

A

REFORMED AND REVIVED

CHRISTIANITY,

OUR COUNTRY'S GREAT NECESSITY:

A Sermon

PREACHED ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1867,

IN THE

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BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

IT seems proper for me to say, that the request for the publication of this sermon has come to me from gentlemen differing *toto cœlo* in their political sentiments. The grateful significance of this, is, that there is a broad, common ground upon which good men of all parties can meet, and concert measures for the relief of our distracted country.

H. A. B.

SERMON.

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.—*Luke, x. 42.*

It is a grateful service to which this Anniversary invites us. Our Day of Thanksgiving has, happily, become a National Festival. The President of the United States and the Chief Magistrates of the several Commonwealths, responding to the Christian feeling of the country, propose a common tribute of praise to God in acknowledgment of our common mercies. Great cause for thankfulness we have in that our fratricidal war has given place to peace; in our ample harvests; in the continued enjoyment of our religious privileges; in all that has been done during the past twelve-month for the material comfort or moral improvement of any portion of our people; and for our amicable relations with foreign nations. To enumerate the blessings which the year has brought us as individuals and families, and as a Church of Christ, would more than consume the hour devoted to this service. Let us gratefully recognize the bounty of our Father in heaven. Let us “praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.” “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to

our iniquities." But "as far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever."

While on every side we find motives to thankfulness, we have a deep stake in the inquiry—How may we so improve our blessings as to insure a continuance of them? That we have not profited by them as we might; that we may possibly forfeit them in the future; are points upon which there can be no diversity of opinion here. The goodness of God to us as a nation, words were poor to express. And yet the condition of our land is far from being answerable to the munificence of the Divine bounty. If we do no better in the future than we have in the past, our Days of Thanksgiving will be apt to come to us shadowed with actual or impending judgments. This need not be. It should not be. The remedy is, by God's mercy, in our own hands. "ONE THING IS NEEDFUL." We take the friendly caution of our Saviour to the sisters of Bethany, and apply it to our national affairs. The "one thing needful" to every child of man, is a personal interest in the Mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The "one thing needful" to our country, is A REFORMED AND REVIVED CHRISTIANITY. The bare statement of the thesis indicates its paramount importance. I shall offer no apology for talking with you in a familiar way this morning, about OUR COUNTRY'S GREAT AND ONLY NEED.

A single word in the proposition just enunciated may awaken curiosity. "A '*reformed*' Christianity,"

—why use this phrase when a “revived” Christianity covers the ground? The question deserves an answer. And the answer will serve as part and parcel of our exposition of the country’s great need. For in the term “country” is comprised the totality of our interests—our social life, our literary institutions, our politics—as well what pertains to the Church, as what pertains to the State. And it is especially of the Church we mean to affirm that it needs a “reformed” Christianity. It were quite to the purpose to argue this point, and you will doubtless expect me to argue it, upon the basis of facts which have elicited large discussion concerning the interference on the part of the pulpit, and of ecclesiastical Courts and Conventions, with questions of party-politics. That our Christianity has suffered almost irreparably from this source, and greatly needs to be “reformed,” must be apparent to every one capable of reviewing calmly the events of the last fifteen, and especially of the last seven, years. But it is quite another aspect of the subject which I design to bring before you to-day.

The grand religious movement of the sixteenth century, is known in history as “the REFORMATION.” The Church had been for ages deteriorating in every attribute of a Divine Institution. The primitive faith which it received from its Lord, had been mutilated and covered up by the rubbish of human traditions. Its simple worship was transformed into a gorgeous ritual. Preaching, in its legitimate import, had gone into utter desuetude. And the ecclesiastical orders were given up to frightful immoralities. Through the instrumentality of Luther and his

associates, a considerable portion of the Church was, in a measure, purged of these abuses, and brought back to its ancient faith and discipline. The Reformation was in some countries tolerably thorough; in others very imperfect. In England, arrested midway by the imperious will first of Henry VIII., and then of Elizabeth, there was enough of the old leaven left to vex and grieve the hearts of the faithful Bishops of that day, and to work untold mischief since. Of late years this leaven has increased in virulence. It has carried several hundred of the Established clergy back into the fold of Rome, and is now impressing upon the entire structure an appreciable gravitation toward that centre. Again the English people are brought face to face with the spectacle of undisguised Romanism flaunting itself in the very bosom of the National Church. Kindred symptoms are revealing themselves (as yet only here and there) on this side of the water—and not confined to the communion which derives its organic being from the Church of England. The fatal taint has spread, or is spreading, through most of the branches of the Church, our own included. Its tokens are manifold. But there is one so pre-eminent as to deserve specific mention.

