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**A REFORMATION OF MORALS PRACTICABLE  
AND INDISPENSABLE.**

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**SERMON,**

**DELIVERED AT NEW-HAVEN, ON THE EVENING  
OF OCTOBER, 27, 1812,**

BY

**LYMAN BEECHER, A. M.**

**PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN LITCHFIELD.**

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# SERMON,

&c.

EZEKIEL xxxiii 10.

*Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?*

**A**T the time this direction was given to the prophet, the nation of Israel had become very wicked and were suffering in captivity the punishment of their sins. And yet they did not reform—They affected to doubt whether the Most High would pardon them if they should reform. But if he would, it would afford them no consolation, for reformation, they insisted, had become hopeless. “Our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them and die, how should we then live?” The burthen has increased until we are crushed beneath it. The disease has progressed until it has become incurable.

They were correct in the inference that if they did not reform they must die; but they erred lamentably in the conclusion that reformation was hopeless.

To wipe off such an aspersion from his character, and to banish from the minds of his people such desponding apprehensions, the Most High condescends to expostulate with them. Have I any pleasure in the death of him that dieth? Is it my fault that nations are wicked? Do I constrain them to sin or prevent their reformation? As I live saith the Lord I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: “turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

We are brought, therefore, by the text and its connections to the doctrine, That a work of reformation, in a time of great moral declension, is a difficult, but by no means an impracticable work.

In the illustration of this doctrine it is proposed to consider,

I. Some of the difficulties which may be expected to impede a work of reformation.

II. Show that such a work is, notwithstanding, entirely practicable.

III. Consider some of the ways in which it may be successfully attempted. And,

IV. The motives to immediate exertion.

With respect to the difficulties which may be expected to attend a work of reformation, one obvious impediment will be found in the number and character of those who must be immediately affected by such a work.

The sons of Belial, in a time of declension, are numerous and daring. Emboldened by impunity they have declared themselves independent both of God and man, and are leagued by a common interest and a common feeling to defend their usurped immunities. They are watchful and zealous, and the moment an effort is made to execute the laws, every mouth is open against the work; and their clamours, and sneers, and threatenings, and lies, like the croakings of Egypt, fill the land.

This direct opposition may be expected to receive, from various sources, collateral aid. In this wicked world, where the love of money is the root of evil, there are not a few who traffic in the souls and bodies of men. Not immoral always in their own conduct, they thrive by the vices of other men and may be tempted to resist a reformation, which would dry up these impure sources of revenue. They would not justify intemperance, nor the means of promoting it, but pretexts are never wanting to conceal the real motives of men and justify opposition to whatever they deem inconsistent with their interest. Though reformation, therefore, might be admitted to be desirable, either the motives of those who make the attempt, or the means by which they make it, will always be wrong; and it will be impossible ever to devise a right way, till their interest is on the other side. In many cases it is to be hoped that integrity would get the victory over cupidity; but in many more it is to be feared that avarice, secretly or openly, would send recruits to the standard of opposition.

This phalanx may receive some augmentation from those whose pride may be wounded through the medium of their unhappy relatives.

They could endure to see them live in infamy and die in despair—while they shrink from the imagined disgrace of applying a remedy which may rescue the victim, or limit the influence of his pestilent example.

*How long shall it be ere men will learn that sin is infamy, and that reformation is glory and honour,*

To the preceding must be added the opposition of all the timid, falsely called, peace makers.

They lament bitterly, the prevailing evils of the day, and multiply predictions of divine judgments and speedy ruin— But if a voice be raised or a finger be lifted to attempt a reformation, they are in a tremor, lest the peace of society be invaded. Their maxim would seem to be, “better to die in sin, if we may but die quietly, than to purchase life and honour by contending for them.” If men will be wicked, let them be wicked, if they will but be peaceable. But the mischief is, men freed from restraint will be wicked and will not be peaceable. No method can be devised more effectual to destroy the peace of society, than tamely to give up the laws to conciliate the favor of the flagitious. Like the tribute paid by the degenerate Romans to purchase peace of the northern barbarians, every concession will increase the demand and render resistance more hopeless.

Another class of men will encamp very near the enemy through mere love of ease.

They would have no objection that vice should be suppressed, and good morals promoted, if these events would come to pass of their own accord; but, when the question is asked, what must be done? This talk of action is a terrific thing, and if in their panic they go not over to the enemy, it is only because the enemy also demands courage and enterprise—In this dilemma, it is judged expedient to put in requisition the resources of wisdom, and gravely to caution against rashness, and innovation, and zeal without knowledge, until all about them are persuaded, that the safest and wisest and easiest way is to do nothing.

There is another class of men, not too indolent, but too exclusively occupied with schemes of personal enterprise, to bestow that time or labor upon plans which regard only the general good.

If their fields bring forth abundantly, if their profession be lucrative, if they can buy and sell and get gain, it is enough. Society must take care of itself. Distant consequences are not regarded, and generations to come must provide for their own safety. The stream of business hurries them on, without the leisure of a moment, or an anxious thought concerning the general welfare.

Another impediment to be apprehended, when the work of reformation is attempted is found in the large territory of neutral ground, which, on such occasions, is often very populous.

Many would engage in the enterprize cheerfully, were they quite certain it could be done with perfect safety. But

perhaps it may injure their interest or affect their popularity. They take their stand, therefore, on this safe middle ground—They will not oppose the work, for perhaps it may be popular : And they will not help the work, for perhaps it may be unpopular—They wait, therefore, till they perceive whether Israel or Amaleek prevail, and then, with much self-complacency, fall in on the popular side.

This neutral territory is especially large in a republican government, where so much emolument and the gratification of so much ambition depend upon the suffrages of the people. It requires no deep investigation to make it manifest to the candidate for suffrage, That if he lend his influence to prevent travelling on the Sabbath, the Sabbath-breaker will not vote for him ; if he lay his hand upon tippling shops, and drunkards, the whole suffrage of those who are implicated will be turned against him. Hence many who should be a terror to evil doers, do bear the sword in vain. They persuade themselves that theirs, is a peculiar ease, and that for them it is not best to volunteer in the work of reformation.

To reduce the power of this temptation, it may be laid down as a maxim, that when the toleration of crimes becomes the price of public suffrage—when the people will not endure the restraint of righteous laws, but reward magistrates who violate their oath and suffer them to sin with impunity ; and when magistrates will sell their conscience and the public good for a little brief authority, then the public suffrage is of but little value, for the day of liberty is drawing to a close, and the night of despotism is at hand. The people are prepared to become slaves, and the flagitious to usurp the government and rule them with a rod of iron. No compact formed by man, is more unhallowed or pernicious than this tacit compact between rulers and subjects, to dispense with the laws and tolerate crimes.

In the midst of these difficulties, there are not a few who greatly magnify them by unmanly dejection.

