

THE

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PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

OR ORIGINAL SERMONS BY LIVING MINISTERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON

THE IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY,

PRESENTED IN A CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT AGE, AND IN DEFENCE OF THE TRUTH.

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: the commandment of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.—PSALMS.

EDITED BY S. C. JENNINGS,
PASTOR OF A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

VOLUME III. — 5

etc



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THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

Vol. III.

PITTSBURGH, JUNE, 1834.

No. 1.

SERMON XXVIII.*

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.,

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IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON, NEW-JERSEY.

PLEA FOR AN ENLARGED MINISTRY.

LUKE 10:2. *Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.*

THE first ministers of the gospel were called and qualified in an extraordinary manner. Their Divine Master himself immediately selected them, gave them their commission, instructed them in the things pertaining to his kingdom, and endowed them with the power of working miracles in attestation and aid of their ministerial labors. With these extraordinary gifts he sent them forth on the great missionary enterprise of converting the world. After he had commissioned the twelve apostles in this manner, he sent forth "other seventy also," on the same great errand, and endowed with similar powers. It appears to have been when he sent forth this second band of seventy ministers, that he repeated to them what he had before said to the twelve—*The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.* As if he had said—"There are not yet enough of laborers for the great work which is to be done. Behold the immense field whitening to the harvest which requires to be gathered in! *Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, who has all power in heaven and on earth, that he would raise up, and qualify, and send forth, many faithful laborers into his harvest.*"

* Preached in the Central Church, Philadelphia, May 18th, 1834, at the request of, and before, the Board of Education of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

Our blessed Savior was himself "the Lord of the harvest." Why, then, it may be asked, did he direct his disciples to pray to *himself*, to do that which he saw was important and indispensable? Why did he not, unsolicited, send forth one company of ministers after another, until a number adequate to the work of gathering in the mighty harvest were actually on the field? I answer, because it was not intended by infinite Wisdom that the method of furnishing ministers by extraordinary means should continue after the first supply. It was necessary that the commencement should be by the immediate agency of the Master himself; because it was impossible to begin the work of instructing the people, and of gathering and organizing churches, without a previous supply of living and authorized teachers. But when a beginning had been fairly made, it was judged best that the subsequent supply and increase of preachers should be obtained by the ordinary course of human instrumentality. We are to consider our Savior, then, in uttering the words of our text, as virtually saying—"I shall extend no further, at present, this extraordinary supply. It is to be carried on, in time to come, by the agency of man. Still the Lord of the harvest alone can prepare ministers for their work, and send them forth; but his church can and must employ the means of attaining this blessing; and to these means let them henceforth address themselves with prayer and diligence."

And, accordingly, it is well known, that after the day of Pentecost—with a single eminent exception—ministers began to be called, qualified, and set apart to their work in the ordinary way. We find directions given to the teachers and rulers of the church, for selecting and ordaining candidates for the sacred office; and long before the period of miracles and inspiration was ended, we find careful study, and mature knowledge, as well as fervent piety, enjoined as indispensable preparation for the evangelical ministry, and that by an apostle who knew their value by experience, and inculcated them upon principles which apply to all ages.

From the passage before us, I propose to derive, and endeavor to illustrate and enforce the following propositions.

I. *That we now, no less than in the days of our Lord's personal ministry, most urgently need a large additional number of laborers in the gospel field.*

II. That it is the duty of the Church to employ all the means in her power, for the attainment of this blessing.

I. WE, AT PRESENT, GREATLY NEED A LARGE ADDITIONAL NUMBER OF GOSPEL LABORERS.

It may be confidently asserted, that the declaration of our blessed Lord, that "the harvest is great, and the laborers few," was never more applicable—more strikingly and affectingly applicable to the state of the world, than at the present hour. With this fact, it is my earnest wish to impress every hearer. And I am so far from being afraid of drawing a more alarming picture than facts will warrant, that my only fear is, that, after all I can say, an adequate impression of the real state of the case will not be left upon your minds.

In the first place, then, there are, at this moment, within the bounds of the Presbyterian church, **MORE THAN SIX HUNDRED VACANT CONGREGATIONS:** congregations which are not only destitute of pastors, but which cannot possibly be supplied with them, without a corresponding addition to the number of our ministerial laborers. Besides these vacant congregations, many of which are ready and loudly calling for pastors, and languishing and declining for want of them—I say, besides these—there are at least **FOUR OR FIVE HUNDRED POPULOUS DISTRICTS,** north, south, and west, in which, if we had zealous and able ministers to send to them, large and flourishing congregations might be speedily formed. So that our beloved church, at the present hour, most urgently needs **MORE THAN A THOUSAND MINISTERS,** over and above her present supply. And if they cannot be obtained more rapidly, and in greater numbers, than our means have hitherto furnished, these destitute, complaining, entreating, dying flocks, must either fall off to other denominations, and seek a supply of pastors from churches more faithful than ourselves; or be left to sink into all the desolation and death of practical heathenism.

In short, the number of gospel laborers which we are now able annually to send into the field, is scarcely more than **A TENTH PART** of what we most pressingly need. And, what is still more appalling, if **no means** be adopted for obtaining a much larger supply, the deficiency **now so serious and distressing,** will, every year, become more serious

and more distressing, in consequence of the population of our country growing far more rapidly than the supply of ministers;—until, in a few years, myriads of our countrymen, and perhaps some of our own children, or our children's children, must be left without Sabbaths; without sanctuary privileges; without ministers of religion; and thus, virtually, abandoned to heathenism under the name of Christianity.

But besides all these loud calls for many more ministers; beside the large supply demanded for vacant churches, and the extended frontier settlements within our own borders; there is a much larger harvest* still, which calls for a far greater number of laborers than any which has been mentioned. I mean **THE HEATHEN WORLD**. Had any one told the apostle *Paul*, in the midst of his arduous and devoted labors, that at the end of eighteen centuries from his time, more than three-fourths of the whole human race would still be covered with pagan darkness, what would have been the feelings of that heroic, noble-minded missionary? Yet so the humbling, appalling fact is! Out of eight hundred and fifty, or nine hundred millions of mankind, more than six hundred millions are supposed to be still pagans, or under the dominion of an equally dark and degrading superstition. Over the darkness and misery of these perishing millions, the church of Christ has been criminally slumbering for ages. She is now beginning to awake. I say *beginning*, for this is all that can be said. She has sent out a few missionaries; but what are they among the uncounted millions who need their labors? It is like sending a single reaper to reap down the whitening fields of an empire! The missionaries who have been sent, are calling in every direction for **MORE LABORERS**. And even the heathen themselves are beginning to join their voices, and to entreat Christians to remember them, and to send to them those who can teach the way of salvation. But when, in consequence of these importunate and heart-affecting calls, we look round for even *forty* or *fifty* young men, whose hearts the Lord has touched with love to the souls of men, and especially with love to the heathen—(many hundreds, indeed, might be employed, and are wanted)—but when we look round for even *forty* or *fifty* consecrated young heroes, who are willing to carry the glorious gospel to the ends of the earth—we see them not! We cry aloud for them, but we cry in vain! The truth is, for this immense field of service many thousands of laborers are pressing-ly needed. Nay, for this field several thousands of laborers would be

* See Note, page 16.

but a *fair proportion* to be sent by the *American churches*. But, when I ask myself—where they are to be found—my heart sinks within me. American christians must be roused to exertions on this subject greatly beyond that which they have ever yet made; or large parts of our country must suffer a grievous “famine of the word of life,” and the heathen world be left to languish for centuries more under all their darkness, and misery, and death.

If these things be so, then we are very naturally conducted to our

II. Second proposition, viz.: **THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO EMPLOY ALL THE MEANS IN HER POWER TO PROVIDE MORE,—MANY MORE LABORERS FOR THE GREAT HARVEST WHICH LIES BEFORE HER.**

The command in our text was originally given to the teachers and guides of the church, and through them, to the church herself in all ages; and especially to those who occupy the place of “watchmen on the walls of Zion.” Whatever others may feel themselves as at liberty to attempt, or as bound to accomplish—the church—“the household of faith”—the professing body of “believers,”—are solemnly bound to take measures, by their representatives, for carrying into effect this high command of their Master in heaven. And every individual member of the body is bound to co-operate, to the utmost of the power which God has given him, in sustaining and bearing onward all wise efforts for the attainment of an object so momentous to all the interests of Zion.

But while the general obligation to attend with fidelity to this object will be acknowledged by all, some may imagine that it may be safely left to the voluntary enterprise of those individuals who may feel inclined to undertake the task. Now, I maintain, that, while we forbid none who may think proper to engage in the promotion of this great object; while we pray for the prosperity of every wise and scriptural effort to increase the number of evangelical laborers;—**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST HERSELF, AS SUCH**—whatever others may do,—is bound to make this one of her primary and unceasing objects of pursuit. The arguments by which this position may be established are the most direct and simple that can be imagined.

For what purpose, I ask, has a church been founded and sustained in our world by her Almighty Head and Lord? Manifestly, as the word of God every where teaches, for maintaining in their purity the doctrines and ordinances of our holy religion, and for spreading them abroad among those who have them not. In other words, the great end of the church of God is to hold fast, and "hold forth the word of life," and to send it as far and wide as possible, for enlightening and saving the world. That this is a duty incumbent on the church, is just as evident as that she has any duties to perform. If, besides providing for the ample and faithful support of all gospel ordinances within her own bosom, she does not also remember the destitute and the benighted, who have none to dispense to them the bread and the water of life—she is undoubtedly faithless to a solemn and most important part of her trust.

But if it be incumbent on the church, as that body which is called out of the world, by the authority of Christ, for spreading the knowledge of the gospel;—if it be incumbent on her to send this precious treasure to all within her reach; then it is perfectly obvious that she is also bound to provide the MEANS of sending it. Now among the most essential of these means are LIVING TEACHERS. The BLESSED BIBLE, we know, is one of the most important and indispensable means of enlightening and saving men. And, everlasting thanks to Him who sits as King upon the holy hill of Zion!"—that precious volume, we hope, before the lapse of many years, will be sent to "every kindred and people, and nation and tongue." But, suppose the bible to be actually in the hands of every human being; how are the great mass of mankind to be roused to a sense of its value? How are benighted, hardened, sensual mortals, even in our own land, and much more in pagan lands, to be prevailed upon to read the bible? How is the bible to be explained, and brought into contact with the minds of the millions who may have it in their hands? The bible is, indeed, a plain book, easily comprehended, in all its practical bearings, by all who are willing to know and obey the truth:—and yet, what multitudes in all lands, may reply with that serious reader of the word of God, from *Ethiopia*, who, eighteen centuries ago, when asked by a minister of Christ—*Understandest thou what thou readest?* was constrained to answer, *How can I, except some man guide me?* Nay, suppose every son and daughter of *Adam* on earth to be furnished with a copy of the bible;—but to be, at the same time, deprived of all public ordinances; having none to collect them for public worship; none to feed them with "the bread of

life;" none to dispense the sacramental seal; none, in short, to furnish those outward privileges by which the Holy Spirit is wont to convince and convert men, and to build up his people in faith and holiness unto salvation? The fact is, sending forth the living teacher is made just as essential, by the appointment of God, for spreading the gospel, as the distribution of the bible. What, therefore, "God has joined together, let not man put asunder." *How*, asks the inspired apostle—*How shall men believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how can they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace; that bring glad tidings of good things; that say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!*

The obligation of the church, then, in her ecclesiastical capacity, to train up faithful laborers for the gospel harvest—nay, to provide as many, if it be possible, as the harvest demands—is just as manifest as her obligation to send the bible, and to send the gospel in any way to every nation under heaven. In fact, if any one department of the church's duty may be represented as radical;—as taking the precedence, in the order of nature and necessity of almost every other;—it is to provide an adequate supply of living teachers, to go every where bearing that precious gospel, "which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." What are all missionary plans and enterprises without this? How are the glad tidings of great joy to be imparted to all people, if there be none to carry them? To neglect to raise up living teachers, then, involves, by necessary consequence, the neglect of all the great objects for which the church was founded.

But this general reasoning is not all that demands our attention on this subject. The church is bound to preserve the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel pure and entire as the Master left them. She is expressly appointed to be **A WITNESS OF THE TRUTH** in the midst of a perverse and corrupt world. It is incumbent on her to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and when the enemy cometh in like a flood, to lift up a standard against him.* Hence, as a consequence, she is bound to see that all her ministers be "sound in the faith;" that they "all speak the same thing;" and unite in holding forth the same pure and steady light which came down from heaven to enlighten and bless the revolted population of our globe. But can all this be done; nay, can **ANY PART OF IT BE EFFECTUALLY**

DONE, without directing constant and most vigilant attention to the training of those who are to be the teachers and guides of the church? Is it not obviously indispensable that the church herself, with parental care, select and guide the candidates for this high and momentous trust? That she watch over the fountains of knowledge to which they repair, and the course of instruction which they receive? Can she otherwise hope, (to employ the language of our fathers more than twenty years ago,) "to form men for the gospel ministry, who shall truly believe, and cordially love, and endeavor faithfully to propagate and defend, in its genuineness, simplicity, and fulness, that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Plan of government and discipline of the Presbyterian church."* If we are intelligent and sincere Presbyterians, we, of course, believe that our formularies of doctrine and order are founded on the word of God. If we really believe this, we shall desire to have them maintained and extended as far as possible. And, if so, can we rationally expect to succeed, if we consent to have our public teachers trained up by other hands, and exposed to the contagion of other sentiments, and other habits than those which characterize our body? It was wisely and forcibly said, by a distinguished minister of our church, several years ago, in an address before the board now assembled, that "a man, with proper vigilance and caution, may be defended against *murder*; but that against *suicide* there is no human defence." As long as the "watchmen" on the walls of our Zion, and the "rulers" within the walls, are faithful to their trust;—faithful in warning against error, and faithful in excluding enemies in disguise from our militant ranks—our citadel, under God, is safe. "The gates of hell will never prevail against it." But if we deliberately bring in false friends among the number of the "watchmen," or knowingly allow them to be brought in; if we encourage plans for the preparation of our rising ministry, which shall introduce among the "teachers" and "guides" of the church those who have no real love for either her doctrines or her government,—we are, beyond all doubt, preparing the way for an **ECCLESIASTICAL SUICIDE**. Nothing less than a miracle can save us from discord, strife, division, and ruin. The credulity of the ancient Trojans was not more infatuated, when they consented to the introduc-

* *Introduction to the Plan of the Theological Seminary at Princeton—drawn up in 1811.*

tion within their walls of the fatal wooden horse, which contained in its bowels the instruments of their ignoble subjugation.

We all know what ancient state it was which separated children from their parents at a very early age, and made their whole education a matter of national concern. The declared object of this policy was, that every domestic affection might be swallowed up and lost in general patriotism; that all the children of the state might be trained up with that physical vigor, and that spirit of hardy endurance, which would fit every one to be a soldier, determined to conquer or to die. This was a plan well adapted to form able-bodied warriors, but not moral beings. It rejected some of the most important elements of human culture, and destroyed some of the strongest bonds of human society. Equally objectionable is the plan of, directly or indirectly, separating the sons of the church from their proper ecclesiastical mother; and assigning their intellectual and spiritual culture, and their professional training to foreign and irresponsible hands. Trained in this manner, they may, perhaps, be as physically and intellectually vigorous as if every part of their education had passed under the immediate eye of that mother. But they will be likely to understand her feelings and her interests less; to love her less; and, of course, to be less desirous, and less qualified to promote the comfort and edification of her immediate household.

In short, if it be our object to train up a set of *theological pugilists*, who shall keep the church in perpetual agitation by their feats of polemic skill and valor, and expend all their strength in conflicts with one another; then the more diversified the habits and opinions in which our candidates are trained, the better. But if the object be to furnish the Presbyterian church with spiritual teachers and guides, who shall love her doctrine and order; who will study at once her purity and her peace; and who will labor together, with affectionate harmony, for her edification, and for the conversion of the world;—then no reasonable man can doubt that their selection and training ought to be the object of the church's most anxious and unceasing care; and that none ought to be encouraged to seek the sacred office, in our Zion, but those who give evidence, not only that they love the cause of Christ in general; but also that they sincerely love, as well as outwardly adopt, our ecclesiastical standards, as containing the great system of truth and order taught in the holy scriptures.

It is no solid objection to the foregoing reasoning, to say, that the interest of the church at large is far more important than the interest of any particular denomination. This is, no doubt, most emphatically correct. But will not an army of good soldiers be most likely to conquer, when every member of it is found fighting bravely in his own appropriate ranks? Besides; if it be our sincere belief that the doctrine and order of our church are most agreeable to the word of God; then we are not only bound, as the Lord's "witnesses" to promote their reception and extension as far as possible; but just so far as we accomplish this, we are promoting the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the wisest, the best, and the most permanently valuable manner that is possible.

Let the church, then, in all her borders, awake to a deep sense of her great obligation in reference to this matter. Her duty to her Master; her duty to herself; her growth, her strength, her purity, her peace, her power to act with harmony and energy for the conversion of the world,—all—all demand it of her. If she fails here, and in proportion as she fails here, she must ultimately fail in every other department of evangelical exertion. What will become of the largest and the wisest plans of missionary enterprise, if there be not enlightened and sanctified men to carry the "glad tidings of great joy" to dark and perishing millions? To what purpose shall we organize new churches, as the increasing population and zeal of our body may enable us; if we cannot find living teachers to take charge of them as spiritual guides? In fact, every enterprise for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, must either be abandoned, or deplorably languish, unless a much larger supply of gospel laborers can be sent into the field. And, after all, the *mere multiplication* of them will not be found to answer the main purpose intended. If they are trained up with other preferences, and other habits than those of our own church the greater their number, the more will discordant views and divided counsels prevail; and the greater the probability that their discord and strife will destroy our peace, and hold us up to the pity or the scorn of all surrounding denominations.

In applying this subject, I beg to be allowed, in the first place, to address myself to the "BOARD OF EDUCATION," at whose request, and for whose benefit we are now assembled.

My respected FRIENDS AND BRETHREN! You have committed to your charge one of the most precious and momentous trusts that the church of God can possibly delegate to human hands. Yours is the delicate, the arduous task of selecting and training a large part of those sons of the church, who are hereafter to be her teachers and guides. And if the character of ministers may be said to decide the character and destiny of the church over which they preside, then what arithmetic can calculate the good or the evil which your manner of discharging the trust committed to you, may be preparing for the body of Christ?

It is beyond your power, indeed, to give the most essential of all qualifications for gospel laborers—I mean VITAL PIETY. In this sense it may be said, with special emphasis, the LORD OF THE HARVEST can ALONE send forth laborers into his harvest. For, in regard to this qualification, none but He who made the world can make a minister. But has *He* ever been wanting when his *people* were faithful? Is he not *now*, if I may so speak, running far ahead of our movements, by pouring out his Spirit upon our academies, our colleges, and many of our churches, and bringing into the kingdom of his grace hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young men, who are ready and desirous to devote themselves to the ministry of reconciliation? On you devolves the solemn task of searching them out; putting in the claim of their moral mother, and, still more urgently, the claim of the Master in heaven, to their services; and watching over all their preparation for the great field of labor. To this delicate, weighty, unspeakably important task it is our hope that you will address yourselves, with all that diligence, zeal, faith, and prayer, for HELP FROM ON HIGH, which the solemnity of the trust so evidently demands.

Remember, I pray you, first of all, and above all, that decided piety, —ardent piety—is the first, the highest, the most deeply essential qualification that can be named for the sacred office. Let this great principle ever stimulate and guide your operations. Never patronize, as candidates for the ministry, any others than those who give decisive evidence that they are converted men. Though they had the talents of angels, without sincere love to Christ, they would be no blessing to his church. Yet we are not to suppose that EVERY PIOUS YOUTH, or even that EVERY FERVENTLY PIOUS YOUTH ought to be introduced into the ministry. Unless he have good native talents; some portion

of those gifts which form an impressive public instructor; prudence, and a freedom from striking eccentricity, he will be likely to serve God and his generation, in any other honest calling, far more successfully than as an ambassador of Christ. Many a young man selected and trained for the holy ministry, who gave satisfactory evidence of piety—has been found so feeble-minded, so deficient in the power of public speaking, or so characteristically indiscreet, as to constrain every enlightened friend of religion to wish that he had adorned and sanctified some secular avocation.

Remember, further, my respected friends, that you have not been appointed to be **THE BOARD OF A PARTY**; but to represent and serve **THE WHOLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**. And the only plan on which you can successfully attain this object is, not to be swayed by the wishes, or the policy of any individual, or body of individuals; but to keep an eye constantly fixed on the word of God, and the truly scriptural and apostolic constitution of our church, as that system which we have all equally promised to respect and sustain. The only fair and legitimate index of the church's will is to be found in those public formularies, which she has solemnly adopted, and set forth, as containing that system of doctrine and government which, in her judgment, is contained in the holy scriptures. Let your whole administration be in faithful conformity with the spirit of **THESE**; and, with the divine blessing, harmony and edification will follow of course.

Remember, also, as before remarked, that the *mere multiplication* of ministers is not that which the enlightened friends of the Redeemer's kingdom mainly desire, and expect you to seek. In fact, the more ministers are multiplied, unless they be suitably furnished, and of the right spirit,—the greater the burden, and even the curse, which they will inevitably bring on the church of God. We want neither learned drones, nor ignorant fanatics; neither heartless zealots for mere frigid orthodoxy, nor empty, childish boasters of a zeal without knowledge. No; the exigencies of the church, and of the world call more loudly than ever before, for men of enlightened minds, and hearts warmed with the love of Christ and of souls; men "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" qualified to "feed the people with knowledge and with understanding;" men who love and desire to promote genuine revivals of religion; men who are "wise in winning souls" to

Christ;—men thoroughly devoted, in heart and in life, to the conversion of the world.

Remember, moreover, that such ministers as I have described, can never be furnished, (without a miracle,) unless candidates for the sacred office can be persuaded to pursue a **REGULAR AND ADEQUATE COURSE OF STUDY**. It will, then, be a most important part of your duty to conjure and constrain such of them as may come under your direction, so far to respect their **MASTER**, to respect **THEMSELVES**, and to respect the **OFFICE** which they seek, as not to be found “novices” when they enter the field of labor. — It is the lamentable infatuation of a large majority of our theological students, that, they *will*, in spite of every dictate of wisdom and of scripture to the contrary—they *will* hasten into the pulpit with half, or less than half, an adequate training. In many cases, even after a previous literary course to the last degree stunted and superficial, we cannot persuade them to feel as they ought the importance of extended and mature theological studies. Not more than a fourth part of the candidates for the sacred office whom I have known, have had wisdom and patience enough to complete the course prescribed in the plan of most of our seminaries, as indispensable to form a well-furnished laborer in the gospel harvest. For this deplorable infatuation no remedy has yet been found. Private friends, theological teachers, boards of directors, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, have all lifted the voice of remonstrance against the fatal delusion; but they have lifted it in vain. The evil is still going on with undiminished prevalence. The very spirit of **IMPATIENCE**, and of **SUPERFICIALITY**, seems to have taken possession of the greater part of our candidates for the Lord’s harvest. The consequence is, that the proportion of our rising ministry who make attainments in any measure adapted to the day in which we live, is lamentably small. And hence it comes to pass, that so many, when they enter the field, instead of proving “workmen that need not be ashamed,” qualified “rightly to divide the word of truth,”—disappoint the expectations of their friends; are unable to remain, for any length of time, in one place, as acceptable pastors; and finally become rather a burden than a blessing to the church.

I know of no body of men, my respected friends, in the Presbyterian church, who have it in their power to do more towards obviating this deplorable evil than the **ASSEMBLY’S BOARD OF EDUCATION**. To

your care, and that of your committees, hundreds of young men will be entrusted from the commencement of their studies. Be entreated ever to inculcate upon them that, with a given amount of piety, he who is the most accurate scholar, and the best furnished divine, will ever be the most useful minister. Assure them also, that these attainments can never be made without unwearied and long-continued labor. There is no royal way to knowledge. I know of no magic by which theological professors can impart adequate furniture to young men who will not study, even while they continue to occupy the place of students, and who are in haste to escape from instruction. And as long as there are presbyteries who will consent to license, and even ordain, candidates, who have never studied the gospel, and, of course, do not understand it, I can think of no way in which the correction of the evil in question is to be expected from our judicatories. But, if the Board of Education will firmly withhold its patronage from all who will not, in the outset, consent to take a regular and thorough course of study; and will instantly withdraw its aid from any and every young man who does not in good faith comply with his agreement, unless prevented by unavoidable dispensations of Providence;—if this be done, the mass of our candidates may be brought back to listen to the voice of reason, of conscience, and of scripture, in regard to this matter. There is little hope of relief, unless, under God, it can be afforded by **YOUR BOARD**. May the King of Zion enable you to be faithful to this, as well as to every other interest committed to your charge, and crown your labors with an abundant blessing!

But the subject before us demands the solemn attention, not merely of the Board of Education, but of every member and friend of the Presbyterian church. Are there any of this large class who are ready to ask—"What can we do?" I answer—There are, probably, at this hour, from four to five thousand young men scattered through our churches, of hopeful piety, and of sound, improvable minds; who might, in seven or eight years, from the present time, be brought into the ministry, if proper measures were forthwith taken to effect the object. Now, let ministers and church sessions search out all such young men;—carefully discriminating between those who have good native talents, and those who have *not*; and also between those who are modest, humble, prudent, and teachable, and those who, though hopefully pious, have *not* these qualities. Let them immediately recommend the **FORMER** to the Board of Education, and encourage them, by all **suita-**

ble means, to seek the ministry; while they, as carefully, *discourage and keep back* the LATTER. Let presbyteries and synods take order on this subject, at every meeting, keeping it constantly before the minds of all the ministers, and elders, and churches, within their bounds, and recommending unceasing attention to it, as one of the most vital parts of their stated business, as judicatories of Christ. Let every congregation ask—"Can *we* not furnish from our number, and support in study, at least *one pious young man*, to be trained up for the ministry of reconciliation?" Let every wealthy Christian, who feels that *he* cannot preach the gospel himself, ask—"Cannot I indirectly become a peacher, by selecting and sustaining one, if not more, beloved youth, "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," who may go forth, and be made a blessing to perishing thousands?" Let pious fathers and mothers ask—"Have *we* no sons, and if *we* have none, have our *neighbors* no sons, whose hearts the Lord has enlightened and sanctified, and whom we should be glad to see bearing the gospel far hence to the Gentiles?" And let ALL—ALL—male and female, who desire the speedy conversion of the world, ask—"Can we not, nay, are we not bound, to take a deeper interest and agency in this great subject than we have ever yet done? Can we not *pray* more, and *give* more, and make more *efforts* to rouse and animate others to come to the help of a cause so vital in its character, and so dear to the heart of every intelligent Christian?" You see, my friends, that this is a cause in the prosecution of which every one, without exception, may contribute some aid. Yes, every one who has a heart to pray, a tongue to speak, or a cent to give, may be a "worker together with God" in this great concern, which may be said to lie at the foundation of all enlightened efforts for promoting the best interests of mankind. For it is only when ministers shall be raised up by *tens of thousands*, that the gospel can possibly be preached "to every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue."

NOTE.

The Editor takes occasion to append a short statement, collected from the most correct sources of which he has a knowledge. It may illustrate to the reader, more particularly, the lamentable facts that "the harvest truly is great"—that "the laborers are few." The venerable preacher of this discourse wisely omitted an extended statistical statement, which could not have been of so much benefit to the *hearer* of ordinary memory, as a somewhat *more particular* enumeration may be to the *reader*, who may not have an opportunity of arriving at a tolerably accurate knowledge of the religious state of the world.

"The field," which "is the world," contains from 310 to 500 millions of Pagans—from 90 to 100 millions of Mohammedans—from 60 to 70 millions belonging to the Greek church—from four to eight millions of Jews—about 116 millions of Roman Catholics—and only from 42 to 50 millions of Protestants. In all, from 653 to 800 millions of people. Some parts of the field have not a single evangelical laborer of any denomination. Other portions of the unevangelized world have laborers in the following proportions, who are, in most cases, depressed by the fact, that their number is so "few" in proportion to the work to be done:

Africa and her Isles, containing from 70 to 110 millions, have 90 missionaries. In the Islands of the Mediterranean and the parts circumjacent, there are twenty. In Egypt, Abyssinia, and among the Jews, there are six. Caucasus and Siberia have fourteen. China, with from 200 to 361 millions of people, had, till recently, but two. India beyond the Ganges, with 18 millions, has eighteen missionaries. India within the Ganges, containing 140 millions, has one hundred and twenty. Ceylon has twenty-four missionaries. Indian Archipelago, thirty-one. Australasia, fourteen. Polynesia, forty-one. West India Islands, one hundred and thirty-five. North American continent, fifty-six missionaries. In all, 539 *evangelical* preachers of the gospel of all denominations, for about THREE-FOURTHS of the world!! That is, about ONE laborer in the *foreign* field to *every million* of degraded, dying, sinful people!! Some small increase of laborers as also of population, has taken place since our information was communicated. The *proportions*, then, are the same.

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SERMON XXIX.

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EXCELLENCE OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

ILLUSTRATED IN THEIR UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION, IN THE
NATURE OF THEIR CONTENTS, AND IN THE CHARACTER OF
THEIR INFLUENCE.

PSALM 119:39.—*Thy judgments are good.*

THE original of this psalm is one of the curiosities of Hebrew literature. It belongs to that small class of sacred poetry which is denominated *alphabetical* or *acrostic*. It consists of twenty-two stanzas, corresponding with the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet and arranged in alphabetical order. Each stanza contains eight lines, and each line in the same stanza begins with the same letter. Though the author's name is not prefixed, this psalm is generally ascribed to the inspiration of the royal psalmist of Israel. David is supposed to have written it in the different vicissitudes of his eventful life, and afterwards to have arranged the detached parts in their present order, and given them an acrostic form for the aid of the reader's memory. But however this may be, it is no way doubtful to the pious mind, accustomed to an attentive perusal of this portion of sacred writ, that the author has here furnished a precious treasury of truth, adapted to the Christian's experience in all the variety of the circumstances of his life. If there be any one design, rather than another, apparent throughout the whole, it seems to be to exhibit the practical excellency of the word of God; and though only a small part of what is now comprised in the sacred canon was then written, the commendations here found are certainly not less applicable to the entire bible. There are at least ten different titles here applied to the scriptures; and it is another curious fact respecting this psalm, that some one of these is introduced into almost every verse. Sometimes each of these different terms appears to have its own peculiar signification, and sometimes they appear to be used promiscuously to avoid tautology, or to suit the metrical arrangement.

In our text, we understand the term *judgments* as a general title of the word of God. In discoursing on the passage, we shall consider

it as a declaration of the excellency of the sacred scriptures. "Thy judgments are good."

It may not be unprofitable nor altogether uninteresting, as it is calculated to encourage our confidence in the divine authority of the scriptures, to show, in the *first place*, that they are good as to their *uncorrupted purity*.

Admitting, as I trust all my hearers do, that the bible was given to mankind as the word of God, containing an inspired and authentic revelation of his will, the inquiry sometimes arises, may it not have been since materially corrupted by the hands of men? Has it not, in the lapse of ages and in passing through its numerous transcripts and editions, lost much of the original integrity of the text? These are surely questions of primary importance, and lying near the foundation of all our Christian hopes.

But, in reply, we may observe,

First, That it seems reasonable to suppose, that He who is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same, after having so graciously regarded the necessity of mankind in *past ages*, as to give a written revelation of his will by the inspiration of his Spirit, would, in his *providential care*, preserve it in such a state of purity as to answer the purposes of a revelation to mankind in all *subsequent ages*. We are not supposing a continual miracle in the case. Nor was this necessary. That Providence that exerts an every-day agency in all human concerns, needs not be diverted from its ordinary course of operation for the accomplishment of that for which we contend. And surely if a sparrow does not fall to the ground by the arrow of the archer, without his permission, the preservation of that *heavenly truth* which his own Spirit has revealed, and which is as "the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold," should not be thought beneath his care. Nay, his own glory and the salvation of his people are intimately connected with the preservation of these *holy doctrines*, and may we not, therefore, believe that heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle shall in any wise fail?

We remark, *secondly*, That the inspired writings have ever been held in the greatest *reverence* by those to whose immediate care they were entrusted, whether *Jews* or *Christians*; and this fact, while it affords another presumptive argument against their corruption, at the same time exhibits one of the means which Divine Providence has actually employed for maintaining their purity. This reverence was the natural offspring of their uniform conviction that all scripture was given by inspiration of God; and it was doubtless heightened by the consideration of the repeated prohibitions against their making any addition or diminution, on pain of forfeiting all the blessings and incurring all the plagues written in these books.

So great was this reverence among the *Jews* for their scriptures, that, as Philo and Josephus inform us, they would incur any torture and even death itself, rather than alter a single letter or point; and we learn from ecclesiastical history that, in *fact*, both *Jews* and *Christians* have often chosen martyrdom in preference to the sacrifice of their

sacred books. Is it not then unreasonable to suppose, that while the scriptures were in such hands there was any *disposition* to corrupt them?

Nor do their care and diligence, in guarding against their corruption, appear to have been less remarkable. A distinguished biblical critic justly remarks, that such care and diligence were employed in the preservation of the scriptures as were never exercised in regard to any other books in the world. The *Jewish teachers* are known to have been superstitiously exact about their copies; and learned *Christian divines* have spared no labor in revising, comparing, investigating, and vindicating the sacred text. In regard to the *Old Testament*, what biblical scholar does not know that an almost inconceivable amount of labor was expended by the Jewish doctors for its uncorrupted preservation? A learned Jew affirms that hundreds and thousands of their rabbins, in successive generations, were concerned in what are commonly denominated the labors of the *Masorites*; and many of their writers maintain, that though these labors were not *completed* until the council met at Tiberius, in the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian era, yet they were *commenced* as early as the time of *Ezra*. Among other means which these men adopted for preserving the purity of the text, they established certain rules according to which their scriptures should be transcribed; and to guard against the smallest possible alteration, they even numbered all the verses, words, and titles in each book. Hence the Masora was called "*the hedge of the law*;" and it is easy to perceive how admirably it was calculated to answer the idea of the name it received.

Thirdly. The sacred oracles have been transmitted to us through the hands of *different guardians, whose watchfulness over each other in relation to the common trust reposed in them, was a security for their mutual fidelity*. After the *five books of Moses* were completed, the original was deposited, by divine appointment, and long preserved, in the side of the ark of the covenant, a kind of chest prepared for the purpose. But beside this, there must have been for common use, many copies in the hands of the *Levites*, and still more in the hands of the *people generally*; for the Levites were commanded to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by Moses; and the people also were required to study them attentively in their private dwellings, and to teach them diligently to their children. Moreover, as the government of the Jews was a theocracy, and the law of God was the *law of the land*, there must have been other copies in the possession of the *magistrates*, as the standard of all their judicial transactions; and it was expressly enjoined that the *king* should write him a copy of this law in a book out of the autograph of Moses kept in the ark. Thus all classes being entrusted with this portion of the scriptures, they became not only the common guardians of their purity, but each class exerted a salutary influence over the other, and rendered the design of introducing any corruptions—had there existed such a design in any party—utterly impracticable.

Now it has been in *similar* circumstances, or in circumstances, if

possible, *still more favorable* to the preservation of their purity, that all the sacred books have been transmitted to us through the medium of the different *sects* of *Jews* and *Christians* unto the present day. Suppose, for illustration, that an attempt should now be made by an individual, or by any body of men, whether Infidel, Jewish, or Christian, to corrupt the oracles of God; who does not readily perceive that, from the number of copies scattered abroad throughout the church, and the various sects exercising a mutual watch over the movements of each other, and a common jealousy over the movements of the enemies of the truth, such an attempt must necessarily prove unsuccessful? And it is equally obvious, from the history of the church, that difficulties not less insurmountable would have been met in preceding ages.

Had the attempt been made by *Infidels*, it would have been detected either by the Jews or Christians, or by both. Had it been made by the *Jews*, the evil would have been exposed and corrected by the Christians. Or had it been made by the *Christians*, if in regard to the Old Testament, the remedy was with the Jews; or if in regard to the New Testament, the fraud would have been detected and the design frustrated by other Christian sects and by infidels also.

But it may be objected, that during the reigns of the impious kings of the Jews, and the prevalence of idolatry among that people, circumstances were different, and that the inspired books previously written might then have been depraved without difficulty; and it has, indeed, been urged by the enemies of the bible, that the record relative to the discovery of the book of the law in the temple, under the reign of Josiah, affords evidence of such a fact. But without occupying your time with an answer in detail, it will be sufficient to observe, in general, that though Josiah, yet but a youth, had never before seen an entire copy of the law, there might have been, and probably were, many copies scattered throughout the land, in the hands of the pious part of his subjects; and we are fully authorized to suppose that, during the greatest prevalence of idolatry, there were not wanting an adequate number of faithful guardians of the scriptures then extant; for even under the reign of Ahab, than whom none did more for the suppression of true religion and for the establishment of idolatry, the answer of God to Elijah assures us that he had reserved to himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. These had doubtless retained the holy oracles in their possession; and the testimony that is given of them is a satisfactory evidence of their disposition to preserve them in their purity.

But what though the sacred page had been then profaned and the truth of God falsified? Was not the Spirit of prophecy, the same Spirit that originally dictated that truth, continued in the church by a succession of prophets until the canon of the Hebrew scriptures was completed; and what better security than this do we need for the restoration of the text, if it had received injury from the hands of men? But there is an other consideration, that ought forever to settle the question respecting the purity of the books of the Old Testament, as far down as the Christian era. Our Lord Jesus Christ in all the charges that he

brought against the Jews, never intimated that they had corrupted the word of God. He did indeed accuse them of making the law of none effect by their traditions, but not of depraving the law itself. His silence, therefore, on a point of such vital importance, and especially while publicly reading and expounding the scriptures in their synagogues, affords a just ground of inference, that they had not therein exposed themselves to censure; and, moreover, he and his inspired apostles by referring their hearers, without any qualification or caution, to the Old Testament as the oracles of God, and declaring that all scripture was given by inspiration of God, gave positive testimony in favor of their uncorrupted integrity.

But again, it may be objected that there was a time subsequent to this, when the evil might have occurred. It may be thought that during the dark ages of the church, when by a solemn decree of the Roman hierarchy the laity were prohibited the use of the bible, that then the circumstances which we have represented as a security for the preservation of the integrity of the scriptures did not exist, and that consequently corruptions might then have been introduced by an unprincipled and profligate clergy. To this we reply, 1st, That the Old Testament was safely guarded by the Jews; 2d, That had the New Testament been altered, it would have been made to sanction the errors that then prevailed in the Roman Catholic church; whereas, it *now* explicitly condemns them; 3d, That previous to this there was a schism between the Eastern and the Western churches, which rendered any such fraudulent attempt by one party impossible, without detection and exposure by the other—and that, in fact, the copies of the bible in the East and West now agree; 4, That throughout that long reign of moral darkness that overspread the church, there were scattered over Europe thousands of faithful witnesses of the truth, and not *less faithful guardians of the scriptures*, among the Paulicians, the Vallenses, and the Waldenses.

Of the holy and excellent character of these people, even their enemies in the communion of the hierarchy have borne decisive testimony. Of their attention to the word of God, also, they speak particularly. One of their cruel persecutors says, “they frequently read the holy scriptures, and in their preaching cited the words of Christ and his apostles.” Another says, that he had seen peasants among them who could recite the book of Job by memory; and several others who could perfectly repeat the whole *New Testament*. A third writer, an enemy too, in speaking of one of the valleys where they dwelt, says, “they can all read and write, and you can scarce find a boy among them who cannot give you an intelligent account of the faith which they profess.” He adds, “in this, indeed, they resemble their brethren of the *other valleys*.” Here, then, was a refuge for the bible, and another security against any designs of the catholic clergy.

But to bring our investigations in this branch of our discourse to a close, we remark,

Fourthly, That the result of the stupendous labors of biblical critics in late years, perfectly harmonizes with the considerations that have

already been adduced. After an incalculable amount of time and treasure expended by the most learned theologians of Europe in collecting and comparing all the ancient manuscript copies that could be found in every part of the world, (some of which are upwards of twelve hundred years old,) it has been found that there are no other discrepancies between them and our present editions of the bible, than such as would accidentally and unavoidably occur.

A late learned author observes, "that the very *worst* manuscript extant would not pervert *one article of our faith*, or destroy *one moral precept*. The general uniformity, therefore, of the manuscripts which are dispersed through all the countries of Christendom, and in so great a variety of languages, is truly astonishing, and demonstrates both the veneration in which the scriptures have uniformly been held and the singular care which was taken in transcribing them; and so far are the various readings contained in these manuscripts from being hostile to the uncorrupted preservation of the inspired books, (as some sceptics have boldly affirmed, and as some timid Christians have apprehended,) that they afford us, on the contrary, a most convincing proof that they exist at present, in all *essential* points, precisely the same, as they were when they left the hands of their authors."

Other considerations, leading to the same conclusion, might be derived from ancient versions, and from the voluminous amount of quotations in early Christian writers, but we have already occupied too much of your time on the subject, and therefore proceed,

II. In the *second place*, to notice very briefly, some of the *contents* of the bible, illustrative of the proposition in our text. Yes, my hearers, this holy volume is good as to the truths it contains, the doctrines it teaches, and the difficulties it solves. The oracles of reason and philosophy have failed to satisfy the anxious inquiries of the human mind in matters of infinito moment. But what they have failed to do, revelation has accomplished. Here is the true light; a light emanating from the third heavens to irradiate the darkness of this lower world; a lamp hung out from the skies to enlighten our way thither. The subject is copious and affords an opportunity for much detail, but as this is ground more frequently trod, it will be sufficient, on the present occasion, merely to glance at a few particulars. The bible, then, we may specify, decides on the claims of the gods that have swarmed like summer insects, in the mythologies of the heathen, and *teaches us to whom alone divine worship should be paid*. It would seem from the multiplicity of deities acknowledged by some of the idolatrous nations, that there had been a competition among them, which could enumerate the most. An ancient Grecian author computes the number at 30,000; and in Hindostan the number is estimated at not less than *three hundred and thirty millions!* The kind of creature or thing, whether in heaven or earth, can hardly be named, that has not received in some form or other, the adoration of men; so that there are acknowledged, gods innumerable, both celestial and terrestrial. But the bible leaves us in no doubt to whom we should render our homage. It assures us, "though there be that are *called* gods, whether in heaven or in earth,

(as there be gods many and lords many,") that to us there is but one God, of whom are all things; and by ascribing to him every conceivable perfection in an infinite degree, shows us why he alone is *entitled* to our homage, why his name *alone* is *Jehovah*, and why he will not give his glory to *another*.

It teaches us also, as might reasonably be expected of an infinite Being, that he is a God of unsearchable mysteries. It assures us, that in the unity of the Godhead there are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to each of whom belong all the names, attributes, works, and worship of the true God.

It instructs us in the doctrine, agitated but undecided by the heathen, of an *all-wise, superintending Providence*—a Providence so *general*, that it extends its dominion, not only abroad over all the face of the earth, but up through all the splendid galaxy of the heavens—so *particular*, that the very hairs of our heads are *numbered*. It quiets the *anxieties*, engendered alike by atheism and polytheism, and bids us to rejoice because the Lord God omnipotent reigneth—to cast our cares upon him, for he *careth* for us.

But the bible not only reveals the *true God* to man, in his being, his perfections, and government, but also *reveals man to himself*, in his origin, his character, and condition, and acquaints him with his duties and his destination. Without the supposition to which unaided reason was sometimes driven, of his being the workmanship of Demiurge, a malevolent deity, and without raising a shadow of impeachment against the goodness of his Creator, it accounts for his moral degradation and his numberless sufferings, by teaching us that, after being created in the image of God and made happy in his communion, he voluntarily apostatized, and by so doing not only involved himself in sin and misery, but, according to the uniform analogy of Providence, entailed the corruption of his nature and the curse of his disobedience on his posterity. It describes mankind in all the extent of the turpitude of their degeneracy. It decides the question on which, after all their arguments, the greatest masters of reason still doubted—the question of the *immortality of the soul*; and reveals the kindred doctrine of which they knew nothing—the doctrine of the *resurrection of the body*. It discloses to our view, in the midst of the assembled universe, the great white throne of *future judgment*, and assures us of an eternal state of *retribution*, according to the deeds done in the body.

But to man as a *sinner*, these disclosures *alone* would only add to the sorrows, that previously burdened his heart. Thanks to God, these are not *all*. The bible, while, by bringing the sinner under the scrutiny of a law whose requirements are as broad as its character is holy, and in view of a tribunal whose retributions are as terrible as they are just; while it thus constrains him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" at the same time exhibits a *scheme of grace* so consolatory, and a plan of *redemption* so complete, as to demand from him the rapturous exclamation, "O the breadth and the length, the depth and the height of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge!" Yes, it answers to the sa-

tisfaction of the anxious and agitated sinner, the all-important question. "How shall man be just with God?" It assures him that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The necessity of an *atonement* has been implied in all the sacrifices and penances that have ever been practised, from the apostacy to the present day; but in the bible only do we find an atonement that affords any rational ground of hope towards God. Here the vicarious sufferer is *human*, that sin may be punished in the same nature in which it is committed; and *divine*, both that he may have the right to make an offering of himself, and that his dignity may give sufficient value to his sufferings. Here is the only sin-offering with which the Lord is pleased. Hence the bible bids him that would bathe the sacrificial knife in the blood of his offspring, to desist, and "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and him that would torture or immolate his own body, to appease his gods, "Do thyself no harm—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Yes, it proclaims to all, as a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him—not only to save them from the goadings of a guilty conscience in this life, and from the pains of hell for ever, but to advance them to the adoption of children in the family of God while here, and afterwards to introduce them into his *presence*, where is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

As a preparation for that state of pure and perfect bliss, the scriptures declare the necessity of the *regeneration* and *sanctification* of our nature, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. They moreover inculcate and exemplify a perfect system of morals, both personal and relative—morals far exceeding any thing that the mind of man in his fallen state ever could have conceived. They carry the authority of their precepts to the conscience, and sum them up in these all-comprehensive injunctions, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself"—and "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." These precepts, in addition to their divine authority and legal sanctions, are enforced in all their details by evangelical motives—by motives derived from the amazing love of God in Christ Jesus.

Such, briefly, are some of the contents of this inspired volume. Blessed book! Who would not say, "Thy judgments are good! more are they to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." Who, in the benevolence they inculcate, would not give his money and his influence to send them to all the benighted abodes of his fellow men?

III. Need we further evidence of the excellence of the bible? Look, in the *third place*, at its *effects*. It is one of its own maxims, that the "tree is known by its fruit. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Now apply this principle to the history of the bible, and the result will be calculated alike to increase our conviction of its excellence, and to enkindle our zeal in its

circulation. But where shall we begin? It would require volumes to do justice to the subject.

Did our limits allow, we might trace its effects on *literature*. We might show that whenever Christianity was propagated among barbarous nations, the knowledge of letters was at the same time introduced. We might show, that as the reading of the scriptures is essential to Christianity, and as these were long confined to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, the knowledge of those languages was necessarily preserved in the church, and thereby the study of the ancient classics also promoted. That during the dark ages, literature, so far as it existed, was almost confined to the *biblical* scholars, and but for them would have perished. That since the revival of letters, multitudes who have blessed the world by their learning, and some of whom were among its brightest luminaries, were educated for the services of the church, and but for the scriptures would have remained unknowing and unknown. We might mention its effect on the common people in Christian countries, as wherever the bible is received, an ability to read its contents is deemed indispensable. We might mention, also, that thousands and hundreds of thousands of the children of the poor, rescued from utter ignorance by Sabbath schools, are taught to read that they may become acquainted with the bible; and thus be fitted for usefulness in society, as well as for happiness in heaven.

Can its effects on *civil government* be questioned? It teaches magistrates that they are the ministers of God, appointed to be a "terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." It teaches the people to regard their authority as "the ordinance of God, not only for fear, but for conscience sake." Hence insurrections and massacres have been much less frequent in protestant Christian, than in heathen and infidel countries. It has infused its moral, humane, and benevolent spirit into the laws and institutions of states and kingdoms. It has given additional security of their respective rights to all classes of the community. It has softened the rigors of war, and when its principles shall be universally adopted, will utterly exterminate this devourer of nations from the earth. In proportion as it has obtained in the world, it has taught its *real* disciples to regard all of human kind as their brethren, and it will ultimately cut every spear in sunder, and burn every war-chariot in fire. Yes, under its influence, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, the time will come when the earth shall no longer exhibit scenes of blood and carnage—"when nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—when nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they *learn war any more*, but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

But it is on the *social*, the *moral*, and *religious* interests of mankind, that the scriptures exert their most benign influence. Need we evidence? Look at facts. The exposure of deformed or illegitimate *infants*—of *aged* and helpless *parents*, and the cruelties practised by the superior on the inferior orders of society, in many heathen countries, both in ancient and modern times, are matters of public notoriety. Several years since

we were told, that at least eighteen thousand infants were annually destroyed in China; and ten thousand every month in the single province of Bengal in India. The horrid sports and gladiatorial exhibitions, too, practised in ancient Rome, in the midst of all her boasted refinement and philosophy, are well known. Europe, by these means, is supposed to have sometimes lost twenty or thirty thousand lives in a month. But who does not know that wherever the holy bible has gained dominion, these and all like abominations have been done away, and the remembrance of them contemplated with horror. Nor has the effect been merely negative.

Christian communities have not only ceased to do evil, but learned to do well. In the benevolent spirit of the bible, how many asylums have they erected for the children of want and wretchedness—for widows and orphans—for the friendless and the helpless. How many hospitals for the sick and the maimed—the halt and the blind—the idiot and the maniac.

What kind of misery have they not attempted to relieve? or what species of crime have they not attempted to reform?

These institutions and efforts of benevolence originated from the *bible*; and in vain do we look for their existence where *its* influence is unknown.