The present is a *musical* age—more so, perhaps, than any other since the Advent. Music, then, has become the lever by which it is essayed to enervate and despoil the Church. Heaven itself is full of music. Music, therefore, must needs be an innocent and rational amusement. And so thousands of good Christians deem it quite proper to go anywhere—no matter with what surroundings—where they can hear

“good music.” This is one device, but not the chief one.

If there be anything which the devil may be presumed both to hate and fear, it is the preaching of the Gospel. For this is the choice means the Saviour put into the hands of his disciples, for thwarting him and all his works. The early Christians understood this. Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory Nyssen, Augustine, and others, bear testimony to the prominence which was given to *preaching* in their churches. Besides two sermons on Sundays, they sometimes had preaching every day; and in some cases, two or three sermons at one session. Their ministers did not weary of preaching, nor the people of hearing. If a precedent is wanted for disparaging the preaching of the Gospel, and thrusting it into a corner of the service or a mere parenthesis, it must be sought elsewhere than in the primitive Church. The whole voice of ecclesiastical antiquity is against it.

Nor is their testimony less significant in respect to singing. This comprised both inspired and uninspired Hymns. And in the service, “the whole congregation bore a part, joining all together in a common celebration of the praises of God.”* Very early, however, did mischief begin to come in at this door. Both Jerome and Chrysostom complain of “the lightness which some used in singing, who took their measures from the mean and practice of the *theatres*, introducing from thence *the corruption and effeminacy of secular music* into the grave and solemn devotions

* Cave.

of the Church." "Let young men hear this. Let those hear it who have the office of singing in the Church, that they sing not with their voice but with their heart to the Lord; not like tragedians—singing after the fashion of the theatre in the Church." In similar terms the Fathers complain, that "the music of the words and the sweetness of the composure, were more regarded than the sense and meaning of them," and that the aim was "rather to please the ear than to raise the affections of the soul."*

Thus early was music brought into play as a means of perverting and debasing public worship. With one voice the Fathers resisted its abuses, and strove to preserve its purity, and to keep it in its place. In the end, however, they were foiled. Music encroached more and more upon the customary ritual; until at length the choir overpowered the pulpit. For several centuries preaching was practically suspended. Painting and sculpture allied themselves with their sister art. Vast cathedrals, alien from the whole genius of the Gospel of Christ, and suitable only for pompous shows, took the place of the humble sanctuaries of the early believers. The Church by degrees exchanged its spiritual character, for the functions and trappings of a civil STATE. Christianity became a mere political institute; and worship a sacrilegious ceremonial in which God's altars were used to offer incense to human pride and ambition.

The cycles of history return upon themselves. It is not probable that those who are most concerned

* Bingham's Antiquities, Book xiv. sec. 17-19.

will care to look into this mirror, or that the lesson, if seen, will be heeded. But there the lesson is. The process which wrought such irreparable evil in the early Church, is repeating itself in our day. Music is again the chosen implement for sapping the walls of Zion and defacing its beauty. People used to go to Church to worship God. This seems, on the whole, to be the Scriptural idea of going to Church. But they are now invited to the Sanctuary to enjoy a musical treat; in many cases to witness a melo-dramatic *performance*,—a sort of Sunday Opera, mollified, indeed, but in full keeping with the Opera of the other six days. As yet these are, with us, exceptional instances. But any Church may grow to them in time. Already it has come to be recognized in very numerous congregations, and confined to no one sect, as an indispensable means of what is called “success,” to provide the most artistic and elaborate music. Churches are not ashamed to compete with each other, in holding out inducements of this sort to allure visitors. Multitudes of young people, forsaking the pews where they belong, are flitting about from Church to Church “to hear the music.” This is the acknowledged motive. They have too much candor to pretend that they go to join in the prayers and praises of the Sanctuary, or to hear the preaching of the Gospel. They go simply to be regaled with fine singing. This is the end they aim at; and this the burden of their report when the service is over. The preaching is nothing—the less of it (in their esteem) the better.

