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Religious Ultraism:

A

SERMON

DELIVERED AUGUST 25, 1835,

AT THE

INSTALLATION OF THE

REV. JOHN H. HUNTER,

AS PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN WEST  
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS.

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By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ALBANY.

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1835.



TO THE MINISTERS

COMPOSING THE

HAMPDEN ASSOCIATION,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF THE FRATERNAL REGARDS AND GRATEFUL  
REMEMBRANCES OF

THE AUTHOR.



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## SERMON.

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PHILIPPIANS, iv. 5.

*Let your moderation be known unto all men.*

There is, perhaps, no theme which better suits the taste of this generation than the glories of the present age. We have talked of it as an age of light; and have recognized in its increasing brightness no equivocal harbinger of millennial glory. We have talked of it as an age of action; in which man has learned the great lesson that he was made, not merely to live but to labor; and a spirit of enterprize has pervaded, with almost electric power, every department of human society. We have talked of it as an age of benevolence; in which the strong claims of human wretchedness are beginning to be deeply and extensively felt, and monuments of a self-sacrificing spirit crowd upon the eye from every direction. We have talked of the noble institutions to which the age has given birth, as so many central points of moral or evangelical influence; of the wilderness beginning to bud and blossom beneath the culture which christian benevolence has bestowed upon it; and in the visions of a hallowed enthusiasm, we have seemed almost to forget that the whole earth has not been actually reclaimed to the spiritual dominion of Messiah. And last, though not least, we have talked of

our Revivals, which have distinguished this age above any that has preceded it; of the signal triumphs of God's grâces which they have displayed; and the vast amount of beneficent instrumentality which they have secured; and the incalculable number of souls whose destiny for eternity they have reversed; and the constantly increasing influence which each revival will send down through all coming generations. On these and other kindred topics we have been accustomed to linger, and we have had a right to linger, with delight; though it will be well for us if our rejoicing has never degenerated into boasting; if, instead of giving God the glory of his own work, we have not taken at least a part of it to ourselves.

But though we have a right to call to mind, in the exercise of a proper spirit, the brighter features of the age,—nay, though we are bound to do so, as well from considerations of gratitude to God, as for the sake of availing ourselves of every encouragement to a course of benevolent action, yet it may fairly be questioned whether, in our zeal to discover and eulogize every thing that is good, we have not, to a great extent, lost sight of the fact that there is much in the character of our age that needs to be corrected. And possibly an examination might show that our exclusive and self-complacent contemplation of the more promising characteristics of the age, is one principal reason why we are threatened—may I not say, actually visited, with certain appalling evils. I well know that it is far more grateful to dwell upon the bright than the dark side of the picture; just as it is more grateful to an individual to contemplate those circumstances in his own condition which indicate safety and prosperity, than those which tell of disaster and ruin; but I know too that, in the former case as truly as in the latter, both our duty and our interest conspire to demand that we

should look at things as they really are, and not turn our eye away from facts in which we are most deeply interested, because it is painful to contemplate them. If it is a dictate of wisdom that we should consider the more propitious aspects of the age with gratitude, it is equally a dictate of wisdom that we should dwell upon its darker features with humiliation; and that minister is not faithful to his Master who cries 'Peace, Peace,' when the general interests of Zion are in jeopardy, any more than he who prescribes a false remedy to the soul that is sinking under the weight of its own trespasses and sins.

You cannot, I think, have observed the progress of things in this country within the last few years, without having been struck with the fact that, in many of our religious and benevolent operations,—to say nothing of our political movements,—there has been an increasing tendency to wild and extravagant action. There is a large class who have been not only zealous, but over-zealous; not only wise, but over-wise;—who have seemed to rue the day that such words as *caution*, and *prudence*, and *discretion*, ever found their way into the Christian's vocabulary; and to regard all the old ways of doing good as well enough in their time, but as quite unworthy of this enlightened age. The spirit to which I refer, is not confined to any particular department of religious action: if it were, it would be an occasion for much less alarm;—but you have to encounter it, like an all pervading energy, in almost every good enterprize of the day; and it has gathered so much strength, that he who thinks to oppose it, may well gird himself for conflict with a giant. I scarcely know by what single word to designate this evil: I will call it *Ultraism*; which, if not a strictly authorized word, is so much in popular use, that the idea which I wish to convey by it will instantly occur to you. ULTRAISM then,

in the sense in which the word is now commonly understood in this country, and as it is connected with our benevolent and religious operations, is to constitute the topic of the present discourse.

I hardly need say, my friends, that, in selecting such a topic for this occasion, I have not been influenced by any apprehension that you, as a congregation, are chargeable with any approach to the excesses which I shall have occasion to reprobate; nor yet, that I suppose they have gained a footing to any extent in this favored neighborhood. I bless God that this region has hitherto been kept so free from them; and I pray God that you may know them only as you know the sound of the distant tempest. But I bring this subject before you because I regard it as of vital interest to our American church, and one member cannot suffer, but that the rest must suffer with it; because, though the evil may not hitherto have reached you, yet no portion of the church is secure from it; and finally, because I remember where I stand;—amidst a congregation whom I know too well to hesitate to speak forth to them my whole heart;—may I not add, amidst brethren in the ministry, of whose kindness and candor I have had too much experience, to justify any apprehension that the discussion on which I am about to enter will be met, as I might reasonably expect it would be in some other clerical circles, with distrust and crimination. I rejoice that I can address you on this subject with a full conviction, that your feelings will go along with me; and that I can recognize in you, as in other days, fellow-helpers in the great cause of evangelical order, truth and piety.

It would be a great mistake, if any of you should imagine that the selection of this subject even remotely implies a conviction on my part, that the church has noth-



ing to fear at this day, from the influence of formalism. I know that this evil exists to an appalling extent; nor would it be at all out of place, if I were to avail myself of this very occasion to sound a note of alarm to the multitude of slumbering Christians, which the visible church embosoms; and indeed I expect to strike at this evil indirectly, inasmuch as it is one of the legitimate fruits of that spirit which I am to endeavor to expose. Nor yet again, do I mean at all to question the fact that there is in the church a goodly measure of consistent and well regulated zeal; that zeal which burns brightly, and operates efficiently, on the one hand, while yet it avoids all rash excesses on the other: And here too, I might properly enough use the present occasion to commend the culture of this heavenly grace, and exhort you to abound in it yet more and more. But notwithstanding all this, the church is in imminent danger from the progress of Ultraism: it is not only a real evil, but an evil of mighty magnitude; and I appeal to you whether Zion's watchmen shall slumber over it, and do nothing to resist its progress, or else lift up the voice of remonstrance and warning, even though it be at the peril of having their motives arraigned, and their names held up to public odium on the list of the enemies of truth and righteousness.

Lend me your attention then, while I present this evil before you in

Its SOURCES:

Its ELEMENTS:

Its MANIFESTATIONS:

Its TENDENCIES:

Its REMEDY.



I. *Its* SOURCES.

I may mention,

1. *An ardent temperament.*

Every one who has made the least observation upon the springs of human conduct, and especially upon the operations of his own mind, must be aware of the controlling influence of the passions in every department of human action. I do not say that reason and conscience have no authority; but I say that in the mass of men passion over-awes it: under the influence of passion, multitudes fly directly in the face of reason and conscience, and fearlessly encounter their rebukes; while others contrive to bribe them into silence by a process of self-deception. Hence it is in accordance with common experience that the strength of an individual's feelings determines, in a great measure, the amount of energy that will characterize his actions. We expect that a man of an originally sluggish temperament will move in any enterprize with deliberation; while an individual of quick native sensibility and strong passions, will act on every subject which engages his attention, with proportional fervor and impetuosity.