In the rites and forms of religious worship, its effects are not less obvious. Where, in the worship of the God of the bible, do you find such scenes as have been exhibited in the impure and the bloody superstitions of Africa and India, or such as historians and travellers have reported of all pagan nations, both ancient and modern?—scenes too often described to need a repetition. Beside rites the most obscene, penances the most severe, and self-immolations the most shocking and innumerable, it is a well attested fact that, in every part of the world, the blood of human victims has smoked on the idolatrous altars of the heathen. But wherever the bible has extended its empire, “the altars and the gods have fallen together in the dust.” Instead of the abominations of paganism, it has established the worship of Jehovah “in the beauty of holiness.” It declares in all his temples, “God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Need we allude more particularly to its effects on individuals? Here, indeed, its divine efficacy is immediately and gloriously displayed. When attended with the power of the Spirit, it urges home upon the inner man the resistless claims of the Almighty. It arrests the sinner in his career of crime, penetrates him with a sense of guilt, subdues him to the dominion of grace, and brings back his soul to God. Without regard to distinction or rank, it has carried its redeeming authority alike into palaces and cottages, and brought kings and peasants to sit together at the Savior's feet. Throughout every grade of character, from the self-righteous Pharisee to the extortionate publican—from the heartless Stoic to the licentious Epicurean, it has multiplied its disciples, and made them one in humility, in holiness, and in happiness. “How many thousands,” says one, “have felt its power, rejoiced in its influence, and under its dictates been constrained to devote themselves to the glory and praise of God. Burdened with guilt, incapable of finding relief

from human resources, the mind has *here* found peace unspeakable, in beholding that sacrifice which alone could atone for transgression. Here the hard and impenitent heart has been softened, the impetuous passions restrained, the ferocious temper subdued, powerful prejudices conquered, ignorance dispelled, and the obstacles to real happiness removed. Here the Christian, looking around on the glories and blandishments of this world, has been enabled, with a noble contempt, to despise them all for Christ. Here death itself, the king of terrors, has lost its sting; and the soul, with a holy magnanimity, has borne up in the agonies of a dying hour, and sweetly sung itself away to everlasting bliss." Such, my hearers, are some of the effects of the book of God.

Let me now say, in a brief review of the whole subject,

1. *With what confidence we may consult the sacred word.*

Time, that often effects such mighty changes in men and things, has effected no important change in the scriptures. He who at first gave them by inspiration of his Spirit, pure as their divine source, has graciously handed them down uncorrupted, still the infallible rule of faith. And who can but admire the wisdom and goodness of Providence displayed in the means by which they have been transmitted through so many generations, and in the midst of so many enemies, without the possibility of any essential corruption or alteration! Here, too, we see how that diversity of sentiment and of sect, which is often, in manifold ignorance, urged as an objection against Christianity, has been made to subserve an important purpose by creating and sustaining a successful guardianship over the standard by which every sect and sentiment is to be tried. Partly, at least, as the consequence of all this diversity, we now resort to the Law and the Testimony, in every question of faith or practice, with a confidence, as to the authoritative decision of heaven, no less firm than if we lived in the age of inspiration and listened at the lips of the Seer. No change has occurred to diminish an iota the import of the apostolic assurance, that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2. *What a debt of gratitude do we owe to God for the inestimable gift of his holy word.* On all the ground we have gone over, at every step we have taken, we have found cause for thanksgiving. All that authorizes our commendation of the sacred volume; all that enhances its value in our estimation; all that constitutes its excellence—its doctrines—its revelations, holy, heavenly, divine—its promises, exceeding great and precious—the influence it exerts, renewing, transforming, elevating—the consolations it imparts, meeting the necessities of our case in the sorrows of this life, and opening the rapturous prospect of glory ineffable in the life to come: all conspire to lay a claim to our gratitude which no ingenuous heart can resist. Think how much you owe to the instrumentality of the Bible in your personal condition, in your domestic and social relations, and in the condition of your country exalted immeasurably above the condition of any Popish, Mohammeden, or Pagan country; and let the reflection inspire you with becoming sentiments of gratitude and praise to the Author of the Bible.

Again: Permit me, affectionately, but earnestly and solemnly, to ask, *Do you believe and obey the Bible, according to its unquestionable claims? Are you daily becoming wiser and better, holier and happier, in the use of it?* These are interrogatories of personal, universal, and eternal importance. Admit them at the door of your conscience, and dismiss them not, I conjure you, till you are prepared to answer them, when you must meet them again, at the bar of God. This appeal is made without respect of persons—to the high and the low, to rulers and the ruled, to the learned and ignorant; to the rich and the poor; to all the scriptures are equally adapted—to all are equally addressed—to all are equally important,—and let each remember that he must give account for himself in this matter to God. In view of all that is excellent in the book of God, of all that has been done for its uncorrupted transmission for your use—of all the time, treasure, and toil that are now expended for its universal diffusion—and of the anxieties that the waking nations begin to manifest to receive and read it, what can you expect will become of you, if you neglect its great salvation!

Finally: *The view that has been taken of the sacred word is adapted to inspire us with zeal in promoting its circulation among the destitute.*

As we value the uncorrupted purity in which it has been preserved; the unequalled doctrines it contains; the literature it promotes; the authority it confers on magistrates; the rights it secures to subjects; the support it gives to government; the amelioration it effects in the state of society; the simplicity and spirituality it promotes in the worship of God; the morality it produces among all the classes of the community; and the redemption it brings to the immortal soul of the sinner,—we are called upon, as men, as scholars, as citizens, as philanthropists, and as Christians, to contribute our aid in the distribution of the bible.

Do you fear to entrust your money in this cause? Who but the God of the bible gave you your money? What are you but stewards of him? Who but the God of the bible gives prosperity or honesty to your debtors, or those entrusted with your money? Who but the God of the bible controls the elements where your property is? Who but the God of the bible gives you success in your trades, your merchandise, or your professions? All issues are in his hands, and hence the solution of the enigma, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” Can you, then, obey the precept and believe the promise, “Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt receive it again after many days?” “Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty.” But why urge a consideration so much addressed to selfishness? May I not rather appeal to a more noble principle, to your benevolence? Is it not enough to remind you of the wants and woes of the world? Look over the map of the world—see how widely these wants and woes are spread—and remember that the bible affords the only remedy.

SERMON XXX.

BY HENRY R. WEED,
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VISION OF THE LAMB.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

REV. 5:6. *And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain.*

THIS is a part of John's vision, introductory to his prophecies recorded in the subsequent chapters. As he looked up into heaven, a glorious scene was presented to his view. A door was opened in heaven; and as he looked within, he saw the throne of the eternal King; and he that sat upon the throne was in appearance "like a jasper, and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The resplendent and transparent jasper is supposed to represent the perfect purity and unsullied holiness of the divine nature—the sardine stone, which is of a red color, the avenging justice of God—and the rainbow his covenant mercy. He, moreover, saw, in orderly arrangement, round about the throne, four living creatures, and four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, and wearing crowns of gold. These are supposed to be the representatives of the ministers and church of the living God. And besides many other symbolical exhibitions of the invisible world, he beheld, with admiration, "in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts (or *living creatures*, as it might be translated), and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns," (well known emblems of power,) "and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God," (i. e. the manifold influences of the Spirit,) "sent forth into all the earth."

I need hardly tell you, my brethren, that by the Lamb in the vision, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character. He is often exhibited in the sacred writings under this figure; and according to its proper import, is a most appropriate object of our contemplation, when we are thus assembled to celebrate the sacrifice he made for our sins. Let us, then, in the

First place, inquire what the import of this figure is: why is the Saviour represented as a *Lamb*? The title may denote, 1. His *meekness*. This is, even to a proverb, a distinguishing characteristic of the Lamb. And who that has read the history that the evangelists have given of the Son of man, can have failed to observe how remarkably it was exemplified in his life. What indignities—what insults—what taunts and scoffs, were cast upon him! But no angry passion ever ruffled his bosom—no malignant revenge ever marked an action of his life. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." To Zion, it was proclaimed, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, *meek and lowly*." And when he invites the weary and heavy-laden to him for rest, he encourages their approach by the assurance that he is "*meek and lowly in heart*."

Again: a lamb is an established emblem of *innocence*. What, then, could be more suitable to express the immaculate character of the Redeemer? Though he took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, though "the Word was made *flesh*, and dwelt among us," though he was made of a woman, and thus became our kinsman, our brother; yet such was the peculiarity of his generation that no stain of human depravity was attached to his person. Though he became subject, in common with us, to infirmities, temptations, and trials; yet was he without sin. The inspired testimony concerning him is, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." The untarnished purity of his character was continually inculcated on the minds of ancient believers, not only by the use of lambs in their typical sacrifices, but also by the care which they were required to exercise in choosing those that were without spot or blemish.

We may remark, *further*, that the figure under which our Lord is represented in the text, is adapted to remind us of his *patience*. How various and severe were the sufferings which he endured, when as the man of sorrows he tabernacled among us! but what an *example of patience* did he leave for those that should come after! "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Amidst all the reproaches and persecutions of his benevolent life, and even amidst all the torture and anguish of his bloody death, he never uttered an angry or a murmuring word. The meekness, innocence, gentleness, and patience of the Lamb were not more clearly inculcated by his *precepts*, than they were exemplified in his *practice*. As the incarnate Son of God, he united all the amiable virtues of sinless humanity, to all the glorious attributes of essential divinity.

But this emblematical title, so often applied to Christ, was much more significant to a Jewish ear, than it ordinarily is to our ears. Lambs were continually exhibited before their eyes in their expiatory sacrifices, and hence became associated with all their ideas of acceptance with God. It was, therefore, with special reference to this fact, and the divine appointment on which it was founded, that the sacred writers represented the Savior under the figure employed in our text. They well knew that every sacrifice that was offered, that every lamb that was slain, that every victim that smoked on the altars of their religion, and that every priest who ministered at their temple, was a type of Christ, who "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God," by his blood to purge our "consciences from dead works to serve the living God." Christ was the great antitype, to which they all referred. In his death the meaning of all previous victims was explained and fulfilled. And hence, as a

Second topic of consideration, I would remark, that the text points us not only to the lamb-like qualities that the Redeemer exhibited in his personal character, but also to the *SACRIFICE FOR SIN* that he made in his mediatorial office. It points us to his expiatory sufferings and death. "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne—stood a *Lamb, as it had been slain*." Viewing him simply in the form of a lamb, the inspired revelator might have recognized him as his once living, and ever beloved Lord; but when he further saw that he bore the marks of death—"the scars of mortal wounds"—that there were the

prints of the nails and of the spear, he could not for a moment doubt that this was he, whose bloody agony he had once witnessed in the garden of Gethsemane—he, whom he had seen hanging on the accursed tree—the bleeding, dying victim of Calvary as the grand object shadowed forth by all the Mosaic rites—“the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”—“the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!” O, what a flood of emotions must have arisen in the bosom of this beloved disciple, while thus contemplating the scene that was disclosed to his view—and with what a freshness and affecting tenderness would the whole history of his Lord’s past sufferings now press on his recollection! And can we, my brethren,—though not favored with the same sensible representation with which John was,—yet can we contemplate with indifference the record he has here given us of what he saw, especially when our contemplations are aided and strengthened by these affecting memorials of his body and blood? O, can our hearts be cold, and our devotions be formal, while we encompass this table, and, through the medium of the inspired testimony and of these sacramental symbols, look on the “Lamb that was slain!” You will observe, it is not merely said, that *he died*. We do, indeed, in one view of the subject so speak; but such an expression, falls short of a full exhibition of the facts in the case. “He died not the common death of all men, nor was he visited after the visitation of all men.” It is said that “*he was slain*,” and there is force in the expression. He died a violent death, and it is so described on the sacred page, whether you consider the agency of God or man.

But why did the Prince of life thus ignominiously die? why was the Lamb of God thus slain? He, who could instantly have called more than twelve legions of angels to the defence of his life; *He*, who had the power to lay down his life and to take it again—*He*, who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” was not surely overpowered in conflict with his foes: his life was not surely wrested from him contrary to his will. No, my hearers. He came into the world designing to suffer the reproaches and cruelties of men, and to endure the wrath of God; designing to give himself to the shame and the pain that were due to our transgression; designing to resign himself as a lamb to the slaughter, that he might expiate the guilt that we had contracted, and avert the wrath that we had incurred. He was slain, as the only adequate and effectual propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Of no avail, in themselves considered, were the offerings under the law. It is not possible, saith the apostle, that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; but, adds he, Christ appeared once in the end of the world, (that is, at the close of the Jewish economy) to *put away sin* by the *sacrifice of himself*. But now, it may be asked, did he *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself? What are we to understand by this expression? As it is in allusion to the ancient sacrifices, that he is denominated a Lamb, *they* will afford the correct illustration of the phrase. On turning, then, to the typical ceremonies of the law, we find on this subject, that when an individual offered a sacrifice of atonement for his offences, he was required to lay his hands on the head of the victim before it was slain, confessing over it his sins to signify a transfer of them to the innocent animal; and that the victim, then slain, was considered as dying in his stead and for his sins. Examine attentively the Levitical laws, and I think you cannot fail of

finding a clear exhibition of the doctrines of *substitution, imputation, and vicarious* suffering; and these are doctrines which, I conceive, are implied in our text. The Lord Jesus, as the Lamb slain, was the legal *substitute* of his people, their sins were *imputed* to him, and by being sacrificed in their stead, he expiated their guilt—took away their sins. He “who knew no sin”—who had no sin of his own—became a sin-offering for us—and “his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” The Lamb that was slain, was *slain for us*. Here, my christian brethren, we will fix our faith—here we will venture our all—here we will encourage our hearts in hope—here, in view of the Lamb that was slain, will we lift up our heads in triumph.

3. The text suggests *another topic*, to which we must briefly advert: I mean *the Redeemer's appearance and intercession* in heaven. His official work in achieving the redemption of his people, was not consummated when his sufferings were ended,—“He died for our sins, and *rose again* for our justification”—“and henceforth *ever liveth to make intercession* for us.” John saw him, not only as bearing the marks of death, as a lamb that *had been slain*, but as again alive and *standing*. John in another vision heard him say, “I am the first, and the last,—I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” The reproaches and suffering to which he was subject on earth, had now ceased, and he again shared the glory that he had with the Father before the world was.

It is indeed the babe of Bethlehem, and man of sorrows—but O how changed! Instead of the manger and the cross, he now has a throne, and a crown; yea, the throne of God and the crown of the universe. Instead of the cry, “*Away with him, crucify him,*” is now heard the shout of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders—(and the number of them is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands)—saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

But does he still remember us, amidst the splendors of this scene, and the worship of adoring throngs? Yes, my brethren. Unlike the little creatures of earth, who, in their advancement to wealth, or honor, are swelled into an imaginary self-importance, in which they forget the companions of their former condition. Jesus, remembers his humble disciples, who are yet in the flesh, following the lowly path which he once trod. He is not ashamed of the ignominy of the cross. He exhibits the marks of his former abasement before the throne of God, and amidst the myriads by which he is surrounded. He appears as our advocate with the Father, pleading our cause and presenting the scars in his hands, his feet and his side, as a standing *memorial* of the sacrifice he once made for our sins. This, is the *great argument* by which he urges our acceptance with God. And can such an Intercessor and such an argument, be disregarded! Can *they* be unavailing! Must not the Father be moved by the marks of death on the person of his beloved Son? O, then, let us draw near with humble boldness, notwithstanding all the number and the enormity of our sins, confidently believing that “he is able to save to the uttermost” all “that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

Amen.

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SERMON XXXI.*

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THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH.

PSALM 122:6—*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*

IN the scriptures of the Old Testament much is said concerning the city of Jerusalem, and many and great encomiums are bestowed upon it. And in many respects it was certainly greatly distinguished and favored above all other cities. In the days of David, Jerusalem was wrested from the Jebusites, and made the seat of government; and from that time, ever after it was the capitol of Judea. It was the royal city, the residence of the kings of Judah, the centre of their political union, and the place where justice was administered. "There were set the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David." And among the kings, who reigned in Jerusalem, were some of the best that ever swayed a sceptre. As the capitol of the kingdom, the centre of their political union, and the seat of justice, it was dear to Israel.

But it was especially dear to them, as the *Holy City*. There was the temple, the place of their solemnities. There was a resting place for the ark, the symbol of the divine presence and glory, where Jehovah, in a special manner, manifested his presence. Thither the tribes of the Lord went up to worship, to receive instruction from the divine testimonies, and offer their prayers and praises. In this respect, it was the city of God, the city which, above all others, he had chosen for himself. It was the seat of his church, the place of his worship, and of his more immediate presence; and this it was that made Jerusalem so beautiful and glorious in the eyes of Israel, especially of those in

*Delivered at the opening of the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

Israel who loved God, and took pleasure in his worship. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem, then, was to pray for the peace of God's church, of which Jerusalem was then the seat.

Jerusalem of old, was typical of the christian church; and the solemnities of Israel, were equivalent to our public ordinances, and emblematical of that worship which we owe God through Jesus Christ. The name is therefore in the scriptures figuratively transferred to the christian church, embracing the redeemed of all nations,—Jews, and Gentiles. In this sense we find the name Jerusalem frequently used, as designating the church of Christ, or the church as it now exists, under the reign of the Messiah. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem, then, is to pray for the peace of the Redeemer's kingdom, or of the church of Christ,—a duty as important and binding on God's people now, as it was in the days of David.

The term peace, as used by the sacred writers, has several significations. In its literal and most general acceptation it means "respite from war;" also quiet, and rest from distress and trouble. Sometimes it is used to signify *reconciliation*. In this sense it is frequently used in the New Testament, to express our reconciliation to God, through faith in the blood of Christ, and to denote the fruit of that reconciliation, which is "*peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" It is also used to denote *general prosperity and happiness*. In this sense the Jews were in the constant habit of using the word. Their ordinary mode of salutation was, "Peace be with you," by which they meant to express their desire for the general prosperity and happiness of their friends. In this last sense,—as denoting general prosperity,—the word may be understood in our text.

The duty enjoined in the text, then, is this, "*To pray for the prosperity of the church.*" And in further addressing you, I will now, in the

First place, consider, what is implied in the prosperity of the church, or, what is necessary in order to its prosperity; and

Second, Mention some reasons why we should pray for this.

I. *What is implied in the prosperity of the church, or, what is necessary in order to its prosperity?*

This inquiry opens before us a very wide field for investigation; but on the present occasion I shall confine myself to a few leading particulars, and will discuss them, with as much brevity as is consistent with a distinct view of the subject.

1. The first thing I notice, as connected with the prosperity of the church, is *external tranquillity, or freedom from oppression and persecution*. Whether worldly favor and patronage are conducive to the church's welfare, would admit of a question. The history of the church, I believe, furnishes but little evidence of good resulting to her from an alliance with the world; but there is no want of evidence to show that she has been most deeply injured by such alliance. The world can hardly extend its favors, without imparting something of its spirit; and the evil resulting from the latter, when the church has been patronized by the world, has generally been found greatly to overbalance the good derived from the former.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. In its spirit, its maxims, and its laws, it is not only different from the world, but directly opposed to it; and the more distinct it is from the world, the more it has generally been found to prosper. But though not of the world, the church is in the world, and so connected with it, or situated in relation to it, that her interests may be affected, and seriously affected, by the feelings and conduct of the world towards her. Worldly influence and power may be used, and often have been used, to distract, oppress, and persecute the church; and thus injure her peace or prosperity. I am aware that the spirituality of the church, which is her life, may be injured by uninterrupted tranquillity; and that secular oppression and persecution have been made conducive to her prosperity. This was remarkably the case in the early ages of the christian church. Persecution dispersed abroad the disciples of Christ, and into all places whither they were driven they carried the gospel. Thus the good seed of the word was scattered, the gospel was more extensively preached, and the boundaries of the church greatly extended.

The cruelties, also, inflicted on christians, their martyrdom, and their patience and calm resignation under such severe and cruel sufferings, made a deep impression on others, led them to examine more carefully a system which could produce such astonishing effects, and brought them in many instances to enlist under the standard of Christ;

so that it was literally true, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." And in later times, in the reformation from Popery, the persecution of christians was in many instances made subservient to the prosperity of the church. But all these good effects were produced, not by persecution itself, but by the providence of God overruling this cruel and wicked violence, contrary to its natural tendency, for the good of his cause. It is the province of God to bring order out of confusion, light out of darkness, good out of evil, and to make even "the wrath of man to praise him." He can make all things work for the good of his cause, and the prosperity of his kingdom. As in the natural world, hurricanes and storms, which are serious evils in themselves, are made to purify the atmosphere, and in this way are often productive of great good; so, also, God can make moral convulsions and rage against his spiritual kingdom, subservient to the health and prosperity of his church. Still, these are evils; and God's providence overruling them for good does not at all change their nature—they are evils still; and external tranquillity, or peace, is a great blessing.

It leaves the members of Christ's house free to establish and maintain that order, which is essential to its prosperity. It affords an opportunity for that regular instruction, which has an inseparable connection with the church's improvement. And it leaves the church at liberty to devise and execute plans for its extension and growth. In every respect it is a blessing, to be earnestly desired, and prayed for. It is mentioned as one of the peculiar blessings which will be enjoyed by the church in the days of her millennial prosperity and glory. Then, God's people "shall dwell in peaceable habitations, and in sure dwellings, and quiet resting places;" then, "there shall be none to disturb and make afraid in all the holy mountain of our God."

It is our privilege, my beloved brethren, to live where the most entire religious toleration is enjoyed. The church in the midst of us is not checked in its progress by civil opposition, or persecution. That the holy cause of the Redeemer has its enemies here, is not to be doubted; and that the progress of this cause is viewed with jealousy, and feelings of the most decided hostility by some among us, who hate every thing that is good, there can be as little doubt. But, blessed be God, such men are restrained, and we are permitted "to sit under our own vines, and our own fig trees," and to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, while "there is none to disturb

or make us afraid." For this favor we cannot be sufficiently thankful. And as we value the prosperity of the church we should pray that this blessing of peace with all around may be continued to her, even to the latest generation; that God would ever "make even her enemies to be at peace with her," and that her children may "live peaceably with all men."

2. *Internal peace and unity* are essential to the prosperity of the church. I make a difference here, between *peace*, or *tranquillity*, and *unity*, because they are not always found together, in the sense in which I use the term *unity*. By internal peace or tranquillity, I mean, a freedom from all divisions and dissensions; that christians live together in harmony, loving one another. By unity, I mean, not only a oneness of feeling, and affection, but also concert in action; that they be "of one heart, and one mind," to pray, and labor together, for the cause of Christ. Now we know there may be the most perfect peace, or tranquillity, in the church—that is, there may be no divisions or dissensions, but the most entire harmony among the members,—where there is a most deplorable want of every thing like that *unity* in prayer and effort which is inseparably connected with the prosperity of Christ's cause. But both these are essential to the prosperity of the church.

Christ Jesus, the great Head of the church, is the "Prince of peace." His kingdom is a "kingdom of peace;" his subjects are "called to peace;" and they are strictly enjoined to be "of one mind," and live in peace. They being many are *one body*, and in this *one body*, there should be but *one heart*, and *one way*. All the members of Christ's body, in the bond of love, and the spirit of peace, should "walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing." That christian brethren should "fall out by the way;" that the church of God should be torn by discord, and rent by divisions; that the members of Christ's family should wrangle, and contend, and quarrel, and devour one another; while it affords gratification to their enemies, must bring a reproach on their profession, and inflict a deep wound on the cause of their Lord. Thus do they cast a stumbling-block, in the way of others, and expose themselves to the frowns and chastisements of their heavenly Father. Nothing, dear brethren, is more destructive to the prosperity of the church, than internal discord. Let but a spirit of jealousy and contention go forth among christians—no matter about what they contend—and religion ceases to prosper, the

enemy triumphs, the church is in sackcloth. Christian brethren, do you love the kingdom of the Redeemer? Do you love your own church, and desire its prosperity? Then live in peace; shut your ears and close your eyes against every thing that would excite the spirit of jealousy or discord. Place a double guard over your lips, that nothing escape you which can possibly lead to strife. Remember, the great art of making and preserving peace consists, principally, in abstaining from that which gives offence and engenders strife*. Then avoid every thing that can create dissensions and cultivate a spirit of peace; and, as you value the prosperity of the church, pray that "peace may be within her walls."

But it is not sufficient that there be peace, or harmony in the church; oneness of feeling in regard to her great and important interests, and unity of effort to promote these interests, are essential to her prosperity. *Unity is the beauty, and strength of the church.* Where there is this agreement in desire and prayer, it is effectual in obtaining the divine blessing; and when the church is perfectly united, in efforts to advance the cause of the Redeemer, that cause will go forward. Union here, emphatically, is strength. It is powerful, both with God and man. Of the primitive christians, it is said, "they were of one heart, and one soul." They were "of one accord" in prayer, and in action. There was among them *perfect agreement*; and the consequence was "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." "Great numbers believed, and turned unto the Lord." The cause of Christ rapidly advanced. And the same effects would still be seen, were there the same perfect agreement among christians. Yes, my brethren, if christians in our own widely extended, and much loved church were thus of one heart, and one mind; if there were among us this perfect agreement in faith, in prayer, and in action, we should soon witness the glorious effects, in the conversion of many souls, and the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, in our land and through our world. Pray, then, for *unity* in the church. Pray that believers now, as in former days, may be "of one accord,"—and then the church will prosper.

3. *Purity* is essential to the prosperity of the church. In this consists her chief beauty, and glory; and whatever else she may have, if she have not purity, or holiness, she cannot prosper.

Purity in doctrine is essential to the prosperity of the church. The

*See 48th page.

church is founded in truth; and truth is the great instrument, which is used by the Holy Spirit in her growth and establishment. It is by the truth instrumentally that men are converted to God. "The law of the Lord," by which is meant in this passage, his truth, "is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The scriptures uniformly make faith, or belief of the truth, essential to salvation; and it is by the truth, instrumentally, that believers are sanctified and comforted, and "nourished to eternal life;" and the truth of God will be the great instrument used in the conversion of the nations, and the consequent enlargement and glory of the church. Jehovah will send forth his light and his truth, and establish his kingdom throughout the world. It is of vital importance, then, to the church, that her doctrines be kept pure; that she be free from all heresy, and every error. God will never own, as the instrument of building up his church, that which opposes his word; and it is not more certain, that truth is the great means of the sanctification, and salvation of men, than it is, that error has a natural and direct tendency to delude, corrupt, and destroy them. Error in doctrine, my brethren, which always necessarily leads to error in practice, has been in all ages of the church, one of the most powerful engines in the hands of Satan, to mar the beauty, and destroy the prosperity of Zion.

But in order to advance the prosperity of the church, it is not sufficient that she be kept free from false doctrines; if the truth be withheld, she suffers in her most important interests. A church may be free from gross errors, and yet, in her instructions, have very little, or even nothing of the great and essential doctrines of the gospel. The evil in this case is, not that errors are inculcated, but that truth is withheld; and in either case, her interests are sacrificed. For her prosperity, she needs the whole system of divine truth, which her Master has committed to her. The great doctrines of the cross, in all their simplicity, and purity, as they are found in the living oracles, are necessary to the growth, and prosperity of the church. These doctrines are her life; they are the food of her children, and she cannot thrive without them. In praying for the prosperity of the church, then, pray that she may be purified from all false, polluting doctrines, and that she may have the truth, in all its purity, simplicity, and fulness.

Purity, or holiness, in her members, is also essential to the pros-

perity of the church. It was the prayer of the Psalmist, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." God's real people,—and all the members of his church should be his real people,—are the subjects of a holy beauty, or of the "beauty of holiness." They are comely through his comeliness: and powerful are the charms of genuine piety; it disarms malignity itself, and extorts admiration, even from those who hate it. I repeat it, my brethren, there is an amazing power in genuine piety; and it is when the disciples of Christ are found drinking in his spirit, and walking in the way of his commandments, that the church appears "beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible" to all her enemies "as an army with banners." Of the primitive christians, it is said, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost," they were multiplied. They exhibited in their lives the purity and the excellency of religion—and the consequence was, others were won over to them, and the church increased and prospered. And the same effect would still follow, if the members of Christ's church exhibited the same purity, and conscientious regard to his commandments.

Nothing, my friends, has more deeply injured the cause of religion than the ungodly lives of professors. The professed children of the church have, in this way, more deeply injured her prosperity than the whole host of her enemies combined. Would we then promote the prosperity of Zion, let it be our unceasing prayer, "that her children may all be righteous;" that they may all "walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

Purity in her sacraments, has also a very intimate connection with the prosperity of the church. By the admission of unholy, or unregenerate persons, to the sealing ordinances of the church, we certainly greatly endanger her peace, and check her prosperity. We thus receive into her bosom those who love not her king, relish not her spiritual provisions, and who cannot feel a deep concern for her real interests. But this is not all: by the admission of such, God's holy ordinances are profaned, and the seals of his covenant prostituted. These seals are committed to the church. They are a sacred deposit in her hands, and by suffering the seals to be laid hold of by those who obviously have no interest in the covenant, the church is unfaithful to her solemn trust, and exposes herself to the displeasure of her king and head: and how can she hope to prosper, when her Lord is displeased, and frowns upon her! I am satisfied, my friends, by the

admission of unholy men to her communion, by prostituting the seals of the covenant, the church has been deeply injured, and many souls ruined forever. Pray, then, that the sacraments of the church may be kept pure.

Purity in discipline is also essential to the prosperity of the church. Without discipline, in the present state of human nature, no society can prosper. Where this is neglected, there will, of necessity, be disorder, and every evil work: and as the prosperity of the church more especially depends on its order and purity, the necessity of a wise and faithful discipline must be apparent to all. To be faithful in this matter, I know, brethren, requires much self-denial, and often a most painful sacrifice of feeling, on the part of those to whom this difficult and trying work is committed. But painful as this work is, it must be done, or the cause of Christ must suffer. The order of God's house must be maintained or the church cannot prosper. Pray, then, that purity in the discipline of the church may be maintained. In short, pray for the *purity* of the church in all her ministrations, and concerns; that she may shine forth in all the beauties of holiness, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

4. Finally, *The presence of Christ by his Spirit* is essential, *absolutely essential*, to the prosperity of the church. Without the gracious presence of her King, and Head, whatever may be the external or internal state of the church, she cannot prosper. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." Now this is true, not only of every individual christian, but of every particular church, and of the church at large. It is the presence of Christ by his Spirit, which gives power to the word, and to ordinances, which makes the means of grace effectual to the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of believers. It is this, which makes religion flourish, which gives spirituality and strength and comfort to God's people, and brings the impenitent to feel their guilt, and fly to the Saviour. Deprived of the special presence of Christ by his Spirit, God's people sink down into coldness and formality, religion will decline and sinners must and will perish. In praying for the prosperity of the church, then, brethren, pray, *especially*, that she may enjoy the presence of Christ, and the influences of his Spirit; that the Spirit of the Lord may be poured out upon her from on high. "Then shall her peace be as a river, and her righteousness as the waves of the sea."

Such are some of the things necessary to the prosperity of the church, and for which the friends of Zion are bound to pray. But why should we be so much concerned for the church? why so earnest in praying for her prosperity?

II. I proceed now to answer these inquiries, by mentioning, under our second head, *some reasons why we should pray for the prosperity of the church.*

And here I must be brief.

1. Christians ought to pray for the "peace of Jerusalem," the prosperity of the church, for the sake of their brethren of Christ's family, whose dearest interests are identified with those of Zion. This the Psalmist mentions, as a motive which had influence with him. "For my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, peace be within thee." True religion is not selfish, or contracted. It teaches and disposes us to embrace, in our desires and prayers, a fallen world; to "do good unto all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith." Christians are bound to each other by very strong and tender ties. Although divided into many parts, and these known by different names, the church of Christ is one, and all true believers have a common interest and feeling; they should therefore love one another, and in every possible way seek each other's good: and as far as they have the spirit of their Master, they will do this. In praying for the prosperity of the church, we pray for the peace and comfort, the sanctification, and the salvation of the whole and every member of the family of Jesus; and as far as we feel an interest in the good of our brethren, we have in this a cogent motive to pray for the "peace of Jerusalem."

2. A still more important reason why we should pray for the prosperity of the church, is,

The glory of God is intimately connected with her prosperity. God's glory appears, in all his works, but, especially in his work of redemption. Here we have exhibited the glory of his nature. It is by the church, the apostle tells us, the manifold wisdom, or glory of God, is made known even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. It is in the redemption and sanctification of his people, that the perfections of Jehovah are most illustriously displayed. The

cause of his church is that in which God himself is most deeply interested. It is the cause in which his Son embarked, and in which he shed his blood; the cause in which all the energies of the Holy Spirit are pledged; to the success of which angels delight to minister, and the triumph of which will swell the anthems of Heaven through eternity. When God builds up Zion, then, especially, does he appear in his glory. Every conversion of a sinner, every accession to the cause of Immanuel, brings glory to God. Every temptation resisted, every lust subdued, and every advance believers make in holiness, glorifies God. In short, just in proportion as the cause of truth and righteousness advance, or the church prospers, God is glorified in our world. If we desire that God should be honored, then, pray for the prosperity of Zion.

3. Once more. The best interests of the human family are identified with the prosperity of the church.

The church of Jesus Christ is the strength and safety, as well as the glory of our world. It is for the sake of the church the world is preserved. Had not God a people, to be prepared here for his heavenly kingdom, this earth, groaning under the guilt of its inhabitants, and stained as it is with the blood of God's own Son, would soon become the prey of destruction. And we have reason from scripture to believe the removal to glory, of the last of God's redeemed people, will be the signal for the complete destruction of our globe.

A pure gospel church, in its salutary influence on the temporal prosperity of a people, is an invaluable treasure to any community. It is their best security against destructive vices; the best cement of society; and the secret pledge of even worldly prosperity.

But in the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, are involved interests infinitely more important and valuable, than the temporal interests of a world. The salvation of the soul is concerned here. Estimate, if you can, brethren, the value of a single soul. Think of the price paid for its redemption, "The blood of God's incarnate Son." Think of its endless duration; its ever increasing powers, and susceptibilities; and the amount of enjoyment, or pain, which will be its certain portion in eternity, and then say, whether its value was overrated by Him who declared it to be worth more than a world. And when you have attempted to fix the value of a single undying spirit, then recollect how many such souls, how many millions of immortal

spirits, there are in our world, whose salvation is identified with the progress of true religion, and you may be able to understand something of that infinite weight of motive which urges you, and urges every lover of God, and of his Christ, to pray for the prosperity of the Church.

Such is a specimen of the host of motives that urge every true believer to pray for the prosperity of Zion. The glory of our redeeming God; the sanctification and comfort of his redeemed people, and the interests of a world lying in sin, and hastening to judgment, all urge us, with a holy importunity, to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

INFERENCES.

1. We may learn from this subject, what *object* should be *first* in the mind and heart of every christian. *The prosperity of the church*, the advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness is the one great object, on which every renewed mind, every sanctified heart, should fix, and dwell, with the most constant and intense interest. In the prosperity of the church, we have seen, are involved, the glory of God, the comfort of his redeemed people, and the best interests of our whole race. Jerusalem, or the church, is not only "the delight of our God, and the joy of his people." It is "the glory of the whole earth."

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joys." This should be the feeling, this the language of every renewed mind. The cause of Jesus Christ with him should be *first*, the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom paramount to all other interests. In *grandeur*, there is nothing in our world comparable to the kingdom of our Immanuel; and in *importance*, what other interest will you bring into competition with it? This is the great interest of men, compared with which, every thing else on earth is lighter than vanity. This one object, then, brethren, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, should absorb every renewed mind, and fill every believing heart, and call forth every energy of the christian.

2. From this subject we may learn in *what way* we may contribute

our share in promoting the prosperity of the church. The church, we know, depends for its prosperity entirely on God. He alone has power to convert a single soul. By his Spirit alone are believers sanctified, and Zion beautified and enlarged. This is a very important truth, implied and taught in our text, That in God alone are found the sources of Zion's prosperity; the very duty of praying for the prosperity of Zion, implies that all the springs of her prosperity are in God.

But while it is true, that the church depends for its prosperity entirely on God, and He alone can make religion flourish; it is also true, in building up and extending his kingdom in the world, God makes use of means. In this work He is pleased, in infinite condescension and kindness, to make use of the instrumentality of his people.

We have noticed a few things essential to the church's prosperity. *Peace* without, and *harmony* within; *unity*, or oneness in faith, in prayer, and in effort, among the ministers, and members of the church; *purity* in her doctrines; *holiness* in her members, a sacred guarding of her ordinances, and a wise and salutary discipline, and above all, the presence of Christ by his Spirit, are essential to the prosperity of Zion. By promoting these, then, that is, by promoting the purity, peace, and order of the church, and by being much engaged in believing, importunate prayer to God, for the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are instrumental, in promoting the true interests, the prosperity of Zion. It is then by living up to our high and holy vocation; by adhering strictly to the plain, and important truths of God's word; by cultivating a spirit of meekness and kindness, and brotherly love; by maintaining the order of God's house; and by communion with God in prayer, that we contribute essentially to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Beloved brethren, do we desire to see that kingdom advanced? do we wish to exert an instrumentality in urging its onward march? Let us evince this desire by our love to the truth, by our love to the brethren, by our love to the order of God's house, by a spirit of self-denial, and by a wise, and holy, and devoted zeal for the honor of our Redeemer, and the salvation of the souls of men.

Let us leave to others the unholy work of distracting, and dividing, and desolating the church, by false doctrines, or a self-sufficient, con-

tentious spirit. Be it our delightful work to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and by every possible effort promote her purity, her order, her prosperity.

3. *Finally*, In view of this subject, what a fearful responsibility rests on this "General Assembly!" Composed, as this General Assembly is, of ministers and officers in the church, into whose hands God has, in a special manner, committed the interests of his Zion, and on whom, more especially, he has devolved the great work of building up, and enlarging the Redeemer's kingdom,—under what a weight of responsibility do we come together? Why have we come hither? What is the object of our meeting? For what purpose have these ministers, and these elders left their homes, and from all parts of our land assembled in this place of holy convocation?

The answer to this question is easily given: We have met in General Assembly, to promote the interests of Zion,—to lay plans and adopt measures for advancing the prosperity of the church. We profess to have no other object. We should have no other, in assembling here. Our very meeting together, brethren, for such an object, should call forth the best affections of the heart, and put up the mind to high thoughts, and noble conceptions. There is an unspeakable *grandeur* in the very idea of such a convocation as this—a convocation of the ministers of Jesus Christ, and of the representatives of his church, assembled to deliberate on subjects connected with the prosperity of his kingdom, and the interests of immortal souls. Why, brethren, it is not the temporary interests of worms of the dust—not the concerns of a perishing world, that claim our attention here. It is the concerns of many, very many, immortal souls; the interests of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We come here, not to promote the interests of a party, but to employ our best instrumentality in advancing the magnificent and glorious designs of divine mercy in the world; and the results of this meeting, we have reason to believe, will be felt in eternity. It will have an influence, either salutary or the reverse, on the churches, and on souls, through the whole extent of our land. We come together under circumstances of deep and thrilling interest. The world is in agitation; the church is in motion. Every careful observer of the signs of the times must feel that this is no ordinary period. In the present aspect of things, both in the church and in the world, while there are many things to encourage and

animate the friends of the Redeemer, there is also much to alarm and distress; there are prominent signs, both of good and evil, and it will be our part to do all we can to accomplish the promised good, and guard against the threatening evil.

We act here, in view of many witnesses. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has his eye on this Assembly. Angels, doubtless, are viewing it with intense interest. The church throughout our land, not only our own denomination, but other denominations of professing christians, are looking to this Assembly with deep and thrilling interest.

Infidels, and errorists of all descriptions, have their eye fixed upon us, and are closely watching us.

An interest in the proceedings of this Assembly is felt far beyond the limits of our own country. From across the waters, which separate us from the old world, many an anxious eye turns towards this Assembly, and many a renewed heart has breathed a prayer in our behalf.

Under what an amazing weight of responsibility, then, do we act! Verily, beloved brethren, we need large supplies of wisdom and of grace to meet our responsibility here. Oh! that we all felt this, and that every heart were engaged in prayer to Him, who is the fountain of wisdom, and the source of grace, to grant us the supplies we need.

Brethren, ministers of the gospel, like others, are dying men. We, who are here now, will never all meet in "General Assembly" again, until we meet in one, very differently organized, and held for a very different purpose. What we have to do to advance the prosperity of the church, must be done quickly. *Here* is our opportunity; *now* is our time.

Let us, then, fix our eye and our heart on one single object—"The prosperity of Zion,"—and feeling that our only hope, for either receiving or doing good, is in God, let our united, believing, importunate prayer ascend to his throne. Let the whole, and every part of our business, be commenced, and prosecuted, and ended in prayer. And may God of his infinite mercy grant to every member of this body, a large supply of that "wisdom which is from above; which is, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

And may our covenant Jehovah prosper his own blessed cause.
Amen.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

The sin of disturbing the peace of the church, often originates with those who consider their opponents as especially guilty of neglecting the excellent advice of our author. The man who adopts the *language* of error, in explaining the *essential* doctrines of the branch of the church with which he is connected; or, neglects her *important* usages, is laying a foundation for discord. He may think it is "lawful," to use any phraseology in expressing his views, or engage in any speculations, so long as he holds the doctrines of her standards. But even this, is not always "expedient."—(See 1 Cor. 10:23—32.) By so doing he may offend his "weak brother;" he may thus excite suspicions; he may cause others who do not know his real sentiments, to oppose him *conscientiously*; he may promote a "schism" in the church, by an unwillingness to relinquish *modes* of explanation, and his philosophy, which (he says) conveys no different ideas from the obvious meaning of the standards.

He may continue the *causes* of controversy by recklessly continuing his unwarranted interpretations, by his apparent neglect of ecclesiastical order, by ridiculing or treating his brethren unkindly, by giving a *preference* to other institutions than those peculiar to the branch of the church whose "unity" and "prosperity" he has voluntarily pledged himself to "study" and promote. In our opinion, such a person (but especially *fundamental* errorists) as well as those who contend with their brethren about *small matters*, destroy the peace of the church. But we will cease to express our judgment, and give a timely extract from the "pastoral letter" of the General Assembly of 1817, found in the "Digest," page 112.

"Dear brethren, be UNITED AMONG YOURSELVES. If you desire to profit by your spiritual privileges; if you hope to be instrumental in promoting the cause of Christ, or to be honored with his blessing; cherish harmony of affection, and union of effort. Besides the common bonds of christian love, which unite the great family of believers; the ministers and members of the Presbyterian church are cemented by a compact which every honest man cannot fail to appreciate. We mean the "Confession of Faith" of our church. While we believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice, we do also, if we deal faithfully with God and man, *sincerely* receive and adopt this Confession, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. Let us adhere to this standard with fidelity; and endeavor to transmit to our children *pure* and *undefiled*, a treasure, which our fathers at great expense have, under God, bequeathed to us. But while we hold fast the *form of sound words* which we have received, let us guard against indulging a spirit of controversy, than which few things are more unfriendly to the life and power of godliness. It is never necessary to sacrifice charity, in order to maintain faith and hope. That differences of opinion, acknowledged on all hands, to be of the minor class, may and ought to be tolerated, among those who are agreed in great and leading views of Divine truth, is a principle on which the godly have so long and so generally acted, that it seems unnecessary, at the present day, to seek arguments for its support. Our Fathers, in early periods of the history of our church, had their peculiarities and diversities of opinion; which yet, however did not prevent them from loving one another, from cordially acting together; and by their united prayers and exertions, transmitting to us a goodly inheritance. Let us emulate their moderation and forbearance, and we may hope to be favored with more than their success.

The great adversary will, no doubt, be disposed to sow the seeds of discord and division among you. But resist him in this, as well as all his other insidious efforts. Surely those who can come together on the great principles of our public Standards, however they may differ on non-essential points, ought not to separate, or to indulge bitterness or prejudice against each other. Dear brethren, *let there be no divisions among you; but be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. Follow the things which make for peace, and the things whereby ye may edify one another. Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Brethren, farewell, love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. Be of one mind; live in peace, and the God of love and of peace shall be with you. AMEN!"*

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SERMON XXXII.*

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THE SCRIPTURAL DUTY OF AVOIDING OFFENCES,
CONSIDERED IN ITS APPLICATION TO THE SUBJECT OF TEMPERANCE.

1 COR. 8:13. *If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

To the Christians of Rome the apostle addresses the following exhortation: *Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* The importance of following after those things which may tend, to mutual edification, is probably not sufficiently appreciated by the generality of Christian professors. Wrapped up in their own individual concerns, and yielding too much to the influence of the contracted spirit of selfishness, there is among the professed followers of Christ too generally, a disposition to look, every man upon his own things, not upon the things of others. But says the apostle, *We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* Being thus compacted together in one body, we have a mutual interest in each other. It is therefore to the advantage of each individual member, as well as to the whole body, that there be no schism in the body of Christ, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And if one member suffers, all the members should sympathize with it, or if one member is honored, all the members should rejoice with it. Regarding each other as members of one common body, it should be with the disciples of Christ a settled maxim, that none of us liveth to himself. And therefore while we study to advance the interests of godliness in our own souls, we should aim at such a course as may tend to mutual edification.

* Delivered before the Temperance Society of Noblestown.

There probably never was a man who better understood, or more happily exemplified, this important maxim in Christian ethics, than Paul the apostle. While he understood the nature of his Christian liberty, and where principle was involved, would contend for it, yet so desirous was he to promote the edification of his brethren, that he would deny himself, rather than do any thing which would have a tendency to place a stumbling-block in the way of the weak. When his right to a temporal support from those among whom he labored in preaching the gospel was called in question, he boldly asserted and maintained it. But while he claimed the right, he waived the exercise of it, and submitted to many personal inconveniencies, lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ. The same spirit of self-denial and benevolence is displayed in the chapter from which the text is taken, where the question with regard to the eating of meats which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, is under consideration. Though the apostle admits the lawfulness of the thing in itself, yet with respect to the edification of those brethren whose Christian knowledge was more limited, he recommends to his better informed brethren to refrain.

Amongst pagan idolators, it was the usual custom when an animal was offered in sacrifice to one of their idols, that a part of the carcass was consumed upon the altar, a part was given to the priest, and on the remainder the offerers feasted with their friends, either in the idol's temple or at home. And on such occasions, it sometimes happened in the primitive days of Christianity, that their Christian neighbors were invited to partake with them. Hence a question arose in the Corinthian church, whether it was lawful for a Christian to eat such flesh. The apostle admits the lawfulness of the thing in itself; for, *We know that an idol is nothing in the world.* And the offering of flesh to a vain, imaginary deity, does not alter its nature, nor render it unfit for food. Yet while this matter might be perfectly understood by the intelligent Christian, there is not in every man that knowledge. Some, owing to the imperfection of their knowledge and their early prejudices, would be ready to suppose that in eating this flesh, they paid some respect to the idol to whom it was offered, and thus their weak conscience would be defiled. Inasmuch, therefore, as the exercise of his liberty, on the part of the well-informed Christian, would have a tendency to involve his weak brother in sin, the apostle recommends to refrain. *For neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.* You who understand the matter, can without injury to yourselves refrain, while the exercise of your liberty may become an occasion of injury to others. And with that spirit of benevolence for which he was so eminently distinguished, he says for himself, *If meat*

make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

The word here translated *to offend*, signifies properly, to cause to stumble, to lay an impediment in the way of another, which may endanger his fall. It is used in the New Testament only in a figurative sense. And to offend, in the scriptural acceptation of the term, is to do that which has a tendency to lead another into sin, so as to cause him to stumble or fall in his Christian profession. The principle here laid down by the apostle is a general one, and one of much practical importance—that, even from those things, the use of which is lawful, it is a Christian duty to abstain, when the exercise of our liberty has a tendency to injure others, by leading them into sin. And if this is true in relation to those things which may be lawfully enjoyed, much more ought we to abstain from those things which are not proper to be used.

The general principle is equally as applicable to the use of drinks, as of meats. And it is my design, on the present occasion, to apply it to the subject of temperance, which is now, with great propriety, occupying a large share of the public attention.

And let it be remarked generally, that while, as every one knows, Christianity requires the exercise of temperance in all things, in the use of food and of clothing, in labor and in innocent recreations, as well as in the use of drinks, and consequently, intemperance in any of these things is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, the present discourse has reference to that species of intemperance, which is productive of more evil to society at large, than perhaps all others, which results from the use of intoxicating liquors.

That intemperance is an evil of a most destructive character, and one which has prevailed to a fearful extent in our land, all must admit. That for its suppression all proper means should be employed, is a matter in relation to which there can be among reflecting men, but one opinion. It is unnecessary for me to attempt to portray before this auditory, the misery, and wretchedness, and crime, which arise from this source. I shall not undertake to recount the number of our valuable citizens, whom it has brought from the height of usefulness to an untimely grave. Nor shall I present to you a picture of the many families, once prosperous and happy, whom it has reduced to penury and shame. I shall not attempt to detail the countless enormities, to the perpetration of which it has led; nor need I conduct you to our jails, and penitentiaries, and hospitals, to make you sensible how numerous are its victims, and how bitter are its fruits. That intemperance is an evil of fearful magnitude; that it is spreading desolation

and misery through society; that it is exerting a most powerful influence in withstanding the progress of the gospel, and is bringing much reproach upon the church of Christ,—these things are admitted and deplored. What then is to be done? Are we to fold up our arms in supineness and sloth, and permit the tide of desolation to roll on? No! It is high time to awake out of sleep. A powerful effort is now in progress to stay this alarming evil, and in the result the friends of humanity and religion cannot but feel most deeply interested.

