and “turn from the evil of their ways,” under any other agency than the truth of God? And where efforts to reclaim the prisoner have resulted in a deplorable and disheartening failure, have not these efforts been made in the neglect or contempt of God and the gospel?

Might I speak to the friends of improvement in prison discipline throughout this republic and throughout the world, with what deep earnestness and strong emphasis would I say; Beware, as you would avoid utter and hopeless defeat in your designs, beware of excluding Jesus Christ from the sphere of your beneficent exertions. Without Him you can do nothing to promote the permanent benefit of the objects of your kind regard. Slight the Savior, and you enter the penitentiary only to mock the prisoner and bring disgrace upon yourselves. Do ye not know—have ye not heard—have ye not *felt*, that “Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God to salvation;” to the loathsome criminal as well as to the man of unblemished reputation? In this warfare, away with “carnal weapons,” wield the sword of the Spirit; and, through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are more than conquerors!

And O, if I might address the redeemed of the Lord; with what fervent importunity would I urge them to give their most efficient aid to the holy design of the Prison Discipline Society. You could not, beloved brethren, mark the object and efforts of this society without the deepest interest. You could not contemplate the field of their exertion without longing to enter as their fellow-laborers. You would pant for a fellowship in the sacred enterprise.

This field I invite you, my brethren, to contemplate. An acquaintance with it you may form through the *Reports of the Society*. Have you read them? Have you weighed the facts which they present; the plans which they describe, and the appeals which they urge? say, brethren, have ye taken them home to yourselves? Know ye not that ye are under peculiar obligations to promote an enterprise so honorable to God, so useful to men?

Give this enterprise, my brethren, your prayers, your influence, a portion of your gold and silver. To you it appropriately belongs to sustain it. God and men expect that you will rise and promote it. Will you deny that the most weighty reasons demand exertion at your hands? Stand up, then, and gird yourselves for action. Your labor in the Lord shall not be in vain. He will smile as he has smiled upon your labors in this department of Christian effort. The work shall prosper in your hands. It shall augment your final reward. In the last day the repentant convict shall outstrip angels in hastening to welcome you to “the joy of your Lord.”

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SERMON CXXIII.

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PHILADELPHIA.

DIFFICULTIES OF OLD AGE WITHOUT RELIGION.

JEREMIAH vi. 4.—Wo unto us! for the day goeth away; for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

THE subject which, from this text, I intend to commend to your attention, is *an old age without religion*. It is truly a painful subject, but one to which it is a matter of duty to call the attention of procrastinating man. In the remarks I shall make, so far as they are addressed to those who have not yet attained this period of life, the subject calls for the most serious admonition and warning. But in regard to those of my hearers who are already aged, or who are upon the verge of the declining years of manhood, it becomes me to employ the utmost tenderness of manner, united with the most ardent language of persuasion.

The command of St. Paul to Timothy was, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the elder women as mothers." The spirit of compassion-ate respect which this precept requires, the law also enjoined, in our deportment towards the aged. "The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother thou shalt not uncover." "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God, I am the Lord." I desire that the spirit of these precepts may govern all my remarks. I wish only, in the meekness which the gospel requires, to show the inevitable misery which *they* entail upon themselves, even in the present life, who come to the winter days of man unpardoned, unclothed, and without hope, and the comfort which arises to the hoary head from being found in the way of righteousness.

It may be that some of my hearers feel constrained to adopt the mournful exclamation of this passage. Their time of labor is just at its close; and in the deepening shadows of the evening, not a glimmering light is seen to guide them through approaching darkness. If I address any who have lived for many long years in the midst of Divine mercies, and the abundant privileges of grace, and are conscious that they are yet unreconciled to God, I would not utter language of reproach; I would entreat them, as fathers and mothers, to "give glory to the Lord their God, before he cause darkness, and their feet stumble upon the lark mountains, and while they look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." While they see and feel the wretchedness of an old age without the presence of God, and find themselves sinking into the eternal world without comfort, I would beseech them to devote with great earnestness their few remaining years or days to the important concerns of an endless being. None of you, my beloved friends, can think the present subject unim-

appropriate, when you notice how many of our aged men and women make no profession of attachment to Christ,—how many habitually turn away from the table of the Lord, as if they had no need of the provisions of Divine grace. None can think me out of place, in beseeching *their* attention to the calls of the Savior, when told that among all the additions to the communion of this church, under my ministry, from the society of the worldly, hardly one individual had passed the middle age of man. All our new members have been young—and the aged who were out of the fold in years past, if they are still alive, are most of them out of it now. To such would I address, with seriousness and affection, the considerations arising from our text. The points to which I wish particularly to direct attention are the *difficulties* and the *sorrows* of old age without religion, without a vital union with Christ, and the comforts of his love. “Wo unto us! for the day goeth away, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out.”

I. That period of life, during which the Savior grants to men the privileges of the gospel, is known under the appellation of *a day of grace*; a day in which he waits for the sinner's repentance, and is peculiarly ready to aid his efforts. The great object to be attained during the continuance of this day is reconciliation to God, and the consequent enjoyment of his love. They who seek him early have the promise that they shall find him; and if man be wise in the morning of this day of privilege, the way of return to God is filled with encouragement.