Like the captive Israelites they sit down and fold their hands, and sigh, and weep, and wish that something might be done, but ineffectually and unceasingly, the disheartening prediction that nothing can be done. *“It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anaks, which came of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”*

Because the work cannot be done at a stroke, they conclude that it can never be done. Because all that might be desirable cannot be obtained, perhaps ever, they conclude that nothing can be obtained.

Talk of reformation, and the whole nation, with all its crimes, rises up before them, and fills them with dismay and despair. It seems never to have occurred to them, that if we cannot do great good it is best to do a little: and that, by accomplishing with persevering industry all that is practicable, the ultimate amount may be great, surpassing expectation.

There is yet another class of people who by no means despair of deliverance. But they have no conception that human exertion will be of much avail.

If we are delivered God must deliver us, and we must pray and wait till it shall please him to come and save us. But we may pray and wait forever, upon this principle, and the Lord will not come.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of means, and though the excellency of the power belongs to him exclusively; human instrumentality is indispensable.

It is by no means improbable that some may be aroused to oppose any special efforts at reformation, merely from their *novelty*. It is lamentable that such efforts should be a novelty in a world where they are always so necessary to keep back the encroachments of vice. But so it is. And however good and proper the exertions may be, if they have not been made before, they never should be made. "What new thing is this? Did our fathers ever do so?" They had not the same occasion. But because they did not make special efforts to repel an enemy which did not assail them, shall we neglect by appropriate means to resist an enemy which is pouring in like a flood, and threatening to sweep us away? There are some who look with cold philosophic eye upon the progress of crimes, as a part of that great course of events which will roll on resistless in spite of human endeavor.— And we know that the genius of the government, the progress of science, and the refinement of wealth and luxury, will draw after them a train of consequences which no human efforts can prevent. But are these consequences evil only? Are not certain vices left behind in the rude age, and certain virtues produced by the age of refinement? If there be greater facilities of committing crimes, are there not also increased facilities of preventing them? And if the balance be on the whole against us, is this an argument that we can do nothing, or only that we should double our diligence as dangers increase? Because nations have not resisted this tide of human events, does it follow that it cannot be resisted? May not the deleterious causes be modified and counteracted, and their result delayed if not averted? Will the

christian religion and its institutions exert no saving influence in our favor? Because Greece and Rome, who had not this precious system, perished by their vices, is it certain that nations must perish now who experience its preserving influence? We have seen what idols can do, and we have before us the result of atheism. Let us water now with double diligence the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and not despair of its restoring influence till the experiment has been faithfully made and has failed.

But not a few, after all, it may be feared, will stand aloof from the work of reformation, from the persuasion that we are in no danger. The world is no worse than it always has been, and this pretence of growing wickedness is only a song of alarm, sung by superstition from age to age.

Surely then if we may credit testimony, the world has been uniformly bad enough to make reformation desirable, and if without special efforts, it has been stationary, the prospect of improvement by exertion is bright, and we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make the attempt.

But is it true that nations do not decline? whence then the punishment of the Israelites for this sin, and whence the maxim we have just combated, that they *must* and *will* decline? Were the morals of the Roman empire as good when it was sold at auction as at any antecedent period? Was the age of Charles the second in England as favorable to virtue as any preceding age? Did the late war produce in our own land no change for the worse? Are the morals of New-England as pure now as they ever have been? Is the God of heaven as universally worshipped in the family? Are children as much accustomed to subordination and as faithfully instructed in religion? Are the laws against immorality as faithfully executed, and the occasions for their interference as few as at any former period? Has there been no increase of slander, falsehood, and perjury? Is the Sabbath day remembered and kept holy with its ancient strictness? Did our fathers journey, and labor in the field, and visit, and ride out for amusement on that holy day, and do these things with impunity? Has there been no increase of intemperance? Was there consumed in the days of our fathers the proportion of five gallons of ardent spirits for every man, woman, and child in the land, and at an expense more than sufficient to support the gospel, the civil government, and every school and literary institution? Did our fathers tolerate tippling-shops all over the land, and enrich merchants and beggar their families by mortgaging their estates to pay the expenses of intemperance? Did the ardent spirits consumed

by laborers amount not unfrequently to almost half the price of their labor, and did they faint often ere the day was past, and fail before the summer was ended, and die of intemperance in the midst of their days? It is capable of demonstration that the vigour of our countrymen, the amount of productive labour, and their morals are declining together under the influence of this destructive sin.

We are to show

II. That, notwithstanding all these impediments a reformation is entirely practicable.

If it were not practicable, why should it be commanded and disobedience be followed with fearful punishment? Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Are not all his requisitions according to what a man hath and not according to what he hath not? The commands of God, are the measure and the evidence of human ability. He is not an hard master, reaping where he has not sowed and gathering where he has not strawed. The way of the Lord is not unequal. He never demands of men the performance of impossibilities. We conclude therefore, that reformation is practicable, because it is the unceasing demand of heaven that nations, as well as individuals, do turn from their evil ways.

But facts corroborate theory. Reformations, great and difficult have been achieved. Such was the reformation from Popery, began by Luther. Who would have conceived it possible, before the event, that an individual, could awake half of Europe from the slumber of ages, and shed upon the nations, that light, which is shining more and more to the perfect day!

The abolition of the Slave-trade in England, and in our own country, is a memorable exhibition of what may be done by well directed persevering efforts. The inhuman traffic was sanctioned by custom, defended by argument, and still more powerfully, by a vast monied capital, embarked in the trade. It is not yet fifty years, since this first effort was made, and now the victory is won. Who produced this mighty revolution? A few men at first, lifted up their voice and were reinforced by others, till the immortal work was done.

A thousandth part of the study, and exertion, and expense, and suffering endured to achieve our independence, would be sufficient, with the divine blessing, to preserve our morals, and perpetuate our liberties for ever. Should a foreign foe invade us, there would be no despondency; every pulse would beat high, and every arm would be strong. It is only when criminals demand the surrendry of our laws and institutions,

that all faces gather paleness and all hearts are faint. Men who would fly to the field of battle to rescue their country from shame, tremble at the song of the drunkard, and flee, panic struck, before the army of the aliens.

But we have facts to produce; facts, more decisive than a thousand arguments, to prove that such a reformation as we need is practicable.

Desperate as the state of the Jews was in their own estimation, they were reformed, and did not at that time pine away and die in their sins. And never, perhaps, was such a work attended with circumstances of greater difficulty. The whole order of God's worship had been deranged by the captivity, and was again to be restored. Many of the people had contracted unlawful marriages, and husbands and wives were to be separated, and parents and children. Some had been in the habit of treading the wine press on the Sabbath day, and bringing in sheaves, and wine and grapes, and figs, and all manner of burthens. The people held also constant intercourse with Syrian merchants, who came into their city on the Sabbath and traded with them. But great as were the difficulties, Nehemiah and Ezra, and the Elders of the land undertook, and by the help of God accomplished the work of reformation.