The evil of intemperance in the use of ardent spirit has all along been openly condemned. Both from the pulpit and from the press a warning voice has been raised against it. But while a species of opposition has been waged against the evil, it was in former times admitted by common consent, that the moderate use of ardent spirit, as a comfort of life, was allowable and right. And the consequence has been, that under this mode of opposition, the evil has continued to strike its roots deeper and still deeper in society, and its baleful fruits have been multiplied to a fearful extent. And if any thing can be learned from past experience, we are warranted to conclude, that so long as the principle of “moderate use” is contended for and acted upon, let men say what they may about the evil of intemperance, it will prevail. So it has been in times past, and so we may reasonably conclude it will be in time to come.

The want of success which attended all former efforts to suppress intemperance, has led to an inquiry whether this failure is not attributable to something defective in the plan of operation. The result of this inquiry has been the adoption of the principle, that to declaim against intemperance and yet plead for “moderate drinking,” is to do nothing more than simply to lop off some of the outer branches, while the trunk and root of the evil remain untouched. **IN THE SCHOOL OF MODERATE USE, DRUNKARDS RECEIVE THEIR TUITION.** I am not to be understood as saying, that all who have practised upon the principle of moderate use, have actually become drunkards. But we all know, that in relation to very many, this is the truth. One thing, however, is certain. It is here they take their first lessons; and were there no scholars in the school of moderate use, society would no longer be burdened with drunkards. The principle, then, on which the Temperance reformation is based, is, that the common use of ardent spirit, as a drink, is to be abandoned. And such, it is believed, is the only principle on which intemperance can be successfully opposed.

We, my brethren, are so situated that we cannot remain neutral, in relation to this matter. Every individual in society has some degree of influence, and ours will be exerted either in favor of, or against, the

great effort which is in progress throughout the world to put down a most fearful evil. As rational men, as men who wish well to the human race, and above all, as the followers of Him, of whom it is said, that he went about doing good, it becomes us to examine the ground on which we stand. If the principle on which the Temperance reformation rests, has the sanction of God's word; and if experience demonstrates that its operation is conducive to the best interests of society, it surely deserves our cordial and zealous support. But if not, if it involves any thing hostile to the spirit of the bible, let it be rejected. Let none however condemn, without careful examination.

Guided by the principle laid down by the apostle, it shall be my object,

I. To show that, even granting the moderate use of ardent spirit as a drink, to be proper in itself, yet if such use of it, on our part, has a tendency to lead others into sin, we should abstain, lest we make a brother to offend.

And then,

II. I shall advance a step further, and endeavor to make it appear, that in the moderate use there is something improper, therefore much more should we abstain.

If the first of these positions shall be established, our way to the general conclusion at which I aim, will be open. But if the second shall likewise be sustained, my conclusion would seem to rest on an immovable basis.

I. My first position, then, is, that, admitting the lawfulness of the moderate use of ardent spirit, yet if our use of it have a tendency to lead others into sin, we should abstain lest we make a brother to offend. The question under the consideration of the apostle, it has already been observed, relates to the eating of meats which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol. The lawfulness of using such meats, on the part of the Christian who understands the vanity of idolatry, is admitted. But there was no obligation on any one to use such meats. To abstain, therefore, could involve no one in guilt. And whatever might be the fact with some, others could not without sin partake. For, in consequence of the imperfection of their knowledge, they were under the impression, that in partaking of such flesh, they paid some religious respect to the idol, to whom it had been offered, and therefore by using

it they would involve themselves in the guilt of idolatry. Now, therefore, says the apostle, not directly on my own account, but for the sake of my brethren, I will use no flesh, lest my example should lead them into a practice which would involve them in guilt. Now, to apply this principle to the subject before us, let me suppose for the present, that the common, moderate use of ardent spirit is allowable; it will not surely be maintained by any, that there lies upon us an obligation to make such use of it. There can be no evil, then, in abstinence. But all past experience demonstrates that there are many in society who cannot indulge in the use, without using to excess. By occasional use, a vitiated taste is acquired, which cries incessantly, give, give. When, by the habit of using, a man has contracted a fondness for ardent spirit, a taste only serves to excite a morbid appetite, and he must have more. For such a man the only rational hope of safety is in entire abstinence. And while there are many in society, already in this perilous condition, the most temperate, by a little tuition in the school of moderate use, may be brought into it. If, therefore, I practise upon the principle of moderate use, though possibly I may not become a drunkard myself, yet I set an example which, to the whole extent of my influence, encourages others to pursue a course which has a tendency to lead them into sin. Therefore, according to the sentiment of the apostle, since, without any injury to myself, I can abstain from the use of ardent spirit, I will drink none while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

But will some one say, "There are many who abuse our necessary food and indulge in gluttony. According to your reasoning, we ought to abstain from the moderate use of food, lest our example should encourage the glutton, to eat to excess." My reply is, the cases are not parallel. Food is, by the ordinance of God, absolutely necessary in the present state for the support of life. It is, therefore, the duty of every man to use food with moderation, and it would be directly sinful to adopt the principle of abstinence from food, because its direct tendency would be to destroy the life which God has given us. Not so, however, with ardent spirit. No sober man will pretend that it is an absolute duty to use it. All that the devotee of Bacchus himself will contend for is, that there is no harm in taking a little; that it may be used in moderation. It is in no degree necessary to the health or vigor of the healthy system. The use of it, then, may be dispensed with. All reasoning, therefore, from the use of nourishing food to the use of ardent spirit is inconclusive, because the cases are entirely dissimilar.

In the observations which have hitherto been offered, I have taken it

for granted, that even supposing the moderate use of ardent spirit to be allowable, there can be no evil in entire abstinence. It might appear, however, from the manner in which some express themselves, that they would have some hesitation in admitting the correctness of this principle. A remark or two may, therefore, be proper for the purpose of exhibiting this matter in its true light.

It will be admitted that the moderate use of wine is recognized in the bible as allowable. But we are informed in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah, that for some particular reason, Jonathan the son of Rechab, laid an injunction upon his family to abstain from the use of wine. From respect for his authority, the family of Jonathan, religiously regarded his direction, and heaven approved their conduct. *Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Jonathan the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.* This portion of sacred history is not adduced to prove, that we are under obligation to abstain from the use of wine or of ardent spirit, but to show that in abstinence there is no evil. The Rechabites adopted the principle of total abstinence, from respect for the authority of their father, and heaven approved their conduct. While, therefore, we are warranted by this portion of scripture in saying, that there can be no evil in abstinence from the use of intoxicating liquors; if our use of them have a tendency to lead others into sin, the principle of the apostle would teach us to say, *If drink make my brother to offend, I will drink none while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

II. In the remarks hitherto advanced, we have proceeded upon the supposition that the moderate use of ardent spirits is proper. Let us now advance a step further, and inquire into the correctness of this supposition. And here suffer me to remark, that some in their zeal in opposing an evil have made declarations in no degree necessary to the support of our cause, and to which I am by no means prepared to subscribe. I have no hesitation in admitting that ardent spirit may be termed a good creature of God, in the same sense in which a thousand other things are, which by human art are prepared out of the productions of nature, and which in various ways are useful to man. "If, then," some one will say—"If, then, ardent spirit is a good creature of God, is it not, according to the apostle, to be received with thanksgiving?" Most certainly, it should be thankfully received for the purpose for which it was intended. But for what particular purpose this and the various other creatures of God are good, the words of the apostle do not inform us. They are all good and answer some valuable end in God's government. But every good thing is not good for every thing. The rocks, which lie on the bosom of the earth, are the creatures of

God, and they are good; but are they, therefore, good for food? The briny water of the ocean is a good creature of God; is it, therefore, good for the purpose of satisfying our thirst? This abused declaration of the apostle, decides nothing at all with regard to the propriety of using ardent spirit as a common drink. Ardent spirit is to be regarded as a good creature of God, just in the same sense as arsenic, or laudanum, or calomel, or such like medicinal preparations. These are all good when kept in their proper place, and are to be received with thanksgiving. But are they, therefore, good for common use? Because they are sometimes necessary and useful, shall we, therefore, in health take a portion of them in connection with our daily meals? While, under particular circumstances, a portion of these might be of great advantage to the human system, the common use of them would be hurtful and even destructive to life.

It is, therefore, a perversion of scripture and an abuse of reason to say, "Ardent spirit is a good creature of God, and therefore it is proper to be used as a common drink." Hemlock is a good creature of God, but shall we therefore have it served up on our table? To determine whether ardent spirit is good to be used as a common drink, we must inquire into its nature, and properties, and effects upon the human system. Out of the ground the Lord God has caused to grow a great variety of vegetables. Some of these we use for food, while others are not used. But they are all the creatures of God, and why do we make a distinction? Because from an examination of their nature and properties, some of them are found to be nourishing while others are poisonous. By the same rule are we to be guided in determining the question, whether the use of ardent spirit as a common drink is proper. What are its properties, and what are its effects upon the human system? And here we have no difficulty. It is a well-known fact, that ardent spirit contains a powerful poison. And those men whose profession requires them to make the animal system the subject of their study, and who have the best opportunity of knowing, with remarkable harmony concur in the opinion, that the common use of ardent spirit is hurtful to the human constitution. It may be, for aught I know, that some very respectable physicians would not be willing to express their concurrence in this opinion. But without intending any disrespect to a very useful and respectable profession, I may be permitted to say, that it is with some physicians just as it is with some clergymen. They have so long cultivated a familiar acquaintance with ardent spirit, that there exists betwixt them a friendly feeling, and they are slow to bear testimony against an old companion and friend. But I think it is now conceded by the great body of intelligent and scientific physicians, both

in Europe and America, that ardent spirit is of no advantage to man in health, but on the other hand, that the tendency of the common use of it is injurious. "If," says Sir Astley Cooper, "If the poor could see the white livers, the dropsies, and the shattered nervous systems which I have seen, as the consequences of drinking, they would be aware, that *spirits* and *poisons* are synonymous terms." And before the Temperance question had generally occupied the public attention, our own distinguished countryman, Dr. Chapman, expressed himself in the following manner: "As to the habitual use of wine, except under very severe restrictions, it is a custom more honored in the breach than in the observance." And while his opinion is evidently against the common use even of wine, he says, "Compared with ardent spirits, the action of wine is infinitely less injurious in a state of health, and as a remedy in disease, it evinces the same superiority. The effect it produces is slower and more permanent, combining also qualities, which, while they blunt the ardency of the stimulus, afford no inconsiderable portion of nutriment, by which the system is sustained and invigorated."

With regard to the use of ardent spirits, even as a medicine, his decision is, that they should be used only when wine cannot be had; and he considers it the duty of every medical practitioner, to discountenance the popular notion of their remedial efficacy.*

To produce an abundance of similar testimonies would be an easy matter, but it is unnecessary. I take it then to be the settled judgment, not of selfish priests, nor of wild enthusiasts, but of those who are competent to decide, that ardent spirit is not only not necessary for the man in health, but its direct tendency is to enervate the animal functions, and to predispose the system to disease. Men frequently accustom themselves to the use of it, and thus, by a pernicious habit, create a kind of necessity for it under almost every variety of circumstances. And by a practice which is secretly undermining the vigor of their constitutions, they bring themselves into such a condition, that they imagine the use of ardent spirit is necessary, to enable them to withstand the effects of cold, and to brace the system under fatigue, and to support it under the pressure of heat. But these are the dreams of a disordered imagination. The matter has been fairly reduced to the test of experiment, and thousands who have made the trial can testify, that man in health does not need the aid of ardent spirit, under cold, or heat, or fatigue, but, as a general fact, is better without it. If, then, experience proves that the common use of ardent spirit is hurtful

* Chapman's Therapeutics, Vol. 2, pp. 184—187.

to the health and vigor of the human constitution, if it has a tendency to predispose the system to disease, if it is insidious in its nature, and the use of it creates a fondness for it, which has a tendency to lead to excess, then there must be something wrong in the practice of using it as a comfort of life; and the spirit of that law, which forbids the taking away of our own life or the life of our neighbor unjustly, OF WHATSOEVER TENDETH THEREUNTO, requires that this practice should be abandoned.*

And such is the important object which the Temperance Society proposes to accomplish. By the power of persuasion and of argument, it proposes to prevail upon men to abandon the use of an article, which is not only not necessary to their well-being, but which when used as a common drink, as has been the custom, is positively injurious. And how desirable to the patriot, the philanthropist, and the Christian, must be the accomplishment of this object! If intemperance can be suppressed, how broad and deep a fountain of human misery will then be dried up! How formidable an obstacle to the general prosperity of society and the advancement of godliness, would then be removed! Those who have not with some attention examined the subject, would be amazed by a faithful exhibition of the amount of evils resulting from this one source. With a view to collect facts upon the subject, an investigation has been made throughout a sister state [New-York], as to the influence of intemperance in producing pauperism and crime. And as a specimen, suffer me to mention the result of this investigation, with regard to one particular county [Schenectady]. In the course of one year [1832], the number of individuals committed to jail for various offences, was *one hundred and forty-five*. Of these, not less than *one hundred and seven* were known to be intemperate. During the same year, *one hundred and seventeen* persons were sent to the poor-house. And of this number, *ninety-four* were intemperate. If this be allowed to be a fair specimen, (and it is believed that a careful inquiry throughout our country would lead to the conclusion, that it does not exaggerate the evil influence of intemperance,) then, how fearful is the amount of crime, and pauperism, and wretchedness, produced by this one evil! And when the subject is viewed in the light of facts, how loudly is every individual called, who has the good of society and the well-being of man at heart, to exert whatever influence he may possess, in the extirpation of this evil, whose character is Apollyon and whose name is Legion.

It is the remark of one of the most eminent lawyers our country has ever produced, and, besides, a pious man, "I have been for more than forty years, a close observer of life and manners, in various parts of

*See Note A., page 64.

these United States, and I know of no evil that will bear a moment's comparison with intemperance." And he adds, "I am persuaded that if we could have a statistical survey and report of the affairs of unhappy families and individuals, with the causes of their misery annexed, we should find nine cases out of ten, if not a still greater proportion, resulting from the use of ardent spirits alone." Some will no doubt regard this estimate of the relative influence of intemperance in the production of human misery, as too high. But when it is borne in mind, that this is the language of the lamented Wirt, it will be admitted that few have had better opportunities of observation, and that no one was more competent to form a correct opinion.

But while all reasonable men will admit, that it is the imperative duty of every good citizen, as well as of every consistent Christian, to yield his zealous aid in the suppression of intemperance, there are yet some who object to the plan proposed by the Temperance society, for the accomplishment of this object. And what is the general character of this plan? The Temperance society proposes to form voluntary associations of men, who shall pledge themselves to each other to abstain from the common use of ardent spirit, that so by the moral influence of their example, they may operate upon the community and produce an abandonment of that evil custom, which gives rise to all the drunkenness which prevails in the land. Now if it be allowable in itself, for a man to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors, it surely cannot be wrong to express his resolution to do so. And this he does by uniting himself with a Temperance society. He pursues no improper end; he embraces no unsound principle; he brings himself under no unlawful obligation, but in a public manner expresses his purpose to do that which is proper in itself, that the light of his example may shine for the benefit of others. And in this course is he not fully sustained by that precept of the gospel, which requires, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works?*

But against the Temperance society it is objected, that there is no authority in the bible for such an institution. This objection supposes that the Temperance society claims to be regarded as a divine ordinance. If such a claim were set up, it would then be a reasonable demand, "Where is your divine authority?" For every ordinance which we observe as an institution of religion, and for every exercise of religious worship in which we engage, we ought to be able to produce our divine authority. I admit, therefore, that if the Temperance society claimed to be a divine ordinance, the want of divine authority would be fatal to it. But such is not the fact, and consequently the objection has no bearing upon the subject. It is not pretended that we have any command

in the bible to form such a society, nor do we call upon men to enter it as a religious institution. The end to which the operations of the society are directed, is the promotion of temperance; an end every where recommended throughout the bible. But there has existed in the community a pernicious custom, which exerts an influence directly hostile to the cause of temperance; that is the custom of using ardent spirit as a common drink. To accomplish her ulterior object, the promotion of temperance, the society, in the first place, directs her energies to the abolition of this evil custom. And while the object proposed to be accomplished is one which the bible recommends, the principle on which the society proceeds is fully sustained by the authority of the bible, which requires that we *abstain from all appearance of evil*.

It results from the constitution of our nature as social beings, that we associate together and combine our energies for the accomplishment of any important object. To accomplish effects which require great physical strength, men associate together and unite their strength. United, they are able to accomplish with ease, what would otherwise be impossible. The same principle holds in relation to the operation of moral causes and effects. The moral influence of one good example can do something, and the united influence of two can do more. Now, there exists in our land a great moral evil, intemperance. It is spreading desolation in every direction, covering society with penury and wretchedness, and the church with shame. This evil has waxed great and is become exceedingly powerful. It owes its origin to the pernicious custom of using ardent spirit as a common drink. How shall we undertake to destroy it? It is a principle of common sense, that we should with united front advance to meet the common enemy. By associating together, by uniting the moral influence of our example, by concentrating our energies, we can do more than can possibly be effected in any other mode. And in this concentration of our efforts for the common good, we act in entire accordance with the spirit of that precept of the gospel, which requires that we consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works. Now, while common sense, as well as the general principles of the bible, would direct us to pursue such a course, to unite our energies for the accomplishment of an important common object, what is the result of the experiment which has been made? A revolution in the customs of society has been effected. The common use of ardent spirit has been well nigh banished from cultivated society and to a surprising and most gratifying extent, the tide of intemperance has been stayed.* But it will be said,

“The church is a Temperance society of divine appointment, and it

*See Note B, page 64.

is an insult offered to the wisdom of God, to suppose that a human institution can suppress intemperance if the church cannot." This objection would be of some force, if the Temperance society were set up in opposition to the church, or were invested with authority over the church, or presumed to take out of the hands of the church her own concerns. But no such thing will be pretended. Without presuming to interfere with any thing which lies within the peculiar province of the church, the Temperance society comes forward in the character of an humble assistant in the common work of doing good. It is readily admitted that the church is a Temperance society, and so far as her appropriate influence is exerted, it is in favor of temperance. But still it is a deplorable fact, that intemperance exists within the visible church as well as in the world. The humbling evidence of its existence may be seen in the bloated appearance of many a reverend visage, as well as in the irregularities of many a private member. If any help, then, can be afforded to the church in the extirpation of this evil, is the offer of it any insult either to the church or to her risen Head? If the Temperance society, without interfering with the authority of the church, is willing to co-operate with her in the promotion of a common object, intimately connected with the good of society and the interests of religion, what evil can result from this co-operation? Shall the church indulge a spirit of jealousy, lest she should be deprived of the exclusive honor of reforming society? Nay, after the church and every other benevolent society shall have done all that they are able to accomplish, there will still remain much evil, both in the church and in the world, over which the spirit of humanity and religion will be called to mourn.

But that we may understand the true character of this objection, let us examine how it will work.

The church may with equal propriety be said to be an Education society. It is her special duty to see that her youth are instructed in the principles of true wisdom. What then? May we send our children no where else but to the church to receive instruction? Is the system of common schools, for the instruction of youth, to be abandoned? Though we do not plead divine appointment for the establishment of a common school, or a college, or a theological seminary, yet may not these institutions afford important aid to the church in training up her youth for future usefulness? According to the character of the objection we are considering, the church being an Education society, all those institutions which have not divine appointment on their side, established for the purpose of banishing ignorance, and for the diffusion of correct knowledge, ought to be abolished.

I admit most willingly, that the church is the most efficient associa-

tion for the promotion of temperance, which exists in the world, and that the Temperance society is not for a moment to be placed upon a level with her. And I admit further, that if the church would carry faithfully into practice, the principles delivered to her by her glorious Head, in so far as her own members are concerned, there would be no need for another. But in reply, I would offer two remarks for consideration.

1. The affairs of the visible church are administered by fallible men, and sometimes evil customs creep into the church, which are tolerated by public opinion, and there, to the great discredit of religion, they are permitted to grow. Under such circumstances, the interests of religion call for reformation. Precisely such is the fact, in the present case. The pernicious custom of using ardent spirit as a common drink, has found its way into the church. Both ministers and people have too long and too generally acted upon the principle, that "there is no harm in taking a little." And the school of moderate use, set up within the sacred precincts of the church of Christ, has trained up, Oh! how many drunkards, both among the clergy and laity. Because of these things the friends of Zion have been called to mourning and humiliation before God.

It was necessary, then, by some means to correct an abuse which had crept into the church—not to correct any thing in the organization of the church as ordained of God; nothing in the system of worship divinely instituted; nothing in the form of sound doctrine delivered to her; but something which human depravity had introduced. And the principles of truth operating through the instrumentality of the Temperance society, have, in divine providence, been made effectual in directing public attention to the subject, and in producing, to a good extent, a most desirable reformation.

2. The Temperance society, in an especial manner, proposes to operate upon the world at large. The christian is a member of the civil community as well as of the church. And while there are particular duties resulting from the relation he sustains to the church, in the performance of which he is to be faithful, he is, by all lawful means, to promote the good of the community around him. Intemperance is an evil, not only inconsistent with Christianity, but hostile to the good of society. If, then, the christian can prevail upon the man who is not connected with the church, to unite with him, upon proper principles, in promoting the cause of temperance, he may thus do good to the individual himself, and in connection with him may promote the general good of society. Why then should they not unite? In the church they cannot co-operate, because one of the parties is not connected

with it. But in the Temperance society they may come together, without any sacrifice of principle on the part of the Christian. And not only is there no sacrifice of principle, but the gain is evidently on the side of Christianity. In the Temperance society we meet upon the broad principles of the bible, and for the promotion of an object which the bible every where recommends. And thus we have an opportunity of doing good to those to whom in the church we could not have access. And the apostolic direction is, *As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

In conclusion, while it becomes the philanthropist to rejoice in the success with which heaven has crowned the efforts of the Temperance society, I would, with all affection, caution the friends of the Temperance reform, against the use of extravagant language in representing the success of our efforts, and against the adoption of unauthorized measures for the promotion of the cause. A good cause is often injured by the imprudence of friends, whose zeal outruns their discretion. When it is said that "the Temperance society has saved more souls from perdition—has done more to promote the conversion of sinners than the preaching of the gospel"—when such unguarded declarations drop from the lips of men, who understand not what they say nor whereof they affirm, sober minds are disgusted, and the ear of intelligent piety is shocked. The Temperance society sets up no claim to divine institution, nor does she profess to have power to change the human heart. She professes to be actuated by something of that spirit of benevolence, for which the Author of our religion was so eminently distinguished. And she desires to perform her part in promoting the general good of society. She is, moreover, perfectly willing that her principles and plan of operations be tried by the word of God. And while the friends of the Temperance reform labor to promote the cause, let them be careful to disclaim every principle, and to discard every measure, which has not the sanction of the bible; being assured that no system of benevolence can ultimately prevail to the good of society, which is not in accordance with the principles of divine revelation. Amen.

NOTE A. A man who has long accustomed himself to the use of ardent spirit may feel as though it was necessary for him, and may have some difficulty in believing that he could dispense with the use of it without sustaining injury. But let him have the resolution to make the experiment, and he will discover his mistake. We are frequently told, that, we who spend our time in the retirement of the study, are not competent to decide what is necessary for those who have to undergo great bodily labor under the heat of the sun. "You, who are employed among books in the shade, may do very well without the aid of any such stimulus; but we, who toil in the field under the scorching rays of the sun, find that a little ardent spirit is absolutely necessary." I have no doubt that some who use this language believe what they say; but I have as little doubt, that they are entirely mistaken, and that, in fact, the remedy to which they resort really tends to aggravate the disease. And how is the question at issue to be decided? Our appeal is to facts.

Luring a recent excursion through this and some adjoining counties, a favorable opportunity was enjoyed for collecting some facts on this subject, which may deserve the attentive consideration of the candid. The late harvest was, up n the whole, what our farmers call a "heavy one." The heat of the summer, we all know, was unusually intense. And yet many of our farmers in Allegheny, Washington and Fayette counties, through which I passed, have harvested their large crops of grain without the aid of a drop of ardent spirit. Many, even of those who are not members of the Temperance Society, used none at all, because the custom of taking the bottle to the field in harvest is fast growing into disrepute. Now, these men have made trial of both usages, and they have that knowledge which is the result of experience on both sides. They are consequently more competent to decide, than those who have never made trial of abstinence. And what is their testimony? It is, without a single exception, so far as my observation extends, to the following purport. "Since we have discontinued the use of ardent spirit during the harvest, we find our work is done better—fewer accidents occur—the conduct of the laborers is much more quiet, orderly and agreeable—there are fewer instances of the men giving out, being overcome, either by heat or by labor—they drink less water—have a better appetite for their food, and perform more labor in a given time." Facts are stubborn things, and one of them weighs heavier in the scale of reason than a thousand speculations or suppositions.

NOTE B. The question is sometimes asked with a sneering air, "And after all the noise that has been made, what has the Temperance Society done?" I answer Under the blessing of Heaven, the Temperance Society has been instrumental, in effecting to a considerable extent, a most important revolution in the habits of society. And here, again, we ask those who are disposed to be incredulous, to look at facts.

Let the following be mentioned, as a specimen of the salutary change in the habits of cultivated society, which may be traced to the benevolent efforts of the Temperance Society. During the month of April last, the writer of this note spent some time in a pleasant visit among a numerous circle of relatives and acquaintances, residing in that beautiful section of country west of the Great Miami, in the state of Ohio. In every instance, he was most kindly received and most hospitably entertained. But in not a single instance, was a drop of ardent spirit presented. But a few years since, and probably not one of these families, though a people of temperate habits, would have been without a supply of some kind of ardent spirit. Or if any of them had happened to be found without it, they would have thought it necessary to make many apologies for their inability to furnish a suitable evidence of their hospitality. I do not mention this as a thing which is singular, but because it came under my own observation. Facts of a similar kind may be seen in all parts of our country. Still, I admit, that much remains yet to be done. Intemperance is still lamentably prevalent. And when it is remembered how many good men, and even ministers of the gospel, plead for and set the example of "moderate use," it is rather a matter of surprise that the evil is not more prevalent. What has already been accomplished, however, may well cheer and encourage the philanthropist, and stimulate him to go forward in his work of faith and labor of love.

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SERMON XXXIII.

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THE DECEITFUL AND WICKED HEART.

JEREMIAH 17:9.—*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

WHEN the sun set last evening, and darkness covered the earth, you were perfectly assured that he would rise again;—you felt an entire confidence that any purpose depending for its accomplishment on this event could not fail. Had your prosperity or adversity, your sickness or health, your life or death, been inseparably connected with the rising of the sun, you would have looked for it with the same certainty with which you did for the dispersion of darkness. This confidence is the result of truth understood and believed by the mind. This truth is derived from the regularity with which God, according to his purpose, directs all the movements of the heavens and the earth; and in connection with this, from the plain declarations of his word, that day and night, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, shall succeed each other till the end of time. The whole word of God is truth; because it is given by divine inspiration. The passage just repeated, and which we consider the text for the present, is true—emphatically true. Last evening, the rising of the sun this morning, was a future, but confidently expected event. That which was then expected, has been realized: the sun has risen;—for he is now shedding his beams on the earth. We are as certain of this fact, as we are of our own existence; for we are at this moment surrounded by his light. But it really is not, cannot be more certain that the sun has risen, and is now shining, than it is that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. These are the words of the prophet, moved by the Holy Spirit,—*the Spirit of truth*.

This passage implies that other things are deceitful. Men often deceive each other. The man who has any thing to sell, will praise the article beyond its real merit, that he may obtain for it more than its value. On the other hand, *the buyer saith, it is naught, it is naught*;

but when he is gone his way, having defrauded his neighbor, then he boasteth. Promises are made, and thus expectations are excited, without the honest intention, and without the probable means of performing them. Such instances of wilful deception are too common. Hence that suspicion that is cherished, that watchfulness that is employed by those who are much acquainted with the world. Hence those securities that are required in all the important transactions of life. Hence, too, the necessity for laws to defend the character, and protect the rights, of one part of the community from the fraudulent designs and the wicked impositions of the other. There are some who *lie in wait to deceive*; who mark out from the multitude the weak, the simple, the unsuspecting, the ignorant, and make these the victims of their deceitful policy. There are not a few *deceitful workers*, who will pursue, for weeks and months, that course of conduct, which is calculated and intended to remove the suspicions and excite the confidence of those whom it is their diabolical purpose to deceive and to ruin. There is many a female, once with the fair prospect of comfort and respectability before her, now, in the deepest disgrace, excluded from decent society, who can witness to the success of such deceitful workers, such cold-blooded, detestable seducers. Hypocrites are deceivers by profession. All their good works, all their acts of devotion, are intended to deceive others. They wish you to believe that they are pious, while conscious that they are not, that they may the more easily defraud the fatherless, and rob the house of the widow. Indeed, to the most sincere and upright man, it is deeply humiliating to know that he belongs to a race, with whom he can have no intercourse without unceasing vigilance and caution to secure himself from their fraudulent designs.

The world, in its three great divisions, its pleasures, its riches and its honors, is deceitful; not from design, but because it is perverted to purposes which it was not intended to answer. Those who have been most successful in the pursuit of worldly pleasures, if they speak the language of experience, will pronounce them *vanity of vanities; all is vanity*. Those who have hoarded up the riches of earth, have hoarded up corroding cares, anxieties and fears in the same proportion. They will experience the *deceitfulness* of riches; the pleasure was in the ardent pursuit, not in the possession. When a man is raised to honor by the suffrages of a free and grateful people, as the reward of merit, of a life of active beneficence, such honor is *better than precious ornament*. This man will submit to the cares, and discharge the duties of the office which he fills, not for the sake of the honor connected with it, but for the sake of doing good, of being more extensively useful. But when this office is sought and obtained by the arts of duplicity, with strife and contention, he will find himself deceived; his happiness will be imaginary, not real.

But deceitful as men are to each other; deceitful as the world is to those who give it their chief attention; and deceitful as many other

things are; the heart is deceitful *above all things*. Some men, from education or even from selfishness, are honest in their dealings; but the deceitfulness of the heart is universal, having no limits but those of the human family. Every sinful heart is *full of deceit*, and every heart is sinful. Men who use deceit with their tongues, for the want of opportunity, are not always practising their arts of duplicity; but the wicked heart is, at all times, under all circumstances, *working a deceitful work*. Men deceive each other for the sake of some temporal object, some momentary pleasure; but the deceptions of the heart involve the things that are spiritual, the deep interests of the soul, the joys and sorrows of eternity. Man, by his *cunning craftiness*, aims to deceive his fellow man; but the heart deceives itself: the sinner is, at once, both the deceiver and deceived, both inflicting and suffering the injury. Such deceitfulness, so universal in extent, so constant in operation, relating to things of such transcendent importance, leading its author and its victim to fearful and endless perdition, can be found in nothing but the wicked heart of man: here it is found in its supreme, unparalleled degree. This heart is not only deceitful, but deceitful *above all things*. Let us, then, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, inquire,

I. *What is the cause of this deceitfulness; and, that the subject may be useful to us, may come home to our consciences,*

II. *Refer to some examples, from which its nature and reality may be clearly seen in its effects.*

I. What, then, is the cause of this deceitfulness? Why is this proneness to deceive as characteristic of the human heart, as features are of the countenance? When you see the river, flowing with a widening and deepening current, you are sure that there are fountains which furnish this constant supply of water; and that you could trace the stream up to the fountains from which it flows. Can this flood of iniquity, this torrent of deceitfulness, which is whelming our guilty world in misery, and in its results, reaching eternity, be traced back to its fountain, to a cause that will account for such singular and tremendous effects? It can. If we mistake not, the *wickedness* of the heart is this cause. The heart is deceitful, because it is wicked; deceitful *above all things*, because *desperately wicked*. So far as the heart is made *good*, changed by the Spirit and truth of God, so far is it an *honest heart*, in which there is *no guile*. The holy angels, because they are holy, deceive not. Satan, because he is that *wicked one*, *deceiveth the whole world*. They are *wicked men* who are *seducers, waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*. In a heart, perfectly pure, motives to deception cannot be found, or even supposed; and without motives, deception could not be practised; for it implies design; and the accomplishment of some purpose, according to this design. Thus, although the bible was not intended to teach philosophy in systematic order, yet, as it regards mind and its operations, and as far as our spiritual interests are involved, it gives us the true

philosophy: effects are ascribed to their true and adequate causes; and causes are seen producing their appropriate effects.

The heart is **DESPERATELY** wicked. Of this passage, critics and commentators have given different expositions. Some tell us that it means, *infirm, weak, frail*. This interpretation does not correspond with the whole tenor of scripture; with accurate observation and experience on this subject. The deceitfulness practised by the heart is not, as it ought to be, if such was its cause, *infirm, weak, and frail*; it is active, powerful, energetic; producing the most wonderful effects of endless perdition. The guilt of man does not admit, for its atonement, of an infirm, weak and frail Mediator; but one possessing and exercising all the attributes of Deity, is indispensably necessary for this purpose. The great power and wisdom of angels would fail in this enterprise of mercy. The atonement required, was not, in its merit, to be in proportion to the results of mere infirmity, weakness and frailty; but of the most deliberate, persevering and active rebellion against God. When the heart is changed and made new, it is not mere infirmity, weakness and frailty that are strengthened, but enmity that is slain, affections and lusts that are crucified, requiring divine energy to accomplish the work.

Others tell us that the word should be rendered *incurable*: the heart is deceitful above all things and *incurable*. To this we have no objections; for its meaning is the same with the current version. That case of disease which is incurable is, for this reason alone, desperate. If any possible remedy could be applied with success, the case would not be desperate; for there would still be hope respecting it. Now this is literally true of the heart; it is *incurably*, and therefore *desperately wicked*. This wickedness admits of no possible remedy, and is therefore hopeless and desperate. When the diseased man is restored to health, it is not the disease, but the man that is cured; and by the destruction of the disease, or by driving it from the system. So the mind, the immortal soul, may be restored to spiritual life and health, only, however, by the destruction of sin, or by driving it from the moral system. Sinfulness is not essential to rational minds, to intelligent beings: the minds of Adam and Eve were, for a time without sin; the mind, that essential part of the human nature of Christ, was perfectly pure; myriads of angels are holy. The mind may, therefore, be delivered from sin, and restored to perfect holiness; only, however, by the utter destruction of sin. The means of salvation, are therefore, the means of this destruction. The Son of man came not to destroy *men's lives, but the works of the devil*.

That this truth may be more clearly understood, let us adopt the rhetoric of Paul, who views sin clothed with all the attributes of distinct personality, and agency, as exercising intelligence, practising deceit, selecting fit occasions for accomplishing intended purposes, reigning, having dominion, dwelling and working in the heart, waging war, slaying its victims, &c. This is the person, according to the vivid

conceptions, the glowing rhetoric of Paul, who is the deliberate, the determined, the active enemy of God; who will neither ask nor receive mercy; who is determined neither to cease from his efforts, nor give up his subjects, but with his life, his very existence; whose struggles and warfare are the struggles and warfare of desperation. No degree of kindness can soften or change him into a friend; his fixed determination is, to conquer or die. Hence, if his subjects are delivered from his dominion, *this body of sin must be destroyed; this old man must be crucified*, as the only possible means of deliverance.

When the sinner approves of sin, embraces it in his heart, yields himself to its control, refuses to forsake it, or even be sorry for it—and this is strictly true of all men by nature—he is so completely identified with it, that whatever is said of sin when personified, is strictly true, and may be said of the sinner himself. Every impenitent sinner on earth embraces sin with a grasp so powerful, that nothing but Omnipotence can relax it. In the deliberations and purposes of his own mind, he is resolved, with adamant firmness, never to forsake sin, never to exist without it, never to submit to God, never to have Christ the Savior to reign over him. He has taken the attitude of wilful rebellion against God, and is fully determined that this attitude shall be eternal. He is determined never to repent of sin, never to ask for mercy, never to be the friend of God. What are these but the workings and promptings of desperation? His heart, while he is thus identified with sin, or while he remains impenitent, is *incurably*, and therefore *desperately wicked*. The most fearful enemy is he who fights from desperation.

The history of Greece furnishes a striking illustration of this fact. The Persian monarch, with an army more numerous, it is supposed, than ever was marshalled before or since his time, had invaded the country for the purpose of conquest. Leonidas, the Lacedemonian chief, with three hundred Spartans, and a few others, determined to sacrifice themselves on the altar of Grecian liberty, to the safety and glory of their country. Having not the slightest hope of vanquishing the millions of the Persian army, and determined not to survive the crisis, they fought from absolute desperation. Their strength was the strength of despair; their courage was the courage of despair. The conflict was dreadful. The number slain, except where miraculous power interposed, was probably never so great, when compared with the small number of assailants.

Such is every impenitent sinner on earth. His course of persevering rebellion can flow from nothing but desperate wickedness. In scriptures he is considered and called an *enemy to God*. He is a friend of the world; and *whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God*. His opposition is not merely in theory or speculation, but in principle and in practice. He is *an enemy in his mind*,—his thoughts and reasonings and purposes are all inimical—and exert a powerful influence on his life; he is therefore an enemy by

wicked works. *He striveth with his Maker; he resists the Spirit and truth of God; he despises and rejects the only Savior, and is an enemy to the cross of Christ.* Thus he is, emphatically, and by profession, a *fighter, a warrior against God.* (Acts 5:39.) In this conflict with his Maker, the language of his heart is, *no God, no God!* Following the desires and purposes of his heart, he chooses and determines to live *without God in the world.*

Now, when it is remembered that the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,* against the very course which this impenitent sinner, this desperate rebel, is habitually pursuing; that this wrath *abideth on him* every moment; that it is increasing with every sin he commits; that it is approaching, with inconceivable rapidity, nearer and nearer, with every hour that passes; that he *knows not the day nor the hour,* when this tremendous torrent of *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,* shall burst upon him; the desperate wickedness of his heart must appear in the most striking light. Nothing but desperation can break through the restraints thrown around him to arrest his progress to perdition. His sentence of condemnation is written in capitals, large enough to fill the wide expanse of heaven over his head; but instead of trembling, he provokes the Judge with still more daring crimes. Conscience often reproves and condemns him, often remonstrates and pleads with him; but he does violence to this internal and friendly monitor, hardens his heart, and plunges deeper in sin. God, his offended Sovereign, with the voice of mercy, with infinite kindness, calls to him to turn and live; assures him that after all his years of rebellion, after all his aggravated offences, if he will repent and believe in a crucified Savior, he shall be saved; his sins, through the blood of the atonement, shall be freely pardoned; but he *makes light* of these invitations and promises, *refuseth to be healed,* smites with malicious scorn, the cup of salvation from his lips, tramples the blood of atonement under his feet, *does despite unto the Spirit of grace,* and thus raises the standard of defiance against Omnipotence. With much longsuffering the Lord waits with him, gives him time for reflection, time for repentance, and with increasing earnestness repeats the invitations of mercy; but he despises the heavenly birthright, and *turns the grace of God* into more insolent rebellion.

Who are the parties engaged in this conflict? The sinner is a creature *but of yesterday,* a poor *worm* of the earth, weak and frail, dependent on God for his existence, for his breath, and for the power which is exerted in sin. It is God against whom he fights; the self-existent, eternal, omnipotent Jehovah, with whom this rebel-worm is contending; that God, who, with a single touch, could crush him in death. It is weakness contending with infinite power; it is folly disputing with divine wisdom; it is insignificance arrayed against the majesty of heaven; it is the wickedness, the malice, the enmity of demons, waging war with the holiness, the purity of the universe.

The supposition that the sinner can succeed in this unequal combat, would be the most inexcusable blasphemy. Sooner, ten thousand times sooner, might Leonidas, with his chosen band, have been expected to vanquish the Persian host: sooner, by millions, might the meanest worm that crawls on the earth, be expected to heave the mountain from its deep foundation into the midst of the ocean. If the sinner will identify himself with sin; if he refuses to repent and forsake it, his utter and eternal destruction is inevitable. The character, the laws, the government of God—the interests of the universe require it. At the appointed time, when the measure of his iniquity is filled up, when the forbearance of God is exhausted, when it will make the best impression on the universe, then *sudden destruction cometh upon him, and he shall not escape*; then shall he be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*. The case of Leonidas does not more clearly exhibit the reality and nature of desperation, than does the case of the hardened, impenitent, incorrigible sinner. By resolving to continue in sin, as he frequently and deliberately does, he cuts off the possibility of escape, and seals the certainty of his own perdition.

Once more,—and this wickedness will fully account for the deceitfulness of the human heart. The sinner is ignorant, in a great measure, of the degree and tendency of his wickedness. He is not aware of the vileness and malignity of his own heart. He will readily confess, indeed, that he is a sinner; but it will be with the same indifference with which he would point out his right hand from his left; proving, most conclusively, that he does not understand the fearful import of the confession which he makes. This is implied in the latter clause of the text: *Who can know it?* evidently implying that none but God can know it. Hence it follows; *I, the Lord, search the heart, and try the reins, &c.* There exists in active and constant operation in the sinner's heart, a principle of enmity against God; and yet he is not fully aware of either its existence or its influence. If an enemy lies in ambush against us, he is more dangerous than when meeting us in the open field. If we know the ambuscade, we shun it and are safe; if we know it not, we go forward and are ruined. The sinner's heart is *desperately wicked*, but he knows it not; therefore, it is *deceitful above all things*.

II. Let us now select a few instances illustrating this deceitfulness. Hazael, chief officer of the king of Syria, was sent to the prophet Elisha. During the interview, the prophet fixed his eyes steadfastly on him, and wept. Hazael, being ashamed, inquired, *why weepeth my lord?* The prophet replied; *Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel*, mentioning some of the most savage cruelties, as a part of this evil. Hazael replied: *But what! is thy servant a dog; that he should do this great thing?* He considers it impossible for him to be guilty of such atrocities, and therefore repels the intimation of the prophet with indignant feelings. Yet after a short time, and under different circumstances, he is guilty of those

very barbarities, which the prophet had foretold. He knew not, nor even suspected the wickedness of his own heart, and therefore it deceived him; and yet that wickedness was there, and wanted only a suitable occasion to break forth in all its appropriate acts of brutal violence. Here, then, is a striking instance of the deceitfulness arising from the unknown, the unsuspected wickedness of the heart.

Another, not less striking, is furnished by the young man, the young ruler, who came to the Savior, with the respectful salutation, *Good Master*; with the pious inquiry, *what good thing shall I do*; and for the best of all objects, *that I may inherit eternal life*; at the same time *kneeling* in proof that he was humble, sincere and willing to be taught. While other young men of wealth are neglecting, perhaps persecuting the Savior, this young ruler *runs to him*, lest the present opportunity, if neglected, might never return. While others are spending their time in idleness, or in works of darkness; he is engaged in *doing good*. While others are stained with every species of crime against their fellow-men, he is free from every stain of this kind. As it regards relative duties, he is perfectly moral; for the Savior does not question, but seems to admit the truth of his declaration on this subject. In this young man there is much that is naturally amiable, for the Savior *beholding him*, that is, viewing with attention, not his features or external appearance, but his disposition, his character, *loved him*. Doubtless this young man expected to receive the instruction for which he asked with approbation and delight; but how great was his disappointment! He is ignorant of his own heart. He has not the slightest suspicion that there is in it *such a root of bitterness*, such, till now, concealed opposition to this Teacher. Had he been asked, when presenting his request, do you not dislike and reject this Teacher? he would, no doubt, have indignantly replied, am I a Samaritan, or a devil, that I should do this? Yet he cannot conceal from himself the fact that he rejects this Teacher. As a man, he may respect and receive him; but as a religious instructor, he deliberately rejects him. He is determined to give up the hopes of eternal life, rather than part with his beloved wealth. The voice of the Savior has turned the sorrow of many a heart into joy; in this case, it turns anticipated joy into sadness, sorrow and grief. The viper in his bosom is not perceived, till warmed and irritated by this crisis, it strikes its deadly fangs against this *Good Teacher*.

Who does not recollect the case of Peter, as an afflictive and melancholy instance of the deceitfulness of the heart? We hear his public and solemn professions of attachment to his Master; *Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I not deny thee*. He considers it possible that others, even the other apostles, might forsake their Lord, yet if they should, he is confident that he will not. The Savior kindly and plainly warns him of the event about to take place; but he seems to suspect, not his own heart, but the truth of the prediction, and becomes more confident; *Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*. In making these professions, there is reason to

believe that he was sincere; but there was still greater reason to believe that he was ignorant, totally ignorant of his own heart. But let us follow them to the palace of the high priest, where his Master, as a culprit, is on trial for his life. A damsel says to him; *Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.* The crisis has now come. What will Peter now say? Has he forgotten the professions, made but a few hours ago? No, he has not forgotten them; they are in his thoughts; for his Master, to whom they related, is, at this moment, within his view. Silence, or even delay, is inadmissible; he must speak; and he does speak; *But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.* After going out on the porch, another maid said to them that stood by, *This is one of them.* He has had a few minutes, at least, for reflection, to recover from the perturbation of the first unexpected attack, to hear the voice of conscience, to compare his late professions with his still more recent denial, but having taken the first step, he is prepared for the second. *And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.* Returning from the porch, and mingling again with those in the palace, several persons affirmed that he *was one of them*, for his speech proved him to be a Galilean. One, in particular, alleging that he was one of them, for he himself had seen him in the garden. Here is proof in support of the charge alleged; the dialect which he used, and the testimony of an eye-witness, who had seen him, in the garden, draw the sword in defence of his Master. What an earthquake of feeling must have agitated his bosom at this moment! He has had an hour for reflection. He must either confess the wickedness and turpitude of his former denials, or add to them another, still more wicked and base. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man of whom you speak!* Is this the man who, but a few hours ago, professed an attachment greater than that of all others, and declared that he would die sooner than deny his Master? It is the same man! To have denied once, and in simple language, would have been wicked; but to deny twice, and thrice, with an oath, and then cursing and swearing, is desperately wicked! These denials come from the heart; for there was time, between each of them, for reflection; and not to reflect was impossible. During two of these denials, his Master was in his view; and during the last, it is highly probable his eye was fixed on him. That wickedness, developed in these denials, was in the heart, when the warm professions of attachment were made; but he does not know, nor even suspect that it was there. When told by his Master that he would, *that very night*, deny him, most evidently he does not believe it. Had he known or even suspected this, he would not have been so greatly deceived; he would not have fallen from the extreme of confident profession, to the guilt and turpitude of these repeated denials. Here, then, is one of the most instructive, impressive and afflictive instances, and also one of the clearest proofs of the wickedness and deceitfulness of the heart, that can be found in the annals of human nature.

Let us now select a few cases, illustrating the same subject, from ourselves, coming under our own observation and making a part of our own experience.

Multitudes are deceiving themselves respecting the character and state of their hearts, by giving undue importance to mere natural goodness, and the good opinion of others founded on this goodness. There is nothing harsh, severe, or repulsive in their temper; kind, affectionate and cheerful in all the relations of life; courteous and obliging to others; moral in their deportment, respectful to religion, constantly attending public worship. And perhaps there is added to all this, the interest which youth, and wealth, and influence in society can impart. They are respected and esteemed by all, and sincerely loved by many. How easy is it, and how probable is it, that these will substitute this mere natural goodness, for that which is spiritual—the good opinion of men for the approbation of their Judge! How difficult and almost impossible is it for such to believe that, with an active and deep-rooted enmity, they hate God, and hate the Savior, and his salvation! Yet such is the fact, (John 15:23,24.) They do not profess to have been *born again*, to love God, or to repent of sin; they belong to the world, are the friends of the world; of course, they are the *enemies of God, the enemies of the cross of Christ*. Without *repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, they will soon be confirmed in this state; and, divested of all this natural goodness, will forever be *hateful and hating one another*. It is afflictive in the extreme, to think that those who are now so amiable, will, at some future period, fight and rage against God, with all the fury and malice of devils! The seeds of this wickedness are now in their hearts; but they know it not, they believe it not; and are, therefore, deceived to their own destruction.

The deceitfulness of the heart is manifest, again, in this: that sinners are often led, step after step, to a degree of shameless impiety, of daring wickedness, which they once supposed impossible that they would ever reach. But taking the first step, they are prepared for the second, and this leads to a third, until they *drink iniquity like water*. They first *walk in the counsel of the ungodly*, then *stand in the way of sinners*, then *sit in the seat of the scornful*. The first step, in this *broad way which leadeth to destruction*, is taken, without much apprehension of danger; because its connection with the last is not perceived, nor supposed to exist. Yet that connection exists, and strengthens as every successive step is taken. The youth, when the first profane word escapes from his lips, has no intention of becoming, by profession and by habit, a profane swearer, a bold blasphemer. But the first having been uttered, the second and third follow, until the habit is formed, and he belches forth, without either shame or remorse, the language of hell upon earth. The man who indulges in the temperate use of ardent spirits, has no intention of becoming a drunkard, and of dying, unobserved and unpitied, in the ditch. And yet most cases of habitual intoxication and premature death from the excessive use of this insidious poison, commenced with the temperate use of it.

But one of the most striking and deplorable instances of the deceitfulness of the heart is, the supposed intention to repent at some future

time. It is general, we may say universal, with those who profess to believe the Bible, to quiet their conscience by resolving to repent hereafter. We say this is a delusion. The determination to live in sin and enjoy its pleasures for the present, is so utterly inconsistent with the determination to repent in future, that they cannot exist in the mind at the same time. It is impossible that these two purposes can exist in the mind at the same time; for they are destructive of each other, as light is of darkness. Light necessarily excludes darkness, and darkness is the absence of light. It is impossible for this room to be full of light, and full of darkness, at the same time; because the one necessarily implies the absence of the other. So the determination to live in sin, and enjoy its pleasures for the present, is utterly inconsistent with a determination to repent of it in future. The motive which leads to the purpose of living in sin is, the pleasure expected from it. This implies that the knowledge of this pleasure must be in the mind when the purpose is formed; for if the mind is totally ignorant of this pleasure no motive can be derived from it; and without a motive, neither this nor any other purpose can be formed. So the purpose of future repentance implies that the knowledge of this repentance is in the mind, when the purpose is formed. Now, repentance is a sorrow, *a godly sorrow* for sin. The purpose of living in sin, and of future repentance are supposed to exist in the mind at the same moment; of course the knowledge of this pleasure and of this sorrow is in the mind at the same moment. This knowledge will, in some degree, be the anticipation, the foretaste, respectively of this pleasure and this sorrow; that is, the mind derives from the same source, and at the same moment, both pleasure and pain, both joy and sorrow. This is plainly impossible; and the mind cannot accomplish impossibilities. *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? or a vine figs? So can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh.* It is admitted that both joy and sorrow may be in the mind at the same time, but then they are always derived from different sources, and never from the same. But in this case, they both spring from the same source, and are unmingled. The sinner, who postpones his reformation, does not intend that the pleasures of sin shall be mingled and embittered with anticipations of penitential sorrow. This sorrow, according to his supposed intention, is not to commence till some future, and generally distant period. When this sorrow commences, he does not intend that it shall be mingled and assuaged with the recollections of sinful pleasures. It is, therefore, not more absurd to suppose that a thing is, and is not, at the same moment, than to suppose these two purposes can exist in the mind, at the same time.