Suppose, now, that some great and good object be presented to an individual of this latter description—if he be a good man, it will naturally seize strongly hold of his feelings, and command his vigorous efforts. His great desire is that it may be accomplished, and accomplished speedily; and presently his desire rises into impatience; he cannot bear the lingering operation of the ordinary means of doing the good work; and in this state of mind, he turns his eye away from the Bible, and runs over some catalogue of human devices, or peradventure originates something which nobody has tried before him; and when he begins to act, if you attempt to follow him, you seem

to be moving in the track of a whirlwind. So intensely is his eye fixed upon the good end, that he practically adopts the principle that the end sanctifies the means; and if he is admonished either from without or from within, of the questionable character of the measures he employs, he instantly disposes of the admonition by a reference to the importance of the object which he is laboring to accomplish. You see then that the fact that a man even rushes into grievous excesses, is no certain evidence that he has not the genuine love of God in his heart: On the contrary, I believe that a reference to facts will show that some eminently pious men have, for a season at least, seemed to cut loose from all scripture rules in their efforts to advance the cause of Christ; only because their constitutional ardor has triumphed over the dictates of sober judgment.

2. This spirit originates also in *mistaken views of religion*.

I might mention various errors which legitimately tend to Ultraism; but I will limit myself on the present occasion to two of the most prominent of them.

The first is, *ascribing an unscriptural and disproportionate importance to human agency*. That man has a part, and a highly important part, to perform, in the accomplishment of God's purpose in the moral renovation of the world, no one can reasonably question; for this is a work which God has emphatically committed into the hands of the church; and he has required them to prosecute it vigorously and perseveringly, until it be accomplished. But he does not require, he does not even permit, them to attempt the work in their own strength; he recognizes in them nothing better than feeble instruments, which operate effectually only as they are sustained, and guided, and quickened, by the influence of his Spirit. But

there are those whose religious speculations would seem to take God's work out of his own hands; to make man a mighty agent rather than a humble instrument; to deny to God the power as a preparation for denying to him the glory. I hardly need say that, under the influence of such a view of his own powers, any individual must acquire a self-confident spirit; and if, in the exercise of this spirit, he address himself to the advancement of Christ's cause, he will be almost sure to overstep the rules which God has prescribed; will turn his back upon the infallible Guide, and draw from the resources of his own wisdom.

The other error to which I referred, is the notion that *all religion consists in excitement, or in action*. No Christian doubts that more or less of excitement, and a great amount of action, belong legitimately to true religion. But there is not a small class who will have it that there is no religion without great excitement, and that the sum and substance of all religion is action. And it is almost exclusively that kind of action which consists in direct efforts for the salvation of men. The duty of examining ourselves whether we be in the faith, the duty of keeping the heart with all diligence, the duty of searching the scriptures, and even of training up our families in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are regarded as falling quite into the back ground, in comparison with duties of a more public and more exciting character. And in addition to this, there is the impression that there is little progress made in personal piety independently of strong excitement; and that the process of growth in grace never goes on so rapidly in the soul as when the hands are most busy for the promotion of Christ's cause; even though the work of self communion and other private religious duties, should, for the time, be nearly sus-

pended. Here again, you instantly see that no man can adopt this view of christian duty, and act under its influence, but he will be an Ultraist in reference to any object to which his efforts are directed.

3. Another source of this evil is to be found in a *restless desire of change*.

There is such a thing no doubt as carrying an aversion to change so far that it shall interfere with real and legitimate improvements: and this certainly is wrong, and shows the judgment to be under the dominion of an unworthy prejudice. But on the other hand, the desire of change not unfrequently mounts up to be the ruling passion, and there is a perpetual longing and reaching after something that is new, merely *because* it is new; and one point is gained only to be abandoned for another that lies beyond it. With persons who are the subjects of such a passion, the mere fact that a thing is old is enough to condemn it. They dislike old doctrines; they have no patience with old measures; and to use their own significant and stereotyped expression, they "wish to see things go ahead." Now, do you not think that such persons will actually *make* things go ahead; and that, in their rage for improvements, they will rush into extravagancies which will make the sober and consistent Christian weep? So it has been; and so it always will be where this restless desire of change prevails. Those who yield to it forget that going forward is not always synonymous with doing right; and that beyond a certain point each successive step only carries them farther and farther into the region of error.

4. *The love of distinction* is another fruitful source of this evil.

The desire of distinction is natural to all men; though in some it is originally much stronger, as well as subject



to much fewer restraints, than in others. Most men seek to gratify this desire in some way or other; and you easily see how it *may* be gratified by standing forth in the character of a reformer, or as the case may be, in favor of some startling opinion or practice. Here is an individual whose lot is cast in obscurity,—an obscurity from which, in the ordinary course of events, he seems little likely to emerge; but suddenly some object comes up of such magnitude that it seems to him that all who can identify themselves with it must become great; and forthwith he dreams, and behold he has a vision of his own future glory; and he determines that that vision shall be realized if his best efforts can accomplish it. And now he puts his hand in earnest to the work; and moves about in the character of a reformer; and his bosom quickly learns to thrill at seeing his name emblazoned on the list of the great and the good. But the desire of distinction becomes stronger in proportion as it is gratified, and the natural course of events is too tardy for his impatient spirit; and instead of waiting for the honors of a Howard or a Wilberforce to perfume and hallow his memory, he resolves to seize upon them prematurely, by adopting measures which are designed to pass as an improvement on the noblest efforts which those illustrious philanthropists ever put forth. And in doing this, he becomes an Ultraist. He has indeed got out of the beaten track, but he has got into the wilds of extravagance and error. He has succeeded in reaching an eminence, and the world are gazing at him; but it is no desirable eminence that he has gained, for it exhibits him as nothing better than a laughing stock.

5. This evil is frequently to be traced to *the force of external circumstances*.



Scarcely any thing is so powerful as public opinion. Let the popular voice be on one side, and it requires no common degree of firmness to stand on the other. If an individual ventures to be singular, or even to act with an inconsiderable minority, on a subject which has taken strong hold of the public mind, the least he can expect is, that he will bring upon himself the opprobrium of the multitude. Hence the probability in any given case that he will move with the current, rather than attempt to resist it. Suppose then he happen to find himself in a community, or a neighborhood, in which fanaticism, in some form or other, is becoming prevalent;—suppose his christian brethren around him, in whose fellowship he has found much of the comfort of his religious life, all or nearly all, show themselves friendly to a new order of things, which purports to be marked by a higher degree of spirituality and devotedness than has previously been exhibited; and suppose he is appealed to as a christian brother, and on the high principles of christian duty, to enter into their views and feelings and purposes, while he is given distinctly to understand that if he refuse to do so, it will be at the peril of being proscribed as a heartless formalist;—let such a state of things, I say, exist in respect to an individual, and what, upon the common principles of human calculation, will be the result? It is *possible* that he may set his face like a flint against the whole operation, and resolve that he will not take a step even upon doubtful ground; but it is *probable* that he will first pause in a state of anxiety, not knowing whether he shall yield or not;—that he will next try to persuade himself that the new course is right, as the good people around him are falling into it, and as it claims to bring higher honor to God, and more than all, as it is the only course which just now he can adopt without making shipwreck

of his own comfort. And now he addresses himself to the enterprize in which his brethren are engaged, and labors in the same spirit with which they labor; and if scruples arise, he disposes of them as well as he can; and at no distant period, there is the concurrent influence of the force of example, and the power of habit, and the pride of consistency, to keep him from retracing his steps, if not to hurry him into still wilder excesses. And after having pursued this erratic course for years, perhaps the influences under which he entered it, cease to operate, and he settles back into a sober Christian; or as the case may be, he is never reclaimed from it, and is even saved so as by fire.