In old age, this reconciliation to God is rendered embarrassing and painful by this *first* difficulty, that “*The day goeth away.*” The period of grace has almost come to its close. The aged sinner must necessarily reflect upon a long duration of mercy, which has passed by unimproved. Every privilege of the gospel has brought with it an individual responsibility. Not one of its advantages can have been enjoyed without the corresponding obligation to render an account thereof to the holy and heart-searching God. O, how awful is the record which must stand against that man's soul who has for twenty, it may be for thirty years, received from God the ample provisions of the gospel, and derived from them no benefit whatever! The heathen, who in his old age, for the *first time*, listens to the invitations and promises of the gospel, has then the commencement of a day of grace, and is to be regarded under the same aspect as a child in a Christian land, with the same opportunities of religious knowledge. But alas, the aged man, in a land of Christian light, has had from the beginning of his life the privileges which are *first* offered to the idolater in his latter days! O, what is the condition of many such before me? Two thousand solemn public calls of the gospel are to be accounted for, by some of my hearers, besides the vast multitude of private opportunities of knowledge, which have produced no beneficial influence upon their character and prospects. How terrible is the prospect of being thus thrust down to hell, under this load of privileges and blessings from Heaven! and how serious is the difficulty which this wasted period of mercy interposes to a spiritual return to God!

“The day goeth away.” It has been enjoyed, in the fulness of its privileges. It has been long allowed to endure for some of those who listen to me now. But since it has been utterly unimproved, it has tended only to increase the guilt and danger of the soul. For fifty years the Redeemer has called upon an *individual present* to turn to him and live. For fifty years angels of mercy have *watched for his conversion*. For fifty years Divine Providence has crowned his *ways with loving-kindness and tender mercy*. For fifty years there has been *consternation in hell*, lest he should be persuaded to accept the invitations of the *gospel*, and escape from the captivity of Satan. Jesus was answered, *amid*

the convictions impressed in the youthful period, by a promise for the years of maturity. He was put off in maturity to old age, by the cares and labors of life, which had then so much increased that no time could be given to the soul. And now that old age has come, what is the result? Satan is tempting him now to sit down, in sullen despair, under the feeling that so much time has gone that now there can be no room for hope; that he is too old to change a course of habits which have been contracted and indulged for so many years; and that it is better for him to submit with fortitude to that which has been formed into a kind of necessity for his soul. Bring to him now the kind and precious invitations of the gospel, and he can answer, "I would gladly accept them, but alas, I have wasted so much time—I have lived so long in a careless state of mind,—I have had so many mercies, and have never improved them, that I have now no hope, if I should desire to return. 'The day goeth away,' and I must yield to a night of darkness without comfort or hope." O how painful is this view of the condition of an aged sinner! How hard and difficult to arouse him to a sense of the privileges which he has yet remaining, and of the duty which is yet resting upon him! He thinks he would return, but he fears, lest there should be no hope for his soul.

II. The second difficulty which the text suggests, to prevent the spiritual return of the aged sinner unto Christ, is *the short period of grace which is now left to him*. "The shadows of the evening are stretched out." Many years have passed by unimproved. But very few, at the best, are now left for his soul's salvation. As life passes away, the work to be done increases, in the same proportion as the time in which it is to be done is diminished. The reconciliation to God, which in youth was comparatively easy, in the advanced period of life becomes so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible. And the sinner who has postponed the care of his soul to the last hours of life, finds when these hours come that he has so much work to do in other relations in which he is placed, that salvation is now a hopeless matter. Standing upon the verge of eternity, and looking into the awful blackness of the abyss, the aged man feels that the danger which before was little heeded, is now near and dreadful. Beholding the abiding holiness of God contrasted with his own unceasing alienation from his perfect ways, he sees that the distance between himself and his Maker has been immensely increased by this voluntary estrangement. And while in his youth he had gone astray from the Divine Creator, he finds himself now to have gone so much farther, that the period of youth seems to have been, in a comparative view, a period of innocence. And now, how shall he travel back over this whole distance by which he is separated from God? It has taken him perhaps fifty or sixty years to accomplish this outward-bound journey: can he hope for fifty or sixty years more as a period of return? He set out early in the morning to go astray from God. Through the whole day he has been pressing forward, with unabating rapidity, in this course of ruin; and now, when the day has gone, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out, and exhausted nature is asking for repose, alas, is this an hour to commence the journey of a day? to begin a work which, as soon as it is commenced, midnight darkness will interfere to arrest? Death now stands at the door. The line which separates earth from hell has dwindled to a hair, and the aged sinner is tempted to yield to utter despair of escaping the ruin which is to close upon him. The difficulty which his own heart presents, as arising from this shortened period of probation, Satan uses as a temptation to him to be quiet and unconcerned under his load of sins. He agrees that he ought to have made up his mind before this time as to a course of duty for his life. And he answers the faithful admonitions which are given him by his minister or pious friends, that if he has been all this time in the

wrong, it will be a hopeless undertaking, at this late period of his life; to attain to a better course and system. The pride of age interferes. He cannot yield to that strong crying and those tears which might make up for the loss of time, and in a little while do the work of many years. A spirit of deep and agonizing earnestness for his soul he cannot, and he does not wish to attain; and there is no opportunity for any slow work of grace. Thus he argues against himself, and against those who love his precious, but ruined soul. If he had to begin his life anew, he confesses he would not pass it as he has done. He cheerfully advises those who are young by no means to follow his example of procrastination, but in the commencement of life to make provision for eternity. And yet, while he gives this advice to others, he feels himself obliged to pursue the course in which he has been so long engaged. Thus it is that aged parents can behold their children experiencing the power of religion, rejoicing in the life and mercy of the gospel, and uniting themselves to the people of God, and can even feel pleasure at the sight, while themselves still remain far astray from the ways of peace, and are living and perishing, without any interest in the covenant of redeeming mercy; so many difficulties seem to beset the path of return to God.