Besides; although the sinner may have felt sorrow, arising from different sources, yet he has never felt the sorrow of true repentance. This sorrow has something peculiar, by which it differs from all other sorrows. It is the *gift*, the free unmerited favor of the *exalted Prince and Savior*. It is an essential part of regeneration, which is

the work of the Holy Spirit. Now the sinner intends to accomplish his supposed repentance himself, by his own unaided power, as he intends to live in the practice of sin. The repentance which he intends to accomplish is to be his own work, not that of the Holy Spirit; to be the result of his own efforts, not the gift of the Savior. Hence, if he should accomplish all that he intends, it would not be evangelical repentance, which is the work of the Spirit and the gift of God. Repentance is produced, through the Spirit, by a deep sense of the vileness and hatefulness of sin, connected with an "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ." Now altho' the sinner may have some idea of the guilt and danger of sin, he has not the faintest idea of its vileness and hatefulness, nor of the mercy of God. He is not vile in his own eyes; and if vileness was charged upon him by others, he would, no doubt, resent it with indignant warmth. He does not even profess to be a christian, that is, to have asked and obtained of God the pardon of his sins; and by his own profession he is ignorant of that mercy, which is exercised in granting this pardon. It is impossible, therefore, to derive a motive from that knowledge which does not, and cannot exist in his mind; and it is equally impossible to form the supposed resolution without a motive.

Again; repentance is inseparably connected with other features of the christian character; with faith in Christ, love to God, gratitude, humility, peace of conscience, joy in the Lord, the hope of heaven, &c. The intention to repent in future is the intention to exercise all these devout and spiritual affections and dispositions, with which repentance is connected, and without which even true repentance itself is impossible. This repentance is not, and cannot be understood except in connection with these other affections; and these affections, love to God, for instance, and joy in the Lord, can be known only from experience; and the sinner declares by profession and practice that this is not his experience. True, he may, like a parrot, repeat the words; but like the parrot, too, he will be ignorant of their meaning. This knowledge, with that of the vileness of sin and the mercy of God, are *things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man receiveth not; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* To discern and to know these things, he must become a *spiritual man*; he must be *born of the Spirit, put on the new man, put on Christ*; that is, he must cease to be an impenitent sinner, and become a real christian, a true penitent. Now he understands all these things, and now his intention to repent is real, because it goes into immediate operation; for now *he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes.* And now, too, his intention to live in sin is crucified and dies; proving most conclusively that the intention to repent in future, is not real, but a most fatal delusion, one of the most destructive instances of the deceitfulness of a desperately wicked heart.

Has there ever been an instance of repentance according to this supposed intention? Not one; we verily believe, *not one.* The lost spirits of Adam's race, now in the bottomless pit, can furnish no such in-

stance: they have perished because they did not repent; though, doubtless, as they supposed, this was their intention. We may, and we do appeal to those christians here present; you have all, in the days of your thoughtless wickedness, had such intention; did you repent and embrace the Gospel according to this intention, and in consequence of it? and was the repentance which you have felt, and daily feel, the same thing, the same state and exercise of the mind, with that which your intention contemplated! We confidently affirm that you did not; and that your repentance is entirely different from what you intended. When your heart melted with godly sorrow it was a new feeling, the knowledge of which has not before entered the mind. Not an instance, therefore, can be found of repentance taking place according to this intention.

It is a truth, then, established on testimony the most ample and satisfactory, that there is not an impenitent sinner on earth who has, or can have an intention to repent in future. Such an intention would be the commencement of repentance, and he would, from that moment, cease to be impenitent. His intention to continue in sin is the commencement, or rather, is a part of that sin. His determination is, never to repent, never to forsake sin, never to submit to God, never to ask for mercy, never to love God, never to be holy; but to remain the active enemy of God, of Christ, and of his salvation! He may think otherwise; he may, to quiet his conscience, persuade himself that he is sincere; but he is deceiving himself. The more successful he is in quieting his conscience, the stronger proof does he furnish that his *heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.*

Multitudes who profess the religion of Christ and are members of the church, are deceived. They mistake the mere workings of imagination for the exercise of faith. The Savior is supposed to be seen hanging, suffering, bleeding, dying on the cross, speaking comfort to them, pronouncing their sins forgiven: all this is mistaken for the knowledge and belief of the gospel, in which alone Christ is offered for acceptance; of that atonement, on account of which *God can be just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.* Intense feelings; though nothing but mere animal passions, will be excited, which, receiving a tinge, a slight coloring from religion, and bearing some resemblance to these which are the work of the Spirit, are mistaken for genuine spiritual affections. Thus deception is stamped on the soul, to be removed in too many instances, only by the light of eternity, and the voice of the Judge, bidding them to depart as *workers of iniquity.*

Christians, even real christians, are not free from these deep and subtle delusions. We believe that we are much better than we really are; that there is far less wickedness in our hearts than there really is. Hence, apprehensive of little or no danger, we cease to *watch and pray*; and when the shock of temptation comes, calculated to rouse into fearful activity, the latent, the unsuspected wickedness of the heart, we are vanquished and fall, and thus bring a reproach on the

cause of Christ, and *pierce our own souls through with many sorrows*. Such lessons of bitter experience ought to teach us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We have, as we profess and believe, a zeal for the glory of God and the cause of Christ, which is the *bitter zeal and strife* mentioned by the apostle James. We give censure to others, not because they have sinned against God, but because they differ from us in our peculiar views and measures. We administer reproof more to gratify a censorious spirit than to promote the true interests of the church. This zeal is often nothing but party spirit, perhaps intolerant bigotry which condemns others for the same things which we readily excuse in one of our own party. We profess *brotherly love*, and christian affections; but it is confined chiefly to those of our own denomination, who are supposed to love us. This love may please ourselves, and those who are the objects of it; but sinners love each other for the same reason. We are the warm friends and zealous advocates for peace; and so little are we acquainted with our own hearts, that, under this profession, we are soon involved in contention, discord and strife; manifesting a fierceness of spirit which pierces like the point of a sword. But it is for peace we are so fiercely contending; yet it must be on our own terms. It is peace for which we thus *bite and devour*; and the end will justify the means. We believe that if we possessed the wealth which some others do, we would be much more liberal than they are in the support of all benevolent institutions; while we are not as liberal as we might, and of course, ought to be with the means we now have. If we are not as liberal, now, as we might; and if we are not as liberal as others are, with means no greater, perhaps less, than our own, it is certain that, if our wealth was increased, we would not be more liberal in proportion. That we are not more liberal now, is not for the want of means, but of a *willing mind*. In this case there is a two-fold deception: we cast the blame of our stinted contributions really, though not professedly, on God. He has not given us the wealth which he has to some others; therefore we will not return to him his due portion of what he has entrusted to our stewardship. We profess to be *clothed with humility*; yet the exhibitions of this humility are little short of direct solicitations for nutriment to pride and vanity.

But time will not permit us to pursue this subject in all its details. We can all remember the time when we have supposed that sinful passions should never again pollute our hearts; and yet one *hour* has scarcely elapsed till some trivial occurrence excited within us a host of unhallowed feelings, which so disturbed our peace as to unfit us for any thing like devotion. We can all remember the hour of calm and spiritual reflection, when we determined, that, if God should spare us, we would, before this time, have made greater attainments in the divine life, and have done more for the cause of Christ, than we have done. All that was wanting, as we then believed, was the opportunity; and yet when the opportunity has fairly come, our resolution has melted away, and the greatest effort made was, to invent an excuse for being less engaged, and for doing less than we had intended.

Sin, in the heart of christians, is as malignant, and as deceitful, as it is in the most impenitent: it differs only in degree, not in nature.

Beloved christians, professed disciples of Christ; you see from this subject the great importance of self-examination. Multitudes who occupy a place in the church on earth, perhaps an office, perhaps the ministerial office, will, at the last day, be publicly and solemnly denied by the Savior. They may esteem themselves, and be esteemed by others, as christians; they may now be zealous, active and useful, but will then be driven from him as *workers of iniquity*. Are you not ready to say, *Lord is it I?* Are my hopes to be thus blasted by the crush of despair? If you should now be deceiving yourselves with a *name that you live, and are dead*, how much better to make the discovery now, while an *honest and good heart* may be obtained, than when *mercy will be clean gone forever?* If your hopes are founded on scriptural reasons, these reasons, instead of suffering loss, will brighten and strengthen under the most impartial examination; if they are not thus founded, this inquiry will be the best means, through the Spirit, of discovering the delusion. Your danger may be inferred from the frequency and earnestness with which you are cautioned against self-deception? *Be not deceived: let no man deceive himself: take heed that ye be not deceived.* By frequent examination and earnest prayer to God, you may discover what is genuine and what is spurious in your religious exercise; and thus you will learn both your strength and your weakness. Pride is the native and vigorous growth of a depraved and wicked heart; and under its influence you are far more likely to be deceived by *thinking yourselves to be something, when you are nothing*, than by thinking less favorably of yourselves than truth requires; by believing that you are *rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*, than by judging that you are more *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, than you really are. Therefore, *examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* Examine, not only whether you have what you suppose to be faith, and love, and repentance, but whether this faith is the *work and gift of God*, whether this love is *shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost*, whether this repentance is *working out reformation to salvation*. Invoke, with the Psalmist, the aid of God: *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart! Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Impenitent sinners! this subject presents to you the most powerful motives to come to Christ, to come now, this day, this hour, this moment! These motives are derived, in part, from the clear and forcible exhibitions of your guilt and danger: from the proof that your *hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. This wickedness, as the work of the devil, must be destroyed; as the *old man*,

it must be crucified. If, therefore, you refuse to repent and forsake sin; if you refuse to live, to exist without it, you must die with it,—die the *second death*. If you will not have sin crushed in your hearts, under the stroke of divine justice, you must be crushed with it. Do you reply that you are helpless, and therefore cannot come? This indeed is a truth; but it is a truth which you neither believe nor feel. Your supposed intention of future repentance, which has the effect of quieting your conscience, which true repentance alone ought to produce, is made in your own strength. If you are helpless, raise the cry of helplessness to God. This cry is the most solemn and earnest that ascends from this earth to heaven. The Lord will hear it and *will be your help*. None who raise this cry shall ever perish; for *God will be your refuge and strength*. Come then to Christ as guilty and helpless sinners—*believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved*; for his *blood cleanseth from all sin*. This blood, sprinkled on the heart, will dissolve its connection with sin. Without this blood, your hearts will remain incurably wicked. Delay is dangerous. *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

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SERMON XXXIV.*

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**THE OBJECTS AND ORIGIN OF ECCLESIASTICAL POWER,
AND THE MANNER OF EXERCISING IT.**

MATTH. 18:18. *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

THE Church of the living God on earth has always been considered, by both her friends and her foes, as a society distinct from the world. This is the leading fact which is brought into view in the text and context. The church in this passage is represented as a regularly organized body, having a government of her own, and exercising that government for peculiar and special purposes, and with singular efficiency. Whatsoever she *binds* "on earth shall be bound in heaven," and whatsoever she *looses* "on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

We propose at this time to consider,

- I. THE OBJECTS OF THIS GOVERNMENT.
- II. THE SOURCE FROM WHICH IT IS DERIVED. And
- III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THOSE TO WHOM IT MAY BE ENTRUSTED ARE TO EXERCISE IT.

On the first of these we need not dwell. A mere statement of a few of the leading facts is all that is necessary. And,

1. The church, as a society, is within a society, and having objects and modes of operation peculiarly her own. But in these respects

* A Synodical Sermon.

there is no difference betwixt the church and a thousand other societies that are in the world. Every voluntary association for commercial, or literary, or national, or benevolent purposes, has exactly the same character. It is formed and it operates within the bosom of the national government, and in every case it is modified to a great extent by the character and habits of the mass of the population of the country.

All these societies agree further, in that though each has its peculiar object, and its peculiar mode of acting, and though all the members of any particular society may be connected with a vast number of other societies; yet men are known and recognized as members of that particular society only for a particular and specified purpose; and while all the arrangements of the society are made to bear upon that one object, yet the government of the society has no control over any of its member, but just so far as the declared object of the society is concerned. In all *other* matters, every member of the society is as free as if no such society did exist.

2. The great and specific object of the church, as a society, distinct from the world, is, without doubt, the deliverance of the human family from the power and pollution of sin. All her peculiar titles will be found to bear on this one object, and for this purpose were all her ordinances and modes of doing business appointed.

3. The *means* which the church, as a distinct society, commands for the accomplishment of this great object are *ample*, and most appropriate. They may all be comprehended under—the written word,—her sabbaths,—her ministry,—and the character and attainments of her members. Hence the great object of church government must be, to preserve these, and to exhibit them in all their purity and simplicity; and in the exhibition of them, to make them bear upon the understanding, and the hearts, and the consciences of men. And, in every case, the administration of church government is good when it accomplishes this one object, and it is bad when it fails to accomplish this object.

4. All things considered, and so far as government is concerned, the character and the attainments of her ministry and members is that which has the most important bearing on her efficiency and success. Nor does the church in this respect differ from other associations. In every society, whether large or small, whether voluntary or supported by authority, the society will be efficient, and will ultimately accomplish its specific object, in exact proportion to the qualifications and character of its members, and particularly of its officers.

This great and important matter is particularly brought into view in the passage before us. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Mat. 18:15—17. The great and distinct object of church government is, to attend to the admission or rejection of members. Let all things in this matter be done at the right time, and in the right manner, and with the right spirit, and all will be well. The authority and arrangements of the church will be irresistible. "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

We proceed now to consider,

II. The SOURCE from which church government is derived.

And here we are at once presented with one of the peculiar characteristics of the church. In all other associations of men, the power claimed and exercised by the officers of government over their fellow-men, is either directly or indirectly derived from the members of the society; and these officers, whether legislative or executive, act in the name and by the authority of the whole. But in the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, is the sole source of all the authority claimed and exercised.

He is the sole Head and Sovereign of the church. As Jehovah he created and gave being to all men, whether of the church or of the world. As Redeemer, he purchased the church with his own blood. He has, therefore, an original and undivided right to supreme authority. He, and he only, gave to the church and to the world the written word, which is the charter of all her privileges, as well as the only proper rule of her conduct, and the ground of all her hopes. He appointed her ordinances,—her sabbaths, and her sacraments, and the reading and the preaching of the word. He, and he only, appointed her ministry both under the Old and New Testament dispensations. And under the New Testament dispensation particularly, the ministry was appointed before the church was organized. Or in other words, the officers existed before the society existed. He still continues to communicate, from generation to generation, all the necessary ministerial gifts and graces. And in preaching the word, and

in administering the sacraments, and in exercising government and discipline, these officers are merely executive—they possess no legislative or creative power.

He hath further marked distinctly in his word what ought to be the qualifications of all her members. And members and officers are in all cases to be admitted or excluded only upon the evidence being produced of their possessing, or their not possessing these qualifications.

Finally: He has, in the passage before us, distinctly stated that he is to be personally present wherever the church may meet in his name, and that he is to take a deep interest in all their proceedings,—and that whatever is done in these meetings in accordance with his revealed will shall be ratified and carried into execution by himself. And in another passage, referring to the exercise of the ministerial office in all its parts, he says, “He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”

We pass on •

III. To attend to the MANNER in which those to whom the government of the church is entrusted are to exercise it.

We cannot, here, go into any details as to the various forms of ecclesiastical government. We can only state a few general principles. And,

1. No society of any kind can exist and act without *some form* of government. And whatever may be the form of government, there must be officers; and these officers, by whatever name they may be called, always constitute the executive department.

2. We have just seen that the church, properly speaking, has *no legislative power*. In whatever form then any particular church may agree to do their particular business, they are only to carry into execution the laws already given them; and given to them in common with all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus. No portion of the church has any power to make any new laws. The written word given by the Lord Jesus Christ is the common rule, and common charter, and common statute book of the whole catholic church.

3. In the Presbyterian Church the representative form of government is adopted, and ordained officers only are entrusted with the whole administration. Hence, in the remarks which are to be offered, though the general principles which may be stated may be applicable to every form of church government, yet they are to be applied in the present case particularly to ourselves.

We ask then, in *what manner* are those to *whom* the government of a church is committed to exercise that important trust? And

1. It is indispensably necessary that we at all times know and feel our responsibility, and know and feel to whom, and to whom *only*, we are responsible.

As men, and as christians, and as citizens, we are intimately connected with our fellow-men and fellow-christians; and our individual and social interest is in all cases intimately connected with their interest. But as officers in the house of God we are not responsible, in the strict and proper sense of the term, to any of our fellow-men for the manner in which we may discharge the duties of our office. We received our office from God. We hold it of Him, and to Him only are we properly responsible.

When we were entrusted with this office by "the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery," the brethren who acted on the occasion, acted only as executive officers. They merely announced to the church and to the world that they had what they considered satisfactory evidence that we were called and qualified by the Head of the Church for the great work for which we were set apart. Hence if we have these qualifications, and had that call, we minister in Christ's stead as his ambassadors, and as such we will be recognized while we are employed in his service. But if, on the other hand, we have been deceiving ourselves and imposing upon the church, we are only traitors and intruders, and will in the great day be published to an assembled world as such.

As fellow-officers in the house of God, we have a common trust; and one important part of that common trust is, to look out for faithful men to whom we may commit this ministry. And another important part of the trust is, to watch over one another, and to assist and admonish one another; and we are in the most of cases to know the particular will of our Lord and Master through the brethren with whom we are associated, and in this sense we are to be obedient to one another in the Lord. But still, strictly and properly speaking, we are individually and unitedly responsible only to Him of whom we hold our commission.

Much less do we hold our office of the people. It is true that we are the people's servants. We are to give ourselves wholly to our proper work, and our time, and our talents, and our attainments, and our all are to be devoted to the service of the people. And we are to watch for their souls, and to watch as those who are to "give an account." And to watch, as those who are to account for souls at the

risk of losing their own. But no where in the Bible is it said, either *directly* or *indirectly*, that this account is to be rendered to the people. Every where it is represented as to be rendered to God. Particularly in that important hour when it shall be said, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward." And still more so, in that day, when "the dead, small and great," shall stand before the "great white throne."

The practical use of this *one* fact is of vast importance, and must be very obvious. It is only by understanding at all times the true nature of our responsibility, that we can exercise ourselves so as to have consciences void of offence towards God and towards man. This principle will lead us to study the bible—to be men of prayer and devotion—and to live above the favors and frowns of the world. The preacher of the gospel also, who shall thus live continually in the fear of God, will generally be equally noted for his humility, and his meekness, and his love to the brotherhood, and for his cheerful submission to all lawful authority. We remark,

2. That church authority is always to be exercised with great charity, having a due respect to all the *diversities* which mark human nature in its present state. Please to read the context, from verse 15 to the end of the chapter. We offer no comment on this passage. We only would request the fathers and the brethren of the ministry and eldership to read it, and pray over it again and again. It is our Lord and Master who addresses us in these verses; and while we shall be acting as his officers, let us each daily ask himself, "Do I understand this passage? Have I as an officer in God's house imbibed and acted out its spirit?" We remark,

3. That *continued prayer* and *devotion* ought to be intermingled with all our deliberations, and with all our conduct as executive officers. See verses 19 and 20. Many reasons might be urged to enforce this prerequisite. We suggest only a few. And,

1. The exercise of government and discipline is undoubtedly the highest and most important part of the ministerial office. It is admitted on all hands and on all occasions, that when we are called to administer either of the sacraments, we ought to be in a solemn and devotional spirit: and yet the sacraments are administered to particular individuals, because, by a previous act of government, these individuals have been admitted into the communion of the church. Hence all the distinguishing privileges of a christian and of a christian community depend on the faithful—the judicious—the conscientious administration of government and discipline. If we act *right*, here,

what we "bind on earth", is "bound in heaven," and what we "loose on earth" is "loosed in heaven." But if we act *wrong*, we sport with the realities of both worlds. The eternal destiny of an immortal—in many cases the destiny of *many* immortals, is involved in a single act of discipline.

Add to all—that while we sit in judgment we act as the representatives of the Redeemer, not in his humiliation, but in his exaltation, and in his highest grade of mediatorial glory. Every act of church government *rightly* administered is the symbol or representation of the final decision at the great day. Surely, then, if a mortal can be serious at any time, he ought to be serious, and ought to cherish a devotional spirit when he is called to act under such circumstances.

2. Under the Old Testament dispensation, a direct appeal to heaven for direction, or for a decision was almost an ordinary occurrence in all cases of difficulty. But we have no reason to believe, that *ordinary* communications from the throne of God to the sons of men are less frequent, or less efficient *now*, than they were then. All the evidence is otherwise. The whole tenor of Old Testament prophecy must lead to the conclusion, that the Divine presence is to be more abundant, and more general, and more powerful under the new dispensation, than ever it was under the old.

3. In the passage before us, the enjoyment and the exercise of the power of binding and loosing is intimately, and I believe inseparably, *connected with prayer and devotion*. Read verses 18, 19, 20. The inference from this connection is plain.

We might reason also here from *analogy*. The government and the discipline of the church is a divine ordinance. The same as the reading and the preaching of the word, or the giving and receiving of the sacraments. But we all agree in acknowledging the necessity of sincere, and fervent, and united prayer, in dispensing or in receiving any of these divine institutions. Much more, then, is the spirit of grace and supplication necessary, in the administration of government and discipline.

We might farther dwell upon the need we have of special direction while sitting in judgment. It is here that we are peculiarly in danger from the deceitfulness, the passions, and the prejudices of the human heart. Mind, in these cases, comes into contact with mind; and opinion clashes with opinion. Almost every case of discipline, also, supposes some departure from profession or principle—some accusation or suspicion; and consequently, more or less of irritation and want of confidence, *even* among brethren. And from whom are we to expect

assistance in such cases, but from Him who ruleth in the raging of the sea, and stilleth the noise of the people?

4. All that is known of the nature and efficacy of prayer, might be made to bear on this particular case. We know that Jehovah has been pleased to annex a great efficacy to prayer. We know that he has commanded and encouraged us to pray always, and to pray and not faint. We know further that he has given us special promises and encouragement and directions to pray, applicable to every possible situation, and that all the enjoyments of a child of God are sweet and profitable just in proportion as he has the spirit of grace and supplication. But as officers in the house of God, we are to take the lead in all the devotions of the sanctuary. And generally speaking, there will be *like priest, like people*. When the officers are men of prayer and devotion, the household will partake of the same spirit. But if it is otherwise with us, we need not expect to find among the people any thing but deadness and darkness and desolation.

5. The history of the church, in all lands and in all ages, and in every state and condition of men, will confirm and illustrate this part of our subject to almost any extent. It is a matter of historical doubt what was the particular form of government in some particular periods of the church; and where history is clear and decided as to the particular form, it is certain that there have been great diversities as to the success attending the administration of the very same ecclesiastical forms. There have been good and wise and faithful episcopalian governments, and good and wise presbyterian governments, and good and wise congregational governments; and there have been bad,—very bad administrations of government under all of these forms, and in all their varied modifications. But, in every case, the general rule has held good, without a single exception. The government and the discipline of the church have been good, while administered under the influence of the spirit of prayer and devotion. The most meek and humble and pious men have uniformly been the men whose judicial proceedings were most evidently ratified in heaven; and the proud and the arrogant, and those who had little or nothing of the spirit of devotion, have been the men whose decisions did not promote the peace and the purity and the prosperity of the church of God. These facts speak volumes.

6. We may appeal, fathers and brethren, to your own personal experience on this subject. When, brethren, do you study best? When do you preach best? When is your private and social intercourse with the members of the church, and with the men of the world

most conducive to the declared object of the gospel ministry? Uniformly, without a single exception, when you enjoy most of the spirit of prayer and devotion.

In like manner we may ask,—at the meeting of what particular church courts have you had the most decided evidence, that the Lord Jesus Christ was present in the midst of his officers, and fulfilling to them the promise, that he would be “a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment?” We presume the answer will be as in the former cases. The Head of the church was visibly present to direct and bless, just in proportion as the spirit of prayer and devotion prevailed. Can any of you say, that your Master has on any occasion forsaken you, when you were seeking him with your whole heart? Or have you ever been left to your own wisdom, or to your own strength, but when you were too proud and too self-confident to humble yourself before him? We presume not.

The *practical improvement* of all that has been advanced on this subject, will suggest an answer to a very important question, viz. Why has not the Divine presence been more deeply felt than it generally has been in the meetings of our church courts? This has been our situation in the most of cases, because,

1. Christians generally, and even the officers of God’s house, have not been properly impressed with the peculiar nature, and the peculiar character of church courts and church authority. Hence,

2. We have been in the habit of doing business in these courts nearly wholly in the way of the world, and very little under the influence of piety and devotion.

3. Our discipline has frequently been exercised for purposes very different from what ought to be the proper object of all church government. Hence, our ecclesiastical courts have been distinguished in many cases for producing and cherishing the *very opposite* of what they ought to produce and cherish. And,

4. Even when all our judicial business has been of the right kind, and conducted with the right spirit, the *necessity* of the continued influence of God’s Spirit to carry into effect our decisions, has, probably, been often,—very often, forgotten. If we have enjoyed Jehovah’s gracious presence, while sitting in judgment in his name, we have soon, like many of our ordinary hearers, lost all our devotional spirit, and returned again to act under the influence of the maxims and spirit of the world.

Fathers and brethren,—Shall these things be always so? Shall we not with one heart and one spirit return to the Lord God of our fathers? Shall we not yet know our weakness and our dangers,—the importance of the trust committed to us,—and the source of our strength,—and the encouragement which we have to lay hold of this strength; and act on all occasions according to the dignity and nature of the sacred office?

SERMON XXXV.

BY REV. JOHN HOWE,
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THE RECEPTION OF SINNERS.

LUKE 15:2. *This man receiveth sinners.*

THE Scribes and Pharisees said, "This man receiveth sinners;" which fact they thought a great reproach and an indelible blot on the character of the Savior. It was, in truth, a high eulogy, and matter of the greatest encouragement to any and to every sinner made acquainted with his real moral character, as brought to view in the holy scriptures. He received persons in whom, in a moral point of view, existed nothing but sin, and from whom proceeded nothing but sin, while remaining in that state. For as is the principle, so is the practice. As is the tree, so is its fruit. And as is the fountain, so are its streams.

In opening this subject for improvement, I shall

I. DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS RECEIVED.

II. SHOW WHENCE IT IS DERIVED.

III. SHOW TO WHAT SINNERS ARE RECEIVED.

I. The character of the persons received.

And I say first: The persons were "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin." Psalm 51:5. The very first shape of humanity is iniquity, and the very conception is sin. Moreover, we argue the original corruption and depravity of our nature, from the fact of those penal evils our nature sustains in infancy. Infants, even before they appear in our world, writhe in pain and gasp in death. The apostle Paul says, Rom. 5:14, "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," that is, had never sinned *in act*; because they were not capable of actual transgression, being infants. But can penal evils be inflicted on innocent subjects under the administration of a holy, just and righteous God? "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23.

Infants die; and therefore infants are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. Again, the Savior has taught the same doctrine, John 3:6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," that is, a mere mass of moral defilement. That this is a correct interpretation is manifest from the antithesis in the last clause of the same verse, namely, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," that is, it is holy, a state the very opposite of the former. The same state of heart the Savior evidently taught in Matt. 15:19. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Again, the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians 2:1, shews that the character received is one that is "dead in trespasses and sins," and in verse 5, "Even when we were dead in sins;" "dead," a total privation of moral life, not only dead in sin, but dead in law, under the curse, "For cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," condemned already and the wrath of God abiding upon him. This character is as clearly, fully and definitely depicted in the 14th and 53d Psalms. Likewise by Paul in the 3d chapter of his epistle to the Romans from the 10th to the 20th verse inclusive. Indeed, the character under consideration, in plain language and bold figures is brought to view in almost every page of the holy volume.

The *understanding*, the perceiving faculty, is not only in a dark, misty, cloudy state, but it is *darkness* itself; and hence "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." Hence God, in his view, is altogether such an one as himself. Hence he says, I am rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing; hence he is full of himself, of his own wisdom, of his own moral strength, of his own righteousness, whilst Christ is as a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness. His *will* is as prone to evil as the sparks are to fly up. "His heart is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." His *affections* are all disordered, and therefore all misplaced on self and forbidden objects. In short, men, by nature, are "haters of God." Rom. 1:30. The members of the body are "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," and the senses are inlets to moral impurity. Hence, even holy Job, awake to the truth of this subject, found it necessary to make a covenant with his eyes. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint," from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is *only* evil continu-

ally." Gen. 6:5. "The wicked are estrayed from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." But whence all this sad character? how cometh it to pass that our nature is thus dashed, depraved and lost? The answer to these inquiries will bring me to the second proposition: namely,

II. Whence this character is derived.

And without hesitation, I say it is derived to the race by virtue of their union to Adam as a federal head. When God made man in his own image, he entered into covenant with him, promising life upon condition of perfect obedience to the law. Which obedience was suspended upon and tested by the single point of abstinence from the forbidden fruit. He threatened death in case of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now, this transaction embraced the posterity as well as himself. Because, he was the head of the body. Compliance with the stipulation of the covenant would have secured the perpetuation of his own holiness and happiness, it would have secured the holiness and happiness of his entire race. To this view of the subject, the whole host of Arminians have no objection: but present the other side—that *the act of one person can be imputed to another*—and they cannot admit it; but set aside, as I apprehend, the federal relation entirely. The holy scriptures, in many portions of them, do unequivocally and definitely support this doctrine. Particularly in the epistle to the Romans, 5:12. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This last clause in the original is, "ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον," literally, *in whom all have sinned*; the relative *whom* referring back to its proper antecedent *man*, in the beginning of the verse. The very same doctrine is established in the first clauses of the 18th and 19th verses of the same chapter. "Therefore, as by the offence of *one*, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." This triple testimony of Paul furnishes sufficient evidence to satisfy any honest inquirer after *truth*, that the deep and total depravity of man, by which he is subjected "to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever," are derived from *the guilt* of Adam's first sin imputed to the race. In the imputation of this guilt to the race, we do not understand, that there is a diffusion of moral impurity through every power of the mind, and through every member and sense of the body: but that God, in holiness, justice and righteousness, withholds that perfect knowledge, holiness and righteousness, that Adam possessed in his primitive purity,

which he had forfeited by transgression, not only for himself, but for his posterity: and therefore, as in the natural world, the total privation of light, is the presence of total darkness, so, the total want of the moral image of God, is the total corruption and depravity of the whole nature. So, says our excellent Confession of Faith, "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of our whole nature, which is commonly called original sin." All this is in perfect accordance with the above-cited scripture authorities. Nor do we believe that the guilt of this first federal sin of Adam, with which we are all justly charged, is unpardonable; for it is just as easy, consistent, hopeful and joyous to trust and rely on the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of this guilt, as that of any other transgression of the exceedingly broad law of God; because, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." In him there is plenteous redemption, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, even the fullness of the "Godhead bodily." So that every soul that trusts exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ can be abundantly pardoned.

And now, I conclude, in close of my remarks on this part of the subject, that the character, and the *only* character of a person in which Christ ever did, or ever will receive any one, is that of "a sinner." One, that is in a moral point of view, nothing but a sinner; which brings me to the third proposition: namely,

III. To what sinners are received.

And I say, in a word, they are received to plenary justification "from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." But there is no ground or foundation on which a sinner can be justified in the sight of God, but that which meets every claim of the divine law, in every jot and tittle of its preceptive and penal claims. There is no expedient of which we have any knowledge, in the universe of God, that meets these claims, but the pure, perfect and complete righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. To this end, he was born "of a woman and made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law"—"For such an high priest that became us, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate* from sinners." He was fully competent, and did fully meet the claims of the law in every jot and tittle; he did magnify and make it honorable; or, declared its nature and immutable honors. Being very God, he was competent to sustain, and did sustain every jot and tittle of the divine and awful

penalty, consisting in the wrath and curse of God due to our sins, and hence he is the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth in him." I know it is said by some, that an essential ingredient in the penalty of the divine law, is remorse of conscience. But if remorse of conscience be an essential ingredient of the divine law, as enacted of God, and Christ had no inherent sin, he did not, and could not sustain the entire penalty; the law, therefore, is not fulfilled; its claims are not fully met, and never will be; sin is not finished, an "end is not made of transgression, and an everlasting righteousness" is not brought in, and no soul of Adam's race ever has been, or ever will be consistently and gloriously justified. And the above sentiment reflects most impiously on the manifold wisdom, love, mercy, and grace of God in the constitution of the divine and only Mediator between himself and his offending creature, man. But we reject, with abhorrence, all such dishonorable doctrine, and rely with triumphant confidence on the testimony of that God who cannot lie, when he saith that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" that he is his "Son in whom he is ever well pleased;" that he has done all things well, and declared him to be his Son by his resurrection from the dead. And thereby, most loudly evincing that he had effected a plan, every way just and honorable to God, and safe to man; so that here, and here only, God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly; here, and here only, truth and mercy meet together, "righteousness and peace mutually embrace each other."

Again: They are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. They have access to God and to the grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, in the use of the various means and ordinances of divine appointment, both private and public. Especially in prayer, they cry Abba Father, and God owns the kindred in accents of comfort and consolation. Moreover, they are received to an increase of grace, whereby they "die unto sin and live unto righteousness, put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness;" in which way they are enabled to persevere to the end of life, and attain complete meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Finally: They are received to consummate glorification, consisting in complete eternal deliverance from all sin and sorrow, and the uninterrupted vision and full fruition of the great *Three-One*, forever. As yet, "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

In conclusion: I infer, that salvation, the salvation of man is of God. He devised the plan,—infinite wisdom found the ransom. The eternal Son *trod the wine-press of the Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him.* And he needed none; for his own arm was competent to bring salvation. The Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in the great and mighty work of *application.* The holy scriptures adopt the very terms which ascribe *it* to the most High, namely, *creation* and *resurrection.* Hence, “if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.” “Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Again, “you hath he quickened,”—that is, raised up to life. Now, no power, short of Omnipotence, can create, that is, produce a something out of nothing. No other power can raise the dead. This glorious fact is established by the very state and condition of the sinner. He has destroyed himself, and in himself is no help, no strength, no might, no power; he is morally, as bones, dry, very dry, having a *heart* of stone, totally devoid of the least particle of *moral* life. But why all these strong and very expressive terms, but to teach man his true state as a sinner, and his own utter inability to extricate himself from the horrible pit and miry clay into which he has plunged himself, and to induce him under the *conviction* to cry to the hills from whence all his help must come, or with the publican, to say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Where is boasting then? It is excluded: by what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.” The humble, empty sinner receives *all*, and gives nothing but a sinful *soul* and *body*, condemned and unworthy. Therefore, the following is the sweet labor of the heart and tongue of the saved, in all ages, and under every dispensation of God's grace, “Not unto us, not unto us: but to thy name give the glory.” Paul said, “By the grace of God, I am what I am.” The whole family in heaven, rejoice only in Christ, and him crucified, “saying, with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.’” Amen.

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SERMON XXXVI.

BY OBADIAH JENNINGS, D. D.

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ON THE NECESSITY AND DUTY OF PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL.

MATTH. 28:19. *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.*

THE evangelizing of the world, is an object which has filled with wonder, those higher orders of intelligent creatures, a little below whom, man in his pristine innocence and glory was placed. It is a subject which occupies, and which is worthy the mind of the "only wise God." It is the glorious result of "that eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The grand design originated in the everlasting love of God, and the greatest missionary was his own Son, his "elect," in whom his "soul delighteth."

When this great Missionary, who came forth from God, had finished, by his obedience, even unto death, the work which his Father had given him to do, when he had not only been "delivered for our offences," but "was raised again for our justification"—and just before he visibly ascended from Mount Olivet to that mediatorial throne, where, at the right hand of God, he now sits exalted "a Prince and a Savior for to give repentance, and forgiveness of sins"—he came and spoke to the eleven disciples, saying, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." After such a preface, asserting a claim so extraordinary, and yet so well founded, it might naturally be expected that the triumphant Redeemer would utter something of unspeakable importance. Accordingly, as "Head over all things to the church," and invested with all possible and rightful authority, he gave to his disciples, and through them to his ministers and their successors, in all succeeding ages, the honorable and important, but arduous and oftentimes dangerous commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

In the discussion of this subject, it will be my object to *refute some opinions* which oppose the teaching of the gospel to all nations; and to *show the duty of christians*, heartily to engage in the missionary cause.

I. *By showing that all nations stand in perishing need of the gospel.*

II. *By exhibiting its benign influence on nations; and especially, its blessed effects on many individuals of which nations are composed.*

That all nations stand in perishing need of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is a position, which is either directly or virtually denied by too many in our country, who assume the christian name. Nor are there wanting, even in the councils of our nation, those who have lifted up their voice and exerted their influence in direct opposition to the missionary cause, and the command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. By such it has been alleged, that man is so constituted that he is as *infallibly guided by a law of his nature*, in seeking after happiness and God, as are the brutes by a natural instinct, in the pursuit of that which is necessary for the support of animal life. Opinions such as this are usually held and inculcated by men as profligate in their conduct as they are infidel in their sentiments. And, however palpably absurd they may appear to the discerning and reflecting part of mankind, they are, nevertheless, too likely to exert a pernicious influence upon the minds of many, to permit them to pass without animadversion. That all such opinions virtually deny the fall of man and the consequent depravity of human nature, and are in direct opposition to the whole tenor of God's word, and especially, his express declaration, that "none" (by nature) "understand" or "seek after God"—is too plain to need any illustration. We are, however, aware, that the moral perceptions of men of sceptical minds, are so obtuse as to render them insensible to the majesty of divine truth, and incapable of feeling the force of an argument drawn from this sacred source. It is, nevertheless, calculated to excite at least some surprise, that in conspicuous places, there should be found men either so grossly ignorant of the state of the heathen world, or so hardened in bold infidelity, as to maintain their absurd opinions in opposition to the most stubborn facts.

What! Is man so infallibly guided in his researches after God and the way in which he may find acceptance with him? What, then, mean the unnatural austerities which are practised, the voluntary tortures which are endured, the many suicides which are committed, and the multitudes of human sacrifices which are offered by the heathen, with the avowed purpose of gaining the favor of their God, or a happy state of futurity? Why does the deluded ascetic lie upon a bed of spikes? Why the order of men who have the right arm stiff, withered, and raised above the head until it becomes incapable of being removed from that unnatural position? Why do others surround themselves with large wood fires, so near as almost to scorch,

while the vertical sun beats upon their bare heads? and when he has sunk beneath the Western wave, why do these same deluded creatures remain the greater part of the night plunged to the neck in water; thus through a succession of many days and nights, alternately, experiencing the greatest extremes of heat and cold which human nature can endure? Why do none of the Hindoos die with the hope even of temporary happiness, except such as commit suicide by drowning or burning themselves? Why is the languishing Hindoo, who is deterred from seeking a death so horrible, brought to die by the side of the Ganges? and while there, if man is guided as by instinct in his return to God, why is he heard to express his fearful apprehensions not only that he is just about to assume some reptile form, but that he must experience many millions of such like transmigrations before his spirit can again be united to a human body? and in the midst of this distressing perplexity, why is he heard to pray to the Ganges to receive him, and to his idols to have mercy upon him?

Inquiries such as this might be multiplied until the face of the infidel opposer of christian missions would, if it were possible, be mantled with shame. But of this we are almost ready to despair. We cannot, however, here forbear the reflection, how multifarious are the works as well as the devices of the "god of this world," whereby he supports his usurped but tottering dominion.

2. But there are many others, who would by no means be ranked among the enemies of the cross, who, nevertheless, seem to think the situation of the heathen nations of the world, if not so favorable as that of those who enjoy the gospel and its privileges, yet that it is far from being so deplorable as the enthusiastic advocates and supporters of missions would represent—that every circumstance considered, they have an *equal chance* for salvation with those who have their dwelling in Zion!

This sentiment seems to savor so much of liberality—of charity—of expansion of mind—that many are ensnared and captivated by its meretricious charms; while those who hold the opposite opinion are often branded with bigotry, with illiberality, with a want of christian charity, and even with malevolence. This, however, is no matter of surprise. They who maintain the truth as it is in Jesus, must expect to bear his reproach. We, therefore, do not hesitate to assert, that this unscriptural sentiment is working a more extensive injury to the missionary cause, than all the direct and avowed opposition of the open enemies of our God and his Christ.

It is not our intention to examine the question, particularly, whether a heathen can possibly be saved without a knowledge of the gospel obtained in the *ordinary* manner. Let the affirmative of this question, if it is desired, be conceded. But still I contend the heathen are in a perishing condition by reason of their lack of knowledge. The word of God expressly declares, that "where there is no vision the people perish." And all the information which we have received of the actual state of the heathen, confirms this awful truth. It establishes the fact, not only that they are wretched in the extreme, but wicked; cruel, impure, abominable: and surely, it need not be shown, that none of all their religious principles, or unclean rites, or murderous sacrifices, can purge their guilty consciences or purify their polluted

hearts, or fit them for the presence and enjoyment of God, who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Though their sins may not be so heinous, or their guilt so aggravated, as though they had sinned against the clear light and knowledge of the revealed will of God; yet, as they have all sinned against the *light of nature*—as they are by nature corrupt, and by practice guilty—as their hearts "are deceitful" "and desperately wicked"—as their minds are "carnal" and "enmity against God"—as "there is none other name given under heaven among men," whereby any of a fallen race can be saved except the name of Jesus—and as this name is unknown to the heathen world *generally*—it follows, that continuing in this state, (though they will not be judged by the written law of God, or fall under the same aggravated condemnation as those who have known but still neglected their master's will) they must perish in their sins.

Men, therefore, may boast of their liberal views and their freedom from the shackles of superstition—of their philanthropy and enlarged good will towards all men: but what will all this avail the numerous millions of the human race who sit in the region and the shadow of death, unless their opinions excite them to active and unwearied exertion to meliorate the condition of the heathen world. The opinion which I am endeavoring to prove to be false and deceptive, so far as it obtains, necessarily cuts the sinews of exertion and paralyzes the arm which is extended to rescue a world lying in wickedness. Let this principle and its opposite, be tested by their legitimate consequences—"By their fruits ye shall know them."

But this is not all. The natural tendency of this principle, which is "so false and yet so fair," is to dishonor the Son of God, and to degrade his finished and stupendous work. If the heathen nations of the world can as well be saved in their ignorance and impurity and sin, as through the knowledge of Christ crucified and the power of his resurrection—why did He, "who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant—and why did he become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? Why this infinite condescension? Why this astonishing humiliation? Why all this waste of labor and of blood!! Would Heaven be thus lavish of its best treasure? Would the Son of God thus shed his own blood to purchase that salvation, which is nevertheless attainable by other means or through some other expedient? What, I ask, means the commission and the solemn charge given by our Lord to his disciples and apostles: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations"—"Go ye, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? And, in the execution of this commission, why did they act as under the fullest conviction that all men, by nature, are "children of wrath," and that according to the *ordinary* mode of God's dealing with sinners, there was no possible method whereby they could be rescued from deserved destruction, unless through such a knowledge of the gospel as would render it the power of God unto salvation? Why did they go, with haste, from place to place, from one city unto another, and from one heathen nation unto another, until the apostle of the Gentiles in one of his letters could say, the gospel had come "in all the world"—in all the *then* known world? Their conduct cannot admit of an expla-

nation on any rational principle, if we reject *that* given by the great apostle himself: "That I might by all means save some."

This leads us,

II. *To exhibit the benign influence of the gospel upon nations; and especially, its blessed effects on individuals, of which nations are composed, as incentives to its universal propagation.*

1. There are effects of the gospel which are *visible*, palpable, and undeniable, which when duly considered, ought to induce all men in every christian country to engage in this great work. What is it, that causes the amazing contrast between that portion of the world usually termed christendom, (especially those parts of it where the principles of the reformation from popery have obtained,) and every other country or region which has not partaken of the illumination of the gospel? Why is it that we, in this new and western world, are so far elevated above the numerous nations and unnumbered millions of some parts of the old world, with all their natural advantages? Why is it that we have made, and still continue to make, such rapid advances in literature and the arts? What has so raised the tone of morals in most of our states? Why do we enjoy such excellent civil institutions? Why are not only "the rights of man," but the rights of woman too, so well understood and so securely guarded? Why is it that the cruel and wicked effects of superstition and idol-worship are not experienced here as they are in some parts of the old world? Why is it that many infants are not, as soon as they are born, slain by the hands of their own parents? Why are not others every month cast into our rivers as an acceptable sacrifice to devils? Why are not our widows seen to ascend the funeral pile of their deceased husbands, willing victims to the devouring flame? Why do we not behold our citizens collected in vast numbers, and from distant parts of our country, to celebrate the rights of idol-worship, ever marked by obscenity, and cruelty, and blood? Why do we not see here and there a Golgotha, strewed with the skulls of those who devoted themselves to death, by falling prostrate before the creaking wheels of the massy car of some abominable idol? Why is not our highly favored country a moral waste? Why are not its inhabitants, and why are not we enveloped in a thick veil of ignorance? But *one* answer, consistently with *reason* and *truth*, can be given. "Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us," and glorious streaks of light emanating from the "Sun of Righteousness," have, in a good measure, dispelled the shades of night.

And although it accords with the method of God's dealing with his servants and people, to try their faith and patience, as well as all their christian graces, the success which has eventually crowned almost every effort to extend the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom in other parts of the earth, clearly shows, the Lord is not unfaithful or slack in the performance of his promises. In taking a view of the state of the world, we cannot turn our eyes eastward, or westward, or northward, or southward, but we behold the wondrous success of missionary labors, and the triumphs of the cross over idolatry and pagan superstition. Surely God is now saying to the north give up, and to

the south keep not back. Surely this is at least the dawn of the day when it was foretold, men should cast their idols which they had made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and the bats. Surely the day is not far distant, when all kings shall fall down before Him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and when all nations shall serve him.

2. These effects may be said to be both *visible* and *invisible*. The force of one (and that which is the most important) branch of this argument, cannot be perceived or felt by those who have not, after the manner of his true disciples, "learned Christ," or have not by him been taught the truth "as it is in Jesus." We allude to the effects of the gospel upon the hearts, and hopes, and characters of men; when it is "made the power of God unto salvation." The power which it then exerts, or rather the power which God himself thereby exerts, as well as the effects of that power, are truly wonderful. Thereby a fellow-sinner is raised from his state of misery and degradation, pollution and condemnation, to the image as well as the favor of God. His relation to God is altogether changed, so that he is no longer a condemned rebel, but a child.

There is produced in his soul, that spiritual life, which "is hid with Christ in God"—that life which shall never have an end—that life which enables the subject of it to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." However unintelligible these things may be to some, we doubt not, there are many who feel with thankfulness to God, the force of this part of our argument, and are ready to say, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

From this brief view of this subject, we come to a conclusion which ought to be highly interesting to every citizen of this federate republic, viz., that *only the influence of the gospel, with the blessing of God, can preserve this nation in possession of its present blessings.*

What else can possibly support this mighty fabric, which has never had its parallel from the foundation of the world? What has *hitherto* preserved, and more especially, what can in time to come preserve, *the union* of these states, so essential to our happiness and freedom, notwithstanding the great increase of their numbers and our vast acquisitions of territorial limits? Under this view of the future prospects of our country, what is it that can give *energy* to our laws or *stability* to our civil governments?

We know, indeed, that senators and statesmen, and, indeed, too many of all that class of the community who are famed for their political wisdom, are prone to lay great stress, and to rest their confident hopes upon the admirable structure of our government, the justice of its principles, and the wisdom and equity of its laws and institutions; as well as upon their adaptation to the wants, the views, the feelings and even the wishes of the people. But whatever may be said (and we, with pleasure, admit that much may with truth be said) in praise of our government and laws, still, they must largely partake of the imperfection which characterizes man in his fallen estate. Did not the ties, therefore, which bind these states together, derive their chief strength from a sense of the *obligations imposed by the gospel*, they would long ere now have been broken, as the green withes which bound the mighty Danite. And were there not principles, more efficient

than any which can be derived from the nature of our government, and the wisdom of its institutions, to counteract the corrupt propensities and to control the evil passions of men, to deter them from the commission of crimes and to induce a ready obedience to the laws, our rulers might as soon guide the tempest, or gather the wind in their fists, as to render those laws efficacious for the safety and happiness of our citizens, or the stability of our civil institutions. It cannot be too deeply lamented, that "the wisdom of this world (which) is foolishness with God," is so generally prone to undervalue or overlook the real source of all that is truly valuable in this life, or that which is to come. And especially, that those who are called to hold the reins of government so frequently seem to be in a great measure ignorant, how absolutely necessary is the gospel in its purity to support a free government, especially such as ours, and to give efficacy to laws enacted by freemen. Was it not for the continued and repeated instruction which the due administration of the gospel imparts, the duties which it inculcates, and the performance of which it strictly enjoins, the hopes and the fears which it inspires; did not the gospel require men "to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake;" did it not enjoin every "soul to be subject to the higher powers" as ordained of God—and did it not teach, that "whosoever resisteth rightful power, resisteth the ordinance; and that they that resist receive to themselves damnation," our *written statutes* would prove totally inoperative. They would furnish no redress to the injured, no shelter to the oppressed. It is ever the *sanction* of a law, that prevents it from being a nullity. Our laws derive their chief support from the word and gospel of God. And what must be the state of morals? What the extreme wretchedness and degradation? What the awful wickedness and profanation? What the ignorance of all that is desirable to be known, by all classes in our community? And especially, what, at last, what must become of their immortal souls, unless the progress of the gospel be in some good measure commensurate with the progress of the settlement of the extensive wilds of our country, and the increase of its population!!