Now am I declaiming against the culture of music? No. Am I proscribing musical exhibitions? No: not

in their legitimate place and character. Am I disparaging the value of good singing in the house of God? Not at all. There *must* be a certain harmony between the refinement and taste of a congregation, and their service of song, or it will mar the comfort and edification of their worship. But this is not to justify or extenuate the arrogant and pernicious substitution of cunning music and its kindred devices, for the authorized exercises of the Lord's house. To intimate that the practices reprobated may be telling upon the whole cast of our religion, and replacing the substance with the shadow, might provoke a smile. But your incredulity may have its solution. People standing upon a drifting field of ice, miles in diameter, are not cognizant of its motion. Our Christianity has been so long and so widely drifting from its ancient moorings, that we have, possibly, lost sight of all the land-marks. A single observation will suffice to correct your reckoning. Bring the Christianity now growing so popular in our cities, to the test of the law and the testimony. See whether it be the religion of Christ and the apostles. See whether its worship and its spirit be the spirit and worship of the early Church. If this inquiry be conducted with candor, you will be shut up to the conclusion, that a change is stealing over our Christianity, which seriously threatens its vitality. The passion for ornate music is doing for the Church, what the most subtle of the mineral poisons does for the body. The first effect of arsenic, in minute potions, is to beautify the complexion. Persevered in, the result is asphyxia and death. Men are not satisfied with the Church as

Christ made it and pronounced it, "very good." They must refine upon His model, and array it in other vestments, and make it attractive to the senses, and adjust it to a "cultivated" generation. And they are too busy in embellishing its exterior, to note that their manipulations are poisoning the blood, and weakening the pulse, and extinguishing its very life. This, too, with the inevitable effects of the treatment before their eyes. It is the common vice of empirics that they never learn anything. If it were otherwise, these people would see that they have only taken up a system of practice which has been in vogue for ages in the Oriental Churches and the Church of Rome. Those Churches offer them satisfactory exhibitions of a mere spectacular Christianity. The methods they have adopted, if persisted in, would in time assimilate any Protestant Church to these Hierarchies. And if they cannot or will not see it, the Christians of these communions ought to see it, and put a stop to this pestilent tampering with sacred things.

If you cannot endure the simplicity of the New Testament ceremonial; if the central place assigned by Christ to the preaching of the Gospel, offend you; if the house of God be in your esteem a mere music-hall or theatre; and the only worship you crave, be an oratorio or a drama; why insist upon fashioning Protestant Churches to this style of devotion? If the scheme be so captivating in the bud, the full bloom must be still better. Why not go at once to some Romish Church, where you will be certain to find all you are yearning for, without the toil, and the delay,

and the unseemliness of attempting to effect this transformation in Churches established to *protest* against a sensuous religion?

Here, then, is the answer to the inquiry, why we speak to-day of a "*reformed* Christianity" as the necessity of the times. The glory of the Christian religion is its spirituality. Herein it is the poles away from any and all of the false religions. Its beauty and strength lie in its holiness. Its rites and ordinances are but the graceful setting for those sublime truths through which we behold the King in His glory. As you enlarge the frames, you exclude the light, and obscure the throne and Him who sits upon it. In other words, the whole moral power of the Church lies in its conformity to its Lord and its spiritual communion with Him. This destroyed, it not only becomes impotent to all the beneficent ends it was designed to accomplish, but its mighty enginery is thenceforward turned to augment and accelerate the multitudinous evil forces which are hurrying men to destruction.

In pointing out the importance of a REFORMED AND REVIVED CHRISTIANITY, it seemed natural to begin with the Church, since it is through the Church such a Christianity must operate upon the country. Let us now advert briefly to a few other particulars in which this may be insisted upon as our country's greatest need. The field is quite too broad to admit of more than a passing glance at two or three leading points.

Can a nation govern itself? This is the experiment we are trying, and have been trying for eighty years. We have been fond of telling the world

of our success. We have somewhat ostentatiously invited other nations to come and see for themselves. They have pertinaciously contended that the problem had not been fully worked out. And at length our pride has been forced to concede that they were right. The experiment is still in progress—with the prospect, however, of being definitely settled, for or against, within the coming ten years.