Other efforts of the same kind, have been crowned with similar success. A society was established in London, about the year 1697, to suppress vice, by promoting the execution of the laws. The moral state of the city and nation at that time, and the success of their association, are thus described by a respectable historian:

“It is well known to our shame that profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness and open lewdness and profanation of the Lord's day, have been committed with great impunity and without control, without either shame or fear of laws: so that they were seen and heard at noon day, and in the open streets.—Debauchery had diffused itself through the whole body of the nation, till at last our morals were so corrupted, that virtue and vice had with too many changed their names. It was reckoned breeding to swear, gallantry to be lewd, good humor to be drunk, and wit to despise serious things. In this state of things, reformation was indeed talked of, as an excellent thing; but vice was looked upon as too formidable an enemy to be provoked, and public reformation was thought to be so difficult a thing, that those who gave it very good words, thought it not safe to set about it. When things were in this dismal and almost desperate state, it came into the hearts of five or six private gentlemen, to engage in

this hazardous enterprize. This was such an undertaking, as might well be expected soon to alarm the enemy, and which the patrons of vice, would attempt to defeat, before any progress could be made. And so it proved. The champions of debauchery put themselves in array, to defend their infamous liberties; to ridicule, to defame, and to oppose this design. And others, whom in charity we could not look upon as enemies, were forward to censure these attempts, as the fruit of an imprudent zeal. But notwithstanding a furious opposition from adversaries, and the unkind neutrality of friends, these gentlemen, not only held their ground, but made advances into the territory of the enemy. The society commencing with five or six, soon embraced numbers and persons of eminence in every station. In imitation of this society, and for the same purpose, other societies were formed in every part of the city, and among the sober of almost every profession and occupation. Besides these there were about thirty-nine religious societies in and about London, who, among other objects, made that of reformation a prominent one.

“The effects of these combinations were favourable beyond the most sanguine expectation. From their vigilance and promptitude, the growing vices of the day were checked, insomuch that it was soon found difficult to detect a single criminal in the streets and markets, where a little before horrid oaths, curses, and imprecations might be heard day and night. Multitudes of drunkards, profaners of the Lord’s day, besides hundreds of disorderly houses, were brought to justice and such open vices suppressed. Nor were the good effects of these associations limited to the city. They soon extended to most of the principal towns and cities of the nation, to Scotland and Ireland, so that a great part of the kingdom, have been awakened in some measure to a sense of duty, and thereby a very hopeful progress is made towards a general reformation.”

Similar societies have been formed in England, at different times, ever since. In 1802. a very respectable society of the above description was established in London. It experienced at first most virulent opposition, but has completely surmounted every obstacle, and now commands fear, and respect, and gratitude. Such has been its influence in preventing crimes, that at one annual meeting, the number of convictions reported was an hundred and seventy-eight, at the next only seventy. As it respects the observation of the Sabbath particularly, the whole city of London, exhibits to a considerable degree, a new face. A vast number of

shops are closed, which used to be open on that day. The butchers of several markets have thanked the society, for compelling them to an act which they find productive of so much comfort to themselves, and have even associated to secure that triumph, which the labours of the society had won.

Their useful and disinterested labours, have received the commendation and thanks of the Lord Chief Justice, of more than one of the judges and of a variety of magistrates. We desire also to bring our gift to their altar, (says the Christian Observer, from which work we have taken this account) and to add the feeble testimony of our opinion, that this society deserves well of its country.

In this country, about the year 1760, a society was formed in the State of Maryland to aid the civil magistrate in the execution of the laws. And so well it is said, did the society succeed, as to induce numbers, in different states, to imitate their example. From that time to the present, similar associations have been formed in various places, as exigencies have demanded and with good effect, whenever their exertions have been made with prudence and decision.

We consider the fact, therefore, as now established, that reformation in a season of prevailing moral declension, is entirely practicable. And if it be so, it is a glorious fact shedding light upon the darkness of the present day.

We are to consider

III. Some of the ways in which this great work may be successfully attempted.

And doubtless in the first place, the public attention must be called up to this subject, and the public mind must be impressed with a proper sense of danger and the necessity of reformation.

From various causes, nations are prone to sleep over the dangers of moral depravation, till their destruction comes upon them. A small portion only of the whole mass of crimes is seen at any one point. A few tipping shops are observed in a particular place empoverishing families and rearing up drunkards. But, it is not considered that thousands, with like pestilent influence are at work all over the land, training up recruits, to hunt down law and order. A few instances are witnessed, of needless travelling or labor or amusement on the Sabbath, which excite a momentary alarm. But it is not considered, that a vast army, probably three millions of people, are assailing at the same time this great bulwark of christian lands.

The progress of declension is also so gradual, as to attract from day to day but little notice, or excite but little alarm.

Now this slow, but certain approximation of the community to destruction, must be made manifest. The whole army of conspirators against law and order, must be brought out and arrayed before the public eye, and the shame, and the bondage, and the wo, which they are preparing for us.

This exposition of public guilt and danger, is the appropriate work of gospel ministers. They are watchmen, set upon the walls of Zion to desery and announce the approach of danger. And if through sloth or worldly avocations, or fear of man, they blow not the trumpet at the approach of the enemy, and the people perish, the blood of the slain will the Lord require at their hands. Civil magistrates, are also ministers of God, attending continually upon this very thing. It is their exclusive work, "to see to it that the commonwealth receive no detriment." Indeed, every man, is bound to be vigilant and firm, and unceasing in this great work. And by sermons, and conversation, and tracts, and news-papers, and magazines, and legislative aid, the point may be gained. The public attention may be called up to the subject, and just apprehensions of danger may be excited, and when this is done, the greatest danger is past. The work is half accomplished.

The next thing to be attempted, is the reformation of the better part of the community.

In a time of general declension, some who are comparatively virtuous, perhaps professedly pious, yield insensibly to the influence of bad example. Habits are formed, and practices are allowed, which none would indulge in better days, but the openly vicious. Each says of his own indulgence "is it not a little one?" But the aggregate guilt is great, and the aggregate demoralizing influence of such license, in such persons, is dreadful. It annihilates the influence of their good example, tempts the inexperienced to enter, and the hardened to go on in the downward road, and renders all efforts to save them unavailing. If we would attempt therefore, successfully the work of reformation, we must make the experiment first upon ourselves. We must cease to do evil and learn to do well, that with pure hands and clear vision we may be qualified to reclaim others. If our liberty, even in things lawful, should become a stumbling block to the weak or the wicked, it may be no superfluous benevolence, to forego gratifications, innocent in themselves, that we may avoid the appearance of evil, and cut off occasion of reproach from all whom our exertions may provoke to desire occasion.\*

\* Upon this principle, it is presumed, the General Association of this State, have recommended to the District Associations, that they abstain from the use

The next thing demanding attention is the religious education of the rising generation.

When the subject of reformation is proposed, multitudes turn their eyes to places of the greatest depravation, and to criminals of the most abandoned character, and because these strong holds cannot be carried, and these sons of Belial reformed, they conclude that nothing can be done. But reformation is not the work of a day, and if the strong holds of vice cannot be stormed, there is still a silent, certain way of reformation. Immoral men do not live forever; and if good heed be taken that they draw no new recruits from our families, death will achieve for us a speedy victory. We may stand still and see the salvation of God. Death will lay low the sons of Anak, and a generation of another spirit will occupy without resistance their fortified places.