But, brethren, we would not dissemble here, or conceal from you the absolute defect of your motives, if you are actuated by no higher principle, than that general philanthropy which is common to most men, or even the purest love of country, and zeal for its best interests. This is considered, nevertheless, by many, as the standard of human perfection, and indeed it may be termed the *ne plus ultra* or extent of our nature. To principles higher than these, our unrenewed nature can advance no claim. But, believe me, much more is required to render our services an offering of a sweet smelling savor to God. *They must proceed from a principle of supreme love and regard to God, and love to men, for HIS SAKE who "gave himself for us."*

Lastly; we conclude, that an increase of a genuine missionary spirit needs to be diffused throughout the church of God in all its branches, so that all nations may be taught. You know, it matters not what is the physical power, and what are the resources of a nation—in vain do its rulers declare war, unless a corresponding spirit be excited and kept up in the great mass of its population. So, also, unless the church at large partake of the spirit of missions, which is no other

than the spirit of the Lord Jesus, unless they have the same mind that was in Christ, which led him to *do* and *suffer* all that was necessary to accomplish the redemption of this ruined world, this great work *must languish*. The hands of those who are engaged in it must "hang down," and their knees must prove "feeble,"—and the conquests which have already been achieved, will not prove what they are intended to be, the pledges of more enlarged and glorious victories. This spirit is all we want. Means and resources there are in abundance. The Lord has been pleased to endow many of his true followers with a large portion of this world's goods. Besides, the gold and the silver, although it be in the hand of the wicked and the covetous, is the Lord's. The beasts of the forest are his, and "the cattle upon a thousand hills." Yea, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Resources, therefore, are not wanting. Besides, the Lord is daily raising up men, who, when they shall hear the voice of the Lord saying, "whom shall I send, and who will go for us," will be ready each one to respond, "here am I, send me." But **WE WANT THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS** to bring these resources, and these men into active operation. Until this is obtained, even christians themselves, will be prone to content themselves with detached, limited, and interrupted efforts, and contributions; and, with a few cold and heartless prayers, all which will avail but little.

SERMON XXXVII.*

BY DAVID ELLIOTT,
OF WASHINGTON, PA.

THE GROUNDS OF LAMENTING THE DEATH OF A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS 8:2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

THE practice of mourning for departed friends prevailed from the earliest ages. Thus we find Abraham mourning over the tomb of Sarah, and the Israelites lamenting the death of Jacob, of Moses, and Aaron. These expressions of sorrow continued for different periods of time, according to the rank and circumstances of the deceased. The most common term was seven days; though for Jacob, they mourned seventy days; and for Moses and Aaron, thirty. On occasions of this kind, they gave full vent to their feelings, and evinced their deep sorrow by fasting, lying on the ground, weeping, tearing their clothes, beating their breasts, walking barefoot, pulling out their hair, with other like expressions of frantic grief. In this respect, the Jews were particularly distinguished. Accordingly Suetonius informs us, that while at the funeral of Julius Cæsar, a multitude of foreign nations expressed their sorrow, according to their respective customs, the lamentations of the Jews exceeded all the rest; and that they continued about the funeral pile all night together.

Although in the mode of expressing their sorrow for departed friends, the ancient Jews might have been extravagant, the practice itself is founded in nature, and approved by reason. Hence, it has been continued through all ages, and been adopted by all nations. I do not recollect any people so barbarous as to evince no sorrow at the death of friends. Such insensibility, though it is sometimes found in degenerate bosoms, is not the sin of human nature.

This kind of sorrow is also approved by christianity itself. When Lazarus died, "Jesus wept." Can any one, then, condemn those feelings which vent themselves in expressions of sorrow over the tomb of departed worth? 'Tis the honest impulse of nature. And there are often reasons of great importance to show that such expressions of sorrow are not the unmeaning offspring of instinctive feelings or vitiated habits.

The death of Stephen, though attended with some animating circumstances, furnished matter of deep regret to the church of God. Though he died with a noble intrepidity, highly consolatory to his christian friends, they were too sensible of their great loss, and that of the church of God, not to make great lamentation over him, as they carried him to his burial.

* Occasioned by the death of Obadiah Jennings, of Nashville, Tennessee.

Without confining myself to the peculiar circumstances connected with the death of this christian proto-martyr, to which I may have occasion to refer before I am done, what I design from these words is *to show the grounds of that sorrow and lamentation which are occasioned by the death of a minister of Jesus Christ.*

In estimating the grounds of sorrow occasioned by the loss of a minister of Jesus Christ, we must view him in the different relations in which he stands *to his family, to civil society, to the church of God, and to the world at large.* His loss to each of these, is one of great magnitude, sufficient to occasion the deepest lamentation.

I. In the death of a minister of Jesus Christ, *his family* (if he has one) *have sustained a serious loss.* 'Tis not a light affliction to any family, to have a christian head removed from its midst. To the companion of his life, who looked to him for counsel and protection; to his children and domestics, who were accustomed to receive his paternal instructions and admonitions in relation to all that stood connected with their temporal and eternal interests, his removal is a calamity of no ordinary kind.

But to a minister's family, his loss is incomparably great. There is a peculiarity in their case, which renders them objects of the deepest sympathy. Even during a minister's life, it is well known that his family have, in many cases, very hard measure dealt out to them. His wife is considered a suitable object of remark and censure for every one.

His children—how great their deprivation! The children of ministers are more exposed than those of other men. Every one around them, who hates religion and loves the pleasures of sin, labors to find an apology for his conduct, in that of the children of his minister. Hence, plans are devised, and efforts made to seduce them into sin, and to make them the companions of those who delight in mischief. The fact is notorious. The history of ministers' griefs too well attests its truth. What a heavy loss, then, is it to such a man's family, to be deprived of its pious head? If his living counsels and example could scarcely withstand the strong current of temptation, which threatened destruction to his children, what will come of them when he is gone? Oh, it is enough to rend the heart, to think of the desolations which death makes in the house of a minister of Christ. Well may his friends, while they carry him to his burial, make great lamentation over him, when they look at his despoiled household. When, moreover, we add to this, that ministers, generally, leave their families poor, few congregations being willing to allow them more than a bare and scanty support; it is calculated to deepen their sorrows, and increase their wailings at his death.

II. In the death of a minister of Jesus Christ, *civil society has sustained a great loss.* It is not as civil officers of the state, that the removal of ministers is felt to be a public calamity. To such stations, they are rarely called, in this land of enlightened freedom. They ought not, indeed, to be disfranchised by the constitution of a country where all are entitled to equal privileges. But while their rights in this respect ought not to be taken away, it is not desirable in practice that the ministers of Christ should be elevated to civil stations in the government. And it is believed that few, if any, in our favored na-

tion, who understand and love their master's work, desire such an elevation. It is not in official stations in the government, then, that we consider ministers as useful to their country, or their removal as a loss.

But there are other respects in which they do civil society an extended service. It is well known, that as a class, ministers are the open and decided friends and advocates of rational liberty. So far as my information extends, this is true of the ministers of all Protestant denominations in the land. Respecting those of our own denomination, I speak with more confidence; for with them and their history, I am better acquainted. Presbyterian ministers will yield to no class of men in the country, in their attachment to the civil institutions of our government. Much as they have been abused, and are still abused by designing men, as aspirants after political alliances, they may safely appeal to their history, as a practical commentary on their principles and professions, in refutation of the calumny. They may go back, and with honest confidence refer to the annals of the American revolution in proof of their attachment and that of their fathers to those sacred principles which gave birth to our independence and happiness to our country. And at the present day, it is believed that none are more undisguised, nor more ardent in their support of the laws and institutions by which American rights and privileges are so fully guaranteed.

And is it no advantage to our country to have such a class of men as the ministers of Jesus Christ, consisting of not less than from eight to ten thousand of the various Protestant denominations, a large proportion of them learned, many of them talented and eloquent, trained to public speaking, and all the friends and advocates of liberty, who, when necessity calls, are prepared to stand forth in its defence and infuse its spirit into every breast? One such man, is a treasure to a community, and the loss of him is cause of deep lamentation.

But add to this, that ministers are, by office, the teachers of public virtue, the patrons and advocates of order, of morality, of obedience to the laws, of reverence to magistrates, of an elevated and enlightened regard to every institution bearing on the happiness of men in their associated condition. They are in short, the sworn heralds of a religion, which, while it proclaims first, and loudest, "Glory to God in the highest;" pours forth, with accents equally divine, "peace on earth and good will towards men." It is, moreover, the office and duty of ministers to rebuke vice, to check disorder, to frown upon the infraction of the laws, and to bring the principles of the gospel to operate in all their heavenly force, for the prevention of vice, and the reformation of those who disturb society by their crimes.

And is civil society under no obligations to such men as these? Are they not a public blessing to the community? I know that infidels would have it believed that they are a curse to the nation, and that they ought to be put down; and some weak people are silly enough to believe them. But what would come of the public morals, if there were no public teachers of religion and morality? What would bind society together, if the principles of the bible were withdrawn, as they would in a great measure be, by the removal of the heralds who proclaim them? The experiment was once tried. France, in the madness of her folly, closed the doors of her sanctuaries and her pulpits

against the publication of the gospel, by its authorized ministers—and what were the consequences? Degenerate as was the character of her priesthood, the consequences were of the most fearful kind. Society was torn from its base. It suffered disruption in all its parts. The throne and the altar were crimsoned with blood, and the sword and the guillotine were the arbiters of human fate. And let the ministers of Christ be driven from the exercise of their appropriate functions in our own country, and the time would not be far distant, when the tragedy of the French revolution would be acted over again here.

The prayers of godly ministers, also, for the civil and political prosperity of their country, is no mean benefit. How often, in ancient times, did the prayers of God's ministers, while standing "between the porch and the altar," avert the threatened judgments from those for whom they supplicated? And who can tell how much evil is averted, and how much good is secured to rulers and people, by the daily supplications of the ministers of Christ on their behalf? Although some of our State legislatures have refused to have daily prayers offered in their legislative halls for the blessing of God upon their deliberations, it is doubtless owing to the forbearance of God, in answer to the prayers of ministers and christians, that they are permitted to assemble and deliberate for the public good.

Viewing the ministers of Christ in their connection with civil society, under the different aspects, as the patrons and advocates of liberty; as the public teachers of religion and good morals; as the friends of God and of man, daily engaged in making supplication for their country, we cannot fail to be deeply impressed with the great loss which society sustains when any one of their number is removed by death. And every friend to society and his country, while he carries him to his burial, will make great lamentation over him.

III. In the death of a minister of Jesus Christ, *the church of God has sustained a heavy loss*. The prosperity of the church lies near the heart of every minister of Jesus Christ. "For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." To the service of the church he has been dedicated. For her appropriate employments he has been trained. On her ultimate triumphs, he has staked all his interests for time and for eternity. In him, therefore, she may calculate on a steadfast friend, and a zealous advocate and defender of all that pertains to her prosperity and glory.

I need not enter into any argument to prove the value and importance of the ministry to the church. The fact is palpable from their institution by the Head of the Church; from the nature of their functions; and from the benefits which, in different ages have resulted from their labors. Under every dispensation of God's covenants there have been ministers of religion, who have been recognized as vital parts of the system. Under the present dispensation, it was among the most important acts of the Savior's public life in relation to the order of the church, to commission ministers to labor for her good, by proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, and urging sinners to accept of mercy through the atoning blood of the Son of God.

It is true that ministerial agency is dependent on the blessing of God, for the beneficial results arising from it to the church. "I have planted, (says Paul,) Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So

then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." But with God's blessing, what have the ministers of Christ not achieved, in relation to the glory of the church? Let the history of the labors of the apostles in the primitive age of the church answer. Almost the whole of the then known world felt the influence of apostolic enterprise; and Judaism and Paganism alike dreaded the force of their eloquence, and the controlling power of the doctrines which they preached. Let the history of the Reformation also, in the 16th century, answer to this question. Who is ignorant of what Luther, and Calvin, and Melancthon, and an host of others did, to dethrone error, to banish ignorance and superstition, to disrobe truth of the filthy vestments which had been cast around her by her false friends, and to release the captive church from the slavery to which she had been subjected by a wicked and tyrannical priesthood? It is true, that they had helpers among the laity, who nobly sustained them. But the ministers of Jesus Christ led the van, in this holy contest for truth and the souls of men.

I might point you also to the later results of missionary labor, in proof of the efficiency of ministerial effort. Who shed the light of salvation on the dark minds of the savages of our forests, and introduced them to the blessings of civilization? Who taught the Greenlanders to sing of Jesus, and trust in his atoning blood? Who carried the gospel to India? Who ventured to set his foot on the ground stained by the blood of his brethren, and preach the gospel successfully to the ferocious inhabitants of Otaheite? Or who raised the sluggish mind of the Hottentot to the throne of God, and poured into it the vivifying streams of the water of life? There is but one answer. *They were the ministers of Jesus Christ.* Courageous men! What does not the church of God owe them for their self-denial, and zeal, and laborious efforts in her holy cause? To others, we would not deny the glory to which they are entitled in this work. But historical truth will require that the most prominent place be assigned to the ministers of Christ.

And what would the church *at home* do without ministers? Would religion prosper? Has it ever prospered for any length of time, without the labors of ministers? Or, has not the reverse been true? Are there not examples enough of particular churches suffering dissolution and death for want of ministerial labor? The fact is notorious, and goes to show the value of ministers to the church of God, as an integral part of her prosperity, and the great loss which she sustains when any of them are called away by death.

There are particular emergencies in the church, in which the loss of an able minister of the New-Testament is a peculiar affliction. There are times, when above all others, his presence seems almost indispensable to the prosperity and safety of the church with which he stands connected. Such was the time in which holy Stephen was cut off by the unrelenting hand of persecution. The church was in her infancy. She was in the midst of powerful and malignant enemies. The storms of persecution were gathering in thick and fearful gloom around her. Her integrity was threatened; the foundations of her faith were impugned; learning, and talents, and eloquence, Jewish prejudice and heathen superstition, all united in giving an impulse to

the power which threatened her extirpation from the earth. For the ground that she occupied, and the conquests she had won, she was indebted, under God, to the labors of her ministers. In Stephen, she had found an able defender of her doctrines, a bold and fearless champion of her rights; a man, the lightning of whose eloquence flashed conviction upon the hearts of his hearers, and the heavenly benignity of whose spirit sought pardon for his murderers in the very arms of death. In this crisis of her affairs, how could the church do without Stephen? What need had she for his counsels, his constancy, his theological attainments, his persuasive eloquence, and his heaven-born spirit! His death seemed like tearing out her very vitals, and laying her loftiest energies in the dust. No wonder that devout men, while they carried him to his burial, made great lamentation over him.

And are not such men always a loss to the church, in times of peril and rebuke? To the Presbyterian church at this time, it is an affliction of no small magnitude, to have an able, prudent, zealous, godly minister removed from her midst. Such men are needed to guide her councils, to defend her doctrines, to sustain her piety, to rebuke her slanderers, and to give an impulse to her zeal for the promotion of the Redeemer's glory. It is not every man who is furnished to meet such a crisis as the present; who is thoroughly acquainted with the standard doctrines of the church, and able and willing to defend them, when assailed by the enemies of the truth. When, therefore, ministers who are gifted for times like these are taken away, the loss to the church is peculiarly great, and she is called to lamentation and mourning whilst they are carried to the tomb.

IV. In the death of a minister of Jesus Christ, *the world at large has sustained a loss.* Let not the infidel smile at this remark. It is by the doctrines of the gospel, which the ministers of Christ are commissioned to preach, and the accompanying energies of the spirit of grace, that the heathen are to be enlightened and the world brought back to God. To preach these holy doctrines is the appropriate business of every minister of Christ. To give them extension and power over the hearts of men, is his most delightful employment. In this respect, he is emphatically the friend of man, and the benefactor of the world. His plans and his labors have for their object, the moral and spiritual renovation of every inhabitant of our globe. His is not the infidel charity, which would erect palaces and endow seminaries of learning, whose dying inmates should never be blessed with the sound of salvation by the blood of God's eternal Son, proclaimed by the commissioned heralds of the Redeemer of the world. But with a benevolence as expansive as the globe, he would send the gospel throughout the whole earth, and have it proclaimed by the messengers of God, in every hamlet and in every palace, in the midst of the haunts of ignorance and the halls of science, that all might be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and obtain salvation and eternal glory in the heavens.

For these blessed objects the minister of Christ labors: for these he prays: for these he enlists the sympathies of his fellow christians, and opens the hearts and the hands of the benevolent to contribute of the substance which the Lord has bestowed on them. And it is impossible to tell how far the efforts of a single minister of Christ may extend

in promoting the general interests of the world. If he does not go himself, he may by his preaching and his prayers, and his contributions be the means of training some pious youth, who may go to the heathen and be instrumental in converting thousands to God. The plans which he devises, and the energies which he elicits, may reach in their effects to the ends of the earth, and tell upon unborn millions of our race.

What a loss, then, is it to the world, when a minister of Jesus Christ is removed from the earth? When one who thus feels and labors for the cardinal sorrows of our race is consigned to the tomb? It is no ordinary calamity, no insulated bereavement. The world has lost a friend. The human family has been bereaved of a benefactor.

Having thus pointed out the grounds of sorrow occasioned by the death of a minister of Jesus Christ, the way is prepared for noticing the grounds of that sorrow in which we are called to indulge at the news of the death of my worthy predecessor, and your late Pastor, the Rev. Obadiah Jennings, who died at Nashville, Tennessee.

As a member of civil society, the loss of Dr. Jennings will be felt. From his early education and habits, he was, doubtless, well skilled in the economy of civil society. At the bar and in the council chamber, he had learned the character and the strength of the evils, with which our political and social system had to contend; and could pronounce from experience upon the excellence of our laws, and their effective power for all the purposes of salutary government. In common with his clerical brethren, he was the ardent friend of civil liberty. He wanted no alliance of church and state. He would have tolerated none. He understood the interests of the church and the principles of civil liberty too well, to desire or advocate that which would prove ruinous to both.

A man so meek, and peaceful, and unpretending, as the deceased was, must also have been peculiarly valuable to the social circle in which he moved. In times of public excitement, when society was tossed and distracted by the unhallowed influence of party strife, we can readily conceive of the beneficial results arising from the gentle breathings of a spirit so affectionate and heavenly as his. His very example, one would think, would be an host in allaying the excitements of party, and infusing a spirit of peace and love into the breasts of contending combatants. In this respect, his death is doubtless a loss to society.

As the friend and patron of literature, civil society has also reason to deplore his loss. In this, he evinced his regard for his country, and his attachment to her institutions. No man is a greater enemy to his country and its prosperity, than he who is the advocate and patron of ignorance. For if ever our liberties perish, it will be when *ignorance*, with all her brood of kindred vices, shall have snatched the reins of government from the hands of intelligence and virtue. Every friend of learning, then, who is called away, is a loss to the country; especially one whose influence was so great as that of him whose death we this day deplore.

But it is especially to the church of God, that the removal of Dr. Jennings is a loss. His entire devotion to her interests none can

doubt, when it is recollected that he abandoned a lucrative practice at the bar, for the sake of becoming her humble minister, on a salary which was insufficient to defray the ordinary expenses of his family. That he was thus willing to make a sacrifice of his worldly interests, that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to perishing sinners, is strong proof of the ardent desire which he felt to be instrumental in promoting the highest interests of the Redeemer's church on earth. And how faithfully he sustained her interests and her honor, you all know. From what we know ourselves, and have heard from others, his exhibitions of scriptural truth were always lucid and solemn, and often convincing and powerful in a high degree.

Of his elevated character as a debater, he had often given evidence on the floors of our ecclesiastical assemblies. His speeches (and we have had the happiness to hear some of them ourselves) were always marked by perspicuity, intelligence, sound argument, and well balanced discretion. His eloquence, so far as we understand its character, was not the lightning which flashed, nor the thunder which roared, filling the heart with awe; but it was the clear, strong, vigorous current, which carried his audience willingly and with self-complacency to the place of destination. In theological debate, when called to defend the doctrines of his own church and of the Bible, against the encroachments of heresy, the annals of the church, will give him a deservedly high rank.

In the estimation of his ministerial brethren, Dr. Jennings was regarded as a wise, sagacious, dispassionate counsellor, whose judgment might be relied upon in times of difficulty and distraction in the church. His sound, discriminating mind, his great experience, his devotion to the standards of the church, and his mild and heavenly spirit, marked him out as an efficient agent in allaying the agitations, and conducting to a sound and healthful issue the existing distractions of the Presbyterian church. But Dr. Jennings is gone. In him the church has lost an able champion and ardent friend. He is gone from the conflicts and trials of the church militant on earth, to enjoy more peaceful scenes in the church triumphant in heaven. The church to which he belonged, and of which he was a minister, mourns his death.

Nor let it be thought extravagant to say, that the death of this philanthropist is a loss to the world. He was the friend of our race. He sought to have the gospel preached to every creature, to send messengers into every land, and to have the light of salvation shed down upon every dark place on the earth. Of his labors and his prayers on this behalf, you have all been witnesses. The loss of such a man, therefore, as this, whose benevolence was as diffusive as the dimensions of the globe, is one which every friend of man is called to mourn.

But while we mourn his death, we are animated with the assurance that our loss has been his unspeakable gain. His life was that of the righteous, and his last end was like his. With holy composure, he gathered his family around his bed, and having given to each his dying counsels, commended them all to his covenant-keeping God. Having done this, he departed in the full hope of a happy resurrection, and a glorious immortality in the presence of his God and Redeemer.

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THE HOUSE OF GOD DESIRABLE.

PSALMS 84: 1, 2. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

IN the patriarchal ages, the pious had no particular place or consecrated edifice, where they offered up their worship to God, but wherever they happened to reside, there they erected altars, on which they offered sacrifices, agreeably to the original institution; and, sometimes, consecrated pillars, by anointing them with oil, to be memorials of some remarkable transaction. But in the time of Moses, while Israel remained near Mount Sinai, a command was given to build a tent or tabernacle for the worship of God, of the most precious materials. The quality and workmanship of these were specified with the utmost particularity. The form and dimensions of this sacred structure were also revealed, and it was positively directed that every part of it, even to the loops and pins, should be made in conformity to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount. Around the sacred tabernacle, a spacious court was enclosed, within which stood the altar of burnt-offerings, and the laver for the purification of the priests. While the Israelites sojourned in the wilderness, the tabernacle moved or remained with them, and the pillar of fire and cloud which rested on it, by night and day, was their constant guide. But when they had conquered the promised land, SHILOH became the permanent residence of the house of God. For several hundred years, even to the time of Samuel the prophet, the tribes were accustomed to assemble for the celebration of divine worship at this place. But in the time of David, the ark of the covenant, after its return from the

land of the Philistines, was brought to Jerusalem, where king David had erected for it a new tabernacle on a piece of ground, which, by divine direction he had purchased from Araunah the Jebusite, at the time of the destructive plague by which so many thousands of the people were cut off.

Here, on Mount Zion, was henceforth the sacred place where God met with his people. But the devout king of Israel was not contented, that now, when the nation was rich and powerful, God's worship should be celebrated in a moveable tent: he, therefore, by divine permission, resolved to erect a costly and splendid temple, adorned and furnished with the greatest possible magnificence. During the life of David, however, the tabernacle continued to be the place of worship; for, although God approved of his pious purpose to build him a house, yet he chose that the work should be executed not by him, but by his son and successor, Solomon.

While there was only one place where God recorded his name, and one house where he gave tokens of his presence, it was a precious privilege to enjoy the opportunity of frequent access to the courts and to the tabernacle where divine worship was daily and periodically celebrated; and where such rites were performed, and such objects exhibited, as were calculated to strengthen the faith and enkindle the devotion of the pious.

But it was especially desirable and pleasant to enter these courts, and join in the solemn worship of the sanctuary on those sacred festivals, which, by divine appointment, were periodically solemnized: at which times, the scene was rendered peculiarly impressive and interesting, by the number of appropriate and significant ceremonies which were exhibited; and by the eager multitudes of people who attended from every part of the holy land.

On these solemn occasions, it must have been a delightful spectacle to behold the thousands of Israel, of every age and condition, coming up to the house of the Lord, and presenting themselves before the God of Jacob, with their respective gifts and offerings. Who can tell, with what rapture the bosom of the devout worshipper swelled, when his eye caught the first glance of that holy and beautiful house which contained so many expressive and mysterious emblems of Jehovah's presence, and of Jehovah's grace! The worship of God in the tabernacle or temple was, doubtless, to the pious Israelite, a most solemn and affecting service. In it the ancient saints took exceeding great delight. Therefore, we find in the Psalm from which our text is taken, and many others, an expression of the most ardent desires to enjoy the privilege of joining with the people of God in the worship of the tabernacle; and the most pathetic lamentations, when by any circumstance, the psalmist was prevented from attending the public worship of God, celebrated in this sacred edifice. "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" And the liveliest joy was expressed upon the pros-

pect of entering these sacred courts. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." And in our text; "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts:" and in verse 10; "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The essence of spiritual worship is the same under all dispensations; the same to the believing Israelite and the devout Christian. They had the same object of worship, for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the Christian's God. They exercised faith on the same Messiah; trusted in the same promises, and hoped for the same reward. The devotional exercises of the true worshippers under the old and the new dispensation were not different. Humble penitence, ardent thirsting after God, joy and confidence in his mercy and faithfulness, and fervent gratitude and praise, were common to both of them. Pious Jews and Christians, also, equally delighted in drawing near to God in his house. Here, under both dispensations, much was found to strengthen faith, to encourage hope, to elevate the affections, and to fill the troubled heart with consolation.

And the courts of the Lord are still sought after, and rejoiced in, by all the true Israel. The solemn pomp of ceremonies, it is true, no longer strikes our eyes; the mysterious veil has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the mysteries of the most holy place have been revealed; the mercy-seat is now accessible to all believers; and the spiritual SHECHINAH, or GLORY OF GOD, is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. No longer is it requisite to pour out daily, the blood of lambs and bullocks, which is not efficacious for the removal of guilt; but it is ours, to present by faith the sprinkled blood of that Lamb, which "cleanseth from all sin."

If the worship of God, under the gospel, has less in it to strike the senses, and affect the imagination, it presents before the mind of the pious worshipper, the object of faith much more clearly and strongly. The method of reconciliation is no longer hidden under shadows and types; but the "new and living way" is rendered so manifest, that he that runs may read.

In the sequel of this discourse, I propose to explain what those considerations are, which have always rendered the HOUSE OF GOD so DESIRABLE TO THE PIOUS, both under the old and new covenants, or dispensations.

I. The COURTS of the Lord were highly prized by the pious of old, because, upon entering the sacred enclosure, they were permitted to behold the altar of burnt-offerings, on which, morning and evening, an unblemished lamb was offered unto God, and on which his blood was sprinkled. There is no want, which every true penitent feels to

be so urgent, as his need of pardon; and as it is an unchangeable principle, in the divine government, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission," no object of contemplation can be more interesting to such, than an atoning sacrifice. And, although, the blood of these sacrificed animals possessed no efficacy to purge the conscience; yet, they served as types to represent, in a lively manner, the real and efficacious atonement which God was about to provide. And a believing Israelite was not only privileged to behold at a distance the blood flowing from the altar, but to be himself the offerer, the scene was still more impressive, and his faith had a more evident ground on which to rest. In this case, the humble penitent was permitted to come near to the altar, and with confession of his sins, to lay his hand on the head of the victim, before it was slaughtered: as much as to say, may my guilt be transferred to my surety, and may he bear the punishment due to my sins. Then when he beheld the devoted animal sinking under the deadly stroke, and his quivering limbs laid upon the altar to be consumed, and the priest in his sacred garments receiving the shed blood, and sprinkling it on every side of the altar, and pouring it out at its foot, could any other language have taught him more significantly and impressively, that his pardon could in no other way be secured, than by the shedding of blood, and by the infliction of the punishment due to him upon a substitute? Every soul, therefore, which was deeply conscious of guilt, and thirsted for pardon, would ardently desire to enter the courts of the Lord, where he might fix his believing eyes on the sacrifices which exhibited by anticipation, "THE LAMB OF GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world."

And what is it now which renders the house of God desirable and delightful to the pious Christian, but the doctrine of atonement which is there exhibited to his view, in the word and sacraments of the church? This is what causes him to long and faint for the courts of the Lord. Take away all idea of an atoning sacrifice for sin, and what is left that can much interest a soul oppressed with a sense of guilt and deserved punishment? Without the doctrine of an atoning sacrifice, the gospel would be no glad tidings; it would be but an empty sound. The church of God in that case would present no object of ardent desire to convinced sinners: the tabernacles of the Lord would be no longer amiable. The burdened soul would go away unrelieved; the thirsting soul unsatisfied. The sound of joy and thanksgiving would, in that case, be no longer heard in the courts of Zion. O Christian, what is it in the church of God which most enlivens and comforts your heart? Is it not "the Lamb slain"—"the blood of sprinkling"—"the cross"—THE REDEEMER, wounded for your transgressions, and bearing your sins in his own body on the tree? And what in the preaching of the gospel do you find most attractive and edifying? Is it not "Christ crucified?" Wherever, then, this precious doctrine is plainly and fully inculcated, thither will the sincere seeker of salvation resort. And as long as the world stands, the tabernacles

of the Lord will be amiable, when the people can find there a healing balm for a wounded conscience.

The next conspicuous object in the court of the Lord's house, was the laver of purifying water. This, was a lively figure of the "sanctification of the Spirit." Christ came both by water and by blood. So, when he hung on the cross, and was pierced to the heart with a spear, the disciple who bore witness saw a double stream, of blood and water, issue from his side. Here justification by his blood, and sanctification by his spirit, were emblematically represented. Every sincere believer earnestly desires to partake of both these rich benefits; and on account of both, the tabernacles of the Lord are amiable and his courts desirable. How delightful is it to those who abhor sin and loathe its pollution, to come to a fountain open for the washing away of sin and uncleanness? The doctrine of regeneration and sanctification by the sovereign and supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, has ever been precious in the eyes of true christians. And as these blessings are usually bestowed through the instrumentality of the word and ordinance of the church, therefore, the house of the Lord is rendered exceedingly desirable. There, the word is like a purifying bath, and the influences of the Spirit descend as the gently distilling rain. "Let us draw near, then, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

There is no more decisive evidence of being an Israelite, indeed, than a habitual and ardent desire after universal holiness. The "new creature" breathes after complete redemption from the bondage of iniquity; "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," and never can be satisfied until he is filled. The name of JESUS is peculiarly precious to his people, because he saves them from their sins. The antinomian hypocrite desires exemption from punishment, and boasts of his liberty from the law, while sin has dominion over him, and while his pollution is not cleansed. But the truly regenerate knows that Christ came not to be the minister of sin; and that the end of his death was "to purchase a peculiar people," whom he would redeem from all iniquity, and render zealous of good works. God's house is to his people lovely, because it is a holy house. Holiness was, in the tabernacle, inscribed on every person who ministered, and on every utensil used. Every thing which came near to God must be purified; no unclean person or thing was, on any account, permitted to be brought into the sanctuary. And, now, by the grace administered, by means of the word and sacraments, the souls of believers undergo fresh purification from time to time. Here, as in a laver of pure water, they are washed again and again, from the filthiness contracted by too close a contact with the world: and knowing the value of this cleansing, the pious greatly delight in the courts of the Lord: and when prevented from the enjoyment of this privilege, their spirits long and faint, and their very flesh crieth out for the living God. "As the hunted hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My

soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?"

3. As the court contained objects of deep interest to the true penitent; so also did the tabernacle itself. On entering this sacred edifice the first thing which would engage the attention of the observer, was the golden candlestick, with its seven branches and lamps, constantly illumining the holy place. This was undoubtedly an emblem of the knowledge of divine truth. The natural light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the light of the sun: but blessed above expression, are they who have the light of divine truth continually beaming upon their souls. God is a sun unto those who are privileged to walk in the light. But as the natural sun is too bright for our eyes, with safety and comfort to gaze upon it, without the interposition of some medium, to mitigate his burning splendor, so the light of God's glory is too dazzling for the contemplation of human beings; they are overwhelmed and blinded by the exceeding brightness of his countenance. God is said, therefore, "to dwell in light which is inaccessible and full of glory, whom no man hath seen or can see." *But in the church this glorious light is manifested in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the sun of righteousness; and here, without losing any thing of its clearness, its intolerable brightness is mitigated, and accommodated to the weakness of our vision. The divine perfections, by being exhibited in the person of the Mediator, and by being revealed to us through his human nature, are capable of being contemplated by the believing soul, as with open face. This view, however, is transforming; "for we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord." The truth of God revealed in his word, and illustrated by the Holy Spirit, is the light of the soul. All those who know not the truth are in "darkness and walk in darkness, and know not whither they go;" but they who are taught of God are "children of the light and of the day." Christ is to them "the true light,"—"The sun of righteousness, with healing under his wings." And as in the natural world, the sun itself is the object rendered most brightly conspicuous by his own rays; so CHRIST is the object most distinctly revealed by the light of divine truth. That is a false light which does not exhibit Christ in his mediatorial work and offices. How pleasing to enter a room which is illumined by a clear but mild light, rendering distinctly visible all objects in the place: such a light radiated from the lamps of the golden candlestick, in the holy place. This light, like the holy fire, there is good reason to think, was never suffered to go out; for even in the day-time it was needed, as the tabernacle had no window for the reception of the light from without. Thus the lamp of divine truth, since it first began to dawn upon the world has never been extinct, and will go on to shine brighter and brighter, until the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea. And as this light still shines in the house of God, the spiritual worshipper rejoices to go thither, that he may be enlightened with its life-giving rays. Therefore, he cries out, "How amiable are thy taber-

nacles, O Lord!" Here, in the church, are now seen the golden candlesticks, and one walking in the midst of them, who is no other than the Son of man. "One thing," said the royal psalmist, "have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his holy temple."

4. Another significant emblem in the holy place of the tabernacle, was the table of shew-bread: on which were placed twelve loaves of bread, in two rows, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. These loaves were covered with frankincense, and were renewed every Sabbath morning; and those which were removed were eaten by the priests within the sacred inclosure.

As food is absolutely necessary to the subsistence of the body, according to the laws which regulate the animal economy; and as bread is the chief article of food, and therefore called, "the staff of life," it furnishes an expressive emblem of that grace and truth by which the soul is nourished in the spiritual life. When the body is in want, hunger impels us to seek for bread, and to go wherever it can be obtained. In vain do we endeavor to satisfy the cravings of hunger with any thing but food. The most precious metals and jewels will be spurned by one perishing with famine, unless they can be made available to procure nourishment. The soul needs nourishment as well as the body; the soul is famished while it has nothing better to feed on than the husks of this world. But a gracious God has made ample provision for our spiritual refreshment. He has prepared "a feast of fat things," and the invitation is gone out, "that all things are ready;" and that there is room and a welcome, for all who will come. This feast is exhibited in the courts of the Lord: it is presented to all believers, in the word and sacraments of the church. Here CHRIST, the true bread, that came down from heaven, may be eaten. The hungry soul may here feast on the hidden manna. Here, the body of Christ, broken for us on the cross, is meat indeed. Here, also, babes in Christ are fed with the pure milk of the word, and grow thereby. Under all dispensations, bread has been an emblem of that grace which nourishes the soul. In the wilderness God prepares a table for his people; and as there is no stint of spiritual provision, his language to them is, "Eat, O friends, drink, O beloved." On every holy Sabbath, the bread is renewed: the ministers of God, by the faithful preaching of his word, bring forth the precious food, and when the table of the Lord is spread, there is a rich feast for God's hungry people. His kind inviting language to them is, "O taste and see that God is good. Blessed is every one that trusteth in Him." Well, then, might the psalmist exclaim, when for a season separated from the house of God, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

5. But in the holy place there was still another interesting object: it was the altar of incense. Every morning and evening sacred perfumes were here burnt, by a coal taken from the altar of burnt offer-

ings. The ascending smoke, the sweet savor, and the officiating priest, exhibited, in an impressive manner, the prayers of the saints, and the intercessions of our great High Priest. How pleasing the assurance, that the prayer of faith enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth! Our sincere petitions rise before him, like the savor of the precious incense from the golden altar. But our imperfect prayers can only be made acceptable through the kind and continual intercession of the High Priest of our profession. In allusion to this altar, the pious psalmist sings, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands, as the evening sacrifice." There is a remarkable passage in the Revelation of John, which seems to have a relation to this subject. "And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came up with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God, out of the angel's hand."

There is no stronger inducement to bring the pious near to God than the assurance that He is the hearer of prayer. This, in fact, is our only accessible way of approaching our heavenly Father. No greater privilege, therefore, can be enjoyed by the believer, than prayer; and he is so sensible of this, that nothing in the world could induce him to forego this exercise, or to abandon a throne of grace. That house, therefore, which is emphatically called "the house of prayer," is amiable in his eyes. His soul longs to be present with the assemblies of praying people. He loves to mingle his desires, petitions, and praises with theirs. In these social and devotional exercises of the congregation of God's people, he finds unspeakable pleasure. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house; even of thy holy temple." "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."

6. But the tabernacle of the Lord was not only amiable and interesting, on account of what was visible, but more so on account of those sacred objects which were concealed from the eyes of the people, and even of the common priests. Between the HOLY and the MOST HOLY place, was suspended a rich, impervious veil, which concealed from view the ark, and all the other mysterious emblems of the sacred place. Beyond this veil no one was ever permitted to pass, except the high priest; and he only on one day in the year—the great day of atonement; when with the blood of the sin offering, and a censer of incense, he went to make atonement for his own sins, and those of the people. The worshippers in the court and in the sanctuary well knew, however, what was contained in this most holy place. They well knew, that the divine glory visibly rested over the ark, and that there was the propitiatory, or mercy-seat, and the golden cherubim, with their expanded wings and emblematical faces. Their reverence and profound adoration would, therefore, be the more ex-

cited by the awful mystery which hung over this part of the tabernacle; and as they approached the house of God, they would be filled with holy exultation, and would be ready to exclaim, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord!" "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The **INFERENCES** from the subject treated, are

1. The benefits and pleasures of public worship being thus great, we ought so highly to prize the house and ordinances of God, as never to be absent from his courts, unless providentially prevented from attendance. This subject brings a solemn admonition to many, who suffer a trifling obstacle to prevent them from appearing in the temple of God, when the regular period of public worship comes round. Professing Christians, who thus act, despise their own mercies. They loathe the children's bread, by which alone they can be nourished. They love darkness rather than light, or they would come to the place where the "true light" shineth. They are insensible of their own pollution, and the value and sweetness of moral purity, or they would frequent the fountain where their filthiness might be cleansed. They know not the malignity of the disease by which they are infected, and by which their life is threatened, or they would assiduously attend on the great Physician, and make use of the remedies which he prescribes. And as to the multitudes who are seldom or never seen in the house of God, it is, perhaps, useless to address an admonition to them, because they are not likely to peruse a discourse of this kind; but if, for a moment, I could gain their attention, I would say, deluded mortals! you know not what you are doing. You are pursuing happiness, and yet turn your backs upon the only true source of felicity. You neglect preparation for another world, and yet you stand upon its verge. Suffer one word of exhortation from a fellow-traveller to eternity, who seeks your salvation. Turn from the evil, reckless course, which you are pursuing. Turn unto God and live. Turn towards Zion—towards the temple of the most High, where safety and happiness only can be found. Turn seasonably—that is, *instantly*; lest, when his wrath is kindled, you perish forever, with the workers of iniquity. "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." And that you may receive safe directions into the way of life, go, I beseech you, to the house of God—frequent his courts—listen to his word, and obey his commands. And then you will also join in saying, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord!"

2. This subject also reproves those, who, for the sake of earthly gain, emigrate from a region where they enjoyed the privileges of God's house, and go, with their families, far into the wilderness, where

there are no churches, no Sabbaths observed, no sound of the gospel, except from some chance itinerant. Here their children grow up without the beneficial training of the church, and without the salutary and powerful influence of religious society. They grow up nearly as wild as the savages whose places they occupy. There are thousands of families who have thus sacrificed spiritual for the sake of earthly blessings: who have preferred fat lands and rich crops, to the pleasures and benefits of the church of God. They may have obtained for their children a worldly inheritance, while they have put them entirely out of the way of securing for themselves an inheritance among the saints in light. Solemn will be the account which such persons must give for turning their backs upon the house of God, and removing their children, consecrated to God, perhaps, in holy baptism, from the church into which they were initiated, and from all the means of grace. God may, in some instances, have over-ruled it for good, by planting germs of gospel churches in the bosom of the wilderness; but this does not lessen the guilt of those who deserted the ordinances of God, without any reason to expect that any spiritual good would ensue.

I am not opposed to emigration. In this land it is the order of Providence to fill up the unoccupied parts of the earth; but I would have christian people to emigrate with the ark and the priesthood in their midst. Let them first provide for the instruction and spiritual edification of their families, and then let them go forth wherever Providence may direct them. Let them only be careful to follow the leadings of the pillar of fire and cloud, and pitch their tents wherever God may direct.

3. But finally, I feel my heart moving me to say a word to such as are still, unhappily, far from the tabernacle of God, whether thus separated from the ordinances of public worship by their own fault or not. In such painful circumstances, I know, there are found many of God's dear children; but when the Sabbath comes, no church-bell announces the approach of the hour of preaching. No temple of God rears its top towards the skies; yea, no humble tabernacle of the felled trees of the forest opens its doors to receive them. They are doomed to silent Sabbaths. They cannot but reflect with a mournful pleasure on the privileges and enjoyments of former days.

Dear brethren; I sincerely compassionate your condition, and would suggest a few words of counsel suited to your present destitute circumstances. If you have any pious neighbors, or any who have any sense of the importance of religion near you, however small their number, invite them to meet with you for the social worship of God, and for the reading of his holy word. "Where two or three," says Christ, "are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Be not backward to take a part in these social exercises. Though you may be weak in the gift of prayer, the mere effort will be acceptable in the sight of God; and he often wonderfully strengthens the weak, and aids those who go forward in the performance of

duty, in humble dependence on his help. Be not discouraged, although many obstacles should oppose your attempt. Persevere, and God may cause "a little one to become a thousand." From such a beginning, a flourishing church may take its rise. In these social meetings, on the Sabbath, make it a point to catechise the children, and give them good advice. And as a substitute for preaching, let a discourse or religious tract be read by one of your number. A sermon out of Boston, Burder, Davies, Walker, Scott, Newton, or Witherspoon, will often be found exceedingly refreshing, and will be likely to have a very salutary effect on your children. I have known such social meetings to be eminently blessed, in the absence of the public ordinances, in preserving the spirit of piety from becoming extinct.

But I would earnestly beseech you to spare no pains to get the gospel preached among you, by a faithful minister. Go to the nearest presbytery, when met, and supplicate with importunity for aid. Take no denial; but hang upon the skirts of the servants of God, until they consent to visit you. This advice will also apply to many vacant churches. These are often so far removed from settled ministers, that they are seldom supplied with preaching; and often the elders neglect to gather the people together at the house of God. This is a fault to be censured. It is the duty of every ruling elder, in the want of a pastor, to do his best in giving the people instruction. He must not preach, but he may exhort the people to the performance of duty. He may instruct the ignorant by familiar conversation; and he may and ought to catechise the children, in the use of the excellent catechisms of our church. And it is his bounden duty to read an edifying sermon to the destitute flock. There is in my neighborhood a little society of Quakers, who have no speaker among them these several years; and yet they never fail to go to their meeting, where they sit in silence, unless some *public friend* comes along. Will not these punctual Quakers rise up in judgment against many of our vacant congregations?

SERMON XXXIX.

BY S. C. JENNINGS,
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THE NATURE AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICE OF RULING ELDER.

Acts 20:17,18,28. *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them,.... Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.*

THE interesting circumstances under which the apostle Paul delivered the preceding advice, and the whole subject of his discourse on the occasion, can be ascertained by a perusal of the sacred narrative. He spoke to persons who had received their official character and qualifications from the Holy Ghost. He enjoined on them certain duties, and taught them that great care was necessary to their performance.

I. WHO WERE THE PERSONS DESIGNATED BY THE APPELLATIONS, "ELDERS," "OVERSEERS"?

Overseers and bishops were the same persons. The same word, translated in the text "overseers," is translated in Phil. 1:1, *bishops*. The same is done elsewhere in the epistles. Elders and overseers were the same kind of officers, called by different names, as appears from the passage under consideration as the text. The persons who are called elders in the 17th verse, are denominated overseers in the 28th verse. That an elder and a bishop, in the New-Testament, signify the same personage, is also manifest from the Epistle to Titus, 1:5,7. The apostle giving direction to "ordain elders," describes the qualifications of the *same* persons, by saying "a bishop must be blameless," &c. It farther appears from the duty of bishops being also assigned to elders. "The elders which are among you I exhort. Feed the flock of God that is among you, *taking the oversight thereof.*" 1 Peter 5:12. They are, then, used convertibly in the sacred volume.

The word translated, usually, elders, is also properly rendered presbytery. (1 Tim. 4:14.) So that elders, overseers, bishops, presbytery, *all refer to the same class of persons.* An elder, or presbyter, signifies, literally, an aged person. Though in the Jewish church

the name corresponded generally to the fact, it does not seem that in the time of the apostles, elders were always persons advanced in life. Elders are distinguished into two classes by the apostle Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy 5:17. "Let the *elders that rule well* be accounted worthy of double honor; especially, *they who labor in the word and doctrine.*" An elder, that labored "in the word and in doctrine," bore, sometimes, the extraordinary office of an apostle. Peter, in his first epistle, 5:1, says, "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am *also an elder.*" Also, 1 John 1:1. 2 John 1:1. Others mentioned in the New-Testament were public laborers in the word, and ruled in the church, but were not inspired apostles. Some such joined in the ordination of Paul and Barnabas, and are spoken of (Acts 13:1) as "teachers."

The other class of elders, we believe, are described (1 Cor. 12:28,) as "governments," and by the apostle Peter, as the "elders that rule," because that was the leading feature of their office. And the exhortation of the apostle, (Rom. 12:8,) "he that ruleth, with diligence," was intended especially for them. They are elsewhere spoken of in common with the teaching elders. This we believe to have been the fact in regard to those who came at Paul's request from Ephesus to Miletus, and to whom he gave the instruction of the text. They were all equally charged with the duty of overseeing the flock, and of causing it to be fed; which is entirely consistent with the idea of only one or more attempting in a public manner to teach or preach. The duties which the apostle enjoined on them will be considered incumbent, of course, on all who bear the like office in every age of the church. To those, then, who have been called, by a saving influence on their hearts, giving them a desire and qualification to do good, and to glorify God as ruling elders; and who have been called to that office by the voice of the church, we will apply the advice of the apostle, by considering,

II. THE DUTIES OF RULING ELDERS.

1. They are to rule in the church of God. According to the form of government of the Presbyterian Church, "ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, in conjunction with pastors or ministers." For this, and for other purposes, they are to be "overscers." They are included in the references to rulers, Heb. 13:17. 1 Thes. 5:12,13. They are to take their seats in judicatories of the church as the elders spoken of Acts 15:4,6, that they may consult and carry out the will of Christ. They are to decide who are worthy to be church members, and on cases of alleged offence according to the statutes of Him who is Head over all things to the church." They are never to contravene his laws by legislation. They are, in their individual capacities, to oversee those admitted to the privileges of the church, that they do not depart from the truth and duty; to "admonish" alone, if the offence is of a private nature, to report to the whole

representatives of the church, those, who prove intractable. To perform these duties they must truly be overseers, which implies that they must be doers.

2. The ruling elder is to "*feed the church of God.*" He is to perform the office of a shepherd towards it, as the word signifies.

Besides being subject to the ordinary duties, binding on all ordinary christians; to "exhort one another daily;" to "save others, pulling them out of the fire;" to labor to be the instrument of converting the "sinner from the error of his ways;" he is bound, from his office, to give private instruction, and to procure, if possible, public instruction. To feed the flock, he must visit the members, (or he cannot know their wants,)—exhort them, pray with them, especially the sick, James 5:14. He has not the faith of miracles—they have ceased—therefore he need not anoint the sick with oil, as was formerly done.

3. He must take heed to *all* the flock. He must comfort the aged and "feeble minded;" watch over and guard the youth,—the lambs of the flock; instruct them in Sabbath schools, and teach them the catechisms. He is to be faithful to the rich; not to pass by the poor, "preferring one before another;" to enlighten the ignorant of every age and color, taking heed to *all* over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer. If this be done extensively by the teaching elder, who is to give himself "wholly" to the work of the ministry, there will be the less for the ruling elder to do. If there be no such one, then he and his associates should devote themselves more particularly to these duties,—especially to guiding the *anxious* and inquiring.

4. An elder is to *take heed to himself.* "Take heed to yourselves." The particulars in himself, to which the elder should take heed, are sufficiently enumerated by the apostle in his epistle to Titus from the 6th to the 9th verse inclusive, which see. But here, I may be met with the objection, that this portion of sacred writ was intended for teaching elders, *exclusively.* It has already been shown that the term bishop, is synonymous with the *generic*, or general term, elder. As the apostle has not applied it to the species who "labor in the word and doctrine," so no other one has a right to do so, any more than he ought to confine it to ruling elders. And according to a rule of interpretation, the passage should have the most extended application, unless circumscribed by the Holy Ghost. But it may be said, that the elders which Titus was to ordain were to be, like himself, teaching elders, because it is said in the 5th verse, "ordain elders in every city," as I *had appointed thee.* It should be known, however, that the word rendered ordain, in the first of these members of the sentence, is altogether a different word from that translated "appointed" in the last clause. The primary meaning of the latter is, *to command*, and the translation, according to its strict meaning, would be ordain elders in every city, as I *commanded* thee. If so, the apostle did not refer to his manner of ordination of Titus; but he was only repeating a former direction.

Moreover, the Greeks used the original word, translated *city*, when speaking of a village also; and here "it is applied to both." He

might find villages where there was a sufficient number to constitute a church, with ruling elders and a teaching elder, but he would scarcely ordain a plurality of laborers "in word and doctrine" in a small church. That *this* portion of the epistle was not intended to apply exclusively to teaching elders, seems evident, from the fact that the apostle says nothing about the bishop being "apt to teach," as he does in the passage somewhat similar in the 3d chapter of 1st Timothy.

He is to "hold fast the word as he *hath been taught*," that he might do that which it was lawful for a ruling elder to do, "exhort and convince the gainsayers." (Tit. 1:9.) An elder should take heed to acquire food in order to feed the flock. He has the bible, other books and sources of instruction, and the promise of the Spirit, so that if he be ignorant, he is inexcusable. Seek the wisdom promised, James 1:5.

He must take heed to be "holy," Tit. 1:8—seek to "grow in grace." Without piety, he will be worse than useless. If he have it buried in the rubbish of this world, if it is in a declining state, he will neither have a *heart* for his duties, nor perform them to the advantage of others, nor to the honor of God. He should be "sober," or prudent, as the word in the original more strictly means. Prudent in speech—in retaining what is not necessary to be told—in all judicial measures—in all his conduct. That he may know how and when prudently to encourage, commence, or carry on *process* against supposed offenders in the church, he should carefully study our "BOOK OF DISCIPLINE." His prudence should not be that *spurious* kind, which is ever and anon pleading, it is *not prudent*, when the plainest duties are to be performed; which is continually saying, "there is a lion in the way." This, dear brethren, is the offspring of sloth and cowardice, not of genuine, fervent piety.

An elder or bishop should take heed to be "blameless." He cannot always be exempt from the slanders of the wicked, who "say all manner of evil—falsely;" but he must not be *really* wanting in integrity of speech, in the fulfilment of promises (if possible,) in honest dealings. He must be "just," (Tit. 1:8,) or there will be no confidence in him "as the steward of God."

"He must have a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach." If he think to attain it of the wicked by neglect of duty, or by conniving at sin, he will surely secure their contempt and reproach; for though they may be gratified with his unfaithfulness, they will be the *first* to speak of it.

An elder must take heed to be "vigilant" in seeking for opportunities to do good; for elders, or overseers, "watch for souls, as they who must give account." Heb. 13:17.

An elder must not be "self-willed." He must not mistake obstinacy for independence of mind; nor be self-conceited.

He must not be "soon angry." If he cannot govern himself; how can he govern "the church of God?" He should be soon reconciled; "let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

He must be of "good behavior." Not vain, or given to "filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient."

Eph. 5:4. Not a "brawler," but grave in conversation; not morose.

He must not be "given to wine." The pure juice of the grape may be used for the "stomach's sake," and for his "often infirmities," if he be diseased, or on marriage, or "communion" occasions; but he is not to be given to it, much less to "strong drink." He should be "temperate" "in all (lawful and expedient) things."

He must be no "striker," except in defence of life, and not then if he is about to suffer for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Matt. 5:39. Luke 9:24.

Not given to "filthy lucre." He is not to neglect his duties to attain it, nor make his office subserve avaricious purposes, nor given to attain it by unjust methods, or an unchristian business. He should not let his love for it keep him from sustaining the important benevolent societies for extending the Redeemer's kingdom, nor cause him to approve misrepresentations of them.

He must be "patient" with the wandering, refractory part of the flock, of which he is a bishop, like the great "Shepherd and Bishop of souls."

He must take heed that he be "a lover of hospitality." "Entertain strangers,"—especially them who are of "the household of faith." He should have a public spirit, ready to "do good unto all men," according "as God hath prospered him."

He should take heed to be a "lover of good men," of every denomination, and of every age, and of every condition. As such, he should defend them when assailed unjustly by the *common enemy*. He must not dislike, through envy, his brethren of the eldership because of superior attainments or gifts, nor refuse to sustain the teaching elder in the discharge of his duty.

From this subject I remark,

1. That the New-Testament affords no countenance, from the import of the official appellations, for the distinction between superior or diocesan bishops, and ordinary elders, who "labor in the word and in doctrine."

2. How wise is the arrangement of the Head of the Church! He has left some particulars of church order, to be adapted by her uninspired rulers to the circumstances in which she is placed; yet, he has designated such officers and made such *general* regulations as would promote her increased energy and glory, if they were properly sustained.

3. If the preceding description of what should be the character and qualifications of a ruling elder, and of what are his duties, be correct, how important is his office, and what a weight of responsibility rests upon him! And yet how lamentably deficient are many who bear the office!

4. Lastly: It may be evident that the duties of the office of ruling elder are not sufficiently fulfilled, when he aids in receiving and rejecting candidates for full communion in the church, when he helps to distribute the elements in the Lord's Supper, when he occasionally consults with the other members of the session, and when he takes his seat in other church courts.

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SERMON XL.

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THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPEL.

1 TIMOTHY 1:5. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

THE sentiments expressed in these words form a perfect contrast to those which Paul, before his conversion, entertained in relation to Jesus Christ and the gospel. While the malicious prejudices of a Pharisee rankled in his breast, he verily thought that he did God service in persecuting the followers of the Redeemer. His own confession, concerning his former bitter opposition to christianity is in the following strong and candid language: "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." Before King Agrippa, he acknowledged again, "I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them."

Under the influence of this hostile rage against the innocent unoffending disciples of Jesus, we find him applying to the high priest at Jerusalem, and desiring of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. But how memorable in the history of Paul's life, and how important to the church of Christ, was that remarkable and happy event by which his whole inhuman plot was frustrated! He had advanced far in his journey, and had almost reached Damascus, where his murderous spirit was to have vented its malignant rage against every devoted follower of the Redeemer who might fall in his way. But while this furious, persecuting zealot was meditating vengeance, the benevolent Savior surprised him with a most signal display of his mercy. Then it was, that a great light suddenly shone around him from heaven, and he was so overpowered

by the radiance of that light, that he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* This divine expostulation came home to the heart of the infuriated persecutor with a resistless energy, and in a moment all his prejudices were overcome, he was melted down in penitence and holy submission, and in the spirit of an humble and genuine disciple he immediately inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Very shortly after his conversion, by divine commission, Paul commenced preaching the faith which he once endeavored to destroy. His zeal in preaching the word, and his activity in promoting the cause of Christ, was greatly superior to that with which he had formerly opposed it.

The office of the ministry, he justly esteemed peculiarly honorable and sacred, and frequently in his writings takes occasion to express his grateful sense of the divine goodness in committing a trust so holy, and so important, to him. To this pious and devout feeling he had just been giving vent in our context. In the three verses immediately preceding the text, he uses the following humble, grateful, and ardently pious expressions, "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." His former furious zeal in persecuting the church of Christ, he appears ever to have recollected with deep humiliation, and with most affectionate gratitude to a God of sovereign and boundless mercy, who could not only pardon his enormous guilt, but also, appoint him to preach the faith he had labored to destroy. Under this feeling of pious humility and deep self-abasement, he adds yet further, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." In the text St. Paul sends Timothy an epitome, or brief abstract of that gospel which Jesus Christ had commissioned him to preach, and of which Timothy was probably at that time a student. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

We shall consider, and endeavor to improve this subject under the following propositions:

I. *The world is in such a state as to render a Savior absolutely necessary.*

II. *It is a faithful saying, or doctrine, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

III. *This faithful saying is worthy of all acceptation.*

I. *The world is in such a state as to render a Savior absolutely necessary.* Two circumstances in the condition of fallen apostate man, will demonstrate his absolute need of a gracious and almighty Savior, his *guilt* and his *impotency*. That all men are sinners, is a doctrine believed by every one who believes the Bible. Guilt, or liability to punishment, is the just and inevitable consequence of sin. The law of God being "holy, just, and good," necessarily condemns man for every unholy action. The divine law requires a *full* and *perfect* conformity to all its precepts, both in the *state* of our hearts

and in the *character* of our actions. If we fail in one point, *only*, we are necessarily subjected to its righteous penalty; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law of God is *immutable* in its nature, and *indispensable* in its obligations. It never can approve of sin, or hold and treat the transgressor of its sacred requirements as guiltless. It is, and will forever remain true, "that the wages of sin," (its just punishment) "is death." The perfect law of God must for ever exclude from the felicities of a holy heaven, every creature that is not perfectly holy and upright. For the same reason it must forever consign the unholy and the impenitent to the pains and penalties of the prison of Tophet. If these plain remarks be founded in truth, every sinner on earth must despair of being justified or saved by his own righteousness. Either God's righteous law must *relax* in its holy and immutable requirements, or man, sinful, impenitent man, must be subjected to its everlasting curse. The necessity, therefore, of a Mediator, to make an atonement for our guilt, is obvious and undeniable. The holiness and justice of the Divine Lawgiver, and the indispensable claims of his righteous government imperiously require, that, if sinful man be pardoned and restored to the favor of heaven, some personage greater than himself should make *an expiation* for his sins, and satisfy, in his stead, the claims of violated justice. The guilty condition of the human family, or the undeniable fact that all men are by nature under sin and condemnation, is proof, amply sufficient, that a Savior was absolutely needed.

We mentioned, also, the *impotency* of fallen man, as another proof of the necessity of a Savior. By man's *impotency*, in this connection, we intend his inability by any works or endeavors of his own to secure or accomplish his own salvation. The apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, speaking of the love of Christ in undertaking the work of our redemption, takes particular notice of man's helpless state as a sinner. In chapter 5, verse 6, he writes thus, "When we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We could neither render to the divine law that perfect obedience which, from its holy nature, it necessarily requires, nor did we possess ability to endure its severe and righteous *penalty*. Our destitution of strength in these respects, rendered the benevolent interposition and gracious mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ necessary to the accomplishment of our salvation. It did not seem fit that the holy and righteous Governor of the universe, should pardon and save sinners without an adequate atonement. It pleased God to adopt such a plan of redemption as would be calculated to bring a revenue of glory to his own divine attributes. He determined to exercise his mercy towards the guilty upon principles which might display in view of the whole rational universe, the glorious holiness of his character, and show him to be a God of truth and righteousness, by the same dispensation which proves him to be the benevolent Savior of the lost, the helpless, and the miserable. Not only was fallen man unable to accomplish his own salvation by his own efforts; but there was no creature, even those of the most exalted rank, that could afford him deliverance. Every rational subject

of God's moral government is bound to render constant and perfect obedience to his law on his own account. The obedience, therefore, of *one creature*, could not be imputed to *another*. The righteousness of Gabriel, though absolutely spotless, could avail *only* for himself. It could not be placed to the account of any one of the human family. Hence it is plain, that the most exalted creatures could never do any thing to redeem their brethren of Adam's apostate race. It is equally obvious, too, that they could not endure, in our stead, the penalty of God's violated law. The mightiest angel in heaven did not possess strength sufficient to sustain the wrath and curse due to the injured justice of God for the transgressions of men. How certainly, then, how inevitably must the whole human family have perished forever, had not their help been laid upon a Redeemer, who is both gracious and mighty to save.

How shall man be just with God? was a problem which the wisest sages of antiquity were not able to solve. They saw convincing proofs of the apostate condition of man, and of his consequent liability to the penalties of his Creator's righteous law; but upon what terms the transgressor might be restored to the favor of God, and be blessed with a sure title to the glorious inheritance of heaven, was a subject veiled from their minds in impenetrable darkness, and one on which rested the appalling gloom of uncertainty and death. It is true, the idea of the infinite goodness of Deity was calculated to raise a faint hope of mercy, but the glorious and awful attributes of the *divine justice* and holiness would, at the same time, serve to throw dismal uncertainty over the hope of forgiveness, and would necessarily render the situation of the convicted delinquent unspeakably gloomy and distressing. In order to restore peace to the conscience of the convicted sinner, it is necessary that we should be prepared to give a certain and satisfactory answer to his anxious inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" On this momentous question, it is natural for the awakened sinner to wish to arrive at certainty. He cannot avoid feeling a deep solicitude to know on what grounds his multiplied and enormous transgressions can be expiated, and upon what principles a creature, so utterly unworthy as he feels himself to be, can be justified in the sight of a holy God. How a righteous and holy God can be just in justifying a vile rebel against his throne and government—how he can save with an everlasting salvation, in heaven, a rebellious sinner, whose just desert is the eternal miseries of perdition?

These momentous and interesting inquiries, blessed be God, are satisfactorily solved in the precious gospel of Christ. Our gracious Redeemer has, in his boundless benevolence, undertaken and accomplished every thing that was necessary in order to secure our salvation, and eternal felicity. "The Son of man is come to seek, and to save that which was lost." Because it was necessary to our reconciliation to a just and holy God, he shed his blood to be the "propitiation for our sins." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The gospel, we think, then, plainly teaches the necessity of a Savior to make an expiation for sin, and to deliver from guilt and condemna-

helpless sinners: who could not, in their own persons satisfy the law and justice of God; either by obeying the divine will in a perfect manner, or sustain the just penalty of the violated law of heaven. We proceed to show that it is a *faithful saying*, or doctrine, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. In proof of this doctrine, we may refer to the *various prophecies* of the Old Testament, in which the coming of the Messiah was, during a long series of ages, predicted, in connection with the history of their accomplishment as recorded in the New Testament. It may be confirmed also by a reference to the *life of Christ—his miracles—his death—resurrection*—and the *propagation of christianity*, notwithstanding the violent opposition made against it by the Jews and Romans,—and finally, its *blessed effects* upon those happy persons by whom it was sincerely embraced. On each of these topics we must be very brief.

In touching upon the subject of prophecy, we may look back to the first age of the world. Immediately after the apostacy of our first parents, we find upon record a gracious promise of an almighty and merciful Deliverer. In the very curse which God denounced against the serpent for seducing our first parents, a revelation of grace is made them; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." "Here," as Dr. Scott remarks, "is a prophecy and a promise which have ever since been fulfilling, but have not received their entire accomplishment." Jesus Christ, as every intelligent christian well knows, is the woman's promised seed, and when he "was manifested to destroy the works of the devil," it might be said that this important, and truly important prediction was proved to be founded in truth and faithfulness.

The next remarkable prophecy which we meet with in the Bible is found in the promise which God made to Abraham, when he called him to leave his native country, and his kindred, and directed him to go to the land of Canaan to sojourn there. The God of glory manifested himself to this venerable father of the faithful, and made this encouraging promise to him; "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall *all the families of the earth be blessed*." St. Paul has interpreted the blessing of Abraham, as importing the free favor of God which is conferred upon both Jews and Gentiles through the Lord Jesus Christ. He holds forth this doctrine clearly in his epistle to the churches in Galatia. "Christ, (he observes, chap. 3, v. 13th,) hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And then he adds, v. 14, "That *the blessing of Abraham*, might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ." This promise, which God made to Abraham, was virtually a prediction, that a Savior should be numbered amongst his descendants, in whom all the nations should be blessed. This gracious promise, or prediction, received its accomplishment in the advent of Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. The same promise was renewed to Isaac and to Jacob successively.

who were designated particularly by the sovereign Jehovah as the chosen heirs of the predicted blessing. It was specially revealed to Jacob, that the glorious Shiloh or Messiah, who was to come, should be a descendant of his son Judah. "The sceptre" (said the pious patriarch, in his dying address to his sons, which was throughout prophetic) "shall not depart from Judah," (meaning the tribe of that name) "nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." In after times, the family of king David was selected and designated as the particular branch of the tribe of Judah, which should be honored by giving birth to the Savior of mankind.

David wrote a number of plain and illustrious prophecies concerning the coming and glorious kingdom of the promised Messiah. In the 2d Psalm, he introduces the Lord Jesus Christ, himself, as solemnly announcing the eternal decree of the Father, by which he should be constituted the Mediator and supreme Head of the Church; "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree. The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." In his 22d Psalm, and in some others of his sacred odes, he has described various circumstances of our Savior's bloody passion and ignominious death, with as much exactness as any one could have done, who had been a witness of the whole tragical scene.

But we will pass on to the prophets, more particularly so denominated, and select a few from the numerous predictions in which they have foretold the coming of the Just One; and in which they have, with a divine pathos and beauty, described the glorious blessings of salvation, which, through his gracious mediation, are to be bestowed upon a sinful and ruined world.

ISAIAH enjoyed the clearest foresight of the glorious Messiah, and of the blessings and privileges of his kingdom of grace, of all the Old Testament prophets. There is a superior elegance and sublimity in the style of his predictions. In the following quotations there is a lustre and glory truly evangelical; chapter 9:2,6,7, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Chapter 11:10, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Chapter 40:9—11, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. He

shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Chapter 63:1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Chapter 45:22, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else."

Let us, in the next place, examine what predictions we can select in relation to the promised Savior, from the solemn and pathetic **JEREMIAH**. Chapter 23:5,6, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" In another part of his writings, this prophet has also spoken of the miraculous conception and birth of the expected glorious Messiah. Chapter 31:22, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man."

EZEKIEL was certainly inspired to foretell the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, and the flourishing state of his church, when he uttered the following prediction, chapter 34:22—24, "Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it."

In the prophecy of **DANIEL**, we find a remarkable prediction of the Messiah's sufferings to expiate the sins of his people. Chapter 9:26, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself." This prediction, was literally accomplished, when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on Calvary. He it was who suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that sinners justly condemned for their iniquities, by believing on him might be reconciled to God, and be made heirs of eternal life.

The prophet **MICAH** was inspired to designate the very town in which the Savior should be born. Chapter 5:2, "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

The prophet **ZEPHANIAH**, in the most animated and pathetic strains, calls the attention of the Daughter of Zion, or the church of God to the joyful advent of the promised Savior. Chapter 9:9, "Rejoice greatly O Daughter of Zion; shout O Daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Our blessed Savior fulfilled this prophecy when he entered Jerusalem riding upon an ass, and the whole multitude of the spectators on that memorable occasion understanding the subject in the same light, were for the moment greatly excited, and with ecstasy and rapture irrepressible, cried,

“Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

A brief quotation from the writings of the prophet MALACHI will close our chair of predictions. Chapter 3:2, “Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come saith the Lord of hosts.” The messenger first mentioned in this passage, was evidently John the Baptist, who was to be the harbinger of the Messiah, and was to prepare the way before him, and the “Messenger of the covenant,” who was so certainly in a short time to succeed John, was undoubtedly no less a personage than the divine Messiah himself, whose advent into the world had been so long foretold, and had for so many ages been the subject of ardent desire, and delightful expectation to the faithful people of God.

If we, now, my brethren, for a few moments, keep our attention fixed upon the prophecies we have been reciting from the Old Testament, and compare them with the history of our blessed Savior as we find it related in the writings of the four evangelists, do we not find a strikingly exact agreement between the predictions of the prophets, and the events recorded by the evangelists? The evangelist Matthew, in giving the genealogy of Jesus Christ, traces his descent from Abraham the father of the faithful, by Isaac the son of promise, then by Jacob, Isaac’s younger son, who inherited his father’s blessing. Next, he selects the tribe of Judah, and of that tribe points to the family of David, in which family he finds his descent. Who does not here plainly “see the blessing of Abraham” coming upon his posterity and upon all the nations of the earth, in exact accordance with the gracious promises which God appended to his merciful covenant with that ancient patriarch? The Messiah, agreeably to the record of the same evangelist, was born in Bethlehem of Judea, which served as a fulfilment of a prediction of the prophet Micah, which we have quoted above. And he was brought up at Nazareth, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.” For the tedious period of four thousand years did the church of God, travail in ardent expectation of the coming of the Just One. To this long desired, glorious and important event, the promises, types, and prophecies of the Old Testament dispensation all looked forward. In Jesus of Nazareth, we see every circumstance foretold and pre-figured in relation to the promised Messiah, receiving an exact completion. In the fullness of time, in wonderful and precise agreement with promises and prophecies uttered by the inspired patriarchs and prophets, the true Messiah hath appeared for the salvation of the church. He has graciously condescended to put away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of himself, and is “become the author of eternal salvation, to all them that obey him.” Horrid, indeed, is the ingratitude of those who reject the benevolent Jesus, and neglect the great and precious salvation which he died to procure for lost sinners. From such enormous guilt, from such black ingratitude, may we all be preserved.

The benevolent *miracles* wrought by our blessed Savior, while they were so beneficial to those persons who were privileged with being the subjects of them, afforded to the world at large the clearest and most conclusive evidences of his true and proper divinity, and of his mission into the world to redeem and save guilty, helpless, perishing sinners. To his *miracles* our Redeemer himself appeals, in refuting the unreasonable cavils of the unbelieving Jews. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." John 5:36. Surely the beneficent miracles which were daily performed by our blessed Redeemer ought to have served as a clear and convincing testimony of his proper divinity, and of his being sent of the Father, as the ambassador of his grace to sinful men.

The circumstances which attended the death of Jesus Christ corresponded with remarkable exactness with various predictions, which he himself had uttered in the hearing of his disciples before the mournful event took place; and which also precisely accorded with various prophecies. One of his professed disciples, for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed him into the hands of the Romans. The perfidy of wicked Judas had been foretold long before he was born. The ancient evangelical prophet had predicted, likewise, that Christ's *visage should be more marred* than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men; that he should be *put to grief, wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*. Do we not learn from the story of his last sufferings, that the inhuman soldiery, after profanely mocking the innocent Son of God, proceeded with unrelenting cruelty to buffet him with their fists, scourge him with knotty whips, then to crown him with piercing thorns, beating them with savage wantonness into his sacred temples, and finally glutted their own rage and the merciless fury of the Scribes and Pharisees, by crucifying him between two thieves on the hill of Calvary? In this very manner had the tragical sufferings and bloody death of the divine Messiah been described in the writings of the ancient prophets of God, many ages before he came into the world. They had predicted that his hands and his feet should be pierced, that his heart should be broken with reproach, and be full of heaviness, that he should look for some to take pity, but should find none; and for comforters, but none should be found; that his face should not be hid from shame and spitting, that he should be cut off, but not for himself, that he should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that he should make his soul an offering for sin, that he should make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness; that the chastisement of our peace should be upon him and with his stripes we should be healed. Can any man in the sober and unbiassed exercise of reason reflect upon these remarkable predictions of the prophets, and then read the story of the Savior's sorrows and agony in Gethsemane, and of his bloody wounds and anguish on the cross of Calvary, and not feel a thorough conviction that it is indeed a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!

The *resurrection* of Christ is one of the main pillars of our chris-

tian faith. If Christ be not risen, said Paul to the christians of the church of Corinth, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." We have reason to bless God that no fact recorded in the Bible is confirmed by fuller, or more complete testimony, than that of our Savior's resurrection. It is confirmed by the testimony of both his enemies and his friends. His disciples were chosen witnesses of this important event. On various and different occasions, they saw and conversed with their adored Redeemer, personally, after he was risen from the dead. Christ not only shewed himself to his disciples on several different occasions, but used the utmost pains, by many infallible proofs, to remove from their minds every doubt in relation to the reality and certainty of his resurrection. The risen Savior was seen not only of Cephas, or Peter, and the rest of the eleven disciples, but on another occasion, afterwards, he was seen, as St. Paul has recorded, of more than *five hundred persons at once*, of whom he remarked that the greater part were living at the time of his making the record.

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was also clearly proved and firmly established by his enemies themselves. The chief priests, it is true, when the soldiers who had been appointed to guard his sepulchre informed them that Christ's body was not to be found where it had been laid by Joseph and Nicodemus, were very solicitous to conceal from the world the knowledge of his resurrection; but to what means did they resort in order to prevent its discovery? They gave a bribe to the soldiers to induce them to propagate the silly, self-contradictory story, that while they were asleep his disciples had stolen him away. But it was death for a Roman soldier to sleep upon guard; how then are we to believe that the soldiers would, at that time, suffer themselves to fall asleep? The pretence is utterly incredible. And if the declaration were even admitted, that they were really asleep when the body was removed, how could they know that the disciples had taken it away? Can men be judged competent to testify to any fact which should have taken place while they were asleep? The chief priests and Pharisees did not believe the story themselves, but they trusted they could impose it upon the credulity of the ignorant and prejudiced populace, hence they conceived the design of bribing the soldiers to propagate the most absurd and incredible report that ever was invented. Their whole conduct seems to evidence that they harbored a secret suspicion that Christ might have risen from the dead, as he had predicted he would before he was put to death; and that they viewed it as a fact which, if it could be supposed to exist, never could be disproved by fair, open and regular testimony. This absurd contrivance of the Jewish priests, we think, affords strong presumptive evidence, that they thought the report of Christ's resurrection might possibly be true, though they earnestly wished to conceal the knowledge of it from the world; and therefore, we think we are warranted in ranking them *amongst the witnesses* of the reality of this important fact. The Lord is risen indeed—he is risen—"the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." We

rejoice that we have found such *plenary evidence* to confirm the truth so full of consolation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

The same comfortable doctrine is also further confirmed by the *ascension* of our blessed Savior to heaven. Of this fact also, the apostles themselves were eye-witnesses. In the gospel of the evangelist Luke, chapter 24:50—52, we find this interesting fact recorded. “And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

The ascension of our Redeemer gave the fullest attestation to his divine and mediatorial character, and by this illustrious event, the way was happily prepared for the propagation of his holy religion throughout the whole earth. The apostles, accordingly, after the memorable day of pentecost, having been endued with power from on high, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, proceeded to preach, in his name, repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The wonderful and glorious *effects* produced, in the *primitive age*, by the preaching of the commissioned ministers of Jesus, soon afforded a new and decisive attestation to the credibility of the interesting doctrine that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. By the ministry of the apostles and a few devoted and zealous evangelists who co-operated with them, the religion of Jesus, in a few years, obtained a general prevalence throughout the Roman empire, and spread among all the nations of the then known world. In order to have a complete view of the strength and conclusiveness of the evidence deduced from the *rapid and remarkable spread of christianity in the first age of the gospel dispensation*, we must consider the opposition the ministers of Christ had to encounter, together with the wonderful and blessed success which every where attended their evangelical labors; and further also, the happy and glorious effects of the gospel upon the hearts and lives of those who were brought, cordially and sincerely, to embrace it. By each of these several considerations, the credibility of the gospel may be established beyond all reasonable possibility of doubt.

Never was any scheme opposed with so much bitterness and rage, as was the holy gospel and the benign religion of Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Romans conspired against the Lord, and against his anointed. With systematic and insatiable malignity and rage, they incessantly persecuted the faithful heralds of the cross, and employed their utmost efforts to put to silence every zealous advocate of the christian cause. For this purpose, they caused the first evangelists to be frequently put under arrest by the interposition of the civil authority—by cruel scourging, by imprisonment, and by various kinds of barbarous usage, they endeavored to deter them from the prosecution of their evangelical duties. But the exalted Savior and king of Zion, to whom all power in heaven and in earth was given at the period of his glo-

rious ascension, completely frustrated the impious plots and machinations of his own and his church's enemies. By his wise and efficient over-ruling providence, the opposition which was made against his gospel, proved, in almost every instance, an occasion of its greater furtherance. "The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church:" and thus it turned out that the more the gospel was opposed, and the ministers of Jesus persecuted, the more mightily did the word of God grow and prevail. The primitive ministers of Christ were borne forward in the glorious cause in which they had embarked, by a noble zeal, which rendered them superior to all the savage cruelties with which their enemies could distress them. With heroic intrepidity, they journeyed from country to country, and from one city and village to another, proclaiming every where the glorious doctrines of salvation, through a crucified and risen Savior. Through the blessing of heaven upon their labors of love, multitudes of perishing sinners were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Nor did they ever desert the cause of their heavenly Master, or intermit their assiduous exertions to promote his holy religion; unless, when confined in prisons and dungeons until they were called to give the last seal to the truth and importance of the religion which they had been called to preach and advocate by the sufferings of a bloody martyrdom. In the course of a few years, the gospel was carried over every part of the world then known, and multitudes, in every country into which the blessed light of christianity penetrated, believed and turned to the Lord.

But in order to see the full evidence in favor of the *divinity* and *truth* of the gospel, arising from its general propagation through the world, it will be useful for us to consider its *blessed effects* upon the *experience* and *practice* of the *genuine* converts of Jesus Christ. The happy men, who have experienced the heavenly power of the religion of Jesus in their own souls, have the witness in themselves that he came into the world to save sinners. The Spirit sent down by the exalted Savior has convinced *them* of sin, made *them* feel their perishing need of salvation, and enabled *them* to rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rejoice in him as the Lord their righteousness and strength—the source of their present peace and consolation, and their glorious everlasting portion. Having had the salvation of God wrought in their hearts, with humble joy and confidence, they can refer to themselves as examples of the riches and the efficacy of the grace of the exalted Redeemer, and know by their own happy experience that he came into the world to save poor, miserable, helpless sinners. O, that we all had this important, comfortable seal to our faith!

The effects of the gospel, upon the genuine disciples of Christ, are of such a striking nature, that it seems very strange that the most stupid and hardened infidels should not be confounded and put to silence by witnessing them. To see the most audaciously profane, and stupidly careless sinner struck, perhaps instantaneously, with such an awful sense of his guilty and lost condition, as to be almost unable to support under it, his conscience so distracted with agonizing re-

morse as to make him a terror to himself; and to extort from him the anxious inquiries, "what shall I do to be saved?" how shall such a hell-deserving rebel find reconciliation to his righteous and offended Sovereign? How shall such a servant of iniquity as I have been escape the miseries of eternal damnation? How shall I get my aggravated guilt cancelled, and obtain admittance into the favor of my long forsaken, long insulted God and Savior? To hear such language as this from the lips of one who probably had formerly gloried in his contempt of religion, and who prided in ranking foremost amongst the enemies of the cross of Christ; to hear one who but a short time before had been a bold and impious blasphemer, most earnestly and fervently praying to God for mercy and salvation, and then after his sinking feet have been taken from the deep pit and the miry clay of sin and misery, to hear him, with the melodious strains of gratitude and joy, celebrating the grace which has made him free; to see him punctually attend upon the preaching of that gospel which he once so cordially despised; to observe an entire change in his whole character and manner of life, to hear him no longer blaspheme, to find him now abstaining, conscientiously, from "all appearance of evil," and uniformly endeavoring to live soberly, righteously and godly—such a happy moral renovation, affords the best evidence which can be given of the divinity of the religion of Jesus Christ; the *most conclusive proof* that he came into the world to save sinners.

If the philosophy of Plato, and Socrates, and Seneca, had produced the same blessed effects upon their morals and their conversation, it would have been the boast of the whole infidel tribe. The excellent nature of philosophy would have been loudly extolled and applauded. Can any good reason be assigned, why the excellent effects of christianity in disposing and engaging its *genuine* disciples to lead a life of pure and spotless morality, should not be deemed a sufficient evidence of its truth and importance? When we behold the scoffer turned to be sincerely devout, the licentious holy in all his deportment, the worldling having his daily conversation in heaven, and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the honors, emoluments and pleasures of a delusive enchanting world, can we, in view of these excellent tendencies of the religion of Jesus, withhold our assent from this important, well-attested, credible saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?

III. We have now, as we trust, satisfactorily evinced the credibility of the declaration in our text, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We also, in conclusion, proposed to show that this "faithful saying," is "*worthy of all acceptation.*"

This faithful saying is worthy of the acceptation of all who have the privilege of hearing it proclaimed, and that, with *all the heart*. Persons of every age, rank and condition in life, are interested deeply in its serious import, and should be concerned to hear and receive it with honest candor, and improve it with faithful diligence. With regard to the *aged*, it is universally esteemed proper and necessary for them to have their thoughts much employed upon the grave and solemn subjects

of religion, death, and eternity. This opinion, my respected senior friends, is certainly founded in truth and propriety, and I hope my venerable aged hearers have many years ago laid it solemnly to heart. Some of you I trust, long since, having given the precious gospel of the Redeemer a sincere and cordial reception, and as a happy consequence of your early faith and repentance, long have been, and are *now*, daily privileged to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. You know in whom you have believed, and now your daily comfortable employment consists in waiting for the blessed end of your faith, the everlasting "salvation of your souls."

But, dear young friends, I seriously fear it is far otherwise with many of you. That you are sinners, you will no doubt feel willing to acknowledge; yet, strange to think, you feel no present concern about your own salvation. This matter, in which you must acknowledge you have a greater interest than in any thing else, you have most probably persuaded yourselves to postpone till some future day—a day which, very possibly, you may not live to see. In the mean time, you promise yourselves a long season to revel in sensual delights and gratifications. You are much pleased with the license which Solomon has given you, when he says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." But the serious import of this piece of *sacred irony*, you studiously endeavor to forget. You carefully exclude from your thoughts the solemn, faithful, monitory warning, with which the same verse concludes. You will not give it place in your thoughts lest it should damp the ardor of your spirits in your festive hours, or prove an alloy to the poignancy of your illicit pleasures. Permit me, for once, however, to press it upon your attention and to entreat you to give it a patient hearing, and serious attention and consideration. It is, "*KNOW THOU, that for all these things God will bring THEE into judgment.*" This, dear, unthinking youth, is to be the end of your scenes of dissipation, and vain delights, and none can tell you how near that end may be. Death, unsparing death, may surprise you in the midst of your jovial delights, and hurry you to the tremendous bar of your divine Judge, before you have even seriously resolved upon a reformation. O, let the possibility of such an awful alarm excite the youngest of you, who are capable of serious reflection, to feel a deep solicitude for the salvation of your precious souls. Not only resolve that you will seek salvation, but earnestly determine that this day you will accept the offered blessings of the gospel; if you should defer coming to the Savior only till to-morrow, you might come a day too late. You will lose nothing by embracing the Savior and devoting yourselves to a life of religion and piety at once, for "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." If she prohibits your carnal, short-lived, empty joys and gratifications, she will give you in return or exchange, pure, spiritual, never-ending felicity. Exalt her, my dear young friends, and she shall promote you to true honor. Embrace her cordially and sincerely, and she will give you an unfading crown of glory, joy, and felicity.

Once more, the news of salvation through Jesus Christ is worthy the acceptance of men of every rank and condition in life. Hear this, all ye people, give ear all ye inhabitants of the world, both low and high, both rich and poor together. The most honorable and illustrious personages in every age of the world, have been those who have not esteemed themselves too great to fear God and keep his commandments. Statesmen of the most profound erudition and the brightest talents, and even kings who had the wealth of whole nations at command, have laid down their fame and their honors at the feet of the Savior, and esteemed it their highest dignity, and joy, to call him "*The Lord our righteousness.*" Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in the royal court of Pharaoh.

The most illustrious of the kings of Israel were those who paid the most sacred regard to the holy institutions of the true religion. In modern ages, too, the wisest philosophers, and men of the most distinguished talents and the highest literary fame have confessed it their chief glory to rank with the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, and have professed to owe their religious comforts and their hope of future and everlasting happiness to the free and sovereign mercy of God in their Redeemer who came into the world to save sinners. On this truly respectable list, we find the venerable names of a Newton, a Bacon, a Lyttleton, a West, a Jennyns, a Gardiner, a Hale, a Wilberforce, a Washington, a Wirt; men, whose tried integrity, whose incomparable talents, and whose eminent piety and usefulness have deservedly been held in universal admiration, and whose names will be approved and signally honored before an assembled universe, when the countenance of the scoffing infidel will be blackened with shame and pale with horror, and his character blasted with eternal infamy.

But if the free overtures of salvation are insipid and uninteresting to sinners of superior rank, who have a proud conceit of their own righteousness, we know by *whom* they will be embraced with humble gratitude and cordial delight; by *all those* weeping mourners, who, like the apostle Paul, feel themselves to be the chief of sinners. All who have been brought to know and feel that in a spiritual view they are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, will feel not willing only, but thankful and joyful to be privileged to be found in Jesus Christ, not having their own righteousness. If any of my hearers are convinced that they are poor, miserable, helpless sinners, I design in the conclusion of this discourse, affectionately to point them to the Lamb of God, who, by his vicarious death, takes away the sin of the world. Take refuge in his bleeding wounds, and then you will be able to say, upon good grounds, we "know in whom we have believed." Do any of you, with streaming eyes and trembling hearts, ask us what you shall do to be saved; hear it and receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, the chief of sinners.

The woman's promised seed is born—and the illustrious descendant of faithful Abraham, whose day that holy sage rejoiced to anticipate,

has descended to bless all the families of the earth. The Root and Offspring of David has spread forth his life-infusing boughs. The bright and morning Star has shed the lustre of his orient beams on this dark globe—this region of guilt, moral gloom and misery; and unto them who fear his name hath the glorious Sun of righteousness arisen, with healing, and joy, and salvation in his beams.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah! This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? Rejoice, and love, and praise, O trembling, weeping penitent! This is Jesus who speaks in righteousness, and who is mighty, and gracious and faithful to save.

Here is the prophet Jeremiah's righteous Branch, whose name is the Lord our righteousness—Ezekiel's faithful Shepherd, presiding over, protecting and saving in the darkest seasons of adversity and trial, the chosen flock of the God of Israel—Daniel's Prince Messiah, who was cut off for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness for the free justification of every penitent, believing sinner—Micah's Ruler in Israel, whose coming was from Bethlehem Ephratah. Here is the glorious and merciful King, whom Zechariah foresaw as coming to bless the daughter of Zion; just, and having the blessings of salvation to dispense to all who feel their need. And finally, Malachi's Messenger of the covenant of divine mercy, in whom all spiritual believers delight, as being infinitely precious, "full of grace and truth." To him give all the prophets of the old dispensation, their united testimony, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. It is, therefore, a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

But yet, once more, Immanuel's holy life, his godlike beneficent miracles, his death of ignominy on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, conformably to his own prediction to the Jews, and to his own disciples, his triumphant ascension to heaven in view of his wondering apostles, and his sending down his Spirit to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, *afford evidence complete*, that he is indeed the true Savior, and that "he is able to save to the uttermost" all "that come unto God through him, seeing *he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*"

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SERMON XII.

—
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THE DUTY AND REASONS OF CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE.

PHIL. 2:12,13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

THIS exhortation was addressed by the apostle Paul to his beloved converts at Philippi. It appears, that during his residence among them, they were prompt in obeying the will of Christ, as made known by him, and he approved of their conduct in so doing: and now, with the tenderest affection, he exhorts them to continue to conduct themselves in the same manner; and thus work out their salvation with fear and trembling; "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The language of the text expresses an important *duty*—and the *consideration* with which the duty is enforced. And these are the two points we shall endeavor to illustrate in the sequel of this discourse.

I. The *duty* expressed is to WORK OUT OUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

What the apostle said to christians, nearly 1800 years ago, he now says, by the ministrations of his word, to all professing christians; "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The exhortation is not less seasonable *now*, than it was then. The instruction conveyed by it is not less important, or less necessary to

us than it was to the persons to whom it was originally addressed. Equally formidable are the difficulties that are to be surmounted. Equally great is the danger of disappointment in this arduous work. Equally imperious is the necessity of working out your salvation with fear and trembling. And therefore the exhortation may be considered as particularly addressed to all who have named the name of Christ. None else can be working out their salvation with fear and trembling. Our text presumes they have already entered upon the work, and are engaged in giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure. In such, God worketh both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Let me therefore entreat you to consider, in the first place, that the duty of working out your salvation with fear and trembling denotes *its vast importance*, when compared with the littleness, and fleeting nature of all those things after which men of the world are laboring. What is the grand object to be effected? It is nothing less than the salvation of the immortal soul! Is not this an object of the first magnitude—the one and only thing needful? And will not its happiness, if secured by working out our salvation with fear and trembling, be great beyond conception, boundless in extent, and endless in duration. Immortality has stamped an amazing value on man. Weigh, in the balance of the sanctuary, against the salvation of the soul, the world which we inhabit, and what is it! “What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Yet we see the people of the world all life and diligence in its pursuits. Their hearts, and heads, and hands, are all employed, whether they aim at the enlargement of business, the advancement of their families, the improvement of their estates, the acquisition of a great name, or the enjoyment of pleasure. Their favorite object is ever uppermost in their hearts, and first in their efforts: they are constantly on the watch for every favorable opportunity of promoting its attainment. Not a day nor an hour passes but some plan is formed, and some steps are taken for its accomplishment. Nothing which may be done to-day is deferred until to-morrow; and nothing which can be done is left undone. Oftentimes increasing and discouraging obstacles only quicken their efforts, and call forth greater exertions—such are the diligence and activity of the men of the world in their pursuits.

And now we ask, though eternal things be of transcendent value, are professed christians equally active and diligent in working out their salvation with fear and trembling? Does the truth compel us to say, with shame, they are not? Are we obliged to admit, that worldly people, who are following an object in itself fleeting, perishing, and

Comparatively worthless—an object which may never be attained—and which, if attained, would certainly disappoint their expectations, and must, at any rate, soon be taken away from them—must we admit, that they are more active, laborious, and diligent, than religious people, who are pursuing an object ever substantial, lasting, and of infinite value? an object which they may be sure of attaining; and when attained, will far exceed their highest hopes, and shall never, never, be taken away from them? Ah, Christian Brethren shall they, who are merely seeking a worldly treasure, show more diligence and activity, more foresight and circumspection, more decision and singleness of mind, in attaining their end, than we, who are seeking a heavenly treasure, and working out our salvation? Have we not reason to blush and be ashamed, to reflect that we, who possess such advantages, and profess to be striving for an incorruptible crown, and for glory and blessedness, to be less active, less earnest, and less anxious in our efforts to obtain it, than the people of the world are to obtain the things of this fleeting life? Ponder well the exhortation of the text, and let the inestimable value of our eternal salvation rouse us from this disgraceful sloth, and let it lead us to act more consistently with our profession, and infuse more life and spirit into all our religious exercises and duties.

But secondly: The duty of working out our salvation with fear and trembling denotes not only its vast importance, but also, *activity and diligence in the way prescribed* by God for the attainment of salvation. This consists, according to apostolic instruction, in working out our salvation with fear and trembling, which cannot be done otherwise than by an active and diligent attention to the means appointed by infinite wisdom. It will not be needful for me, at present, to state what those means are: you know what they are. And although these means cannot, or will not, of themselves, effect the salvation of sinners, yet it is God's usual method to begin and carry on his work in the hearts of his people *by the instrumentality of means*. He could indeed, at once, carry into immediate effect, and accomplish our salvation by the direct and exclusive energy of his Holy Spirit: but, *as a fact*, you are well aware, this is not his manner of doing it; for, He both begins and carries on this work by the instrumentality of means, which require time for their operation. This is a truth, abundantly confirmed by all the works and word of God, and exemplified by all our observation and experience. Therefore, it is nothing less than presumption to hope for salvation, either in the omission of means, or in the careless and formal observance of them.

There is nothing more obvious from the existing state and constitu-

tion of things, than that nothing useful or excellent can be obtained without labor and vigorous effort. We cannot acquire even the comforts of life, or its conveniences, without labor and diligence. We cannot arrive at distinction, either in wealth or literature, without labor or diligent attention. In a word, what is it in this world that is to be obtained without it? And of course, the men of the world spare no pains, decline no difficulty, and fear no hazard in their enterprizes, even though they have nothing more than probability to excite and encourage them. And if this be the fact, with respect to the present world, why should it be otherwise with respect to the world to come? Can we reasonably suppose the spiritual blessings are to be obtained and maintained without labor and diligence? Most unquestionably not. For the word of God plainly teaches us, that we must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling"—that we must "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure"—that we must "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God"—and that we must "labor to enter into rest." Now, these are all scriptural injunctions and exhortations. They correspond with the declaration of our text, and plainly convey the idea of working out our salvation with vigorous effort on our part; every exertion must be used, every nerve must be strained, and all diligence must be exercised in God's appointed way.

There is no discordance between working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and the grace of God necessary to give effect or success to these efforts. We must work, and labor, and press forward, and use every exertion, just as if we were to accomplish all for ourselves, and yet, *depend as entirely* and simply on the power and grace of God, as if all were to be done for us. While we are therefore stating the duty expressed in the text, and illustrating the manner in which it is to be performed, remember all is to be done in God's appointed way, and in dependance on his grace. There is no other way of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, but in this way. If this way, or manner, is neglected or overlooked, all your efforts, in every other way, or manner, will be vain, and eventually ruinous. God's prescribed manner must be complied with. And his word requires us, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and likewise instructs us that all our success depends simply on the grace of God, who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

We are well aware, some have supposed there is an inconsistency between the necessity of using means, and at the same time ascribing all success to the agency of God's Spirit. But, I must confess, I see

no inconsistency. I must say, I see no more of it in the moral than in the natural world. I see a farmer plough his field and sow his grain in the expectation of a future crop, but he can no more cause the grain to vegetate, grow up and produce fruit than he could remove a mountain, for this is entirely owing to the agency of God in the natural world. The farmer sees and knows that both are necessary, and sees no inconsistency between them. Just so in the moral world, the Christian sees and feels the necessity of working out his salvation by a diligent attention to all the means of God's appointment, that it requires continual labor, unceasing watchfulness and prayer to make progress in the way to Heaven; and yet he is thoroughly convinced that all is in vain without the Spirit of the Lord is with him, and will work in him both to will and to do. This statement is plainly made in our text, clearly authorised by the general tenor of God's word, and fully coincides with the experience of real christians, whose testimony will go to show, that the Lord gives success to their efforts, whilst they are most diligently and actively employed in his prescribed manner.

Thirdly: The duty of working out our salvation, is to be done *with fear and trembling*. So says the apostle, who wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. And, hence, it is to men of this character the Lord will look, and graciously vouchsafe his gracious presence, who are of a "poor and contrite spirit, and tremble at his word." Such is the result of correct views of the divine character, filling the soul with an affectionate fear and holy dread of offending God, and a deep, humbling view of ourselves as weak, guilty, and miserable sinners, depending entirely on the power and grace of God to renew us and work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is, however, of importance to observe, that by working out our salvation with fear and trembling, we do not mean that *slavish fear* and dread of God that often arises from a sense of guilt, and mistaken views of the divine character. There is a class of people in whom slavish fear has produced all the religion they ever possessed; they have been alarmed, and their consciences coincide with the awful threatenings of a violated law, in denouncing death and damnation on all the workers of iniquity without exception. Providential dispensations fill them with terror of divine power. They know they cannot always live, they know they cannot escape from God, and they tremble to think what shall become of them after death.

Hence they engage in some of the duties of religion. Slavish fear not only awakens, but continues to govern them in the after-course of life. They lay down a legal system of obedience and self-righteousness, but they wear the yoke with great impatience. They do not

hate sin with all their hearts, but are afraid they shall be tormented for the commission of it. They do not love God with all their hearts, but fear him because they know they cannot resist him. They do not engage in his service with cheerfulness and delight as their choice, but groan under it as a heavy task or burden. Their hearts and affections are fixed upon present and temporal things, though they apply themselves in some measure to the duties of religion, for they know they cannot always live in this world, and therefore they submit to it as rather better and more tolerable than eternal misery. So that all the religion that some people have, is both begun and carried on by a slavish fear of God's wrath.

But such is not the fear and trembling contemplated in our text, it is not the fear which God promises to "put into the hearts of his people, that they shall not depart from him." For, says God, Jer. 32:40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." To the same purpose, says the apostle, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear." This affectionate fear of God is produced by a believing view of his entire character, as exhibited by the mediation of Jesus Christ, where mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other; where God appears in all the majesty of holiness and justice, and at the same time delighting in mercy. And it is the contemplation of this union of holiness and grace, of wrath against sin and mercy to the sinner, that produces in our hearts this affectionate fear, and makes it one of the most influential motives in working out our salvation.

While we are most actively and diligently employed in working out our salvation in the manner we have just stated, fear makes us jealous of ourselves with a trembling diffidence and caution, even while love "makes our cheerful feet in swift obedience move." *Our sorrow for sin, is at once the solemn dread of divine displeasure, and the meltings of love to an offended father.* The view of the cross, as a display of wrath and of mercy, inspiring both the one and the other. Fear makes us shun all that is displeasing to God, and fills us with a godly jealousy over ourselves, lest we should grieve the Spirit of God. We must therefore fear the commission of all sin, as well as its consequences. We must shrink from it as from the touch of pollution, as from the dagger of death, as from that which if unrepented of, as from that which if unwashed by the blood of Christ, is to separate us eternally from God our exceeding joy, and give us over to the worm that

never dies. This is the fear which is in our text combined with working out our salvation. It is a reverential awe of the majesty and perfections of God on our spirits, kindly regarding his authority, obeying his commands, and hating and avoiding whatever is sinful and displeasing to God.

What a contrast is this to the temper and conduct of multitudes among us, who have "no fear of God before their eyes," who serve him not "with reverence and godly fear!" They persist in their sin and ungodliness, notwithstanding "the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It makes no impression on their stony and hard hearts. These are the brave men of the world, who harden themselves against God. Unhappy men! Ignorance and blindness and stupidity, will not ward off the awful realities of a world that is yet to come.