One thing is apparent: no *man* can “govern himself” without the aid of true religion. This will be accepted as an axiom: to argue it before a Christian audience were a waste of words. But a nation is simply an aggregate of individuals. The self-government which transcends the capacity of the units, must be equally impracticable to the organized body. No *nation*, then, can govern itself wisely and well without the help of Christianity. This is obviously true on the general principle that nations are as absolutely dependent upon God as individuals—that He disposes of them as He sees fit, setting up and de-throning princes, and creating and destroying constitutions, according to His good pleasure. Witness the history of the great prophetic Monarchies, with the recorded exposition of the Divine agency in their rise, progress, and overthrow. All history attests that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” And it were presumption in any nation to count upon His favor, while contesting His supremacy and spurning His laws.

But we need not rest the case here. We have only to look over our country to perceive that a pure and

resolute Christianity is the "one thing needful" to our *politics*.

The existing condition of things is eminently unsatisfactory. If one may judge from the public prints, it satisfies nobody—not only no political party, but no individual of any party. At the end of two and a half years after the close of the war, the anomaly is presented of a state of affairs which fails to command cordial approval in any quarter. With the most diverse aims and plans, all are hoping and striving for something better. What is this but a universal admission, that up to this period the problems evolved out of our bloody conflict have outmatched our wisdom? The solution of these questions has engrossed the sagacity, the experience, and the patriotism of the nation. Is there not room for the suggestion that one thing *more* is needful, and that we have failed to recognize it as we ought? Our urgent want is the Pillar of cloud and of fire—the symbol of the Divine Presence, to lead the way and guide our statesmen through this labyrinth. Were the nation properly imbued with the influence of true religion, such united and inportunate prayers would go up to the Mercy-seat, as would insure for us this and every other essential blessing. Herein is a *reformed and revived Christianity*, the "one thing needful" to us in our politics.

This, however, is a very meagre statement of the case. The fact which glares upon every eye is, that the temper in which our vexed problems are discussed, is of no wholesome augury to the country. One need not be alarmed at a little undue warmth in political

contests: this is common under all free governments. But with us these controversies are envenomed, *first*, by the recollections of the war; *secondly*, by the magnitude of the interests at stake; and *thirdly*, by the admixture of an element which has for the past thirty or forty years kept the country in more or less of a ferment. To restrain the excitement incident to this condition of things, and give full scope to the better instincts of the people, seems the proper function of our holy religion; and no other agency is equal to the task. It were ground for humiliation to suppose that the violence which characterizes a portion of the daily press, and the acrimony of our legislative debates, faithfully reflect the general feeling of the nation. Underlying these fierce surface-convulsions there must be a vast amount of practical wisdom, of instructed patriotism, of well-poised moderation, which have failed to make themselves properly felt in the current agitations. When Rome was in a turmoil, Cincinnatus was at his plough. Most of our Cincinnati are at their ploughs. Peradventure in our case, as in that of Rome, some crisis may come in which the sense of public danger, overpowering all personal and party sentiments, may compel the nation to summon them from their retirement, and commit its affairs to their control. To this desirable result nothing could conduce more powerfully than the revival of a genuine religious influence throughout the country. It is the genius of Christianity to array itself against all injustice and all wrong; against faction, lawless ambition, malevolence, and falsehood. It is eminently the guardian of private rights, and the friend of public order. Al-

lowed its legitimate sway, it would insist upon intelligence and rectitude as prime qualifications for the magistracy, of whatever grade, and infuse into our politics the candor, the moderation, and the comprehensive love of country (of the whole country), which are so urgently needed.

No one can imagine that even in this contingency—with the Christianity of the land rising to a higher level and sending out its myriads of life-giving rivulets into the broad wilderness of our politics—there would be any amalgamation of parties, or any truce to vehement conflict of opinion. Such a Utopia belongs only to the land of dreams. But the great questions of the day would be handled in a very different spirit. If there are factitious obstacles devised purely to thwart any rational settlement of our troubles, they would be thrust aside. And people would begin to sleep more quietly under the expectation that the country might be at rest and its complex machinery once more in working order, at no very distant period.

I have referred to the question of the freedmen. It is not foreign from the province of the pulpit to affirm that the aid of Christianity must be invoked if we would see this abstruse problem carried to a satisfactory solution, either in its civil or its spiritual aspects. The Providence of God has cast these three millions of Africans upon our hands, *and what is to be done with them?* By what methods are they to be restrained, employed, educated, and elevated?