From various causes, the ancient discipline of the family has been extensively neglected. Children have neither been instructed in religion nor governed in early life, as they were in the days of our fathers. The imported discovery, that human nature is too good to be made better by discipline, that children are enticed from the right way by religious instruction, and driven from it by the rod, and kept in thralldom by the conspiracy of priests and legislators, has united not a few in the noble experiment of emancipating the world, by the help of an irreligious, ungoverned progeny.

The indolent have rejoiced in the discovery, that our fathers were fools and bigots, and have cheerfully let loose their children, to help on the glorious work: While thousands of families having heard from their teachers, or believing in spite of them, that morality will suffice, both for earth and heaven, and not doubting that, morality will flourish without religion, have either not reared the family altar, or have put out the sacred fire and laid aside together the rod and the Bible, as superfluous auxiliaries in the education of children. From the school too, with pious regard for its sacred honors, the bible has been withdrawn, lest by a too familiar knowledge of its contents, children should learn to despise it. As if ignorance were the mother of devotion, and the efficacy of laws depended upon their not being understood. With similar benign wisdom, has not only the rod, but government and catechetical instruction, and a regard to the moral conduct of children, been exiled from the school.

of ardent spirits at their various ecclesiastical meetings. And to the churches that it be understood that civility does not require, or expediency permit, the introduction of ardent spirits as a part of hospitable entertainment at social visits.

These sagacious counsels, emerging from beneath, were heedlessly adopted by many, as the wisdom from above, until their result began to disclose their different origin. For it came to pass, in many places, that the school, instead of a nursery of piety, became often a place of temptation, where children forgetting the scanty instruction of the family learned insubordination by indulgence and impiety, and immorality by the example of those who were permitted to sin with impunity. The consequence has been that, on all sides, our ancient institutions are assailed, and our venerable habits and usages are passing away.

To retrieve these mischiefs of negligence and folly, a general effort must be made to restore our ancient system of education. There must be concert, new zeal and special exertion.

And let no man predict that the holy enterprize cannot succeed. Because we have listened to the syren song of vain philosophy and floated listlessly down the stream till the precipice appears, shall we despair to row back, when danger inspires courage and calls aloud for a common effort?

Our fathers were not fools; as far from it were they as modern philosophers are from wisdom. Their fundamental maxim was, that man is desperately wicked, and cannot be qualified for good membership in society without the influence of moral restraint. With great diligence they availed themselves therefore of the laws and institutions of revelation, as embodying the most correct instruction, and the most powerful moral restraint. The word of God was daily read and his worship celebrated in the family and in the school, and children were trained up under the eye of Jehovah. In this great work, pastors, and churches, and magistrates co-operated. And what moral restraint could not accomplish, was secured by parental authority and the coercion of the law.

The success of these efforts, corresponded with the wisdom of the system adopted and the fidelity with which it was reduced to practice. Our fathers established, and for a great while preserved, the most perfect state of society probably that has ever existed in this fallen world.

The same causes will still produce the same effects, and no other causes will produce them. New England can retain her pre-eminence, only by upholding those institutions and habits which produced it. Divested of these, like Sampson shorn of his locks, she will become as weak and as contemptible as any other land. But let the family and the school be organized and ordered according to the ancient pattern. Let parents, and schoolmasters, and pastors, and

churches, and magistrates, do their duty and all will be well. The crown of glory will return, and the most fine gold will shine again in all its ancient lustre.

But we must here state more particularly, the indispensable necessity of executing promptly the laws against immorality.

Much may be done in the way of prevention: but, in a free government, moral suasion and coercion must be united. If children be not religiously educated and accustomed in early life to subordination, the laws will fail, in the unequal contest, of subduing tigers to their yoke. But if the influence of education and habit be not confirmed, and guarded by the supervening influence of law, this salutary restraint will be burst and swept away by the overpowering force of human depravity. To retrieve therefore our declension, it is indispensable that new fidelity pervade not only the family, the school, and the church of God, but that the laws against immorality be restored to their ancient vigour. Laws unexecuted are worse than nothing; mere phantoms, which excite increased audacity, when the vain fears subside which they have inspired. If the stream must have its course, it is better not to oppose obstructions, which will only increase its fury, and extend the desolation when they are swept away. But in a season of great moral declension, how shall we raise from the dust neglected laws, and give to them life and vigour?

The multiplication of new prohibitions and penalties will not avail; for the evil to be redressed is the non-execution of laws already competent, if executed, to our protection.

Shall the government itself stand forth, the watchful guardian of its own laws? Too often it may lack the inclination; and always, it will be too much occupied by other concerns, to exercise the minute agency that is requisite.

Shall the work then be delegated to a subordinate magistracy? The neglect of official duty, is the very evil for which we now seek a remedy. Shall individuals then, volunteer their assistance? It is possible, that they may sometimes experience a rebuke from the magistrate to whose aid they come. The workers of iniquity also, will conspire instantly, to hunt them down. While thousands of prudent well wishers to the public morals, will look on and see them sacrificed, pitying their rashness, and blessing themselves, that they were wise enough to stand aloof from enterprises of so much danger.

Direct evils compel men to execute the laws, while crimes full of deadly consequences are suffered to prevail with impunity. With relentless zeal the sword pursues the fugitive

thief and murderer; and no city of refuge affords them a sanctuary. While thousands devote themselves to the work of training up thieves and murderers, and in open day, cut the moral ties which bind them, and let them loose upon society, and yet the sword sleeps, and judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; while truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter.

To secure then, the execution of the laws against immorality, in a time of prevailing moral declension, an influence is needed, distinct from that of the government, independent of popular suffrage, superior in potency to individual efforts, and competent to enlist and preserve the public opinion on the side of law and order.

This most desirable influence, as we have before observed, has been found in local voluntary associations of the wise and the good to aid the civil magistrate in the execution of the laws. These associations are eminently adapted to answer their intended purpose. They awaken the public attention, and by the sermons, the reports, and the conversation they occasion, diffuse much moral instruction.

They combine the wisdom and influence of all who desire to prevent crimes, and uphold peace and good order in society. They have great influence to form correctly the public opinion, and to render the violation of the law disgraceful, as well as dangerous.

They teach the virtuous part of the community their strength, and accustom them to act as well as to wish, and to pray.

They constitute a sort of disciplined moral militia, prepared to act upon every emergency, and repel every encroachment upon the liberties and morals of the state. By their numbers they embolden the timid and intimidate the enemy; and in every conflict the responsibility being divided among many, is not feared.

By this auxiliary band, the hands of the magistrate are strengthened. The laws are rescued from contempt, the land is purified, the anger of the Lord is turned away, and his blessing and protection restored.\*

\* The writer would not be understood to recommend an indiscriminate attempt, to erect local societies to aid the civil magistrate in executing the laws. In some instances grand jurors have done their duty with entire success. In others, the authority of the whole town have met and resolved, and published their resolutions faithfully to execute the laws. Heads of families have associated to restrain and guard their children and servants. Individuals without the formalities of an association have met occasionally to converse together.

If besides these local associations, a more extended concert could be formed of wise and good men, to devise ways and means of suppressing vice and guarding the public morals; to collect facts and extend information, and in a thousand nameless ways to exert a salutary general influence; it would seem to complete a system of exertion, which we might hope would retrieve what we have lost, and perpetuate forever civil and religious institutions. Associations of this general nature for the promotion of the arts and sciences, have exerted a powerful influence, with great success; and no reason it is presumed can be given, why the cause of morals, may not be equally benefitted by similar associations.

Finally, To counteract the prevalent declension, and raise the standard of public morals, it is peculiarly necessary to preserve indissoluble the connection between sin and shame.

A sense of shame will deter multitudes from the commission of crimes, whom conscience alone would not deter.— Happily in New-England, immorality of every description has from the beginning been associated with disgrace. But the prevalence of wickedness in high places, and the growing frequency of crimes, have at length paralyzed the public sensibility, and lightened the tax of shame. Hence criminals whom our fathers would have abhorred, have been first “endured, then pitied, then embraced.” This compromise with crimes if persisted in will undo us. Let the profligate be received with complacency into virtuous society, and enjoy without impediment the suffrage of the community, and the public conscience will be seared as with a hot iron. The distinctions between right and wrong will disappear. The wicked, open-mouthed, will walk on every side, and tread down with impunity the remnants of law and order. If we would reform the land, we must return therefore, to the stern virtue of our ancestors, and lay the whole tax of shame upon the dissolute and immoral.

Let this circumspection concerning moral character, attend us in the selection of schoolmasters to instruct our chil-

concerning existing evils in society, and the proper method of preventing them, resolving to exercise their best discretion to promote a reformation. In other cases; where circumstances dictated the necessity and expediency, regular associations have been formed; and always, when prudently conducted, with decisive effect. The manner of exertion may however be safely left to local discretion. For in whatever shape reformation, in any place, has been seriously attempted it has always succeeded, and with far less difficulty than was anticipated.

dren ; of subordinate magistrates, to manage the concerns of the town, and to execute the laws of the State ; and in selecting the members of our State and National Legislatures, and we shall soon experience the good effects of our caution. But disregard this single consideration, and clothe with power irreligious and immoral men, and we cannot stop the prevalence of crimes. From the bad pre-eminence to which we exalt the wicked, the flood of iniquity will roll down upon us, and the judgments of God will follow and sweep us away.

IV. We are to consider some of the motives which should animate the wise and the good, to make immediate and vigorous exertion for the reformation of morals, and the preservation of our laws and institutions.

And certainly the importance of the interest in jeopardy, demands our first and most serious regard.

If we consider only the temporal prosperity of New-England, especially, and of Connecticut in particular, the interest, is the most important earthly interest that ever called forth the enterprize of man. No other portion of the human race ever commenced a national existence as we commenced ours. Our very beginning was civilized, learned, and pious. The sagacious eye of our ancestors, looked far down the vale of time. Their benevolence laid foundations and reared superstructures for the accommodation of distant generations. Through peril, and tears, and blood, they procured the inheritance, which, with many prayers, they bequeathed unto us. It has descended in an unbroken line. It is now in our possession, impaired indeed by our folly, perverted and abused, but the richest inheritance still, which the mercy of God continues to the troubled earth. No where beside, if you search the world over, will you find so much real liberty, so much equality, so much personal safety and temporal prosperity, so general an extension of useful knowledge, so much religious instruction, so much moral restraint, and so much divine mercy to make these blessings the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Shall we throw away this precious bequest? Shall we surrender our laws and liberties, our religion and morals, our social and domestic blessings to the first invader? Shall we despair and die of every fear, without an effort to avert our doom? What folly! what infatuation! what madness to do so! With what indignation, could indignation be in heaven, would our fathers look down upon the deed! With what lamentation, could tears be in heaven, would they weep over it! With loud voices,

could they speak to us from heaven, would they beseech their degenerate children to put their trust in God and contend earnestly for those precious institutions and laws for which they toiled and bled!

2. If we do not awake and engage vigorously in the work of reformation it will soon be too late.

Though reformation be always practicable, if a people are disposed to reform, there is a point of degradation from which neither individuals nor nations *are disposed* to arise; and from which the Most High is seldom disposed to raise them.—When irreligion and vice shall have contaminated the mass of the people, when the majority, emancipated from civil and moral restraint, shall be disposed to set aside the laws and institutions and habits of their fathers; then indeed it may be feared that our transgressions and our sins will be upon us, and that we shall pine away and die in them. The means of preservation passing into other hands, will become the means of destruction. Talents and official influence, and the power of legislation, and all the resources of the State may be perverted to demolish our institutions, laws and usages, until every vestige of ancient wisdom and prosperity is gone.

To this state of things we are hastening, and if no effort be made to stop our progress, the sun in his course is not more resistless than our doom. Our vices are digging the grave of our liberties, and preparing to entomb our glory.—We may sleep, but the work goes on. We may despise admonition, but our destruction slumbereth not. Travelling, and worldly labor, and visiting and amusement on the Sabbath, will neither produce nor preserve such a state of society as the conscientious observance of the Sabbath has helped to produce and preserve.

The enormous consumption of ardent spirits in our land, will produce neither bodies nor minds like those which were the offspring of temperance and virtue.

The neglect of family government, and family prayer, and the religious education of children, will not produce such freedom as were formed by early habits of subordination, and the constant influence of the fear of God.

The neglect of official duty in magistrates to execute the laws, will not produce the same effects which were produced by the vigilance and fidelity of our fathers to restrain and punish crimes.

Our institutions, civil and religious, have out lived that domestic discipline and official vigilance in magistrates to execute the laws which rendered obedience easy and habitual.

The laws now are beginning to operate extensively upon necks unaccustomed to the yoke. And when to the majority, they shall become irksome, their execution will become impracticable. To this situation we are reduced already in some districts of this State, and in many places in New-England. Drunkards reel through the streets, day after day, and year after year, with entire impunity. Profane swearing is heard, and even by magistrates as though they heard it not. Efforts to stop travelling on the Sabbath have, in all places become feeble, and in many places even in this State, they have wholly ceased. Grandjurors complain that magistrates will not regard their informations, and that the public sentiment will not bear them out in executing the laws. And conscientious men who dare not violate an oath, have begun to refuse the office. The only proper characters to sustain it, the only men who can retrieve our declining state, are driven into the back ground, and their places filled with men of easy conscience, who will either do nothing, or, by their own example help on the ruin. The public conscience is becoming callous by the frequency and impunity of crimes. The sin of violating the Sabbath is becoming in the public estimation a little sin and the shame of it nothing. The disgrace is divided among so many that none regard it. The Sabbath is trodden down by a host of men whom shame alone in better days would have deterred entirely from this sin. In the mean time, many, who lament these evils, are augmenting them by predicting that all is lost, emboldening the enemy and weakening the hands of the wise and good. But truly, we do not stand on the confines of destruction. The mass is changing. We are becoming another people. Our habits have held us, long after those moral causes which formed them had in a great degree ceased to operate. These habits, at length, are giving way. So many hands, have so long been employed to pull away foundations, and so few to repair the breaches, that the building totters. So much enterprize has been displayed, in removing obstructions from the current of human depravity, and so little to restore them, that the stream at length is beginning to run. It may be stopped now, but soon it will become deep, and broad, and rapid, and irresistible.

The crisis then has come. By the people of this generation, by ourselves probably, the amazing question is to be decided, whether the inheritance of our fathers shall be preserved or thrown away.—Whether our Sabbaths shall be a delight, or a loathing.—Whether the taverns on that holy

day, shall be crowded with drunkards, or the sanctuary of God with humble worshippers.—Whether riot and profanity shall fill our streets, and poverty our dwellings, and convicts our jails, and violence our land, or whether industry and temperance, and righteousness, shall be the stability of our times.—Whether mild laws shall receive the cheerful submission of freemen, or the iron rod of a tyrant, compel the trembling homage of slaves. Be not deceived. Human nature in this state is like human nature every where. All actual difference in our favour, is adventitious, and the result of our laws, institutions, and habits. It is a *moral influence*, which, with the blessing of God, has formed a state of society so eminently desirable. The same influence which has formed it, is indispensable to its preservation. The rocks and hills of New-England, will remain till the last conflagration. But let the Sabbath be profaned with impunity, the worship of God be abandoned, the government and religious instruction of children neglected, and the streams of intemperance be permitted to flow, and her glory will depart. The wall of fire will no more surround her, and the munition of rocks will no longer be her defence.

But 3dly. If we do neglect our duty, and suffer our laws and institutions to go down, we give them up for ever. It is easy to relax, easy to retreat, but impossible, when the abomination of desolation has once passed over New-England, to rear again the thrown down altars, and gather again the fragments, and build up the ruins of demolished institutions. Another New-England, nor we, nor our children shall ever see, if this be destroyed. Another Connecticut will not arise upon the ruins of this happy state, if it be given up to the empire of sin. All is lost irretrievably, when the landmarks are once removed, and the bands which now hold us are once broken. Such institutions, and such a state of society, can be established only by such men as our fathers were, and in such circumstances as they were: They could not have made a New-England in Holland. They made the attempt but failed. Nowhere could they have succeeded, but in a wilderness. where *they gave the precepts and set the example, and made, and executed the laws.* We may defend these institutions; by vigilance and prayer, and exertion, we may retrieve much of what we have lost, and perpetuate a better state of society than can elsewhere be made by the art of man. But let the enemy come in like a flood, and overturn, and overturn, and no place will be found for repentance, though it be sought carefully with tears.

4. If we do give up our laws and institutions, our guilt and misery will be very great.

We shall become slaves, and slaves to the worst of masters. The profane and the profligate, men of corrupt minds, and to every good work reprobate, will be exalted to pollute us by their example, to distract us by their folly, and impoverish us by fraud and rapine. Let loose from wholesome restraint, and taught to sin by the example of the great, a scene most horrid to be conceived, but more dreadful to be experienced, will ensue. No people are more fitted to destruction if they go to destruction, than we ourselves. All the daring enterprize of New-England, emancipated from moral restraint, will become the desperate daring of unrestrained sin. Should we break the bands of Christ, and cast his cords from us, and begin the work of self-destruction, it will be urged on with a malignant enterprize, which has no parallel in the annals of time, and be attended with miseries, such as the son has never looked upon.

The hand that overturns our laws and altars, is the hand of death unbarring the gate of Pandemoneum, and letting loose upon our land, the crimes and the miseries of hell. If the Most High should stand aloof, and cast not a single ingredient into our cup of trembling, it would seem to be full of superlative woe. But he will not stand aloof. As we shall have begun an open controversy with him, he will contend openly with us. And never since the earth stood, has it been so fearful a thing for nations to fall into the hands of the living God. The day of vengeance is in his heart, the day of judgment has come; the great earthquake which sinks Babylon is shaking the nations, and the waves of the mighty commotion, are dashing upon every shore. Is this, then, a time to remove foundations, when the earth itself is shaken? Is this a time to forfeit the protection of God, when the hearts of men are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth? Is this a time to run upon his neck and the thick bosses of his buckler, when the nations are drinking blood, and fainting, and passing away in his wrath? Is this a time to throw away the shield of faith when his arrows are drunk with the blood of the slain? To cut from the anchor of hope, when the clouds are collecting and the sea and the waves are roaring, and thunders are uttering their voices, and lightnings blazing in the heavens, and the great hail is falling from heaven upon men, and every mountain, sea and island is falling in dismay from the face of an incensed God?

5. The judgments of God which *we* feel, and those which impend, call for immediate repentance and reformation. Our country has never seen such a day as this. By our sins we are fitted to destruction. God has begun in earnest, his work, his strange work, of national desolation. For many years the ordinary gains of industry have to a great extent been cut off. The counsels of the nation have by one part of it been deemed infatuation, and by the other part oracular wisdom: while the action and reaction of parties have shaken our institutions to their foundations, debased our morals, and awakened animosities which expose us to dismemberment and all the horrors of civil war. But for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. On our seaboard are the alarms and the plagues of war. On our frontiers is heard too the trumpet of war, mingling with the war-whoop of the savage, and the cries and dying groans of murdered families. In the South, a volcano, whose raging fires and murmuring thunders have long been suppressed, is now with loud admonition threatening an eruption. In the midst of these calamities, the angel of God has received commission to unsheath his sword, and extend far and wide the work of death. The little child and the blooming youth, the husband and the wife, men of talents and usefulness, the ministers of the sanctuary, and the members of the church of God, bow before the stroke and sink to the grave.

That dreadful tempest, the sound of which, till late, was heard from afar, borne across the Atlantic, has at length begun to beat upon us. And those mighty burnings, the smoke of which we beheld from afar, have begun in the nation their devouring course. Nothing can avert the tempest, and nothing can extinguish our burning, but repentance and reformation. For it is the tempest of the wrath of God, and the fire of his indignation.

6. Our advantages to achieve a reformation of morals are great, and will render our guilt and punishment proportionably aggravated, if we neglect to avail ourselves of them.

We are not yet undone. The harvest is not past, the summer is not ended. There is yet remaining much health, and strength, in many parts of our land. This state especially, is by its laws thoroughly furnished to every good work. Let our laws be executed, and we may live for ever. Nor is their execution to be despaired of. In every town in the state, the majority of the population, are decidedly opposed, it is believed, to those immoral practices which our laws condemn.