Fourthly: The duty of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, denotes *perseverance* in this duty, otherwise the work will never be done. Many seem to set out with great zeal and activity in this all-interesting concern, and work well for a time, but after a while grow weary in well-doing, slacken their efforts, and sink down into indolence and security. How many in all ages have thus made shipwreck of their faith, and have returned to the world "like the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Not so with those who are working out their salvation with fear and trembling. They dread every thing that tends to retard their progress, and guard against every thing which would seduce them from their duty. They count all present attainments as nothing in comparison of the immense field which is yet before them. They are pressing forward, eagerly seeking to know more of Christ, and of the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings; resolving, through divine grace, never to slacken any exertions till death brings them to the enjoyment of their eternal salvation. Certainly not less than this is implied in the language of the text, as well as in many other parallel scriptural passages, and we judge of their importance from their frequency. We are commanded to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," "to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure," "to run with patience the race set before us," "and so to run that we may obtain," "to fight the good fight of faith," "to watch and to pray," "to press forward," to have the loins of our minds girded about, "and our lights burning," to be "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," "and to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The course demanded by these and such like exhortations, is to be persevered in throughout the

whole progress of our lives, for it is only "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." This is the principle assumed throughout the whole illustration of this subject, and is vitally important to the existence of real religion. There is no standing still, no lounging in the christian's work. He who is not pressing forward, and working out his salvation with fear and trembling, *must be* on the high-way to apostacy.

Moreover, brethren, we must assure you, that it is no easy matter to be continually engaged in this work. It demands constant watchfulness and prayer, while it requires a simple dependence on God to "work in us both to will and to do." It calls for laborious diligence, painful conflicts, habitual mortification of sin, denial of self, examination of the heart, and daily sacrifices to duty. But, what if we must labor and toil to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? What if the kingdom of heaven is to be taken by storm? What if the difficulties are many and great? What if it is through "much tribulation," long and sore, we must enter the climcs of glory and bliss? Yet, surely, the salvation of our souls—the rest that remains for the people of God, and the joys of that blessed kingdom, will more than compensate for all the difficulties and tribulations through which we are to pass on our way thither. And thanks to the name of God, there is no difficulty in the way, which may not be overcome; no obstacle but can be surmounted; no enemy but can be vanquished through Him who "loved us, and gave himself for us." In ourselves, indeed, we have not strength for the arduous labor; yet "in the Lord Jehovah is our everlasting strength." In the way prescribed; in the exercise of watchfulness, and fervent and importunate prayer, and in resisting the devil, and in dependence on the power and grace of Christ, we shall labor with success, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling, God working in us both to will and to do. We shall be strengthened in the inner man, we shall have power to overcome every obstacle, to endure to the end; and so, "an entrance shall be ministered abundantly unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

II. This leads me, secondly, to state, *the reason* with which the duty in the text is enforced—"FOR IT IS GOD THAT WORKETH IN YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE."

In illustrating the duty, we stated, there was no discordance between *working out our salvation with fear and trembling*, and *God's working in us both to will and to do*. It may be asked, how God works in us both to will and to do? If the question refers to the secret

manner of God's operation upon the mind, we say, we cannot tell; and it is enough for us to know, that he worketh in us. This is the *fact*, as stated in our text, and it is doubtless of such a nature as never to interfere with or set aside man's free agency, for He commandeth to work.

It is a principle, however, that pervades all the works of creation, and providence, and redemption, that God makes use of means for carrying into effect his plans. It is the hand of God that sustains the chain of causes and effects, and *his agency pervades* the worlds of nature and of grace. In the natural world, the farmer must till the ground, and sow the seed in season. But still it is God who infuses, preserves, and quickens the vital principle, and commands the clouds to rain, and the sun to diffuse its fertilizing influence. Without this, all man's labor would be in vain. Just so in the world of grace. God uses means to bring sinners to the knowledge of the truth, and to prepare and make them meet for heaven. But all will be in vain, if God deny the influence of his grace. The agency of God's Spirit is as necessary to fructify the word of his grace, and make it the seed of the sinner's conversion and sanctification, as his influences are to fructify the earth and promote vegetation. This is the grand truth taught by the apostle in the following passage; "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

While, therefore we say that God hath provided salvation, and it is freely offered, and enforced by the most powerful motives; and while we, as ministers of the gospel, enforce the use, and urge the necessity of means, we ought not to separate them from, or forget their subordination to God. It is not, therefore, merely by furnishing well adapted means, and by the disposition of his providence, giving them an opportunity of exerting their influence, that God works in them both to will and to do, but by an immediate and divine agency distinct from and superior to every second cause. In like manner, it is not by merely providing a Savior, offering salvation, furnishing well adapted means, and presenting motives to the mind, but by a *direct and saving influence on the heart*. Not indeed without means and motives but along with them, God works in his people both to will and to do. This agency of God does not destroy free agency, but puts it into operation, and guides and directs it in a proper way, so that they are made truly obedient to the will of God. For when God works in the hearts of his people "both to will and to do," *they also both will and do*.

We do not deem it necessary to enter upon a direct proof of this truth at present. We would remark, that perhaps it would be much the better mode to follow the scripture method, and never attempt to satisfy mere useless curiosity, or answer metaphysical questions, but press the practical use of the doctrine. Both parts of the text are stated, and the doctrines contained in them clearly taught, without once supposing any discordance, or any interference with each other in their practical influence. This is what we have most at heart in this discourse. When we therefore urge you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, we do precisely what the apostle did; and we do *no more* than what he has done before us. And when, in addition to this, we teach you, that it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, we still do what the apostle did, and no more than what he has done before us. And if either the one or the other had been revealed without its counterpart, certainly there would have been a great difference in the duties and obligations of man. If, for instance, God had told us that he would work in us both to will and to do, without requiring us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, then, surely, we would not have been under the same obligation to have used the efforts now required. Our case would have resembled that of the Israelites upon the banks of the Red Sea. When the injunction was, "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you this day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day ye shall see them no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

If, again, we had been required to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, without any reference to the grace of God, our duty would then be to encourage ourselves with such arguments as the Philistines used when the ark of God was brought into the camp of Israel; and the Philistines were afraid: and they said, "wo unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men and fight."

But, on the other hand, take the text as it stands upon sacred record, and all *similar* texts; or, if you please, unite both the doctrines; and let each of them occupy their proper place, and then the feelings of every christian will become like those of good Hezekiah when he gathered the captains of war together, and spake comforably to them, saying, "Be strong and courageous; be not afraid or dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh,

but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles." Yes, and if the Lord "be for us, who can be against us." For he will work in us both to will and to do, and he will make his grace sufficient *for* us, and efficient *within* us, to every good word and work.

Although it be not possible for any finite mind to point out the precise bounds between divine and human agency, yet for any man to make and imagine an inconsistency between them, when we are clearly taught their correspondence and consistency throughout the word of God, is surely not acting either a wise or an humble part. Neither our text, nor any portion of the scripture, supposes, for a moment, there is any discordance between human effort and divine agency, in beginning and carrying on the work of salvation in our souls. They are perfectly consistent; and both indispensable in their proper place. Effort is ours, and the grace of God, propelling to the use of these efforts, is the causal influence of working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

From the illustration of this subject, let us learn to guard against error both on the one hand and on the other. There are two practical errors on this subject, that ought to be carefully guarded against; and they are both errors into which mankind are prone to run. *One* is, to ascribe the work to God in such a sense as to exclude the agency and efforts of man. The *other* is, to ascribe it to man in such a sense as to exclude the agency of God. These are both *errors*, and equally wide of the truth, and have been equally guarded against in the illustration of this subject.

We say, therefore, in the first place, let none ascribe the work to God in such a sense as to exclude the agency and efforts of man. This would be in direct opposition to the command of God, to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." This is an error by no means uncommon, and ruinous to the souls of men, by encouraging their sloth and negligence; by hoping and presuming that God is to do all for them, they are to do nothing for themselves. If this be true, the language of our text, and a hundred more of the same nature, ought never to have been upon record. If this be true, the experience of lively, active, and zealous christians, is also a mere delusion: for it is their uniform testimony that they are comfortable in proportion to their activity and diligence in the cause, and service of the Lord.

It is therefore a most fatal mistake, for any man to flatter himself, that because God works in us both to will and to do, that we have nothing to do but to wait, in sloth and negligence, till God, in some mysterious way, will come and carry us along in the narrow way to

heaven, without any effort on our part. Now, we say, this is a most alarming case. Any thing rather than this repose in sin and sloth! Any thing rather than this graceless abuse of the grace and power of God, for encouragement in sin and heedless unconcern. This is the principle assumed by those who say, *if God has determined to save them, they shall be saved let them do what they will*, and therefore they may as well fold their hands and rest securely in sin as to seek their salvation. Are there any of my readers quieting their consciences in this way? If so, you are resting in a fatal error. Is this "working out your salvation with fear and trembling?" Is this "striving to enter in at the strait gate?" Is this pressing forward to gain the heavenly prize? Is this running the christian race, fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life? You may rest assured, you will never be saved without your own exertions. You must work if you would gain eternal life. You might as well refuse to eat and drink, and trust in God to preserve your life, as to refuse to work out your salvation, yet trust in God to save you. If God has determined to save you, you will not be carried to heaven in stupidity and in sin, you will and *must* be roused from your slumbers; you will find that you have much to do, and you will be disposed to do what your "hand findeth to do" with your "might." If God shall save you, he will save you by causing you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. But so long as you are disposed to slumber in a state of spiritual apathy, you have no more reason to expect salvation than you have to look for grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles. And yet such is the delusion of multitudes.

The other error to which we have referred, is the opposite extreme, and so ascribes this *work to man*, in such a sense *as to exclude the agency of God*. This would be in direct opposition to the second clause of our text, "For it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do."

But it may be said, (for it has been said,) that all that is meant by this declaration, is, that God has made provision for the salvation of sinners, thrown open the door of Heaven for them, and invited them to enter in that they might obtain eternal life. But if this was all, the question at once occurs, how comes it to pass that some obey and others disobey the gospel? To what are we to attribute this difference? If all that God does is to prepare the way for sinners, and afford them reasonable opportunities and place suitable motives before them, why do not all comply or all refuse? They are alike free agents, and they are capable of being influenced by motives, why then do some yield to motives while others reject them? If God does *no more* to give ef-

efficiency to motives in one case than in another, why do not the same motives produce the same effects in all cases? Why did Peter believe in Christ, while Judas remained an unbeliever? Why did Paul become a disciple while multitudes of the Pharisees persisted in unbelief? Why did one of the thieves on the cross embrace Christ, while the other continued to revile him? And why is it, that wherever the gospel has been preached, some have believed while others have believed not.

Will it, in answer to such inquiries, be said, that some are more inclined to yield to the motives of the gospel than others? But this cannot be said with truth, "for as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." They are all by nature "children of wrath," and "dead in trespasses and in sins." And not only so, but there have been multitudes who have been distinguished for their wickedness and for their hostility to the truth, yet have been made the subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace. Paul testifies that he was the chief of sinners, and yet he obtained mercy, while many who manifested far less opposition to the gospel continued in unbelief. How is this fact to be explained? Besides, if God *only* presents motives to the mind, why is it that the same motives which have been long resisted have afterwards proved effectual? Why is a sinner sometimes converted, after having abused the means of grace and resisted every motive presented to his mind? If God does no more to render means efficacious at one time than at another, why were they not effectual upon the individual supposed, while his heart was less hard and his habits in sin less confirmed? These questions cannot be answered correctly, without admitting the immediate and direct agency of God, in working in him both to will and to do.

But closely associated with this error, there is another on this subject, and it is very common, because it is natural to the pride of the human heart. It is this, that all men have *some resource in themselves to work out their own salvation*. And therefore, they only need some additional aid from time to time to help them along. This is the idea which many have of God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, (and they quote the text for its confirmation,) that it is only some kind of assistance vouchsafed to a weak creature like man, who is able to perform a part but not the whole, and hence we find the exhortation predicated on this view of the subject, "Do the best you can and God will do the rest for you." They consider the language of our text as bearing them out in this idea, because it speaks both of God's working and man's working.

It is true, as we have already stated at large, that we must work out

our salvation with fear and trembling; but it is also true that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do. And it is God's working in us both to will and to do, that inclines us to work out our salvation, and not any inherent disposition or native strength we have within ourselves. It is plainly on this principle, that the apostle Paul, after having observed that he had labored more abundantly than all the other apostles, declared, "not I but the grace of God." And elsewhere he says, "that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Now the plain and obvious fact, is, that all real christians know and believe this to be true, for they pray to God to give them grace, and to impart to them his Holy Spirit for accomplishing all parts of their salvation. And, hence, all these errors are alike opposed to the sentiment of the apostle in our text.

2d. Let us learn from this subject, the danger of sloth and carnal security in christians. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, as illustrated in this discourse. And if this be so, then surely this subject may serve to reprove the merely nominal professor, and show the vanity of his religion. The conscience of every such professor must tell him that he knows nothing of the activity and diligence of working out his salvation, which has been stated in this discourse. Such a professor may indeed believe in christianity, because he has been born in a christian country, and he may be decent in his external conduct, just in his dealings, amiable in his dispositions, kind to the poor, and attentive to certain religious observances, but if this be all, his hope will be in vain. If he has never felt himself a sinner before God, wretched, and helpless, and miserable; if he has never repented of sin, and despairing of help from every other quarter, come to Christ for pardon and peace through the blood of the atonement; if he has never seen the necessity of an entire change of heart, and under this conviction earnestly sought the influence of God's Spirit, to renew him in the spirit of his mind, and to sanctify him throughout the whole man; if he has formed no determination to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, and to press forward after higher measures of faith and love—after every holy and heavenly grace and spiritual obedience,—*then*, is he a christian only in name, a mere speculatist on the doctrines of the gospel, as a kind of abstract science; but knows not and feels not its heart-changing power and influence.

Let me then address you in the language of God's word. "Awake, thou that sleepest." We cannot exhort you to go on in this work, but we must exhort you to *begin* this work by repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And we urge you to remember,

that if you are not born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of God; and that without holiness no man can see the Lord's face in mercy.

3d. Learn from this subject, the *dependence* of christians on God to work in them both to will and to do. It is the office of God, the Holy Spirit, to begin and to carry on and to accomplish our salvation, not only by means, but also by an agency superior to every second cause. Let christians then learn their dependence upon God for all that they are, or have, or want. For what have they that they have not received? Have they been active and diligent in the service of their master? Who made them thus active and diligent? Have they been successful? Who gave them that success? Have they thus far persevered? Who has kept them from falling? It is God, and let christians realize that it is God who has done all in them and for them; for it is God who worketh in them and for them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Finally. Learn from this subject the indispensable *necessity* of christians working out their salvation. It is the grand business of human life. It is really the one thing needful, and demands the first and best of our days, and the most vigorous efforts of our lives.

Let me then seriously ask professing christians whether you have made it the chief business of your lives to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? Have you lived, and are you now living in this world as those who really and practically believe that it is absolutely necessary? Has the awful importance of eternal things occupied your hearts more than all other things in the world? Have they been the objects of your eager desires and most vigorous pursuits? If such has been the fact with regard to some of you, yet is it not the melancholy fact with regard to others, that instead of improving precious seasons of working out your salvation with fear and trembling, and securing their eternal interests, they only abuse such precious seasons in such a manner as to enhance their final condemnation. Instead of laying up treasure in Heaven, and complying with the calls and invitations of redeeming love and mercy, they only abuse the goodness of God, neglect his offered mercy and grace, make light of the gospel, and treasure up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Instead of laying hold of eternal life, and striving for a crown of glory, they are only working out their damnation with all imaginable pains. Instead of denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Christ, they are only gratifying themselves in "the lust of the flesh" and in the "lust of the eye," and in "the pride of life." Instead of mortifying the deeds of the body, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and grow-

ing in conformity to Christ in the temper and disposition of their minds, they are daily becoming more fitted for destruction, and preparing for the eternal abodes of moral impurity and ruin. Instead of aspiring to shine in the realms of glory with a distinguished lustre, they are only acting as if they were desirous of glowing more remarkably than others in the world of wo. Is not such the melancholy fact with regard to numbers? Men and brethren, what shall we say to you? What can we say to you but what has often been said? Shall we entreat you by all the powers of the world to come, to pause and consider, and begin immediately to act wisely and reasonably, and let *no* worldly considerations interfere with your eternal interests, remembering that the Saviour has said "work while it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work." John 9:4. And it is elsewhere urged, Prov. 9:10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest!" And,

Therefore, in the conclusion, let me say to every professing christian, that as your time on earth is both short and uncertain, there is nothing of more importance to your comfort and safety, as christians, and more honorable to God and to religion, than to see you "working out your salvation with fear and trembling;" always active in your Master's service, and always employed in every good word and work. We live in a day when there is work enough for christians of every age and sex; and they may all be employed to good advantage in sustaining and furthering the interests of religion. None need be, and none should be *idle* in the Lord's vineyard. There is work enough for all, in their different stations and relations of life, without interfering with each other. And let me assure you, that it is as necessary for one, and all of us, to be as active and diligent in the service of our Lord and Master, as it is for the soldier to be valiant in the battle; as it is for the wrestler to be eager in the struggle; and as it is for the racer to reach forth with constant exertion after the prize. Let us also bear in mind, that the same grace which has made, and is still making other christians active and diligent in the cause of Christ, is as ready to be dispensed to us, as it was to them. His grace will be sufficient for us, and make us triumphant over every enemy. We therefore unite with the apostle in praying, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus, to the glory and praise of God." And may mercy, and grace, and peace, be multiplied toward you, and all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity.

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ON JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS 3:28.—*A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

POWER, in an intelligent agent, implies an obligation to its exercise. The contrary supposition is an impeachment of the Creator's wisdom. The parable of the talents assumes this truth whilst it illustrates its application. Possession confers the right and imposes the duty. Such, too, is as plainly the common sense of mankind as it is the dictate of scripture. Hence idleness is esteemed a crime, which, if not punished by law, is at least placed under the ban of public reprobation. The buried talent will see its resurrection morn and meet its murderer at the bar of God.

Intelligent agents are moreover not accountable for the *exercise* only of their talents, but also for the *manner* of it. The Giver has defined the use of the gift, and prescribed a law to regulate it. This, too, is an original element in morals, and we can form no distinct conception of morality without it. Intelligent action, according to prescribed rule, is a leading item in our complex notion of moral agency. The very thought of an intelligent creature existing without law or rule to regulate and govern his actions, is difficult to conceive; its reality impossible to be believed. There *is* one, and we presume there *can be* but **ONE** such being. He whose understanding is infinite, and He alone, exists in simple and pure intelligence without *prescribed law*. He giveth none account. But to all created mind the prescription of rule appears a necessary adjunct.

Nor is our idea of moral existence yet complete. Law implies more than simple rule to regulate action. It also measures accountability. It is retrospective as well as prospective. It looks upon past as well as upon future action. It originates in sovereignty and flows back upon its source. Sovereign authority prescribes the rule, supreme power superintends its final application. Its alpha is legislative: its omega judicial. What the law prescribes must be done, and if done, will be rewarded; what it prohibits, must not be done, or if done, will be punished. In other words, God has always dealt with man on the principle of motive; addressing his fears on the one hand and his hopes on the other; both having their influence through the principle of self love. The desire of happiness is an essential item of our being. Thus has God formed us; and to this indestructible principle has he address-

ed his law; (at least in the only form in which we have to do with it.) He holds forth exemption from misery and the hope of enjoyment as an inducing motive to compliance with its requisitions on the one hand; and the terrors of fearful endurance, to deter us on the other, from its neglect or violation.

Thus we have arrived at the distinct notion of moral agency. It implies an intelligent creature; endowed with capacity to act; laid under *obligation* to act, and that according to law; and under the influence of hope of reward and fear of punishment, as the necessary legal results.

Now, in the important discussion to which we are approaching, it is matter of high concern, to be well settled in our elementary principles. If we have confused—half formed conceptions here, full formed confusion will pour around us the flood of its chaos ere our feet stand firm on the rock of God's eternal truth.

Let us, then, pause for a moment at the threshold of the discussion, and ask ourselves, To what has God in his law, (under its covenant form,) promised life and happiness? Is it to *holy action*—*action according to the precept of law*? Or is it to suffering—to painful endurance of the penalty?

Reward is promised. Happiness, life, blessedness is held forth and pledged to the moral being. Now the question relates to the *merit*, the *desert*—that which *merits*, which *deserves* this reward. What is it? Is there any *merit* in suffering the just consequences of sin! Does the man who has even *patiently* endured punishment for his crimes deserve reward? The moment he emerges from the gratings of his incarceration, may he put in a claim to the positive benefits and blessings which the law holds out as a motive to *holy action*? Or has he simply and only made restitution for the positive injury he inflicted upon the law? This last, beyond all question, is the true state of the case. If it were otherwise—if reward were given—because merited—if positive reward were given to mere endurance of penalty, who does not see the fearful consequences of the principle? If there is real merit in suffering penalty, then unquestionably the deeper the agony of endurance, the higher the desert of happiness! The lower a spirit sinks in the burning lake, the higher he rises toward heavenly blessedness. The more of wrath divine he drinks in, the more of the river of the water of life, is he entitled to receive! Adopt this principle, and you unpeople hell! Adopt this; and you lift Satan away above the seat he lost!! Adopt this; and you upturn the foundations of all moral order! We therefore revert with confidence to the position, that *reward is given only to holy action; positive blessedness is connected, in law, with active obedience*. This we hold to be a pure element in morals; a fundamental maxim of scripture. "If thou wilt have life, [by thine own merits,] keep the commandments." "In keeping of them there is great reward." "In the day thou eatest thereof—thou shalt surely die."

These elementary truths adjusted, we are prepared to meet the most momentous query ever presented for human consideration, viz. "How should man be just with God?" To this our text is the true response. "A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

Let us inquire,

I. WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?

II. WHAT ARE THE REQUISITES TO MAN'S JUSTIFICATION?

III. HOW DOES HE OBTAIN THOSE REQUISITES.

I. What is justification? The prosecution of this inquiry will lead us to define the term and the thing.

1st. Let us define the term. To justify, is the opposite of to condemn. Deut. 25:1, "The judges shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." Prov. 17:15, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." Matth. 12:37, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Rom. 8:34, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"

These passages establish undeniably two points, viz. 1st. That the terms justify and condemn are judicial. They relate to the proceedings of courts, to the acts of a judge. 2nd. They stand in contrast, as signifying acts of an opposite character.

Justification, therefore, has reference to the legal relations and condition of men; and not at all to their moral feelings and dispositions. These come in under the doctrine of sanctification, which is not before us. Ours is a simple question of right and law. The precise nature of that question may fairly be inferred from the second point just settled. If to justify is the opposite of to condemn; and if we can easily ascertain the meaning of this term and the thing signified by it, then we can also settle the meaning of the term justification and define the thing.

Now, can any man have a doubt or a difficulty about condemnation? What is it? Is it the infusion of unholy dispositions, feelings, affections into the person condemned? This were to make the judge a criminal, and in reference to God would be blasphemy! Or is it simply a declaration of the fact that the man having broken the law is now under its penalty—he deserves the reward of transgression—he is liable to punishment? Thus condemnation is passing sentence against a person. Hence we infer, that such being the true and scriptural meaning of the term and thing, the opposite term to justify does not describe the act of infusing just or holy principles into the person judged; but it is simply a declaration of the fact that, having fulfilled the precept of the law, he is entitled to the promised reward; having performed the service, the wages are his as a matter of right. In the one case to pass a sentence in favor of the person would be abomination in the sight of God; and in the other it would be abomination to pass sentence against him.

Justification therefore implies,

1. A rational, intelligent agent, whose conduct is the subject of judicial inquiry.
2. A law according to which he is bound to act, and to be judged.
3. A judge whose office is to *compare the* conduct of the subject with the law itself and to mark the agreement.
4. Action according to law; obedience.
5. Evidence that such is the fact.
6. The judge's declaration of that fact.

Now this *action* according to law is righteousness. Deut. 6:25. "And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God." Ps. 15:25. "He that doeth these things, (that worketh righteousness,) shall never be moved." Righteousness is often opposed to wickedness and sin; and the righteous to the wicked. Prov. 14:34. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Prov. 11:5. "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way, but the wicked shall fall by his *own wickedness.*" v. 8. "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead." Now wickedness

or sin is the transgression of the law; hence righteousness is obedience or compliance with law. He that lives and acts as the law requires is a righteous man.

That this is the true and proper sense of the *term* is evident also from the Apostle's reasoning in the preceding part of the epistle. In v. 20, he concludes, "therefore by the deeds of the law, (man's active compliance,) no flesh shall be justified in his sight." This is an inference from the previous argument, wherein he had shown the entire deficiency of man's obedience. For had it been ascertained that man had actually obeyed the law, this inference could not have been drawn, but the contrary. As he said, "circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law," and afterwards, "the man which doeth those things shall live by them." And having, in the 20th v., set aside the active compliance of men with the law, because of its imperfection, he substitutes in its place the righteousness of God, that is, the active obedience of Christ, for it is active obedience whose deficiency he has proved. He makes deeds, works, the same as righteousness. It is this which constitutes the ground of justification. It is the meritorious procuring cause of it; agreeably to the fundamental axiom already laid down.

2d. Justification, the thing therefore is, the act of a judge declaring that the person is in possession of the righteousness of law, and by consequence is *entitled*—he has a *right* to the stipulated reward. It is the official approval of his course of action.

This is the simple scriptural idea. It is also the general sense of the term with writers on jurisprudence. When a man is put to the bar and presents a plea of justification, he undertakes to shew that the acts alleged against him were *right* in themselves—that the law approves them. If his proof is good, the sentence is not simply acquittal, but justification. He is praiseworthy instead of being censurable—he is entitled to reward instead of punishment.

II. What are the requisites to man's justification?

1st. He must have the righteousness of the law. Our apostle, having stated (chap. 1:17,) that in the gospel, the righteousness of God, that is, Christ's righteousness, or his holy obedience to the precept of the law, was revealed from the divine faithfulness, to the principle of faith in man; took up the opposite position, v. 18, and proved that man's active obedience, his works, his righteousness, could not procure him justification because of its imperfection.

This argument he brought to a close in chap. 3:29, and then set aside that righteousness, and now takes up again in its room and place the righteousness of God. Now it is all important to observe, that the righteousness whose imperfection he had demonstrated, was not the *sufferings* of men; but their *obedience*; their *deeds*; their *doings*; their *actions*. They have not conformed with the law; they have not the righteousness to which the reward of life was promised; they cannot be declared just or righteous. Such a declaration would not be true. "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

Thus an alarming deficiency is demonstrated; and unless it be made up, man cannot be justified at all. Shall he make it up by his own exertions? This is impossible. The evidence of his deficiency is demonstration strong, of man's incapacity to supply it. Whence shall the deliverance come? I see my defect, says the sinner—I feel that I cannot supply it. Who will interpose on my behalf? Who will furnish me with the righteousness demanded and indispensable to my justification? "Lo! I come"—is the Savior's response. "But now, the righteousness of God without the law, (without

man's obedience to it which is imperfect,) is manifest—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ." This is the grand requisite.

But there is something else necessary in man's case. Not the precept of the law only must be obeyed as the title to eternal life; the penalty lies upon him in all the weight of its woes, and must be met in all the awfulness of its extent. The sentence has gone forth: "thou shalt surely die;" and is irrevocable. Before therefore man can be justified, this claim too must be liquidated. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And this curse causeless has not come. Who will meet it? Shall man? Perdition eternal, is the inevitable consequence. Salvation is then out of the question.

Here again the gracious Redeemer steps forward. "Lo! I come." He puts himself in the sinner's place. He assumes his legal relations. He takes his sin upon himself. He becomes guilty in the eye of the law. "He, his own self, bears our sins in his own body on the tree." Hence it "pleases the Father to bruise him." "He makes his soul an offering for sin." The son receives the bitter cup at the Father's hand—he drinks the wrath of God. The proper penalty of the violated law, that is death—"thou shalt surely die"—he endures. He must be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice." He must "be man, that he might perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature." What this death is—the extent of its pains, the fearfulness of its amount, the terrors of God's wrath, the awfulness of its agonies—no man can tell. The nearest approximation we can make to the proper idea, is doubtless by contemplating the blessed Lamb of God, whilst under its operations. "See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Mark, O sinner! the unutterable anguish of his spirit. See him as he proceeds with his three disciples. How is his soul oppressed beneath the fearful load of human guilt! Now, alone he advances into the darkness; more, and still more insupportable the load becomes; when lo! the Son of God totters, he falls, he sinks beneath the wrath of God! Who will measure the woes of Gethsemane! Mark too his footsteps ascending the mount of crucifixion. See the lacerations of his blessed body. Harken to the sigh of his wounded spirit. Fathom, if thou canst, O sinner! the depth of his sorrows. Weigh the magnitude of that groan. Tell, if thou canst, the full meaning of that last desponding shriek!

Oh no, let us not institute metaphysical subtleties in a case where we cannot possibly know the facts. Let us not deny that Jesus took the sins of an elect world, and bore them in his own body on the tree, because, we cannot understand *how*, he could suffer to the full extent of our demerits. Let us not deny that Christ "did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf," simply because we cannot see how he should experience *remorse* of conscience. And especially let us not make this a stumbling block, seeing the term remorse is not in the Bible, and the thing is no where set down as constituting the proper penalty of the law. *Death* is the penalty—that death which sin deserved. "Dying, thou shalt die."

Here then are the two grand requisites to the justification of a sinner; they meet the law in the totality of its demands.

Here is atonement which meets in all their length and breadth, those claims of law which grow out of its violation. This forms the basis of par-

don and procures the acquittal, release from penal claim. Pardon is the passing by of an offender, as though he had not offended; releasing him from the penal claim of law, so that he is no longer guilty—no longer liable to be punished; it is forgiveness, remission of sin. It is an act of sovereignty, and in human affairs is always made at the expense of justice. It is an abandonment of the claim of justice. It is obvious that pardon has exclusive reference to the penalty, and has nothing to do with the precept of the law. Pardon therefore implies no positive merit on the part of the pardoned. He has in consequence of it, no claims to positive reward. He can only claim exemption from painful endurance.

Here also is the other requisite. Here is positive merit. Active, holy, perfect and perpetual obedience was rendered by Christ to the precept of the law. This constitutes the ground of justification in the strict sense of the term. This is the righteousness to which, and to which only, life is promised. This secures to its possessor more than simple acquittal. He is not simply innocent, that is, free from sin. He is not simply a cypher in morals, a mere neutral, deserving neither reward nor punishment. He has positive virtue and a right to the rewards of holy action. Life is his right of law.

Now let us remark the importance of clear distinction in these matters. Let us keep the precept and the penalty separate. The claims of both must be met: but they are different in their character and essential nature. Let us not confound them. To a holy being, the fulfilling of the precept is all enjoyment. He delights in the law of the Lord. His blessedness grows upon him continually as he advances in the work of perfecting the righteousness of the law. But not so in fulfilling the penalty. Here is unmingled and unmitigated anguish. All is wrath—the wrath of God.

III. The next question for our consideration is—how does the sinner become *actually* interested in these two grand requisites? And the answer covers the whole remaining ground of our discussion. It is two-fold, it brings before us the doctrines of imputation and of faith.

1st. God imputes to the sinner his Son's atonement and righteousness, or, in a phraseology more familiar and sufficiently precise for our purposes—The active and positive obedience of Christ.

The doctrine of imputation is as clearly set forth in the bible as language can express it. Nor is there any mystery about it. The thing itself is an original element or "principle of the doctrine of Christ." Heb. 6:1. It is the setting down to a person's account—the charging of a thing to him in right and law. Consequently a person's own act may be imputed to him, as is the case with all who remain impenitent. Their sins are set down against them. Another person's act and its legal consequences may be imputed; as when Paul requests Philemon to impute Onesimus' debt to him. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Charge it to me. And in the Greek he uses the same word that is translated impute in Rom. 5:13, and the simple of which occurs so often in the same sense. See Rom. 4:6.11.22,23. Jas. 2:23, and in other places.

Imputation, when the thing imputed had been one person's and is passed over in right and law to another, is founded on the doctrine of representation.

Moral beings are necessarily social, and the existence of the social relations implies and comprehends the principle of substitution and representation. Here, too, we have one of "the principles (elementary) of the doctrine of Christ." One man often occupies the place of another; sustains his legal and moral relations; acts or suffers for him; so that the act of the substitute is, to all the intents and purposes of law, the act of his principal. This is called representation. And though it be true, as has been *seriously* objected

to it, that the term *representation* is not found in the bible, yet it is no proof that the thing is unknown on the sacred page. Many terms in common use, and highly useful, are not contained in the bible. In our English bibles you will search in vain for the words, bible, character, moral, develop, result, organization, constitution, plan, system, and a hundred others. But our business is with things. Do the scriptures recognise the principle of substitution and representation? Do they show the facts of frequent occurrence that one person acts for another, and suffers for another? Here there is no room to hesitate. And so it is in the social concerns of life. Without this principle whereby one person represents, that is, becomes accountable, and acts for another or others, the commerce of society is at an end. Government must cease. The world must speedily become a desolation. The human family must become extinct. God has created man with this principle in him. It is a part of his nature. Without it he would not be man.

Are we told that it is inexplicable? no man can understand *how* the moral character, the very being as it were, of a moral agent, is divided and sent into different quarters of the world, and there transacts various business at the same time; forms contracts that are morally binding in law, and yet the individual himself remains all the while at his own proper home. Be it so that you cannot explain *how* it is; does your ignorance nullify the **FACT**? Must society cease to act upon its own general laws until you are able to explain the *how* of every thing? No, truly, you cannot explain the manner of this moral transformation and transmission. But then the facts you know. And the reason of the difficulty in their explanation lies simply here—Representation is an original element in morals; a first principle occupying the same position here that his axioms do in the science of the mathematician, or that gravitation does among the laws of the astronomer. Let us not attempt to simplify simplicity itself. There are bounds to human knowledge.

There is, however, no danger of men rejecting the principle. In a representative government, and a world where no one man can ever do with his own hands all the things which he must do in order to live, we are secured against that measure of idiocy that would reject the principle. Yet, men there are, who wish to deny its application in the great question of justification.

The bible, however, does teach that "sin entered into the world by one man," "and death by sin." "By one man's offence, death reigned." "By the offence of one, *judgment* came upon all men to condemnation." "By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners." They also shew that this one man was Adam. Here we see, that not only were men *made sinners* by the sin of Adam, but placed under *condemnation*. The apostle moreover states, (Rom. 5:12,) that they all sinned in him. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; even so death passed upon all men *by him*, in whom all have sinned."*

*This I feel assured is a correct translation. Because, 1st, It preserves the comparison, which in the Greek is very formal, and which by our common translation is destroyed. *As by one—even so*. This formal expression *as* and *even so*, answering to one another is always used by the Apostle when the comparison is full. See, Chap. 5: 19.21—6:4.19—11:30,31.—1 Cor. 11:12.15.22—16:1.—2 Cor. 1:7.—Gal. 4:29.—Eph. 5:24. In all of which the same terms occur, and are translated as I have given it above.

2nd. There is not another case in the New Testament, in which the words rendered in our common translation, "for that," either are or can be so rendered without marring the sense. It is used in the New Testament only six times, viz. Matt. 26:50—"wherefore," Mark 2:4, "the bed *wherein*," Luke 5:25, "bed *whereon*," Phil. 3:12, "*for which*," Phil. 4: 10, "*wherein*,"—every case may therefore be rendered *in*, or *by whom*, or *which*, not one "for that."

3d. The verb translated "passed," occurs forty-two times in the New Testament, and

This shews the manner in which sin entered our world, viz. by Adam's act of disobedience. It shews the manner of death's entrance; it is the same. It avers, that exactly in the same way, that is, by or through the one man, death entered upon all, and the reason of death's passing upon all men through Adam, viz. they all have sinned in him.

Men may attempt to throw difficulties in the way of the Apostle's doctrine. They may ask, *how could* I sin in Adam before I was born? Still *difficulties* cannot disprove *facts*. There is the fact, "All sinned in Adam and fell with him."

But where, after all, is the difficulty? Do not mankind universally act on the principle of federal representation? Do not the acts of the representative bind the represented? Does not your servant's contract at the merchant's counter bind you? Can you evade the payment of the debt thus contracted? Explain this and I will explain the mystery of "all sinning in Adam." There is not a particle of difficulty in the one which does not exist in the other, except simply the question of fact, whether Adam was the moral head—the federal or covenant head to his posterity. Now for proof of this fact, we need scarcely pass beyond the present context. (Rom. 5:12,13, &c.) In presenting it, let us remark,—

1st. The Judge of all the earth will do right. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Hence we infer, that wherever he visits his moral creatures with the legal consequences of sin, sin itself preceded the visitation. But death is a legal consequence of sin. Men die, and infants before they have done good or evil die; therefore they have sin upon them.

2nd. The apostle expressly says, that death entered the world by the one man and passed upon all men. Here then is the fact. Adam acts, and his action has a *moral* and *legal* effect, most serious and awful, upon all men. Now, from the moral effect, the moral cause is proved. The legal consequences can only follow from the legal relation. Adam was connected with all men, and his deeds brought all under their moral effects.

3d. The same is evinced by the comparison instituted between Adam and Christ. The former, Paul says, was the figure—the type of the latter. And the same apostle assures us elsewhere, (Col. 2:19. Eph. 1:22,) that Christ is a head to his body, the church. If, therefore, Jesus is a head of moral influence and responsibilities—if he acted for his people; if he obeyed and suffered and died for them, as their surety and friend; so must Adam have been a moral head, acting for his people; and this is representation.

But, will some men say, how did Adam become a moral head to his people? By the highest of all authority. How came he to be the first man? Had not he, who formed him, power to make him thus?

Or will any still object, that the consent of the represented—their voluntary appointment is necessary to a fair and equitable representation. Is it not hard to be represented where the opportunity of voluntary action was not afforded? I answer, No. Consent is not material to constitute the representative character. All minors, all aliens, all minorities are represented by men who never had their consent, and who, in many cases, if it were

always, when thus compounded, governs a case by the preposition included in it. Sometimes the preposition is repeated separately; sometimes not; sometimes the governed case is understood; oftener it is expressed. But always the force of the preposition requires a case. There must be a case understood here. "Even so upon all men death passed through"—this is the Greek most literally. Now I ask, through what did death pass? The answer is given by the Apostle in the former part of the comparison—"through the one man." To make the grammatical construction full, the case must be supplied, "through *him*, in whom all sinned." 4th. This last, in *whom*, is precisely literal.

asked, would refuse to give it; yet are they bound by their acts? This will doubtless be considered an imperfection in human arrangements, and so it is. But no such imperfection existed in our first representative. He was perfect, holy and happy, and was appointed to his station by infinite wisdom. And were he alive to-day, and all his posterity with him on the earth, and all pure and holy, he would have their universal suffrage to represent them before God.

A word will shew how and wherefore the benefits of Christ's atonement and righteousness became his people's. God, their Father, views them as morally one with his Son. He is their living head, and they are his members. Consequently his acts and sufferings, as their covenant head, belong to them in law and right, and are therefore set down to their account—are imputed to them. Jesus says to the Father, in reference to them, as Paul said to Philemon, in reference to Onesimus, If they have wronged thee or owe thee aught, put that on mine account; I Jesus, have written it with mine own hand; I will repay it. With this voluntary proposition of the Son, the Father complies.

Thus it is that "God imputeth righteousness without works." Thus independently on his own personal acts of obedience to the divine law, a man is "made righteous." The Savior's satisfaction to the penalty, and his fulfillment of the precept of the law—both performed as the sinner's friend, surety, representative, and both therefore being his—are set down in the book of God's account to his favor. God, as the righteous Judge, inspects his book, finds the individual sinner in righteous possession of the whole righteousness of the whole law, and *declares the fact*. This is justification.

Hence it is plain how God is just, that is, righteous; when "he justifies the ungodly." In Rom. 4:5, we are told explicitly, that the persons whom God justifies were ungodly; they were sinners, in themselves corrupt and deserving of his wrath. But now being personally interested by faith, (as we shall see,) in the righteousness of the Savior, they have in him a title to life; and the righteous Father declares the fact—he justifies them. Clearly then to the sinner, his justification is a matter of pure grace; whilst to the sinner's representative, surely friend, it is all of debt. He, the **LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, claims as our Advocate, our acceptance before the Father's glory. The Father admits the justice of his claim. He is a just God and a Savior.

2nd. We are now to contemplate the doctrine of saving faith.

A man is justified by *faith*. In illustrating the nature, origin, and acting of that faith which saves the soul, let us remark,

1st. There is a principle of faith in the human constitution. Men are so formed by their Creator, that to believe, to exercise confidence, trust, in the testimony or declarations of others, is, a law of their being—a part of their nature. This law is universal. All men are under its influence. All men are prone to accredit the testimony of their fellow men. Without this principle they would not be men. It is essential to their nature. Accordingly you find that, in early life, credulity is characteristic—universally characteristic of the race. Little children believe what is told them, and that with unwavering confidence, until they learn by experience that lies are sometimes told. Their incredulity is an *acquisition*—a result of experience; their disposition to credence is *natural*. Now it is to this characteristic of little children, the Savior has reference when he says, (Matt. 18:3) "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Humble faith—childlike confidence in God is the leading feature of a true christian.

Faith is not simply an act of the mind; but an abiding principle. Believing is its exercise. Hence we speak of acts of faith. But if there were no fixed principle; if faith were merely an act, it would be absurd to speak of acts of faith, that is, acts of "an act of the mind."

2nd. Faith has for its specific object truth. What the mind perceives to be true it believes—it rests upon. Veracity is the attribute in a witness which secures the mind's belief and confidence.

3rd. Sin has so impaired the original powers of the soul that men, in their unconverted state, are unable to perceive the truth of God's testimony concerning his Son. They have no spiritual vision and consequently are shut up in unbelief. Their understanding is blinded; their foolish heart is darkened; their affections are alienated from God. They have no fixed habitual disposition to accredit the testimony of God in the matters of salvation. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And in this wretched condition men abide until renewing grace, restores them.

4th. Saving faith is a grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and word of God: whereby he assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, and receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation. In the gospel are presented atoning blood and meritorious, justifying righteousness, viz- Christ's passive and active obedience. The veracity of God in Christ is pledged to impute these to every believer, to every sinner who by trusting in Jesus shows that he is one of his people, for whom he obeyed suffered and died. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8.) "To another is given faith by the same spirit." (1 Cor. 12:9.) If the gifts alluded to in this last text and those connected with it, are gifts, as distinguished from graces: if the faith of miracles is meant, it strengthens the argument. Because graces are superior to mere gifts: if therefore the power of the Holy Ghost is necessary to confer gifts: much more to confer graces. Accordingly Paul (Eph. 1:19,) speaks of "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," and compares the energy operated in the heart of the believer to that by which Christ was raised from the dead. He also speaks (Heb. 13:21,) "of the God of peace—working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight." And undoubtedly the chief thing is that faith "without which it is impossible to please God." Hence the prayer "increase our faith—help thou mine unbelief." Hence,

5th. Faith is the instrumental cause of justification. It is not the acting of the principle, it is not the principle itself; but it is the righteousness of Christ—his active and passive obedience—that is imputed, set down to the believing sinner, and makes him righteous. "By the obedience of one," not the act of the believer's mind—but the obedience of the *one* many are"—not treated as if they were righteous—but "made *righteous*." Christ's whole righteousness, the entire, seamless, untornd robe, passes over to the believer—it is his. The Father declares the fact. The believer is justified. Faith justifies by uniting us to Christ.

6th. One remark more and we have done with saving faith and the doctrinal discussion of the whole subject. It is this, that faith is a duty; or in other words, that all men are bound to accredit all the testimonies of God presented to them, and to exercise the highest measure of confidence in him.

Let the remark be taken as universal. All intelligent beings are bound to exercise faith in God. In every form of its presentation to him, for his belief, Satan is under perpetual obligation to accredit God's testimony. And

thus it is in reference to every other moral duty. He is bound to be holy—to return to his allegiance—to obey his Creator. He is unable and unwilling. But neither the indisposition, nor the incapacity cancels the obligation.

Thus, too, men are bound to return to God and obey his law. They will thus be bound in eternal ages. The principle, that incapacity to perform duty, cancels obligation, places the sinner above law. And he who, to a race of sinful beings, prescribes their present abilities as the limit and measure of their present duties, is a dangerous man and ought to be watched. I would not lend him money; for, feeling that his inability to pay, released him from the obligation, I should fear he would never be able to pay. This principle, in the business world, would be even more efficient than the statutes of limitation and the laws of Chancery.

Apply the true principle, that faith is a duty, and you make men feel that their unbelief is a sin. They are opposites. If therefore unbelief is a sin, faith is a duty. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." God testifieth that adherence to mere human works as the ground of justification leads to death. The unbeliever denies. He testifies that faith in Christ secures life. The unbeliever denies; he rejects the testimony of God against his own soul, and perishes.

Accordant with this view, you find every where faith is presented with authority. "Come unto me all ye that labor." "Seek the Lord while he may be found." "Call ye upon him while he is near." "Repent ye and believe the gospel." The language is mandatory; the duty imperative.

It remains to make a few practical remarks from the whole subject.

1st. This doctrine presents the beautiful consistency of the divine attributes, justice and mercy. All the schemes of human device "set at odds heaven's jarring attributes." "A God all mercy, is a God unjust." This brings them together. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Thence in awful and frowning majesty the minister of vengeance issues forth, arrayed in terrible grandeur, his wings plumed with lightning, and in his hand a flaming sword. Downward to this world of rebels is his rapid flight. By Orno's threshing floor he takes his stand. "Where is the blasphemer of my God! The rebel where, on whom this arm must execute due vengeance."

To meet him from the opposing mount advances meek eyed mercy, daughter too of heaven by birth: her head a rainbow circles; in her hand the price untold of man's redemption; her bosom open thrown. "On me thou messenger of wrath thy stroke let fall." They close on Calvary's day-dark brow. A groan proclaims—"Tis finished." The darkness flees away. When lo! these cherubim that met in hostile attitudes, stand with outstretched wings over the mercy-seat, whence issue pardons bought with blood. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

2nd. This doctrine "stains the pride of all human glory." Not Abraham himself hath whereof to glory before God. He is made to feel, as he is enabled to see, that his own righteousness has not merited this lofty seat which he occupies. He is made to feel that his patience, and trials, and sufferings have not extinguished the fires of death. In the smoke of his altar, on mount Moriah, he sees the victim of Calvary, and exclaims "Jehovah-Jireh."

3rd. This doctrine puts the crown of glory on the only head worthy to wear it. It holds up the only begotten and the well beloved, to the admiring gaze of redeemed millions; whilst it extorts from the myriads of rebellion,

an acknowledgment of propriety in the song, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

4th. This doctrine leads to holiness of life. Faith is a living principle. It works by love—it purifies the heart—it overcomes the world—it transforms the sinner into the moral image of his Savior.

5th. This doctrine gives *security* to God's redeemed. They are not simply treated, by an arbitrary or sovereign act as if they were righteous, but they *are righteous*, and therefore are justified, and have in their Savior a title to life and glory. To them it is all of grace, but in him it is of merit. It is secured by the perfection of his work on their behalf. Their Advocate is their Judge and will not deny himself.

6th. This doctrine teaches the true position of good works in the economy of redemption. They follow justification as necessarily as the goodness of the fruit is secured by the change in the nature of the tree.

7th. This doctrine presents the church in a glorious attitude. Her robes are of needle wrought. "Her garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." The righteousness in which the believer stands enrobed before the bar of God, is not the righteousness of a man, nor of an angel—it is the **RIGHTeousNESS OF GOD.**

8th. Every sinner of Adam's race is either a believer or an unbeliever; in a state of justification or of condemnation. There is no middle ground. There can be none, for there is no neutrality in morals. "He that is not with me is against me." Reader! you are now an heir of glory or a child of wrath. The curse of God's law is *now* upon you, or you have passed from death unto life, and are rejoicing in Christ Jesus. On whose side do you stand?

9th. Let me invite, and beseech, and command you in the name and by the authority of the Lord of all worlds, to flee from the coming wrath. Lo! upon mount Calvary, the bleeding cross. See the outstretched arms of a dying Savior. "Turn ye—turn ye—why will ye die?" "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Therefore, lastly,

10th. Where the gospel is preached no man can perish, but by a double destruction. He must *reject* Christ. There must necessarily be a deliberate and wilful *thrusting away* of the Redeemer—a *positive action* of the soul in opposition to him. This Stone is again placed before thee, reader! Thou must either build upon it a house that will stand the storms of time and the tempests of eternity, or thou *wilt* stumble over it and plunge into the burning lake of God's eternal wrath. May He forbid it in tender mercy. Amen.

SERMON XLIII.

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PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

GENESIS 18:19—*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*

The principles of the text will be evolved, by a discussion of the two following propositions, viz:—

I. A godly man will faithfully train his children and his household, in the right ways of the Lord.

II. This training will secure the blessings of the promised salvation.

I. As to the first of these—let us state its general truths, and glance at the mode of their application.

1. The family is the primitive social institution and the foundation of all others. Two societies only have been organized among men, by immediate divine authority, viz. the family and the church.

2. The law of creation has constituted the husband head of the house. Every social body must have a head.

3. The head of the family is vested with *authority*, a right to exercise governing power. This is indeed what constitutes headship. And its exercise is not a matter of volition but of moral necessity. No man constituted by the God of providence head of an household, can permanently divest himself, either by delegation or resignation, of the power entrusted to him.

4. For the exercise of his authority, every head of a family shall give account of himself to God. That thus it must be evident from the very nature of a trust. "Occupy till I come," implies a limit to the possession, and an account of its manner.

Abraham is in this text commended for the faithful exercise of his trust. And at a distant day, Eli was fearfully reprimanded for his infidelity to his ———. Let us view,

5. The extent of authority. It confines with the family or household. The partner of his bosom, the fruit of their body, and the stranger that is within thy gates, are within its range. In other words, the children and the other inmates of the dwelling; all to whom he is a parental head. Should the providence of God throw the fatherless and the orphan under his roof, he may not withhold paternal discipline: he may not refuse the legitimate exercise of family training.

6. As to the mode of its exercise, this vested authority is not arbitrary, cold, forbidding; but tempered throughout with love. Accordingly divine wisdom has thrown around it a cluster of feelings and affections of a very tender character.

7. The ultimate ends of family government may be summed up in the word *holiness*. A godly seed is thus secured to the church, and a succession of sound members to the body politic. To perfect and

to perpetuate the human character, and thereby to promote the glory of God, as seen in the holiness of his people, should be to every christian parent the ever present object of his unwearied efforts.

How are these principles to be applied in the attainment of this object? I answer,

1. By the slow and silent, but certain operations of parental example. He that will train up a child in the way he should go, must himself walk in that way. "He will command his children and his household *after him*."

• 2. Another and most important theatre on which to exhibit the power of imitation, is in the great concerns of religion. Let the little child be accustomed from its earliest capability of observation to see its parent daily consulting the oracles of God with profound veneration, and it is almost impossible that he should not grow up with a feeling of deep reverence for the bible. Let the voice of praise to God be sounded in his ears from their first opening, and they will always delight in the songs of Zion. Let the parental knee be daily bended at the family altar, and the fervent aspirations, warm from a parent's heart, ascend in sweetest sympathy to the throne of mercy, and the blessed example cannot miss of its legitimate and most benign influence.

3. Let us remark, that the faithful inculcation of divine truth constitutes a very important item in the system of family training. How shall a man walk in the ways of the Lord unless he know them? Mere example is not expected to work miracles of transformation upon character. But let the religious and moral truth, which lies spread out in the living page of a parent's conduct, be also set forth in his preceptive instruction—let there be precept upon precept—plain familiar illustration, and the force of example receives an impulse which cannot be resisted.

II. This training will secure the blessings of the promised salvation.

In illustrating this position—let us remark, first. That there exists, substantially, a covenant between God and the believing parent. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." (Gen. 17:7.)

Now that the passage quoted has reference to the great ecclesiastical constitution, called in the Old Testament, "the congregation of the Lord," and in the New, "the church of God," is not to be doubted. Equally true and obvious it is that "thy seed" here, is Christ, (Gal. 3:16,) and that in reference both to his mediatorial person and to his body the church. Still, however, it includes in this last, the children of believing parents. Indeed so intimately blended are the interests of these too divinely constituted social bodies, the family and the church, that we often find difficulty in settling the question to which many passages of scripture relate. And I can see no violation of the soundest rules of interpretation, in the application of such to both.

2. Therefore, I remark that this covenant guarantees to the seed of the faithful the blessings of the covenant of grace.

3. FAITHFULNESS to his covenant engagements on the part of the parent, is indispensable to foreclose the obligation and bind down the faithfulness of a covenant keeping God. Let this be displayed in all

the duties resulting from the relations of a parent and a believer and the hypothetical promise becomes absolute.

4. Wherefore, in the last place:

The faithful training already described, is a means, an efficacious means of securing a godly seed, and transmitting the blessings of peace and salvation to the most distant generations of men. There is security, and therefore he says, (Is. 55:3,) "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." The faithfulness of Jehovah being pledged, and that faithfulness being met by the faith of the believing parent, setting to his zeal that God is true, the covenant is confirmed and the blessings it guarantees must infallibly come in their season.

We hasten on to some practical improvement of the whole subject.

1. Christian parent! you are accountable for the souls of your children. You are constituted by the God of heaven and monarch of the skies, temporary guardians, not only of their bodies and their various interests, but also of their spirits. How precious the trust! How heavy the responsibility!! How solemn the account!!!

But if the trust is precious; the responsibility heavy; the account solemn; you have your comfort in this; the reward of faithfulness is great. If he has said, "Take this child away and nurse it for me;" he has also said, "I will give thee thy wages."

For 2. High and honorable is the state to which your labors are designed to raise the fruit of your body. Your children are in a course of preparation for the blest society of heaven.

Therefore, 3. Let your labors in the education of your children be directed to prepare them for their ultimate destination. In the early care and training of a child, wisdom and prudence will never lose sight of his post of usefulness and honor in future life. To fit him in the best manner for this, is the object of education. How absurd the conduct of a guardian to whom has been entrusted the education of a prince, that he might be fitted for the throne, should he instruct him only in the elementary branches of literature, and then direct his whole attention to music, drawing, sculpture: leaving out of view entirely the great principles of morals, the science of political economy, the history of nations, and the policy by which they have risen or fallen? Not less absurd is the conduct of that parent who directs his whole attention to the preparation of his child for this present life; whilst he turns not his attention to the life beyond the grave.

4. Piety is an inheritance for children. This remark I mean to be understood literally. An inheritance is that which is inherited, or received gratuitously from parents or other relations, by will and law. The position therefore is, that parents may transmit their piety to their children, as they do their worldly goods; so that the son shall with as much regularity heir his parent's piety as his property. To this conclusion we are shut up by the doctrines already laid down. If there is a covenant between God and the believing parent, and the latter, (on the strength of grace received,) perform his part, the former cannot fail; and the blessing is sure. There is no difficulty in the theory, and the practical difficulties are more imaginary than real.

Let the parent be equally careful, diligent and skilful in using all the means to transmit his piety that he does to transmit his property, and the results will be as regular in the one case as in the other. And indeed the facts accord with the principles. Wherever parents are faithful,

there the blessing is received. The failures are as frequent in the transmission of property as of piety. How very often does it happen, that the greatest diligence in treasuring up property for children, and the greatest care in securing it, utterly fail. No precautions heretofore have been able to guard against all contingencies. If then, the exceptions are as numerous in the one case as in the other, we ought to impute both to deficiency either in the means, or in their use. Now the means of transmitting piety are of divine origin, those of transmitting property of human; and therefore the former must be more perfectly adapted to their end than the latter. But the right use of the means is probably less neglected in the latter than in the former, because it depends on man's agency, which is much affected by his *feeling* of interest.

Thence, 5. Woe to that son or daughter who breaks the line of transmission by which piety has heretofore flowed down in the family blood. Woe be to him that expatriates himself from the kingdom of God: that brings a taint into the blood, and places his family under the ban of proscription from the house of God. I know not a more dreadful case; no sin that can place a human being under more fearful forebodings of destruction. To turn away from a line of holy ancestry, and to become a head to a new dynasty of rebels—to unite the interests of an interminable line, perhaps of descendants, with the interests of sin and satan! Oh horrible apostacy! Think seriously of this, ye youths of pious parentage. Examine well the whole subject, in its bearings upon time and upon eternity, before you make the fearful election.

6. Let us learn hence, the high importance of family religion. When the head of a house is a prophet, we may expect the will of God to be known, and the household to be trained in its practical obedience. When he is a priest, we may expect them to be led to the altar of God for forgiveness of sins, and for offering up the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. When he is a king, we may expect subjection to moral rule, because it is right. Thus the state is supplied with valuable citizens, the church militant with valiant soldiers of the cross, and the church triumphant, with pillars to decorate her temple and to stand for ever as monuments of grace and memorials of its victories.

7. The present attitude of the church in reference to the world's conversion to God, it appears to me, calls upon christian parents for very peculiar efforts in the whole business of family training. The signs of the times plainly indicate the approach of the days of the Son of man.

Now, christian parents! what part do you wish your sons and your daughters to act in that bright day? Shall they not participate in its conflicts and its triumphs? When the Son of man exclaims, "whom shall I send and who will go for us?" burns not your heart with a holy ambition to furnish a son or a daughter who shall step forward and respond, "Here am I, send me." How, important then, that the infusion of a missionary spirit begin in the early training of the domestic altar! Let every christian parent feel that he is bound to do something toward the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Let the hallowed desire of furnishing some portion of that host which is destined to bear the banner of the cross in triumph round the world, animate the heart and kindle the fire of its devotion amid the family circle. So shall our sons and our daughters come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty; and having served the Captain of salvation in the foreign field, and been instrumental in turning many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever.—Amen.

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SERMON XLIV.

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PREACHING THE WORD, AN ANTIDOTE TO ERROR.*

II. TIMOTHY 4:1—4. *“I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom; preach the word; be instant, in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”*

This passage contains the charge of Paul to Timothy, and through him to every succeeding minister of the gospel. It is a charge of solemn import, in which, as ministers of the Lord Jesus, we are deeply concerned. It is my design to examine its bearing, with a view to our instruction in the duties and responsibilities of the christian ministry.

There are three points here distinctly presented, to which I shall invite your attention. I. A time is mentioned as future to that in which the apostle wrote, in which a particular state or condition of things would exist, and which would give it character and prominence. “For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine, &c.” II. The duty of the ministry in reference to that time, and the mode of accomplishing that duty. “Preach the word, &c.” III. The solemn motives which should operate to rouse the ministry to a faithful discharge of this duty. “I charge thee, &c.”

I. A time is mentioned, as future to that in which the Apostle wrote, in which a particular state or condition of things would exist, and which would give it character and prominence. This is indicated in verses 3d and 4th. *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”*

It is on the prospective existence of this time, that the exhortation and motive urged in the 1st and 2d verses are based. This fact that a time was coming in which the state of things described would be found

* A Presbyterian Sermon—published by request.

to exist, constitutes the reason why ministers should act as directed, in view of the responsibilities of the future judgment. The natural order, then, is first to notice the time referred to, in which would be found the particular state or condition of things here described.

The time referred to is distinguished by *opposition to the uncorrupted ministrations of the gospel*. As I am preaching to ministers, I may be allowed to criticize. I shall do it as sparingly as the proper elucidation of the subject will allow. The word "διδασκαλίας" which is translated "doctrine" in this 3d verse, signifies *instruction imparted*, and especially that instruction which involves principle, and which is distinguished by the name of *doctrine*. Its connected adjective signifies pure, unadulterated, uncorrupted. It is translated *sound*, in reference to a body which is well and free from disease. As the Apostle is addressing Timothy as a minister, in reference to his ministrations and their effects, it is evident that when he speaks of "sound doctrine," he must mean, *as it was preached by Timothy and others* who should succeed him in the ministry. It is believed, then, that we speak accurately, when we say that the time referred to, will be distinguished by opposition to the *uncorrupted ministrations of the gospel*, because it is to the sound doctrine of the gospel, *as exhibited by the christian ministry*, that men will manifest their opposition. This opposition will be manifested in several ways, and under different forms, though all closely connected.

1. "*They will not endure sound doctrine.*" The word "ανεξουρα" which is translated "endure," properly signifies in this place, to *admit or receive*. When, therefore, the doctrines of the gospel shall be presented by ministers in their pure, uncorrupted, scriptural character, they will not be received as the truth. Men will not admit them into their minds. They will evince their opposition, by the indulgence of a doubting, sceptical, objecting temper. They will resist them, as offensive to their taste, and refuse to receive them, as the accredited messages of heaven.

2. Another way in which they will manifest their opposition to the sound, wholesome ministrations of the gospel, will be, by the multiplication of teachers for the gratification of a depraved curiosity. "*After their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.*" In making their selection of ministers, they will not be influenced by a regard to their soundness in the faith, or the uncorrupted purity of their instructions, by their fidelity to their trust, or their capacity to do them good; but they will be influenced by their own depraved desires. "Their own lusts," will be the rule and measure of their conduct, in their selection of ministers, and their attendance on their ministrations,

And as wholesome instruction is not their object, but self-flattery and the gratification of curiosity, they will never be long satisfied with the ministrations of one man, especially, if he preaches the pure doctrines of the gospel, but will be constantly seeking something new, and endeavoring to gratify their rage for novelty, by the introduction of new ministers. And if they cannot introduce them into the midst of the society where they dwell and to which they belong, they will run after them, that they may have their "itching ears" tickled, and their depraved lusts gratified.

This disposition to multiply teachers; this rage for new men and new doctrines, seems to be the natural consequence of not admitting the truth into the mind. It is the second step in this course of defection. Let men

begin to doubt and object against sound ministrations, and refuse to admit their value and force, and they will, as a matter of course, cast about for others of a different description, which may better suit their taste, and interfere less with their prevailing lusts. And if you will take the trouble to look into the history of defection from the truth, as it has existed in different places, you will find this representation literally verified. A want of cordiality for sound ministerial instruction, a repugnance to the truth exhibited in its uncorrupted forms, has always led men, and churches, and congregations in which it existed, to seek ministers of a more compromising character, whose ministrations would tend rather to tickle the fancy, than enlighten the understanding and mend the heart. And such are found to be never satisfied with the ministrations of their own pastor, but have a restless craving to hear this, and the other one; and they never think that good is done or likely to be done, unless new and strange agents are introduced, and new measures, calculated to strike the imagination and rouse the animal feelings, put in requisition. The consequence is, that in this rage for new, and various, and diversified exhibitions, all regard for *the truth*, as embodied in the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, is lost. Their opposition to "sound doctrine," is, moreover, greatly increased by the vain philosophy, and flippant rhetoric, and noisy zeal exhibited by those on whose ministrations they attend, and who rarely fail to represent ministers of sound views and sober manner, as encased by prejudice, the subjects of a frigid orthodoxy, and the enemies of practical godliness and genuine revivals of religion. Hence, the way is prepared for a farther exhibition of their opposition, in the manner stated by the Apostle, by refusing to hear sound ministerial instruction.

3. "*And they shall turn away their ears from the truth.*" This evidently means that they shall refuse any longer to hear ministers who preach the gospel in its uncorrupted simplicity; whose ministrations embody sound principles and bring them to bear in all their heavenly force on the understanding and the heart, for purposes of practical godliness. This farther manifestation of opposition to the unadulterated ministrations of the gospel, is the natural effect of that which preceded. Men who make ministers the mere panders to their lusts; who attend upon their ministrations to gratify their taste for novelty; and who, in the accumulated variety, and heterogeneous mixture, and cob-web texture of their ministrations, find nothing to enlighten or confirm them in the faith of the gospel, will, from the very nature of the case, become more averse from the truth, and more fixed in their opposition to it. Especially, when it is considered that they had never admitted the truth into their hearts; that they have already begun to cavil and object; that their "heaps" of teachers, are ever alarming their fears about "heartless orthodoxy"—"creeds and confessions"—"metaphysical theology," with other things of a similar nature, it is not at all surprising, that they become entirely alienated from the truth, and finally refuse to attend upon the ministrations of men who preach it sound from the Bible. This is the natural course of things: I mean, natural to men who are under the influence of depraved lusts.

And what has been the history of this matter? What has been the course of those men, and churches, and congregations, which "after their own lusts have heaped to themselves teachers having itching ears?" Have they not been led ultimately to abandon a sound ministry, and withdraw from

those connections in which the truth was preached in its uncorrupted simplicity? Such, it is well known, has been the fact. While men who profess to be sound in the faith may, (inconsistently enough,) be seen mingling with the crowds which flock to hear the lectures of some popular heretic, you will rarely, if ever, see those who have thus departed from the truth, within the walls of a church, in which the doctrines of the protestant reformation are preached in their integrity and force. They turn away from the truth, being no longer able to bear its heavenly radiance. And thus the way is prepared for the highest and closing manifestation of their opposition to the truth, mentioned by the Apostle in the text.

4. They "*shall be turned unto fables.*" Perhaps, there is a primary reference to Jewish fables, against which the Apostle had previously warned Timothy. But, doubtless, all *vain and groundless doctrines*, which have no foundation in the word of God, are included; especially those doctrines which are not only unsupported by the word of God, but are light and trivial, partaking of the turgid vanity of those who fabricate and publish them. When men are entirely removed from the range and influence of a sound ministry, having been conducted there in the manner described, they are prepared to be the dupes of any imposture. Any thing in the name and garb of a preacher will be followed, and any thing and every thing which claims to be preaching, though it be the veriest figments of a disordered imagination, will be embraced as the richest treasures of heavenly wisdom.

There are examples enough in the history of the church to confirm this statement. Men who have suffered themselves to be carried away by artful, designing errorists and heresiarchs, and who have followed them wholly, have not generally stopped with the adoption of ordinary errors. They have gone from bad to worse, till they have been prepared for the adoption of any thing, however unscriptural or fabulous. The most foolish and irrational reveries have been accepted in the place of the purest and soundest doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Truth has been lost or buried amidst the accumulated novelties which have filled the mind, and the wildest absurdities have been accredited and received as the messages of heaven!

Such are the different forms under which opposition to the sound ministrations of the gospel will manifest itself in the time to which the Apostle here refers. And this opposition to the uncorrupted truths of the Bible, as published by the ministers of the Lord Jesus, under one or other, or all these forms, is that by which this time will be eminently distinguished.

II. In connection with the time which will thus be characterized by opposition to sound doctrine, the Apostle has informed us of the duty of the ministry in reference to it, and the mode of accomplishing that duty. "*Preach the word; be instant, in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*"

"*Preach the word.*"—By "*the word*" here is meant the gospel in its peculiar and distinguishing doctrines; the same as designated by "*sound doctrine*," and "*the truth*," in the subsequent verses, so far as regards the substantive and scriptural character of that truth. It is their duty publicly and officially to proclaim and inculcate the truth as it is contained in the holy scriptures. Salvation through the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, with all the associated doctrines of the gospel, must be distinctly presented and urged on the attention of men, by the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Preaching the gospel is the grand instrumentality which God has ordained to prevent the influx of error, or, if it already exists in the church, to prevent its spread. Is a time of defection and opposition to the truth foreseen or apprehended? Then, "preach the word," as the best preventive to such encroachments. Has error found its way into the church? Still "preach the word," as the surest way to counteract its progress and hinder its wider circulation. In this way, the ignorant will be instructed, the wavering will be confirmed, men who have never reflected will be made to think, those without principles will acquire them, an array of scriptural truth and argument will be thrown into the field, the consciences of men will become enlightened, souls will be converted, revivals will be produced by the effusions of the Holy Ghost in connection with the labors of Christ's servants, and thus, a strong barrier, to the successful advances of error, be erected. Hence, the solemn charge of Paul to Timothy, in view of the period which he describes, "preach the word!"

But how is this to be done? This is a question of great importance. Men may preach the word, and yet not preach it in the mode which God has prescribed; and thus, the objects to be attained, be defeated. Hence, much of duty lies in the mode of doing things, and in few things more than in preaching the gospel. On this subject, the Apostle has given us instructions, in this immediate connection.

1. His first direction is, "*be instant in season, out of season.*" In times of prospective or real defection from the truth, a leading inquiry is, when? how often shall we preach, to meet the demands of the occasion? Shall it be on the Sabbath only, or also on other days of the week? Only when opportunity offers, and men invite? Or shall we seek opportunity, and proffer our labors for the benefit of the souls of men?

The language of the apostolic injunction, evidently does not comport with the casual and sluggish discharge of the duty of preaching. It is *στηθί*, *stand upon* your duty; be close up to your work, standing as it were, upon it, and leaning over it. Be thus "*instant in season, out of season.*" Make it your constant business to preach the gospel; not at fixed times or stated periods only, but at all suitable times, when you can find opportunity; not according to the taste and desire of men, but according to the urgency of their necessities, and the magnitude of the interests involved.

It is, doubtless, not intended, by the apostle, that men should be regardless of prudence, in the midst of their zeal. There may be such a thing as presenting truth at unsuitable times. Hence, Christ tells his disciples, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." But, while prudence is to be exercised in relation to such cases, ministers must not be regulated by the calculations or rules of worldly wisdom on this subject. The less ministers preach and communicate on the subject of religion, the more agreeable it is to the taste of multitudes, both in and out of the church. Indeed, we have heard of churches which have desired to stipulate with their ministers for only *one* sermon a week, and which are quite willing to dispense with meetings for prayer, catechetical instruction, and every thing of this kind. Ministers, however, must not yield to such desires, nor adopt such rules; but as often as they can, however unreasonable it may be deemed by the world, they must present their

Master's message, seeking to obtain possession of the sinner's heart, and close it against those destructive seeds of error, which are ruinous to the interests of the soul.

2. "*Reprove, rebuke, exhort.*" These different terms are probably intended to describe the different modes of presenting the truth in our ministrations. The original word translated "reprove," signifies "to convince, to prove irrefragably to any one, to convict." The force of the direction is, that in preaching, ministers should make it a leading point to enlighten the understanding and satisfy the mind of the truth of the gospel, by intelligent exhibitions of its principles, and the evidence on which it rests. Thus they should seek to produce conviction. This is the first point to be accomplished. And this should be done before resort be had to rebuke or exhortation. First, enlighten and convince; then rebuke and exhort. You cannot drive men to the acceptance of the gospel by severe denunciations, nor draw them by mild persuasions, until you have produced in their minds enlightened convictions of its truth by rational evidence.

This method, is important to be observed. Ministers always depart from it, with loss to the cause of truth. They may thunder their rebukes, or urge their exhortations, if no ground of conviction be presented, little good will be effected. The sinner may be alarmed at, he knows not what: or his desires may be drawn forth after something to which he is exhorted: but if he has no enlightened conviction of the nature and value of the objects of fear and desire, the whole will soon pass away without any beneficial result. When, therefore, we hear ministers pouring forth their rebukes and exhortations, before they have taken any steps to enlighten the minds of their hearers in the knowledge of the doctrines and duties involved, we consider it about as wise, as for an artisan to urge an apprentice to do that which he never learned to do, and which he has never been convinced he ought to do, and then to rebuke him for not accomplishing it.

But allowing that men might, by the force of exhortation and rebuke, be brought over to the side of Christ, without any intelligent views in relation to the principles and grounds of their faith, would they be likely to stand fast in times of defection, and against the encroachments of error? Or, would they not be liable to be "tossed about by every wind of doctrine," and carried away by every errorist who invaded the purity of the church? All experience proves, that this description of converts, who have been brought into the church under ministrations of this character, have ever furnished the easiest and most abundant prey to those who have sought to seduce men from the simplicity of the gospel. While on the other hand, it has been comparatively rare, that those who have entered the church under the culture of enlightened instruction, have, to any great extent, been made the subjects of the seductive arts of wily declaimers, and the enemies of the truth. Hence, the great importance of directing our ministrations so as to ensure enlightened convictions of the truth, in order to its proper reception and maintenance against its adversaries.

Nor, is it simply by public preaching from the pulpit, that ministers are required to wield the truth. There are various other methods which they may employ, according to their appropriate talents, the circumstances in which they are placed, or the demands of the time in which they live. By written exhibitions of the doctrines of the gospel in books, or essays, or tracts, or in such other forms as peculiar emergencies may require for the

purpose of giving prominence to the truth, and bearing testimony against error, ministers may comply with the requisition of the apostle in the text. By uniting in a *public testimony* in favor of the truth, and in opposition to error, they may do much to silence gainsayers, and recommend the sound doctrines of the gospel to the acceptance of their fellow-men. Much, also, may be done by private instruction in the family circle and the catechetical meeting, to store the mind with sound doctrine, and lead sinners to Christ for salvation. All these various methods of presenting the truth, may and ought to be employed in the discharge of the high duties belonging to our office, and here pressed upon our attention by apostolical authority.

Some, understand these directions, "reprove, rebuke, exhort," as referring to the exercise of discipline, and so interpret them. I have taken a different view of the subject. It may not be improper, indeed, to include the various parts of discipline. Discipline, we know, is an important means of arresting the progress of error; and the apostle may have intended to include this, as a part of the instrumentality to be employed for the preservation of the purity of the church of Christ. "*An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject,*" is a judicial injunction, intended for ministerial direction in the removal of error from the church, by forms of disciplinary process. And where ministers, in connection with preaching the word in the manner prescribed, are faithful in the application of discipline to its appropriate object, they will not fail to erect a strong barrier to the encroachments of error, and prevent its spread to the injury and subversion of the truth. This they ought to do.

3. "*With all long-suffering and doctrine.*" Ministers in preaching the word, must exercise much "long-suffering." The term includes the ideas of *patience* and *fortitude*. It means the patient endurance of whatever evils arise in the discharge of their duty. There is much of opposition and reproach, and want of success, and of every thing calculated to produce discouragement, connected with the faithful preaching of the gospel. Ministers are often tempted to despondency and fretfulness, and discontent, and passion. To these, they must not yield, but patiently endure every evil to which they may be exposed, in the circumstances of their condition. They must calmly bear with christian fortitude whatever trials, fidelity to the cause of truth and duty may impose.

At the same time, they must not allow patience to degenerate into indolence. Though they must be passive under trials, they must not be inactive in reference to the duties which stand connected with them. For while they are required to do their duty with "all long-suffering," they must do it also with "doctrine," that is, as the word here means, "giving instruction." They must continue to preach, constantly imparting the knowledge of sound doctrine for the security and salvation of those to whom they are sent. Ministers, when they see error approaching, adversaries rising up, and dangers threatening, must meet the crisis with calm and holy fortitude. But this is not enough. They must connect with this, the active communication of divine truth, instructing the ignorant, encouraging the feeble-minded, counselling the wavering, directing the energies of the strong, testifying against error, and, in the exercise of a *faithful and efficient discipline*, seeking to have the church purged from all her impurities. In short, they must combine the greatest activity in duty, with the most unruffled meekness of disposition, and the most unbroken energy of soul.

The spirit with which ministerial effort is characterized, is of great importance. Men may preach sound doctrine, and be laborious in its inculcation, if they do not evince the right spirit, they will fail of accomplishing much. If, when their labors appear unproductive of profit to the souls of men, and men oppose and resist their efforts to do good, they become angry and petulant, and seek, by violence and harshness, to carry their object, disappointment will be the certain result. Men will not lay aside their sins, to gratify a haughty or angry temper. Ministers must be patient. They must bear long and be kind, seeking by patient fortitude to surmount every obstacle, and win sinners to the standard of the divine Redeemer.

These remarks apply with equal force to the exercise of discipline. It requires much "long-suffering and doctrine," to give it its proper effect, and make it answer the end of its institution. Indeed, the whole of the work of the ministers of Christ, should be characterized by a right spirit, and right efforts. They should not cease, in the exercise of patience and fortitude, to instruct men in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and way of salvation through his blood, and the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, that they may thus be brought into his kingdom and made partakers of eternal life. To the fulfilment of these high duties of the ministry, under the circumstances referred to in the text, ministers have strong and pressing inducements. This brings us to consider,

III. The solemn motives presented in the text to rouse the ministry to the faithful discharge of the duties enjoined. "*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom.*" There are two things which the apostle here urges as motives to ministerial fidelity, under the circumstances presented.

1. The first is, that they act under the immediate notice of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. "*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" We are always in the presence of God. His eye is ever upon us. He sees us in the retirements of our study, in our public ministrations in the pulpit, in our intercourse with our flocks, and in our deportment before the world. He observes us, when we think, and plan, and labor, and pray in relation to the souls of those committed to our care. He sees us when we meet in Presbytery, when we are together in Synod, and when engaged in responsible and solemn deliberation on the floor of the General Assembly. And, O, when we neglect our duty: when we cease to preach the word in the manner enjoined in the text, he sees us too, with a vigilance equally strict, and a judgment equally unerring.

This presence of God and the Savior, should be deeply felt by us, wherever we go, and whatever we do. But especially, in our official characters, as ministers of the everlasting gospel, and when engaged in the fulfilment of the duties growing out of our commission, we should have a profound sense of the presence of the omniscient God. And without doubt, if we always had an abiding sense of the presence of God and the Savior when we engage in our official duties, it would tend much to give purity and vigor, and devotional power to our ministrations. We would not then dare to trifle with sacred things, nor with the sacredness of our official vocation. But we would always prepare for our duty, and engage in it with a grave and solemn sense of its importance to our own souls, and the souls of those to whom we are sent. Thus, we sometimes feel bound to peculiar

efforts, and our minds are filled with respect and awe, when called to preach in the presence of our superiors in wisdom and age. But to preach "*before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,*" how solemn and overpowering the thought! Here, truly it becomes us to tax every power of thought, and to call into requisition all the spiritual energies of the soul. This, assuredly is a motive which should be felt in all its overwhelming force, urging us to increased fidelity and diligence in discharging the sacred functions of our office.

2. The other motive presented by the apostle, to the faithful discharge of the duties enjoined, is, that we shall have to answer to the Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming to wind up his kingdom. "*Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.*" The judgment day is called "his kingdom," because the whole of the affairs of the Redeemer's Kingdom, will be settled, and finally, and for ever arranged on that day.

And while the Lord Jesus will judge the quick and dead on that occasion, we who have enjoyed official stations, as heralds of the cross here in his church, must also give an account. We must give an account of ourselves. But what is still more solemn, we must give an account for the souls committed to our trust. For the manner in which we have preached the word; for our diligence; our pressing earnestness; our care to make the people understand the truth; for our urgent application of motives, in reproof, rebuking and exhorting sinners: for our patience and fortitude, and laborious exhibition of the doctrines and principles of the gospel: for all these, we must give an account.

My dear brethren, this is a very solemn consideration, which ought to have a constraining influence upon us. To be assured, that our poor, defective, sin-stained labors, shall all be brought into review before the judgment seat of Christ; and that, if we shall be found to have been faithless and negligent, it shall be published to the assembled universe, and we ourselves condemned to everlasting woe, is enough to rouse every power of our souls, and lead to unceasing diligence, and prayerful and believing efforts in seeking to win souls to Christ. Surely in view of this, every one of us is ready to adopt the pious resolution, that, by the grace of God, we will "preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

Having thus illustrated the points in the text, I shall close with a few practical reflections. 1. The hearers of the gospel may be admonished against indulging a rage for novelty, which is ever in search of new doctrines, and new measures, and new ministers. 'Tis the bane of the church, and of sound and growing piety. Few things have done more injury to the cause of evangelical religion than "itching ears," which are never contented with the plain, scriptural exhibitions of divine truth, by sound and enlightened ministers, but are always craving the novelties and varieties of an ever-changing ministry. It is an unfavorable symptom, as it indicates a state of mind adverse to the truth, and prepared for the adoption of any error. Indeed, persons are in a sure way to become the victims of a fabulous theology, when they yield to this thirst for new teachers, who will entertain them with new speculations, and introduce them to new and strange doctrines, with which the church is not familiar. Those, then, who value the truth in its intrinsic excellence, and practical influence, should beware

of yielding to this demand for new and ever-varying exhibitions of divine things. Let them rather "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," and that, strengthened through the agency of the truth, they may be prepared to sustain the honor and interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the world.

2. Let the ministers of the gospel learn how to meet and repel the advances of error—by laborious and multiplied, persevering and patient preaching of the gospel, and the discharge of their various official functions. This is that to which *we* are called. The state of things which the apostle has described prospectively, seems to have arrived. The time *has* come when "men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts, have heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Nor has this state of things *now* for the first time made its appearance, but it has long existed, and is apparently increasing—and if fidelity in our ministerial functions is required by the apostle, as necessary to prevent the influx of error, it is equally, if not more necessary to prevent its spread, and effect its removal.

Do we, then, mourn that errors prevail, and that teachers who disseminate these errors, are multiplied? Let us seek the correction of these evils, by the diligent and faithful preaching of the gospel, and the equitable administration of discipline. Let us exhibit the truth in its lovely forms and just proportions. Let us reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with the spirit of our divine Master. In a word, let us preach more, and better, than we have ever done; be more faithful in dealing plainly and affectionately with our hearers about their souls, warning them against errors, directing them in the ways of righteousness, and by much patient fortitude, laboring till they be brought to know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, for the salvation of their souls. In this way, we may do much for the suppression and prevention of error in general, and for the restoration and continuance of a sound and healthful sentiment in the church, to whose glory we stand pledged.

3. Finally, that we may be stimulated to this course, let us remember, that for the manner in which we comply with these requisitions, we must give an account to the Savior whose commission we bear. Let us keep that account constantly in view. O, it will be a solemn reckoning. It will be for the life of souls. In the prospect of this solemn retribution, let us all be roused to greater activity and fidelity in our Master's service. The time is short. The day of reckoning is near. Opportunities for labor, will soon be over. Let us then, work, while it is called to-day. Let us give ourselves wholly to this blessed work, so that when the Master comes, we may receive the approving sentence, "Well done good and faithful servants—enter into the joys of your Lord!"

SERMON XLIII.

BY WM. T. HAMILTON,
OF MOBILE, ALABAMA.

ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

GENESIS 2:7. *Man became a living soul.*

THE world having been called into existence by the power of the Eternal, reduced from chaotic confusion to order, and clothed with herbage, the trees of the forest and the shrubbery on the mountain sides were already spreading their rich foliage to the sun; while the air, the waters and the verdant plains were teeming with innumerable tribes of living beings rejoicing in the Creator's bounty, when the sixth day witnessed the last effort of creative might on earth; for then man was produced and constituted lord of this lower world. The manner of man's production was diverse from that of any other occupant of earth, indicating his dignity and higher destiny. "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And then we are further told, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL!"

The best critics are agreed in understanding this language as expressive of the spiritual nature of man, a *living intelligence*; and they have further supposed that this passage does, not very obscurely, intimate *the immortality of the human soul*. To a few considerations bearing on this great doctrine, I would solicit serious and candid attention. Like the Sadducees of old, there have always been some, who would deny not only the immortality of the soul, but its very existence as an immaterial spirit: and various are the arguments they have advanced in support of this cheerless opinion. It is not so much my object to refute these arguments, as to state with clearness the series of considerations which appear to confirm the great truth set forth in the text, "*the soul is immortal*."

By some, even among the professed believers in revelation, and in a future and endless life, it has been maintained that the soul is a *material substance*. Of this position there is, however, no proof. So far as we can ascertain, the properties of *mind* are wholly diverse from those of matter. Matter and mind have never yet been shown to have any one quality in common. But, admit, for a moment, that the soul is material; it would not follow from the materiality of the soul, that it should perish; for we have as little idea how a single particle of matter can be annihilated, as how it can be created. Matter does exist: but no man has ever known one atom annihilated; notwithstanding all the changes continually taking place among material objects, these changes, in all their variety, involve nothing more than a change in the relative position of the original atoms of which material objects are composed. It is, at least, possible, that a material substance may be in existence, as much more subtle than light or heat, and as much more beyond perception by our bodily senses, as light is more

subtle than marble or iron. And of matter thus subtle, the soul might consist, for aught we can tell. It might exist in union with the body, and then detached from it, and again reunited with it, and so exist forever.

Others have supposed that thought, and consciousness, and all that we usually attribute to the soul, are only the results of that delicate organization of matter found in the human body. They tell us that thought, and hope, and fear, and love, are only the result of the action of certain material organs in our frame, just as speech is the product of one set of organs, and motion of another. But for this hypothesis there is no valid proof: on the contrary, we find much that is directly inconsistent with it. The brain is generally regarded as the seat of intelligence: and attempts have been repeatedly made, to show that in several divisions of the brain, are found the seat of the several intellectual operations respectively: one part being designated the seat of memory, another of judgment, another of the imagination, &c. Now, suppose that this hypothesis were completely established, it would not authorize the conclusion that the soul is material. Those portions of the brain denominated the seat of memory, of judgment, &c., may be merely those organs of the body which the soul employs in the process of reasoning, or imagining, &c., just as the ear is the organ through which the soul acts in hearing, the eye its organ for seeing, and as the nerves are the instruments by means of which it ascertains the presence of external objects, &c. But against the hypothesis itself, many formidable objections lie. Skillful anatomists have shown that in different subjects, every part of the brain has been injured, and yet the intellectual powers have remained unimpaired. Nay, cases have repeatedly occurred, in which portions of the brain have been actually destroyed, and removed, yet not only has life remained, but the mental powers have continued to act with unimpaired vigor and acuteness. Moreover, if intelligence be merely the result of our peculiar animal organization, then, with the death of the body, the consciousness of man is suspended, and he must sleep in utter insensibility till the body shall rise to life again. On this hypothesis there is no soul, no spirit distinct from the body: but if so, what are we to make of the words of Jesus Christ to the disciples, when, alarmed at his coming to them walking on the sea, *they cried out, supposing it had been a spirit*—and he said unto them, “it is I,” be not afraid, for **A SPIRIT HATH NOT FLESH AND BONES, AS YE SEE ME HAVE**. But, whatever opinion we may adopt as to the nature of the soul itself, its continued existence after death we are led to expect from a variety of considerations: as

1st, *From its capacities, and the progressive nature of its powers.*

The various animals, roaming over the face of our earth, evince a sort of intelligence well adapted to their several spheres of action; but their intelligence is far, very far inferior to the intelligence of man. They are guided by instinct, admirable in itself, but admitting of no improvement or advancement. Bees now construct their comb, and arrange all their domestic economy, just as they did in the days of Jonathan and of Samson. Elephants exhibited instinct as wonderful in the age of the ancient Romans, as they now do; and the feathered tribes constructed their nests as admirably, and they watched over and provided for their young as skilfully in the days of Christ, and in those of Moses, as they do in our own. There is no evidence of progression or improvement in the present generation of beasts, insects, fishes, or birds, beyond any of their progenitors, however remote. But widely different is the case with man; for advancement in

knowledge and improvements in the arts are continually taking place. What a difference between the state of society, and the condition of the human mind, as found here—and in the heart of Africa, or among the rude tribes that roam along the borders of the Pacific. Consider the progress of one mind from the commencement to the close of life! So far as knowledge is concerned, the mind of an infant is a mere blank; but every day it is gathering knowledge, until it extends its inquiries through all creation, nor hesitates to explore the mysteries profound of the divine nature. Nor is it alone by capacity for knowledge that the soul is distinguished. It is possessed of moral sensibilities, keenly alive to the distinction between right and wrong. Irrespective, entirely, of human applause or censure, we are rendered uneasy by conduct or by feelings which we deem wrong: we are sustained and cheered under the heaviest trials, if pursuing the course we believe to be right. All the honors and riches of the world cannot satisfy the soul of him who carries an upbraiding conscience. Obloquy and pain combined cannot crush him whose conscience approves his doings. The longer a man lives, the more his capacities expand, and the more fully his character becomes developed.

The closing scene of life not unfrequently comes on, while every power of the soul is in the utmost vigor of action. Even while the body lies in the last extremity of exhaustion and decay, the soul, with all its powers, intellectual and moral, often appears to be in the very zenith of its energies. Since, then, we find powers totally distinct from mere animal nature, powers which, when the body lies with all its senses sealed in sleep, or sinking and prostrate by disease, are still wakeful, active, energetic, ranging through all nature, and springing up to nature's God—what is there, in all this, to authorize the notion that at death the soul ends? If so, then, these noble powers have been conferred in vain; for, in a vast majority of mankind, the attainments they make in this life bear no proportion to those of which they are capable. But certainly, that which exhibits a capability of progressing in vigor and excellence, cannot be supposed to have been produced by an all wise Being to flutter on the confines of existence for a short season, and then sink into non-existence ere yet it has had an opportunity even to make trial of its powers! No, surely, on receiving the inspiration of God, "*man became a living soul.*"

A 2d ground on which this expectation rests, is the fact, that a *future life is indispensable to vindicate the character of the world's great Governor.* It is notorious that, in this life, the wicked frequently prosper. The riches, the power, the honors of this world, have, in every age, been found, for the most part, in the hands of unprincipled, selfish, and wicked men. If there be no life beyond the grave, then will it be found impossible (with reverence be it said,) to vindicate, as equitable, the conduct of God in the government of this world. Occasionally, it is true, signal crime meets with punishment as signal: not uniformly, but just often enough to show there is a righteous God on high, and to give birth to the expectation that a righteous retribution will be awarded to each individual. There is, also, a voice in man's bosom, that warns him to beware how he provokes the awful Majesty of heaven, and forbids him to hope, that even in the grave, he may hide his guilt from Him to whose view hell and the grave lie fully open!

The instinctive expectation we all feel, that crime will meet with its just desert, in connection with the fact that countless misdeeds do escape merited

punishment in this life, compels us to anticipate a state of existence after death, when justice shall be impartially dispensed to all.

Hence, 3dly, *The universal expectation of men confirms this doctrine.*

In all countries, and in every age, the expectation of life beyond the grave has prevailed. We find evidence of this belief amid the hideous fables of ancient heathenism, and in the labored reasoning of ancient philosophers. We find traces of it, to this day, in the popular faith of every nation under heaven, however rude. There is something so gloomy and revolting in the prospect of utter annihilation, that the human mind shrinks from it with dismay, and clings to the hope of continued consciousness and life. This constitutional tendency is found in man wherever he exists; and it has been so in all ages. It must, then, have been impressed upon him by the hand that made him. This dismay at the thought of non-existence, this longing desire for continued being, for enjoyments beyond what earth can yield, as clearly betokens the design of the Creator that man shall live beyond the tomb, that the soul shall survive the agonies of dissolution, as the eye, by its wonderful construction, discovers its adaptedness to be used in a medium filled with light.

But, although these considerations betoken man *a living soul*, not destroyed by the dissolution of his animal frame, they do not decide the extent of his duration: they do not proclaim the soul *absolutely eternal*. For aught that appears to reason alone, the purposes of justice may be answered in an existence after death, that shall close at the end of a few revolving centuries. Nor is it indisputably clear that the faculties of the soul may not reach the utmost expansion of which they are capable, and take in, also, all the enjoyment of which they are susceptible, in a period of duration far short of eternity; and then gradually sink exhausted and spent, and die like the flickering of a flame, when the fuel that supplied it is all consumed. Here, then, reason is at fault: and our only light, on this deeply interesting point, is to be found in the word of the living God.

True, it has been argued with confidence, that thought being a single act, and simple, it must be the property of a simple, indivisible unit: and that the soul, being thus a simple, indivisible substance, must of necessity be indestructible, and therefore eternal.

But this argument being based on mere assumption, utterly incapable of proof, is not conclusive. We do not know that the soul is an indivisible unit. We can, indeed, hardly affix a definite idea to the terms. And further, we do not know that an indivisible unit, if such exist, is indestructible. For aught that can be shown to the contrary, the essential particles of matter are all of them indivisible units, mere points. Yet who believes matter to be indestructible? If each separate particle be indestructible, then matter itself, wherever found, is essentially indestructible; and if so, it must be everlasting. This *may* be so; but we do not know it; none can prove it. On the contrary, the holy scriptures give, at least, some countenance to the idea that matter will finally be destroyed, when "*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.*"

But 4thly: *In the Scriptures of truth, the doctrine of the future and eternal existence of the soul is unequivocally stated.*

"It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment." "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," said the Redeemer to the dying thief. *Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel.* And, in describing the winding up of the judgment day, Christ declares, "*the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*" Matt. 25:46. A declaration, if possible, still

more decisive, is found, John 10:28, where Christ assures us, his "*sheep shall never perish.*" In the vision of the heavenly state, the beloved disciple was assured, the spirits of the ransomed shall be with God, and reign for ever and ever; and *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.* Rev. 21:3. If language can convey the idea, then do the holy scriptures undeniably teach, that the *soul of man is immortal—it shall not perish—it shall live for ever.*

This is further corroborated, 5thly, *by the whole tenor of revelation, as well as by explicit declarations.*

What is the view the Scriptures present of the importance of the human soul? From the perfection of his nature, God must assuredly be independent of all beings. We cannot, for one moment, suppose, that any created being, nor all creatures combined, can add any thing to his essential glory or blessedness; nor could the utter destruction of all creation obscure that glory or impair that blessedness. Yet God is certainly acquainted with the true nature and the real value of every object. His treatment of his creatures cannot fail to evince the regard he has for them: it must therefore discover their real worth. This vast world, God brought into existence with a word, and fashioned it all, complete and beautiful, in six short days. But the redemption of the human soul was accomplished only by an effort of amazing magnitude. To save the soul of man, the Son of God, himself, appeared on earth, clothed in a human form, having taken the nature of man into inseparable union with the divine, and at an amazing expense of condescension, toil and pain, wrought out redemption for the soul of man. He returned to heaven, *bearing the glorified human nature with him*, and there he continues still—filling the throne of universal empire—carrying out his plan of mercy to man, and shedding forth, also, the Holy Spirit from on high, to secure the salvation of the soul! Can all this have been done to subserve interests, which, after a few revolving ages, shall cease to have a being? The dignity of the Redeemer, therefore, and the ascension and exaltation of the man Jesus to the mediatorial throne in heaven, combine, with the explicit declarations of holy writ, to satisfy us that the soul is not perishable; it shall exist, long as the throne of God shall stand—LONG AS ETERNITY ROLLS ON!

This subject naturally suggests the remark: 1st. *How solemn is the destiny of man.*

We have entered on a course of being that shall never, never end! Whatever may be our location, whatever our portion hereafter, whether joyful or mournful, we must continue, we can never lay down our existence. Through all eternity we must move on. No amount of joy will ever exhaust us, no weight or duration of anguish can ever crush us down to non-existence.

There is something solemn, yea, oppressive and overwhelming, in the prospect of interminable existence! existence, which, however burdensome it may prove, can not be laid down. The little babe, that first drew the breath of life to day, has entered on a course of being that runs parallel with that of God himself! Eternity, like a shoreless, fathomless, boundless ocean, is spread out in its vastness, all before us.

We see 2dly, *why various and trying afflictions may be needful for us while here.*

This life is but an introduction to eternity; a little stream flowing down to the boundless ocean. If, in the brief period we pass here, so many unforeseen events occur to baffle our calculations, and frustrate our plans, who can tell what, amid all the crossing events of a long, long eternity, shall there await us? Who can tell what process of discipline here, may be needed to adapt us to the place we shall hereafter occupy, and to fit us for meeting the emergencies that may there occur? How thankfully, then, should we commit the guidance of our destinies to Him, who "*seeth the end from the beginning,*" and who "*doeth all things well!*" The little child cannot judge as to what is needful to fit it for its future destinies, and prepare it for usefulness and for happiness in after life; how much less are we competent to decide what is needed here, as a preparative to the eternity before us! How cordially, then, ought we to acquiesce in the ordering of our entire lot by Him who is all-wise, almighty, and infinitely benevolent!

We are taught 3dly: *The amazing import of the Gospel.*

The gospel exhibits provision for our wants, as *immortal beings!* If you address a young friend, just entering on the business of life, and show, to his satisfaction, that the proposal you have to make, involves his honor or infamy, his happiness or wretchedness for his entire life, how readily he will listen to you, how deep and how earnest the attention he will lend! But the gospel offer respects our well being, not for this life only, but, for the life to come; not for a few years merely, but, for age succeeding age, age upon age, long as eternity shall roll! Unlike the paltry schemes of human

origin, which contemplate only the interests of a few fleeting years—and whose largest prospect is bounded by the grave—the gospel meets us in all the majesty of heaven, and overlooking all the petty distinctions of rank, and title, and riches, and honors, by which the fluttering triflers of this world are dazzled and deluded, it presents before us prospects large as our capacities, boundless as our whole duration; and points to our immortality, as the object alone worthy of solicitude, while it directs us to the boundless mercy of the Redeemer, as the sure and only means of making the Almighty God our friend, and heaven itself our resting place for ever and ever.

Hence we discern 4thly: *The unspeakable folly of neglecting the Gospel.*

What can be put in competition with the value of the soul? Usually, men estimate their possessions according to their permanence. A rose is as beautiful as a gem: but the rose perishes in an hour—the jewel is durable, and therefore *precious*. Who regards the inconveniences of a day, if he may but subserve his interests for life? But what is life, even in its utmost extent, compared with eternity? The man who neglects the gospel, under whatever pretext he may do so, destroys his hopes for eternity, he murders his immortal soul, he makes sure a portion in eternal wailings. And what does he gain as a substitute?—pleasure? it dies in the enjoyment:—honor? it is lost to-morrow!—riches? they slip through his hands ere he is aware! But suppose a man should have every wish of his heart gratified while on earth;—what then? a few, few years terminate his enjoyments and his life together—and then begins an eternity of bitter sorrow. Oh, *what, then, shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

We here discern 5thly: *How affecting an event is death.*

Death is not merely the end of all those enjoyments, comforts and pleasures, which the earth has yielded; it is not merely a final divorce from all the fascinating scenes of this life, and a separation from relatives and friends, but it is the close of probation, it is the commencement of retribution, it is an introduction to scenes unchangeable and eternal. He who has wisely made preparation by compliance with the gospel terms, finds himself at once in the presence of God, surrounded by the spirits of just men made perfect, encompassed with all the glories of heaven, and assured of exemption from sin, and sorrow, and pain, and fear, and doubt, for ever: with his intellect invigorated, his capacities enlarged and ever expanding; a boundless ocean of joy before him, and all eternity to explore it!

But he who has despised an offered Savior finds, in that solemn moment, that he emerges into the blackness of eternal darkness: horror falls on him—despair seizes him—hope itself dies—and the conviction, keen and biting, fastens on his inmost soul—“’Tis done, salvation is for ever beyond my reach; I have madly destroyed myself!” and lost, lost, lost, for ever lost, is his bitter cry!

This subject reminds us 6thly: *How very desirable is a season of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

Such is the amazing apathy of the human heart, such the stultifying power of sin, such the delusive influence of the enemy of souls, that with the bible in their hands, and eternity just opening before them, men remain totally unaffected, and perfectly at their ease, although lying under the curse of God, and exposed to all the terrors of his righteous indignation. Nothing but the power of the Holy Ghost, can dissipate this fatal delusion. The gospel, however faithfully preached, and how sorely soever it may trouble men's consciences, will not, of itself, renew their hearts or save their souls. Like persons lying on the very edge of a tremendous precipice with their senses fast locked in profound sleep, the effect of all our warnings and entreaties is only like the uneasy tossings of such sleepers when gently touched, or spoken to, or when startled by alarming dreams, restlessness agitates them, and only increases their danger, yet they do not awake. But when the Holy Spirit's influence accompanies the gospel message, its effect on dying men is like that of the shrill clang of a loud trumpet abruptly sounded in that sleeper's ear; or like the pealing of sudden thunder, rolling and crashing directly over his head; he starts from his slumber, broad awake, to see his danger, feel his peril, and flee at once for safety! That saving influence is vouchsafed, only, in answer to fervent, importunate prayer. Are you a Christian—look on your family—your bosom friends—your acquaintances in the community around you. Each one you love, each one you see, “*was made a living soul!*” If unrenewed—if not holy—each one is treading the path that leads to endless despair! Their confidence, their security, their gaiety, may impose on themselves and on each other;—does it impose on you? Can it avert, or retard, or mitigate their doom? Each one you love has “*a living soul!*” Can you do nothing to rescue it from the pangs of the endless death? Carry that inquiry to the mercy-seat, and act as the word and Spirit of God shall direct you. Amen.