I have spoken only of the operation of a single set of circumstances, and those perhaps the most common, by which men are drawn into fanatical courses; but there are other circumstances which operate with scarcely less power than those to which I have adverted. Indeed it may be questioned whether, in almost every case in which a habit of religious extravagance is formed, it is not to be referred, in a greater or less degree, to some features of the condition in which the individual happens to be placed.

Having spoken of the sources of Ultraism, let me proceed to consider,

## II. *Its* ELEMENTS.

### 1. *Self righteousness.*

It always indicates a self righteous spirit for persons to exceed the rule of conduct which God has prescribed; or to attempt to alter or amend his institutions; or to substitute in place of them the devices of their own wisdom. It shows that they attach an undue importance to their own doings; and that the secret feeling of the heart

is that they live and move as Christians in their own strength; that they regard themselves as proportionably more holy than others, as they are more bold and active; and that in the exuberance of their zeal and the superabundance of their good works, they imagine there is a good stock of merit laid up against the time to come. I am aware that there may be connected with all this a frequent recognition of the righteousness of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, as the only ground of the sinner's hope; and there may be many expressions that would seem to savor deeply of evangelical humility; but it is not always difficult to detect a self righteous spirit even amidst strong professions of entire dependance on Christ; nay, in some instances those professions are evidently dictated by precisely that spirit. Who has not heard individuals talk of their own worthlessness and vileness in such a manner as to show that there was boasting in their humility; and to indicate a secret conviction, that if they had not reached an exalted pitch of holiness, they could never have been so prompt, and full, and open in their confessions?

Now I appeal to any who have had opportunity of making observations on this subject, whether this self righteous, self complacent spirit of which I am speaking, is not most strikingly exhibited in the ultra movements of the present day. One class of Ultraists deliberately claim, not only to be righteous, but perfectly righteous; and instead of coming before God to make confession of their sins, they come to remind him that they are as holy as the angels. Another class attempt to promote Revivals of Religion by unwarrantable and unscriptural means; and then in the spirit of triumph, appeal to the result of their labors to justify their extravagance. And all classes, so far as I know, are distinguished for the fa-

cility with which they can recall and recount their own achievements; can blazon abroad that there is a reformation going forward and that they are the men to sustain it. I ask you, my friends, and I trust not with an uncharitable spirit, does this indicate the humility of the gospel? Rather does it not look exceedingly like the conduct of a certain man, who went up into the temple to pray, and said, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are?'

2. Another of the elements of Ultraism is *ensoriousness*.

Let a man become an Ultraist, and the first effect of the change is, that he regards all who are not prepared to advance to the same point with himself, as grievously behind the spirit of the age; and he charges it home upon them that they are in darkness, and only see men as trees walking. Suppose he determines on the adoption of some extreme measures for the promotion of a Revival,—if you venture to call in question the propriety of them, it is more than probable that you do it at the peril of being told that you have no religion. Or suppose he wishes to carry some great moral reformation to a point which you believe to be not only unauthorized by scripture, but directly in the face of scripture,—you may lift up your voice against it if you dare,—but I forewarn you that you will be visited by a torrent of reproach. Or suppose he have erected some arbitrary standard of christian character, which the Bible does not recognize;—suppose he have set up barriers around the communion table against all who will not pledge themselves to some particular course which he deems important;—rely on it you cannot even express a doubt of the propriety of the measure, but you will have a full cup of crimination wrung out to you. You need not be surprised to meet your name in



some odious connexion in the columns of a religious newspaper; or to find a cruel thrust at your character where your name, from considerations of policy, is withheld. You need not be surprised if a railing accusation is made against you in a public assembly, or the deadly weapons of sarcasm and ridicule,—worse than a whip of scorpions,—are held up to terrify you into submission. You need not wonder if it is whispered through many a circle that you are the enemy of Reform, or the enemy of Revivals, or if your character actually bleeds before the world, while you are unconscious of its having received a wound. I say you need not be surprised at any of these things; for they have occurred too frequently to be any longer wondered at: You may be traduced secretly, or you may be traduced openly, and yet you may have this comfort at least, that no strange thing hath happened unto you.

3. *Disingenuousness* is another element of Ultraism.

I have already adverted to the fact that it is a popular, if not a fundamental, maxim with Ultraists, that the end justifies the means; and it is scarcely supposable that this principle should go into operation, without involving more or less of dissimulation and artifice. Let a man become thoroughly imbued with the conviction that *any* measures for the accomplishment of a good object are justifiable, and you will soon witness the practical influence of this error upon himself, in his making shipwreck of christian integrity; and it is not improbable that he will, at no distant period, contract such moral obliquity, that the ends at which he aims, will be worthy of the deceit and treachery which he employs for their accomplishment.

I might mention various particulars in which a disingenuous spirit comes out in the Ultraism of the present day.



It is to be seen in much of the machinery that has been employed in connection with religious excitements; in the ingenious arrangements that have been made to play upon the passions; in the strange and unwarrantable expressions which have often been put forth, professedly with a view to arouse the attention and disturb the conscience. It may be seen, too, in the exaggerated accounts of the results of certain efforts in the cause of morality or piety;—accounts which look extremely well on paper, but which you must not undertake to sift, unless you will run the hazard of seeing all that is marvellous in them sifted away. It appears, moreover, in the efforts which are often made to undermine the influence of christian ministers, by dark allusions in respect to their characters; by intimating that, though they may be good men, yet they are not revival men; or by whispering in the ear of some rash and restless spirit connected with their charge, that the good cause would not suffer by having their place vacated, for some man who had a larger measure of the spirit of the age. Suppose it happens to occur to these persons that all this is not quite consistent with the old rule of doing to others as we would that they should do to us,—yet this is quickly disposed of by the reflection that they are doing the Lord's work, and that nothing can be wrong which has a tendency to help that forward.

4. *Inconsistency* belongs essentially to Ultraism.

If the persons who yield to the influence of this spirit are the professed followers of Christ, there is certainly an inconsistency between their conduct and their profession. They profess to take the word of God for their rule; but still they practice their own devices in the face of it. They profess to make Jesus Christ their great pattern; but the meek and lowly and gentle virtues which adorned his character, you look for in vain in theirs.

They profess in most cases a higher degree of spirituality than others; and yet you are not unfrequently shocked by their irreverence, not to say their impiety. They profess to have their hearts full of christian benevolence; and yet out of that good treasure proceed coarse and offensive allusions,—violent attacks on character,—as if they would kill the body to save the soul.