And in most towns and societies, it is a *small minority*, who corrupt with impunity the public morals. Let the friends of virtue, then, express their opinions, and unite their influence, and the laws can be executed. Crimes will become disgraceful, and the non-execution of the laws, more hazardous to popularity, than their faithful execution. The friends of good morals and good government, have it yet in their power to *create a public opinion*, which nothing can resist. The wicked are bold in appearance, but they are cowards at heart. Their threats and boastings are loud, but they are "*vox et preterea nihil*,"\* God is against them. Their own consciences are against them. The laws are against them: and let only the public opinion be arrayed against them, and five shall chase a thousand, and an hundred shall put ten thousand to flight.

It is not as if we were called upon to make new laws, and establish usages unknown before. We make no innovation. We embark in no novel experiment. We set up no new standard of morals. We encroach upon no man's liberty. We lord it over no man's conscience. We stand upon the defensive merely. We contend for our altars and our firesides. We rally around the standard which our fathers reared; and our motto is, "*the inheritance which they bequeathed no man shall take from us.*"

The executive, legislative, and judicial departments of the government, are in the hands of men, who, we doubt not, will lend to the work of reformation, their example, their prayers, their weight of character, official influence, and their active co-operation. And will not the clergy, and christian churches of all denominations array themselves on the side of good morals and the laws? Will they not like a band of brothers, and terrible to the wicked as an army with banners, contend earnestly for the precepts of the gospel? If with such means then, of self preservation, we pine away and die in our sins, we shall deserve to die; and our death will be dreadful.

7. But were our advantages fewer than they are, the Lord will be on our side, and will bless us if we repent and endeavor to do our duty.

He commands us to repent and reform, and what he commands his people to do, he will help them to accomplish if

\* Mere noise and nothing else.

they make the attempt. He has promised to help them.— He always has given efficacy, more or less, to the faithful exertions of men to do good. At the present time, in a peculiar manner, does he smile upon every essay to do good.— Not a finger is lifted in vain, in any righteous cause. The result of every enterprize, surpasses expectation. The grain of mustard becomes a tree. The little leaven, leavens the lump. The voice of providence now is, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for this and that shall both prosper.” The God in whose help we confide, is also our fathers’ God, who remembers mercy to the thousandth generation of them that fear him and keep his commandments. Within the broad circumference of this covenant we stand, and neither few, nor obscure are the indications of his mercy in the midst of wrath.

8. The work of reformation is already, it may be hoped, auspiciously begun.

Though in some things, there is a fearful declension of morals, which if not arrested, will inevitably destroy us, yet it ought to be gratefully acknowledged, that in some respects our moral state has for a considerable period been growing better.

The progress of civilization and religion, have softened the manners of the people, and banished to a great extent, that violence of passion, which ended in broils and lawsuits.

Those indecencies also, which too often polluted the intercourse of the sexes, and warred upon the best interests of society, have to a great extent, given place to habits of refinement and virtue.

Though at this time there be heresies, that they which are approved may be manifest, there has never been in this state, perhaps never in the nation, a more extensive prevalence of evangelical doctrine. Great efforts have been made also, and with signal success, to raise up a learned and pious ministry for the churches; from which, in time, a great reforming influence may be expected: for the morals of a nation will ever hold a close alliance, with the talents and learning, the piety and orthodoxy of its clergy. The number of pious people, has, in the course of fifteen years, been greatly increased, and attended with a more than correspondent increase of prayer. Those local weekly associations for prayer, which are now spread over our land, are most of them, of comparatively recent origin.

In perfect accordance with this increased spirit of prayer, has been the effusion of the Holy Spirit in the revival of religion. These revivals have been numerous, great and glorious; and blessed be God, they still prevail. Their reforming influence has been salutary beyond expression. Wherever they have existed, they have raised up the foundations of many generations. They have done more than all other causes, to arrest our general decline, and are this moment turning back the captivity of our land.

The churches under their renovating influence, are beginning to maintain a more efficient discipline, and to superintend with more fidelity, the religious education of their baptised children. The declension of infidel philosophy, with respect to civil government, and the government and religious education of children, have had their day, it is hoped, and are retiring to their own place, succeeded happily, by the maxims of revelation and common sense.

The missionary spirit which is beginning to pervade our land, promises also an auspicious reforming influence. It teaches us to appreciate more justly our own religious privileges, and calls off the hearts of thousands from political and sectarian bickerings, to unite them in one glorious enterprise of love. Who, also, but the Lord our God, has created that extensive and simultaneous predisposition in the public mind, to favor a work of reformation. Who, in this day of clouds and tempest, has opened the eyes of the people to recognise their dependence upon God, and his avenging hand in the judgments which they feel, and turned their hearts to seek him, to an unusual extent, by fasting and humiliation and prayer.

Who, indeed, has poured out upon our land, a spirit of reformation, as *real*, if not yet as universal, as the spirit of missions. The fact is manifest, from the zeal of individuals; the reviving fidelity of magistrates in various places; the addresses of ecclesiastical bodies, and the formation of general and local associations, to suppress crimes, and support the laws and institutions of our land.\*

\* A society was formed in Boston, on the fifth of February, last, entitled "The Massachusetts Society, for the Suppression of Intemperance." The object of the Society is stated to be, "to discountenance and suppress the too frequent use of Ardent Spirits, and its kindred vices, profaneness, and gaming and to encourage and promote temperance and general morality. With a view to this object, the Society will recommend the institution of auxiliary

The Most High, then, has begun to help us. While judgments are abroad, the nation is beginning to learn righteousness. These favorable circumstances, do by no means supersede the necessity of special exertion; but they are joyful pledges that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. They are his providential voice, announcing that he is waiting to be gracious; and that if we "hearken to him, he will soon subdue our enemies, and turn his hand against our adversaries. That the haters of the Lord shall submit themselves unto him, but our time shall endure for ever." Therefore,

9. If we endure a little longer, the resources of the millennial day, will come to our aid.

Many are the prophetic signs, which declare the rapid approach of that day. Babylon the great is fallen. The false Prophet is hastening to perdition. That wicked one hath appeared, whom the Lord will destroy, by the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming. The day of his vengeance is wasting the earth. The last vial of the wrath of God is running, the angel having the everlasting gospel to preach to men, has begun his flight, and with trumpet sounding long and waxing loud, is calling to the nations to look unto Jesus and be saved. Soon will the responsive song be heard from every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, allelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

On the confines of such a day shall we despair? While its blessed light is beginning to shine, shall we give up our laws and institutions and sink down to the darkness and torments of the bottomless pit?

societies in different parts of the commonwealth, and hold correspondence with other societies which may be instituted for the same general object.

"Besides the usual officers of the Society, there is a board of counsel, consisting of eight persons, which is to act as the executive of the Society. To make communications to the auxiliary societies, and to receive communications from them. To collect, combine, and digest facts, and general information relating to the purposes of the Society. To devise ways and means for the furtherance of these purposes, to apply the Society's funds according to direction, and at each annual meeting, to report to the society their doings, a digest of the facts, and general information which they may have collected, and such measures as they may judge suitable for the society to adopt and pursue. They shall hold stated quarterly meetings." *PANOPLIST for February 1813. p. 118, 119, 120.*

10. But considerations, before which the kingdoms of this world fade and are forgotten, call us to instant exertion in the work of reformation.

Every one of us must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Every one of us, as a friend or an enemy, shall live under his government forever. We shall drink of the river of pleasure, or of the cup of trembling. We shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, or lift up our cries with the smoke of our torment.

The institutions in danger, are the institutions of heaven; provided to aid us in fleeing from the wrath to come. The laws to be preserved, are laws, which have lent their congenial influence to the immortal work of saving sinners. The welfare of millions through eternity, depends, under God, upon their preservation.

Ye parents, which of your children can you give up to the miseries of a profligate life, and the pangs of an impenitent death? Which, undone by your example, or negligence and folly, are you prepared to meet on the left hand of our Judge? Which, if by a miracle of mercy you should ascend to heaven, can you leave behind, to go away into everlasting torment? Call around you the dear children whom God has given you, and look them o'er and o'er: and, if among them all, you cannot find a victim to sacrifice, awake, and with all diligence uphold those institutions, which the good Shepherd has provided to protect and save them.

My fathers and brethren, who minister at the altar. The time is short. We must soon meet our people at the bar of God. Should we meet any of them undone by our example, or sloth, or unbelief, dreadful will be the interview! Shall we not lift up our voice as a trumpet, and do quickly and with all our might, what our hands find to do?

Ye magistrates of a christian land, ye ministers of God for good; the people of this land, alarmed by the prevalence of crimes, and by the judgments of God, look up to you for protection. By the glories and terrors of the judgment day, by the joys of heaven, and the miseries of hell, they beseech you, as the ministers of God, to save them and their children from the dangers of this untoward generation.

Ye men of wealth and influence; will ye not help in this great attempt to reform, and save our land? Are not these distinctions, talents, for the employment of which you must give an account to God, and can you employ them better

than to consecrate them to the service of your generation by the will of God ?

Let me entreat those unhappy men, to consider their end, who haste to be rich by unlawful means. Who thrive by the vices and ruin of their fellow men. How dreadful to you will be the day of death? How intolerable the day of judgment? How many broken hearted widows and fatherless children, will then lift up their voices to testify against you? How many damned spirits will ascend from the world of woe, to cry out against you, as the wretches who ministered to their lusts, and fitted them for destruction? In vain will you plead that if you had not done the murderous deed, other men would have done it. Or that, if you had not destroyed them, they had still destroyed themselves. If other men had done the deed, they, and not you, would answer for it. If they had destroyed themselves without your agency, their blood would be upon their own heads. But as you contributed voluntarily to their destruction, you will be holden as partakers in their sins, and their blood will be required at your hands. Why will you then traffic in the souls and bodies of men, and barter away your souls for the gains of a momentary life!

To conclude. Let me entreat the unhappy men, who are the special objects of legal restraint, to cease from their evil ways, and supercede the necessity of coercion and punishment, by voluntary reformation. Why will you die? What fearful thing is there in heaven, which makes you flee from that world? What facinating object in hell, that excites such frenzied exertion to burst every band, and o'erleap every mound, and force your way downward to the chambers of death? Stop! I beseech you, and repent, and Jesus Christ shall blot out your sins and remember your transgressions no more. Stop, and the host who follow your steps, shall turn, and take hold on the path of life. Stop, and the wide waste of sin shall cease, and the song of angels shall be heard again, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men." Stop, and instead of wailing with the damned, you shall join the multitudes which no man can number, in the ascription of blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever.—AMEN.

# **C** Constitution.

*The following is the substance of the Constitution of the Moral Society in East-Hampton.*

**Article I.** There shall be chosen annually in the society, a President, Vice-President, Clerk and Treasurer. It shall be the duty of the President, and in his absence of the Vice-President, to preside and preserve order, in the meetings of the society. The clerk shall record the proceedings, and the treasurer shall keep the accounts of the society.

There shall be chosen, also, annually, a committee, who between each meeting of the society, shall conduct at discretion the affairs of the society, and report their proceedings at each stated meeting. In addition to the report of their proceedings, the committee shall, also, at each meeting, report in answer to one or all the following questions :

1. What evils of a moral nature, are now existing in this community ?

2. What is the probable cause of those evils ?

3. In what manner can they, with the most probable success, be remedied ?

**Art. II.** It shall be the duty of each member of this society, to abstain, and if a parent or master, to endeavor to cause those committed to his care, to abstain from such immoral practices, as it is the object of this society to prevent ; and if any member shall persist in immoral conduct, he shall cease to be a member of this society.

**Art. III.** It shall be the duty of the members of this society, to use their influence to prevent such immoral conduct as falls under their notice ; and it shall be the duty of the society to support their committee, and to support individuals, in all prudent measures, to suppress vice and promote the objects of the institution.

**Art. IV.** Any person of good moral character, who wishes to join the society, shall, on subscribing to the constitution, become a member. And any in regular standing, who shall be disposed to leave the society, shall on his signifying it to the meeting, have that liberty.

It is an obvious reflection, and one which in the formation of the society in this place was early realized, that the con-

stitution of a moral society, must be adapted to the local circumstances of the people proposing to unite. In populous cities, where neighbors have less intercourse, and vice is more bold, it may be more advisable to stipulate what, in given cases, will be done; but in a country town, connected by ties of blood and neighborhood, too great particularity in the constitution, would, it was found, intimidate the virtuous, excite the opposition of the vicious, and defeat the proposed union. It was soon perceived that the utility of the society would depend less on what was said in the constitution, than what was done by the society, when formed; and that it would be easier to prescribe remedies, as circumstances should require, than to secure their application beforehand, by the provision of a constitution.

It will not escape observation, that in a society instituted for the suppression of vice, it cannot be expected that every member will experience at all times, and permanently that zeal which is necessary to perpetuate the institution; or, that those duties, which it equally belongs to all to perform, will, by all, be performed so promptly, and correctly, as if devolving on a smaller number. This consideration led to the selection of an annual committee, to transact at discretion the affairs of the society, and report at each meeting. This arrangement, in connection with the report on the moral state of society, has been found to answer the most salutary purpose. The zeal of this body will be more easily kept alive, vices will be more early noticed, and in the report of the committee, held up to public notice. This alone, will, probably in most instances, supersede the necessity of appealing to the laws.

In a few places where the formation of moral societies may be attempted, will there be found any so hardened, and destitute of character, as openly to oppose the real object of the institution. The novelty of the thing may excite the prejudices of some, at heart friendly to order; and the secret enmity of others will lead them to excite suspicion, and circulate misrepresentation. Too great care cannot, therefore be taken to proceed with caution, and to circulate the earliest, and most correct information. And if, in its progress, a society should meet with opposition, and be charged with creating disturbance, it should constantly be remembered, that vice is the criminal cause of the mischief, and not those who are engaged to suppress it.