The corresponding problem with which the British Parliament had to deal, on abolishing slavery in Ja-

maica, was very simple as compared with the question devolved upon us: for the Africans were fewer in number and three thousand miles away from England. Here they are mixed up with our white population, and nothing can be done for the one race which will not equally affect the other. In the example precedent, the legislation of Great Britain has proved a disastrous failure. Notwithstanding the favorable conditions under which her authority was put forth and the acclamation with which the act was hailed by the civilized world, it is no longer denied by any competent witness, that the experiment has proved utterly unsatisfactory. It is the recorded testimony, not of planters and merchants only, but of zealous missionaries who have spent years among them, that the Island is running to waste, and the blacks are relapsing into barbarism. Does this prove that our experiment must issue in the same way? By no means. But it certainly illustrates the intrinsic difficulties of the subject. It proves that the matter is one not to be disposed of by any summary legislation whatever; but to be approached with caution, to be examined in all its vital relations with calmness and penetration, and to be conducted throughout with the deliberation and the kindness due to the momentous interests involved. This is no proper field for mere party tactics or party triumphs. In the presence of three millions of people, ignorant and helpless, cast upon the nation as its wards, and looking to the superior race for all that may be essential to their present comfort and their preparation for eternity, it becomes partisanship to shut its brazen throat, and retire from the arena.

What is wanted here is not political craft, but lofty statesmanship and the philanthropy which draws its inspiration from the cross of Christ. The stake is too vast and too sacred to be bandied about as an electioneering puppet. There are no scales that can weigh it except the balances of the sanctuary: and the only powers, under God, competent to deal with it, are a Church and a Magistracy imbued with the spirit and controlled by the motives of our Divine religion. In such hands the freedmen would be safe.

Suppose, then, we forget, for the moment, all party issues. Let politics stand aside. Leaving the potsherd to strive with the potsherd of the earth, we may well afford, here, in the house of God, to look at this subject simply as Christian men animated by a common solicitude for the spiritual well-being of the African race. We claim to be their best friends. From the day of their emancipation until now, we have filled the world's ear with protestations of our regard for them. We have encouraged them to look to Northern Christians and philanthropists for all needful religious instruction and counsel. And how far have these pledges been redeemed? That the North has established a considerable number of schools among them, and is sustaining their teachers, is cheerfully admitted. We can bear testimony, in our own congregation, to at least a single instance, in which a genuine concern for their welfare has found expression in a noble gift for the founding of an academical institution in the State of North Carolina, for the training of freedmen. But "what are these among so many?" Is there any right-minded man who does not feel that the aggregate con-

tributions and labors bestowed upon this cause by the entire Northern States, are as unworthy of those States as they are inadequate to the object in hand? The indisputable fact is, that only a few thousands of the colored people have been reached by any of these agencies, or by all combined. It is equally certain that there are two and a half millions of them who are beyond the reach of every Christian agency but one. Unless the Gospel is given them by the *Southern Churches*, there is every reason to believe that they will live and die without it.

Whatever may be alleged to the contrary, there is no lack of disposition on the part of those Churches to do this work. They are doing it to the extent of their ability,—doing it on a scale to which we, with our affluent means and loud professions, have made no approximation. But their poverty fetters and oppresses them. Why should we not go to their relief? Do you reply by pointing to their complicity in the late war? But what then? In the Providence of God they stand between us and the freedmen. We cannot reach the freedmen without their co-operation. *Would you rather these millions should die without the Gospel, than assist Southern Christians in giving them the Gospel?* Is this “the mind which was in Christ?” No one will pretend it. Our duty, then, is plain. Let the Northern Churches rise up as one man to this service. Let them pour of their abundance into the hands of their Southern brethren. Let them say to them:—“You have access to these people, and we have not. You understand their ways. You can gain their confidence. Provide them with schools and

churches; with teachers and preachers; and we will assist you with funds." Were not this a hundred fold better than to turn a deaf ear to these multitudes, who are clamoring at our very doors for the bread of life? Well, all we need to bring this about is, a reformed and revived Christianity. And, therefore, in the name of three millions of freedmen, do I plead for this as our country's grand necessity.