But their conduct is not only inconsistent with their profession, but also with itself; or rather some parts of their conduct are inconsistent with other parts of it. For instance, in behalf of one good cause they have a zeal which it would seem nothing could quench; and they appear to regard its success as identified with the speedy renovation of the world; and they think it but an act of charity to deal out sharp rebukes to those who may differ from them in their views of its comparative importance;—and yet you may present to them another object of equal or even greater moment,—an object which immediately involves the spiritual interests of a world, and not improbably you will find that the fountains of their sensibility are frozen up, and that they are prepared to meet your application with nothing more expensive than good wishes. But who does not see that while consistency allows an individual to occupy himself chiefly in the promotion of one good cause, yet it requires that he should extend at least a general regard to every object that involves the interests, especially the immortal interests, of his fellow-men: and if, from considerations of benevolence, he engages for the promotion of one, surely the same considerations must keep him from being indifferent to the success of the rest.

Now it has come to pass under this influence, as might be expected, that there is a great lack of proportion in christian character. We have boisterous reformers,

whose own characters need exceedingly to be reformed. We have exhibitions of zeal without knowledge; zeal without discretion; zeal without humility; zeal without charity; zeal even without honesty; and I hardly need say that zeal when thus divorced from other christian graces, loses its identity, and is nothing better than a tempest of the passions.

And this leads me to mention,

5. As the last of the elements of Ultraism, *fanaticism*.

We have had fanatical doctrines and fanatical practices; fanatical ends proposed, and fanatical means employed for their accomplishment. We have had fanaticism in the pulpit, pretending to superior sanctity, and putting on looks of grimace, and breaking forth into expressions of vulgar ridicule or shocking impiety. We have had fanaticism on the platform, working itself into a delirious phrenzy, and foaming out a torrent of coarse invective upon those whose good sense and delicacy may have kept them out of the ranks of its abettors. We have had fanaticism in our public assemblies;—confusion taking the place of order, and all reverence, and dignity and decorum, falling before the wild uproar of a hundred tongues. We have had fanaticism in connexion with some of our benevolent institutions, performing startling feats of apparent self-denial, and affronting the common sense of the community by its arrogant dictates. We have had fanaticism in our Revivals, maintaining that it is as easy to be converted as to move the hand; virtually identifying conversion with a mere physical act, and at the close of a meeting proclaiming the number who have been converted within the hour, with as much confidence as if, in each case, the genuineness of the change were certified to them under the signature of Omniscience. And we have had fanaticism superabounding,

overflowing, in some of our religious periodicals; and through this medium especially, the flame has been kindled almost every where; and so powerful has been the influence, that men who have sat down to the reading of a newspaper sober, have risen up fanatics. I only touch upon the several points under this article; for it is painful to dwell upon them: and besides, the facts by which each point is illustrated are too well known to require that they should be distinctly referred to on this occasion.

I pass therefore to the next general division of the discourse, viz :

### III. *The MANIFESTATIONS of Ultraism.*

1. It manifests itself in respect to that which is **WRONG**, *by opposing it with an improper spirit.*

If there are evils existing in a community, no doubt it is the duty of every one, acting in his legitimate sphere, to exert his influence for their removal; nevertheless it is possible to oppose them in a manner which will be far worse than making no effort for their correction;—in a manner which, while it tends to perpetuate rather than remove them, contributes to the introduction of other evils for which it may be still more difficult to find a remedy. It is right, for instance, to oppose every form of error; but it is possible to assail the errorist with such harsh and revolting denunciations, as shall not only make him deaf to *your* arguments, but put him effectually beyond the reach of *all* conviction. It is right to do your utmost for the suppression of vice; but then it is possible to encounter it in such a way that every effort you make will only contribute to its extension;—and more than that, will fill the community with wrath and strife. It is right to rebuke a spirit of apathy in the church, or in any part of the church; but you will instantly see that this



may be done in such a manner that, if there is a waking up, it will probably be nothing better than the waking up of a spirit of fierce contention. Now I ask you to look abroad upon our American church, and say whether all this, and even more, is not actually realized in the operations of Ultraism? Is not much of the opposition that is made to existing evils, apparently the fruit of any thing else than a spirit of genuine benevolence? Is it not sometimes evidently dictated by a vindictive spirit, which would seem to wish there were vials of vengeance at its command, that it might empty them on the heads of those whom it is professedly longing to reclaim? And have we not seen the effect of it in a way that has made our hearts bleed? Have we not seen vice coming out of the conflict with a rash and overbearing assailant, with a fearless and triumphant air which has seemed to say that there is little to be apprehended from such opposition? And have we not seen other vices than that which is particularly assailed, gathering fresh strength, as if the victory that had been gained by one member, were the common property of the whole family?

2. It manifests itself in respect to that which is comparatively **INDIFFERENT**, *by urging it beyond its real claims.*

Every object that claims our regard should receive the degree of attention which its importance demands. The fact that it is of comparatively little importance is certainly no reason why it should be entirely neglected; and in estimating its real claims, we are to take into view not only its more immediate, but more remote, bearings; and not unfrequently the latter are much the more important. But it is folly to tithe mint, annise, and cummin, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law. It is an abuse both of our time and faculties; for even admitting



that they are not employed absolutely in vain, yet it is certain that they might be employed to far better purpose; and God requires that we make the best use of every talent. Now I cannot resist the conviction that no small degree of the zeal and effort that are put forth at the present day, are directed towards objects which do not justify such an expenditure of intellectual and moral energy. For instance there is some philosophical theory to be maintained in connexion with some one of the doctrines of the gospel, which claims perhaps to make the doctrine more intelligible, but which possibly may go far to neutralize its power,—and this theory lays under contribution many great minds for its defence and establishment; and much deep and laborious thought is expended in the effort; and the whole church is thrown into commotion, and things of great and acknowledged importance are neglected, in an attempt to grasp the merest shadow. Or it may be that something new comes up in connexion with some one of the benevolent objects of the age,—something which claims to be vital to its success, but which has really little or nothing to do with it;—for a season at least, this becomes the all absorbing matter of consideration, and is practically regarded as paramount to the interests of the great object itself; and not improbably the result is, that those who have labored together in a common cause, are henceforth arrayed against each other in the attitude of violent partizans. If all the labor that is bestowed at this day upon mere shadows, were transferred to sober and important realities, there would be an accession of good influence to the cause of Christ, in which the church might well rejoice as a harbinger of her glory.

3. It manifests itself in respect to that which is RIGHT, *by promoting it at the expense of integrity and charity.*

The cause of *Temperance* is a noble cause; and that heart which does not long for its universal triumph, has certainly never been imbued with the benevolence of the gospel: and yet the cause of Temperance—I say it fearlessly—has been marred by attempts that have been made to sustain it through base and malignant detraction. The *abolition of slavery* is an object which every patriot, every philanthropist, every Christian, must earnestly wish to see accomplished; but need I say that some of the efforts which have been made in reference to this object have been adapted to aggravate the evil they were intended to remedy, and have breathed a spirit which is utterly at war with the spirit of the gospel? The cause of *Revivals* is the most hallowed and glorious cause for which the heart of man ever beat; and yet who needs be told that, in many of the efforts which have been made to carry it forward, there have been malevolent feelings, and hard speeches, and pious frauds, enough to justify the church in putting on the habiliments of mourning? Indeed it is not easy to conceive of a greater contrast than exists between the character of the objects on the one hand, and the means which Ultraists employ for their accomplishment, and the spirit in which they employ them, on the other. The former bear the very impress of christian benevolence; the latter, to say the least of them, are of the earth, earthy.