III. A third difficulty in the way of aged sinners, arises from *the increased hardness of their hearts*. They cannot attain the same liveliness of feeling which marked the period of their youth. When they were young, conviction agitated their minds. The solemn proclamations of Divine truth awakened their attention. Their eyes could weep under the preaching of the gospel. Their affections could be attracted by the inviting hopes and promises of the gospel, and they often felt strongly excited towards a life of holiness and peace. But now they have no such feelings. They sit under the preaching of the word utterly unmoved. The rain which descends to refresh others seems to have no such effect upon them, but rather to hasten their decay. In the language of Barzillai, "they can no more hear the voice of singing men or singing women." Their ears have grown dull in age, and the most awakening calls can produce no influence upon their minds. They sometimes appear to wish, "that they were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon their habitations," that they could renew the awakened feelings and anxious desires of some earlier period. They sometimes look with a kind of envy upon younger persons, who are brought under the renewing influence of the gospel of Jesus, and long as they think to bend in humbleness of mind at the Savior's feet. But they can find no place for repentance. They cannot exercise a godly sorrow. And when the summer and the harvest have passed without improvement, every succeeding day of autumn seems only to dry, and harden, and seal up the earth against the approach of a frost-bound and cheerless winter. This hardness of heart, the necessary accompaniment of age, and still more necessarily the effect of a long continuance in an unconverted state of character, forms a most serious difficulty in the way of the aged sinner's return to God. I do not here speak of a judicial hardening of the heart by the power of God; under this it would be useless to speak of difficulties, for there would be no possibility of return to God. But I refer to the universal characteristic of age, to show how utterly unfit is that period of life, for the first love of a new-born soul, and the deep and sincere emotions of a spiritual mind. While the passage of the day renders every hour which is left of tenfold importance, and the *stretching out* of the shadows of the evening admonishes the aged sinner, "what thou hast to do, do quickly;" this encasing of the affections, this hard and callous state of the soul, blocks up the way towards accomplishing the work which *remains to be done*. A tyrant necessity is driving him on to ruin with untired rapidity, and he has so bound fetters around his own feet, that he has no power

to move. Like aged Joab, many a long-lived sinner attempts in the last hours of life to cling to the horns of the altar for protection, but finds that his hoar hairs, the monuments only of long-continued rebellion and sin, cannot come down to the grave in peace.

IV. The remaining difficulty to which I refer, as hedging up the aged sinner's return to God, is the *pride of character which attendst he advanced periods of life*. There is but one way of salvation opened to men, whether young or old. They must come down to a Savior's feet, as humble, weeping, heart-broken sinners, to obtain pardon and peace in his atonement. This implies an acknowledgment that they have been, through the whole antecedent period of life, in a state of rebellion against God; that they have gone astray from their birth; and now are anxious to come entirely back to the point whence they first set out, and to seek the free mercy of a Savior whom they have hitherto rejected. This is a most humiliating course. Pride rebels at once against it. The wandering child can go home to a pious father or mother with a broken spirit and weeping countenance, and confess the sorrow and shame which remembrance of a life of sin produces. But a parent, who has grown gray without an experience of religion, cannot come down to ask the counsel and prayers of a child that has found a Savior and is evidently rejoicing in his love. The pride of age prohibits such a course. The heart may be often moved, the conscience awakened, and the feelings roused in the bosom of the aged transgressor, and a vehement desire be felt to lay down this burden and find peace. But an assumed dignity and coolness of manner are drawn over a broken and bleeding spirit, because the acknowledgment of these awakened desires is so humiliating to the age and station of the individual. But there is no other course presented. To this humbling ground the sinner must be brought, or he will assuredly perish. Age furnishes no exemptions. So far from it, it requires still deeper abasement from the longer continuance of guilt. This difficulty is now preventing, and has long been operating to prevent, the return of some of my aged hearers to Christ. They are convinced, as they listen to the gospel, of the importance of the course pointed out. They almost resolve to pursue it. But when they return to their homes, the acknowledgment to children, and domestics, and friends, that they have been all this time in the wrong, is so painful and repulsive to their minds, that they cannot yield. The determination, perhaps, is made to commence a course of family worship,—to enter upon a succession of Christian duties and requirements; the hand, perhaps, is actually laid upon the Bible to begin the work; when the heart flutters with indecision, and this pride of age rises up and almost chokes the utterance, and takes away the strength. If there was some other way opened they would embrace it. But pride will probably forever forbid their coming down to the humbled spirit of a child, to seek the salvation which is presented to their acceptance. And though the aged sinners present are now moved, and awakened, and made to feel, it is much more than probable that this strong feeling of pride will put down any lasting concern for their souls, and persuade them still to remain in a state of carelessness and opposition. With such a spirit, well may aged hearers adopt the exclamation of the text, "Wo unto us! for the day goeth away, the shadows of the evening are stretched out;" our whole work of salvation is to be effected, and our hearts prove so hardened and proud, that we are unable now to set out upon the great work, which a whole life would be too short to finish.

In concluding this discourse, I would impress upon the minds of my aged hearers the considerations which have been suggested. Many of you have lived past the middle period of your lives, and are yet without God in the world. How improvident would you consider yourselves, if you had waited until this time without selecting for yourselves a business for the present life, or with-

beginning to lay up a treasure in this world for yourselves or your families! What would you think of the man or woman of forty years of age, who was just agitating the question, what course of life had I better pursue to obtain my bread? You would almost think, if this matter had never gained attention until now, it would be a hopeless undertaking to begin it at all. How many have passed this age, and have now entered upon the work of their souls' salvation! Perhaps they have hardly thought of the question, whether they have souls to be saved. And what is the condition of such in a state of guilt, and still impenitent! How many difficulties surround their way. The path of religion seems almost blocked up, and salvation appears a nearly hopeless matter. You will say that this view is most discouraging. My beloved friends, nothing is so discouraging as this carelessness of habit, from which I would try to arouse you. You had better feel despair than feel nothing. For when you despond, we may hope that you will embrace the arm extended for your rescue. The views now suggested should have the effect of rousing you at once to an earnest, determined exertion for your eternal safety. Brethren, your time is short, your difficulties are many, your work is arduous, but it is not impossible; and would you set yourselves immediately about it, God would remove the difficulties, and give you success. Nothing is wanting in God, but there is much wanting in yourselves. O that you could be persuaded immediately to turn to Christ, who invites you, and promises salvation only upon your return. You must be reconciled to God, and find acceptance and peace in a Redeemer's blood. If you pursue this course you will find safety. If it be still rejected, the difficulties will still increase—and as the day sinks into darkness, and the shadows of the evening are lost in undistinguished night—a deeper and deeper woe will be sounded from your souls, and echoed back from every lost spirit of the regions of despair. Aged friends, why will you not yield at once? Come out from ruin, and flee to the arms of Jesus. However painful and humbling the work may be, the humbling step is but one. Be willing to be abased in the Divine presence, and feel that though aged and respected among men, there is no respect of persons with God. Accept the righteousness of Jesus, and be found in him, converted and sanctified, and you will be safe and happy. Do not say to this message, wait yet a little, for a more convenient season. To-morrow will make the matter still worse. The next day, should you live, will increase the difficulties around you; and what finally will be the end, I leave your own consciences to tell you.

SERMON CXXIV.

BY REV. STEPHEN H. TYNG.

SORROWS OF OLD AGE WITHOUT RELIGION.

ECCLESIASTES vi. 3.—If a man live many years, so that the days of his years are many, and his soul be not filled with good, I say that an untimely birth is better than he.

LONG life has been esteemed among all nations as one of the greatest and most desirable of blessings. In the earliest periods of the world, the number of years allotted to man as his season of probation was very great. Now that the days of men are comparatively so circumscribed, we can hardly imagine the

appearance or the feelings of an individual, whose locks were the growth of nine centuries, and who had lived to witness many thousand immortal beings, as the lineal descendants from himself. Yet this was the first measure of human life. But the fallen nature of man, transforming this lengthened period of trial merely into a more extended progress in iniquity,—a more unfathomable depth of sin, the Divine Creator has in successive generations cut down the opportunity of rebellion against him, in the case of each individual, to less than one tenth of the period first granted to the human race. No longer like the oak, which is said to occupy three centuries in its growth, three centuries in the enjoyment of its maturity, and three centuries in decay, now, “we all do fade as a leaf.” At the utmost ordinary limit, the days of man are threescore years and ten. And the wish for long life can hardly carry the mind beyond this period. But the fact that so very few ever attain to this utmost limit leads us to arrange our plans of business and exertion within a much narrower scope than that would allow us. In our worldly occupations, we are governed by the rule, that what we have to do must be done quickly. And no man, who would preserve the reputation of one in possession of his reason, thinks of laying a plan for the acquisition of money, or for the attainment of any worldly object of desire, which is to be commenced when he has attained the age of threescore and ten. To say that he would *set out* then upon a business which his whole life should have been employed in finishing, and the care of which ought to be then dismissed from a mind that needs to be at rest, would stamp any one of you with the character of derangement. He would be an object of ridicule, who should announce his purpose to bind himself, when he had attained the age of seventy, as an apprentice to a trade, or to enter himself as a pupil in a school, or even to plant an orchard in his grounds with the hope of eating the fruit which it should bear him. And yet how many are hoping to prepare for an eternal occupation, and to attain an inexhaustible knowledge in this last flickering of human existence! In the business of this world men are wise. It is only in relation to eternity that they seem to be void of reason.

But what is really the great object and purpose for which human life has been bestowed? Is it to acquire a trade? to obtain an education in science? or to lay up treasures which may be moth-eaten and corrupted? If I should derive my answer from the habits of most of my hearers, it would seem to be this. But if I go to the *Bible* for a reply to this question, it presents a very different end before me.

In my text, the wise preacher supposes a man to have seen the utmost possible limit of human existence. And then he estimates the worth of the whole of this proud and protracted life, if it has passed without the acquisition of that object which the *Bible* proposes. “If a man live many years,—so that the days of his years be many, and his *soul* be not filled with good, I say that an untimely birth is better than he; for he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.” One far wiser than Solomon has given us the same estimate in the striking demand built upon man’s universal love of gain, “What shall it *profit* a man if he shall gain the *whole* world and lose his own *soul*?” When he has balanced his books for eternity, how much will it appear that he has got in exchange for his soul? Probably the *experience* of some of my hearers may soon furnish the exact, and the only adequate reply to these demands, and constrain them to adopt in application to themselves the Lord’s assertion regarding Judas, “It had been better for us, if we had not been born,” “for who can dwell with the devouring fire? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?”

The text leads me to consider,

I. *The great object and purpose of human life.*

II. *The sorrows of that man who has been spared to the later periods of life without attaining it.*

I. The great object of human life is that "*the soul may be filled with good.*" It was for this object that man was placed in a period of earthly education; and it is for this alone that Divine forbearance lengthens out to gray hairs the life of man; to see if the hour will ever come when men will be wise, and think of the things which belong to their peace. The possession of an immortal soul forms man's chief distinction from the brutes which perish,—a soul which must be rejoicing in unspeakable good,—or lamenting amid unutterable evils, ages after the body in which it dwelt has returned to dust as it was. How then shall this soul be filled with good? Is there any thing within the limits of worldly gifts which can thus fill it? Is there any creature on earth that can form a recompense for its loss? Can a sinner before me carry the wealth of the world into hell, to bribe the flames, or to corrupt its tormentors? Can he there buy out his pardon with money? Yes, when he can sow grace in the furrows of his field, and fill his barns with glory; when he can plough up heaven out of the earth, and extract God from corrupted creatures, the world may be able to fill his soul with good, and furnish an adequate exchange for its loss. But who sees not that there is an utter disproportion between the desires of his soul, and all the fruits which earth produces? The sinner is descending where his earthly glory can never descend after him, and where, for a soul unredeemed, all redemption ceaseth for ever. Naked he came into the world, and naked he must leave it again. He has to stand where his soul will constitute his all, where the crowns of kings and the shackles of prisoners, the robes of princes and the rags of beggars will form no distinctions,—where all classes of men must answer upon an equal footing and plea for eternity, and where an experience of the power of godliness in a life of probation will form the only ground of hope.

That man's soul is filled with good who has found a reconciled God. There is none good but one, that is God.—He who has received Jesus in his heart by faith, so that God dwells in him and he in God, has found the one great abiding good for man. The privileges of the gospel are bestowed upon us, and the voice of Jesus is calling us through our whole period of probation, that we may be led to seek salvation in that infinite atonement, which is offered as our only good. In us, by nature, there dwelleth no good thing; nor can all the attainments within the reach of our natural powers procure for us the least permanent good. In the unconverted soul there is nothing but defilement, and guilt, and ruin: and man has no experience of good until he has been brought with a broken and humbled spirit, to lay down his hopes at the feet of Jesus, and to seek for peace and salvation through him. The converted soul is made "the habitation of God through the Spirit," and "is filled with good." The unconverted soul "has not seen God, neither known him," and has therefore no good.

"If a man live many years, and his soul be not filled with good," our text declares, if he be still in an unconverted state, has never submitted his heart to the full dominion of Christ, and has therefore no hope or treasure laid up in another world, "I say that an untimely birth is better than he." Any state, within the conception of man, short of the final and interminable agonies and despair of hell, is preferable to the state of an old man without religion.

II. I am thus led to my second topic of remark,—the sorrows of the man who has passed through life, and "his soul is not filled with good." If there be such a hearer before me, I pray him to consider the evils which he is bringing upon himself, and the sorrows which he is multiplying around him while he is without God in the world.

1. The first cause of sorrow in old age without religion, to which I refer, is, that *man has passed through a life, a reflection upon which gives him no comfort.* So has the Divine Creator constituted the human mind, that man is compelled to look back continually upon his own conduct and character. Even if he would desire and endeavor to forget himself, he finds that he cannot do it. Past days and years rush involuntarily upon his recollection, and bring to him their load of joy or sorrow, and lay it down before him for his cool and inevitable inspection. We are always laying up something for our latter days, and according as we have sown shall we then reap. To the Christian, the review of life is in many respects highly comforting. It gives him a new cause of thankfulness, if he can look back from the bed of death, and see that his whole life has been given to the God who made and upheld it; and that *Ebenezers*, as monuments of divine help, have been set up in every path through which he has been led. In the midst of all the trials of Job, this retrospect of divine grace, as displayed in his past life, gave him comfort, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Such reflections gave him no pain; and he gladly ascribed all the glory to the Almighty who was with him, and whose "candle shined upon his habitation." David could say, "I have been young and now am old; and yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken." Paul could look back upon a long ministry for Him who loved him when he was in the ignorance of unbelief, and say, "I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth *there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day.*" The martyr Polycarp could exclaim at the close of life, "Eighty and six years have I served Jesus of Nazareth." In the same spirit every old disciple may look back upon life, and the reflection gives him consolation, as it brings to his mind new proofs of a Savior's love and faithfulness.

But what *sorrow, anguish, and self-crimination* arise in the heart from the retrospect of a wasted life! No beam of light is cast forth upon the mind from any act or feeling that recollection brings to view. Every hour rises up as an accuser of a guilty conscience.—A remembrance of *youth* is a remembrance of convictions smothered, the Holy Spirit resisted, and a Savior's love despised. The thoughts of a past *manhood* present an awful picture of a sinner, carefully building for himself an altar from the stones of the world, and immolating upon it, to the enemy of God and man, his immortal soul. The latter years, as they have collected upon each other, and are thrusting him so rapidly from the earth, seem only the gathered impetus of that stone of neglected grace which is now ready to fall upon his soul and grind him to powder. All the resolutions and plans which he made for life have gone by unfulfilled. Every opportunity has been lost, every mercy has been abused, and the varied scenes of his past existence, which, when they were approaching seemed to be a pillar of light and hope, now that they are looked back upon, show no aspect but a thick cloud of darkness and despondency. O, what sorrow does such a life produce, and how often does it lead to the exclamation from the aged offender, "O, that I had been cut off from the womb, that I had perished from my birth!" How many of you, my beloved hearers, are thus laying up sorrows which shall consume your flesh as it were fire; or piling up the snows of age upon your heads, to serve only as the monument of your destruction; and compelled in looking back upon life to say,

"O pleasures past, what are ye now
But thorns about my bleeding brow?
Spectres, that hover round my brain,
And work and aggravate my pain."

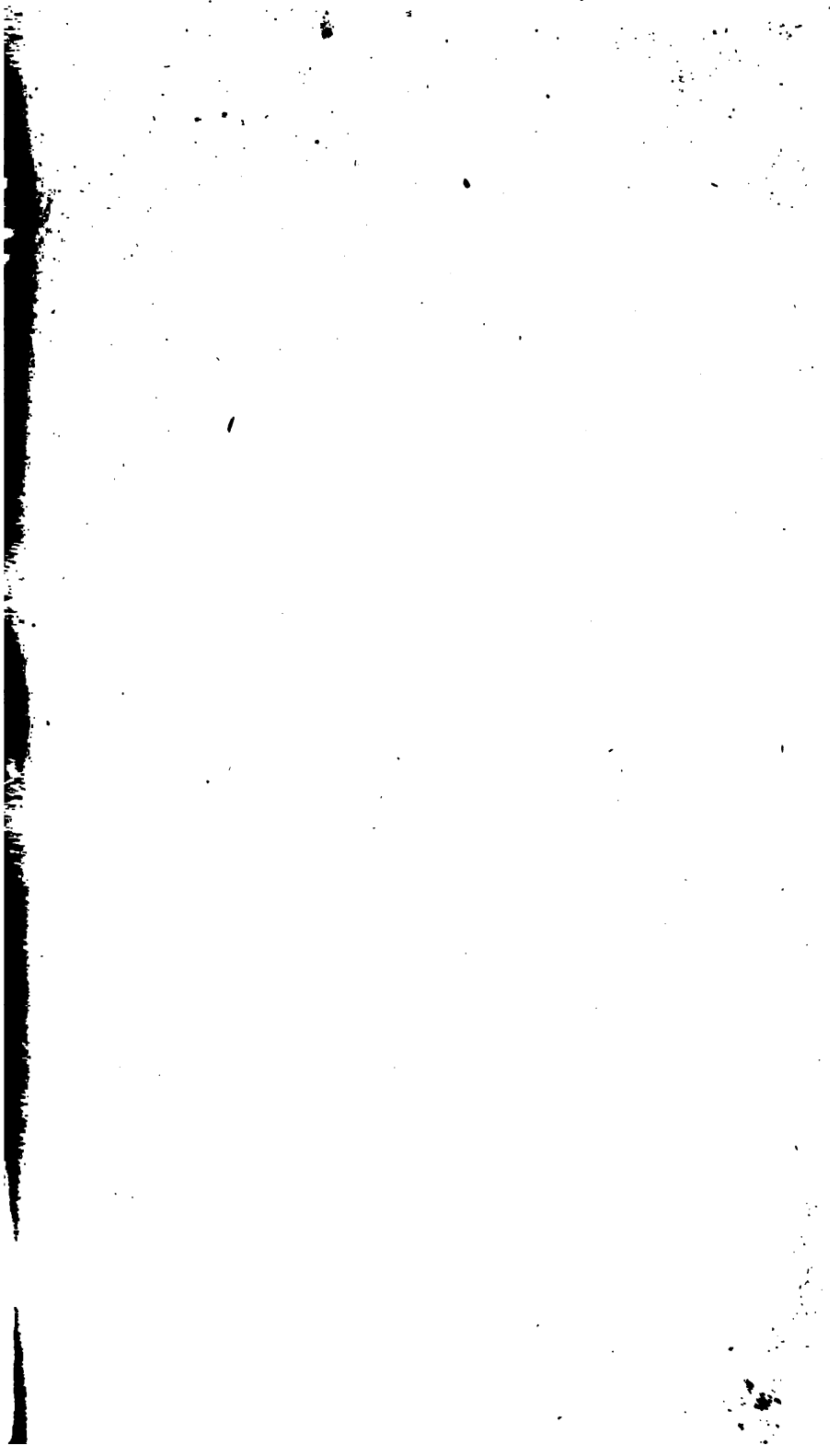
Nothing but wretchedness can arise from a life which has been spent without Christ. Old age may be crowned with human glory, loaded with earthly wealth, and having every comfort which the intercourse of men can give; but this reflection upon a murdered soul, a twice crucified Savior, a miserable bargain with Satan, will tear the glory from a royal diadem, and turn the sweetest joys of earth into anguish and poison.

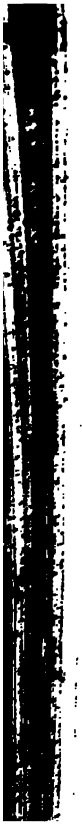
2. The second sorrow of an old age without religion to which I will refer is, that man is *pressing forward to an eternity for which he has no preparation*. The only preparation which any sinner can have for a happy eternity is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ, clothed with his everlasting righteousness, and receiving a free redemption through his blood. This eternity cannot be avoided. There is no discharge in this war. With resistless force man is pressed onward to the valley of the shadow of death, and whether prepared or unprepared, he must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. This course is altogether inevitable. In youth, the thought of it seems to be easily removed, because the day of parting appears to be far off. The youth *may* live to be an old man, and as he thinks, will then have time enough to take care of his soul. But when old age has arrived, the hour of death cannot be far removed. Soon the limbs of the aged will be stiffened with dissolution, and an immortal soul must go to bear witness against itself before the throne of God. The prospect which before was a distant one, now comes to the very door. The man is now upon the very margin of the ocean. It spreads itself before him with inconceivable magnitude. But what is the view upon which his eyes will rest! Does this ocean shine with the glories of the sun? Does every image of beauty seem to be reflected from its waters, and sweet and ever-enduring peace to abide upon its glassy surface? Does its attractive stillness tempt him to launch upon its bosom with confidence and hope? or does he see it agitated with tempests lashed into fury with a mighty wind, rising up in anger to the heavens, only that it may the better expose the deep abyss of hell; heaving from its waters the sad mementoes of a thousand shipwrecks, and proclaiming in every roaring which strikes upon his ear, that *there* is no safety for this soul? Does he feel himself drawn forward by the joyous notes and the cheerful music of those who are floating upon its bosom in everlasting security? Or is he driven back upon himself by the wailings of anguish which burst from its depths, and finally, in spite of his last convulsive grasping upon some poor shrub of earthly confidence, is he plunged bound hand and foot, into all the terrors which he saw full clearly were prepared for him! O, how much is involved in this question! All resting upon the one fact, is he prepared or unprepared for judgment. Has he sought refuge, or has he not, in the hope which was set before him in the blood of Jesus Christ? How truly is that old age an *evil* day in which man finds no pleasure, which has no preparation for eternity, to which hope comes not that comes to all! I wonder not that the aged sinner, who is not of Christ, clings with tenacity to life,—I wonder not that he dreads to think of leaving a world beyond which there is no hope for his soul,—I wonder not that he fears an endless contrition of sorrow and anguish. But O, how unwise is he to expose himself to it! Whatever he may have gotten of earthly good, what is he now profited? Every day is now counted like the days of the criminal. To-morrow and to-morrow he may be here. But ah, the awful hour is not far removed, it cannot be, when he must be carried without hope or comfort to the bar of an offended God. And while an eternity unprovided for is thus near upon him, he feels that it would have been better for him if he had not been born.

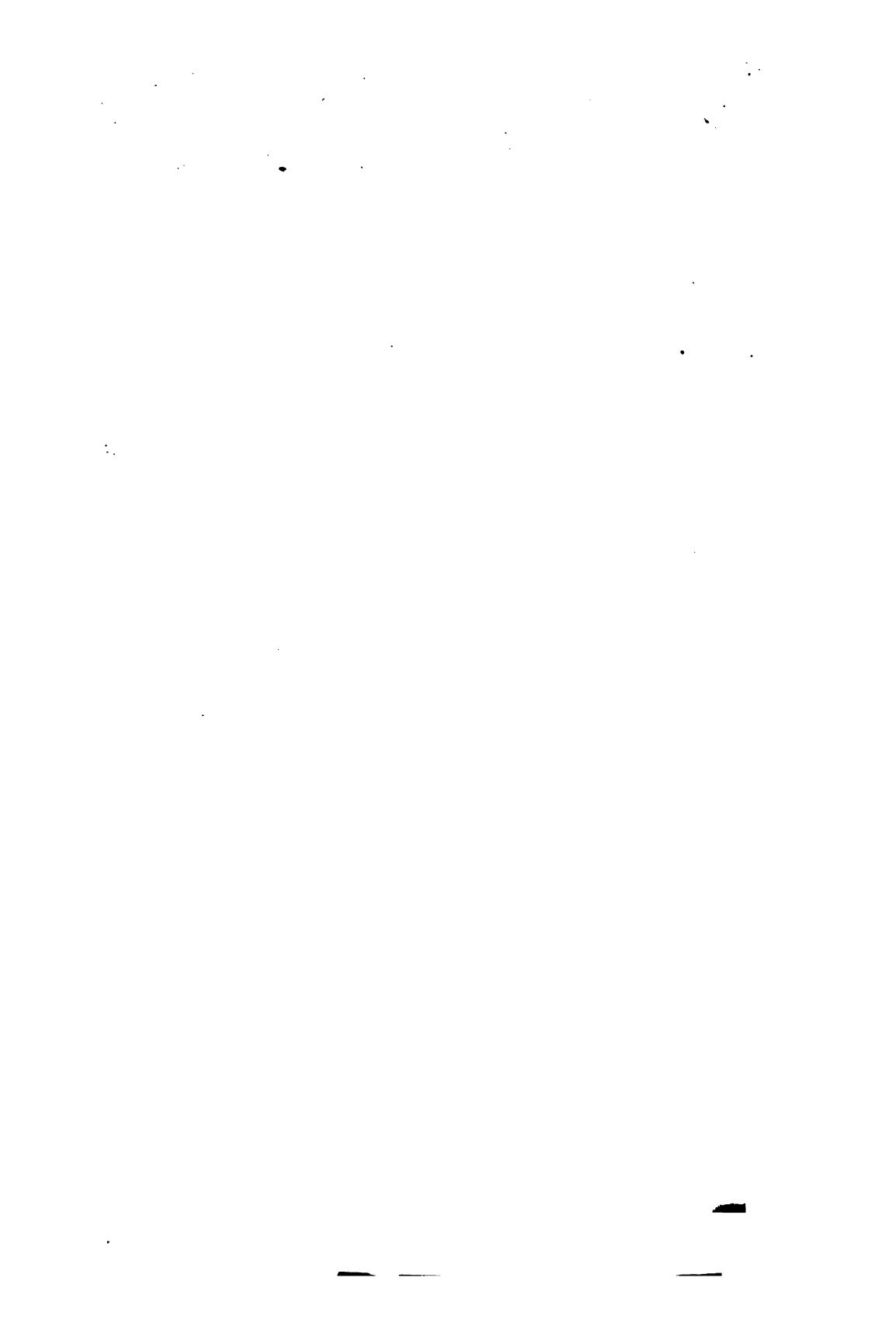
III. Another sorrow of old age without religion is, that man *has experienced the vanity of the world, and has nothing to supply its place.* The false paintings of the world delude the young, and palm themselves upon them for realities. They love to be thus deceived. They make no opposition to the delusions practised upon them by these enticing instruments of Satan. Wealth and pleasure and reputation seem to be proper and reasonable objects of pursuit, and in them the young vainly imagine that they can find satisfaction for their souls. But the aged have outlived these deceptions. They have experienced far too much to be induced now to believe that the present world can furnish them any abiding rest. I am addressing some, my brethren, who can tell me that they have tasted of every fountain which the earth can offer, and know that but miserable comfort is to be derived from them all. Mere sensual indulgence, whether of a light and giddy character, or of a deeper stain of pollution, can offer them nothing, for they have no feelings or desires to which such provisions are suitable. Money can do them no good, for it will require but very little to purchase for them a grave or a coffin, and soon these will be all they shall want. Their own characters can furnish them no consolation, though a thousand sycophants should praise their course of life; for they see that man judgeth by the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart. When they were young, they could be active and occupied, and thus had power to divert their minds from that deep consciousness of deficiency which even then was felt. But now other hands have taken their employments. They have been released from active labors. Many hours in the day must be passed in thought; and they cannot help thinking of themselves. They are obliged often to sit down in a contemplation of their own past and future existence, and their minds present a perfect blank, so far as any source or object of comfort is to be found. The world recedes and disappears; its cisterns are all broken, its springs are dried, its flowers have withered, its joys have become entirely tasteless; and in the midst of all this wilderness of the soul, they can find no fresh springs of hope or peace. Their days are consumed from the earth; they flee away and yet they see no good. There is nothing now which they would not give, they think, for a well-grounded hope of everlasting rest. And no joy seems to them more important than that which would have arisen from an early and cordial acceptance of the loving-kindness of Jesus Christ. But alas, vain as the world is, it is all they have. They have laid up their treasure here. They have *here* sought their joys and comforts; and they have no treasure in any more continuing city. They ask for religious hope, but it seems to flee far from them. They call for Jesus, but he appears to turn a deaf ear to their cries. They try to persuade themselves then that they have been always believers, but conscience will not be charmed to silence. Neither alleged faith, nor attempted infidelity can furnish them what they want. They would be glad to believe that there is no hell. They sometimes say that they do believe so. But alas, their hearts cannot rest upon it. They are troubled and terrified after all; for all the awful words of the Scriptures still press upon their recollection, and knock away the props upon which they have built this vain idea. They are thus left without one source of comfort, and struggling with wretchedness and despair; they feel that the man out of Christ has no hope, though he has gained in this world, when God taketh away his soul.

I refer upon this occasion to none other of the sorrows of age without religion. The three sources of painful reflection which I have suggested, are sufficient to awaken attention to this matter. "If a man live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, I say that an untimely birth is better than he." Why is it so? Because he has passed a long life, and he has no comfort in looking back upon it, for it is only by filling

his soul with good, that the remembrance of many days can give him peace : Because he is pressed to the very margin of a boundless eternity, for which he has made no preparation ; for it is only a soul filled with good that can be a preparation for eternity : because he has proved that the world can do him no good, and he has nothing which can supply its place. It cannot fill his soul, and he has made no other provision for its failure which might receive him to everlasting habitations. Surely then the assertion of my text is proved to be established upon a true foundation. And every hearer who has come to old age in an unconverted state, has infinite reason to shake himself from the dust, to give up every thought about any other object, and to consecrate singly to this great purpose of his soul's salvation every remaining hour of life. I feel no sorrow in driving the aged who are without Christ to despair. When they do feel and care enough about the matter to despair, I shall have hope that the Lord is so overturning all their long-standing self-righteousness, that he may build for them a city which hath foundations, which shall be eternal in the heavens. It is not despair which is likely to injure them. They are perishing in lethargy, in cold and heartless unconcern, and the sooner they despair of accomplishing any thing but eternal ruin in their present course, the better will it be for them. Having applied to them peculiarly my former discourse upon this subject, let me now address the word of exhortation to those who have not quite attained this period of life. There are many of you, in youth and in maturity, who are postponing to old age the concern which you ought now to feel about your souls. I would that you could be convinced of the folly of this course of self-destruction. What have you seen attractive in the picture I have set before you of an irreligious old age ? Why will you persist in your determination thus to seek the living among the dead ? Can you present to your minds one rational excuse for the course you are pursuing ? Travelling in the broad road to death, beholding the pit bottomless and open, knowing that no soul ever returned from its darkness and despair, can you hope to find a reconciled God at the close of this persevering and determined course of folly ? No, I solemnly proclaim to every soul in this assembly who is thus pushing forward the day of return to God, refusing the first-fruits of the harvest, and leaving only the gleanings of a wasted mortality to the living God, that the rest of God will never be found. You are laying up in store nothing but wrath and destruction. You are provoking a God, justly offended, to withdraw his Spirit from you. You are crushing the Spirit of God, as he lifts up his admonitions in your heart, with the vainly gilded determination of final ruin. You are not *postponing* a day of return,—you are thrusting it from you for ever. Do not deceive yourselves with any false expectations of a future repentance. You will never repent. Satan is rejoicing this moment over every procrastinating soul, in the assurance that he has accomplished his design. Let him persuade you to go from this place with the plan of becoming religious when you become old, and his work is finished. Your souls are lost. The day of your conversion will never come ; and the door of hope will be closed against you for ever. To-morrow is good for nothing to you. Now is your proper time of return to God ; and that return now neglected will be neglected for ever: You will go out in darkness, and your name shall be covered with darkness, and the only lasting record of your existence will be the remembrance of God, that you were a poor, obstinately deluded creature, that was led to bargain away eternal life for a paltry provision of this perishing world. Now is your accepted time and your day of salvation. And may the Holy Ghost be pleased to apply to your hearts these solemn truths, to persuade you to improve it. Amen.







1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including the names of the authors and the titles of their works. This list is organized in a structured manner, likely serving as a table of contents or a list of references.

2. The second part of the document contains the main body of text, which appears to be a collection of essays or articles. Each entry in this section likely corresponds to one of the titles listed in the first part. The text is arranged in a vertical column, with each entry starting with a title and followed by a block of text. The text is somewhat faint and difficult to read, but it seems to be organized in a clear, sequential order.