Again, such a Christianity, it must be apparent, is the only agency that can cope with the wayward passions and selfish aims which have so much demoralized our current politics. The necessity for ample and varied Legislation, National, State, and Municipal, will be conceded on all hands. The more indispensable is it that it should be conceived in the spirit of wisdom, equity, and humanity. This will apply to all official bodies, and to all sections of the Union. Hence the radical importance of composing our quarrels; and renewing the ancient amity, as among all portions of the country. Here is a task which Legislation alone cannot accomplish, and which must of right, precede and preside over all statutory enactments. We have no greater want at this moment than the restoration of kind feeling and mutual confidence among ourselves, and between the North and the South. The absence of this is the bane of our politics, the canker-worm of our business, and the reproach of our Christianity. The cry comes up from a hundred thousand mills and counting-houses, that trade languishes, and portentous clouds are gathering over the realm of commerce. Various causes have conspired to produce this state of things. It belongs

to the political economist to indicate them. But it will be no intrusion into a forbidden sphere, to suggest in this place, that if the era of general good feeling could be brought back, it would soon put a new face upon both the politics and the business of the country. However natural that prejudices and animosities should survive a civil war, their pernicious influence is none the less to be deprecated. It is the dictate of an enlightened patriotism, as it assuredly is the injunction of our holy religion, that we do our utmost to foster a spirit of forbearance and conciliation. We ought to frown upon all attempts, whether put forth by our own citizens or by foreigners, to re-open the wounds of the war, and revive its estrangements. It is well to cultivate amicable relations with other nations, even with those which were undeniably hostile to us in the day of our calamity. But it is of ineffably higher moment that we "be at peace among ourselves"—not merely that the sword be sheathed and our armies disbanded, but that we dwell together once more as one people, united in the bonds of a true brotherhood. Whoever comes upon this mission, we will welcome him as an ambassador of the Prince of Peace. But we cannot, and will not, bestow our "God-speed" upon any man, citizen or stranger, who exerts his eloquence for the purpose of again putting asunder those whom God has joined together. How to remove all grounds of dissension, and nourish the virtues upon which our unity, our strength, and our prosperity must depend, may not admit of a specific answer which would cover the entire ground; but it will be admitted, that neither standing armies nor

legislative decrees can do this work; that whatever may be done or attempted through other channels, must be supplemented by the energy of a Divine faith; and that, as among these allied agencies, a reformed and revived Christianity will, by God's blessing, be more effective than all the others combined. In this view, we insist upon such a Christianity as "THE ONE THING NEEDFUL TO OUR COUNTRY."

We may turn for a moment to another department of our affairs which will supply a further demonstration of our thesis. The popular sentiment appears to be, that having repressed Secession and abolished slavery, there is no serious danger threatening our future progress. This is to overlook an evil which appears among us, strong in itself and clothed with the spoils of a hundred empires, viz., the corruption of the public morals. Not to advert to the unexampled prevalence of profaneness, intemperance, Sabbath-breaking, and other vices, the growth of *dishonesty* for the past ten years has been without precedent in our history. I shall not waste your time and my own with specific proofs. No one who reads the daily journals, or opens his ears to the talk along every thoroughfare, can be ignorant of the frightful increase of fraud, peculation, and bribery throughout the land. This is no allegation of the pulpit. It is much more discussed out of the pulpit than in it. Newspapers of every type dwell upon it. Politicians of all schools affirm it. If human testimony can avail to establish anything, a considerable portion even of the legislation of the country proceeds upon such principles as are supposed to bear sway only in the communities inclosed

by the four walls of a Penitentiary. Now is any one so simple as to imagine that a country can bear this permanently? Of what avail are your constitutions and charters? Why boast of your intelligence and your freedom? Why chant with so much exultation the requiem of slavery and rebellion? There is a worm at the core which, unless arrested, will spread the pallor of death over your gairish prosperity. No nation can thrive without virtue. If we do not root out this iniquity, it will destroy us. And there is but one effectual antidote to it. Other specifics may cure mere cutaneous affections. But this malady has its seat in the heart, and grace alone can reach it. A pure Christianity, applied in the fulness of its hallowed influences and with the might of its indwelling Spirit, will extirpate even this cancer; and bring the nation back, at least in some good measure, to the practice of integrity. Is it not, then, the "*one thing needful*" to us?