From a view of the manifestations of Ultraism, I proceed to consider,

#### IV. *Its* TENDENCIES:

1. It is adapted to *throw open the floodgates of error.*

Ultraism, even in its lowest degree, involves error; for though it be considered as having respect more immediately to the practice, yet it takes for granted a false

principle;—a truth, it may be, so overstrained that it loses its identity and becomes absolute error. The truth always lies exactly upon the line of God's word: If then I go beyond this line, even though it may be in my zeal for the truth, I am as truly on the ground of error, as if I were to turn my back on God's testimonies from any other consideration. Every ultraist then has embraced error in some form or other; and his bondage to error is much in proportion to the strength of his Ultraism.

But while the very existence of this spirit supposes the existence of error, let it be remembered that it implies a state of mind peculiarly favorable to the reception of error. As a calm and collected frame of feeling constitutes an essential preparation for ascertaining and receiving the truth, so error is never more likely to find its way into the mind, than through the medium of strong excitement. Let the feelings of an individual be wrought up into a tempest, and you may rest assured that passion has so far got the better of reason, that little confidence can be reposed in his judgments; and not improbably you will find him receiving without the least apparent difficulty, absurdities which even his own mind, in the legitimate exercise of its powers, would have instantly rejected. The history of the church, and especially the recent history of our American church, shows that a time of wild and violent excitement is the devil's best time for sowing the seeds of error. For instance, there is a heresy recently sprung up among us which is known by the name of Perfectionism, and which is as absurd and unscriptural in its principles, as it is licentious in its tendencies. But this originated in the very hot-bed of fanaticism, amidst scenes of frightful extravagance, in which the dictates of sober judgment were silenced, and the passions turned the man whithersoever they listed. In

such circumstances the mind is incapable of discriminating between truth and error; and besides, truth is too insipid to satisfy such an unnatural appetite; there is a perpetual demand for something that is bold and extravagant; and the desire, like all other desires, increases in proportion as it is gratified. I hardly need say that individuals under such feverish excitement, have usually little *disposition* to search the scriptures; or if they do search them, it is only with a view to fortify themselves in their pre-conceived errors; and they have not usually more *time* than taste for such an employment; for as it is a fundamental principle with most of them that all Religion consists in action, so they regard their time as little better than lost to all religious purposes, unless it is occupied in direct efforts to carry forward some great public reformation.

One consideration which strikingly confirms the fact that Ultraism predisposes the mind to the reception of error, is, that whoever is ultra on one subject, easily becomes so on others. Indeed you may present *any* subject to a man whose mind has acquired this habit of unnatural excitement, and unless he turns from it with absolute indifference, and refuses to bestow upon it any portion of his thoughts or regards, he will probably seize hold of it with an enthusiastic ardor, and will, in some way or other, press it beyond its real claims, or its legitimate limits; and in doing so he, at least practically, embraces error; for he acts upon false principles. No matter whether we consult the philosophy of human nature, or the results of observation and experience, in either case we are brought to the conclusion, that the prevalence of Ultraism is adapted to inundate the church with error.



2. It has a tendency also *to drive many into the opposite extreme of inactivity and formality.*

If we are strongly impressed with the evil of any particular course, it is natural that we should keep aloof from every thing which might expose us in any degree to fall into it; and such are the tendencies of human nature, that there is always danger in such a case that we shall fall into the opposite error. Here is some benevolent object presented, which seems to have a direct bearing on the great moral interests of the world; and for a while Christians, and as the case may be, philanthropists of every name, address themselves vigorously, and harmoniously, and successfully, to the promotion of it. But presently some who have taken the lead in the enterprize discover a propensity to move too fast, and taking leave of reason and scripture, resign themselves up to the impulses of a headstrong and fanatical zeal. Possibly the multitude may go with them; but there are those who will hold on upon common sense and God's word, so far as to resist not only the force of example, but the power of persuasion, and even the influence of reproach; and as the current moves forward, this class are left behind. They know full well that the good cause in which they have been laboring is just as important as ever; but their hands are weakened by the loss of that fraternal aid from their associates which they formerly enjoyed; and they hear the voice of crimination coming back upon them charging them with being enemies of the cause; and every month and every week brings them fresh evidence that disaster and ruin wait upon the efforts that are making for its advancement. Now I ask you whether, in these circumstances, any thing is more natural than for an individual to come to a dead pause; and feel for the time as if there were noth-

ing for him to do, because the work has been taken out of his hands? He has ceased his labors in the good cause, as he imagines at least, from principle, because he dares not follow the multitude to do evil; or from necessity, because he can no longer avail himself of the organization which has given efficiency to his efforts; still intending however to resume them, on the first propitious change of circumstances: but is there not danger that what is begun from principle or necessity, will be continued from habit; and that he who left off work to avoid being scorched with the fires of fanaticism, will ever after be kept from returning to it, if not by the love of an inglorious ease, yet by the apprehension that "the thing that hath been will be," in any attempt that is made to prosecute it? Let any object become strongly associated in the mind of an individual with circumstances that involve odium and reproach, and however good the object may be in itself, or however favorably he may have been accustomed to regard it, there is a mighty obstacle to be overcome before he can ever be brought to engage cordially and actively for its promotion.

There is another class of professing Christians who are injuriously affected by Ultraism: I refer to those who, from too much caution, or too little zeal, or some other cause, never commit themselves very strongly to the promotion of any of the great moral or religious enterprizes of the day. They do not wish to be reckoned as indifferent to the progress of the cause of truth and righteousness; but they are so strict in observing to the very letter the good old rules of action that have come down to us from our fathers, that it is scarcely more startling to them to tread upon a serpent than to hear of an innovation. Persons of this description need to be aroused to greater activity, to be impressed more deeply with the

obligation to labor for Christ; but Ultraism makes them afraid to move, even if they were otherwise disposed to do so. It neutralizes the power of any argument you can use to enforce their obligations; and after you have said all that you *can* say in favor of a life of christian action, they will go quietly to sleep and dream about the mischiefs of fanaticism.

Does any one doubt whether there are facts to bear me out in the statements I have made on this subject? Look then at the cause of Revivals;—a cause which, a few years ago, moved forward in our land with constantly increasing triumph; and united the labors, the prayers, the hearts, of almost all evangelical christians. And what is the state of that cause now? The Ultraists themselves being judges, it is greatly depressed. And why? Because it has been attempted to be sustained by a blind and unhallowed zeal; because, instead of the purifying fires of God's Holy Spirit, there have been in too many instances the desolating fires of an unhallowed fanaticism. And hence it has come to pass that men who really love the cause of genuine Revivals, are afraid to put forth their accustomed efforts for its advancement, lest the spirit of evil should follow in their footsteps; and no doubt multitudes are grievously lacking in their duty from the influence of this apprehension. I may mention as another example the cause of Temperance:—Time has been, and not far back either, when this cause carried with it the influence of nearly the whole community;—when those who could not write for it would speak; and those who could not speak would give; and those who could not give would pray;—and every thing seemed to indicate that it would soon have the whole world in subjection. But do I mistake when I say that, since the effort commenced to invade one of God's institutions,

by banishing one of the appropriate elements from the holy communion, this noble cause has received a sensible check? Do my eyes deceive me from day to day, when I think I see many around me doing nothing, whose hands were once busy in this great work of reform? Do my ears deceive me when I think I hear men—those too who have been most active in the Temperance enterprise, declare that it were better that the cause should perish, than that this last measure which has been introduced for its promotion, should succeed? I speak that which I know, Brethren, when I say that there are multitudes who have long been known as zealous friends of Temperance, whom this effort of Ultraism has, temporarily at least, thrown into the attitude of mere spectators; and I leave it to you to judge, from your own knowledge of the workings of human nature, whether there is not danger that many of them will be disgusted, and goaded, and worried, into a habit of indifference to a cause which every one is obliged to acknowledge embraces one of the noblest objects of human charity.

3. It is the tendency of Ultraism *to weaken the moral energies of the Church.*

It does this, partly, by *depressing her standard of spirituality.* In nothing does her power so much consist, apart from her ability by faith and prayer to bring the Holy Ghost to her aid, as in the faithful exemplification of the christian spirit. In a uniform exhibition of a deep and scriptural piety, there is a living energy which it is not easy to resist; and when the church puts forth this energy in the highest degree, she moves forward most efficiently towards victory and glory. Of course, whatever serves to retard the progress of the church in spirituality, proportionally detracts from her legitimate influence. And who can doubt that this *is* the direct tenden-



cy of the evil we are contemplating? Ultraism in itself has none of the elements of true spirituality: it lives, and moves, and has its being, in the bustling scenes of public action; and is, for the most part, if we can judge from appearances, extremely lax in the retired business of keeping the heart. And besides, as we have already seen, it yields, as its legitimate fruit, a plentiful harvest of indifference and apathy. I ask then, whether, in this view, it must not draw fearfully on the moral energies of the church?

But it tends to the same result, still farther, as *it divides her counsels*. In every thing union is strength. Men acting in concert in respect to any given object, will accomplish wonders; while, if each were to put forth his efforts in an insulated way, they might accomplish nothing. Mark then the effect of Ultraism. The very first thing it does is to challenge to a quarrel every one that is not prepared to cheer it onward; and taking human nature as it is, there is scarcely a possibility but that a quarrel will ensue; unless indeed, (which would be the greatest evil of all,) the whole community should turn Ultraists. And now the church becomes divided; and there are two parties arrayed against each other at opposite extremes; and all the greater interests of truth and piety are left to languish under the influence of an unchristian altercation. Or if the moderate party have not been driven backward, or have not suffered themselves to be provoked to any unchristian measures, they have stood still only to be the the objects of reproach. For proof of this statement, I appeal to facts, the record of which constitutes one of the darkest chapters in our Ecclesiastical history. I appeal to the condition of many churches which were once united, and prosperous, and energetic; but since the spirit of Ultraism has entered them, their harmony, their prosper-

rity, their energy, have fled; and that which was once a beautiful garden filled with the plants of righteousness, has become little better than an unsightly field of desolation. I ask again, can the church operate with her legitimate efficiency, while she harbors the distracting spirit of Ultraism?

4. Ultraism is well adapted to *supply to the careless world an apology for the neglect of Religion.*

‘Here,’ said a man of the world the other day, in allusion to the disingenuous dealing of certain individuals who have made themselves prominent in the cause of Ultraism, ‘here you see how very small a matter principle becomes with these *good people*, when they have their own ends to accomplish;’ and he said it with an air of triumph which showed that he had treasured it up to be applied, if need be, as an antidote to a waking conscience. And what came out in his case I have no doubt actually exists in respect to multitudes: they mark these ultra movements with a watchful interest; and as the greater part of those who are concerned in them are professors of Religion, they silently and practically infer that Religion does not make men the better; or at least, that it leaves them under the dominion of some of the worst of passions. Let the claims of the Gospel be urged upon an individual, who has been accustomed to contemplate Christianity, as it is professedly exhibited in the operations of Ultraism, and I greatly fear there would be an iron shield over his conscience, upon which both arguments and expostulations would fall as the idle breath. He knows indeed that the Christianity of the Bible is meek, and humble, and consistent and lovely; and yet because he is averse from yielding to its claims, he plays a trick upon his conscience, by endeavoring to force himself into a conviction that the only Religion with which he is concerned is that

which comes out in the characters of certain fanatical professors.

But there is another way in which the same result is accomplished. The whole system of Ultraism every sober minded and judicious Christian is compelled to reprobate. While he earnestly desires the success of the good objects in respect to which the intemperate measures may be employed; while he bears these objects on his heart in the closet, and stands ready to make sacrifices for their accomplishment, he feels constrained to lift up his voice against the prevailing abuses. And on this point the mere man of the world can co-operate with him, and respond heartily to all his expressions of disapprobation. Here then there would appear to be some common ground between the careless worldling and the man of exemplary piety: both join in opposing the abuses of the times, though from different motives and with a different spirit; and there is great reason to fear that the irreligious man from meeting the Christian frequently and cordially on a subject which is vitally connected with the interests of Religion, will gradually yield to the delusion that they are fellow workers together unto the kingdom of God: or if this effect is not produced, that he will pervert the Christian's opposition to existing evils into some shadow of a concession against Religion itself. I know it is a charge which Ultraists have often made against those who refuse to adopt their measures, that they are taking part with the world; but surely if the world happen to go right in respect to any point, that cannot be a reason why the church should go wrong; and if the world actually pervert the efforts of Christians for the defence of God's truth or God's institutions to their own ruin, I ask to whom belongs the responsibility, rather than to those whose excesses have forced Christians into this self-denying and painful attitude?

And this leads me to say,

5. What is a little more than an extension of the preceding thought, that Ultraism tends *to absolute infidelity*.

From seeing Christianity, if Christianity it can be called, displayed in such unlovely forms; from hearing the language of bitter invective where the language of kindness might be expected; and witnessing scenes of gross disorder which claim to have originated in the operation of the Holy Spirit; men of cultivated minds whose belief in the gospel is only a prejudice of education, begin first to doubt whether they have not been giving credence to a fable; and at no distant period, the little faith which they had in Christianity is given to the winds. We all see the unreasonableness and folly of this course; and we condemn the man who becomes an infidel through the influence of Ultraism as much as if he had become so from any other cause: nevertheless if Ultraism has this tendency, it lays upon its advocates a fearful responsibility, and constitutes a strong reason why it should be resisted.

I must not omit to say that this tendency to infidelity discovers itself also in the facility with which the Bible is made to yield, in the hands of some men, to what are regarded the higher suggestions of Reason and Nature. Some new theory is broached which claims to have in it the elements both of physical and moral reform. This theory is asserted to be in accordance with the laws of our original constitution; and of course it is inferred that it cannot be contrary to the declarations of God's word. The next step is to put the Bible to torture to make it speak the language which it ought to speak, if the theory were true; and if, after all, the Bible and the theory are seen to be at variance, what else will this be than a preparation on the part of those who hold to the



latter, for giving up the former? Do you know what men of the world say when they hear professing Christians endeavoring to sustain their favorite notions by virtually calling in question the authority of scripture? They say, "If this be so, then the Bible is good for nothing." And the infidel looks on with triumph, and says to his fellow infidel, "Verily they are becoming even as we are."

We pass to a consideration of our last topic, viz:

V. *The appropriate REMEDY for this evil.*

1. *Careful discrimination*;—referring every thing that offers itself as an improvement, to God's word, as the standard both of truth and duty.

We have seen that Ultraism consists essentially in a departure from this rule, or rather in an attempt to go beyond it: of course the remedy for this evil must begin in a return to the scriptural standard. It is true indeed that the Bible has not given particular directions in respect to every case in which men are called to act; and in regard to the means to be employed in advancing Christ's cause, no doubt it has left something to the wisdom of the Church; but it *has* given general directions which admit of application to every case; so that there are no supposable circumstances in which the Christian can be placed but that God's word, if properly consulted, will prove an adequate light to his path. Let the Church then as a body, and let each individual member for himself, bring into the light of this living test the various human instrumentalities that are employed professedly to sustain and advance the great interests of truth and piety. When new modes of religious effort are proposed, instead of going about to settle the question of their adoption on principles of mere worldly policy, refer them

immediately to the law and the testimony; and if they are fairly warranted by that, you need not fear to adopt them: if not, you may rest assured that they are unwarrantable innovations.

But it is not only important that our judgments be formed according to the right standard, but that they be formed in the exercise of a right spirit. We are to take heed to our own hearts, that we are not under the dominion of partiality or prejudice; we are to hold ourselves willing to receive the truth, even though it may contravene opinions to which we have committed ourselves, no matter how publicly; above all, we are to seek the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit, remembering that God himself hath said, that "the meek He will guide in judgment, and the meek He will teach his way."

Let God's word then be more faithfully pondered as the great rule of religious action. Let it be the standard by which each Christian shall frame his own course; by which the whole church shall regulate her operations. Under such an influence, Ultraism would expire; and the reign of scriptural decorum, consistency and purity, be restored.

2. Another part of the remedy for this evil is *moral courage*. We must not only discriminate accurately between right and wrong, but when we have ascertained what our duty is, we must fearlessly do it.

I do not mean that we are to set at naught the dictates of a sound discretion, for the effect of that would probably be, that we should become Ultraists in opposing Ultraism: nor would I encourage a disposition to magnify little things, or to stand aloof from a christian brother, because you imagine his vision on some unimportant subjects to be less distinct than your own: but you are to

distinguish carefully between comparatively indifferent matters and serious evils; and while you are suitably indulgent towards the former, you are bound to meet the latter with an honest and prompt resistance. I well know that such a course may sometimes require a great sacrifice of personal feeling. There may be considerations of friendship, and considerations of delicacy, and considerations of personal comfort, all pleading in favor of your remaining silent; and you may have evidence that you cannot resist, that to speak out your heart, and enter your protest against existing evils, will be a signal for your being held up to the world as an enemy of reform; but notwithstanding all this, you are bound to speak, you are bound to act, resolutely and fearlessly, though prudently, in defence of the hallowed cause of evangelical truth and order. No man must sleep at his post, when the enemy are coming in like a flood, even though they may come in the guise of the most devoted friendship; nor may any one sleep when the real friends of the cause of Christ are seen arming themselves, under a wild and delirious impulse, to stab the cause which they are professedly seeking to promote.

And let me say, Brethren, if I do not greatly mistake, all experience proves that the only successful way of encountering the spirit of Ultraism, is to meet it fearlessly and in broad day light; always taking good care that our weapons be spiritual and not carnal. I have known instances in which men, from considerations of policy, have attempted to move with the current with a view to direct it, even after the current had begun to set strongly in favor of the grossest extravagances; but I have rarely known a case in which an individual who has thus put himself in jeopardy, has not been carried by the current much farther than he intended; has not either him-

self become an Ultraist, or been shipwrecked at last in the effort to avoid it. I cannot doubt that the way which God approves is, that you should hold fast to the faithful word, let the voice of crimination be as loud and as violent as it may. If you are on the side of God's truth, the Lord is on *your* side; and you need not, and ought not, to be moved. If in attempting to do your duty, you are for a season thrown into circumstances of painful embarrassment, fear not even then; for greater is He that is for you than all they that can be against you.

3. To complete the appropriate remedy for this evil, there should be *eminent piety*.

This will be *the best security against a rash and intemperate opposition* to Ultraism. The disciples, you know, on a certain occasion, would have fain served their Master, in their over heated zeal, by calling down fire from Heaven upon his enemies; and there is danger lest, in opposing the evil we are contemplating, we should imbibe something of the same spirit. And I hardly need say that the danger is greatly increased, from the circumstance that the spirit which we have to encounter is a spirit of censoriousness; and it is difficult for any one frequently to breathe an infected atmosphere, and altogether escape the influence of contagion. But nothing is more certain than that a violent and acrimonious opposition to this evil,—especially any form of opposition that will even seem to bear the hard name of persecution, is adapted to increase its power. Cultivate the temper of Christ, then, and while you are firm, you will avoid headlong and intemperate measures. Let your heart be kept with all diligence, and there will be little danger that reproaches will flow from your lips. Keep yourself habitually under the dominion of christian principles, and you have the best pledge that your resistance to Ultraism shall be successful.



Again: Eminent piety serves to counteract Ultraism, as *it ensures a high degree of Christian activity*. Some men may perhaps imagine, and some, there is reason to fear, are acting upon the principle, that the true way to oppose this spirit is to withdraw their personal influence as much as possible from every object in respect to which it manifests itself. But such a course surely will not stand the test of either Reason or Scripture. Has not your Master commanded you, Christian, to labor in his cause to the extent of your ability; and has his command become the less imperative, because there are those whom you consider laboring indiscreetly, and under the influence of a blind and unhallowed zeal? Has your Master's honor become less dear to you, because you see measures in operation, which seem to you adapted to tarnish it? Is the soul less valuable, because some who professedly labor for its salvation, employ means which are fitted to defeat their own end? Is the cause of Revivals to be given up, because imprudent and fanatical men have so identified themselves with it as to bring it into temporary disrepute? And shall nothing more be done for the cause of Temperance, because some things have been done wrong? Brethren, God forbid. These melancholy facts to which I have adverted, instead of constituting an apology for our apathy, form a reason why we should be more active than ever; for all our activity surely is required to carry forward our Master's work, especially amidst so many retarding influences. Shall we be afraid to labor for a good object, because it has been brought into reproach through the influence of ill advised measures? Here again, I say, God forbid: let us rather put our hand to the work with renewed diligence, that we may rescue it from reproach, and restore it to its proper place in the regards of the community. By our active and zealous

efforts in the cause of Christ, let us take from the friends of Ultraism all just occasion for reproaching us with apathy; while, by the consistency and purity of our zeal, we show to the world that activity in the christian life is not identified with the ravings of fanaticism. I say again then, if you would impose a check upon Ultraism, be active in the cause of Christ; and as a security for it, cultivate eminent piety.

And finally, eminent piety *secures the influence of fervent and persevering prayer*: and I need not say that the Christian must ultimately rely on this for success in every good object. Let the spirit of prayer be awake in our bosoms, and it will sanctify all our efforts to counteract existing evils; it will lead us to attempt nothing but in dependance on a Higher and Holier Power; and more than all, it will bring the Spirit to our aid, without whose gracious influence our best efforts must be unavailing. Cultivate the spirit of piety then, dear Brethren, in all its branches, and one effect will be that you will have intimate and frequent communion with God; and there is no point in the universe at which you can labor more effectually to correct the evils that are in the Church, than at the throne of the heavenly grace.

Brethren, is not here a powerful consideration to induce us to aim at higher christian attainments; to lead the Church to a united and vigorous effort for securing larger measures of the influence of the Spirit. We may contend against Ultraism till we die, and yet if our efforts are not made in the spirit of a deep and earnest piety, we cannot reasonably expect that they will be crowned with a blessing. Nay, in the absence of this spirit, there is danger that our very opposition to Ultraism may serve to wither the genuine plants of Righteousness, and may even degenerate into an exhibition of ill will and acrimo-

ny. With this view of the exigencies of the Church, let the prayer even now ascend from every heart, "O Lord, revive thy work."

Need I say, Brethren in the ministry, that the subject on which we have been meditating, has much in it to impress us with the responsibility of our office, especially in view of the times on which we are fallen. In some periods of the Church, to exercise the ministerial office has been comparatively an easy matter; though the nature of the office has never changed, and its responsibilities under any circumstances are overwhelming, yet in other days the Church has had more of internal quietude, and the ministry has been proportionally free from vexatious embarrassments. But now every thing both in the Church and the world seems to be in motion; the elements of social order, of civil society, are disturbed; and ten thousand tongues and hands are busy in an effort to break up the foundations of many generations. The movements of the Church itself, or at least of many portions of it, are wild and eccentric; resembling more the momentary blaze of the meteor accompanied by a terrific explosion, than the calm and gradual progress of the shining light. Called to labor in such circumstances, we need the highest order of ministerial qualifications. If we have not the wisdom that is from above, if our minds are not disciplined to a careful discrimination between truth and error, how shall we be kept from falling into some of the false opinions or erroneous practices that prevail in the Church, and thus becoming unprofitable and dangerous guides? If we have not that moral heroism which will dictate the most self-denying efforts, and lead us to stand up for God's truth and God's institutions against the fierce winds of fanaticism and even the torrents of malignant invective,

what will become of those hallowed interests, in behalf of which our fathers sacrificed every thing; in behalf of which the Saviour of the world bled; in behalf of which we are pledged by the very conditions of our office, if need be, earnestly to contend? And if we lack a self-denying and devoted piety, if we are not frequently baptized afresh into the spirit of our Lord and Master, what shall hinder us from relaxing our efforts in the cause of Christ, and doing too little on the ground that others do too much? Or what security can there be that we shall not oppose evil with evil;—reproach with reproach;—Ultraism with Ultraism? Or where is the pledge for that spirit of prayer which is necessary to sanctify our efforts and secure God's blessing? But Brethren, let us not yield to discouragement. Amidst all the convulsions both in the Church and the world, let us hold to our minds the reflection that infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, and Faithfulness, are pledged for a favorable issue. And let us bear in mind also, that many of the aspects of Providence towards us are propitious;—are fitted to invigorate our faith and encourage our hope. There is indeed much in the state of the times to make us serious, watchful, earnest; but nothing which ought to dishearten us. We will go on then and labor for our Master while our breath lasts, confident that He will in the best manner take care of the interests of his own kingdom, and that all the darkness which now reigns will ere long fly away, and give place to the full blaze of millennial glory.

Brethren, you will pardon me for saying that one of the grateful circumstances connected with the prospect of taking part in this solemnity, has been the opportunity, which it would furnish me of once more proffering my cordial and affectionate salutations to those with whom it was my privilege for years to be immediately associated



in the sacred office. I bless God in the recollection of that spirit of fraternal good will which pervaded our intercourse, and cheered us in our labors. I bless God that the same spirit continues among you, and that, amidst all the strifes and changes of the times, you are still striving *together*, for the faith of the gospel. I thank the Master for all your success; and I heartily rejoice in all your joy. The changes that have occurred in your circle since the period of our separation, admonish us that other changes will ere long occur, of which we ourselves must be the subjects. That momentous change which will terminate not only our labors in the Church, but our existence on the earth, cannot be distant. A thousand voices join in one to charge us to renew our diligence, as the day of life is waning away; to remind us that death will soon bring rest from our toils, and, if we are faithful, a reward for our labors. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

I have no formal address to make to the pastor elect; and yet, my Brother, so deeply am I interested in your prospects, and so heartily do I welcome you to your station, that if I were to yield to the suggestions of my feelings, I should at once give you the Right Hand of Fellowship, and leave the Brother who is appointed to that service nothing to do. I meet you this morning for the first time; and yet pardon me for saying that I have not thought of you as a stranger, since I have thought of you as destined to have the spiritual oversight of this beloved people. There are reasons upon which I must not dwell, why I shall regard your course with peculiar interest; why I shall hear of your success with peculiar joy; why I shall, if God gives me grace to do it, intercede for you with peculiar fervor. I rejoice in the confidence that you will guide this flock with wisdom; that

you will set your face against the evils which may at any time threaten, whether on the right hand or the left; that you will feed them with knowledge and understanding, and rightly divide to them the word of truth. I have long since surrendered back my charge of them into the hands of Him from whom I received it; but my interest in them, and my affection for them, I shall surrender only with my breath. I ask the Great Shepherd to be your shepherd and theirs; and to bring you up at last into the presence of his glory, amidst shouts of thanksgiving from those who shall have been blessed and saved by your instrumentality.

Brethren and friends who compose the congregation usually worshipping here, I will not anticipate the appropriate charge which you are soon to receive from my respected friend and brother,\* who will address you under all the advantage of having but just ceased to break to you the bread of life; nevertheless I should do violence to all my feelings, if I were to close this discourse without recurring, for a moment, to other days and other scenes, in which we have been mutually interested. My thoughts fly back to the day when I stood here, not to assist in the consecration of a minister, but to be myself consecrated to the sacred office; when the tremulous voice of my aged and ever venerated colleague who stood on the verge of two worlds, and whose grave it is now your privilege to have in the midst of you, led our devotions, and touched a chord of tenderness in all our hearts. I call to mind the long succession of Sabbaths, during which I stood before you as Christ's ambassador; the numerous instances in which many of us have bowed the knee together in the private meeting; the joy with which I have heard some of you anticipate the immortal song;

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\* Rev. Mr. Vermilye.

the dying scenes in your families; the occasions on which we have walked together to the open grave: All,—all these varied scenes rush upon my mind with unutterable vividness, and render this one of the most interesting hours of my life. But I would fain dismiss, for the present, these tender recollections, and join with you in thanksgiving to God for all the gracious regard which he has exercised towards you since our separation; and would let my thoughts linger with yours on all that is grateful in your opening prospects. May no cloud soon lower in your horizon, to darken the lustre of your rising sun. May a spirit of indifference and apathy on the great concerns of Religion find no place in your bosoms. May a spirit of extravagance and disorder never enter here, to mar your peace and hinder your improvement. May all the genuine fruits of the Spirit be in you and abound. May these fathers and mothers none of them be called hence till they are ripe for heaven. May these youth remember their Creator, and be trained up for glory and honor and immortality. May all of every age and every description be interested in the favor of a covenant-keeping God. Brethren, the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace!