Passing over numerous features of our condition which would be most apposite to the subject in hand, one cannot survey the *religious state* of the country without feeling how much we need a renovated Christianity. Even before the war it was an unsolved problem whether the evangelical faith could keep pace with our expanding population. The war has at once abridged the resources of the Churches, and augmented fifty or an hundred fold the field to be cultivated. Aside from the ever-increasing wants of the West, what prospect is there that the immense spiritual destitutions of the South are to be supplied? Hundreds of church-edifices and school-houses, de-

stroyed by the war, are to be rebuilt. An efficient system of Missions must be established. And provision must be made for the education and religious culture of the emancipated race. To expect Southern Christians to do all this by themselves would be very unreasonable. It will require an amount of money and an array of laborers exceeding the exigencies of any other field yet presented within our territorial limits. The pecuniary means *must* come largely from without. To the credit of the North, as already observed, generous contributions have been made to these objects. But what has been done is traceable to the liberality of the few. Our Churches as a body have not yet opened their hearts to this cause. A single denomination, the Protestant Episcopalian, has set a praiseworthy example of co-operation with its Southern Dioceses. With numerous individual exceptions, the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians of the North exhibit no disposition to fraternize with their brethren of the South. The catholic spirit of Christian union among Presbyterians, so benign in itself and of such auspicious tendency, is not yet catholic *enough* (if one may judge from the late "Convention") even to recognize the existence of a great Church comprising eight hundred ministers and congregations, which, up to 1861, constituted the soundest and most homogeneous portion of our own fold. They need our help—for themselves, and for the perishing millions, white and black, around them. That in the end this succor will be accorded; that Northern and Southern Churches will make common cause of cultivating these wastes, and gathering the harvests for

Christ, is as certain as that they have "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." Christian love has vanquished the resentments of many a bitter war; and it will subdue ours. But while we stand apart, sin and death pause not in their fatal work. Our estrangement is their opportunity. A reformed and revived Christianity might not at once heal all our divisions, but it would unite the Evangelical Churches of the two sections in a goodly fellowship, and combine their efforts in behalf of the "common salvation." Such an event would prove the harbinger of untold blessings to the country; and the agency which alone can bring it about, may be justly regarded as our paramount national necessity.

These hints may suffice to give some idea of the task which the course of events has laid upon the American Churches. Of the several particulars enumerated, there is not one which may not be insisted upon as indispensable to our highest welfare. Nor is there one which can be accomplished (miracles apart) except through the energy of our Divine religion. As the very first step in this direction, the Church needs to reform itself. Freely conceding everything that can in reason be claimed on behalf of its piety, and zeal, and charitable achievements, the growing assimilation of the Church to the world, is no longer a point to be argued: it is known and read of all men. Just at the juncture when it needs to be clad with the whole armor of God, and to bring all its resources into the mighty contest between truth and error, it is holding treasonable parley with the enemy, and bartering its

weapons of celestial proof for his showy but worthless implements, and inviting him within its gates, and all but offering him the very keys of the citadel. If this goes on, it will take no Isaiah or Jeremiah to forecast the future both of the Church and the country. It requires but a glance across the water, to see how impotent for good even the largest and most opulent Churches become, when they have lost their spirituality,—when the blind undertake to lead the blind, and the dumb to prophesy upon the slain. Let our Churches take warning. Let them beware of removing the bulwarks which the Master has reared around His own fold. When solicited to adjudicate between great political parties, let them remember that even Christ himself refused so much as to arbitrate a dispute between two obscure *individuals*—dismissing the petitioner with the sharp reproof, “Who hath made me a judge or a divider over you?” Let them observe rites as rites, and not mistake them for the substance of the Gospel. Let them keep sacred music within its proper sphere—a most honorable sphere, but not one which entitles it to absorb the entire interest of public worship. Let them resist the tendency to cater to the demands of a meretricious taste, which, not content with an unchallenged sway over the wide domain of social life, would impose its arbitrary laws upon “the Church of the living God,” and transmute its simple, heaven-derived *cultus* into a glittering pageant. Let them discountenance the growing habit on the part even of Christian families, to wander about on the Lord’s Day in quest of “shows” and “performances”—none the less such because enacted under the

guise of worship. Let them continually supplicate for themselves and for all the people, the enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. If these things, and such as these are faithfully observed by the Churches, and by those who compose their several communions, the Christianity of the land *will* be "REFORMED AND REVIVED." Through all its arteries the nation will feel the pulsations of a new life. Slowly but surely the manners, the press, the politics, and the business of the country will be ameliorated and elevated. Faction and discord will give place to a pure and lofty patriotism. And our Days of Thanksgiving will be welcomed by a united and prosperous people, singing,—

"We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth with her ten thousand tongues
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise."