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**THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.**

ISAIAH 46:10. *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

These words assert the complete sovereignty of God. In the context, God is contrasted with the idols of the heathen, who cannot move out of their place; who are unconscious of the worship paid them, and who cannot hear when worshippers cry. On the other hand, Jehovah is represented as carrying his people from the beginning of their national existence, and as "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things not yet done," saying, "my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

The sovereignty expressed in the text, cannot be confined to the mere external government of nations, the raising up of one, and the casting down of another; the assigning victory to some, and of defeat and ruin to others. It is a Sovereignty, connected with his declaring "the end from the beginning," and comprehends the power of fulfilling the predictions, of the word of God. The unconditional fulfilment of the prophecies, and especially the promises of the Bible, contains undeniable evidence of the most incomprehensible exercise of Divine Sovereignty, the sovereignty which controls all the movements of the human heart. When God promises the extension of his church, this implies the power of converting his enemies into friends, for in no other way can the church be extended; when he promises to bring all nations into the church, and to cover the whole earth with the knowledge of God, this implies the power, of converting all sinners of every description, and of making them obedient to the truth.

This power of governing the human heart, is the most important as well as the most incomprehensible part of Divine Sovereignty; it is the power of governing moral agents as such, without impairing their moral agency. It supposes the man to be left in possession of all that freedom of which the human mind is conscious, and yet to be so overruled in all his actions as to preserve the Divine plans from violation, and make all human conduct subservient to the Divine counsels. The wise man says "the king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will;" and the same must be true of every human heart, otherwise God could not accomplish his purposes, "and do all his pleasure."

This doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, which consists in the government of the human heart, although certainly connected with all our most comfortable views of religion, has met with great opposition from the world. That wicked men should oppose it, was to be expected, for the root of all wickedness is enmity to God, and no one can take pleasure in the sovereignty of an enemy. But that good men, the true children of God, should oppose this doctrine, is more surprising. But although no exposition of this subject has ever met with the opposition of all christians, yet it has often been asserted, that when the truly pious oppose this doctrine, there must be some mistake or misapprehension as to the terms in which it is stated. And this opinion becomes the more probable from the circumstance that Arminians in prayer, use very much the same language as Calvinists, and always make their supplications with an apparent persuasion, that God is able to grant what they ask. They pray that the wickedness of the wicked may be restrained. This supposes that God can set bounds to the purposes of wicked men, even when under the dominion of sin. They pray for the conversion of particular sinners, and sometimes for that of the worst sinners within the bounds of their acquaintance, without making any proviso, that God would convert them if he could. They appear to offer the supplication in full confidence that God is able to accomplish what they desire. Now certainly the belief that God can restrain sinners as far as he pleases, without converting them; and that he can convert sinners of every description, at his pleasure, contains as much of the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty as is generally contended for. If a faithful transcript could be made of the views and feelings of a pious Arminian, when he is praying as the Holy Ghost teaches him to pray, that transcript would form a creed which few Calvinists would refuse to subscribe. This circumstance furnishes ground of hope that the teaching of the Spirit in the hearts of Christians, has laid a foundation for bringing them nearer together in their doctrinal opinions than they are at present. I do not know that all denominational distinctions will be laid aside even in the Millenium, but certainly if Christians would discuss their differences, with more Christian meekness and charity, they might increase their mutual confidence in each other, and come to act with more harmony and efficiency in the common cause, than they do at present. They could then live as brethren ought to live, and the blessings of the God of peace would be more abundant on their joint efforts in the cause of their common Master.

In the progres of this discussion I shall aim at *conciliation*, rather than *controversy*. I shall attempt to maintain the substance of what our standards teach on this important subject, and to exhibit it in a manner as little liable to objection from the pious as practicable.

In entering on this discussion it may be proper to state what the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty *does not* mean. And, in the first place, it does not mean, *nor does it allow us to say, that if a man is born to be saved, he will be saved even if he lives in sin; and if he is born to be lost, he will be lost let him do what he can.* In the day of judgment, when all the finally impenitent shall be sent to their place, there will not be found among them one sinner who did what he could to be saved—not one sinner who at any moment of his life, was willing to be delivered from the power of indwelling sin, and to be saved on the terms of the gospel.

In the next place, this doctrine *does not mean that God is the author of*

sin. The only author of sin is the sinner himself. God permits sin. He foresaw when he made man, that he would sin, and did not determine to prevent his sinning, for this would imply that he was defeated in his purposes; but he did not use any influence to incline him to sin. And in the present fallen state of man, God permits sin to a certain extent, and overrules it for the manifestation of his goodness, but he never impels man to sin. He only "makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he restrains."

I will again observe, that Divine sovereignty *does not impair the moral agency of man*. Man acts as much in conformity with the dictates of his own will, in committing sin and in rejecting the offers of Divine grace, as if there was no decree of God in operation. It is true his actions are so overruled, that the wise and holy purposes of God are not frustrated, but still the moral agency of man is not impaired. How it is, that God governs moral agents, and leaves them such freedom of action as makes them justly accountable, is one of the most difficult questions in Theology. Metaphysicians have written volumes to explain the mode of Divine operation in the case, but they have thrown more darkness than light on the subject. But that God can govern moral agents, and still leave their wills free, is a fact fully established by the sacred scripture.

In the first place, it is established by the operation of the text, and by all similar assertions. He does "all his pleasure." "He hath made all things for himself." "He makes the wrath of man to praise him." These, and similar assertions, could not be sustained if God could not regulate the operations of the human mind, notwithstanding its conscious freedom.

But in the next place, we think there are many examples in scripture, which show us the very fact of governing moral agents so as to accomplish the Divine purpose while their wills are left free. The brethren of Joseph, determined on taking his life, if necessary, to prevent the fulfilment of his prophetic dreams. But God had inspired those dreams and determined to fulfil them. Here the purpose of man was in direct opposition to the will of God, and yet God so overruled the event, as to make those very men the agents in accomplishing his purpose and defeating their own. Forty Jews bound themselves by a most determined oath, to take the life of Paul, but their purpose was defeated without destroying their moral agency.

I will observe, again, that the promise of eternal life to the believer, certainly proves that God is able to confirm a moral agent in holiness, which is the most important part of governing the human heart. Whatever controversy may exist as to falling from grace in this world, all Christians believe that the redeemed in heaven are confirmed in holiness, beyond the possibility of falling; and this confirmation is certainly by the power of God, and not by their own power. And I cannot conceive of any difference between the power necessary to confirm a saint in heaven, and that which would have confirmed our first parents in paradise. In both cases, the heart of the creature must be considered as in the hands of God. Divine grace arrested Paul when a persecutor of the church; made him an able minister of the New Testament on earth; and led him to a state of confirmed holiness in heaven, from which he can never fall. Could not the same power, or indeed according to our views, a less power, have preserved Adam in innocence,

had infinite wisdom deemed it proper. From these scriptural views of the subject, I am obliged to conclude, that God possesses the power of governing moral agents in all their freedom of action, so as to fulfil his promises, and preserve the plans of his infinite wisdom. Some writers, in accounting for the introduction of moral evil, say, that it was necessary to make men moral agents, and making them such, they were liable to sin of course? I wonder if any Christian would apply this reasoning to the saints in heaven.

I shall now proceed to state the doctrine of the text more distinctly. When it is asserted that the counsel of God shall stand, and that he does all his pleasure, the assertion may be taken in the most general sense as implying *complete success in all the designs of Deity, whether they relate to the management of particular parts of the system, or to the creation and government of the whole.* That God had a plan in view when he created the world, must be conceded by all who acknowledge his existence. This is the necessary result of his wisdom and intelligence. We believe that no rational agent ever undertook any important work without a plan. And to deny a plan or purpose to the Deity at the creation of the world, would be to deny him common rationality. Now, this plan or purpose is the Divine decree, and the only question is, whether it has or has not been defeated. This, I believe, is the true point at which the Calvinist and Arminian must separate.

The Calvinistic system maintains, that the purpose of God never has been defeated. The two principal points brought into this discussion, relate to *the origin of moral evil, and the limited success of the gospel;* and we do not suppose that the divine purpose has been overruled in either of these cases.

In the first case, as to the origin of moral evil, the only question which can be proposed here, is, did God permit sin, or the existence of sin, contrary to the will of God? This is, no doubt, a difficult question, and on this point many persons have formed their creed from a kind of necessity. We must believe something in the case, and on a fair view of the subject, it is certainly easier to believe that God foresaw and permitted sin, than that his plans were defeated by its introduction. The permission of sin contains the whole difficulty of the Divine decrees in relation to sin. The Westminster Confession in speaking on this subject, resolves the Divine decree into the *permission of sin, and the holy bounding of the sinner.* This holy bounding presents no difficulty to our conception; it is merely the restraining of the sinner; the holding of him back from the perpetration of crimes to which his inclinations might lead; or the preventing of his evil dispositions from taking effect to the injury of his fellow creatures. But that God, who views sin with infinite abhorrence, should permit its existence, is what forms the difficulty. And the only solution we can give of it, is, that the Divine Being had motives worthy of himself, but entirely unknown to us, for that permission. But with this difficulty before me, I find it much easier to believe that God freely permitted sin, than to believe that his purpose was defeated by its introduction. For if the first act of sin defeated the divine purpose, every subsequent act was a new defeat, and upon this ground defeats are so multiplied, that the Divine Being would seem to be almost excluded from the government of the world. It will be kept in view that the bare permission of sin, is only suffering the moral agent to act, and not interfering with his moral agency.

The only other point, at which it could be supposed that the Divine will was successfully counteracted, relates to the limited success of the gospel among men. This is also a point of great difficulty. It comprehends in substance the doctrine of election, and all the mysteries which belong to it. There can be no doubt, that the plan of redemption is a scheme of infinite benevolence towards our guilty world. "God has commended his love," in sending his Son to die for us when we were enemies. But after all this manifestation of love, and this expensive preparation in the death of his Son, why is the success of the gospel so limited? Has the conversion of the world been arrested, because the arm of the Lord is shortened that he cannot save?

It will be remembered here, that there is no controversy about the free-agency of man; nor do we suppose any contrariety between the secret and revealed will of God. We allow the Arminian brother to say, and we go with him in saying, that the grace of the gospel is fully offered to all who hear it, and that all who are willing to receive the gospel shall be saved; but this does not remove the difficulty. When we, or when our brothers of other denominations preach the gospel to sinners, we find a majority of them unwilling to receive it. They turn from it with contemptuous neglect, and often exercise the most malignant feelings against those who press the offer upon them. The sinner's unwillingness to receive the gospel, is what stops every thing; and how is it to be removed? At this point there is only one resource for either Arminian or Calvinist. They must look to God for the removal of this obstacle. When the sinner is once willing to receive the gospel and use the means of grace, the great difficulty is overcome; but it is God, and he alone, who can give him this willingness. A willingness to receive the gospel, is the first step in religion; it is the beginning of conversion, and the bestowment of it, is the work of God. The making of the sinner willing to obey the gospel, is the first step in religion; it is the beginning of conversion, and the bestowment of it, is the work of God. The making of the sinner willing to obey the gospel, is conversion or effectual calling. God gives this to some, but not to all; and his previous determination to give it, is his electing grace. It would be in vain to say here, that God gives to all men sufficient grace. I ask, for what is the grace given sufficient? It is no doubt sufficient to render sinners inexcusable, but it is not sufficient to make them Christians; otherwise all would be Christians. But the manner in which God conducts this work shows that his hand is in it. Under the preaching of the gospel, sometimes the worst sinners in the whole community are taken while others are left. The greatest profligate is moved, his heart is opened to receive the truth, and he repents; whilst a better man than he, sitting in the same seat, and hearing the same message of salvation goes away unaffected, and determines to reject the grace of God. These are facts of every man's observation, and they prove undeniably that conversion is the work of God. Should I be asked here, why God converts some and does not convert all? why he makes some willing and leaves others unwilling? my reply is, that I can give no satisfactory answer. I cannot tell, why God permitted sin at first, when he could have prevented it; neither can I tell why he converts some sinners and does not convert all. My Calvinistic creed, would indeed allow me to say, that if the church would pray more fervently for the event, more sinners would be converted. And I have no doubt that the whole church,

Arminian as well as Calvinistic, when it does pray most efficiently, feels the conviction, that all converting grace is in the hand of God; that God is able to move the hardest hearts; and of course they feel, that sinners by rejecting the gospel, cannot diminish the sovereignty of God, nor frustrate his holy purposes. The supposition that God can convert all sinners, while he only converts some, must establish the doctrine of election. Indeed the whole doctrine of the sovereign purpose of God as to sin and its consequences, may be comprised in the following summary. It contains God's determination to create the world; to sustain moral agents in existence; to permit sin in certain cases; and to convert some sinners to eternal life, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The non-conversion of other sinners is the same as the continued permission of sin.

On the other hand, the Arminian system, or any system which differs from that just stated, must suppose that the divine purpose has often been defeated. Perhaps few men would be willing to assert this, in so many words; but the whole reasoning of the case leads to this result. There can be but one question on this subject; Does God "do all his pleasure?" or can the moral agency of the creature defeat the purpose of God? Now let a man carry this question with him, in reading on the Arminian controversy, and ask himself at every turn of the argument, does this suppose a defeat of the divine purpose? and he will find the whole scheme predicated on the supposition, that the will of God has been overruled in numberless instances. And here I would request the Arminian brother, to pause and consider. Would it not be better for us to believe that we are in darkness as to many things in the management of the divine government; and that God may do many things which are holy, just and good, of which we cannot understand the propriety, than to suppose that the sovereign purpose of God has ever been overthrown?

The grand difficulty which separated Christians on this subject, lies in the supposition, that a holy God could have consented to the existence of sin. This difficulty has thrown its perplexities over the reasonings of the whole world. It led many heathen philosophers to the conclusion, that there must have existed from eternity an evil as well as a good principle, and that they were employed in the counteraction of each other. Others supposed that there was an inherent evil in matter, so untractable and ungovernable, that God could not regulate things according to his own will, in any material system. These whims have long since been exploded in christendom. The independent evil principle is gone, but his ghost is not laid yet. Many pious divines think they see in moral agency, that untractable and ungovernable something, which leads to moral evil contrary to the will of God. A very respectable writer has lately asserted, that sin may be necessarily incident to the best system of moral agency. This sentiment is essentially Arminian, and to me, if I believed it, would be very uncomfortable. Sin necessarily incident to the best system of moral agency! I would ask if the redeemed in heaven are not in the best state of moral agency? Can there be any holy obedience to God from creatures who are not moral agents? And are we then to suppose, that contrary to all the promises of eternal life in the word of God, and contrary to all the gracious purposes of God himself, sin may be necessarily incident to the state of the redeemed in heaven? May actually enter heaven contrary to the will of God, and destroy the happiness of the just made perfect? These are serious questions. If we could believe, that

after having entered heaven, we could lose our happiness after millions of ages, or after millions of millions of ages; it might still have been good for us, not to have been born. This opinion is at war with all proper notions of the sovereignty of God. It destroys the sentiment which the Christian feels, when he says with the Psalmist, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." In the prerogative of God, we need more than protection from external enemies; we need a power which can save us from ourselves. When we subscribe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, we believe that God will save us from ourselves; and notwithstanding our weakness and sinfulness, conduct us to heaven. And even the Arminian, who does not, in form, subscribe that doctrine, believes that the grace of God will uphold him, so long as he looks to him for that grace. This is another point at which pious feeling brings Arminians and Calvinists very near together. They all expect to stand by the power of God, and repose on his promises. But they are all wrong, and the whole foundation of their confidence is broken up, if sin be necessarily incident to the best system of moral agency, notwithstanding all that God has willed to the contrary. I suppose indeed, that the respectable writer alluded to, did not intend to apply his reasoning to this subject, and he would probably admit, that God is able to confirm moral agents in holiness in some cases, though not in all. But for my part, I think the promise of eternal life to the believer, gives us the assurance that God is able to confirm moral agents in holiness, whenever his infinite wisdom sees proper to do so. I can see no difference between the power necessary to confirm in one case, and that which would be necessary in another; especially as the Divine Being has the forming of all moral agents in his hands, and could, if he please, create them with all the principles most favorable to such a confirmation in holiness; besides, I think, the conversion of some depraved sinners, and the leading of them to confirmed holiness in heaven, implies at least as much power as would have been necessary to have confirmed our first parents in Paradise.

The view which I have here exhibited of divine sovereignty, as it does not suppose the moral agency of man impaired, presents no greater difficulty to the understanding, *than the doctrine of divine foreknowledge*. Foreknowledge undoubtedly supposes the certainty or fixedness of events. If God foreknows that a thing will take place, that thing must take place; and all the difficulty lies in reconciling the certainty or fixedness of events with the moral agency of man. To avoid this difficulty, however, Mr. Wesley and others have told us that foreknowledge does not properly belong to God; that indeed the knowledge of God is infinite, comprehending all events; but then he does not view things in succession, as past or future, but as continually and eternally present; that with God, all times are an eternal NOW. Whether this notion of the eternal presence of events to the divine mind be correct, we shall not stop here to enquire. But certainly this doctrine accomplishes nothing in the present argument. For according to this doctrine the Divine Being, viewing all things as present at all times, must at this moment view as a present event, the condemnation of every sinner who will be condemned at the day of judgment, although many of those sinners are not yet born.

Dr. Adam Clark has marked out for his followers a different course. He denies the infinite knowledge of God altogether. He believes that God could have foreknown every thing if he had chosen, but that he determined

not to know certain things, and that this determination afforded the occasion for the introduction of sin and misery into the world. To say that Dr. Clarke's scheme is unsatisfactory, is to say too little; for it imputes more than weakness or ignorance to the Deity. It supposes that God imposed a voluntary ignorance upon himself in the management of his affairs as universal Governor, which has resulted in the infinite misery of many of his creatures. Now according to all our notions of governments, voluntary ignorance or neglect in a governor is a crime, the guilt of which must be measured by the consequences resulting from it. But I will not press this subject. I am persuaded Dr. Clarke was not aware of these consequences, and would not have defended them. Still, however, the consequences naturally arise from the scheme, and to avoid them we must reject the Doctor's scheme itself.

My observations on this subject have been directed to *two* points, both of which are necessary to be kept in view, for the understanding of the subject. The first of these points is moral agency, or the freedom of the human will. There is no truth of which the mind is more conscious, than of the freedom of its own actions, and any scheme of divine sovereignty that would contravene that truth is inadmissible. And it is also to be understood, that whilst we maintain the moral agency of man, we maintain the use of human means. Some appear to think, that if all future events are certainly fixed, the use of means has no place in the system. In answer to this I would remark, that the objection, if it applies at all, is as applicable to our temporal as to our spiritual affairs. Now I have never met with any man who did not admit, that divine foreknowledge comprehended all our temporal concerns; and what God foreknows, will certainly come to pass. God foresaw from eternity, in what circumstances we would come into this world, and in what condition we would go out of it. But does the certainty of his knowledge, make our efforts unnecessary? At the beginning of every year God foreknows to a single grain, what will be the produce of our fields, and the amount of our harvest for that year; but does this certainty of events make it unnecessary for us to plough and sow? If not, neither does the certainty of events, make the use of means unnecessary in the spiritual world. In religious matters, means are as necessary as in our temporal concerns, and they are even more certain of attaining their end, because, more manifestly accompanied by a divine promise.

The other point which we attempted to establish in consistency with the freedom of the human will, is that the scheme and purposes of God are not overthrown. This we consider as the main pillar of divinity. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." If any wicked beings or principles in existence, can overthrow the purpose of God; the hopes of the Christian are lost; the purchase of redemption is lost; and the government of the world and of all worlds has passed into the hands of the enemies of God.

We shall now conclude this subject by a few practical observations. And in the first place, the doctrine of the divine sovereignty, rightly understood, furnishes the mind with agreeable contemplations, in surveying the past events of the church. The church has experienced many changes and perils; we have sometimes seen her at the brink of ruin, but an invisible Lord has raised her up. The whole world has sometimes combined for her destruction, and there seemed to be nothing, so far as human eyes could see, to prevent the accomplishment of the purpose; but an invisible hand came to her deliverance. When she passed through the deep waters, they did not overflow her; and when she passed through the fire, the sparks did not kin-

de upon her. The church has often been more endangered by her own negligence and unfaithfulness, than by all her external enemies; and from these dangers she has been delivered by means apparently the most incompetent. Early in the last century, when every thing seemed to be languishing and freezing, throughout almost the whole of Christendom, a small number of obscure young men formed a society in one of the British Universities. The most prominent characters that came from that society were Wesley, Whitfield and Hervey. And these few men, under the blessing of God, kindled up a sacred spark, which extended its light and heat through many of the European and American churches, and which, we trust, will extend its light and heat onward to the latter day glory of the church on earth. To this society we are much indebted for the benevolent efforts of the present day. But how inadequate the means to the end! Surely nothing but the power of God has effected this work. And we now rely on the same God to go forth with our missionaries for the conversion of the world. When we look at the work before us, every man's heart would fail, if we did not trust to an Almighty arm. All our means and preparation are like a drop to the ocean considered in themselves; but when we remember that we go forward at the command of Him who declares the end from the beginning—saying “my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,” we know that our labor is not in vain. That God who shook the length and breadth of the Roman Empire when apostles preached; who made the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church in former times, can make the ashes of our missionaries the seed of the churches in foreign lands. All this we believe, because the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

In the next place, the belief of divine sovereignty, lays the only foundation or encouragement in prayer. We have already seen that all Christians, and even those who appear to be most opposed to this doctrine on other occasions, believe it when they pray. Indeed, to pray to God for what we did not believe he could accomplish or give, would be a most egregious trifling with our duty. How could we pray to God for the conversion of sinners, if we did not believe that he could convert them? How should we pray for the conversion of the world, without believing that he can convert all sinners? And how could we pray for the sanctification of the church, without believing that he can sustain his people in holiness? We may admit that those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, or those who by perseverance in sin, are given up by the Divine Spirit, are placed beyond the mercy of God, though not beyond his converting power, and if we knew the persons to whom these cases applied, we ought not to pray for them, but with these exceptions, it is our duty to pray for all men, and to pray in the faith that God is able to convert them all.

But again this doctrine furnishes our only hope, when we look forward to the immortal interests of man. A duration beyond the grave and beyond the judgment, which millions and millions of ages will not bring nearer to a close, is a startling subject of contemplation. “Through what varieties of untried being,” through what wonderful scenes of enjoyment or misery must we pass, and how immense the interests which such duration must involve! And to whose hands shall we confide those interests? Shall we trust to our own rectitude to sustain our holiness and happiness through eternity, or shall we commit our concerns, to the tender mercies and faithful keeping of our God?

## SERMON XLVII.

BY REV. R. W. BAILEY,  
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### THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH HINDERED BY ONE SIN.

**JOSHUA 7:10, 13.** *“And the Lord said unto Joshua, get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?—Up, sanctify the people, and say, sanctify yourselves against to-morrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O, Israel; thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.”*

Success in the gospel ministry, is a subject of paramount importance and engrossing interest with all, who exercise the sacred office. It is directly in the order of God's gracious providence to bestow success, and when it does not attend on the stated means, there is a cause well worthy of being inquired out and removed.

When the chosen people of God, under the conduct of Joshua, went forward to take possession of the promised land, and the walls of Jericho fell down at their approach. Ai was the next city to be taken, for the subjugation of which, three thousand men were detached and sent out. But instead of the expected and promised success, they fled before their enemies, and were utterly destroyed by an inferior force: for the Lord gave them into the hands of their enemies. “And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell on his face before the ark of the Lord.—And the Lord said unto Joshua, get thee up, why liest thou thus upon thy face? *Israel hath sinned.—Therefore, the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, because they were accursed. Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you.*” “UP, sanctify the people, and say, *sanctify yourselves*, against to-morrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O, Israel; thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.”

So Joshua rose up on the morrow, early in the morning, and assembled the tribes to make search for the transgressor who had brought the anger of the Lord on the whole nation. And Achan was detected, and made confession to Joshua, saying—indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. “When I saw among the spoils, a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them, and behold they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. Here was an adequate cause for the judgments visited upon the people. This was the evil which the Lord saw among them. Therefore, he said to Joshua—“thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye put away the accursed thing from among you.”

The important DOCTRINE, to which the text invites our particular attention, is this—ONE SIN, unrepented, cherished or concealed in the church, may prevent its prosperity.

*In the first place*, we say this will certainly be the case, where the offender has, either, not experienced that watchful care of his brethren, which might have prevented the crime, or, been neglected as a subject of discipline when his offence is known. It is far from being certain that I am guiltless in the sin of my neighbor. He may have confided in me for advice and reproof. Perhaps he ventured a little, and then looked to me for approbation or censure. My silence encouraged him to proceed. After he had actually fallen, perhaps an early and kind reproof might have gained him, and wiped away the reproach while his conscience was yet tender. Thus the weaker brethren often lean on the stronger, and those, who have besetting sins, peculiarly importunate, need the prompt influence of faithful friends. A neglect on the part of Christians to be faithful, may doubtless bring on those, who stand as deep a guilt as that, which attaches to those who fall. They are in a sense held responsible for those, with whom they are in covenant, and God will come into the church and say—"where is thy brother?" We are made the keepers of one another; and it is one of the peculiar privileges of the Christian, that he has secured to him by solemn covenant, the faithful watch and care of his brethren, that he may be gently reprov'd when he sins, and find faithful friends to help him up even after he is in disgrace. When the obligations of the church to deal kindly and faithfully with offenders are violated, God will hold the church as partakers of the guilt, and deal with them as offenders.

The people of God, under the conduct of Joshua, proceeded prosperously in crossing the flood, which divided them from the promised land, and without bloodshed, had taken one of the principal cities. But unexpectedly, the whole army is stayed. Israel flees before the enemy, and is smitten. What is the matter? At the subjugation of Jericho, one man had indulged in the sin of covetousness. He had been tempted by the sight of a goodly Babylonish garment, and took it with fifty shekles of silver and a wedge of gold. Against this sin, the people had been specially warned before the temptation presented. Joshua inquired of the Lord, and receives for answer—"Israel hath sinned, and taken of the accursed thing." There was an offender unreclaimed, and unpunished. Perhaps there had been a general fault in not watching over this offender with sufficient care. If all had done their duty, perhaps this evil might have been entirely prevented. Perhaps the fact was known to others, who neglected to take the proper cognizance of it, and thereby a door might have been opened for greater liberties, had this passed with impunity. Or, going as Israel was into a scene of temptation, they might be found destitute of a spirit of watchfulness suited to the exigency of the times, and this severe method might have been adopted to prevent greater evils. Whatever be the cause of this melancholy fall, and severe Divine dispensation, the lesson it furnishes to us is an impressive one. Open guilt exposes to reproach, and must always have a hardening influence on the church that harbors it. In such a condition, a church can never be in a healthy state. Remedies must be applied to eradicate the disease or remove the infected limb, or the whole body will sink under the malady.

*Secondly*, we may perceive how one sin, unrepented, may prevent the prosperity of the church, if we reflect that others will probably be contaminated, and led astray by this example. A sin, a single sin, cherished concealed, or unrepented, must prevent the prosperity of the individual who harbors it, though it produce no other and more extensive calamity. *That* soul cannot flourish and grow in grace. If the effects are felt no farther, therefore, it will spoil the joys, hinder the safety, and put in jeopardy the salvation of one soul. But it will probably do more. If the sin be known to others, its baneful effects cannot be confined; if concealed, its effects will be felt through its influence on the general christian character of the man, in whose heart it is cherished. Let him be covetous, and this disposition of heart will have a pervading influence in forming his character and regulating his intercourse with others. The same will be true if he be vain, proud, ambitious or undevout. - If he be a prominent and influential individual, the evil of his example will run parallel with the extent of his influence; if the head of a family, he casts in the rigid mould of his own cherished habits, the minds of his children and dependents.

If this be true of an individual, then a prevailing sin in the church will be felt to a corresponding extent. If a church be covetous, or proud, or ambitious, or worldly, its sin will be visited upon it in spiritual leanness and desolation; and the influence of its example will spread blight and mildew on every benevolent and moral enterprise. The work assigned it to do will not prosper. They will be smitten and flee before their enemies, and the cause of the Lord suffer reproach. If the example of one christian is liable to exert an influence so injurious on all others, what must be the state of that church where a general declension prevails? The few, who may remain faithful, will be likely soon to be swallowed up in the vortex, and general ruin ensue.

*Thirdly*, when others are not led astray by the direct example of offenders, they are often found to be abettors in the transgression. Calamities came on the family of Isaac in consequence of the sins of the children, in which the mother was too much concerned. Many judgments were, in the same way, visited on the Israelites during their journey through the wilderness for particular sins. The sons of Eli did wickedly, and he restrained them not; therefore wrath came on the whole house of Israel. The iniquity of David was visited on his family, and on his people. It is often the case that open sins, which bring reproach on an individual, have many secret abettors, who are involved in the guilt and the consequences. When Stephen was stoned, Paul stood by, and consented unto his death, and he afterwards confesses this among his crying sins. The influence of *example* is powerful; but it ought to be considered that apparent *complacency*, or even silence, is often no less encouraging to one disposed to transgress. Hence we see the decided manner, in which we are producing an impression on one another. Those who give their consent to sin, are its abettors, and involved in its guilt. The profane swearer, who is unreprieved, is emboldened; and the christian professor, who sees his brother wander from duty, and withholds the voice of warning, is giving him countenance, and is partaker of his guilt. The magistrate is the life of the civil law, without whom it sleeps and exerts no restraining power. When he neglects to interpose his authority in the support of the law, he is giving countenance and boldness

to the offender. When he looks on transgression in silence, the law is dishonored under his administration, and he becomes the minister of sin. When the christian sins or approves it in others, he weakens the dignity of the law and brings the Gospel he professes to embrace into disrepute. In all such cases, they become direct transgressors, will be held and punished as offenders, and are liable to bring calamities on others also.

We have decided examples to show that sin prevents the prosperity of a church, and retards its progress and influence in the world. Religion cannot flourish where the means used for its advancement are defective or inadequate. God will not hear those who regard iniquity in their hearts, and he will not give effect to an example, which does not present the true religion of Christ. Three thousand may be enroled, and go up against an hundred, but if they are coveting Babylonish garments, and seeking shekels of silver, and wedges of gold, the Lord will not go with them nor prosper them. The church may come forward in a body, and pray for a revival of religion, but the whole effort may be vain and fruitless. Perhaps the want of success may grow out of a neglect to seek out and expose an offender; or else in a general consent to his sin; or in a participation of his crime.

It is necessary that the church come to God with the way cleared, and press the throne of grace with no hindrances. It cannot otherwise be expected that God will hear. While guilt rests on the conscience, no individual can draw near to God; and while a church is involved in the same embarrassment, their intercessions will not prevail. The Lord will not go with them, and therefore they will fall before their enemies.

The subject, thus illustrated, furnishes impressive lessons of practical importance.

1. When churches are not prospered, we see the reason why. They have sinned. God will not own and prosper a wicked church. Unless they live in the love and practice of religion, they will neither commend it to others, nor feel the blessing of it themselves. God will visit them with leanness of soul, although they may be prospered in the business of life. Their riches shall be a snare to them and their prosperity vain. Sometimes God punishes a church by giving them an unfaithful minister; sometimes by sending them strong delusions that they may believe a lie; sometimes, even by giving them their desires, so that their lives are crowned with plenty. In the same way, God deals with individuals. Yet he sometimes visits with a blessing individual members of the church, although the multitude live in sin. He is faithful to fulfil his promise to every soul, and if any will draw nigh to him, all that has been promised shall be realized. That soul shall be enlightened and blessed. It is sometimes the case that heavy judgments are averted not only from the impenitent but from the church through the faithful intercessions of one fervent christian. As general declensions often commence with the sin of one, so great revivals of religion are often traced to the efforts of one. The promise shall not fail to the least saint through the neglect of the many. If that church where he dwells cannot be saved through his intercessions, when the Lord comes down in judgment, he shall be led out as Lot was from Sodom, and shall be saved. But when there are none to plead for the church, it becomes ripe for judgments.

2. God will visit his professing people with severe chastisements for their sins. He is a jealous God, and will not be mocked. When hypocrites

come with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue, He abhors the sacrifice; and when we regard iniquity in our hearts, He will not hear us. If even His redeemed people sin, He will chastise them, and show them its bitterness. Often did His chosen people answer severely for their transgressions. The best saints have not escaped severe chastisements when they have sinned. Awful threatenings are denounced upon those, who draw back from the love and service of God. The dangers and evils of apostacy ought therefore to be well considered by all, who think they stand in the favor of God: "For thus saith the Lord to transgressors, though ye were the signet upon my right hand, yet will I pluck you thence; and I will give you into the hand of them that seek your life, and into the hand of them whose face ye fear; for I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst I will not hear."

3. Christians should be fearful of a single sin. It is dangerous to begin in the way of transgression. We do not know where we shall stop, when we have once stepped aside from the path of rectitude. The moment we sin, we incur the displeasure of God, we forfeit some of the most precious promises, and are exposed to apostacy. We are safe only in the hands of God. But in the way of transgression, we renounce His authority, and must not wonder if He refuse us. Let professing Christians never say, when tempted to sin, "is it not a little one?" It is always the first step in a direct line to the greatest, and therefore, is to be feared, and avoided as the greatest. Avoid the small beginnings of sin, and you will be sure to escape the dreadful end of God's enemies.

It is commonly the case that those churches, on which the wrath of God rests, are spoiled by some one sin. Under the influence of knowledge and a quick conscience, Christians do not come to a universal and rapid declension. Appearances are kept up, and outward forms preserved, while inward lusts are cherished, and the restraining and sanctifying spirit of religion is fled. It is commonly a sin of some one particular kind that gains possession of the heart, and leads astray the church devoted to judgments. The ruin of the church at Ephesus was the loss of love, although she was orthodox and patient and laborious. The sin of the church at Pergamos was, that she cherished and retained heretical members, throwing the mantle of her charity over those, whom God hated. The sin of the church at Thyatira was, that she harbored and listened to false teachers, who ought to have been resisted because they taught not the truth. The sin of Sardis was, that she had become unwatchful and unfaithful. The sin of the church at Laodicea was lukewarmness and pride. All these churches gradually declined under the judgments of God, and finally became extinct.

All this train of evils may grow out of the sin of a single individual. I will suppose a person of reputation and influence in the church maintains an expensive and extravagant style of living, disregarding or restricting the common claims of charity and religion;—that he reasons thus. "Riches depend on industry and economy, and therefore are within the reach of all. The poor are so of choice, or by their own fault. What we possess is our own to enjoy, to keep or expend. Every person, therefore, has a perfect right, amenable only to himself, to regulate his own expenditures, and incur any expense within his means." These specious but fallacious arguments, from such a source, would have a great weight when addressed to a certain set of our natural feelings, and might easily gain advocates, until the sentiment might prevail through that class of society within the reach of its application. Suppose his arguments, on the other hand, went to vindicate a spirit of parsimony, the effect might be the same. Men naturally seek from others license to do what they desire. Therefore it is we find different sins prevailing in different communities. By gradual concessions particular sins, limited at first, become general, although others are still held in abhorrence. The church at Ephesus was orthodox, but lacked zeal. The church at Pergamos was not charged with want of zeal, but was heterodox. Great declensions commonly proceed from small beginnings. It is by a single sin, at first cherished, perhaps in the heart of a single Christian, and next imbibed by another, which often brings the greatest calamities on whole churches or communities. The discipline, necessary to sustain the character of the church against a single sin of a single individual, disposed to persevere in

his wrong, sometimes involves a whole community in a controversy, which agitates the church for years, and terminates in its ruin. How prayerfully, then, should every Christian seek to avoid a single sin.

4. Sinners have occasion to fear, for they are in danger, when Christians transgress. It is not the people of God alone that are injured by their sins. The impenitent, always in danger, are then in greater peril. "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" The sins of Jonah endangered all that were in the ship with him. And when David the king fell under the judgments of God, the blood of his people profusely flowed. So when God begins to punish a church, wo to the people among whom they dwell. It shall be a time of terror and darkness to His enemies. When the wrath of God was provoked against the house of Israel, he said he would have destroyed them, had not Moses, a righteous man, stood up to plead for them; and when these prayers do not prevent the execution of wrath on the church, how can the people be saved?

A church, under the displeasure of God, furnishes cause for mourning to sinners. If they could see the influence it has on themselves, they would run to Christians, and plead with them to pray to God that his wrath come not on them to the uttermost. Churches have been extirpated for their sins; and what greater calamity can come on a people than to have the light of the gospel among them extinguished? Where are now the once flourishing churches of Asia, reproved in the Apocalypse? They exist no longer. And what are the people who inhabit the places where they flourished and shone?—Miserable, degraded and pagan.

5. When the work of the Lord ceases to advance, it is the duty of the ministers and officers of the church to seek out the sins which prevent it. The moment the cause of God began to suffer, Joshua gave himself to prayer, and when apprised that Israel had sinned, he immediately assembled the people, sought out the offender, and removed the cause of God's displeasure. The work, which the disciples of Christ have to do in this world, is explicitly stated and defined. Through their agency, the great work for which this world is sustained, and sinners spared, is to be advanced—the salvation of souls. Other duties and relations in life, share their attention, but this claim is paramount, and all other interests are subservient to this. When, therefore, they fail to accomplish this object, and exert this influence, they fall before their enemies. There is something wrong. There is an Achan in the camp—the church has sinned, and it cannot prosper. They may be prosperous in the pursuits of life, but this is no decided evidence of the Divine favor. A church is never prosperous when they are not growing in grace, and helping sinners to heaven. The first thing for them to do, is to rise up and sanctify themselves, each one for himself; for thus saith the Lord God, "there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee—and ye cannot stand before your enemies, until ye put away the accursed thing from amongst you." The enemies of your religious peace will overcome and destroy you. Nothing can compensate for this state of things; "for the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against you, and he will forsake you, and hide his face from you, and you shall be devoured, and many evils shall come upon you, because the Lord your God is not amongst you." Miserable is such a church, for the curse of God is upon them.

Brethren, when we turn our attention to our own church, what are the facts, which urge themselves on our notice? Are not the faithful few in number? Does not coldness and a worldly spirit mark the intercourse of the disciples? Are not the evil dispositions of our own hearts, the wiles of the adversary, the deceits of the world too powerful for the feeble resistance we oppose, so that we do not stand before our enemies? God has given us a promise, but do we plead it effectually? Is it not time for us to search our hearts, and ask why it is that these evils have come upon us, and who is the guilty cause?

I was once acquainted in a village where the people became repeatedly alarmed by the cry of fire. Such was at length their danger, that they could hardly lie down on their beds before the alarm was given, and some dwelling was laid in ashes. Pursuit for the offender was made in vain, and the alarm was increased, until this miserable people were literally afraid to close their eyes. The consternation became uncontrollable, and could no longer be sustained. At length a public meeting was called, at which every inhabitant was requested to attend. Assembled under the influence of that fear which had taken hold on every heart, and seated with the solemnity and still-

ness of death, with which they seemed to be surrounded—after a pause, one of the principal inhabitants rose, and, adverting to the melancholy scene, through which they had passed and were passing, he says, the author of all this mischief *is in this house*. It is impossible it should be otherwise. It is one of us, either you or I, and our present business is to prosecute an investigation, and find out the offender. The result of this appeal, vigorously urged, was that one man, and he a respectable citizen, was detected and made confession as the author of all their miseries. When Israel suffered the Divine displeasure for sin, Joshua their leader, assembled the tribes and charged the sin upon them. This also resulted in the detection of the offender, and the removal of the offence. And, my brethren, is not the same appeal and inquiry here demanded? Why is it that the gospel here has no more success? Are we not authorized to say, there is some sin in the church which prevents it? Is it not you or I that is in the way of a blessing? Tell me now, I pray thee, what thou hast done to provoke the anger of the Lord? Did you pray in your closet this morning? No? Then suspicion may well rest upon you. Do you often neglect this duty? Do you perform it coldly, formally, or hastily? Then thou art the man. One, to whom these traits of character apply, is unquestionably an offender of some grade of guilt. Are you the head of a family, and are your prayers before your family marked by the same characteristics? Then the evidence is confirmed. Do you read your bible but little, or less than formerly? Do you find your conversation easily diverted from religion? Are you ambitious, and vain, and proud, and sensual? Do you easily speak evil of your brethren, and estimate a man's character more by his other possessions than his piety? Are you easily detained from religious duty, and often absent from the assemblies of the disciples? Are your joys in other things greater than your joys in religion? Have you made no effort the past week to save a soul from death? Where were you when the church bell rung for that tender interview in preparation for the communion? Where were you when it called to the monthly concert? Where were you when the disciples were worshipping in the house of Mary? Where do you live, stay, find your pleasure? There lies your influence, and there you may learn what you are.

6. It is the duty of the church to see that offenders, when detected, are reformed, or disciplined, if necessary, even to excommunication. Discipline must be preserved, or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against the church, and the whole congregation experience his displeasure. If, in this subject, any have been detected in sin, let these sins be put away. If any Christian perceives he has neglected his duty, let him suffer no delay in the faithful performance of it. If the church have in its bosom impenitent offenders let those duties be promptly performed, which shall issue in their reformation or excision. Let there be no delay.

To the worldly minded, slothful, faithless or desponding ministers and elders of the slumbering churches, the language of our text is the voice of inspiration, and it says—“Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?—Up, sanctify the people, and say, sanctify yourselves against to-morrow—(immediately)—For thus saith the Lord God, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee; thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye put away the accursed thing from among you.”

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## SERMON XLVIII.

BY CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, D. D.

OF PHILADELPHIA.

### ON THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

**MATT. 20:28**—*Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

THE coming into the world of God's "only begotten and beloved Son" must have had an important object. It took place four thousand years after the creation. It had been the subject of many promises and prophecies—it had been fore-shadowed by many types and figures—and it had excited long and anxious expectations before the "fulness of the time" came. Not, however, more than its importance demanded. And now, the time having arrived, he did come, and found good old Simeon waiting for him, the second temple standing in its glory, the daily sacrifice still smoking on the altar, the sceptre of Judah just passing into Roman hands, and John the Baptist ready to receive him, set him apart to his offices, and introduce him to Israel as the Messiah. He was then "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," announced and hailed by angels, and honored by "wise men from the East" who had seen his star, and were conducted by it to the place where he lay.

The object of all this he himself declares in the text. He "came not to be ministered unto." His appearance was not splendid and glorious. He was not born in a palace, but in a stable. He was not pillowed on down beneath a canopy of state, but on straw, in a manger. He did not appear amid the splendors of royalty, but in the lowliness of earthly poverty, and in the feebleness of helpless infancy. This was, because he came to "minister" to the necessities of his own creatures. He therefore "took on him the form of a servant" when he "was found in fashion as a man." Hence we have his life of toil in ministering to the instruction and comfort of ignorant and miserable men, for he "went about doing good," as if that was his whole object. However many came to him, he never turned one empty away. However wearied, he never refused to minister. Though "Lord of all" he became "servant of all."

But the great object of his mission remained yet to be performed: "He came—to give his life a ransom for many." "A ransom" is a price paid for the release of one who has forfeited or lost his liberty. He is either too weak to break his chains, or too poor to pay his ransom, and a friend redeems him, and sets him free. This was the condition of our race. Our

lives were forfeited: The law of God condemned us to death—eternal death, and the “law was holy, just, and good.” The law could, therefore, afford us no relief. We could do nothing but bear the penalty; and that left us hopelessly wretched. From this condition Christ came to ransom us, and that ransom our text informs us was his life—and to give *that* for *this* end was the great object of his mission. That object was accomplished on the cross—and his death, under these circumstances, we denominate “The Atonement,” or, that on account of which sinners are pardoned and saved.

A right understanding of this most interesting and important transaction, we consider of the highest moment. But important as it is, a great variety of opinions have been entertained on the subject. The friends of the Christian system have been obliged to defend themselves against the whole body of those who deny the Bible as a revelation from God. And then, again, they have been put upon their defence for the truth by the whole body of Unitarians, who claim for themselves the Christian name, although they deny this vital part of the Christian system. In addition to this, *the nature and extent* of the atonement have been debated at great length, and with much spirit, (not always Christian,) in the bosom of the Christian church. The following definitions of the atonement will show with sufficient clearness the views of the parties to this controversy. The one defines the atonement to be, “A proper satisfaction to the divine law and justice, vicariously made by the Lord Jesus Christ, dying as a substitute, and bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree; in virtue of which they are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and freely justified”—The others have defined it to be, “A satisfaction rendered to the *public justice* of God, giving him an occasion to express his displeasure against sin, and exercise his mercy in the forgiveness of sinners.” Out of this distinction has grown, (as I think,) the great question as to the extent of the atonement. We limit the atonement, as to its extent and objects, to the subjects of salvation; but not as to its value, which we fully and freely admit to be sufficient for the salvation of all mankind, if God had so designed it. My present design is to inquire, What the *Scriptures* teach us the true nature of the atonement is.—I say, *the Scriptures*, because we can learn the true nature of God’s institutions only from God himself. In order to arrive at the object which I have in view, I shall,

I. Show, that that definition of the atonement which describes it as “A satisfaction to the *public justice* of God, giving him an occasion to express his displeasure against sin, and exercise his mercy in the forgiveness of sinners,” gives an inadequate and unscriptural idea of its nature. In the view of this definition, I would reverently ask, Was the death of Christ necessary for such a purpose? Is not the divine displeasure against sin sufficiently illustrated by the death of our race?—by the multiplied and inconceivable miseries under which our world has groaned for nearly six thousand years?—by the everlasting destruction of the finally impenitent? And if God, as an act of *mere mercy*, had pardoned the whole of our race, would not the eternal damnation of all the fallen angels have been a sufficient and perfect illustration of this?

Now if this illustration could have been made without the sufferings and death of the Savior, (as it is humbly conceived it might,) why was it necessary that he should have died for such a purpose? Would he have died for no higher end? God does nothing in vain. He does not perform a mira-

else unless the occasion be worthy of it. In all Christ's doings and sufferings there was a *needs be*. "Thus it behoved him to suffer." If there had been another way by which the great object could have been effected, it would have been. There needed no farther illustration of what was already written as with a sunbeam on the inconceivable misery of our world, and the everlasting destruction of the fallen angels. It does appear to me that the atonement does mean something more, *much more*, than this. Under this view of the subject, I cannot see how it was necessary that Jesus should have died; and if not necessary, surely it would not have taken place. Let those who entertain this sentiment think again of the subject. Have they not been mistaken? Have they not thoughtlessly endeavored to accommodate this great Scripture doctrine to a philosophical system? Does it agree with any view of the sufferings and death of Christ contained in the Bible?

This view of the atonement proceeds upon the supposition that the pardon and justification of sinners is an act of *mere mercy*. That God exercises mercy in the pardon of sinners, the preacher feels no disposition to deny. He would cordially unite with all those who sing,

"O to grace how great a debtor!"

But he, at the same time, believes that the *justice* of God is as strikingly illustrated as his mercy. And so it is thought the Scriptures consider the subject. So it seems to me the apostle John thought when he penned the following words—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" and Paul, when he said—"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be *just* and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:25, 26.)

Now, how the justice of God appears under this view of the atonement, I am utterly at a loss to conceive; or even what concern it has with it. And yet we are told by the Holy Ghost, that God is *just* in performing this act of grace, and that in the view of the propitiation found in the blood of Christ. All this is easily understood and explained under what I believe to be, a Scriptural view of the atonement; but under this view, it seems to me no more than a mere flourish of words, conveying no definite meaning to the mind; and I strongly suspect, would never have been thought of, certainly not suggested by the word of God, unless, when some philosophical dogma was hardly pressed, men had laid hold of the first plausible imagination which had suggested itself to the mind. Upon his plan, I find it difficult to know what such expressions as these mean—"The Lord our righteousness"—"Christ Jesus, made of God unto us righteousness"—"Bring in an everlasting righteousness"—"Make reconciliation for iniquity"—"He will magnify the law and make it honorable"—with a multitude of others of similar import. Is the word of God so lame on a subject of such tremendous import, involving all the hopes of our ruined race, or am I so blind? Let the men of God, the expounders of the revealed will of Jehovah, the ambassadors of God to men, the comforters of those whom guilt has distressed, the priests whose lips should keep knowledge, think, and inquire, whether such be the nature of the atonement? Are these the teachings of the Holy Ghost? Think again, and let God speak by you.

This view of the atonement appears to me to be very nearly akin to a branch of Unitarianism. It certainly leaves the law and justice of God where it finds them, for it has nothing of the nature of a satisfaction in it; and how, without a definite satisfaction, duly rendered, a transgressor can escape the curse denounced, who can tell? This is the language of the Lawgiver, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." To deliver us from this dreadful state, "Christ was made a curse for us." How emphatical on this point is the Scripture!—"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) The Unitarians admit that Christ died—but not as an atoning sacrifice—not to satisfy the divine law and justice—not to "bring in an everlasting righteousness"—not to free us from the curse of that law which we had violated. He died, say they, as a martyr for the truth, to show that he really believed what he taught—thus putting the death of Christ upon a footing with the death of James or Paul. And I see not why, under the view to which I am objecting, the death of these men might not have answered the purpose as well as the death of Christ, if it be not considered as a proper sacrifice of atonement to satisfy the divine law and justice. The alleged design, "To illustrate the divine displeasure against sin," does not alter the case. Is it to be credited, even for a moment, that God would, for such a purpose, so unnecessarily have put his only begotten Son to shame? Is there any thing in the death of Christ, which, under this view of the subject, bears a single characteristic of a real atonement? Was it in this school that Socinus received the rudiments of his education? Will men, to get out of the mire, plunge the whole body into this bottomless slough? Having thus shown that the view of the atonement to which our attention has been directed, is entirely inadequate and inadmissible, we shall next proceed to show,

II. From the Scriptures WHAT ITS TRUE NATURE IS. If we clearly understand what *the nature* of the atonement is, we shall have very little difficulty about its *extent and application*. In order to arrive at a Scriptural knowledge of this, I remark in the

1st place, That our race is sinful and guilty. We are also taught, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The reason of this is, because the forfeiture of life is the penalty for transgression. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." For this state of things God has provided a remedy in "the seed of the woman," his "only begotten Son." That Son must be "made of a woman," that he might be "near of kin," having the right of redemption, be "under the law," and have blood to shed, or a life to offer up. (See Gen. 49:16, Job 19:25, Gal. 4:4, 5.) But inasmuch as it was the divine design, that four thousand years should elapse before "the seed of the woman" should come to perform the great work, God saw fit to have that work foreshadowed by types, to keep alive faith in the first promise, to impress the hearts of men with a sense of their guilt and need, and give them some distinct apprehension of the mode in which sin was to be atoned for. Hence the institution of sacrifices. They were of divine institution, as we learn by comparing Gen. 4:4 with Heb. 10:4. These sacrifices could do no more than I have stated, for it is written, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." (Heb. 10:4.) We find the whole system of sacrifices embraced in the Jewish ritual, and shall pro-

bably be able to ascertain the true nature of the atonement, by comparing the Scriptural account of that ritual with what is said concerning the sufferings and death of Christ. This, it is thought, will give us a clear view of the divine mind on the subject. We may with propriety make this comparison, for we are told that "The law had a shadow," (or figure, or type,) of those "good things to come," the substance of which was found in Christ.

It will not be expected, nor is it necessary, for the object had in view, that a detailed view should be given of the legal sacrifices. Their nature and object can be sufficiently ascertained without this. These sacrifices were numerous and various. My present design is to direct your attention to two or three of them as explanatory of their *nature* and *object*, and which may serve to throw light on the great doctrine of the atonement. The first relates to sacrifices to be made by individuals. "And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." (See Lev. 3:2, 9, 13; 4:4, 24, 29, 33.) The plain and obvious meaning of this transaction is the following: The person bringing the offering is considered as a sinner. The penalty is death. He feels desirous of relief. The Lawgiver has appointed a victim which may be received as a substitute for the transgressor. It has life, and must have, for "without the shedding of blood is no remission." He brings the appointed victim. He lays his hand upon its head, acknowledges his just liability to the penalty, gives it to the demands of the law; it dies in his stead, and he is set free. And now, should any one complain of him as a transgressor, and demand his punishment as a violator of the law, he has an effectual and legal plea in bar of further proceedings, because he has offered the required satisfaction. An atonement has been made. We shall hereafter take occasion to verify with respect to Christ's sacrifice what is here predicated of an acknowledged type of it.

The next instance to which I shall refer, relates to communities; viz., the Jewish commonwealth or congregation. "And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord; and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord." (Lev. 4:15.) The same general view is given in the account which we have of the goats on the great day of atonement, in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited." His fellow was slain. This is probably the most striking and instructive type in the whole of the ancient ritual—the most complete figure of the atonement made by Christ. No single type could fully fore-shadow the real atonement, the taking away of sin by the sacrifice of Christ. But in this double type we have the confession and transfer of guilt, the bearing away of iniquities, so that they no more return to accuse and condemn, and the offering of the atoning sacrifice. Here, therefore, we should look to find the most perfect type of "the Lamb of God;" for here was the great day of atonement. I might add that distinguished transaction on Mount Moriah, which occurred in the days of Abraham, when, in the act of sacrificing his son, he was arrested by the Lord, and had his attention directed to the ram caught in the thicket, which he took and offered in the

stead of his son—to which occasion Jesus referred when he said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.”

The leading idea which runs through the whole system is, The *substitution* of the animal, offered instead of the person making the offering, including a legal transfer of the guilt of the person to the sacrifice, sometimes plainly expressed, and, as I think, always clearly implied. This, it appears to me, enters fully into all the legal sacrifices, and constitutes all their character and force. That whole system, we have seen, was typical of gospel verities, for the identification and illustration of which the apostle employs almost the whole of the epistle to the Hebrews. It was from these sacrifices principally, that believers derived their ideas of atonement and acceptance with God, from the beginning till the full development of the gospel dispensation by Christ; and the main part of the knowledge upon which their faith was founded, was illustrated by these exhibitions. If they had any distinct understanding of the doctrine of atonement it flowed from this source. I am aware it may be said, these were only types and figures. But types and figures mean something; and in this case, they are exceedingly important. Upon a right understanding and application of them, the salvation of souls depended. They were, till the manifestation of God in the flesh, the principal lights on the pathway to heaven. It was as necessary *then* to understand *their* nature and application, as it *now* is to understand the nature and application of the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The ancient faith of the church of God was not the belief of cunningly devised fables. The lamb of the ancient sacrifices was a distinct symbol of “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Else the ancient *faith stood not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men*. Having briefly shown the nature and object of the ancient sacrifices, considered as types of the great atoning sacrifice which was to be offered once for all in the fulness of the time, it may now be relevant to turn our attention,

2. To the view which the Scriptures give us of that sacrifice. I say *Scriptures*, for on this subject we can borrow no light from any other quarter. And if they should put into our hands “a two-edged sword,” let it cut its way, no matter whose system it may “pierce,” or whose “joints and marrow it may divide asunder,” or “the thoughts and intents of whose heart it may discern.” My object shall be to ascertain, if possible, “the mind of the Spirit.” It will not be expected that every passage of Scripture which speaks of the death of Christ will be quoted or noticed; for it is not designed to write a system on the subject, but to ascertain as briefly as possible, what was the nature and design of what Christ did, when “through the Eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot unto God.”

Our attention shall first be directed to the light which prophecy throws upon the subject. One of the distinguishing names by which the Messiah was revealed to the church of old, was that of “Redeemer.” The name occurs too frequently for particular reference. The idea conveyed by the name is that of a person who procures the release of a slave or captive, either by the payment of a valuable consideration, or by the strong hand of power. With respect to the former, Christ is called “a ransom.” (Job 33:24; text; 1 Tim. 2:6.) With respect to the latter, “A Deliverer,” (Rom. 11:26.) When we consider Christ as “a ransom,” his sacrifice necessarily conveys the idea of a *substitute*. So the Holy Ghost seems to consider it when he moved Caiaphas to say, “it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” (John 11:50.) This appears to me to be the attitude in which the facts

of the case place the subject. The law condemns us to death. Christ pays "the ransom" by offering up his own life in our stead. Is not this the construction which every sensible, unsophisticated mind would put upon the language which the Holy Ghost has seen fit to employ for our instruction? If our systems cannot bear this, let them perish. They are not worth maintaining at the expense of giving up the plainness and simplicity of Bible truth.

Isaiah has been called the evangelical prophet, because he entered more fully into the spirit of the gospel dispensation than any of his compeers. We might then expect more light on this subject from him than from any other of the ancient prophets. He has also expressly written on the subject, particularly in his fifty-third chapter. Let me direct your attention to some of his very striking language:—"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"—"For the transgression of my people was he stricken"—"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin"—"He shall bear their iniquities." This language is definite and plain—the ideas are strikingly expressed—so variously, yet simply exhibited, that I scarcely know how it is possible to be mistaken as to the meaning.

The death of Christ is here certainly considered as a proper sacrifice. What else can the phrase, "make his soul an offering for sin," possibly mean? Can any language more precisely and plainly express that idea? He is evidently considered as charged with the guilt of those for whom he died. Does the declaration, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," import less than this? Can it by any legitimate rule of interpretation mean any thing else than this? Let it not be said, guilt cannot be transferred. That would be begging the very thing in dispute. The question is, What does the Lord say, and what does his language fairly import? We do not pretend that the Lord Jesus Christ was *actually* guilty. But we do say, that he gave himself to be legally charged with the guilt of those for whom he died, and was treated accordingly; and that the phrase which we are now considering fully bears us out in this sentiment. And this sentiment, which the word of God so clearly teaches, we *must* and *will* maintain, against every objection which "the wisdom of this world" may bring against it. Here we plant the standard of the cross, and say, "Let God be true." We shall hereafter find, that this is the only view which will admit of even a tolerable interpretation of several interesting and important passages of Scripture. It also harmonizes entirely with that part of the chapter where it is said, "He was wounded *for* our transgressions, he was bruised *for* our iniquities." It only remains to remark, that the doctrine of *substitution* here stands forth in such bold and prominent relief, that a man must have a bold, if not a presumptuous mind, who, with this chapter before him, would venture to deny it. How could that idea be more plainly and convincingly expressed? We have here, man, a guilty sinner, condemned by the law which he had violated; and yet, *justly* pardoned—and Christ, the surety, charged with the guilt incurred, and treated by God himself as the sinner would have been; viz., dying under the wrath of God—wounded, bruised by God's own hand. Is this substitution, or is it not? Can lan-

guage make it plainer? When will men have the grace to say, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth?"

Again—Jesus is expressly called "The Lord our righteousness." (Jer. 23:6, 33:16, compared with 1 Cor. 1:30.) What is the meaning of this phrase? Jesus is unquestionably righteous, or he could not be our high priest? But, how is he "The Lord our righteousness?" Is it not on account of that "everlasting righteousness" which he "hath brought in," so that God "might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus?" Is there another even tolerable sense in which this can be predicated of him? With this view agrees the language of Gabriel to the prophet, (Dan. 9:24,) "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness"—connected with the 26th verse, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." Here we have, God *reconciled* by the *cutting off*, or death of *Messiah*, and "an everlasting righteousness brought in," on account of which sinners are "freely justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Do I pervert the holy records? Do I misapply the revelation of God's grace? Let every unbiassed mind judge.

Before taking leave of this branch of the subject, I will refer only to the *piercing* of the Savior, (Zech. 12:10,) compared with the *opening of the fountain*, (Zech. 13:1,) and ask, whether we are not constrained to connect all our hopes both of justification and sanctification with the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, considered as an atoning sacrifice, by which the law and justice of God are satisfied, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit procured? Salvation, be it remembered, is not the mere issue of pardon to the guilty, however procured, but the exercise of an influence which shall subdue and eradicate corruption, so as to fit the soul for the enjoyment of God; flowing, as the last reference teaches us, immediately from the blood of Christ.

This brief view of Old Testament instruction concerning the atonement which Messiah *was* to make, will, it is thought, serve to give us a clear insight into its *nature*, and be found in harmony with the instruction which we next mean to draw from the New Testament. The view might have been *much* enlarged, if it had been thought necessary. Having directed your attention to the views which the voice of prophecy gives of the death of Christ, and ascertained its harmony with the typical sacrifices by which it was prefigured; I will next,

Direct it to the views which are given in the New Testament of the same subject. From it we learn that Christ has actually been "found in fashion as man," and after dwelling in a tabernacle of clay for about thirty-three years, that he died under very remarkable circumstances. What does the New Testament say about his death? "He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." His death actually took place under form of law. Hence the Jews said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die." By this law, however unjustly, they procured his death. The apostle, however, in the passage quoted, does not refer to this, but to the relation in which he stood before God as Mediator. His death was a legal act under the divine government, and its object was redemption. Hence it is written, "We have redemption through his blood." (Eph. 1:7.) "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish

and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:18,19.) The blood of Christ, then, was shed to satisfy the demands of the divine law. This is the only principle upon which we can account for his sufferings either in the garden of Gethsemane, or on the cross. In the garden his sufferings were purely mental, yet so severe as to cause the "bloody sweat." What occasioned them? "The cup" he was drinking—what was that cup? Was it any thing but the wrath of God? Did it or did it not fulfil the declaration of Isaiah, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." And what was the burden of his complaint on the cross? All seems to have been swallowed up in this one soul-absorbing consideration, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This was the *iron* which entered into his soul. Whatever the atonement was, here it was made, and here we may profitably study it, and learn its true nature. Several things appear in this transaction with the clearness and force of a demonstration; viz.: That Jesus died—that he died under the law of God—that his sufferings were inconceivable, and principally mental—that God treated him as a sinner, putting upon him the *chastisement* which was due to others—that he could not justly thus have suffered, unless he had taken upon himself the responsibilities of others—and occupied their place under the law—and that his death was accepted as a complete legal satisfaction. Which is abundantly proved by the justification of every believer, and the declared fact that God is *just* in so justifying them. His death, then, was a proper sacrifice of atonement under the law of God. It was vicarious.

The next passage to which I would refer, as illustrating the nature of the atonement, is 2 Cor. 5:21. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The view here taken of the subject is certainly very remarkable and striking, and the language very characteristic. Let us look at some of its characteristics. Jesus Christ "knew no sin." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He had no moral defilement—no legal obliquity. This was his real character—"He was made sin." How could this be? Did he ever become a sinner? Certainly not. He was always immaculate. What then does the expression mean? That he was treated as a sinner; that is, he was legally charged with guilt, and then punished. But why? Because he had assumed the legal responsibilities of others, having become their surety. But how could this be? He was a free, *independent* agent, having power to lay down his life, and to take it again. Why was he thus "made sin," or a sin-offering, (for this appears to be the proper meaning of the word)? "For us;" that is, on our account—in our stead; for, says Peter, "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Why is not this the true meaning, as it certainly is the obvious and consistent one? for it fully agrees with the latter clause of the verse, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." By this I understand, that we have in this sin-offering a divine, and a divinely provided righteousness, on account of which we are freely justified in virtue of our union to Christ by faith; for "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Here, again, we have Christ a sacrifice, vicariously making atonement, and the interpretation verified by making believers "the righteousness of God in him." Such a construction is plain and simple. It requires no great learning—no confused, perplexing, metaphysical argumentation to arrive at the conclusion. The unlettered man, and even the child can grasp it.

Take another example—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The law curses all who have violated its

precepts. Nothing but a satisfaction in kind meets its demands. The curse must be borne, otherwise the demands of the law remain in full force against the transgressor. Left to ourselves, that curse must have remained upon us for ever. Hence the necessity of a Mediator. For, if bearing it for any finite period would have answered the purpose, would God have given his only begotten Son to have suffered as he did? From this dreadful and hopeless condition, Christ was given to redeem men. This seemed to have been the only way left. But how should he effect this all-important object? The passage now under consideration tells how he *has* done it. "Being made a curse for us." What does this fairly imply? What is its meaning? The expression is a very strong one, and would never have been employed by the Holy Ghost without an important reason. Does it not mean that he bore the penalty of the law which men had violated?—that God the Father treated him as though he were a sinner? And why? "For us"—in our stead—that *he might redeem us from the curse of the law*. This he undertook, and must fulfil. There was no letting off. The cup must be drank to the very dregs. And from the infinite dignity of his person, although his sufferings were temporary, this became available for the redemption of all to whom God should see fit to apply it. Could language more fully express substitution? *We were under the curse—Christ became a curse for us—and thus we are redeemed from the curse of the law*. Will the words bear any other consistent, or even tolerable construction?

I might extend my remarks to many other passages of Scripture, couched in similar language, and evidently bearing the same meaning; but it appears to me to be so unnecessary, that I shall content myself with simply quoting a few, and leaving them for the attentive and prayerful consideration of my readers, without a note or comment. I shall confine myself principally to the Epistle to the Hebrews, because it treats professedly of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice, and shows their connection with the Levitical ritual. "He offered up himself." (Heb. 7:27.) "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:12.) "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:14.) "But now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. 9:26.) "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28.) "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.) "Who his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Pet. 2:24.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3:18.)

The sum of the whole matter is this—that the Scriptures do most fully and assuredly teach us, that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ *is a proper sacrifice of atonement—that it completely satisfies all the penal demands of the divine law and justice, so that God is just as well as merciful in the pardon and justification of believing sinners—and that it is, strictly speaking, vicarious—that is, that he substituted himself for, or in the stead of those for whom he died*.—Or, as the apostle Peter expresses it, speaking in the person of believers, "Who his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree"—Or, as Isaiah speaks, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This I consider as being the Scriptural view of the atonement, giving a clear exhibition of its true nature, and consequently limiting its

application to its legitimate objects. Nor do I believe that it will be found as objectionable in the end, as those loose, metaphysical views, which have sometimes been taken of it, for the purpose of rendering it more palatable to carnal minds. The preacher's object has been to ascertain the mind of God on the subject; and if he has succeeded in this, he would anchor his own soul's hope there, and urge all who hear him, to "go and do likewise."

I am not unaware that this view of the atonement has met with a variety of objections, and some of a plausible and captivating nature. My object, however, has not been to arrive at a system to which none could or would object. Of that any man may well despair. But to ascertain what God has revealed on the subject. And I am not aware that we are under any obligations to give up the clear dictates of the Spirit, because some can be found to raise objections against them. Else we should be obliged to give up *every* doctrine of revelation; for they have all been assailed. It is not intended at present to go into a detailed consideration of objections; not because we have any fear of meeting them satisfactorily, but because time will not permit. I will only remark, that we do not restrict the gospel offer, and believe that we have a divine warrant for its universal extension, with every sanction and encouragement by which it can possibly be enforced by motives drawn from the Scriptures, in the command of Christ, "Preach the gospel to every creature." And if those who differ from us have a broader warrant enforced by better motives, we shall be pleased to become acquainted with it. The grand motive, among all that may be stated, is, the divine assurance that *whosoever believeth on Christ shall be saved*. This is a revealed fact, and facts are the most powerful of all persuasives. Indulge me now with a very brief

#### APPLICATION.

1. The doctrine of our text is a very important one. The only hope of our ruined race is founded upon it. God will accept of no other plea from sinners; for "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Our works do not avail us, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." We have no sacrifice to bring. The blood of our cattle, or even our children, could not procure our acceptance. And as for the divine mercy, we know it only as it emanates from the atonement of Christ. But here our hope is ample, for the atonement is invaluable. It meets all the wants of all who trust in it. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." So it has been found—and so it will be. It has never failed in any case in which it has been applied.

2. The atonement is throughout a marvellous display of divine love. The Father was self-moved in giving up his only begotten and well beloved Son. The Son was self-moved in undertaking and performing the stupendous work. How could it be otherwise. What was there in man to influence the divine Mind? Misery, you reply. Yes; but that misery flowed from the blackest guilt and rebellion, and the most disgusting moral corruption; all of which was infinitely abhorrent to the mind of God, who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will by no means clear the guilty." These are the facts of the case. "This is love," says John. Who can measure it? Who can form an adequate conception of it? Let us study this love at the foot of the cross, looking upon him whom we have pierced, and learn at least a little of

its length, and breadth, and height, and depth; and let us study it until all sin becomes entirely and for ever embittered to us.

3. This atonement, ample and free as it is, will avail us nothing, unless it be heartily embraced and appropriated. Slighted or neglected, it only increases guilt and wo. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." My dear hearers, you look upon that atonement under awful responsibilities. The sight of it—the hearing of it, will tell deeply and loudly upon the eternal destiny of every one of our souls. The blood of the cross will cleanse or ruin every one of us. We *must*, we *shall* have to do with it. We cannot shut our eyes. We cannot wipe the knowledge of the atonement from the table of our memory. The providence of God—our assigned local habitation—the history of our lives—the privileges of this very day, all render ignorance impossible. We must either accept or refuse. I tremble, my dear friends, while I raise up before you "the Lamb of God," and uncover the fountain of his blood.

4. With what reception has "the atonement" hitherto met from you? You have had full knowledge on the subject. Jesus Christ has been set forth before you as crucified and slain. All the blessings which it covers have been fully, frequently, and freely offered to your acceptance, and urged upon your regard. And you must perish without an interest in them. It is the only ground of our plea, and of your hope. Have you cordially accepted of it as made and offered? Have you by faith become clothed with that spotless robe which was made white in the atoning blood of the Lamb? I put this question, this awful question, to every soul that hears me. I look round this assembly. I mark the interested faces which I behold, and ask with the affection of the sincere friend, Who can answer this question, big with the eternal destiny of all our souls, in a satisfactory manner? The child of God—the humble Christian—the broken-hearted penitent, who has cast himself naked and helpless upon Christ—he can do it, and only he. Of him, of him *alone*, it can be said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Would that this were the blessedness of all who hear me! But I fear it is not. I fear that many of my hearers have not even *begun* to think seriously, much less to feel deeply on this all-important subject. And yet they are on the way to that judgment-seat where nothing but the atoning blood of Christ will stand them in stead; and with that blood they now permit themselves to trifle! Shall all that Jesus has done and suffered be in vain with respect to you?

"Will you let him die in vain?"

"Still to death pursue the Lord?"

Sinner, go to-day, this very day, and lay your hand upon his head, and confess over him all your iniquities, and roll on him all your guilt, and appropriate his atonement, and you shall live, and be for ever blessed. Amen.

## SERMON XLIX.

### WHO SHALL DWELL IN HEAVEN?

BY C. C. CUYLER, D. D.

PSALM 24:3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?*

#### MY DEAR HEARERS:

You can have no doubt that in the course of a few years you will have terminated your earthly course, and be added to the great congregation of the dead. This truth is clearly taught in the scriptures, and is fully confirmed to us by daily observation. Human life is often terminated suddenly; still oftener, unexpectedly; and pains and sicknesses are its ordinary premonitions. You also probably acknowledge the immortality of the soul, in conscious existence; and consequently must be persuaded that such existence must be one of happiness or misery. This also is clearly taught in the scriptures, for they assure us of a judgment to come, from which the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The differences between these states is immeasurable—inconceivable. The day which ends your life on earth, will seal up your destiny for one or other of these states—"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

All uncertainty with respect to the result should fill us with great anxiety; and it would, if seriously considered. Matters of temporary moment, and of small importance, often do so. And yet, with respect to this subject, multitudes, who have neither assurance nor well-founded hope of eternal happiness, are as careless as if they had a guaranty from God for the enjoyment of "eternal life." It seems to be taken for granted by them, without evidence, that they shall enter into heaven when they die; and this they make a sufficient warrant for the dismissal of all anxiety, and the neglect of all serious inquiry. This seems also to be almost the only subject they treat in this manner. The hope or possession of even a small earthly estate leaves them no rest till they have investigated and secured its title—while uncertainty with respect to the soul's eternal welfare scarcely moves a thought, or excites a fear in their minds. Multitudes manifest this inconsistency in yielding to every earthly influence, however trifling, and yet showing no sensibility when the eternal interests of their souls are in question. The fact that insensibility is so general, makes it the more dangerous.

You, my dear reader, may be under its influence, and your welfare requires that you should be awakened from such a delusion, ere God say to you, "Sleep on now." Permit then a friend to deal plainly and affectionately with you. Your wish is, to spend a happy eternity, and you have some expectation, no matter from what source it may be derived, that your wish shall be realized. Is not your want of feeling and anxiety a proof that you have never given the subject much thought or reflection? that you have taken for granted what you would find it impossible to prove? You say, you hope to enter heaven when you die—What is the ground of your hope of admission there? Have you ever asked yourself the questions—By what title shall I enter upon the inheritance? What shall be the ground of my claim? What are my qualifications for its enjoyment? Such an inheritance should be secured by a strong title—not a shadow of doubt should hang over it.

We have no natural claims to this inheritance; nor have we any natural fitness for its enjoyments. These have all been forfeited by transgression, and lost by sin. The law of God shuts out every sinner—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This necessarily excludes all the guilty. They cannot be adjudged to eternal life. The law of the kingdom of heaven is explicit on this point. But you may tell me, my hope rests on another foundation. I look to the provision made by Christ. There is forgiveness with the Lord. You are right. The provision is ample. It has never failed when applied. God has made it, and he will honor it. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." Pardon and justification will insure heaven. This is according to the *will* of the testator. The inheritance runs in this line, and it is sure to all the children. The Holy One of Israel will never deny his word.

But how does this affect you? What bearing has it on your case? The question is not, whether justified sinners shall enter heaven—That is an adjudged case. But are *you* justified? Have you had *your* pardon sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, so as to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the point to be inquired into, and here we must make no mistakes. Pardons are not issued indiscriminately. Sinners are not justified as a matter of course. God is no doubt a sovereign in the pardon of sinners. Sinners are not pardoned because they are worthy of such a distinction. Yet was the rebel ever forgiven till he mourned over his sins, with a godly sorrow? till sin was so embittered to him that he could no longer live in it? till, oppressed as with a heavy burden, which he could no longer bear, and of which he could not rid himself, he cried with the publican, smiting upon his breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Have *you*, in a spirit of deep humiliation, and with fervent prayer, sought the divine forgiveness, and been enabled to hope that you have found it? And as an evidence that you have not deceived yourself with a *vain hope*, has sin ever since been embittered to you, so that you could not live in its practice, and have you, from a sense of obligation, as well as inclination, been endeavoring to do the will of God?

How, upon examination, do you find it? Is the prospect dark? Are you destitute of evidence? Upon what then do you found your hope of heaven? This is the way, the *only* way, in which sinners can ever obtain admission there, without a subversion of the law and government of God. He has given his only begotten Son to die as an atoning sacrifice, that he might be just in justifying every one that believeth—Christ must be received and appropriated. It seems then that all the claims of God's violated law are in full force against you. That you are lying under its condemning power. That you are justly exposed to the wrath of God, and that you have only to die, to which you are every moment liable, to be lost for ever. Do not, I beseech you, turn away from this plain, scriptural view of your state. Do not suffer yourself to be deluded. Do not turn away from this faithful mirror, for that will not change your state, nor lessen your danger. Contemplate your state as it is, and suffer not yourself to believe that the danger is exaggerated. It cannot be. Language is incapable of doing it. Imagination cannot magnify the reality. Let your whole anxiety be to become experimentally acquainted with the forgiving love of God, for till justified, heaven must necessarily be shut against you.

Take another view of your case, in relation to which men are apt to deceive themselves. You think of going to heaven when you die. You think

it desirable to be there. Let me ask you, with affectionate simplicity, what you would do in heaven? In what way could heaven minister to your happiness as you are? My dear friend, the elements of happiness are not local—It depends much less upon *place* than men are apt to imagine. Place men where you please, if their hearts are not in unison with the scene, they could not be happy *there*. It would not gratify a man whose *whole head was sick, and whose whole heart was faint*, to sit down at a table covered with every species of food, substantial or delicate, which could gratify the palate of a healthy man. You would do no kindness to a person of a sad and heavy spirit to introduce him into the company of the light-hearted, trifling, and gay—nor would it promote the comfort of one of the latter class to be thrown into the society of the former.

We are essentially social beings, and no small part of our felicity depends upon the character of our associates. We choose them for the qualities which they possess, or are supposed to possess, in common with ourselves. In order to render their society agreeable to us, there must be a considerable measure of similarity of tastes, dispositions, sentiments, habits, or pursuits. When these are not well assorted, association produces unhappiness. So in order to constitute heaven a pleasant residence to us, we must drink into the very spirit of its inhabitants. We must be morally assimilated to them, or we can never be happy in their society, enjoyments, and employments. If we, therefore, desire to know whether a residence in heaven would make us happy; or in other words, whether we shall be admitted there, for no other will be admitted—we have only to ascertain the characters, enjoyments, and employments of its inhabitants, and our own similarity or dissimilarity to them, in order to know whether we shall be received. We need no better rule of judgment to determine the point in a correct manner. We may thus prove our own selves, and ascertain our own doom.

Who then are the inhabitants of heaven? Heaven is the presence-chamber of the great and glorious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There the Triune holds his court, displays his glory, and dispenses his richest bounties. There is the residence of his servants, the holy angels, who have kept their first estate. And there too dwell the redeemed descendants of Adam. All these are holy. They bear the same image. Their union and harmony are perfect. There is no discord, jarring, or strife. They are all of one heart and of one mind. The will of God is supreme, and the rest are all in unison with him, and with one another. All is love—"God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The employments of heaven are all holy. They consist essentially, in loving, contemplating, admiring, praising and obeying God, and affectionate intercourse with each other on subjects of the highest interest. Can such society and such employments be other than happy? Every faculty, and thought, and feeling, of every individual are in harmony with each other, and with their fellows; and God approves and smiles. This is most delightful. Can any thing add to the enjoyment? Yes, one thought, one single thought. This society is never to be broken up. This harmony is never to be destroyed. "They go no more out." Nothing which is unclean shall ever enter there. What a gulf—what an impassable gulf is there, between this scene and the corruption and carnality of earth! Well might David ask, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" Christ has answered the question—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The apostle has declared the law of the kingdom—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

No unholy being can be admitted into this fellowship. If God *even* should, in some unheard of way, by a singular dispensation, pardon the guilt of a sinner's transgression, and carry him into such society, and subject him to such employments, it neither would, nor could render him happy. How could it be otherwise? We know that sinners take no delight in reading or hearing the word of God on earth. How then could they have pleasure in beholding him of whose mind and perfections that word is only a faint shadow? They do not now love to meditate, even occasionally, on divine things. How then would they relish it to have them continually before their minds in all their perfection and glory? They have now no taste for divine ordinances. How then could they enjoy the God of ordinances? The high praises of God now grate on their ears. How then would they relish them in the perfection to which they have attained in heaven? The work of prayer is now irksome. How then could they take pleasure in holding more direct intercourse with God, the hearer of prayer? Here they are rebels against God's holy government. Their carnal hearts say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" How would they feel to stand continually in his presence, and be occupied in doing his will? Here they account it a drudgery—a very weariness, to spend even a few hours in the company of the truly pious, and witness their conversation and conduct. How would they bear it to be confined to such a society for ever? Here all their enjoyments are sensual. There they would have all their desires and appetites in vigorous exercise, but be for ever separated from every object of their gratification.—To such a creature, heaven would necessarily be a strange and uncomfortable place, because he has nothing in common with the inhabitants of heaven but bare existence, nor a single taste or disposition to which its enjoyments or employments could give agreeable exercise. This, sinners know, or *may* know, if they will only examine the subject with some little care and attention. They need not doubt whether they shall be received into heaven or not, if they die in their present state. They have only to ascertain in what companions, objects, employments, and enjoyments, they now take pleasure, to satisfy themselves, remaining as they are, where they shall spend their eternity. God will never mingle together discordant elements. Like will be associated with like.

And now, my dear reader, having laid before you some plain and highly important truths, which nearly concern your best interests, allow me to take with you the liberty of a friend.—Upon what ground do you stand? In the view of these truths, what is the prospect before you? What does your present state indicate? If you were *now* to die, where are you going? If you die as you *are*, where *must* you expect to spend your eternity? You seem to pause and hesitate. Have you not taken for granted what you cannot prove? Have you not been flattering yourself with a mere delusion of the imagination, and rested your hope on the idle wish of a deceived heart? Do you not clearly perceive that you must be essentially changed before you will be *permitted* to enter heaven; or *could* be happy there? The happiness of heaven is not local—It is founded on the perfections of God, and the conformity of his intelligent creatures to his moral image.—You need, and *must* have, a *new heart*. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let this be the subject of your constant and serious meditation, your ardent desire, your anxious endeavor, your fervent prayer. Rest not till you have a divine assurance of an "inheritance among all them that are sanctified."

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**SERMON I.**

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**A VIEW OF THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD.**

**PROV. 8:30,31.**—*Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.*

SOLOMON was a philosopher as well as a divine. He spoke of trees from the cedar that is on Lebanon, down to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, 1 Kings 4:33. All his works are lost and forgotten. The hand of time has blotted out every line of his writings, save that which bore the impress of the Spirit, and related to the character and work of the Son of God. This was the living ointment that preserved this portion of his writings, else the oblivion of midnight would have long ago rested on them also. This is the great reason why they have survived, not only the dissolution of the monarch's body, but the dissolution of his empire. The character, and work of Messiah, the Prince, stands embodied in them. It is his person whom the inspired monarch mysteriously clothes under the mantle of wisdom—the very Wisdom who supplied him with knowledge, and rendered him renowned throughout all the earth—the very Wisdom sent down from heaven to instruct mankind—the very Wisdom, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and who speaks in all the scriptures “Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.”

Before He assumed our nature or appeared in the likeness of men, his person was complete. It is useless, it is trifling, to tell us of a simple attribute of Deity personified. It is a very small matter indeed to be told that the Deity possessed wisdom, and that he made use of his wisdom on all emergencies. This much we come to know without the aid of inspiration. In this view, the fulness and force of my text is entirely lost; but if taken to mean the eternal word, then all appears at once clear, and sublime. In truth, there is no other person in the universe who can appropriate these words, but our Savior, Jesus Christ. They declare his eternal relation to the Father as his Son: his eternal appointment as Mediator; and the ardor with which he desired to visit our world, and to unite himself to our nature, and actually redeem his people. Taking it then for granted that it is the Savior of the world, and none other, that speaks in this passage, we are led to view him,

**I. IN HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE WITH THE FATHER BEFORE ALL WORLDS.**

**II. AFTER THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION, IN THE HABITABLE PARTS OF THE EARTH, AMONG THE SONS OF MEN.**

According to this arrangement, we shall proceed to consider the character of our great Redeemer in his state with the Father before time began. It appears to be the intention of the Spirit, in this passage of holy writ, to lay open the councils of eternity, particularly in relation to that adorable personage, who is all our salvation and all our desire. The arguments he uses to engage the attention of mankind, namely, his co-existing in the Godhead, and the mutual harmony and rejoicings of these divine persons in the redemption of man. The words of my text conduct us far beyond the date of time, the roll of worlds, or laws of motion, to the spot where eternity meets the eye, and falls with all its weight upon mortal vision, where all created power is bound in by its mighty horizon. Standing, as it were, on the margin of this immensity, we are permitted, yea, we are invited to look into its mighty deeps. Aided by this glass of revelation, undismayed we approach its awful frontier, and catch some of the bright coruscations of that august personage, "whose goings forth have been from old, *from everlasting.*"

In the midst of immensity, in the awfulness of solitude, the great I AM, the Self-existent, alone, appears in the full possession of his unbounded glory, encircled with all the grandeur and majesty of uncreated light and immortality: a light to which no man can approach, which no man hath seen or can see. The all-creative power had not yet put forth its mightiness—light had not beamed over the shadows of the deep—the sun had not taken his station in the height of heaven—a compass had not been set on the face of chaos—over the immense void a single atom had not yet begun to float—mind had not begun to think, the heart to beat, or the morning stars to sing. What shall we call it? by what name shall it be pronounced? *Eternity—Eternity*, in all its vastness. Such is the dwelling place, and such assuredly must be the commensurate existence of Him "who inhabiteth eternity." Let us hear himself: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens I was there, when he set a compass on the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

"*I was set up from everlasting;*"—that everlasting that rebukes all ideas of date, that EVERLASTING that reaches back into deeps at the very margin of which the stoutest mind becomes dizzy, and reason itself flits like a feather in the thin air.

"*I was always his delight.*" ALWAYS, no point in all duration, at which the speaker did not exist, and no moment, in which he did not fill the bosom of the infinite God, and the councils of eternity with unbounded joy. With him the Father wanted nothing in all his eternity; nothing could be added to his happiness, it is at its mighty summit, it can rise no higher nor sink lower; it is, and was, and ever will be, *anterior* and *posterior* to all creation, incapable of ebb or flow, addition or diminution.

"*Before all his works of old—then was I by him as one brought up.*"

*with him;*" before all his works of old, behold the eternal Father embracing in his bosom this delightful HYPOSTASIS; begotten by him, and proceeding from him not by an immanent act, but by a continued mode of existence. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son; which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." If so, who can declare his generation? or date the commencement of his existence, who is absolutely without beginning of days or end of life, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? If so, how wicked, think you, must be the attempt that would impute to him only a created nature, or clothe him with a suspicion of a mere human existence? Of all the heresies that have hitherto infested the church of God, this must be accounted the most subtle and mischievous.

But, whilst we contemplate with amazement the period assigned to the existence of these divine persons, we are, at the same moment, equally struck with the harmony, loveliness and glory of this existence. All their delights are mutual, are the same; all their beams gloriously mingle together—all their joy is full, their joy is one. So is their design, and so is the execution of their *grand design*. When Jehovah planned, Wisdom was present, unity of design was stamped upon their plan. When Jehovah decreed redemption, Wisdom joyfully concurred. Moreover, when the decree brought forth, when space was assigned to nature, when a compass marked out the heavens, when they were filled with all their numerous, and resplendent shinings, with all their garniture and glory by the Spirit, the act was ONE.

When he made the highest part of the dust of the world, and assigned to intelligence its place in the great scale, Wisdom was there, the voice was harmonious, "let us make man." By this their unity is seen; they are known to be essentially ONE.

*Further:* This passage not only implies the eternity and unity of Wisdom in the Godhead, but also the magnitude and splendor of his undertaking. That thought which comprehended the plan of human redemption was incapable of being conceived by any other mind than one that was truly infinite, and the plan itself incapable of development and execution, under any other hand than one that is almighty. This thought, the first, the greatest, itself alone gives pleasure to the eternal mind; and in the absence of all created existence, drew the persons in the Godhead to be parties in a covenant.

This mighty scheme or covenant had in view the pit, the tremendous *Pit without water*, and the fearfulness attending all its prisoners—the blood and the crimes, and the cries of unnumbered millions.

In short, all that is necessary to disclose the magnitude and splendor of this mighty undertaking, is the character of him with whom it originated, Jehovah of Hosts—the high contracting parties, "The Lord of Hosts and his fellow;" the joy it imparted to the original actors long before the scene commenced: that counsel that filled eternity past with nothing but delight—that counsel of Peace which embraced nothing in it but the perfection of wisdom, whose author could say without vaunt, "counsel is mine, and sound wisdom, I am understanding:" that counsel of Peace so replete in all the materials that gladdened and lighted up the chambers of eternity, that contains glad tidings of great joy to all people; this counsel alone must stand, and finally succeed in filling the whole circle originally contemplated, the whole habitable parts of the earth with everlasting and increasing joy.

II. TO THE WORK OF REDEMPTION IN THESE HABITABLE PARTS OF THE EARTH, let us next direct our attention.

Many centuries have rolled away—much of the plan of wisdom must have been developed in the lapse of ages; let us pass it over in brief review.

1. Long before “he was made of a woman,” he disclosed his character in the first promise; “It shall bruise thy head.” At this moment redemption opened, the morning broke forth in the east, it was the first dawn of the day of grace. The omnipotence of this single word drove terror from paradise, and will ultimately succeed in driving horror and despair from all the abodes of men. It was the first sound of deliverance, it was the voice of a Visiter, it rendered redemption certain. What was announced in the garden was accomplished on the cross. The seed of the woman, and the avenger of her wrong, before he yielded up the ghost, exclaimed, “It is finished.”

This promise, from its first opening in Eden, from Adam to Simeon, was believed by all the faithful. “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” was the common faith of every age. In this first sunbeam of eternity, we discern Wisdom in all the sublimity of his high and mighty character, holding in the hollow of his hand his own church, when in a state of embryo existence. He who spoke in paradise, spoke to the patriarchs, “I will be thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” They hearkened to his voice, and in token of their regard erected altars, and dedicated them to him as the proprietor of the earth, the guardian of their lives, and as pledges of a posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven, or sand by the sea. The inscriptions drawn on these monuments of piety clearly exhibit the faith of these holy men of old time. *Jehovah Nisi—Jehovah Jireth—Jehovah Shammah*, the all-seeing, the all-protecting, the omnipotent God,—such is the true meaning of these inscriptions, and such must have been the character and attributes of Him who marked out the earth as the theatre of his rejoicings.

When in after ages, the offspring of these holy and devoted men were enslaved by arbitrary power, in virtue of the covenant sealed to their fathers, a commission was given to a member of the captivity then in banishment, “Go down into Egypt, and bring up my people thence; their cries have reached mine ears.” What shall I say unto them? was the reply of the son of Amram. Tell them, said the angel from the burning bush, “I AM” hath sent you. Moses obeyed. Armed with this commission, a solitary exile enters the confines of the country whence he had fled, and demands of the monarch the immediate release of the house of Jacob detained by him in bondage. Pharaoh refused. His whole land was instantly filled with judgments—his throne trembled—the first-born of Egypt were all, in one night, supernaturally struck dead. The church rises and marches with the mighty symbols of the great I AM—the pillar of cloud and light in fore front of his armies. In his march the waters saw it, “They skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.” The course of nature is stayed; the sea divides, the flood made a way for the captives; their deliverance was complete. The ransomed host sat down on the sand banks of the red sea, and sung aloud, hallelujah, to the Angel of the bush.

A portion of the “habitable parts of the earth” was early marked out by Wisdom as the scene of his most delightful operations. This portion of the globe, secured by promise and covenant, soon became the tomb of the patriarchs; its very mould became sacred, and remains so even to this day. “Bury me with my fathers,” was the dying charge of Jacob in the land of Egypt. “Ye shall carry up my bones from hence,” was the last request of him who was separated from his brethren. To this land of promise the ransomed host must be conducted. But under the convoy of whom

shall this great multitude pass the wilderness, with all its fiery serpents, escape the sword of Ogg, and Amalek, cross the Jordan, enter the territories of Canaan, and subdue all its giants, all its monarchs, all its combined armies? Who is able for so great an undertaking? Moses, the man of God? No indeed. Of his own incapacity he was fully conscious. A created angel of the first order? No, not even an angel of the highest order: for Moses refused to stir one foot until the grant of another, and a far greater, was made; and on receiving this assurance, lo, he immediately volunteered. Who then could this person possibly be, that was able so suddenly to inspire confidence into the soul of Moses, and the multitude under his command? A created angel he could not be, because he calls himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, (Exod. 3:6.) To assume this incommunicable title of the great Jehovah would be the most daring blasphemy in any creature. Neither could it have been God the Father; because Stephen, reciting this history, in Acts 7:35, states that God sent Moses by the hand of the angel: consequently, the angel that appeared to Moses, and spake to him out of the bush, was none other but the Son of God, the "*I am that I am.*"

It was the same angel who wrestled with the patriarch by the brook until the morning light, and who changed his name from Jacob to Israel; to whom he immediately erected an altar with this inscription, *El-Elohi Israel*. The same angel of the covenant whose blessing he invoked, in his dying moments, upon his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manassah: "And he said, the God which fed me all my life long to this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." It was the same mighty angel of redemption, who in the symbol of an ARK, divided Jordan before the son of Nun, who assumed the appearance of a man with a naked sword, under the walls of Jericho, and who, at the request of his servant Joshua, arrested the course of the sun and the moon in the heavens. It was the same great angel who led all their armies, achieved all their victories, presided over all their councils, and was worshipped through a ritual dictated to the twelve tribes, from the burning summit of Sinai. To him their priesthood sacrificed, their altars smoked, their prayers ascended, and of him their inspired bards sung. Bright coruscations of his divinity broke forth upon the joyful vision of the Hebrew seer. "Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace, Stem of Jesse, Glory of Israel, Desire of all nations," were among the notes they sung. His divinity inspired every prophet, and filled all the land of Israel with seers. It was the grand valley of vision in all the earth, where the church was seen rising amidst the wreck of his enemies, and shining forth clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Over this Zion the Angel of redemption rejoiced "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride." This was the habitable part of the earth in which was seen the footsteps of eternal Wisdom in all the days of old.

2. Let us next view the Lord Jesus in *his incarnate state*. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Wisdom veiled his Godhead in our inferior clay. Great is this mystery of Godliness; a mystery by which all the powers of man are dazzled, and all expression swallowed up and lost. If ever there was a case in which the tongue of angels was needed, surely this must be it. He whose goings forth were of old, from everlasting, behold him in Bethlehem, wrapt up as an infant of days! An embassy, of the first characters that then graced the society of men, did homage to this mysterious babe. It was God they worshipped. The hosts

of the highest heavens concur with the sages of the east. They interrupt the silence of midnight with their loud hallelujahs.

The decree at last brought forth—the fulness of time sees him “who was the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made in the likeness of men.” He is met at the streams of Jordan by the Messenger, who, in the spirit and power of Elijah, was to go before his face, and prepare his way. His divinity and his mission are recognized by the persons in the Godhead; the dove, and the voice, the Father and the Spirit concur in his ordination, and testify to the identity of his person, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

At this moment he took the field, and commenced publicly the execution of that mighty work assigned him in the habitable parts of the earth. He is straightway met by the destroying angel of darkness, his determined adversary from the beginning, who claims the field as his own, and disputes the authority of his rival. After two unsuccessful efforts, he makes a third. Pointing from the summit of an exceeding high mountain to the kingdoms and glory of the world; “All these,” said he, “will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Over created nature such motives are mighty, but over Him, “by whom the worlds were made,” such motives could have no influence at all. He spoke; it was the voice of majesty; “Get thee hence satan.” The god of this world fled, baffled and confounded—the triumph was complete; the Son of the beguiled woman, for the first time, became the conqueror of her deceiver.

The involuntary testimony of demons stand on record, and refute the most remote suspicion of his divinity. Legions of these demons were constrained to fall down before him, and in great terror cry out, “Jesus, thou son of God most high, art thou come hither to torment us before the time.” And wherefore did these demons thus cry out in so much terror and dismay? Because they were well aware, that he who stood before them, in the figure of a man, was the very being, and none other, against whom they had sinned, and who would finally and terribly punish their rebellion. The devils in hell believe and tremble at the very fact which men on earth are unwilling to admit.

Nature, also, bears her unequivocal testimony to the voice of her Creator, and imposes silence suddenly upon the most stormy of all her elements: “The winds and the seas obey him:” “Peace, be still.” It was enough, it was God that spoke.

The shadows of death scatter from around the tomb, and corruption itself is made to resign its victim, and to confess the presence of a power altogether irresistible and omnipotent.

When standing before the supreme council of the Hebrew nation, with the mitred successor of Aaron at their head, charged with blasphemy, the question was put, “Art thou the Son of the Blessed?” His answer was clear and final, “I am;” and as a proof that I am, “Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” He was altogether such an one as his enemies had charged him with calling himself, and in the very sense in which his accusers themselves understood him. When asked the reason why they went about to stone him, their reply was, “For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” This charge was substantiated; a verdict was made out against him; he cleaved to his integrity; under this sentence he suffered martyrdom, and proved, while on the cross, what he asserted at the bar, the earth trembled, the sun

withdrew his light, the rocks rent—these convulsions of nature could not be mistaken—its author in some way must have been the sufferer. He must then have perished with a falsehood in his mouth, or what he asserted of himself is true. In short, he is God, or he is not, he is Deity or a deceiver. This inference I take to be irresistible.

In the habitable parts of the earth, Wisdom had this cup of gall and bitterness to drink. Even in this he rejoiced: "In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God."

3. The *mediatorial reign* of the Son of God next claims our attention. Is he dead or does he still live? Has he survived the mighty struggle with the powers of darkness, or has he sunk to rise no more? Is the whole narrative of his resurrection nothing else than "a cunningly devised fable?" The present state of the world, in connexion with the general scope of scripture prophecy, stand opposed to such a conclusion. Plain matter of fact, now before the eyes of every man, proves that as a Prince and a Savior, he is exalted and reigning in the invisible heavens over the church militant on earth; and that the world is now under the moral administration of the Son of God. The curse of the law lay heavy on his grave. This mighty stone is rolled away; he is risen indeed, and declared to be the Son of God with power.

"Raised from the dead in awful state,  
He opened heaven's eternal gate.

He entered as first begotten from the dead, the moral head and representative of a numerous seed; and in their name, took possession of a kingdom destined "to break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world, and stand itself for ever." What do we now see? This prophetic fact evidently fulfilling, all around us in the earth. Look at the current events of the moment. The east, and the west, the north, and the south. What light is this we now see breaking forth over all the dark places of the globe? It springs from the Sun of righteousness, who is rising over all the nations with healing in his wings,—from Him who is the true light of the world, who, of old, was destined to be the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. All the world will soon be seen in motion—crowds of people of all tongues—hosts flocking together as doves to their windows—multitudes, in number as the sand by the sea, or as the dew from the womb of the morning. Such will be the case at the approach of the millenium: it will surely come; yea, it is now at our very doors. Whence then this mighty stir? How shall we account for it? "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." No other satisfactory cause can ever be assigned. We mark the motions of the heavenly bodies, and we stand amazed at that power that manages all their movements. A more marvelous display of the omnipotence of Jesus is seen in raising souls from the death of sin, and imparting new life, sensibility and motion to human spirits towards himself, as a common centre. In *creation*, God stands identified in his works, so that all men, even pagan nations, are left wholly inexcusable. In *redemption*, Messiah stands clearly identified in his work; so that all men living under the light and laws of revelation are much more inexcusable. The management exercised over the chosen tribes, was the management of their own Messiah. It was mediatorial management, the moral administration of Jehovah, the Angel. To him the patriarchs directed their homage, (compare Gen. 32:24—30, with 33:20.) The present management of the church now among the Gentiles is mediatorial management. It is the moral administration of the same Angel, "who was with the church

in the wilderness," who was adored by the enlightened founders and fathers of the Hebrew nation, who saw his day afar off. The very same, also, who was worshipped by the primitive fathers and founders of christianity—"They died calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

Invested with all the high attributes of Deity, his omniscience surveys with delight the whole habitable globe—all the abodes of men. "He still walks among the golden candlesticks." In the plenitude of his "all power" as mediator, holding in his hands the sovereign keys of heaven, death, and hell, his sceptre equally extends to worlds, visible and invisible, and his rule over angels, men and devils. It was he who sat enthroned over the amber wheels in the vision of Ezekiel, and directed all their movements: "above the firmament that was over their heads," says the prophet, "was the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of a man." Ezek. 1:26. It was the same who descended from heaven, in the visions of John, clothed with a cloud; a rainbow was upon his head, his face was, as it were, the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. He set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, in token of his sovereign authority, and lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer. Rev. 10:1.5. These are striking emblems, the precise signification of which cannot well be mistaken. They exhibit the sovereignty and certainty of the moral administration of eternal Wisdom, now in his incarnate state, over all the kingdoms of men. "The Father hath given all things into his hand—he shall put down all rule, and all authority, and all power—he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." 1 Cor. 15:24. A jot of this shall not fail until all is accomplished.

4. Let us, in the last place, view the Son of God as *Supreme Judge* in the great day. The object of the Father, from eternity, was to glorify the Son in time and eternity. Therefore, on bringing his first begotten into the world, orders were issued for all the angels in heaven to worship him. The angels obeyed: "thousand thousands minister unto him." With a loud voice they continue to sing "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." But the last and highest mark of honor the Father will confer upon him, who lay in his bosom, will be seen in the general judgment, when He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

There is a moment fixed in the mind of the commander in chief of a great army, when the mighty conflict, in which he is engaged, will terminate, victory proclaimed throughout all the host, and when his rejoicings shall be complete. To this point, all the movements of the whole undertaking from first to last, were especially directed; so all revelation rests upon the fact of the final triumph of christianity—the sounding of the last trumpet—and the second appearing of Jesus Christ—when all the operations of Wisdom shall be wound up, and all the plans and counsels entered into before all worlds—the whole machinery of Providence and redemption openly displayed in the full view of the assembled universe. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and the books were opened; and they were judged, every man according to his works." To this hour of final retribution, conscience directs all her appeals. A forethought of this made Felix and Belshazzar tremble, and devils cry, "torment us not before the time." This awful day forces upon the attention of

the common observer of Providence: "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness; that iniquity was there, I said in mine heart God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." It is engraved upon all the volumes of violated law: yea, the whole creation of God travails in pain, nature sighs in all her works for such an event.

But who among all the sons of God is capable of occupying the seat of supreme judge in this grand and terrible assize, where thoughts and motives, as well as words and actions, demand the attention of the judge? Who among all the sons of the mighty has power sufficient to collect so great an assembly, to roll up these heavens as a scroll, to break the slumber of ages, and raise the dead incorruptible? Can it be the man who stood pale before Pilate? who hung upon the cross uttering lamentations; and breathing out his last breath in agony and despair? Yes, the same, who says in the context, "I have strength"—who claims omnipotence and omniscience—the very same who says, "I search the hearts"—who says, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth,"—who says, "all power in heaven and earth is mine." To him is committed all the proceedings of the great day; "for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." "This same Jesus," as "the mighty God, shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire," suddenly "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." Every amenable being, million of millions, in the twinkling of an eye, are laid under the most powerful arrest—it is the judgment of the great day. Every eye shall see him, every ear shall hear the sound of that voice that cried upon the cross—then the voice of a lamb, now the voice of a lion—then the voice of compassion, now the voice of vengeance,—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” The sentence is just; every mouth is stopped, and the whole world at once becomes guilty before God. There is no appeal—hell trembles—but heaven rejoiceth at the last sentence of the Supreme Judge: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” The mighty work is now done—the covenant is closed—the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, and are conducted in triumph into the palace of the great King, to an eternal banquet where all things are ready—where all the rejoicings of the Godhead in eternity, and all the rejoicings in the habitable parts of the earth, over repenting sinners in distant times, and distant ages, meet and unite, and all redeemed nature join together with them. “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” Rev. 19:6,7. Such, we believe, shall be the closing scene of that redemption, planned in eternity, and accomplished in time, by the personal ministry and death of eternal WISDOM.

ONE inference from the whole, viz: *That our Savior Jesus Christ is co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal, with Jehovah the Father, in the same Godhead.*

1. If not, the Bible is stripped of its meaning. Its inspiration rests upon the fact of a supernatural communication. It is the substance of a correspondence that passed between eternal Wisdom, and his own intelligent

creatures, between the angel Jehovah, and the sons of men in the habitable parts of the earth: a correspondence as far above that conducted by the genius of carnal reason, as mind is above matter, or the heavens above the earth. On this correspondence Wisdom has stamped his own image; his divinity enlivens every page, it is the soul of the system; strike it out, and every text relating to his character becomes unintelligible; strike it out, and the Bible at once becomes the most uninteresting, and self-contradictory of any volume that ever had claims on the attention of mankind,—like a system without a sun, it would remain destitute of heat and animation, of light and life.

2. If not, he could not have fulfilled that distinct work assigned him in the covenant of redemption. To make a plenary satisfaction to eternal justice for a multitude which no man can number—to magnify the divine law and make it honorable, and make a priest and a king of the criminal that broke it—to strip a miserable creature of all its crimes, and of all its miseries; and clothe it with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory—to bruise the serpent's head, expose his plots, and break the snare into which he had seduced the whole race of man—to redeem from bondage, restore to order, and reunite in one, a host of penitents far surpassing the power of numbers; out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people—to raise a world; fallen under the displeasure of Jehovah; to life and immortality—to make a new creation—who can do all this? but the Almighty. Rev. 1:8.

3. Finally: If Jesus be not God, in the strict sense of the word, his cross is stripped of all its glory, his atonement of all its merit and efficacy, and we, who believe, are of all men the most miserable. Sin is an offence against an infinite God, a violation of his royal and righteous law, a public revolt from under the moral order of duty, at which the heavens stand astonished. Jer. 2:12.

What will atone for a deed that merits death; temporal and eternal? Will ten thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? No. All this is finite; the guilt of mankind is infinite. Will a creature alone upon a cross? At this my hope dies; my soul sickens, my heart and flesh languish in despair.

“ Jesus, my God, thy blood alone  
Has power sufficient to atone.”

Only admit this couplet in its full meaning, and all is safe: hope rises within me, the cross rises before me in grandeur, and I am made to gaze upon the greatest wonder in the universe. “ O, the depth of its riches! O, the wonderful Wisdom of God.” Amen.

## SERMON LI.

BY REV. JOHN GLENN,  
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### THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF MAN'S ABILITY TO OBEY THE LAW OF GOD.

**MATTHEW 25:15.**—*And unto one, he gave five talents; to another two, to another one; to every man according to his several ability.*

THIS parable is intended to illustrate the manner in which God deals with men; to show our relation to him, and to vindicate his conduct towards us. For this purpose, a man is introduced, having servants under him; the proceeds of the labor of these servants, was evidently the property, or right of the master. Before setting out, he divides his goods among his servants; he gave to each a particular portion in order that each one might know precisely what he had to do; what care and labor would devolve on him. If he had left his goods among them, in mass, the idle might have neglected their duty, at the expense of the diligent; their conduct would not be so clearly seen; and their default would have been less obvious. Having thus distributed to each his share, he enjoins on them to employ this property, so that it should yield an increase; he charges them, "Occupy till I come." In this distribution he seems to have regarded the various capacities of the servants, that no one should be perplexed with more than he was able to manage. To those of larger powers he gave more, to those of inferior attainments he gave less; so that they all had alike power to improve their several shares, and were thus without excuse, for neglect of duty. Of these servants, two were faithful to their master; *they*, diligently apply themselves to business, and consequently, double the goods left in their hands; the *other*, hides his lord's money, and, no doubt, spends his time in idleness. When the master returns, he rewards the faithful, and punishes the idle.

In the application of this parable, we may recognize God as represented by the master, and mankind by the servants. The journey taken, alludes to the withdrawal of God's visible presence, and our state of probation. The talents, include all the privileges and blessings which we receive at the hand of God during our probation. The different amounts given, shows that God requires of us according to the privileges he bestows. These requirements seem also to have a relation to our various capacities. The rewards and punishment of the servants, exhibit the manner in which God will finally display his justice and grace, in punishing the wicked and in rewarding the righteous with crowns of everlasting life.

The passage selected as the text, has been often used as evidence that man is able to render all that God requires of him. This appears, however, to be proving quite too much by the passage, and consequently fails to prove any thing. The ability of the servants seems evidently to allude to the original capacities of man, or his ability when he was *first* placed on

trial; the ability of the servants was that which they had when they received the talents, or in other words, when entered on their probation. But the ability of man, *now*, is very different from what it was *then*. The *present ability* of man, I propose to make the subject of a few remarks. I am well aware that it is attended with some difficulties, and that it has given rise to various and conflicting opinions. Until we have right views of our own strength, we will not be prepared to make a proper application to God for what is wanting. In remarking on this subject, I design,

I. TO EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF ABILITY, AS APPLIED TO MAN'S OBEDIENCE.

II. TO SHOW HOW FAR THIS ABILITY EXTENDS.

Ability has long been divided into NATURAL and MORAL ability. This division, deserves respect for its antiquity, and the high character of those by whom it has been adopted, if it does not for its own correctness.

1. Natural ability, has relation to the capacities or the faculties of the mind. This may be illustrated by the body. Our bodies are adapted, in their make, to the performance of certain actions; we have limbs suited to the exercise of walking; hands to write and perform other offices. These faculties or members may be used for different and even opposite purposes. One walks to church, another to the theatre, and a third to a dram-shop. The same remarks are applicable to the mind. We have certain faculties of mind which may be applied to different things; such as, memory, judgment, reason, &c. These may be employed in searching the Scriptures to ascertain the truth, and our duty; or, they may be employed, to prop up some infidel system. Thus when we have the faculties necessary to the performance of a certain action, we are naturally able to perform that act.

2. Moral ability presupposes, natural, and includes also the concurrence of the will. This kind of ability depends on the motive presented to the mind. We are not able, in this sense, to do that, for which we have no motives, or where the motives to an opposite course is stronger. Thus, the guest invited to the supper, said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Here it is evident, if a motive had been present, sufficiently strong to have influenced the will, he could have gone to the supper. This kind of inability, as completely prevents the performance of an action, as natural or physical inability; we can no more do what we have *no will* to do, than that for which we have not the requisite faculties. But while these different species of inability are equally effectual in preventing actions, they are evidently of a very *different nature*; and there is, perhaps, a degree of obscurity arises from the application of the term inability, to both these kinds. It would be, perhaps, a more correct use of terms, to call moral inability, an *unwillingness*, than to call it inability of any kind. It is true that this application of the term has the sanction of common usage, and that too in the common concerns of life, we frequently say we *cannot* do that which every body knows we could do if we *would*; and there is rarely a mistake arises from this use of the term in such cases. But in theology the case is very different. In the concerns of this life, we are so well acquainted with our powers, that we are not easily led into mistakes. When a person, in health, says he cannot pay a visit to a friend, when invited, his friend well knows that he is under the influence of some *opposing motive*, and not the want of power. But our powers, in spiritual things, in relation to our duty to God, are not so well understood. Hence, when we use the

term *cannot*, where there is nothing wanting but the *will*, our meaning may be very readily misunderstood or perverted to an improper use. Hence I would rather say, we are *able* to do that, from which there is nothing prevents us, but the want of *will*, and our not doing it is because we *will not*. But we are unable to do that for which our faculties do not qualify us. This is the distinction which I would make between *will not* and *cannot*. This division of ability and inability, will not perhaps explain all the phenomena of the human character. There will be found a kind of inability, which will not properly come under either of the above divisions. But this will appear more clearly in the discussion of the second particular, to which we will now proceed.

## II. Show the *extent* of man's ability to obey the requirements of God.

Adam was made, with ability to obey all the requirements of God. This is evident from the simple fact that God created him. God having made him, He was the author of all his faculties. His abilities and inabilities, were all regulated by God himself. But He made him, with the design of placing him under a law and requiring obedience to that law. This being God's design in making him, He would of course adapt his faculties to the circumstances in which he was to be placed. He would give to man power to do what he was about to require him to do. The same truth appeared from the facts recorded in the case. Man was made with the law written on his heart. That is, the temper and disposition of his heart, was precisely what the law required. He chose to do what the law required him to do. Hence, all his pleasure was found in obedience to the laws. The *positive* requirement made of him was single and easy; merely to abstain from a single tree. With this requisition, he *could* evidently comply. Thus Adam was qualified, and therefore *able* to perform all that God required of him.

But we are in a far different situation now. The fall has ruined us—deranged our faculties—and paralyzed all our powers. The change was visible in Adam immediately after the fall. An aversion to God is soon discovered. He hides himself from the presence of the Lord, among the trees of the garden,—thus, he shows that the heart was alienated from the object of its former love. Thus it appears that sin poisoned the whole soul, and made an important change in the operation of the mind. This effect of the fall, extended to all his posterity. “By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.” Rom. 5:19. Thus, we find ourselves in the same situation into which the fall brought Adam. Hence, we are destitute of the image of God, the heart is alienated from him and his service, and in the language of the prophet, “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.” Isaiah 1:5. But with all this ruin, we are still able to do some things, which, as to their matter are required of us. That is, we have the faculties necessary, and *could* perform them if we had the *will*. I wish not to be understood, as saying that we *can* do any thing *as* God requires it to be done; but merely so far, as the *matter* of the act is concerned. First: Man can refrain from many overt acts of transgression; the murderer can lay down the weapon of death, and let his brother live; the Sabbath-breaker can rest during sacred hours; the profane lips may be closed, and prevent the impiety of the heart from bringing forth the blasphemous oath. In these cases, there is no power wanting; that is, nothing but what consists in the want of *will*. It is true, the force of custom is often pleaded as an apology for profanity; but this is *only* an apology. Place the most profane person, in certain circum-

stances, and not an oath will be heard escaping his lips. From these and many other sins, we have power to abstain.

Secondly. We can, before regeneration, *meditate* on divine things—those things which concern the interests of the soul. We can, in a measure, at least, comply with the injunction, “Ponder the path of thy feet.” The mind is endowed with the capacity of continual thought; it is always employed on a subject of one kind or another. But it requires no more mental power, to think of God, and divine things, than of those that are earthly and sensual. The former things afford a much wider field of thought, and are more congenial to the original powers of the mind than those things of an earthly kind, on which we are apt to spend our mental powers. We have power, then, to contemplate the glorious perfections of God; to meditate on our relation to him, and our accountability; on the duties he requires; on the glorious immortality he has prepared for those that love him; on the wrath he has treasured up for his enemies; and the way to escape the one, and obtain the other.

Thirdly. We can attend to the *external* means of grace. We can read the Scriptures. It requires no more power to read the Scriptures than to read novels, if we leave out of view the temper of the heart. We can go to the house of God, and mingle with his worshipers. This requires no more power than to go to a ball or other place of amusement or vanity. We can also attend, at least, to the form of prayer. It requires no more power to pray than to curse. Hence the profane swearer could retire to his closet, and pray to God for the salvation of his soul. I say nothing now of the *kind* of prayer he could make, or the *manner* in which he could attend to any of the duties mentioned. These things God requires of us on the best authority, and has a right to punish for their neglect. That we do not, in some way, perform these duties is because we *will not*. In an un-renewed state, we have no pleasure in these duties. We pay more regard to our own pleasure, than to the authority of God, and the dreadful sanctions of his law. Hence, we choose, and pursue the ways of pleasure and sin, in contempt of the authority of God, and at the hazard of his awful frown. Here, it may be remarked, that this unwillingness, or moral inability, as it is called, will secure the destruction of the soul, without the special operation of the Spirit of God, and that too, if there was nothing else in the way. Hence, Christ says, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” John 5:40.; and again, “It is God that worketh in you both to *will* and to do.” Phil. 2:13. The soul that *will* not come to Christ, will as certainly perish as the soul that cannot come. This, then, is as certain an obstacle to salvation, as any thing can be, even an entire natural inability. The soul never will be saved while it chooses the ways of death. It may be said, God can change the will. This is true, and he can as easily remove any other obstacle that can impede the sinner's salvation.

The ability of which we have been speaking is entirely ineffectual, and is not properly employed, until called into exercise by the Spirit of God. Hence if we had all the ability that is necessary to secure our salvation, we would be as dependent on God for this salvation as though we had no ability whatever; because we could never employ our powers. A man might have abundance of wholesome provision; yet if he had such a disrelish to it, that he would not receive it, but would partake of some poisonous substance, he would as certainly die, as the man who had not a morsel of food: and the person who should remove this disrelish, and restore the natural appetite, would as certainly save the man's life, as if he had furnished the destitute with wholesome provisions. Hence the folly of boasting of human ability,

merely because we possess certain faculties, which we have no will to put into exercise in the service of God. But again: This inability is not chargeable merely on the will. The fault lies much deeper. It is evident that the will is governed by the *state of the heart*. It chooses earthly things because the heart is in love with these things; it rejects the service of God, because this service is disagreeable to the heart. The heart, then, is the seat of this inability; it is there the evil is found, which governs the will, and through the will guides all our actions. Before we will choose the service of God, the heart must be changed, or the necessity of a change in our course must be felt so strongly as to overcome the feelings of the heart. The change of the heart from hatred to love is also the peculiar work of the Spirit of God. This is so plain we need not wait to prove it. Hence it is evident that this moral inability or unwillingness to come to Christ, for which the sinner is guilty, will destroy the soul, unless it is removed, and there is no power can remove it but the power of God.

But there is another kind of inability, which mankind labor under. This kind of inability has not, so far as I know, received an appropriate name. It does not properly belong to natural inability; and it is distinct from and goes far beyond that moral inability of which we have been speaking. Perhaps, no name could be more appropriate and expressive than that which the Scriptures apply to it. It is there called "death." "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sin." Eph. 2:1. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John 3:14. "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead." Rom. 6:13. Thus the term "death" is used as expressive of the state of man by nature. This has been properly called a "spiritual death," because we are thus dead, only in spiritual things, while we are alive and active in other things. This spiritual death neutralizes all our natural ability, and renders it entirely inefficient, and thus places in an entirely helpless state. This death is objected to, because we have all the mental faculties, which Adam had before the fall, and all the Christian has after regeneration. But a right understanding of the *nature* of this death, would remove the grounds of this objection. We can easily suppose a *body*, possessing all the members of a living body, composed of bones, flesh, sinews, and skin, having all the muscles and organs necessary for life, and yet destitute of life. Thus it was with the body of Adam, before God breathed in him the breath of life, and he became a *living soul*. So also it was with the bodies in Ezekiel's valley of vision, the bodies were perfectly formed, but there was no life in them. Why not, then, a parallel case, as it respects the mind? A soul possessing all the faculties necessary to qualify it for the service of God, yet wanting a principle of life to put these faculties into operation. There is no more absurdity in the one than in the other. It is true, we can more easily form an idea of the one than of the other, because we are more conversant about body than about spirit. This appears to be the real state of the case, as it is presented to our view in the word of God; this is the grand difference between our present and the primitive state of Adam, or the state after regeneration. Whatever explanation may be given of this inability, or whatever its precise nature may be, one thing is certain, it renders us entirely unable to render an acceptable obedience to any of the commands of God. With all our boasted natural ability, and natural faculties, we can do nothing acceptable to a holy God. Thus it appears, that while we can avoid many external sins; attend to the external means of grace; yet there are many things which we cannot do; things, too, which God requires of us, and which are necessary to our salvation.

“No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father.” John 6:44.65. Thus we are dead, in a spiritual sense. Without life, imparted from above, we will act the part of the unprofitable servant, we will hide our Lord's money. Some may now be disposed to say, our case is hopeless. We must perish, and that “without remedy.” In answer, I would say, for any thing that we are able to do, to change our state, our case is as hopeless as we can well conceive. After all that God has done in Christ, the rich provision He has there made for sinners, and the free offer that is made, still a further work of grace is necessary, or all that has been done will fail to save the soul. But many just such as we are have been saved. All that happy throng, which the apostle saw in vision before the throne, were once dead in sin. They labored under the same inability which now holds the sinner in chains of death; yet they were redeemed; they were raised from the dead; their chains were broken; and now they are singing endless anthems to that grace which saved them. Many more will yet be saved. Christ has not yet seen all his seed; large promises to him remain yet to be fulfilled; He will see of the travail of his soul “until he is satisfied.” “All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” None need despair because their malady is deep. Christ is able to save to the uttermost. Look to him, then, as the dying Israelites to the brazen serpent; the sight will inspire hope in the dying soul, and you will be made willing to come. Here we are met with another objection. It is said, that God cannot justly require what man is unable to perform. In this objection an important circumstance appears to be overlooked,—the fall of man and its consequences. The prostration of our powers, appears to be forgotten. God can justly require whatever man was able to perform in his primitive state. The change which we have made in our own powers makes no change in God's right over us; his claims to our services remain valid, after we have destroyed in ourselves the power of meeting these claims.

[We do not find room to insert the “different particulars” of illustration, and conclude the discourse with two inferences—Ed.]

From the discussion of this subject, it may be inferred,

1. That the sinner is *not* excusable for his moral inability or unwillingness to obey God. That for his voluntary indulgence of it, he is not only guilty, but thereby *increases* it, and, by his *own acts*, mitigates and sanctions the disobedience of Adam.

2. We see that he can still exercise his natural faculties in their present state, in abstaining from sin—in the use of means—in crying for deliverance from a state of spiritual death. And they that *will not*, must expect to perish eternally.

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## SERMON LII.

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### CHRIST THE MODEL OF GOSPEL MINISTERS.\*

MATTHEW 4:19.—*And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

WE have here at once the *call*, the *commission*, and the *directory* of a gospel minister. *Simon Peter* and *Andrew*, his brother, had become the disciples of Christ some time prior to the transaction here recorded. But *now* they were called habitually to attend upon him; to be "with him," as the evangelist *Mark* expresses it; that is, to be with him *statedly*. And in a short time afterwards they were regularly set apart, and sent forth among the number of his apostles.

It is observable that these men, when called thus immediately by the Master himself to be his ministers, had enjoyed nothing of what we are accustomed to style a regular learned education. They were illiterate fishermen, taken immediately from their boats and nets, and sent forth to preach the gospel. It is obvious, however, that this is no argument in favor of an unlearned ministry. The apostles were, for three years, under far more able and unerring instruction than any candidates for the sacred office can now enjoy, in the very best Colleges and Theological Seminaries that Christendom affords. Give to ministers now the same advantages which the first bearers of the gospel message enjoyed, and they might well afford to dispense with all the ponderous volumes and unwearied studies which are, at present, and justly, deemed so important. We know, however, that this extraordinary state of things did not continue even to the close of the first century. A man of eminent learning was very early introduced among the apostles, and became by far the most laborious and useful of the whole number. That distinguished minister of Jesus, too, knowing by experience the value of mature study, and directed by the Holy Spirit, solemnly exhorts *Timothy* to "give

\* This sermon was delivered in the city of Pittsburgh, before the Association of the Alumni of the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

himself to reading," as a preparation for his official work; and enjoins upon him, further, not to "lay hands" upon any who are not "apt to teach," and of course, competently instructed in divine things. And, in strong accordance with this injunction, the history of the church, from the apostolic age to this hour, bears uniform testimony to the fact, that those ministers whose labors have been most eminently blessed to the genuine revival of religion, and to the permanent advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, from time to time, have been men in whom sound learning and fervent piety were remarkably united.

The address of the Savior to these brethren was simple and plain, and yet most strikingly appropriate; that is, it was, agreeably to his wonted manner, admirably adapted to convey his meaning with force and point, to persons of the occupation and habits of those to whom he spoke. Like most of what he uttered, it was at once level to the capacity of the most illiterate, and adapted to instruct and impress the most elevated and enlightened mind. *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

Without further preface, the doctrine which I shall derive from these words is this: **THAT CHRIST OUGHT TO BE THE GREAT MODEL OF GOSPEL MINISTERS; AND THAT THOSE MINISTERS WHO ARE MOST FAITHFUL AND DILIGENT IN FOLLOWING HIM, HAVE THE BEST PROSPECT AND PLEDGE OF SUCCESS IN THEIR WORK.**

This general doctrine presents TWO POINTS for our consideration, viz. **WHAT IS THAT "FOLLOWING CHRIST" TO WHICH THE PROMISE IS MADE? AND WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE?**

L To "follow Christ" is a phrase which, in the language of the Bible, implies much, and expresses much. To "follow" a *man*, is to adopt his opinions, to come under his influence, and to be devoted to the advancement of his plans and interest. All this, and more than this, is included in "following Christ." Our Savior himself explains the phrase by the use which he makes of it in other places. *My sheep*, says he, *hear my voice, and follow me.* And again, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* And again, *If any man will serve me, let him follow me.* And again, *He that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* In all these passages, as well as in our text, the Savior obviously does not mean merely *walking after him*, as a mere *bodily attendant*, during his earthly ministry. Thousands did much of this, who were never his "followers" in the sense of our text. Neither does he intend the mere reception of a set of *speculative opinions*; for thousands have done this also, who yet "held the truth in unrighteousness," and of course never deserved the name of Christ's disciples. But he means something moral; something which implies reverence, affection, discipleship, conformity and devotedness to his holy will. When applied to ministers of the gospel, therefore, we may consider the command to "follow Christ" as importing, in general, *four things*;—implicitly submitting to him as our **TEACHER**; diligently imbibing his **HOLY SPIRIT**; making his **EXAMPLE** the model of all our public and private ministrations; and being supremely and earnestly devoted to the **ADVANCEMENT OF HIS KINGDOM.**

1. Ministers may be said to "follow Christ," when they **IMPLICITLY YIELD THEMSELVES TO HIS GUIDANCE AS THEIR TEACHER**; when they humbly take all the doctrines, which they adopt or preach, from the word of the Master himself. The gospel which we preach, my beloved brethren, is not *our own*; it is **CHRIST'S GOSPEL**. And as man did not invent it, so man is not capable of mending or improving it. *The gospel which I preach, said the inspired Paul, is not of man, nor by man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Son of man, said Jehovah to the prophet of the ancient church, *preach the preaching that I bid thee. Hear the word from my mouth, and give them warning from me.* Ministers, then, while they undertake to teach others, ought ever to place themselves, and to feel as humble learners at the feet of him "whose they are, and whom they serve." Are they *servants*? and shall they not constantly look for direction to their Master? Are they *ambassadors*? and shall they not sacredly govern themselves by the instructions of their Sovereign? Are they *stewards*, entrusted with the truth and ordinances of the Savior's household? and shall they dare, for any consideration, to depart from the declared will of their heavenly Employer? Surely that professed servant of Christ who suffers himself to wander into the regions of speculative philosophy; who subjects Christian doctrine to the torturing ordeal of unsanctified reason; who begins by deciding, upon philosophical principles, what truth *ought to be*, and *must be*, and then recurs to the Bible to see what it *is*; and who is more intent on the honor of being thought an "inventor" and an "original" in theology, than on simply ascertaining and proclaiming "what God the Lord hath spoken;" surely such a servant cannot be said to "follow Christ." On the contrary, he may be said to have embraced, whether he be aware of it or not, the radical principle of the worst heresy, and, indeed, of all unbelief. The minister who truly follows Christ, regards his word as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. He approaches the sacred volume with reverence; studies it with humble and devout diligence; and makes its simple declarations the test of truth. He faithfully employs his reason, indeed, in examining the Bible; but he employs it only to decide two questions—**HAS GOD SPOKEN IN THAT BIBLE?** and, if he have spoken, **WHAT HAS HE SAID?** Having ascertained this, he humbly bows every power of his soul to the heavenly message, and is cordially willing, with meekness and docility, to make it "the man of his counsel," and the sovereign guide of all his instruction. In short he considers the great subjects of his ministry as made ready to his hand; and feels that his only business is to bear them faithfully, clearly, and without alteration, to a benighted world.

2. Again, to "follow Christ" is to **IMBIBE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**; to have a large portion of "the same mind that was also in him." Men may hold the truth with intelligent accuracy, and contend for it with earnestness, without submitting to its power. He who receives with ever so much speculative exactness the genuine doctrines of the gospel, just as the Savior left them, cannot be said, in the best sense of the word, to "follow" him unless "he give him his heart;" unless he receive his truth in the love of it; unless he unfeignedly yield to him his love and confidence, as his great High Priest and King, as well as

his Prophet. That gospel minister, then, who truly follows Christ, is not only "sound in the faith," but also a **CONVERTED MAN**; a cordial, devoted, experimental Christian; a man "full of the faith and of the Holy Ghost;" who speaks that which he knows, and testifies that which he has experienced; who loves his Master and his work above all things; and who accounts it his highest honor to be like Christ, and "his meat and drink" to do his will. He rejects the aspirings of carnal ambition. He is willing to "learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart," and to be himself nothing, that Christ may be "all in all." In a word, he is one who lives daily under the power of that religion which he preaches to others; who "walks with God;" who maintains a life of "fellowship with the Father of his spirit, and with his Son, Jesus Christ;" and who studies daily to "grow in grace," to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," and to have his meditations and desires as well as his treasures in heaven. His hatred of sin, his self-denial, his meekness, his forgiveness of injuries, his benevolence, his conscientious regard to truth and justice in every thing, his deadness to the world, his condescension to the poorest and weakest of the flock, his disinterestedness, his holy zeal and diligence, all bear witness that the love of Christ constrains him; that the imitation of Christ is his "ruling passion;" and the glory of Christ the great end for which he lives.

3. Further, the minister who "follows Christ," **MAKES THE SAVIOR THE GREAT MODEL OF ALL HIS OFFICIAL LABORS.** He not only studies to preach the pure gospel; but also in his manner of preaching it to make Christ his guide and pattern. He consults the word of Christ day and night, not only as a Christian, but also for light and counsel as a preacher. He delights to address his fellow men in "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." He endeavors to declare the whole counsel of God, and "rightly to divide the word of truth;" that is, to exhibit every part of gospel truth in that connection, in that proportion, in that order, and under that solemn, practical, heart-affecting aspect, in which it was left by the Savior and his inspired apostles. He affects no novelties; resorts to no unauthorized modes of doing good; ventures not to teach for ordinances the commandments of men; but makes it his supreme desire, and habitual aim, to imitate, as far as he dare, both in matter and manner, the preaching and the conduct of him who "spake as never man spake;" who was the most perfect judge of human nature that ever addressed a perishing world; and who promised to be with his ministers as long as they taught men "to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them."

He who "follows Christ" does not affect either the spirit or the manner of the "disputers of this world." He "contends earnestly, indeed, for the faith once delivered to the saints," and will not, knowingly, give up a single truth of the Bible. But he contends with the "meekness of heavenly wisdom;" and with as little of the *polemical character* as possible. "Speaking the truth in love" is his divinely inspired motto. The great object which fills his mind is not to silence a disputant, or to exult over a vanquished foe; but to recommend his Master's truth, and to win souls to the love and power of

his Master's reign. To complete the character of the minister who "follows Christ,"

4. He is SUPREMELY AND EARNESTLY DEVOTED, BY ALL THE MEANS IN HIS POWER, TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. He is not content with the strictest doctrinal orthodoxy; with the prevailing hope that he is a converted man; or even with a general consciousness that he desires to imitate Christ, and to walk according to the order of his house. The extension of the Redeemer's kingdom is the great object which fills his mind, which occupies his thoughts, which governs all his plans and calculations, which impels him in going out and coming in, and which prompts him to make every sacrifice for its promotion. Of all this, the Master himself set the most impressive example. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us" from pollution, misery, and death. He submitted to hunger and thirst, to reproach and shame, to unceasing labor and privation, that we might be delivered from ruin. Nay, he "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that we might be rescued from deserved condemnation and wrath, and raised to eternal blessedness. Now the same spirit which actuated the Master in all that he underwent for the salvation of fallen man, must actuate his ministers, and is implied in the language of our text. While we are constrained to say of worldly men, and of worldly-minded ministers of the gospel, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;" the occupant of the sacred office who really "follows Christ," seeks above all "the things that are Christ's." He can say, in some good measure, with the devoted and heroic *Paul*, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Nay, he can say, "neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom swallows up every other interest in his estimation; and prompts him to say, in spirit, if not in words, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Such is a minister of the gospel who "follows Christ," and to whom the promise before us is given. He is not always the most learned divine, or the most eloquent preacher, that best answers this character: but the most spiritual man; the most humble, heavenly-minded, laborious, self-denied, disinterested, devoted man; who, with unceasing perseverance and zeal, preaches Christ, his divine person, his mediatorial offices, his atoning blood, his justifying righteousness, his sanctifying Spirit, and all the moral duties by which obedience to the Savior is manifested. He is one who preaches in some degree as his master preached; who lives, in some humble measure, as his Master lived; who is the active, zealous minister of the gospel *out of the pulpit*, as well as *in it*; who "goes about doing good;" diligently visiting the people of his charge, not to partake of their luxurious hospitality, but to benefit their souls; not to shine in their domestic circles, as an entertaining com-

panion; but to endeavor to promote his Master's reign in their hearts. He is one who carries instruction, as the Savior always did, into the parlor; into the occasional conversation; and even to the convivial table; who, in short, in every situation and walk of life, abroad and at home, in the house and by the way, in sitting down and rising up, "watches for souls as one that must give account;" so that none who approach him, can fail of perceiving that he is a holy man of God; a minister of peace and love and salvation to a perishing world; intent, not on his own personal aggrandizement, but on promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of his fellow men.

I will only add, under this head, that he who follows Christ, does all that has been described under the habitual impression that he can effect nothing of himself; and that, unless the Holy Spirit accompany his efforts, they will all be in vain. He is, therefore, as much engaged in **WRESTLING FOR** his people at the throne of grace in private, as he is laboring **BEFORE THEM** in public. He remembers that "he that planteth is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing, but God who giveth the increase." He, therefore, desires and longs that the power of the Holy Spirit may continually accompany his labor. He often, as it were, agonizes in prayer for this indispensable blessing. He cannot pass a day contented without some visible fruit of his work in winning souls to Christ. His unceasing cry is, "O Lord, revive thy work! Pour out thine Holy Spirit from on high! O for times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord!"

Such is the minister who may be said to "follow Christ." Now to such—

**II. A BLESSED PROMISE IS GIVEN.** "*I will make you fishers of men.*" This promise, though delivered, originally, to two of the ambassadors of Christ, is certainly not to be considered as *confined to them*, or as even *restricted to the twelve apostles*. A promise of the same substantial import is found in various parts of scripture, as applicable to faithful ministers in every age.

The promise before us, you will perceive, is conveyed in figurative language; language drawn from the original employment of the persons addressed. *I will make you fishers of men.* Or, as the Savior said to one of the same brethren, at another time, when astonished, and almost terrified, at the immense draft of fishes, *Fear not, for henceforth thou shalt catch men.* He intended perhaps, to intimate that there is an analogy between taking fishes in a net, and drawing men, by the moral influence of truth, applied by the Holy Spirit, into the kingdom of God; and especially an analogy between the qualities requisite for sustaining a fisherman in his laborious occupation, and the fortitude, patience, and indefatigable perseverance necessary for him who would spend his life in "watching for souls," and endeavoring to "draw them to Christ."

But what is it, in the sense of the text, to be *fishers of men*? Is it merely to ensnare them in the toils of sectarianism? Is it to inveigle them, by artifice, into a favorite church? Is it to make them the blind and implicit dupes of some system of ecclesiastical ambition? Such, I fear, have sometimes really been the aims and the efforts of narrow sectarians; and such have been much more frequently the aims *charged* upon the ambassadors of Christ by an

unbelieving world. But nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of the Bible; nothing more foreign from the mind of a faithful minister of Jesus. His supreme object is to win men to the Savior; to draw them from sin to holiness; from Satan to God; from misery to happiness; from everlasting perdition to an incorruptible crown, an undefiled inheritance, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. All this, and nothing less than this, is implied in the figurative language of the promise.

The import, then, of the promise under consideration, I understand to be, that, if ministers of the gospel do really follow their Master, in the nature of the gospel which they preach; in the spirit with which they preach it; and in the life and conversation with which they accompany it, their labors shall be crowned with a blessing; they shall succeed in bringing men, *some men at least*, to the knowledge and love of the Savior. What precise *measure* of success they shall have; what *number* of their fellow men shall be given them as the reward of their labors, is not specified, and cannot be foreknown, from this, or any other promise of scripture. But the general assurance, that such ministerial fidelity and zeal as has been described, *shall be crowned with success, shall not be in vain in the Lord*, seems to be positive and unquestionable. And I suppose, further, from the language of scripture, and from the light of experience, that we may, in ordinary cases, anticipate a measure of success in some degree *proportioned* to the amount of holy fidelity manifested. Not that *all* truly pious, or even eminently pious ministers, will be precisely alike successful; or that the *same man* will be alike successful at all times, and in all places. To assert this, would be to contradict all history, divine and human. Still, if I am not greatly deceived, the whole current of God's word, and the whole experience of his covenanted people, at once illustrate and confirm the spirit of our text; namely, that the most truly spiritual, wise, devoted and faithful ministers will, in general, ever be found the most successful in convincing and converting sinners, and in *building up believers in faith and holiness unto salvation*.

I know it may be objected here, that even Christ himself, whom his ministers are called to follow, was not, to say the least, a remarkably successful preacher; that notwithstanding all the wisdom, power, and transcendent excellence of his ministrations, the number of converts brought in by his personal ministry was comparatively small. We may grant this to have been the case without at all contravening the doctrine of our text. When the Master himself preached, he did not, for obvious reasons, make a complete disclosure of those precious doctrines concerning his kingdom, which his ministers, after his death and resurrection, freely proclaimed, and which were then found so effectual in *turning men from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan unto God*. It is also important to recollect that; when the Savior himself preached, *the Spirit was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified*. The time, in fact, had not yet come for displaying, in their glory, the conquests of the gospel. The New Testament church was not yet set up. But afterwards, when *the Spirit was poured out from on high*, though the disciples were certainly *not above their Lord* either in skill or fidelity, their preaching was attended with a power before unknown,

and was gloriously successful. And although we have reason to believe that the preaching of all the apostles, after the Holy Spirit was given, was attended with success; yet it is worthy of notice that *the apostle* whose gifts, and graces, and diligence, and devotedness were pre-eminent, even among his brother apostles; who *labored more abundantly than they all*, seems also to have been by far the most successful of the whole number in bringing men to Christ, and in extending the borders of his kingdom. Not that even the heroic, devoted, and heavenly-minded *Paul* was equally successful every where. He preached as faithfully and powerfully, for aught we know, at refined and polished *Athens*, and at imperial *Rome*, as he did in the splendid and luxurious cities of *Corinth* and *Ephesus*; yet a far greater blessing seems to have attended his preaching in the latter cities than in the former. But his success was generally signal and extensive; and he appears to have labored no where wholly in vain.

I need not say, indeed, to a Christian assembly, what was before hinted, that every measure of success which ministers of the gospel enjoy, is the result of the Holy Spirit's influence. This, indeed, is plainly implied in the very language of our text. *Follow me, and I WILL MAKE YOU fishers of men.* Yes, my friends, it is a truth, which, while it humbles the faithful minister, at the same time encourages and animates him in his labor that **SUCCESS IS ALL OF GOD**, and of a SOVEREIGN GOD. Even when the inspired *Paul* planted, and the eloquent *Apollos* watered, the increase was not of themselves, but of him alone who sent them forth, and gave them their message. Their most stupendous miracles, and extraordinary gifts, never wrought the conversion of a single heart. The same divine influence which was effectual when the weakest of their contemporaries were the preachers, was just as necessary for *their* success, as for that of any others. And, to this hour, when the most able and faithful minister on earth is made an instrument of saving good to any, we know that *the excellency of the power is of God, and not of the earthen vessel* by whom the treasure is conveyed. Yet, in grace, as well as in nature, there is an *adaptedness*, as well as a *connection*, between means and ends; and a connection which is neither capricious, nor blindly accidental. The ministry of the gospel is the ordinance which God has appointed for bringing men to the knowledge and love of himself, and which he has promised to bless. And the more simply, earnestly, and perseveringly the ordinance is dispensed, the larger, in general, the amount of blessing which, upon every principle of scripture and reason, may be anticipated.

The scope of the promise, you will observe, is not that every one who preaches the gospel shall be crowned with success in his work; not even that every truly *pious* minister shall be honored with *distinguished* success, or even with *any* visible success. But that those who really "follow Christ" in their ministry; that is, who follow him with some good degree of *fidelity*, *consistency*, and *diligence*, shall be crowned with a blessing, in a greater or less degree. It is, no doubt, with ministers of religion as it is with those who fill other stations. Great excellencies, nay, perhaps, even the greatest, may be neutralized, or counteracted by great defects. An *instructor of*

*youth*, for example, may be an honest man, a profound scholar, and extremely lucid in his mode of imparting knowledge; but he may be, with all, so indolent, so impatient, so undignified, so petulant, or so morose and repulsive, as to conciliate none; arrest the attention of none; and, of course, improve none in knowledge. In like manner, a *military commander* may have great energy of character, determined bravery, and uncommon quickness of perception and decision; but may be, at the same time, so entirely destitute of judgment, as never to win a battle. So it may be with him who bears the sacred office. A minister may be hopefully pious, and yet, in a great measure, without skill in illustrating and applying truth. He may shine as a "sermonizer," according to many of the established canons of that art, without being truly a "gospel preacher." He may be approved and admired by all *in the pulpit*; but may manifest so much coldness, levity or worldliness *out of it*, as wholly to counteract the influence of his preaching; nay, to render him one of the most efficient instruments of the adversary. He may be capable of delighting, by a beautiful discourse, on general truth; while he is so little versed in Christian experience, as to be utterly unqualified wisely and safely to counsel anxious souls. One may have zeal without knowledge or prudence; another may have both knowledge and prudence, but no zeal. One may appear to great advantage in occasional efforts, and fervent appeals; but may have no taste, and scarcely any capacity, for the details of persevering labor. Another may go, year after year, a round of abundant labor; but it may be a dull and lifeless routine, which has not about it a single kindling or spirit-stirring attribute. Now, that such ministers should not be found extensively useful; nay, that some of them should never have been apparently instrumental in the awakening and conversion of a single soul, is surely no marvel. It would rather be marvellous if it were otherwise. For it cannot be said of any of them that they really "follow Christ." It is not denied, indeed, that a minister who is himself destitute of piety, *may* be made a channel for conveying piety to others. "A sovereign God," as an old divine strongly expresses it, "may, now and then, by way of miracle, raise a man to life, even by the bones of a dead prophet." He *may*, and there is reason to believe he sometimes *does*, honor his own word so far as to make it effectual to salvation, even though it fall from unhallowed lips. The ministry of *Judas Iscariot* was, probably, not altogether without benefit to the church of Christ. But such a result is not, in ordinary cases, and certainly not in any considerable degree, to be expected.

But where a minister of Christ really discharges the duties of his office **IN THE TRUE SPIRIT OF HIS MASTER**; where his temper, and his life; his preaching and his practice; his labors for his people in public, and his unceasing prayers for them in secret, are all in harmony with his profession; I consider the word of God, in our text, and in various other passages, as giving a pledge that he shall not labor in vain. Success, in a greater or less degree, will assuredly follow. *As the rain cometh down from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth, saith Jehovah, it shall not return unto me void, but*

*shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* A minister, I say again, who thus faithfully, unostentatiously, and perseveringly labors, will not lose his labor. He will see some precious fruit of it, silently, perhaps, but effectually, springing up around him. To some extent, the truth, like leaven, will take effect; the careless will be roused; the ignorant will think and inquire; the obdurate will feel; the secure will become anxious; the impenitent will repent and believe; the dead will live.

Why should it not be so? Was it not thus in apostolic times? Is not the gospel the same now that it ever was? Are not the Holy Spirit and the divine promises the same *now* that they were when Paul preached? Is not that gracious pledge—*Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world*, as availing and as precious at this hour, as it was eighteen centuries ago? Yes, my friends, the words of the inspired apostle to the believers of *Corinth* are as true of the Christian minister, as of any other follower of Christ. *Be ye, therefore, steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Let none say, as an objection to this statement, that God is a *sovereign*, and that some of the best ministers in the church of Christ have been, in a great measure, without success. Jehovah is indeed a sovereign; and every creature ought to rejoice in the glorious truth. But so also is he a sovereign in dispensing *temporal blessings*. He makes the sun to shine, the rain to descend, and the wind to blow, when and where he pleases. And yet, I suppose it may be laid down, as a general principle, which all experience confirms, that the most wise, vigilant, laborious, and persevering husbandman, will commonly reap the most abundant harvest. Now, the same great principle applies, I believe, quite as extensively, and with even more certainty, in the kingdom of grace. It is true, indeed, in the most favored portions of the church, and under the most faithful ministerial culture, that the eye of man has ever witnessed, there may be seasons of comparative drought and barrenness. But was there ever a wise, deeply pious, humble, faithful, laborious, devoted minister, who was entirely without success? who had *no souls given him for his hire*? I will venture to say such a case never existed. Even though a truly faithful servant of Christ were sent to prophecy in a valley of desolation and death, filled with *dry bones, exceeding dry*; we have never failed to see more or less evidence that his Master was with him, and that his gospel was *the power of God unto salvation*. We have never failed to see some degree of spiritual, verdure and beauty spring up, where all was arid and sterile before. We have heard a shaking, and seen a movement in the valley of vision; *bone coming to his bone, and flesh to his flesh*, until there stood up, if not *an exceeding great army*, at least a *goodly company of witnesses* to the power of the truth. Was it not so with *Whitefield*, and *Tennent*, and *Edwards*, and *Davies*, and *Schwartz*, and *Brainred*, and *Payson*, and *Oberlin*, and hundreds of others like them? Did such men ever labor long together without profit? I firmly believe not. And if the fidelity and zeal of *such* ministers were habitually kept up to the proper elevation; if even *they* were not apt, in many cases, to fall into seasons of relaxation and depression in regard both to feeling and action; I will not say

that they would be favored with a perpetual revival of religion; yet I believe they would witness a silent, but constant turning of one and another to the right way. They would seldom, I am persuaded, pass a week without hearing of one or more awakening from the slumber of death, and *asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward*. And, accordingly, when that blessed period shall arrive, of which the evangelical prophet speaks, when the "watchmen," placed on the walls of Zion, shall be not only really, but uniformly and perseveringly faithful; when they *shall not cease, day nor night*, to instruct and warn, it will be the signal for the arrival of that happy time when the church shall be no longer "forsaken" or "desolate;" but when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the sea*.

From the foregoing doctrine, we may infer—

1. That the duties of a gospel minister are not only the most *important*, but also the most *delightful* in which a mortal can engage on this side of heaven. What is the *nature* of these duties, and what is their *object*? The grand purpose for which the faithful minister of Christ studies and lives, is to be a "fisher of men;" to "win souls" to the best of Masters; to persuade his fellow men to be wise, holy and happy; to turn them from rebellion, condemnation and ruin, to obedience, pardon, peace, and eternal blessedness. Can there be an employment more exalted, more delightful, more godlike than this? If the contemplation of happiness, which we have been instrumental in producing, be one of the purest pleasures of which we are capable; what must be the pleasure of that man who spends his life in conveying to those around him the choicest gifts of heaven; in proclaiming, from day to day, the unsearchable riches of grace, and salvation, and glory, to those who must otherwise have perished? What must be his enjoyment *now*, if he have the spirit of his office? And, above all, what must be his enjoyment in *that day*, when the destinies of the soul, and the glories of redemption, shall have the light of eternity poured upon them? Surely, if there be any employment which ought to be "meat and drink" to him who engages in it, **THIS** is that employment. Surely, if there be a crown of glory infinitely superior to any earthly diadem, it is that which the faithful minister shall wear. Why, then, O why, is not this office more coveted, more eagerly sought than it is, by enlightened, ingenuous, high-minded young men? And why is it, alas! that those who actually sustain it, are not more completely occupied, delighted, absorbed in its blessed pursuits? *Verily, this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation!*

2. It is plain, from the foregoing representation, that the gospel ministry is a work, the due performance of which **REQUIRES THE WHOLE MAN**. If the duties of the office be such as you have heard, it is self-evident that they demand the whole time, the whole strength, the whole heart of him who undertakes them. The voice of reason, as well as of scripture, is, "**GIVE THYSELF WHOLLY TO THEM.**" That minister, then, who thinks to discharge his duty by giving it only a minor part of his time, snatched from secular employment, labors under an awful delusion. And that church, which, by withholding from her pastor a comfortable support, *compels* him to yield himself to the distraction of worldly cares, is deplorably infatuated. It is truly

interesting to observe how some of the ancient servants of Christ were accustomed to regard this matter. We are told of *Ambrose*, bishop of *Milan*, who lived in the fourth century, that he was, habitually, so incessantly occupied in *preaching*, *catechizing*, and *visiting* from house to house; and during the few hours not thus employed, so absorbed in *study*, that it was difficult to obtain an interview with him, unless on special business. *Augustine*, when a young man, spent several years in *Milan*, and though he earnestly desired to enjoy the society of *Ambrose*, he tells us he found it almost impossible to obtain access to him; not at all on account of any personal reserve; but from the multiplicity, and unceasing urgency of his official engagements.

Let no minister be ready to object, that such an unceasing course of labor will *wear him out*. **TO BE SURE IT WILL.** And **WE MUST WEAR OUT IN SOME CAUSE.** Every man who does not die prematurely, is worn out in the service of some master. And which is best, to wear out in the service of sensuality, of ambition, of avarice, or of Jesus Christ? Can any man in his senses hesitate? What were life, and health, and talents given for; but to be **EXPENDED** in promoting the kingdom and glory of their adorable giver? A prudent care of health, indeed, that his life may not be cut short in the midst, is, undoubtedly, the duty of every one. The minister who, in laboring, goes beyond his strength of body and mind, is a madman. But the spirit of "self-indulgence" has been strongly, and not improperly, called **THE VERY SPIRIT OF ANTI-CHRIST!** Shall a minister, then, say either to himself or to any one else, on this principle, **SPARE THYSELF?** Did our Master "spare himself;" when he came to die for us? Did the apostles "spare themselves," when they gave up all for Christ? Can we possibly do more than we ought to do, as far as our strength of body and mind permits, for him to whom we owe our being, our talents, our hope, our life, our all, for this world, and the world to come? Surely, then, of all men living, ministers of the gospel ought to feel that they have no time to lounge in the circles of gossip or amusement; or to waste on reading, or any other employment, which has no immediate tendency to prepare them for their momentous work. Surely they ought to be ready to say, with the pious and devoted *Nehemiah*, to every person or solicitation that would draw them from their appropriate sphere of labor, "We are doing a great work, so that we cannot come down: why should the work cease, while we leave it, and come down to you?"

3. If our interpretation of the Savior's words be correct, then, when a minister of the gospel has **NO GENUINE SUCCESS** in his work, he has reason to be **DEEPLY ANXIOUS AND ALARMED.** Must he not be irresistibly led to the conclusion, that there is something seriously defective in himself, and in the character of his ministry? I am aware, indeed, that when we hear ministers converse on this subject, nothing is more common than to find them referring chiefly to the *Divine sovereignty*, the *diversities*, and the entire *want of success*, among the laborers in the gospel vineyard. But I must think, my dear brethren, that we are apt to "lay this unction to our souls," much more readily and frequently than either scripture or reason warrants. I firmly believe that if we were more like Christ, more devoted, spiritual, diligent, and prayerful, we should all of us be more successful in "winning souls" to him;

and, consequently, that if we are seldom or never thus honored, it is *chiefly* because we so little resemble him. If we wish our message, then, to be effectual in rousing *others*, let us begin with **ROUSING OURSELVES**. O, if we were more "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" if we bore about with us more of the spirit and the example of the Lord Jesus, we should find imparted to our sermons, and our conversation, a life and power; a touching and kindling eloquence, which, without this spirit, can never exist. We, perhaps, all need an improvement in our method of preaching, making it less dogmatical: less philosophical, more simple, more biblical, that is, consisting more in the illustration of scripture by scripture; more direct; more pointed; more affectionate; more full of heavenly unction; more, in short, like a message from God, than a human oration. The late excellent and lamented Dr. *John H. Rice*, in the last letter that I received from him, made the following remark: "I am convinced that, in the present state of this country, there is nothing which can control the religious principle, and give it a salutary direction, but **BIBLE TRUTH, PLAINLY EXHIBITED, AND HONESTLY URGED ON THE UNDERSTANDING AND CONSCIENCE**. And I am persuaded that all settled pastors, and all missionaries too, ought to do a great deal more than they now do in *lecturing*; or, as some express it, *expounding*. There is too much *reasoning*, and too much *dogmatizing* in the pulpit. I throw out this hint, that, if it is worth any thing, you may drop it before the students, of your Seminary." The sentiment is worth much, and I repeat and record it for your benefit. "The word," as the pious and venerable Mr. *Baxter* somewhere observes—"the word is divine; but our preaching is human; and there is scarcely any thing we have the handling of, but we leave on it the prints of our fingers." We need more exclusive devotedness to our great mission; more decision of spiritual character; more ardor and steadfastness of zeal; more urgency in our benevolent suit; more unwearied endeavors to adapt our ministrations to the benefit of the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the learned and the illiterate. O, if we had more of all this, our labor would, certainly, not be "in vain in the Lord." If we desire greater success, then, in our work, the way to it is plain. It is to humble ourselves before God with deeper abasement; to pray with more fervent importunity for the gift of the Holy Spirit; and to gird ourselves with new decision, enterprize and zeal for our work.

4. Finally, we learn from this subject, what **AMPLE ENCOURAGEMENT** ministers have to **PLAN AND LABOR FOR CHRIST**. Surely no laborers ever had higher encouragements set before them than those who are now called of God to the ministry of reconciliation. For such a Master in such a cause, and for such objects, who would not be willing to live and to die laboring? That brighter days await the church of God, and that those days will be introduced and adorned by a band of ministers more faithful and devoted; more totally absorbed and unwearied in their Master's work, than we have ever seen, cannot, I think, be doubted by any serious believer in God's word. Such of us as are now in the decline of life, will, probably, not live to see those days ushered in: but cannot the oldest and the feeblest of us contribute something to hasten on their arrival? And can we consent to live another

year, or another month, without aspiring, while our time lasts, to the labor and the rewards of such a holy enterprize?

Our lot, beloved brethren, is cast in a most interesting and momentous period of the world's history. We see a large part of Christendom in a state of excitement and action, such as no generation ever witnessed before since the gospel was preached among men. During the apostolic age, it is true, and for a hundred years afterwards, efforts and sacrifices were made for Christ, at the recital of which the heart of piety warms, and the coldness of modern zeal must hide its head. But to how small a part of the population of the globe these efforts and sacrifices were confined, and how short their continuance, we all know. During the later portion of the "dark ages" which followed, it may be said, that a large part of the wealth, and power, and activity of the civilized world, was given to the reigning church; but to *what objects* were that wealth and power devoted? To the spread of pure and undefiled religion? To the promotion of the virtue and happiness of man? Far from it. But to erect splendid cathedrals; to endow corrupt monasteries; to enrich and pamper a voluptuous and ambitious priesthood. When the *Crusades* occurred, they caused, it is true, a stupendous and truly memorable movement of the whole Christian church. But to what end? Was it to extend the reign of enlightened piety? By no means. But to prostrate education; to relax morals; to increase ecclesiastical tyranny and profligacy; to destroy two millions of lives; and to clothe almost every household in western Christendom in mourning. That so many blessings were indirectly and ultimately brought out of these enormous evils, is no matter of thanks to the deluded, fanatical actors in the wonderful scene. And, finally, when the *Reformation*, that "great moral miracle," electrified Europe, and shook to its foundation, "the kingdom of the beast," though it was the harbinger of countless blessings to the world, the consequences of which we are enjoying to the present hour, yet how soon was its glory clouded by strife and division; and in how small an amount of immediate exertion for benefiting the human family at large, did it result! But *now* a spirit is poured out, in some measure, if I mistake not, *peculiar* to the day in which we live. Such a spirit of Christian enterprize; such extensive and active combinations to benefit mankind, and especially to spread the glorious gospel, were, surely, never before known. And, although, it cannot be denied that some features of an unfavorable character mar the face of the day in which our lot is cast; yet, undoubtedly, its prevailing lineaments are those of high moral enterprize, of holy hope, and of animating promise. Such is the period in which the Lord of the harvest has placed us in his vineyard, and commanded us to "occupy until he come."

Beloved ALUMNI OF THE SEMINARY with which it is the happiness of him who now addresses you to be connected! do you not account it a privilege to live in such a day as this? Do you not regard it as at once an honor and a duty to cheer on, and, by all the means in your power to help forward, the glorious work which is devolved upon the men of this generation—the work of evangelizing the world? I trust there is not one of your number disposed to shrink from the arduous enterprize, or to say, "I pray thee have me ex-

cused." But remember, I entreat you, that the enjoyment of this privilege is connected with the most solemn responsibility. Yes, your situation is solemn and responsible beyond expression. Have you, or have you not, spirits girded for the plans and efforts of this day? Are you, or are you not, ready and willing to be unreservedly consecrated to Christ, to "spend and be spent" in his service? O that every one of us may be found ready, with the whole heart, to say, when the call of duty sounds, *Behold, here am I, Lord! speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth! Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

Perhaps, as I am called to speak this evening, at the request and for the benefit of the ALUMNI ASSOCIATION of our beloved Seminary, it may be expected by some that I shall dwell particularly on the claims, the wants, and the interests of an Institution so dear to us all. But I have designedly forbore, and shall forbear to enlarge on this subject, because it appears to me that I have something infinitely more important to speak of than the claims of a single "school of the prophets," however worthy it may be of our affection and our prayers. My object is to recommend a spirit, and to contribute my humble instrumentality, under the divine blessing, to the formation of a character, which will render every one of you a blessing to the whole church of God, and to the world. Besides, if the beloved *Alumni* of our Seminary possess as much as they ought of that spirit which I have endeavored to illustrate and enforce, they will, I doubt not, love their theological *Alma Mater* as much as they ought to love her, and will take pleasure in every effort to provide for her wants, and to extend her usefulness. And if it be seen by the religious public that our Seminary sends forth many sons largely endowed with this spirit, the Christian community will love her as much as they ought, and will promptly second all your efforts to sustain her interests, and to enlarge her means of doing good. In a word, we can in no way so essentially and permanently benefit the institution for which we are associated to pray and labor, as by "following Christ," and continually manifesting the power of his Spirit in forming us to be the devoted benefactors of mankind. Cultivate this spirit, and then all will be well. Be filled with this spirit, and then "your joy will be full;" our churches will smile; our judicatories will be scenes of love, harmony and edification; and that Supreme Judicatory of our beloved Church, which we have come hither to attend, instead of being the theatre of conflicting opinions, and of party strife, will never meet but to bless the city in which it assembles; to rejoice the heart of every friend of Christ who witnesses its proceedings; and to give a new impulse to the progress of truth and righteousness in the world.

Beloved Friends and Pupils! to each one of you is committed a share of this mighty trust. Ponder well the magnitude of your duty, and the weight of your responsibility. Pray without ceasing that the spirit of truth, of peace, of love, and of zeal for the Lord of hosts may ever rest upon you all. Seek the peace of Zion; but remember that her *peace* may be consulted at the expense of her *purity*; that she can never be successfully and solidly built up but by a faithful adherence to the truth and order prescribed by her adorable Head; and that he who contributes towards the diffusion of the knowledge and spirit of Christ in our world, does more for the real welfare and happiness of

his species, than he could possibly accomplish by the most splendid endowments that wealth, and learning, and patriotism ever devised. Among the trials of the present day is a spirit of restless innovation; a disposition to consider every thing that is new as, of course, an improvement. Against this spirit let me warn you. However plausible, it is unwise and delusive. Happy are they, who, taking the word of God for their guide, and walking "in the footsteps of the flock," continually seek the purity, the harmony, and the edification of the Master's family! Who, listening with more respect to the unerring Oracle, and to the sober lessons of Christian experience, than to the dreams of morbid excitement, or the delusions of fashionable error; hold on their scriptural way, "turning neither to the right hand nor the left;" and considering it as their highest honor to be employed in winning souls to Christ, and in building up that "kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Need I remind you, beloved Friends, that we are all hastening to the judgment seat of Christ! Nearly **FOURSCORE** of those who once resorted to our Seminary, have been already called to give in their final account. Be ye also ready! And remember that the best of all readiness is that which consists in "following Christ." In following **HIM**, and **ONLY** in following **HIM**, you will be best prepared to meet your Judge. In following **HIM**, and **ONLY** in following **HIM**, you will be best qualified to promote the enlargement, the holiness, and the genuine edification of the Church of God. May this be your habitual aspiration, this your blessed attainment! And when the "Chief Shepherd shall appear, may you be so happy as to receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away!" Amen! and Amen!

# THE PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

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## SERMON LIII.

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### REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

**JEREMIAH 17:27.** *But, if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath day, and not bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.*

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” This was the utterance of generous patriotism, and of ardent piety. To every true-hearted Jew, his country was an object of high estimation, and of deeply-felt interest. Its civil laws, its religious institutions, its thrones of judgment, and its sacred Temple, its cities, and its diversified scenes of rural beauty and fruitfulness,—all had a charm for his eye, an object of tender solicitude for his heart. So must every good man feel for his country, and for all its interests. These interests are a compound of worldly and moral good. The mere profusion or abundance of earthly benefits does not make up the half of its true prosperity. The integrity, the virtuous and religious character of its population constitute the much larger proportion of national felicity. Without these the greatest measure of external good would not be a blessing, but a curse; and, from the nature of the case, as well as from the declared will of God, such external prosperities could not continue. The happiness of nations, like that of individuals, depends essentially, on personal character, and is in fact the aggregate of individual virtue, and enjoyment. The constitution of human nature and the express will of God assign the same laws of happiness to man, whether considered singly, or in any, or all his social relations. The fear of God, and the knowledge and observance of his laws form the only firm foundation on which social order can be sustained, the only sufficiently authoritative and controlling spirit which can give it a wise arrangement, direct its operations, and assign

its due limits. This truth has been felt and recognized by all wise legislators and rulers. On this principle the Jewish government, as prescribed by God, and administered by him, as their supreme governor, was expressly formed. All the details of their civil policy were connected with the explicit recognition of their moral and religious interests, relations, and responsibilities.

This same general principle, God has not abandoned, but, with unabated authority maintains it, in all the various conditions in which man is found, and under all the social or national circumstances in which he does exist. The most High ever rules amongst the inhabitants of this world. To this dominion over man he has not relinquished his claim, nor can they neglect or disown it, but at the expense of the most ruinous forfeitures. It is infinitely fit, that he, to whom all things belong, on whom all things depend, and from whom all good is derived, should be habitually, and unequivocally owned. And such is his constitution of man, and of all his interests and relations, that his perfection, safety, and happiness, can in no other way be secured. "That nation and people that will not serve God shall perish."—"Righteousness will exalt a nation; but sin is the ruin of any people." Hence it will necessarily follow, that, a knowledge of the will of God is of the utmost importance; and that all the means which he has instituted for this purpose, deserves a most sacred regard, and careful improvement. In order to "render to God the things that are God's," we must know what he deserves and requires. To obtain this knowledge, and a disposition and qualification for obedience, we must improve the means which he has ordained for those ends. This is expressly and wisely his reason for the institution of the Sabbath. The nature of man, in all his relations, conditions, and interests, needs, indispensably needs a knowledge of, and regard to the will of God. For this God has ordained the appropriate means: the abuse or neglect of these must, of necessity, involve in it the loss of that good which was thus proposed, and which was by those means attainable: and moreover, it incurs the righteous displeasure of him whose wisdom and goodness are thus contemned, and the benevolent exercise of whose authority is thus opposed. Such are the consequences which God so explicitly and solemnly denounces by the prophet, from verse 21st to 27th: "Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. And it shall come to pass if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes, sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain for ever. And they shall come from the cities of

Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord. *But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.*" Now, the obvious and important question is, What concern have we in this matter? Is this message for us? Is this duty ours? Have we transgressed? What have we to fear? What have we to do? I have no hesitation to answer, that the authority of God, in this matter, binds us, no less than it bound the Jews: that, to its penalty, if transgressors, we are no less exposed than they: and that, if this be true, we have much reason of humiliation and fear. In the consideration of this subject I will,

**I. ADDUCE EVIDENCES OF THE STILL EXISTING AUTHORITY AND OBLIGATION OF THIS LAW.**

**II. CONSIDER THE REASONS WE HAVE TO BELIEVE, THAT, THIS THREATENING WILL BE FULFILLED, IN CASE OF TRANSGRESSION.**

**III. INQUIRE, HOW FAR OUR CONDUCT EXPOSES US TO THIS DANGER.**

I. I will adduce evidences of the still existing authority and obligation of this law of the Sabbath.

This is the more necessary, because, by some it is doubted, and by some it is expressly denied; and there are very many, whose opinions in this matter, are not accompanied with that intelligent and deep conviction which would give it that authority and commanding influence which are due to an explicit and acknowledged law of the Supreme and Eternal King. There are thousands who, in general, admit the existence and obligation of this law,—who, notwithstanding, habitually violate it, and seem seldom, if ever, to reflect, that, in this there is either crime or danger. Their conduct is absurdly impious, and "out of their own mouths are they condemned:" "Knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but even have pleasure in those that do them." But, still, it is to them, as it is to all others, a question of unutterable importance—*"Does God by his high authority, and under the pain of his awful displeasure, enjoin the sanctified observance of the Sabbath?"*

This solemn fact admits of no reasonable doubt or fair denial. That institution never was the peculiarity of any age, nor of any people. "It was made for man." Its existence was coeval with his. It is a matter of duty and of privilege to all: nor, are any, to whom it is made known, exempted from its authority, none are excluded from its exalted privileges, nor, from its benignant influence.

Let us honestly and attentively consider the evidences of the existence and authority of this law.

1. That it was enacted, and duly promulgated by competent, by the only competent authority, is a fact undeniable. For its original institution we refer to Genesis 2d chapter, 2d and 3d verses: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

Is it not beyond all reasonable doubt, that, this is a record of facts, and was intended to be a plain and faithful record of what was done, at the very time to which it refers? It admits, fairly, of no other interpretation. And what was done? "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." His "sanctifying it" can mean nothing else, and nothing less than his setting it apart from a common to a sacred use: and, for whose sacred use? Beyond all doubt, for theirs, for whom all days were made. And in what way did he bless it? Certainly, by ordaining it to be a day of special blessedness to those for whose observance and benefit it was thus specially separated and blest. The correctness of this interpretation is ascertained by the testimony of Him who "is Lord of the Sabbath." He affirms that, it "was made for man:" an early and highly important provision for the whole race: and made by the express authority and appointment of God, the Creator of man, and the rightful disposer of all days and times. It is a fact, that the patriarchs long before the Jewish Sabbath, and all, even the most ancient heathen nations, distinguished time into weeks of seven days, which no appearances in nature could have suggested, and which, therefore, must have resulted from the early appointment of a weekly Sabbath. It is also a fact, that the earliest pagan writers, particularly Homer and Hesiod, speak of the seventh day as peculiarly sacred. The latter styles this day, "the illustrious light of the sun"—the former has this verse, "then came the seventh day, which is holy." To this day of sacred rest, as ordained by God, and as known to be thus ordained, Moses referred the Israelites on the occasion of manna being miraculously furnished to them in the wilderness: "And Moses said, eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord, to-day ye shall not find manna in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, *the Sabbath*, in it there shall be none." Exod. 16:25, 26. Moses evidently takes for granted that the people were acquainted with the institution of the Sabbath: and of this their conduct gave proof. They had been, previously, commanded to gather daily of the manna, only what was sufficient for the daily supply of themselves and families; yet, on the day preceding the Sabbath, they of their own accord, gathered twice as much as they were wont to gather. For this no other reason can be assigned, than, that, aware that the seventh day was the Sabbath, they made this provision previously, that they might not violate the rest of the Sabbath. The conduct of the people and of Moses, evinced a perfect know-

ledge of the institution—and the design of Moses was, to remind them of it; and admonish them of the necessity of observing it sacredly; and that a special dispensation of manna would permit them to observe it, and distinctly show the will of God in that matter.

At Mount Sinai, this institution was solemnly renewed and confirmed—Exod. 20:8, 9, 10, 11. “And God spake these words, saying, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy: Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

The sacred authority of this institution we find distinctly recognized, and authoritatively asserted by Nehemiah. “Then,” says he, “I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus; and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet, ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.” By succeeding prophets we find a like recognition of this law of the Sabbath, until we find its authority asserted, and obediently respected by the incarnate Son of God.

Our first position is sustained by a vast amount of unquestionable evidence, that the sanctification of the Sabbath is a law of heaven, and the expressly declared will of God.

Let us attend to a second consideration in favor of its importance and perpetual obligation, which is—that the time and circumstances of the enactment and promulgation of the law of the Sabbath were very peculiar. We here, in the first place, refer to what we regard as an unquestionable fact, that its first institution was at the conclusion of the work of creation; and that it was ordained for, and given to man in his primeval innocence: one day in seven to be peculiarly honorable and blissful, in the midst of other days honorable and blest.

The Sabbath has nothing in its original design peculiar to man as fallen. It was instituted in memory of, and after the example of God himself ceasing from his work on the seventh day. Had our first parents and all their posterity retained primitive integrity and felicity, no doubt, this periodical cessation from their ordinary employments, would have been observed, honored with some special manifestations of divine favor, and some eminently blissful enjoyments. Exhausting toils and cares would not have existed to make this rest needful; the distractions and pollutions of sin would not have been felt requiring the tranquillizing and purifying influence of a holy Sabbath: yet, still, it might have been, and would have been a season of welcome repose, of more entirely devotional employment, and of more abundant communications of holy joys.

This day of sacred rest was an original enactment designed to be as uninterrupted, perpetual, and permanent, as the ordinances of day and night. It is an important religious ordinance designed to shed its benignant influence on the condition and character of man. It was one of the privileges of his days of innocence, and which is, by the gracious favor of God, continued with him, though fallen. It was not the mere shadow of good things to come: It was in itself good, and the instrumental means of the most exalted good. Who can believe, that this institution which held a place of authority and importance under every preceding dispensation, even that of innocence, is not recognized amongst the duties and privileges of Christianity? It is incredible and untrue.

Let us advert to another peculiarity of time and circumstances under which this original law was recognized and ratified, and marked with characters of high sacredness, authority, and immutability: I refer to the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai. The law of the Sabbath, as one of the ten commandments, and together with them, was given in a manner very peculiar, and which distinguished them from all other laws then given. All others were communicated, mediately, by the ministry of Moses: these were proclaimed immediately, by the voice of God himself. Does not this invest them with very peculiar sacredness? Does it not demand for them an eminent measure of respectful veneration? Does it not bespeak their distinguished importance and perpetuity? These things which God joined together, let not man put asunder. Their authority is one and indivisible. Remove one link and the whole chain is broken. Disclaim the authority of one and you disclaim the authority of all.

The circumstances under which the ten commandments, and the law of the Sabbath, as one of them, were given, were still more peculiar and distinguishing, clothing them with special honor, and impressing on them characters of eminent obligation and unfailing perpetuity. The frequency and speciality with which the observance of the Sabbath is enjoined, is, certainly, remarkable. It is repeated, and given in special charge, again and again. It formed a part of that ever-memorable record which was made by the finger of God, on tables of stone. "He gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God; and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." These were the same laws which were proclaimed by the voice of God from Mount Sinai: so Moses expressly affirms: after having recited the ten commandments he adds, "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the Mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice, and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." Why this marked peculiarity? manifestly to denote their pre-eminent importance, obligation, and perpetuity. Will any dare to deny to any one of these, the authority which God, without discrimination gave to all? May they who choose to worship images nullify the 2d, and they who

account the Sabbath a weariness reject the 4th? and if they may, why may not every class of sinners reject that which is, to them, most offensive? The reason is as good for one, as for another, and if admitted, goes fairly and fully, to the rejection of all. Be it known and remembered, that it is at the awful peril of God's displeasure, that men thus mutilate his work and modify his laws. "Their names shall be blotted out of the Book of life." Of the law of the Sabbath, there is not found, nor can there any where be found, either an express or fairly implied repeal. God has not annulled it, and none else can. Dr. Chalmers remarks, "The first (no doubt meaning the chief and highest) recommendation of the law of the Sabbath is the place which it occupies in the Decalogue. There was much of Jewish observancy swept away with the ruin of the national institutions. There was much of it designed for a temporary purpose, and which fell into disuse among the worshippers of God after that purpose was accomplished. But this does not hold true of all the services of Judaism. There is a broad line of distinction between that part of it which is now broken up, and that part of it which retains all the authority of a perpetual and immutable law. Point us out a single religious observance of the Hebrews, that is now done-away, and we are able to say of it, and of all others which have experienced a similar termination, that they, *every one of them*, lie without the compass of the ten commandments. They have no place whatever in the great record of duty which was graven on tables of stone, proclaimed by the voice of God from Sinai, and placed within the Holy of Holies under the mercy-seat. Now, how does the law of the Sabbath stand as to this particular? Does it lie within or without a limit so tangible, and forming so distinct and so noticeable a line of demarkation? We see it, then, standing within this record, of which all the other duties are of such general and imperishable obligation; we meet with it in the interior of that hallowed ground, of which every other part is so sacred and so inviolable. We perceive it occupying its own conspicuous place in that register of duties, all of which have the substance, and the irrevocable permanency of moral principle. . . . We should count it an experiment of the most fearful audacity, without the intimation of any act of repeal passed in the high legislature of heaven, to fly in the face of that Sabbath law, which stands enrolled among the items of so notable and so illustrious a document: and nothing short of a formal and absolute recallment can ever tempt us to think, that the new dispensation of the gospel has created so much as one vacancy in that register of duties which bears upon the aspect of its whole history the impress of a revealed standard that is unalienable and everlasting. . . . We should feel that, in dethroning any one of the preceptive impositions of the Decalogue from its authority over our practice, we were bidding defiance to the declared will of the Eternal; and resisting a voice which sounds as loudly and as impressively to our consciences, as the one that issued in thunder from the flaming top of Sinai, and scattered dismay among the thousands of Israel."

A third argument which proves that the obligation of the law of the Sabbath is still in force and unimpaired, is, That the reasons of its enactment re-

main unimpaired in all their pertinence and force. This argument would admit of an extended and profitable illustration, which the present occasion does not allow. We can only, briefly, advert to those reasons.

1. The authority of God's example is no less than when this observance had its first institution. The fact of his having rested on the seventh day,—and his declared will that, after his example, we should cease from our works as God also did from his,—are reasons as true, as pertinent, and obligatory now, as they ever were.

2. The proportion of time is as reasonable now, as at any other period of the world, or under any former dispensation. Were it a portion of time, claimed merely by the divine authority, without any regard to, or actual bearing upon our welfare, it would be criminal to refuse, or even to grudge it. The author of our existence, and the giver of all our days has an unquestionable right to any part of our time he chooses to demand, and to prescribe in what manner that time shall be employed.

How moderate is the demand of one day in seven!—I ought rather to say, how benevolent is this appointment: for, even that seventh day is “for man”—eminently, for his best, and highest interests, and to be a blessing to all his other days. To grudge the consecration of this time is eminently unseemly, *under the Christian dispensation*. That Jews should have accounted it grievous, was, in them, less criminal, when we consider the number of holy days, and the numerous, and expensive services of their sacred ritual. Even those institutions, however, were no doubt, wise and benevolent; and the end designed was worthy of all the means, and for them to have repined at the divine requirements, would have been criminal:—and will Christians relieved from the yoke of bondage, grudge to keep holy the seventh day, only, as the Sabbath of the Lord their God!

3. The necessity and benefit of a day of rest are no less now, than they ever were. Man's constitution of body and mind is equally liable to be exhausted by labor and intense application, and requires such a seasonable and periodical allotment of cessation and relief. The same is no less true of the inferior animals, for whom, also, this law kindly provides.

4. The obligation to worship God, in a social, and public manner, is in no wise diminished. For this a stated, and uniform time is altogether necessary; and without it, such worship would be impracticable.

5. The necessity of religious instruction, and means of moral cultivation are, as indispensable, as they ever were; and the value of these benefits is not now, nor can ever, in the present life, be diminished. But, this is not all: I, moreover, affirm that religion, and all its salutary effects, must cease in proportion as the religious observance of the Christian Sabbath ceases. The question is not, merely,—shall one institution of religion be discontinued? but, *shall all?* There is no alternative. Abolish the Sabbath—the Bible will be forgotten, the social worship of God will cease—religious knowledge, and feeling will speedily decline, the reign of ignorance, vice, and barbarism, will return. The Sabbath, as it was designed by God to be, is the palladium of

religion. Let the enemies of religion succeed in carrying this away from the sacred citadel, and their victory is sure. The joyous Church, the city of our God, will be changed into mourning and utter desolation. There will no longer be, any of its blissful privileges—if no Sabbath, there will be no churches, no preachers, no social worship, no Bible. Facts ascertain this result: and those facts are found, wherever, and in proportion as the Sabbath is neglected or profaned.

The reasons of the institution of the Sabbath, as declared by Christ, prove its universality, perpetuity, and sacredness. "The Sabbath was made for man"—consequently for all men—not for Jews alone. For all periods of the world. It was made for man, in a respect in which other days were not made: not for his secular interests, and cares—to that end other days are allotted; but for his moral and religious interest:—to sanctify, and shed a benignant influence on all his secular days, labors, and enjoyments. That the law of the Sabbath is divine, and in the intention of the Lawgiver to reach with unabated authority from the beginning to the end of of time, is a truth as unquestionable as any other which the testimony of God ascertains. On us there rests an undeniable, and indispensable obligation to keep holy to the Lord one day in seven. It is another question, what particular day shall be thus sanctified? The decision of this question affects not the spirit of the law, nor the object and reasons of its enactment. A change of the day, from the seventh to the first, no more abolishes the obligation to keep holy a seventh part of time, than it changes the nature of God, or of man. To God, worship is still due, and man needs instruction and rest one day in seven. All the reasons therefore which ever existed for the institution of the Sabbath, exist still, and will forever exist, while the character of God, and the capacity and character of man remain, and he continues to be an inhabitant of this world. The law is still, in all its original and unabated authority. If its true import demands the Jewish Sabbath, and admits no change, *let that be the Sabbath*, and have its hallowed observance; but, reject not the law. If there be no good and sufficient reasons for the change, then, the original day must be observed. Have we, then, any warrant to admit the change? We believe we have, from the same authority by which the law was first enacted. If in terms less explicit, yet, sufficiently clear and conclusive. Though we can find no positive enactment requiring the change; yet, we can quote the uncontrolled observation of it down from the period of the apostolical age; we are sure that a practice so early, and so universal could not have been introduced without the sanction of heaven's inspired messengers. What they have done with his approbation, is, to all intents and purposes, to be recognized as the act and will of the Eternal King. This argument, in its detail, places the divine authority of this change beyond all reasonable doubt or suspicion. "The Savior, after his passion, introduced the actual change by his own example. His appearances after his resurrection, marked the day which was to become the Lord's. Having risen on that blessed morn, he manifested himself four times before its

close, to his disciples; and thus celebrated, or rather constituted the first Christian Sabbath, on its new day of being observed. All the Evangelists seem to delight in marking, that it was on the first day of the week, and no other, that these transactions took place. Matthew tells us that at the "very dawn of the first day" the two Mary's had the early tidings of the resurrection of their Lord. Mark informs us, that, "very early" in the morning that glorious event occurred. Luke relates the same with special notice, that, it was "on the first day of the week." John says, "on the first day of the week cometh Mary, when it was yet dark, to the sepulchre," and sees her risen Redeemer. The second appearance to the three women, was on the same day. The journey to Emmaus, and his "being known in the breaking of bread" was the third visit. And the fourth closed the first Christian Sabbath: "the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week—where the disciples were assembled, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." The intervening week passed without any repetition of his visits; but, lo! after six days the returning Lord's day is honored by his presence—"and after eight days again, Jesus came, and stood in the midst." This second coming on the same day of the week, (says Paley,) has all the appearance of an appointment, a design to meet on that particular day." I only add in a summary manner—that the pentecostal dispensation of the Spirit was on the Lord's day—on that day, subsequently, the apostles held their special weekly meetings—this was also the universal practice of the primitive church; and it is especially worthy of remembrance, how God has, from that time to this, honored the Lord's day as a season of gracious presence in his ordinances. There is the most abundant evidence, that the first day of the week has, by the authority of Christ, become the Christian Sabbath, and is by way of glorious eminence *the Lord's day*. This in no wise interferes with the spirit and design of the original law. "The fourth commandment does not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath: but only that we should keep every seventh day, or one after six. It says, 'Six days shalt thou labor, and the seventh thou shalt rest;' but does not determine where those six days should begin, nor where the rest of the Sabbath should fall. The precept is to be taken generally of such a seventh day as God should appoint."—*J. Edwards*. This is farther evident from the fact that it is now impossible to determine which is the seventh day from the creation: and from the spherical form of the earth, no uniform time can occur to be observed. The Christian Sabbath "is the day which the Lord hath made." As to the measure and manner of its sanctification, I know of no change, nor reason of change. If we take not the original law as the rule, and the measure, where shall we find either rule or measure? To reject this, is to throw the matter altogether loose and undefined, and leave it to mere opinion and pleasure. This cannot be right. Christianity knows no abatement of the morality of any of the laws of God; but reasonably demands a larger measure of devotedness and spirituality.

If the sanctification of the Sabbath were a grievous tax, or an arbitrary or unnecessary tribute exacted from man—to reduce it as low as possible might be excusable—but this is not true of the requirements of the law, nor of the design of the Lawgiver. The more nearly the observance in its matter and spirit comes to the utmost demands of the precept, the more benign is its influence, and the more abundant its fruits of holiness and happiness. A disposition to abate the measure of the sanctification of the Sabbath can result only from a spirit of irreligion. It grudges at the claims of God as too great: it disrelishes the privileges and enjoyments which God offers: it undervalues the end which God designs to promote, by unwillingness to employ the means appointed for, and most wisely appropriate to that purpose. If men valued holiness and its spiritual joys, as much as they value the world and its interests, they would not complain either of the frequency or the sacredness of the Sabbath. If the Sabbath is a weariness, it is because God and his service are disliked. As to the manner of its sanctification, what ever has been, still is the measure of this law. This the prophet Isaiah teaches. “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, and from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.”

In perfect accordance with this, is the statement of our Catechism: “The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God’s worship, excepting so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.”

I know of no exceptions as to the measure of the observance, nor as to those persons on whom its obligation rests. If one may violate it, all may; if we may in one way, we may in any way. If social pleasure is lawful, labor is no less so; if we may transgress a part, we may profane the whole of it. It is alleged that some early Christians did not religiously observe it. What then? It was their sin—their example has no authority. Show us that Christ, or his inspired apostles, either by doctrine or example, so taught, then we will admit the argument: but we will not admit the authority or opinions of any others. Other errors appeared early in the Christian church. Are they, for that reason, *truth*? No: they were then errors, and they are errors still.

I have endeavored to prove that the authority and obligation of the law of the Sabbath remain in full force and virtue; and that consequently the transgression denounced in the text will, in our case, be no less *a sin* than it was in the case of those to whom the law was first addressed. It becomes, to us, a matter of deep and awful interest,

II. To consider the reasons we have to believe that this threatening will be fulfilled *upon us also*, if we in like manner transgress. This conclusion we cannot avoid, if the evidence adduced amounts to a proof of the doctrine which it was designed to establish. If the law in its unimpaired

authority reaches us, of necessary consequence its penalty must. Our obligation to obey it can be no less, nor is the guilt of transgression less. No reason can be given why the same sin should not be equally criminal in us, and expose us as certainly and as heavily to the displeasure of God. That such is the fact should not be doubted. Sentence against this evil work, may not be executed speedily, yet its execution is sure. It is true, not only in relation to the violation of this law, but of all other laws of God, that merited punishment is often, for a season, delayed: but, if repentance does not intervene, the threatened retribution will not fail. Profaneness, drunkenness, and fraud, are not immediately punished, will any one from this allege that God overlooks their criminality, or will fail to execute, in due time, the merited curse? The hope of impunity, which the impenitent transgressor indulges, is delusive, and if persisted in will be found to be a ruinous presumption. They may flatter themselves that they shall have peace: but God declares that it shall be "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish."

They who impenitently profane the Sabbath shall not escape the judgment of God: for,

1st. *God has thus expressly and repeatedly threatened.* "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken, and will he not bring it to pass?"

That the evidence of this may be more abundant, we add, 2ndly. That God has in many signal instances actually executed his wrath threatened against the profanation of the Sabbath. I refer you to the appeal which Nehemiah makes to the Jews: "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus; and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." The execution of the threatening in the text is recorded in the 52d chapter of this book by Jeremiah. The city was besieged, taken and plundered, and its wealth and its population carried away by the conquerors; and seventy years of captivity, exile, oppression, and suffering, were the dismal retribution for their impious and long continued profanation of the Sabbath of the Lord.

The history of every age, and of every year, furnishes examples of the judgments of God against this grievous and mischievous sin.

It has been often remarked how many calamitous occurrences are found to be on the Lord's day; and how generally these befall persons when actually indulging in its profanation. How many are drowned—how many cases of bodily harm by falls and otherwise occur among those who seek their own irreligious pleasures on that holy day! The number of cases, on that day, is not much less than all that occur on the six remaining days of the week. These, as all other events, are under the direction and control of the providence of God. How shall we account for the time and the fact of their frequent occurrence? I cannot doubt that the displeasure of heaven against the violation of the Sabbath is thus revealed. I am fully aware that, by this an-

swer, I will incur with many the charge of superstition. I cannot help that: I express my conviction. It must be taken for what it is worth.

3dly. This sin is one which involves, in itself, the execution of its own penalty. It inevitably and immediately produces evil.

The first effect is on individual character, by its demoralizing influence. In those who profane the Sabbath will necessarily be found ignorance of God and divine things, destitution and depravation of moral feeling, and vice in all its forms and degrees. Among these you will find the perpetrators of crimes, the troublers of society, and the victims of justice. These constitute our mobs, and replenish our gaols, penitentiaries and poor-houses. Without religious knowledge and influence, men become profligate and desperate. This knowledge *they* cannot have who despise and profane the Sabbath. To this chiefly is to be ascribed the crimes, licentiousness, and misery of individuals. This mischievous effect, as is to be expected, is, *subsequently*, felt by man in all his social relations; in families, neighborhoods, larger communities, and nations. The prosperity and happiness of all these are absolutely dependent on religious knowledge, and the influence of religious principles: and these never exist where the Sabbath and its institutions are disregarded. The present perilous and distracted state of our own nation has, I believe, resulted in a great measure from this cause. God, in just displeasure for his Sabbaths profaned, has left us to divided counsels, unbittered strifes, and deeds of lawless outrage, and we are reaping the bitter fruits of our own impiety and rebellion. His desecrated Sabbaths have increased the floods of iniquity, and the overflowings of ungodliness threaten to overwhelm us. The means which he had ordained to promote knowledge and diffuse moral influence have been by us rejected, and ignorance and vice have acquired a fatal prevalence, and exert an operative and desolating power.

I now proceed to the most painful part of this subject.

III. To inquire how far our conduct exposes us to this danger: are we guilty? In what respects? and to what amount?

We, as a nation, are guilty; and by a national act have required, expressly, the violation of this law of God. It is a mistake to say that Congress have never legislated on this subject. In 1825, a law was enacted requiring every Postmaster in the land to deliver letters and packages on every day of the week, at all seasonable hours. The refusal to direct the Postmaster General to discontinue the transportation of mails on the Sabbath: and this law, compelling all the post-offices in the nation to be open on the Sabbath, is a legislative confirmation of the practice. Such is its actual operation, and such it must have been foreseen it would be. Thus not less than 26,000 persons are every Sabbath necessarily employed. Besides, by this same arrangement, travelling on the Sabbath is encouraged, and in some measure made unavoidable, by persons in the prosecution of a distant journey. The reasons on which this practice proceeds go to the utter annihilation of the Sabbath. Worldly expediency and interest are the only considerations, and if these

reasons will justify the government in the profanation of the Sabbath, they will as fully justify every individual when his supposed interest or convenience may require it, and the whole authority of the law of the Sabbath will be modified according to the views of expediency which each man may adopt. Such, in fact, is the course of conduct to which this national example natively leads. Its practical effect has already been very great, and it will and must continue to have the most noxious influence, and virtually goes to prostrate and nullify all authority and law designed to secure the religious observance of "the rest of the Sabbath."

The church is guilty in this matter; not only because, by its members, the Sabbath is profaned, but, because, it has not with due attention and faithfulness opposed the evil. The profanation of the Sabbath should hold, in the discipline of the church, the same place as the violation of any other of the ten commandments. This accords with what is found to be the fact in all cases of sound conversion; the authority of the 4th commandment is felt to be as sacred as that of any other, its violation as sinful, and its provisions as precious and important. I state it as my deliberate conviction, that, the violation of the Sabbath is as truly a sin, as that of any other of the ten commandments; and that it is less sinful, when wilful and deliberate, I do not know, and dare not affirm. I am aware that it is lightly estimated among men; but that God so estimates it, I see no reason to believe, but the contrary. I can readily believe that, in his judgment, and because of its mischievous effects, it rates in criminality as high, at least, as profaneness, disobedience to parents, malice, drunkenness, theft, or adultery. I desire that the soundness of this opinion may be tried by a consideration of the authority of the law and the effects of its violation. The whole community, individually, are more or less guilty. Very few sanctify it as their duty and their highest interests require. A great many habitually and openly profane it. Some by labor; many by unnecessary travelling; others by amusements; many by a listless and trifling waste of the day. They may abstain from worldly business and employments; but, the duties and privileges of religion have none of their serious regard. With very many, it is eminently a day of idleness as respects both body and mind: a season of lounging inactivity to the body, and of total dissipation to the mind. Many violate it by a compliance with mistaken calls of duty. We willingly except, because the law does except, works of necessity and of mercy. But the calls of duty, in these cases, must be imperious. It may, and I believe does often happen, that, the exercise of that mercy may have no urgency; and the necessity may be such as due care might have anticipated; or, as would suffer nothing by another day's delay. It may, for example, be our duty to visit a sick friend or patient; but, in many instances, due regard to the Sabbath might have done this previously, or, the case might well have admitted of delay. These, and such like cases, present questions for every man's conscience, in the sight of God, and as he shall answer to the omniscient Judge at the great day.

The evidence of guilt is overwhelming. The amount of transgression is immense. This conclusion is inevitable, if the existence and authority of the law be admitted, and made the test of man's conduct. And it is our reasonable and imperious duty to ascertain our own concern in this case.

What then is our duty? The circumstances of this case manifestly require, that we confess and lament the evil, and humble ourselves before the throne of God: But, this will be in vain, unless we reform and do what we can to arrest the abounding iniquity. We must "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." 1. We ought, explicitly, to disclaim the act of our government. The state of this matter leaves none neutral. It is ours, so long as we acquiesce in it. If we have conscience on this subject, and we ought to feel our moral responsibility, we should acquit ourselves of all participation in it; and by deeds which could not be mistaken, and by words which must be heard, bear testimony against a measure which sets us at open and declared war with heaven. The remedy, under God, is in the hands of our legislative and executive officers, and they should be compelled to know and respect our wishes in this matter; and if they will obstinately disregard the authority of God, they have no just claim to our confidence and our support. As citizens of a Christian nation our voice should be heard, and our influence should be felt, when the sacred institutions of our religion are wantonly profaned and dishonored. 2. In our several places and relations, in society, we ought to employ our influence in favor of a speedy and effectual reformation. Each man has some power of operation, in this case; and has with it a corresponding responsibility. God requires every man to do his duty; and if this were done, the abounding of this iniquity would be effectually controlled, and the wrath and impending judgments of God would be averted; and, by his favor, our liberty, peace, and prosperity would be perpetuated. There are reasons most constraining in favor of this moral reformation.

1. The authority and glory of God demand it. We have already ascertained that the Sabbath is a divine institution, and of perpetual obligation. The neglect or profanation of it is rebellion against God: That day in its religious observance is God's appointed means of preserving and diffusing true religion in the world, and thus of promoting his glory. Obedience to his law, and concern for his glory, indispensably require its sacred observance.

2. A wise and benevolent concern for the welfare of our fellow-men demands it. The Sabbath was eminently "made for man." Without its light and holy influence he cannot be happy here or hereafter. His individual and social happiness depend on his religious character. Without the Sabbath and its institutions he will be ignorant and unholy, and consequently degraded and miserable. If we desire him to possess wisdom and holiness, present peace and everlasting felicity, we must endeavor to sustain the authority, and promote the observance of the means which God has ordained, and renders effectual to those ends.

3. The love of our country demands it.

The word of God, and the history of his moral government show, that the profanation of the Sabbath has brought, and will bring down the judgments of God on nations which thus transgress—that ignorance, crime, and misery, are the inevitable consequences of irreligion and impiety—and that these will always prevail, where the Sabbath and its holy and benign influences are rejected. If, therefore, we would employ the most and only efficient means of preventing the prevalence of sin which is the ruin of any people; and, if we would avert the overwhelming judgments of God, we must observe and endeavor to promote the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord our God.

4. Finally: The welfare of our own souls demands it.

We have done wrong, and exerted influence in leading others wrong. We ought to amend our own ways, and endeavor to reclaim them. If faithful to the divine government we must do both: we must obey its authority, and endeavor to have it respected and obeyed.

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## SERMON LIV.

BY JOHN M'MILLAN, D. D.,  
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### THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN AND THE PENALTY, PROVED, AND VINDICATED.

ROM. 5:12.—*Therefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

In treating this subject I shall take occasion to shew,

I. THAT ALL MANKIND ARE, BY ADAM'S SIN BECOME GUILTY, DEPRAVED CREATURES.

II. SHEW WHAT THAT PUNISHMENT OR DEATH IS, TO WHICH ADAM'S SIN EXPOSETH US.

III. VINDICATE THE JUSTICE OF GOD THEREIN, OR SHEW THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR BEING PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN.

I. I AM TO SHEW THAT ALL MANKIND ARE, BY ADAM'S SIN, BECOME GUILTY, DEPRAVED CREATURES.

If there was nothing but the light of nature, and the common observation of mankind to decide the matter, this melancholy truth would appear too evident for any judicious, unprejudiced person to deny it. The early propensity to sin that is observable in children, evinces the corruption of their natures. But the oracles of truth, which God has given us as the rule of our faith and practice, every where considers and treats us as apostate, guilty creatures. The offers of mercy, the promises of pardon, the necessity of regeneration, of taking away the heart of stone, &c., loudly proclaim that we are polluted creatures, exposed to punishment. But I know of no place in the sacred writings that declares it more expressly than our text and context. The apostle's main design in introducing these words, is to prove the doctrine of justification by grace through the merits of Christ; or rather to remove the prejudices of the Jews against it, by shewing its reasonableness. "If (says he, verse 17,) by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Verse 18: Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." As if he had said, It is granted by all that by the imputation of Adam's sin we are all become guilty before God: can it therefore be thought strange that we should be justified in his sight through the imputation of Christ's righteousness? If God may justly impute the sin of our first parents to us, surely we may more easily suppose, from

\* When this sermon was furnished for publication, the author—"the apostle of the West"—was a living minister.

the riches of his grace, that he will impute the merits of Christ's death to believers. If the imputing of Adam's sin be just, certainly the imputation of Christ's righteousness cannot be unjust: "for if through the offence of one man be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." This being plain by the scope of the apostle's argument, it appears that the words of our text contain a truth or doctrine that was not only received, but also well known and familiar to the people to whom Paul wrote; otherwise it could not be fair arguing. For whatever is brought in as a medium to prove another thing by, is always supposed to be more known, or more generally received than that which it is brought to prove. Therefore it follows that the doctrine of original sin, was well known and generally received by them to whom the apostle wrote. But this well known medium, by which the apostle proves the great doctrine of justification by grace is more particularly stated in the words of our text. The force of the apostle's reasoning runs thus, as if he had said, it is manifest that we are all guilty, or that all have sinned, for death hath passed upon all men, and death was introduced by the sin of one man, viz: Adam. Or, as it is elsewhere expressed, Death is the wages of sin. He goes on to show, verses 13, 14, that it is beyond all dispute, from the death and miseries brought upon all mankind, that we are become guilty through Adam's sin. For until the law, or before the law, sin was in the world; that is, before the law was given to Israel by Moses: But sin, says the apostle, is not imputed, therefore it was for the breach of some law, but it could not be for the breach of the law of Moses, for sin was imputed and punished before the law of Moses existed. Therefore this imputation and punishment must be for the breach of some other law, seeing death, which is the punishment of sin, reigned from Adam to Moses; that is, before the law was given by Moses, sin was punished, therefore it must be for the breach of some other law. He likewise shows that this punishment was for the breach of some law, which all mankind were chargeable with the breach of, whether they had actually in their persons broke it, or not. For, says he, death which is the punishment of sin reigned over, or was inflicted upon them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; that is, over infants who died before they had committed actual sin. This must be the meaning of the words: it will not make sense to understand, as some do, that the apostle, by the similitude here mentioned, means that some died whose sins were not similar to Adam's, because they had not, in person, broke a *positive* command in eating the forbidden fruit; for none had sinned in that manner. But the particle (*even*) distinguished those who had sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, from those who had not. Death reigned, *even* over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; which supposeth that some, even from Adam to Moses, had sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression: therefore it is manifest that the apostle concludes the matter thus; as if he had said, Death is a punishment inflicted for sin, or only on sinners: but we know that many die, or are punished by death, who never committed any actual, or personal sin; therefore it is certain that Adam's sin is imputed to all his posterity. It is beyond dispute that Adam is the one man mentioned in our text, by whom sin is said to have entered into the world, and passed upon all men: for, says the same apostle, 1 Cor. 15:22, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Nor can the argument for the universal guilt of mankind, be weakened by supposing that the *all* who in the last mentioned text are said to be made alive, must be restricted, seeing all mankind shall not be made alive, or saved by Christ, and that consequently the *all* who in our text are said to have sinned, may likewise be restricted, to signify only some part of mankind. But if it be just with God to impute Adam's sin to any one of Adam's posterity, he may, with equal justice, impute it to every one of them. Moreover, the term *all* must be taken in its universal extent in both these places: for it is evident that the apostle is comparing Adam with Christ, and running the parallel between them, as they were public representatives of their posterity.

It shows that all Adam's natural seed without exception whom he represented, became guilty through his sin. So likewise all Christ's spiritual seed whom he represented, are, without exception, justified by his righteousness. Adam is said to be the figure of him that was to come, verse 14. But I cannot see how, or in what sense, Adam can be said to be a type or figure of Christ, or what likeness there is between them, except in their conveying their different effects to their respective seeds, whom they publicly represented, and were to stand or fall with them. Hence it is evident that all Adam's seed, that is, all that descended from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, or by his fall became guilty, obnoxious creatures. Which brings me,

**II. TO SHEW WHAT THAT PUNISHMENT OR DEATH IS, TO WHICH ADAM'S SIN EXPOSETH US.**

By that death, which the apostle in our text says passed upon all men, we are to understand all that misery to which Adam himself was exposed by his sin, all that misery which was contained in the penalty of the covenant of works. It is evident that not only natural, but also spiritual and eternal death is included in that threatening Gen. 2:17. In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. It is manifest from the apostle's reasoning that death is not to be confined to bodily pains, or the separation of the soul from the body, which is what we call natural. Sad experience early taught Adam that by his fall he lost the image of God that was stamped upon his soul, and so lost that intimate friendship and communion which he enjoyed while he continued in a state of innocence. He was immediately struck with horror of conscience at the approach of God, he felt himself in a state of alienation from God; whereas before he enjoyed the most friendly and familiar intercourse with him. God was the object of his supreme delight; he could go to him with an holy boldness and humble confidence, as his God, his Father, and his friend. But as soon as he had tasted of the fatal tree, he hid himself from the presence of the Lord, his heart was at once alienated from him. Hence he, with his progeny, became perverse and rebellious, altogether disordered, and filled with vicious principles, and insatiable appetites, which, by sad experience, we may know, arrests us, as it were, by some invisible hand, or as an irresistible torrent, carries us away from God and divine things, to the service of satan and our own lusts. And as the death of the body by no means infers the extinction of the soul, and the scriptures assure us that the soul survives the body, or shall have a future existence; and that by its defilement, it is not only become incapable of delighting in and enjoying God, but by the institution of heaven no unclean thing shall enter there. And as the scriptures of truth know or teach no medium between heaven and hell, eternal life and eternal death, therefore it is evident from these considerations that there is more than a natural death included in the penalty annexed to the law. Moreover, death is here considered as all that evil or misery which was threatened in the first covenant, and consequently there was no other punishment justly due to Adam for his sin than the death here intended. It was to save us from this death that Christ laid down his life—that death from which Christ redeemed his people, is the death to which all mankind are by nature exposed. Whatever Christ procured for believers was forfeited in Adam. The apostle tells us, in the 18th verse of this chapter, that by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; and by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. Experience teaches us that Christ did not, by his death, purchase natural life for his seed, or an exemption from natural death. He restored them, by the merits of his death, to spiritual life, by which their affections are placed upon God and divine things, so that they love and delight in him, and are thereby fitted for the enjoyment of him. And having a well-grounded hope of being delivered from death at the last day, and of dwelling for ever with the Lord, this takes away the sting of natural death. It is evident that the life which was purchased by Christ for his spiritual seed, is opposed to that death to which all Adam's posterity were exposed by his sin. Therefore it follows, that if Adam's seed were not

exposed to eternal death by his sin, none have ground to hope for eternal life through the merits of Christ; and, consequently, that Christ died in vain, seeing he did not free mankind from natural death. And if mankind were not by their apostacy disqualified for eternal life, or the enjoyment of God, they were not spiritually dead; and if they were not spiritually dead, Christ did not purchase spiritual life for them. But these absurdities are too gross to be admitted by any thinking person. Therefore it follows that by Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, all mankind lost their original rectitude, became alienated from God, and were every moment exposed to both natural and eternal death and misery. Which brings me,

### III. TO SHOW THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR BEING PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN, OR VINDICATE THE JUSTICE OF GOD THEREIN.

That we may have a clear view of this matter, it is necessary to consider, that God entered into a covenant with Adam, as head and representative of all mankind, in which he promised life to him and his posterity, if he did not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and threatened to inflict death upon both him and them, if he did eat of the forbidden fruit; as we may see in Genesis 2:17, where the Lord says to Adam, "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This covenant is indeed represented in very brief and general terms, as is common in the Mosaic history. It is not said that Adam should be confirmed in life and perfect rectitude if he did not eat of the forbidden fruit: nor is it said Adam was considered as the representative of his posterity in this transaction. Yet it is evident that both these are implied in this short account of the covenant.

1st. *A promise of life was implied* in the covenant, upon condition of Adam's obedience: for God's threatening death upon this condition, supposes that it was only upon this condition, viz. eating the forbidden fruit, that death was to be feared. Otherwise God must be looked upon as dealing insincerely with Adam, when he threatens him with death in case of disobedience, if his perfect obedience would not have preserved him from it, and have entitled him to life. The threatening of death was a motive to obedience, but it could not be a motive of obedience, if there was not an expectation of some good to be attained, or evil to be avoided by obeying: and it would certainly be unworthy of God to raise Adam's expectation of a benefit, which he should never partake of, even though he perfectly complied with the condition upon which he expected it. Death was threatened to Adam only in case of disobedience; therefore it certainly implies that it would not have been inflicted, if he had not disobeyed. Death was by the covenant made the wages of sin; and it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to suffer the righteous to receive the wages of the wicked. Hence it appears that there was a conditional promise of life contained or implied in the threatening of death.

2ndly. It appears that *Adam represented his posterity* in this covenant transaction; though the Mosaic account of this matter does not expressly mention them, or say that they were concerned in the covenant. It is too manifest to be denied that Adam's posterity do partake of the bitter fruits of his apostacy. We see that sin and death with all its terrors has invaded the whole human race. We see that all the calamities of life, and even death, reign over those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. But if Adam's posterity had not been included in the covenant made with him, the curse annexed to that covenant could not in justice be inflicted upon them. The miseries which are inflicted upon infants, although innocent creatures, must be the effects of Adam's sin; for death and all that is included in that dreadful word, is the wages of sin; and it is far from God that the righteous should be as the wicked. If Adam did not represent his posterity, so that they sinned in him, how can the Judge of all the earth be said to do right, in inflicting the penalty which was threatened to him, upon them who are not guilty of actual sin. The sentence passed upon Adam af-

ter his fall, is executed upon his posterity, as fully as upon himself. Therefore we must charge God with injustice, or acknowledge that they are guilty or have sinned in proportion to the punishment inflicted upon them. And if they are guilty, or have become sinners, sin and guilt must have descended from Adam to them merely by natural generation, or we must have fallen in him as our legal representative. It cannot be the former, otherwise we derive death and the corruption of our natures from our immediate parents, and we no more died in Adam than in them. Nay, it would follow that more sinful and guilty the parents were, the more sinful the children would be; and the more sanctified the parents, the more holy would be the children. Nay, further, I cannot see but it would follow that the parents had through the grace of God, got the victory over their sins, and were justified through the righteousness of Christ; but their children would come into the world with as little propensity to sin, and with as supreme a love to God as Adam had when he was first created. But sad experience teaches us that the children, as well of the godly as ungodly, come into the world with strong propensities to sin, and aversion to God and godliness. Hence it appears that the effects of Adam's apostacy is not conveyed to us merely by natural generation. Therefore it follows that Adam, by the appointment of God, was our legal representative in that covenant transaction.

Now, *if it appears upon examination, that it was most likely to promote the interest of mankind, for Adam to represent his posterity, than for each one of them to stand or fall according to their own conduct, then God will be free from all injustice in punishing Adam's posterity, according to his demerit.*

It must be granted that the creature is bound by the law of nature, or by the reason and fitness of things, to perfect and perpetual obedience to the Creator. The condition upon which Adam and his posterity were to be established in life and happiness, was simple and easy—it was only to abstain from one particular tree in the garden where he had such a variety of whatever could contribute either to his support or delight. It is true, Adam could not violate the precept without violating the whole moral law, the sum of which is, to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. While Adam continued to do this, he could not possibly break this positive precept—while love to God and man reigned in his heart, he could feel no disposition to do that which would dishonor God, and bring everlasting ruin upon all his posterity. Yet it was doubtless great condescension and goodness in God, to make man's life, and his confirmation therein, to depend upon so simple and easy a condition, as the abstinence from the fruit of the tree was.

And if we consider the case as it respected his posterity, it will appear to be *every way their interest* to have their safety put upon this issue. For it must be granted, unless we deny all natural as well as revealed religion, that if Adam's posterity had not been included in that covenant, they would have been under the *strictest obligations to render perfect and perpetual obedience to the whole law*, and so would have been in perpetual danger of transgressing it in some instance or other; so that their state would never have been safe: though they should have kept the whole law perfectly for millions of ages, still they would have been liable to the wrath of God upon the least failure. Was it not then much better for mankind, that their confirmation in life and happiness should depend upon obedience to one easy command, than that it should depend upon their keeping the whole law? And was it not better for them to have it depend upon the obedience of one man, who was able and willing, and had stronger excitements to obedience than any other of the human race could have had, than that each individual of them should be left to act for himself, and so be always liable to lose the favor of God upon the violation of any part of the law of God, and so be always uncertain of their future happiness? For if Adam represented his posterity in the covenant of works, he was under stronger ties to obey and obtain the blessings of obedience than any of his posterity could have been, if

each one had been to stand or fall according to his own conduct. Adam had all the excitements that could arise from the desire of his own happiness and fear of misery, that any of his offspring could have had. But besides this, he had all the excitements that could arise from paternal affection; the eternal weal or wo of his whole progeny depending upon his conduct. But if each one had stood for himself, his falling a victim to divine justice would have been no loss to any but himself, and so he would have been destitute of one powerful motive to obedience which Adam had. Therefore it was evidently more likely that all Adam's posterity would have been everlastingly happy by his representing them in that covenant transaction, than that any one of them should have been happy if each one had stood for himself. But supposing that each one had for himself persevered in obedience for ever, yet they would have been less happy than if they had been, by Adam's obedience, confirmed in that happy state. The stinging reflection that they were always liable to forfeit and lose their happiness, through the manifold temptations to which they would for ever have been exposed, must have greatly lessened their comforts and delights even in Paradise.

It may be farther observed that the *good promised in this covenant was greater than the evil threatened*. The obedience which God demanded of Adam was no more than what he justly owed; and the punishment annexed to his disobedience was no more than he was justly liable to for the least violation of the law. If God had not entered into such a covenant with man, he could not have had the least claim to eternal life, even if he had not only observed this one precept, but had also perfectly kept the whole law. For though an innocent creature might reasonably expect a happy life, so long as it pleased the Creator to continue him in existence, yet God could not be under any obligations to his creature, unless he bind himself by compact or covenant. As God could not owe us our being before we had it, neither can we, by any thing that we can do, bring God under any obligation to continue us in being. If we be righteous, what give we him? or what receiveth he at our hands? When we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. Hence then we see that the penalty annexed to the covenant made with Adam, and in him with all his posterity, was no more than, according to the strictest rules of justice, was due for the least violation of the law. Therefore it must have been just with God to have demanded perfect and perpetual obedience, not only from Adam, but also from all his posterity; and to have punished them for ever for their disobedience, though he had not promised them eternal life upon their obedience; but only a happy life during his pleasure and their obedience. The promise of eternal life is therefore of mere grace, and what Adam nor any of his posterity could have had any just claim to, if God had not made such a covenant with man. *If God had not made such a covenant with Adam, but left every one to stand for himself, there is no reason to think that any one of his offspring would have attained to eternal life; seeing Adam had as great abilities and stronger excitements to keep it than any of his posterity could have had, yet he fell.* But by his fall, he fell under no greater condemnation than the just demerit of his crime, had there been no covenant made with him. But the covenant secured to him infinitely more than his due upon condition of his obedience. How then can we complain of the inequality of that dispensation of God in which there is such a manifestation of his condescending grace and goodness, as deserves our particular admiration and praise? Upon the whole then it appears that some terms of confirmation in our original state of happiness were necessary for us, and that the terrors proposed in the covenant, wherein Adam represented his posterity, were the most suitable, and the most likely to promote our interest; and without doubt, if we had then existed, we should have chosen that Adam should have represented us, and stood or fallen for us.

## SERMON LV.

BY DAVID H. RIDDLE,

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### HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

JOHN 3:6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*—ROM. 3:23. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

*Human Depravity* is at the foundation of the whole system of Christianity. Besides being plainly and repeatedly asserted, it is involved in every other peculiar doctrine of Revelation.

It is *the ruin* which the divine mission of Jesus Christ was designed to restore. It is *the disease* which the blood of the Son of God, and the divine influences of the Holy Ghost, are designed to remedy. Correct views of this subject give harmony and symmetry to the whole Revelation of God, while errors or superficial sentiments on this radical point introduce a corresponding looseness and superficiality into the whole system of religious belief.

The doctrine of the Holy Scriptures on this melancholy subject is definite and explicit. Their testimony concerning *human depravity* is, *that it is natural, universal, and total.* "BY NATURE ALL MANKIND ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED." Let us explore this melancholy but profitable theme.

I. Human depravity is **NATURAL**, or *original*. The disease is seated in our very nature. By this we do not assert that it was always so. No: "*God made man upright.*" Originally he was formed "in the image of God," only "a little lower than the angels." Man once, for a short season, stood erect—lord of the creation—the earthly image of his Creator—reflecting his glory, and enjoying his constant presence. *The tabernacle of God was once with men.* But "the gold became dim, the most fine gold was changed." "By one man sin entered into the world." This sin defaced the image of God, deprived man of his presence, and introduced a fearful and fatal moral disorder, into the system and into the race. "**IN ADAM ALL DIE.**" The fountain was corrupted—the head was diseased—the representative of the whole race became polluted. Adam in his act of transgression, not only sinned personally and fell personally, but acting as the federal head and representative of his posterity, he involved them also in the consequences of his transgression. This is the plain doctrine of the Scriptures, on which the standards of our church\* are founded. "By one man's offence death reigned by one." "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."†

\* The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression."—*Quest. 16, Shorter Catechism.*

† Much philosophy and curious speculation has been expended on the *why* and

By natural or original depravity, we mean to express, that all men since the transgression of Adam, and as a consequence of that transgression, are born without holiness, alienated from God, and possessing a nature so prone to evil, that until renovated, it will produce only evil actions. This we say is the natural state of man. *Involved in the guilt* of our first parent, from our connection with him as our representative, we are thereby liable to death—*partakers of their corruption*, in our nature we are utterly indisposed of ourselves to holiness, and *possessing the active principles of opposition to God, from our first moral being*, we are incapable of relishing his service or enjoying his presence. This is *natural depravity*. This is the humiliating fact, *expressly revealed in the Sacred Volume and confirmed by universal experience*.

1. (a) This fact is clearly revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Two conclusive passages will suffice for the Old Testament evidence, although many more equally conclusive might be cited. "Behold," says the Psalmist in the penitential Psalm, "*Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" Could any selection of words more definitely and unequivocally testify to the fact of original depravity? Can any philosophy, except that which is falsely so called, pervert this passage to mean any thing else? Again, the Psalmist testifies of human nature, as a fact undeniably certain, "*We go astray from the womb speaking lies.*" If plain, unvarnished Scripture testimony, capable of no misconstruction, is admitted to be conclusive, this ought to satisfy any man what is God's verdict on this subject.

(b) The New Testament is equally conclusive. We "were BY NATURE the children of wrath, even as others." This is the acknowledgment of Paul in behalf of himself and his Christian brethren. *Naturally*, Christians and all others are "*the children of wrath*"—possess the *depravity* which exposes to wrath. Our Savior testifies explicitly—"That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," or corruption. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Unchanged human nature is *enmity to God*, and surely this is depravity.

2. This fact, that depravity is natural or original, is moreover testified by observation. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" is a common-sense principle, as well as a Scriptural interrogatory. "The tree is known by its fruit." Now just so far back as human observation can extend, it confirms the Scripture doctrine. The very first actings of a child, that partake at all of a moral character, are consistent with the fact and the philosophy of Scripture, and are inconsistent with, and utterly inexplicable upon, any other principles. *Waywardness, obstinacy, and perverseness*, mark the earliest buddings of its moral nature. The bitter tears of parental anguish give sorrowful demonstration that "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." And in the loveliest and most attractive exhibitions of infantile sweetness, flowers almost like Eden's, the most partial eye

the *how* of this doctrine—the rectitude or the expediency of this constitution of things. The Scriptures plainly and broadly reveal the fact. The apostasy of *one* was the ruin of *all*. The *sin of Adam* involved his whole *posterity*. "The guilt of Adam's first sin;" that is, liability to punishment on account of it, is imputed to all his posterity, and forms a fearful part of what we mean by original sin,

—a mother's—is pained to detect the slimy track of the serpent. We cannot go back into the subject very far—we cannot tell how soon moral and accountable action commences—we cannot ascertain where is the boundary between the physical actings of *the animal*, and the moral actings of the immortal spirit,—*but as far as we can go*, the testimony is conclusive. Without such an explanation as the Bible gives, *the facts* would be distressingly mysterious; with the Bible explanation, the mystery is unravelled and the mournful doctrine confirmed.

II. HUMAN DEPRAVITY IS UNIVERSAL. The disease belongs to our race. “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” “There is none that doeth good: no, not one. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable. There is none righteous: no, not one.” These passages are decisive and sweeping. Paul, in quoting these from the Old Testament, tells us, that his object was, “that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world might be guilty before God.”

There is this peculiarity in this testimony. It is not only the plain meaning of the passage, but this meaning is essential to his purpose, and no other meaning will possibly suit his design.

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul shows the impossibility of salvation except through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, he argues two things—1st. *That God has determined to punish sin\**—and 2d. *THAT ALL MEN HAVE SINNED.* If these two positions are substantiated, the inference is irresistible, that none can be saved except through some remedial system. The quotation just cited is a part of his proof of the second position, *that all, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned.* We see, then, beyond controversy, what is the only meaning of the passage—*the absolute universality of human depravity*: any thing short of this would leave a fatal flaw in the apostle's connected and unanswerable chain of argument for the impossibility of salvation out of Christ, or the necessity and suitableness of the atonement. Besides, Paul's testimony is the testimony of Inspiration. He wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost, when he testified that “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” So it is—“Thus saith the Lord.”

This is not solitary testimony. “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.” Here the omniscient God is represented, in accommodation to human ideas, as examining this question—whether human sinfulness is literally universal. None could more satisfactorily answer the question: for from the height of heaven he “beholdeth all the dwellers upon earth;” and by his omniscience, to which nothing is past or future, but every thing present, he can examine the question from the beginning to the close of time, and bring all the nations and the history of men at once before his scrutiny.

None could more impartially settle the question; for “the just Lord loveth justice.” He “cannot lie.” And so lovely is rectitude to his infinite holiness, that he would discover even a single feature amidst a mass of deformity.

\* The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.”

And what is the result of this divine investigation?

"They are ALL gone aside." "They are *altogether* become filthy. There is none that doeth good: no, not one." Nothing relieves the dark picture of human deformity to the eye of Jehovah. *Depravity* is superscribed over all. *No spot of moral verdure* momentarily cheers the vision. All is gloomy—all is polluted—and Heaven gazes on the scene of unmingled moral death, where once he beheld all to be "very good."

The same fact, the universality of human depravity, is testified in many other portions of the Scriptures. And, in general, we may remark, that it is always directly involved in the doctrine of Christ's mediation. The very basis of the plan of redemption is, that *all were lost*—all alike and irretrievably ruined. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." From every portion of Scripture it is plain, that the disorder which originated in Paradise has infected the whole human race. The poison of the old serpent, which is the devil and satan, has corrupted the whole race by corrupting the head and representative.

Need we appeal, in confirmation of this plain and Scripture testimony, to the facts of human history. How dark but decisive is the commentary thus afforded to the doctrine of Revelation. Take the whole map of human history, from the first murder that stained the earth with a brother's blood, down to the present period, and it gives unvarying and unequivocal attestation to the fact, that "ALL have gone astray," although its details show also, that "*each has gone in his own way.*" The principle of depravity has been endlessly modified by circumstances, and in different ages; but the principle has been the same in all. New, and strange, and mysterious developments of iniquity, have marked the successive stages of human history; but in all, no better, or milder, or softer name can be given than DEPRAVITY. Sometimes the drapery has been more attractive, and the veil more impenetrable; but underneath all the serpent is coiled, and the poison rankles. In the Jew and the Gentile—the Greek and the Barbarian—the ancient and the modern—human nature has been the same. Paul's description in the 1st chapter of Romans—Juvenal's biting but just sarcasms, addressed to the same people—and the journals of modern missionaries—all agree in the essential characteristics of human nature. In the most polished city of ancient times, and in the most degraded hovel of Africa, heathenism, or more properly human nature, may be described in precisely the same words of inspiration: "*Filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.*" Deep and dark as these lines of deformity are, they are not deeper nor darker than the reality. They are not libels on humanity; they are an epitome of human history. The wars, the strifes, the bloodshed and treachery, the falsehood and barbarity, of ancient times; the tricks and chicanery, the corruption and venality, the voluptuousness and profligacy, of modern times; might swell the picture even more frightfully and pitifully, and show more vividly that all mankind are *depraved*. The only bright features in the world's his-

tory, or green spots in the world's geography, are those times and places where the results of *grace* are seen renovating nature and regenerating man into the image of God. *Religion* is the only drapery that can effectually hide human deformity—the only polish that can soften human depravity. Much of what are considered objections to the fact of universal depravity, originates in this superadded influence, and may be traced directly or indirectly to religion. The great reason why depravity is less abhorrent in modern times and Christian countries, than in ancient times and pagan lands, is, this indirect but powerful influence of Christianity, not renovating but restraining human nature; not purifying the fountain but damming up the streams. Christianity has incorporated itself with the structure of society; it has insinuated its benignant influence into the laws, and has powerfully controlled the habits of mankind; and has thus thrown a veil over the most disgusting exhibitions of human depravity.

But Christianity itself has furnished *an occasion* for the strongest evidences of the universality of human depravity, even amidst circumstances best adapted to break its power. *Depravity* has sometimes assumed the badge of *religion*; and if human nature can exhibit depravity, under this guise, and use the blessing of Heaven to serve the purposes of hell, surely it must be considered *universal*. Is this going too far? Has depravity never assumed the cloak of Christianity? Has ambition, as fell and foul as ever disgraced humanity, never been decked in pontificals? Has *lust*, as loathsome as that of the brothel, never been veiled by the monastic cowl, and lured its victims to destruction by the proffer of spiritual assistance? Has covetousness, as idolatrous and damning as a miser's, never put on the cloak of the Jesuit, and made princes pander to its appetite and bow to its sway? Alas! we must admit it; although it shows *human nature*, even surrounded by the blaze of Revelation and in the costume of its ministers, to be depraved as really as at the darkest nook of creation, and when bowing down in adoration to a dumb stone.

The two views of human depravity given now, mutually elucidate and strengthen each other. If human depravity be *natural*, it is obviously probable that it would be *universal*; for what belongs to *nature* will operate essentially alike under all circumstances.

If it be *universal*, there is the strongest possible ground for believing that it is *natural*; for nothing short of a cause as deeply seated and as powerfully operative as the nature of man, would sufficiently account for this effect.

### III. HUMAN DEPRAVITY IS TOTAL.

We premise here a remark by way of explanation.

We do not desire to be understood by total depravity to mean—that *every man is equally depraved*; or, that *every man is as depraved as he can be*. Men may have degrees of depravity, and yet be totally depraved. For instance, *Judas Iscariot* and *the young man* in the gospel, were both totally depraved; and yet they were far from being alike in the degree of their depravity. If *total depravity* meant an unvarying character of the greatest possible enormity, it would be disproved by facts and observation. There is amongst unconverted men, almost innumerable diversities of character, arising from temperament, natural disposition, early restraints, and particular circumstances. Diversity of character does not argue against total depravity: as one

star differeth from another in glory, though all are luminous; so one sinner differeth from another in enormity, though all are totally depraved.

And so, also, depravity is total, and yet men are not as bad as they might be. A man may be *totally* depraved, and yet not be a *fiend*. Probably no man on earth is as depraved as he might be. The grace of God, the customs of society, the *present interest* of virtue, and a variety of causes may prevent the full tide of depravity from rushing forth into action. We do not mean by total depravity, the *greatest possible wickedness*.

Having thus disclaimed misconstruction of our meaning, and obviated the standing objection against this doctrine from this misconstruction, we assert *that human depravity is total*.

Many may be disposed to call this "*an hard saying*," and ask, "Who can bear it?" The question is not, is it an hard saying, but is it true?

1. The Bible is the great fountain of truth. What is its testimony? Decisive and unequivocal. "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, is evil continually." "The *whole* head is sick and the *whole* heart faint." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Unconverted men are "*painted sepulchres*." Beautiful indeed to the eye, but "*within full of rottenness and dead men's bones*." Does any one inquire, after these plain citations, How are we to dispose of the virtues of the heathen? and what becomes of all the excellence and amiableness of unregenerated man? We have to answer, in the spirit of the last passage quoted, their morality may please us as the architecture of a tomb; but external loveliness no more involves internal purity, than a splendid mausoleum converts putrescence into life. "*The heart is desperately wicked*."

2. The Bible making such revelations, appeals directly to the human *conscience*, and asks *there*, "*Are not these things so?*" Holding up the standard of right and wrong, appointed by infinite wisdom and purity, before the sinner's moral sense, it asks him to deny, if he can, that the testimony of God on this point is true? And whatever verdict the feelings and pride of the heart might be disposed to render, the conscience of every man, if not seared or darkened, must acknowledge the truth of *total depravity*. We say unequivocally, that *the human conscience* is with the truth of God. It does not always *speak out*, but its language is conclusive when it does. When not bribed by passion, or stupefied by the deceitfulness of sin, its testimony is distinct and definite. Remarkable instances of this kind sometimes occur, when the light of truth first bursts upon the darkened and stupid conscience. Its verdict then is given with the energy of conviction, amounting almost to immediate revelation. The Bible, read or heard, under such circumstances, seems like a message sent from Heaven to an individual. It displays his heart to himself; pours light on the very motives and principles by which he has always been actuated, but which he had never put into words or breathed to any mortal. He starts at the accuracy of the portrait. He feels himself in the grasp of a giant—within the glare of omniscience; and conscience then responds to the darkest delineations of human depravity, as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The testimony of conscience is given unequivocally in another shape. It speaks loudly and plainly in *the effects* which the Scripture doctrine produces. The Scripture testimony on this subject awakens uneasiness and restlessness, agitation and opposition. Would these views of human character produce these effects—stir up the writhings of enmity, and often the bitterness of open and decided opposition, if conscience did not echo their *truth* in every bosom?

Moreover, these are precisely *the effects* which the Bible declares its doctrines will produce. “*Men hate the light*, neither will they come to the light that their deeds might be reproved.” “They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”

Now it is a very striking confirmation of the truth of total depravity in its darkest colors, that this view of the doctrine and no other, produces the effects described in the Sacred Volume. Garbled or accommodated views of this point are palatable enough to the carnal mind, and of course are radically defective. The view of conscience speaks unequivocally although wrathfully, when *the full truth* is developed. It is soothed and quieted by falsehood, but does not endorse it.

3. The verdict of the Bible and of conscience is sustained by *reason*. What is the evidence of *reason* on this point? Let us understand the point in hand. *Total depravity* is an entire lack of spirituality or holiness. Now reason tells us that the essence of an action is its motive. The essence of a spiritual action is a spiritual motive: without this, it is nothing that can be called good or holy. This is the precise secret which detects the fallacy of supposing the actions of unregenerate men to be holy or spiritual. As to *motive* they are dead and hollow. Actions externally the same may be widely different, if their motives are examined. Let us put a case or two for illustration of this very important point.

Here are two men on the ocean, buffeting its waves, enduring hardships, and braving death. Follow them to a distant shore! They both land—both toil—suffer—and experience immense privations. Both it may be perish, and both are buried. *Here*, all seems the same on the surface. To those unacquainted with the heart both are alike. But here is the mighty difference. In the heart of one from his departure, through all the perils of the way to the close, there burned the inextinguishable *love of gold*. In the other, love equally ardent—equally inextinguishable—burning also till death; but *love to Christ and perishing souls*. Difference of motive stamps a moral character immeasurably different, on seemingly similar conduct. In the buffetings of the billows, as well as in the dying toil of one, might be traced, “*Holiness unto the Lord*,” on every part and parcel of the other, beginning, middle, and ending—life and death—was written, “*The love of money*.”

Let us present another illustration: *There* is a face pale with study. The mists of midnight have gathered on his countenance. His frame groans under the pressure of intellectual toil, and his eye sinks with weary and long-continued watching! *Why?* He has heard the voice of fame—ambition lights the midnight lamp—“the honor that cometh from man,” or death in the unsuccessful pursuit, fires all his ardor!

Here is another frame that tells of toils—another eye that sinks with watching—the fires of another soul wasting away by over-exertion!

*Why?* The love of Jesus urges him to toil—the care of souls keeps his eye waking and weeping—the wickedness of men and their awful doom wears away his spirit and his life! What makes the amazing difference? Can we hesitate to say: *the motives*.

These illustrations will show what we design when we say, that the spirituality or moral excellence of specific actions, or general conduct, depends on *motives*. Now the most commendable or amiable actions of unregenerate men, viewed in this light, have “Tekel” written on them. They lack the motive which is required to make them *holy* in the sight of God. The law of God requires the heart and affections to enter into the acts of men, in order to be spiritual. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole mind, and strength, and understanding; and thy neighbor as thyself.” These are the motives which the law requires. And supreme love to God does not govern the conduct of unconverted men. This is the great fountain of depravity. This deficiency of motive attaches to the whole conduct. The heart is not set on God. The conduct, though externally proper, cannot be called holy. Reason, therefore, exercising her powers in conformity with a plain and unquestioned revelation, decides that man is *totally* depraved: because he is wholly deficient in proper motives.

4. The proposition deduced from the text may be strengthened by another kind of proof. *The testimony of Christians*.

The unanimous testimony of those who have been converted is, that *human depravity*—i. e., their own depravity by nature—is *total*. This testimony is credible and valuable. They have no motive to make uncandid statements. They view their former state accurately and not with prejudice. What do they say of the actions of unregenerate men, or depravity? They tell us, that the actions for which they once received praise—which were once given as evidences of something excellent in human nature, and which are no doubt praised in the same way in others, were, as far as spirituality of motive was concerned, hollow and deficient; and now awaken shame and regret rather than self-complacency. The candor which conviction of sin gives, is remarkable and very valuable. This candid testimony ratifies the verdict of the Bible, and conscience, and reason—that human depravity is *total*: no really regenerate man has ever been found to give a different testimony.

5. This proposition, also, receives confirmation from *unconverted men*. When they have a point to carry, they may and do deny this doctrine, but when speaking of their fellow-men, under circumstances producing candor equal to Christians, they give the same testimony. Who has not, at one period of his life or other, heard the dispassionate verdict of those who have mingled much with their fellow-men in the intercourse of life, on this melancholy subject? What lawyer will dare to deny that his experience does not confirm the decision of Holy Writ? What secrets might they not promulge, to substantiate the whole of Scripture testimony, if they would draw the picture of *human nature* as it acts out before them in the ordinary details of business? What selfishness and covetousness; what naughty tricks and constructive lying; what mean advantages and dirty practices, would not be shown to belong to those whom the world calls *honest*, and who would be insulted if they were not thought virtuous!! Can we call this any thing but total depravity.

When some reverse of circumstances, or change of friendships, displays the real motives and genuine character of a man, how much of the kindness and courtesy, so much esteemed, is found to have been assumed to serve a purpose. How bitterly, but correctly, will human depravity then be described by those who suffer its cruel effects!!

The abstracted recluse who sees only the surface, does not probably imagine human nature to be totally depraved. The minister of God, to whom the fairest side is always shown, and with whom politeness often makes men appear pious, may not see the truth. But some do see it. They could, and would, if they were candid, bear emphatic testimony, that "*the heart of man is desperately wicked.*" Hear a hoary veteran in sin talk of others. Listen to what he will say, after intercourse with every variety of character, and then see what any virtue is worth, but what springs from conscientious principles. Talk with those who have watched the windings of human depravity in the most polished circles, and who have lead the counsels of the greatest nations. Read their recorded verdicts on the depravity of human nature, and you will find that the Scripture declarations, though harsh, are amply confirmed. "*The whole head is sick; the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, they have not been closed, nor bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*"

The strongest evidence of human depravity is, the envenomed thrusts at religion which wicked men make through the character of its professors. The charges of hypocrisy, and inconsistency, and selfishness, *true or false*, which are so lavishly made against professing Christians, prove human depravity to be total. If *true*, it shows that depravity can veil itself even in the garb of holiness; if *false*, it shows that depravity can vilify the only loveliness and excellence that is ever engrafted on man's nature.

We are thus, by the united verdict of the Bible, of the human conscience, of human reason, of the regenerate and the unregenerate, constrained to believe that human depravity is total; that there is no spirituality or moral excellence in unchanged human nature; that all men by nature are dead in sins; that the head and the heart, the intellect and the affections of men, are alike the subjects of this blighting curse. The *apparent* exceptions in the character and conduct of the unregenerate, may all be explained upon other principles. While no man is as bad, probably, as he might be, and while there are almost infinite degrees in the depravity of the human family, all are entirely depraved. Whatever may be the influence of conduct uninspired by proper motives on the affairs of society; however much such actions may serve to keep the world from utter confusion and ruin; however sweetly they may sometimes soften the asperity of human adversity, or smooth the ruggedness of life, in regard to spirituality they are totally deficient. At best, they are "*amiable instincts;*" proofs of the original beauty of the structure of man's nature, rather than evidences of any present moral excellence. These do not at all interfere with the position that men are *totally depraved*. The deadliest poison is sometimes concealed by the fairest flowers.

We have no wish to make human nature darker than it really is. We do not dive into human degradation, or take the covering from plausible actions, because we love these discoveries. It is hard thus

to apply the stern sword of the Spirit to the only flowers that have outlived the fall, or the fire of truth to the graceful drapery around human character. But *the truth of God is at stake*. He describes human depravity in the Sacred Volume. And we must endeavor to show that God is true and every man a liar, even though it sweep away all that man is proud of; **THAT GOD IS TRUE** when he testifies—**THAT BY NATURE ALL MEN ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED**.

It is not pleasant to dwell on the spiritual deformity of our nature. But it may be *profitable*. It is better to describe the disease painfully, if it will lead to the remedy, than to lull to security by false representation. It is better to unveil the deformity, if it lead to salutary abhorrence, than veil it to the ruin of the soul. If the doctrine be harsh, remember it is true. If it thwarts the natural feelings of the heart, it is the plain revelation of that Bible which gives us the only hopes of eternal happiness. If it crushes every proud passion, and humbles us in the dust, it is the truth of that God who only has life and death in his hand. We will disbelieve or disregard it at our eternal peril.

We might, by compromising the truth, present a view of this subject much more palatable, than natural, universal, and total depravity. But with compromise on this point, we must make a corresponding change in all that is peculiar and precious in the Christian system. If we veiled the truth on this point, we might form a system which no sinner would oppose. It would flatter human pride, and foster human merit, and permit the aspirings of human dignity, and lay no fatal axe at the root of human greatness. This we might do; for it has been done. This system would naturally withdraw a Divine Savior from the Sacred Volume, and present his sufferings as a model for our imitation, and not a sacrifice for our innumerable sins. This system would take away the Holy Ghost as an unnecessary appendage of Divine Revelation—change Satan into a personification—and all the fires of hell and the solemnities of the judgment, into figurative phraseology.

Such a system would be palatable to proud human nature. To such a law “the carnal mind would have no enmity;” such light it would not hate; of such a plan of salvation it would shout hosannas; and for such a *faith*, involving no sorrow for sin, nor change of heart—no self-denial or holy obedience, there might be found votaries as numerous as the myriads that worship the Beast, or that follow the false Prophet.

But a minister must be far gone in depravity or in error himself, before he can be brought to the dangerous experiment of defending such a system to please the taste or buy the favor of his fellow-men; and we honestly believe that every man taught by the Spirit of God, is taught that depravity is natural, universal, and total—and the deeper his views of depravity, the clearer his conceptions and stronger his evidences of salvation.

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## SERMON LVI.

BY REV. JAMES M. ARNELL,  
OF WEST TENNESSEE.

### THE NECESSITY, AND NATURE, OF THE EDUCATION OF THE MINISTRY.

2 TIMOTHY 2: 2.—*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.*

The text supposes the union of Piety and Knowledge as necessary to the perfect adornment of the minister of Jesus. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*; (i. e. *pious and devoted men*;) who shall be *able to teach others also*." These are the men we need: men who in roaming the fields of knowledge, forsake not their intercourse with heaven: men who are examples to the world in every virtue: men who can instruct the opposer with meekness, and rebuke the transgressor with firmness: men of gentle hearts who can sympathize with the afflicted, and rejoice with the happy; who have the spirit of self-denial to bear them through all the toils and the trials of their office: men who labor on their appointed day without intermission—looking to the Great Lord of the Harvest for their reward; magnifying not themselves but their office; with all humility giving the glory to Him whose ambassadors they are, and who has honored them as his co-laborers in the work of the world's salvation.

Numerous are the objections which ignorance and prejudice have made against the thorough Education of the Ministry; but the only one of all these which is at all formidable or even worthy of notice, is that which is derived from the character and history of our Lord's apostles. These we are told were, with few exceptions, illiterate men; some of them were obscure fishermen; and nearly all, previous to their ministry, engaged in some secular occupation which left no time for scientific pursuit: yet they were the men who laid the foundations of the Christian church, and who succeeded more in rearing up the glorious fabric than any succeeding generation of ministers, however splendid their talents and extended their acquisitions. The argument is more specious than solid. We deny the premises assumed, and, even admitting the premises, we deny that the inference which is made to follow, is justly deducible. What! methinks I hear it asked, will you deny the admitted and acknowledged fact, that the Lord Jesus called some of his disciples from the very boats in which they were mending their nets, and another from the place where he was gathering the taxes of the land? No, brethren; but we do deny most distinctly that they were immediately admitted to the functions, and performed the duties of the ministerial office. These but began their pupilage; for three years they sat in the school of Christ; listened to the instructions of the great Prophet of our world; heard from his lips doctrines which never fell from Socrates or Plato—and all delivered with a lucidness, a sweetness and a power which astonished even his enemies, and made the officers sent to arrest him exclaim with wonder, "Never man spake like this man." And these were not periodical or occasional privileges. They heard him at all times; not merely in public

lectures, like the students of the Academic philosophers, but in his most private converse: they received in secret the explanation of those parables with which he taught the multitude: by the most simple and lucid illustrations he made still clearer the great mysteries of his word: with the utmost gentleness and affection he removed one prejudice after another as he discovered it to prevail over their minds. Thus instructed by their great Teacher, they went forth fully equipped for their warfare—able to contend with every gainsayer or perverter of their faith. It was not till they had passed through this preparatory stage, that they were fully intrusted with all the responsibilities and duties of their office. It was immediately preceding his glorious return to his Father, that he gave them the important commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Then he established that sacred order whom he hath promised to bless with his presence to the end of the world and the consummation of his kingdom. And now we ask with fearlessness, Were they not learned men? Who is the man that will dare to depreciate the teachings of the Great Messiah, and charge the pupils who issued from his school with ignorance or folly? It is true, in all probability, they knew but little of the babblings of a false philosophy or the conceptions of Platonic childishness. They knew enough, however, of these systems of superstition and error to ensure their destruction: and John, one of those very men who are charged with illiteracy, we behold opening his Gospel with a death-blow at the system of the Gnostics; holding forth Christ, the word of God, as the creator and preserver, the light and the life of the world, in opposition to all those theories which would degrade his divinity or hurl him from the throne of universal government. But whatever they may have known of these ancient and now buried philosophies, they were fully instructed in all the doctrines and mysteries of Revelation. He who was the object of the sacrificial types; the testimony of whom was the spirit and scope of all prophecy: He unfolded to their minds the ample page of sacred knowledge. Thus learning from the book of the Spirit of God and receiving the comment of the Son of God—the great wisdom of the Bible; who will venture to say that after all this training they became not men of knowledge and understanding, able to feed the flock of God from the stores which they themselves had received from the Great Shepherd?

But in addition to the falsity of the premises, the conclusion itself is illogical—the superstructure which is reared upon the assumed basis, is broader than the foundation. Until it can be shown that the present dispensation of the Gospel is coincident in all its parts with the primitive, no argument can be derived from this peculiarity in favor of limiting the intellectual qualifications of ministers of succeeding ages. But the truth is, that dispensation was itself an extraordinary one. It was the birth; the ushering in of all dispensations. The very foundations of Christianity were to be established, and there were the needed displays of power in its behalf, such as had never been and should never follow after. It was necessary to teach the world that the Christian system had not its origin in the school of the philosopher—sprang not from the conceptions of the Rabbin—was in no sense the discovery of the human mind, and therefore it was that Jesus and his disciples came forth from the shades of obscurity, unfolding a harmonious and magnificent system of truth, of which philosophers had never imagined in their proudest conceptions. But when this great object was obtained, there was no need to continue and perpetuate the peculiar means by which it was accomplished.

But further, The teachers of that age were endowed with powers which rendered less necessary the instructions and the intellectual training preparatory to the sacred office. Will those ministers of the present age, who justify a partial and meagre education in the ministry—will they pretend to the same powers? Will they profess to make up by Inspiration what they have lost by want of mental exertion? Will they supply the lack of classical learning by the gift of tongues? Will they work a miracle, heal the sick or raise the dead, in attestation of the truth of their doctrines, when unable to convince by sound argument and copious illustrations drawn from the word of God? Until they claim the possession of these

powers, and are able to make good these pretensions, we beg to hear no more of the jargon about a college-bred or a man-made ministry.

If the testimony of Scripture be appealed to, it is decisively in favor of a thorough ministerial education. No sacred writer has enlarged more upon the qualifications of a minister than the Apostle Paul. In addressing young Timothy, his beloved son in the Gospel, he exhibits as necessary for the perfecting of the Christian minister, *thorough preparation and continued study*. "A bishop"—the word bishop means overseer or pastor, and expresses the station of one who has the duties of the pastoral office engrafted upon those of the ministerial—"a bishop must be *apt to teach*. Not a *novice*, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Till I come give attendance to *reading*, to exhortation, to doctrine. *Neglect not, i. e. improve by study*, the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, *Meditate* upon these things; *give thyself wholly* to them, that thy *profiting* may appear to all. *Study to show thyself approved* of God, a *workman that needeth not to be ashamed*, rightly dividing the word of truth."—1 Tim. 3:2,6—4:13,14,15.—2 Tim. 2:15.

In addition to the Scriptural testimony, we now adduce some other evidence in favor of a thorough ministerial education. This is derived from the very nature and manifold duties of the ministerial office. *First. The minister is an interpreter of the word of God.* All the duties implied in this comprehensive term devolve upon him, and he cannot evade them without doing violence to his own conscience and shaking off the very office which he bears. He must be able to unfold the meaning of the Bible; to spread out its beauties; explain its images, parables, proverbs and metaphors; elucidate its Geography and History; its prophecy and poetry: he must understand the allusions made to reigning customs; to the political or ecclesiastical condition of the times: he must become acquainted with Jewish and Heathen philosophies, before he can attain to any perfection in the critical study and interpretation of the word of God. To accomplish this requires no mean exertion of the mental powers. How wide and immeasurable, for instance, is the field into which we are at once introduced, when we attempt to study the connection between Profane and Sacred History! We begin at the foundations of the Egyptian and Babylonian monarchies: we are carried along through the successive stages of their growth and greatness—we notice the rise of their arts and commerce, their philosophies and superstitions; we travel over their history till the one falls beneath the arms of a Cyrus, and the other is afterward swallowed up in the all-pervading dominion of the man of Macedon. Then we are introduced into the wide field of Grecian learning and History; we review its philosophical sects and systems; its civil and political customs, and, as we rove over these fields of knowledge, we gather up many facts which shed light upon the multiplied, and the otherwise obscure, allusions of the Bible History. But can this be accomplished without mental toil and effort! Must we not drink at the fountains of classical learning—consult the pages of the flowing Herodotus, the terse Thucydides and the gentle Xenophon? The elucidation of Scripture History, however, is but a tithe of the duties devolving upon the Biblical critic. The amount of investigation required for that particular object may, however, serve to illustrate the extensiveness of that knowledge which is necessary for him who would discharge the full measure of his duty as an expositor of the Divine Record.

But, *secondly. The Minister of Jesus should be an able defender of Christian doctrine.* "Holding fast," says the apostle Paul to Titus, when enumerating the qualifications of a bishop or pastor, "holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers." "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped"—and how!—not by force: not as too many controversialists endeavor to close the lips of their adversaries by bitter words, cutting irony, personal invective and billingsgate abuse: no, but by *sound doctrine*, by the luminous argument and reasoning of a mind accus-

omed to flash conviction upon its opposers. Now, in addition to the mental discipline necessary for the performance of such a work, no small degree of knowledge in regard to the history and progress of the church is necessary to ensure success. The Christian minister should understand the various forms which heresy has assumed, and the various arguments by which she has endeavored to sustain her claims, and has battled it out for existence even when ready to drop into the grave. Error has its system, its principles and foundations as well as truth. Conscious of her own deformity she has striven to cover her odiousness with a veil, and interposed her feeble buckler against the uplifted lance of the Christian soldier. Master spirits—gigantic intellects, have employed all their ingenuity and their energies in endeavoring to perpetuate her existence and power. To accomplish her total defeat he should know all her guises; should make himself master of every form of heresy from its inception to its maturity. He should study the whole system of Arius, Pelagius and Socinus, and of every heresiarch from the days of the apostles to the present age. By an accurate survey of all the parts of the fallacious edifices which they have reared, he discovers the key-stone, the removal of which will bring the whole to ruin. By a close inspection of all the fortresses which they have erected both for defence and attack, he discovers the indefensible point, the way of access to that citadel the possession or the loss of which determines their triumph or their destruction.

It is not only necessary for the Christian minister to know the various forms of heresy, but also the sources whence they derive their arguments. And what are those sources? The treasures of Biblical Literature. Error has always delighted in making vain pretensions to science, and in attributing her freedom from the prejudices of orthodoxy to her more frequent access to the fountains of Biblical knowledge. No small portion of the system of the Universalist, is built upon a perversion of the Hebrew and Greek words, which signify the place of condemned spirits, and those also which express the eternity of their punishment. And the Socinian will be found employing the same mode of warfare. With the most astonishing self-complacency he will bid defiance to the researches of learned antiquarians and critics; assail the authority of the most uncorrupt versions, deny the integrity of the text, pervert all the laws and principles of interpretation, mutilate or expunge from the sacred record just as may suit the system which he has reared, and on the truth of which he has madly based all his hopes for eternity. Can he be considered a well furnished soldier who is unable to meet these enemies on their own ground and overthrow them with their own weapons?

But, *thirdly.* *The minister of Jesus should be an able defender of the evidence of Christianity.* He should be able to sustain the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred record—show the credibility of its miracles and the fulfilment of its prophecies—spread out its evidence, external and internal, direct and collateral—vindicate its antiquity and its harmony; the sublimity of its doctrines and the unrivalled excellence of its morals. But here a mine of evidence is opened, which after all the toil of a Lardner and a Paley and a Watson, is still unexhausted and exhaustless. The fields of nature and science and history, are spread out before us, and we may almost rove at pleasure and bring in from every quarter abundant testimonies to the truth of Heaven's record. We may walk with the Geologist the round of this earth, and in its very structure and fossil remains find evidence confirmatory of the Mosaic history—we may go to the tombs of Egyptian monarchs, and read the evidence of the Bible facts in those till lately mystic and undeciphered symbols which are inscribed upon them: we can find in those facts of Natural History which prove the existence of the God of Nature, a presumptive argument in favor of the God of the Bible: We are furnished in the antiquities and traditions of the heathen world, in their gross ignorance, their stupid idolatry, their corrupted morals and abominable sacrifices, with an argument for the necessity and the probable truth of the Christian Revelation. These unfolded in luminous array, must, so far as the intellect is concerned, bear down with resistless power upon every unbeliever; but to the uneducated minister, all this is but a sealed book: and when the sceptic meets him at the threshold of all his inquiries, and demands the evidence for the

Divinity of that volume which he preaches, his mouth is closed, or if he is not dumb he can only point to the witness in his own bosom, which, however satisfactory to himself, can be no evidence to him who demands proof, of which, his own mind or senses can be the judges. Most unhappy will be the effect produced upon the mind of that unbeliever as he returns to his associates, boasting of the ignorance of the professed ministers of Christianity, and deriving, from the incapacity of one of its humble advocates, an argument against the wisdom and authority of all its unfoldings.

Other proofs in favor of a thorough Ministerial Education may be gathered from the history of the church. There are no lessons so valuable and at the same time so dearly bought as those of experience; and the experience of the church has amply testified that the piety and usefulness of her Ministry have gone hand in hand with their learning. Where was there ever a more devoted and eminent minister of Jesus; one more abundant and at the same time successful in his labors than the Apostle Paul? Was he a sciolist? Was he a dull pupil, when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel and studied with so much devotion the religion of his fathers? Does not every Epistle reveal the acuteness of his powers? Does not his matchless address before the Roman Agrippa bear witness to his eloquence as an orator and his accomplishments as a scholar? As it was in the first, so in the second, third, and fourth centuries, the usefulness of the Ministry kept even pace with their learning. During this period they exerted over the whole church a commanding influence, and were eminently instrumental in the promotion of Religion both in its purity and power. And what was the character of these ages? It was strongly intellectual. So important was the holy office of the ministry esteemed, that years were devoted to preparatory study, and the schools of the Prophets were every where established. Then shone those brilliant luminaries Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Tertullian, Origen and Augustine: men whose names are still embalmed in the memory of the churches, and will be to the end of time. But when these holy men were gathered to their fathers, their successors caught not their mantle, and the piety and learning of the ministry declined alike and together. A long night of intellectual and moral darkness enveloped the ministry and the church: a darkness which, like that of Egypt, might be felt—which continued its awful and, with few exceptions, its unbroken reign for nearly a dozen centuries. It was during this age of darkness that the Papal power began and strengthened itself in its abominations. The civilized nations of the earth began a retrograde movement to the barbarous habits from which Christianity had redeemed them. The old proverb of "like priest, like people" was now completely verified: an ignorant and voluptuous priesthood by their abominable doctrines and example in effect giving law to universal sensuality and crime: one grave was made for Piety and Learning to lie down together: the intellectual and moral lights of the world were nearly all put out, and little else remained to pour its rays upon the pervading darkness but the lurid fires of a baleful superstition. There are, however, some redeeming features even in this dark page of the church's history. There was a little band called the Paulicians in the seventh and eighth centuries, who still cherished the love of learning, and were distinguished for their diligence and proficiency in the study of the Bible. As might be expected, they were remarkable both for purity of doctrine and of manners. Their enemies it is true charged them with the errors of the Gnostics and Manicheans, but of this there is no sufficient evidence. The Papal corruptions which began to spread wider and wider their baneful influence, left this pious and simple-hearted people untaunted. The adoration of relics, the perversion of the sacraments, the worship of images, the foul abominations and fashionable drapery of the Romish superstition, were unknown among them. Their ministry was as remarkable for zeal as for knowledge. Under the preaching of Sylvanus, the father of the sect, the light of truth began to spread over Pontus and Cappadocia, and by the instrumentality of his associates was fast sending out its beams to the remote parts of the Greek Empire. As an evidence of their sincere piety, they attested their belief in their doctrines by a cheerful endurance of the pains of martyrdom. While these feeble rays of truth and knowledge were yet lingering in

the East, a brilliant but a solitary star began to shine in the West. Claudius, the learned bishop of Turin, began to excite the attention of the world by his zealous and active opposition to the errors of the Papacy. His enemies acknowledged his powers. Fleury, a Roman Catholic writer himself, says, "he began to preach and instruct with great application." In the 13th century began the rise of the Waldenses. These men of simple and devoted piety took especial care in the training of their ministry. They were anxious to afford them all the advantages which the rigors and hardships of their condition would possibly allow. When reproached by the devotees of the Romish Church, because their pastors followed trades, they pointed to the depths of their distress, and lamented in the most affecting terms that their impoverished and persecuted state rendered them unable to give to their pastors as much intellectual furniture as was desirable; though in this respect they far exceeded their calumniators. The Romish monks—the doctors of the Sarbonne, with all their theological subtleties, could not stand before the pious pastors of the Waldenses. The ministers of the succeeding ages, whose influence was most widely felt upon the public mind, were such men as Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, Thomas Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury, called "the Profound Doctor," and Wickliffe, so often and aptly styled the "morning star of the Reformation." All these, in addition to their undoubted piety, were remarkable for their learning. All drank at the fountains of Oxford literature. In addition to their theological attainments, which were of the most extensive kind, they added proficiency in the sciences. The first was remarkable for his skill in the Hebrew, the Greek and French languages; made himself perfect master of Aristotle; and was at the same time an eminent philosopher. The second excelled in Mathematics, and brought all the acuteness of a mathematical mind to bear upon his theological investigations. The last—who has not heard his fame? The Romish clergy—the corrupted priests of the great Antichrist, quailed before his mental powers. An able disputant—master of all their logical and philosophical niceties, he overthrew them with their own weapons, and brought down upon their heads the very battlements in which they were entrenched. The Reformers who succeeded this great father of the Lollards, were as remarkable for their learning as their piety. All cotemporary authors bear testimony to the genius and the eloquence of Huss; and the celebrated Florentine, Poggius has given the most unequivocal testimony to the powers of Jerome of Prague. The lovely piety and glowing eloquence of the martyred Jerome, affected even the council who condemned him; and nothing, it would seem, but the all-grasping despotism of the Romish superstition, could have secured a condemnatory verdict. And Luther—I need only refer you to his able controversies with Tetzel and Eckius; to his voluminous writings; his letters and his commentaries which were poured upon the world as by magic; to his able defence before the Diet of Worms; to the compliment which was paid him by Miltitz, the Poye's nuncio, who declared that he expected from the extent of his influence to see an old and grey-headed man, when he was introduced to one yet in the prime of his existence; and last of all, to a fact which speaks volumes in favor of his acquirements—that even the learned and subtle Erasmus was afraid to lift his lance against the Wittemberg professor; and, although tempted by the offer of a rich bishopric, declared that he was unable to encounter such a man; and that "he had learned more from a single page in his books than from all the writings of Thomas Aquinas." But time would fail me in exhibiting all the evidence on this subject which can be gathered from the history of the church. In concluding this part of our subject, I would point you to the influence and learning of such men as Owen and Baxter and Howe and Watts and Doddridge—I would show how even the zeal and usefulness of the Missionary may be happily blended with extensive literary acquirements, as in the examples of John Elliot, David Brainerd, Claudius Buchanan and Henry Martyn, I will direct your eye to the ministers of our own beloved land—to the commanding influence and piety and knowledge of such men as Edwards and Dwight and Davies and Mason—men whose praise is yet in the churches, and whose names will be had in remembrance so long as the union of intellectual

industry with a heavenly mind is esteemed a necessary qualification for a watchman upon the walls of Zion.

The questions now arise, what is meant by a thorough Ministerial Education? What are the elements of that intellectual training necessary to the minister of Jesus? These questions will be answered by a reference to the great objects of education. These are: *first, to discipline the mind; second, to store it with suitable knowledge; and third, to give it the power and facility of communicating to others its own treasures.* The teacher who aims not to secure all these benefits to his scholars will fail in fulfilling the whole measure of his duty. His pupils may be men of genius, or they may become pedants and book-worms, or they may come forth to the world eloquent and popular declaimers, but they will never attain to true intellectual greatness—to a perfect and complete education, without a disciplined logical understanding, ample intellectual furniture and a promptness and facility of communication. And all these are necessary for the Christian Minister.

*First, The mind must be disciplined.* The great object of all our schools for both sexes, from the primary to the highest: of all our institutions which are preparatory to professional life—whether of Law, Medicine or Theology—the great object should be to teach the pupils to think—not merely to imbibe knowledge passively, as the full blown flower receives the falling rain, but to originate thoughts or to deduce new trains and processes of reasoning from principles which others have established. In addition to this, the knowledge we gain should be reduced to a system; every similar fact should be bound together in one parcel, and labelled with one generic term. These are qualifications which the uneducated man does not possess. He is but the passive recipient of the information which he gains, and, when particular facts come to his observation, he disposes of them in the same manner in which a boy disposes of the pebbles or shells which he picks up on the beach and crowds into his pocket: there is no selection or arrangement—no power of generalization is exerted over the masts of facts which are crowded into his mind. This power of generalization and independent investigation is the result of mental discipline; and this discipline is a severe one. The mind must be called in from all its wanderings and shut out from every other object of contemplation; its eye must be fastened upon the single object of thought before it, or employed in collecting the facts which are to be reduced to order, and upon which are to be reared the most important principles. And this discipline the minister especially needs. As it becomes him to call no man master, he is to call into action his own powers unfettered by the shackles which the dogmas of others would impose upon him. He is to take the principles of eternal truth as they are laid down in the word of God, and trace them out to their legitimate results and practical application praying for the light of Heaven to guide him, and the Spirit of God to assist his powers of investigation. As he is to dispense this knowledge to others, he should be lucid and clear. Every thing should be well arranged: every fact and principle should be in its right place: from every point of the field in which he travels there should be a radius going to the common centre: all should tend to some great point like the rays of a burning lens to its focus, producing not only light in the understanding, but conviction in the conscience, and warmth in the heart. He is to defend himself against every gainsayer. As the experienced general watches all the movements of his army, its shapes and positions, and prepares in an unguarded hour to bear down with his whole host upon the point, the possession of which secures the victory, so should he fix his mental eye upon the whole array of his argument; and when the arrangement is complete, and the forces are all mustered, unite them together and pour them down upon the main point of defence in one continued and overwhelming storm. If ever he indulges in a wide sweep, or gathers in facts which seem to have no immediate bearing upon the subject, it should be only preparatory to further operation; the circle of his argument, like that of the gathering whirlwind, should be continually narrowing and narrowing, until its power is concentrated in a single point, and it is ready to move on with equal rapidity and alike destructive to all opposition.

*The second part of Ministerial Education is intellectual furniture.* On this topic we shall be brief, as we had occasion to discuss it partly when speaking of the duties of the ministerial office. We have already seen that the study of Geography and History, of Poetry and Philosophy, and of the original languages of the Bible are necessary to render the minister a skilful interpreter of the Divine word. In addition to this, we mention Ethics as only a branch of Christian Theology, and Mental Philosophy as necessary not only to guide the minister in the training of his own mind, but also to assist him in distinguishing the various forms of religious character, and to discriminate between the movements of the animal, the intellectual, and the moral part of our being. It is not to be expected that the student of Theology will make himself master of all the interesting facts which science spreads out to the eye of the man of letters. To attain perfection in any one science would be the labor of a life time, and the student whose ambition would be unsatisfied with any less preparation than a perfect acquaintance with any less preparation than a perfect acquaintance with all the minutia of science, would drop into his grave while yet in the preparatory stages of his education. But the great outlines at least—the general principles of science, and especially those which have a direct bearing upon the office which he seeks—these should be known and treasured in the memory; and, until this be obtained, he cannot be esteemed a well-furnished minister of Jesus. He may at times be eloquent; the sensibilities of his audience may occasionally do homage to his genius or his fancy, but he cannot come forth to his people from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from year to year, like a well-instructed Scribe, bringing out of his treasure things new and old.

*The third part of Ministerial Education is the power of communicating to others the treasures of the mind.* A minister must not only be *learned*: he must be *apt to teach*. His very office is that of a teacher, the highest of whose qualifications is the power to impress upon his pupils the sentiments which are burning in his own bosom. Success in the acquisition of knowledge without the power to dispense the treasures which are gained, would be as useless to the public as the marble which forever remains in the quarry, or the gold which rusts in the box of the miser. Furnished by the researches of his study, the minister is to come forth to his people, fitted to instruct and convince them in regard to the great truths which he is commissioned to proclaim. Although not always necessary, yet, when the occasion demands it, he should bring out to view the trains and processes as well as the results of his investigations: by a luminous disposal of his facts and arguments, to pour into other minds the intellectual treasures with which his own is enriched. The great object which should dwell in the eye of his ambition, should be to make his hearers fully master of the great doctrines which he preaches, and through the medium of the understanding to awaken the dormant sensibilities of the heart. To accomplish this he must study simplicity and copiousness of illustration, precision of language, lucidness of arrangement, and unity of design, and without these, whatever be his powers of utterance or fluency of expression, his discourse will but play upon the ear without reaching the intellect or the heart. For let it be remembered most distinctly that, by this power of communicating thoughts, we mean not any rhetorical elegance or fluency. This is sometimes connected with perfect obscurity: oftentimes that very freedom of the popular declaimer which awakens the gaze of the listening multitude, arises from the multiplicity of his topics—the wideness of a fancy unrestrained by the laws of taste—the absence of a great point or object in his reasonings, and the introduction of whatever may be suggested to the mind of the orator, whether relevant or not to his theme. The hearers of such a minister may be pleased, captivated, perhaps ready to extol him to the skies, but they will return from his pulpit exhibitions as uninstructed as ever; while the more discerning will wonder why all this tempest of eloquence is raised for no imaginable purpose, or for none more valuable than “to waft a feather or to drown a fly.” The power of which we speak is a very different talent from that of empty declamation. It is the dealing which one mind has with another: the ability to spread out its thoughts upon the surface of another intellect, with the same vividness with which the painter transfers to his canvas the beauties of earth and heaven.

If learning was ever necessary for the ministry of any age, it is for that of the present. The aspect of the times is portentous. Both the moral and the political sky are overcast with clouds, and storms are gathering which threaten to rock to their foundations both the Church and the State. Heresy, Infidelity and the Man of Sin are mustering their forces against the "sacramental host of God's elect;" the struggle of the contending armies has already begun, and the noise of their arms may be heard from every part of the battlements of Zion. In the State, the spirit of party, the conflicts of prejudice, interest and political ambition, at stated seasons sweep over the land, rocking the whole republic, threatening (unless the God of Providence prevent,) the speedy dismemberment of our Union, and perhaps the termination of our political freedom. The age is a feverish one: the fever which preys upon the body politic has its ebbs and flows; now perhaps it has a complete intermission, but soon it rises with a sudden violence which threatens our social and political systems with dissolution. In this ominous aspect of the times to whom should we look for guidance? Who should lead on the armies of the church to their glorious warfare, and stand or fall with them in the terrible conflict with the Atheistic and the Papal powers? Who should mould the public mind, soothe its ragings, inspire it with the firmness of principle, and give direction to its power? Who should preside over our colleges? To whom should the youth of our country and the destinies of posterity be entrusted? To whom but a ministry eminent for Piety and Knowledge. It was in a measure owing to the patriotic zeal and efforts of an enlightened ministry, and of the Presbyterian ministry particularly, that we are indebted for the success of our Revolutionary struggle. The learned and venerable Witherspoon stood forth the first and fearless advocate of the Declaration of Independence on the floor of the American Congress, and the pulpits of the land rang with discussions on the duties of the citizen and the patriot in those times which "tried men's souls." And do we not need in this age a ministry who shall be indeed the saviors of their country—who shall infuse into our youth, our families and throughout this great republic, those principles which are calculated to assuage the swellings of popular commotion, to soothe the jealousies of party, to humble the pride of ambition and to overthrow the battlements of the enemies of the church? And to what ministry shall we look for the accomplishment of all this, but to one drinking deeply of the fountains of learning, and breathing at the same time the moral atmosphere of heaven!

And now, fathers and brethren in the ministry, let us apply this subject to ourselves. We have passed through, it is true, our preparatory stage: we have entered upon the duties and trials of our ministry; let us not think, however, our preparation for usefulness completed, or that we may, for the future, dispense with the toil of our pupilage. The years which are spent in a literary and theological course we should esteem but as the inceptive stages of an education, which ceases not till the soul ceases its union with the body. In the college we but learn how to improve our own powers; we receive only the elements of investigation, and on ourselves must depend the rearing up and the perfecting of that superstructure, the foundation of which was laid by our Alma Mater. We should remember that the true honor of a Christian minister consists in pastoral faithfulness and capacity—in copying the example of the Great Shepherd, who feeds his spiritual flock with the richest stores—"takes them to the green pastures and leads them beside the still waters." We must be men of patient investigation and accurate research, and not merely fervid declaimers: we should make it a great object to add to our own stores while we benefit others, remembering that knowledge like "charity is twice blessed." We must believe and act upon these principles, if we hope extensively to influence and to bless the world. In conclusion, let me quote, as applicable to our own case, the declaration of the Synod of Geneva, when making its annual report of the state of religion for the year 1832: "If we would see the Lord God walking among us again in glory and power: if we would be blessed again and refreshed, our ministers must remain in their places, and *study, and study, and study*. They must preach systematically and fully the whole counsel of God, and feed their people with knowledge and understanding."

## SERMON LVII.

BY S. G. WINCHESTER, A. M.,  
OF PHILADELPHIA.

### THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS, THE POWER OF GOD.

1 COR. 1:18. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

In the preceding verse the apostle affirms that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect: and lest the power and results of his preaching should be attributed to the eloquence of speech, and to the learning of man instead of the doctrine of Christ crucified, accompanied by the influence of the divine Spirit. In consequence of this direction from Christ, the apostle, as he relates in the beginning of the second chapter of this epistle, came to the Corinthians, not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God, for he determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ and him crucified: and therefore his speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. However, to those who were spiritually enlightened his speech was not destitute of wisdom, but it was not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, for that comes to nought. But it was the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But God has revealed this wisdom unto us, my brethren, by his Spirit; and as no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him, so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Therefore the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. On this account "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."

The text contains two distinct propositions. First, that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness. Secondly, that to us which are saved it is the power of God. To each of these, in their order, your prayerful attention is now solicited.

#### I. THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS IS, TO THEM THAT PERISH, FOOLISHNESS.

All men, by nature, are in a lost and perishing condition. "He that believeth not is condemned already," and "dead in trespasses and in sins." "To be carnally minded is death." Such is the condition of all impenitent and unconverted men. They are the children of wrath. To such the text affirms the preaching of the cross to be foolishness, because they receive not the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. To show that the expression, "them that perish," does not refer exclusively to those in hell, but includes also the impenitent on earth, it is only necessary to observe, that it is used antithetically to the expression, "us which are saved," which of course included

Paul himself, and all other living saints. If, therefore, our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

On this first proposition, the two following points are raised, viz.: 1. The doctrines of the cross are foolishness to the unrenewed. 2. The preaching of the cross, as an instrumentality for the conversion and salvation of men, is likewise foolishness in the estimation of carnal reason.

1. The doctrines of the cross are foolishness to the unconverted. "We preach," says Paul in the 23d verse, "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness." Although bloody sacrifices from the time of Abel, down to the last victim that was offered up in the temple before our Lord's crucifixion, were typical of this great atoning sacrifice, yet such was the blindness that had come upon Israel, that even the priests, who officiated at the altar, lost sight of the substance, of which these rites were the shadow. God had decreed that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; hence Cain's offering of the first fruits was unacceptable, while Abel's bloody sacrifice secured the divine favor. It was through these bloody sacrifices that the pious, of every age, were accustomed to look forward in faith to that one offering, by which they that are sanctified are perfected for ever. But the great mass of Jewish worshippers looked not beyond the bleeding victim that smoked upon the altar before them. The humble manner in which the Messiah appeared among the Jews, although his humiliation was a part of his great plan, secured their rejection of Him. And although he was foretold in this character by the prophets, they nevertheless poured contempt upon his pretensions, and treated his claims to be their king, with scorn and cruel hatred. His vicarious death, though typified by their own economy, distinctly foretold in their own scriptures, and but recently prophesied by their own high priest, was effected through malice, and the doctrine of its exclusive efficacy to salvation, rejected, with the bitterest animosity, as foolishness and blasphemy. The Pharisee, discarding the doctrine of justification by faith, trusted to their own righteousness for acceptance, and when the resurrection was preached, the Saducees mocked.

Christ, and him crucified, was a stumbling block to the Jews. But to the Gentiles, who had not been taught the doctrines and commandments of the Bible, it was foolishness. To them the method of fallen man's recovery, through a vicarious atoning sacrifice, was unknown. The discovery of such a method was far above the conceptions of a finite mind. It is a matter exclusively of revelation. Carnal reason cannot receive it; and because this and kindred doctrines are beyond its reach, they are stigmatized as unreasonable: as such they are regarded by every grade of rationalism at the present day. That Jesus Christ should be truly God and truly man at the same time: that He should have endured that penal suffering which the law of God denounced, and which the justice of God demanded: that the sufferings of one who knew no sin, should atone for the guilt of many others: that man is justified in the sight of God by merit and righteousness, not his own, but another's, imputed to him: that human works of benevolence, of virtue, of mercy and of piety, should be of no account as the ground of pardon and salvation: that a radical and lasting change is wrought in the human heart by the efficient, yet mysterious, agency of the divine Spirit—are doctrines unacceptable to carnal reason, and which, in the judgment of man's wisdom, are fairly entitled to the appellation of foolishness.

The doctrine of faith in Christ, in order to salvation, is the more regarded in this light, because of its mystery and simplicity. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, is the doctrine of the gospel. Carnal reason pronounces it preposterous and absurd. Faith, although unknown to the law of God, yet secures the believer, a perfect obedience. Faith, although it respects things unseen, yet with infallible certainty, rests upon a firm and safe foundation. Faith, although it respects a future possession, is nevertheless a present subsistence. It cannot be. It is unworthy of the mind of God. It is a dream of the enthusiast. It is the cant

of the fanatic. Such is the soliloquizing infidelity of proud and carnal reason. This unhumiliated and self-confident spirit of the natural man, was eminently illustrated in the history of the Assyrian leper. The simplicity and apparent unreasonableness of Elijah's prescription, enraged the bosom of the disappointed Naaman, who, in all the pomp and elegance of eastern royalty, had waited upon the prophet, with his own vain and preconceived opinion of the remedy to be applied. The direction to wash seven times in the river Jordan was rejected with scorn as foolishness; especially when Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were better in his estimation than all the waters of Israel.

The word rendered in our text "foolishness," may also bear the meaning of "insipidity," and "contemptibleness."

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish insipidity. They have no relish for such doctrines, and can derive therefore no pleasure from the study and contemplation of them. A darkening of the understanding and a blindness of mind induced by sin, and which is a part of their depravity, shut out from their vision the glories of the cross. They apprehended them not because spiritually discerned. To such, therefore, the things of the Spirit of God are *foolishness* or *insipidity*. A man born blind can form no just idea of color, and therefore can neither appreciate nor enjoy the varied hues with which the God of nature has adorned and beautified his works. He can have no relish for the study of those works of art and nature whose prominent excellence appeals to the sense of sight. To him, therefore, the liveliest descriptions of beautiful landscape and brilliant scenery, would be devoid of interest and entertainment. Such things are not received by him, neither can he know them, because they are discerned by a sense of which he is destitute.

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish contemptibleness. The Jews treated with derision and contempt the pretensions of the Messiah to be their Lord and King. Although the time, manner and circumstances of his appearing had been long foretold, and although his suffering and death, with many minute particulars, had been also foretold, yet because of the blindness of their mind and the hardness of their hearts, they turned away from the full import of the prophetic page, or read it with the veil upon their hearts, and indulged the vain and unfounded expectations of a temporal prince appearing in all the pomp and splendor of imperial majesty, to free them from the yoke of Roman bondage, and elevate them above all the other nations of the earth, in power wealth and happiness. But O, with what ineffable contempt did they behold a poor despised Nazarene, the son of a carpenter, born in a stable and cradled in a manger, riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, and claiming to be King of the Jews. While some, whose feelings prompted more to ridicule than wrath, mocked his high pretensions and regarded him as insane, others more filled with fear and jealousy by the honor paid him by the shouting multitude, gnashed their teeth on him, and longed for, and studiously sought a ground of accusation against him. As proselytes increased and his doctrines and character became generally known, enmity and scorn endeavored more assiduously to excite popular prejudice against him; to this end appeals were alternately made to the religious feelings of the people, and to the fears and jealousies of the political government. They at length effected their object, and without designing it, they effected his purpose also. Hell pierced its own bosom with the very thrust that shed his precious life-giving blood. When the Jews were afterwards told that through their enmity they had effected the very object of Christ's mission to this earth, and that it was by his death alone that the divine favor could be secured, they were the more enraged. They despised the doctrine of salvation through a crucified malefactor, as they declared Christ to be. They disdained to be saved by a cross on which the vilest criminals were executed. And to this day the preaching of the cross is not more acceptable to the carnal heart. It is a mode of salvation too humiliating for the proud, rebellious spirit of man, which will not, of itself, stoop to such abasing terms of reconciliation with God. It is a humiliating plan of salvation we frankly acknowledge. It lays the

sinner in the dust, while it exalts the Savior. It takes the crown from the sinner's brow and places it upon His, who wore, in the sinner's stead, a crown of thorns. This plan requires of the sinner an humble and hearty confession of his guilt and desert of hell. It requires an acknowledgment that God might justly have permitted him to perish for ever. It does not indeed require a willingness to be damned, but it does require an acknowledgment that such is his deserved portion. It requires that the sinner abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes; that he esteem himself vile in the sight of God, and unworthy of the smallest favor. This is, my brethren, a humiliating doctrine; is it any wonder then, that it should be offensive to them that perish! The life which the gospel requires, is a life of self-denial, and undivided consecration to the service of God. It requires a crucifixion of the flesh and its lusts; a renunciation of the pomps and vanities and sinful pleasures of the world. It enjoins an unceasing warfare against the habits and maxims of the world, against wickedness although enthroned on the high places of power, wealth and influence, and against the workings and propensities of the heart, and the temptations and allurements by which it is assailed. This is the fight of faith; and it is a conflict unwe'come to flesh and blood. It is tearing from the bosom its long cherished idol. It is casting out from the heart its long loved guest, and it is mortifying, even unto death, its long indulged passions and appetites. Need we be surprized then, that the doctrines which enjoin such a life, such a warfare, and such mortifications, should be offensive to the flesh? The doctrines of the cross are to them that perish, to those who are unrenewed, foolishness, insipidity and contemptibleness.

2. The preaching of the cross, as an instrumentality for the salvation of men, is foolishness to them that perish.

God, in the work of saving sinners, is not confined to means, or instruments, by any necessity of which we are informed, but the use of them is referable to His own good pleasure. It is in gracious condescension to our weakness and ignorance, that we may thereby be the more deeply and sensibly affected by the results of his power and grace. His whole economy is an economy of means. Many of his miracles were wrought through the intervention of means. The Israelites in the wilderness were healed by means of the brazen serpent. Moses supplied them with water by means of his rod. The walls of Jerico were laid low by means of the blowing of ram's horns. Christ opened the eyes of the blind by means of clay which he had made of spittle. In every such case the means would have been justly regarded as foolishness, if considered apart from the power of Him who used them, by which they were accompanied, so God is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. It is a mystery to the carnal mind that the simple preaching of the cross should be appointed by God as the great means of saving souls. That the plain, unvarnished story of Christ's birth, life, sufferings and death, and the unadorned exposition of the doctrines which he taught, should be followed by such vast and amazing results, and that too, by men of humble talents and still more humble acquirements, as the first preachers of the gospel were, is a matter of surprize to all who know any thing of human nature and nothing of religion. Men of the world are accustomed to see themselves and others moved by eloquence, and influenced by learning and argument, but by the preaching of the gospel they are sought to be moved by a very simple narration, by very offensive doctrines, and by what some of them are pleased to call incoherent rapsodies of enthusiasts and fanatics; a means most unlikely, in their estimation, to effect the proposed end. Ancient philosophers and moralists were accustomed to seek a change of public sentiment, or the reformation of public manners, by precepts, by philosophy, and by rewarding virtue and punishing vice. Such an instrumentality met the approbation of the wisest of the heathen, and is still regarded, by many, even in christian lands, as the only wise and efficient means of securing this object. But here is a new and unheard of means. The preaching of the cross. The history and doctrines of an humble Jew who lived more than

eighteen hundred years ago, and who was put to death for blasphemy and conspiracy. The change which is sought to be effected by this means, is a radical and lasting change, not a partial, not a temporary change. How inadequate and unsuited is the instrumentality employed, says carnal reason. What! would you influence rational men, by inculcating the most offensive, mysterious and unwelcome doctrines, doctrines the most unreasonable and absurd! Doctrines which teach us to adore him as God, who was a child, and who died as a criminal! Doctrines which teach us to rely on him for deliverance from the power of sin and hell, who himself fell a victim to the wrath of man! Doctrines which teach us to be righteous with another's righteousness, to be wise with another's wisdom, and to be strong with another's strength! Doctrines which require us to believe what we cannot comprehend or fathom with our minds! Preposterous!! And yet with these doctrines do you seek to control the minds and affections of rational creatures! How much greater was the wisdom of Mohammed's plan, which instead of encountering and opposing the passions, habits, opinions and reasoning of men, was formed to pamper and cherish them, and to float on with the current of carnal appetites and worldly maxims. Yea; how much more worldly wisdom is displayed in the Romish dilutions of the word of God, and in their accommodating terms of salvation. The preaching of the cross is a plan most unwise, and unsuited to the nature of the beings on whom it is designed to operate. So says carnal reason. So says the wisdom of man; but the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, just as we have now seen the wisdom of God to be foolishness with man. But it is by this very foolishness, (viz. of preaching,) that God is pleased to save them that believe. Therefore, we shall proceed to show,

**II. Secondly, that although THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS IS, TO THEM THAT PERISH, FOOLISHNESS, IT IS, NEVERTHELESS, TO US WHO ARE SAVED, THE POWER OF GOD.**

1. The preaching of the cross carries with it great power. The word of God is quick and powerful, mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. It is that word which is able to make us wise unto salvation. It is that word which made Felix tremble, and almost persuaded King Agrippa to be a christian. On the day of pentecost, three thousand were pricked to the heart by the preaching of the cross. They were charged by the preacher with having taken and with wicked hands slain Jesus of Nazareth, and the word preached became the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed. There is a majesty, a grandeur, a sublimity, and a power in the simple doctrines of Christ and him crucified, that beggar the happiest efforts of human oratory and the most touching pathos of human eloquence.

The power of the preaching of the cross is displayed in its effects. It is the power of God unto salvation. It enlightens the darkened understanding. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." It gives spiritual life. "The word of God is quick and powerful." It quickens the sinner dead in trespasses and in sins. It begets the soul anew, which by this heavenly birth becomes an heir of glory. "Of his own will," says James, "begat he us by the word of truth." "Being born again," says Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." It also satisfies the new born soul. Our Lord then prayed for his disciples; "Father sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

2. The preaching of the cross is the power of God unto salvation. The ministration of this word is committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God. "Who hath believed our report," asks Isaiah, "and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" that is, to whom has the power of God in the gospel been revealed.

This power therefore is not inherent in the word, but accompanies it as its instrument. It is not the moral suasion or simple force of truth on the judgment

and will, but it is the power of God exerted through his truth. When Christ spoke Lazarus from the grave, it was through the efficacy of that power which accompanied his words. When he said to the sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed and walk, the man arose in virtue of the power which was communicated when the command was uttered. The weakness of the instruments employed in preaching the cross, shows that the power is of God, who takes the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. That the doctrines of the cross, which condemn and oppose the very heart which they seek to win, should nevertheless succeed, indicates the exertion of divine power. The success which has every where attended the use of this means, abundantly proves the power to be from God. At this success we should not wonder, did the gospel reveal the secret of earthly aggrandizement, and worldly honor, or secure for its professors the favor of princes, and the fame and popularity to which ambition aspires. But the gospel comes with no such bribes. It offers no such allurements. It promises no such rewards. It places no visible, temporary crown upon the head, and enrobes its followers with no purpled authority and distinction, but binds a cross upon the back, a burden upon the shoulder, and a yoke upon the neck. That men should, notwithstanding this, deliberately and heartily leave all, and embrace the gospel and follow Christ, through evil report and through good report, through much tribulation, and suffer much persecution. That Moses should refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than sit on the throne of Egypt and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, clearly and abundantly shows that the power as well as the glory is to be ascribed to God alone.

The word which in our text is rendered "*preaching*," is the same that is translated *word* in those passages which speak of its power and efficacy. "The *preaching of the cross*," therefore, may be rendered "the word of the cross." It is then the preaching of the cross that is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful. It was the preaching of the cross that pricked to the hearts of Peter's hearers on the day of pentecost. It is the preaching of the cross that is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe. It is the preaching of the cross that begets us again unto a lively hope; and it is by the preaching of the cross that we are sanctified and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Thus, my brethren, we see that though Christ crucified be to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, it is the wisdom and the power of God. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." For "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord."

A few practical remarks will conclude this discourse.

1. If the preaching of the cross be the power of God unto salvation, how inestimably precious is the privilege of enjoying it stately, in its purity and without molestation, under your own vine and fig-tree! The ministry of reconciliation was Christ's ascension gift to His beloved church.

The faithful minister who labors diligently for the salvation of his flock is unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one he is the savor of death unto death, and to the other he is the savor of life unto life. His acceptableness with God does not depend upon the success of his labors, but upon the fidelity and diligence with which they are performed. It remains with the people to improve the privileges with which they are blessed. Sinners should accept the offered salvation, and fly to the refuge set before them; and saints should feed upon the word, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

2. If the preaching of the cross be the power of God, it is an awful thing to neglect this stated ordinance, or carelessly to attend upon it. To trifle with the

preaching of the cross, is to trifle with the power of God. To neglect it, is to turn away from the divinely appointed and only ordinary means of salvation. If it be the power of God unto salvation to them that believe, it will be the power of God unto damnation to them that despise or disbelieve it, for it will be to such a savor of death unto death. If the power of God be in his word, how strong and encouraging the motive to search diligently the scriptures, and to wait perseveringly upon God in his sanctuary. The preaching of the cross is in order to faith, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" but how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard! The preaching of the cross is not the power of God to them that hear not, and believe not; but to them that believe it is the power of God unto salvation.

3. If the preaching of the cross be foolishness to them that perish, let none in this condition reject the Gospel, or refuse to hear it, on that account. If there be any thing in the gospel mysterious and unintelligible to such; if there be any thing unwelcome or unpalatable to such; if there be any thing unreasonable or absurd in the judgment of such—let them not be hasty to attribute this difficulty to the gospel itself, but let them learn from this subject to attribute it to the unrenewed state of their hearts, and to their perishing condition; for the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those only who perish, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. The gospel plan of salvation is one which no human wisdom could ever have devised. It carries on its forehead the seal of Heaven, and its every feature is marked with the wisdom of God. Let those, therefore, who regard it as foolishness, who have never seen the beauty of the cross, nor felt its power, tremble, lest they perish in their sins: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."

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No. 8.

**SERMON LVIII.**

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BY JOHN W. NEVIN,

OF THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

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**THE ENGLISH BIBLE.**

DEUT. 4:7, 8.—*For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*

THE present year\* completes just three centuries, since the publication of "COVERDALE'S BIBLE," the first translation of the *entire* scriptures given from the press in the English language. The work carries its own date on the last page in these words: "Prynted in the yeare of our Lord MDXXXV, and fynished the fourth day of October." It has been recommended, to take advantage of the occasion, as one that is proper and suitable to be used for solemnly calling to mind this interesting event, together with its connections and bearings, and turning the whole to profitable account by the reflections it is adapted to create. The thought is certainly deserving of regard. The translation of the bible into our own language, forms a most important chapter in the history of human improvement, worthy to be studied with interest by the friends of learning and religion in all countries; but more especially entitled to the attention of those by whom that language is spoken, whether on the other side of the Atlantic, or in the new world to which it has been transplanted among ourselves. It might be hard perhaps to find amid the changes that mark the history of England and her race, one that has a better claim to be remembered and celebrated, than the glorious revolution that wrested for her the keys of knowledge and of heaven from the power of the Man of Sin, and gave her sons the bible in their own language, that they might "know the truth," and that the truth might "make them free." The great charter of liberties obtained, sword in hand, from king John, the very ground-work as it is held to be of the nation's freedom and greatness, was in itself a less memorable achiev-

\* The year 1835. It is necessary to remark that the sermon was prepared originally by desire, and preached for one of the Bible Societies of Pittsburgh, the last Sabbath in November, in the First Presbyterian Church.

ment. For after all what is mere civil liberty, in comparison with the light of Heaven left to flow unrestrained over the general mind? What Declaration of Rights deserves to be prized, as that which asserts and secures the immunities of the soul, as called of God to the knowledge of virtue and immortality by the constitution of his own word? The true "Magna Charta" of the rights of man—the highest and noblest rights conferred upon him by his Maker—is the bible; the bible in his own language, the bible in his own hands. The most dire of all forms of tyranny is that which undertakes to rob him of this treasure; and so on the other hand, those occasions must ever stand the most illustrious in the history of his generations, by which the free and full possession of it is made sure to him, against all untoward circumstances, and in despite of the machinations of earth and hell employed to prevent the result.

In accordance, then, with the recommendation that has been mentioned, I propose this day to unite with you, my friends, in commemorating the birth-time of our English bible. Such a service cannot be out of place in itself; and it will fall in happily, at the same time, with the special object of the Society, in the presence of which and for whose benefit I am called to preach, and whose privilege and honor it is to be employed in the great work of spreading this holy volume into every part of the world. A sketch of the *history* of those attempts which resulted finally in the version of the scriptures we now use, a brief notice of its *merits*, and some *reflections* suggested by the subject, form the plan of the discourse by which I wish to assist you in improving the occasion.

I. I PROPOSE, IN THE FIRST PLACE, TO GIVE A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE, DOWN TO THE POINT AT WHICH IT MAY BE SAID TO HAVE BECOME COMPLETE IN THE FORMATION OF THE EXCELLENT VERSION NOW IN COMMON USE. This will lead us far back beyond the date of Coverdale's edition, and carry us also the greater part of a century this side. Still it all enters properly enough into the commemoration called for by the occasion we wish to celebrate. The appearance of that edition formed, as it were, the great central point in the course of this history; where the conflict between liberty and oppression in this case came to its crisis, and the new dispensation of knowledge and independence was happily begun, that continued to unfold so auspiciously from that time onward, as the fair sun of revelation rose higher and scattered its rays more widely over the land. Thus in celebrating the anniversaries of our national independence, we never dream of confining our thoughts to the transactions of a single day or a single year, however we may have singled out one particular occasion to stand as the rallying point of our recollections, and the nucleus of all the interesting incidents that went before and followed after. We call the *Fourth of July* the birth-day of our liberties, though we know that a long train of events was opening the way towards the freedom of the nation before, and that years of conflict and toil had to pass away afterwards, ere we came to sit as one great and happy people underneath the shadow of our present constitution. In looking back to the story of our independence, we hold it proper to recapitulate the memory of wrongs and struggles that lay

beyond and led the way to the Declaration of " '76;" and then again to trace the stream of events that followed that Declaration, till we find it emptying its troubled tide into the broad and quiet sea of prosperity and peace toward which all had been forcing its way from the beginning.

Every part of the bible appeared from Heaven originally in the language of the people, into whose hands it was first given, in different ages of the world, as a divine revelation. The Old Testament accordingly was written in Hebrew, with the exception of a few passages in the Chaldee dialect, and the New Testament in Greek. This fact should be of itself sufficient to refute the monstrous error of those, who imagine that the sacred volume should be locked up in a dead language from the common use of men. If God had not wished the bible to be in general use, why did he not publish it at first in some strange tongue, that should have been accessible only to the learned, and not at all to the mass of the people to whom it was sent? Why should he have given the Old Testament in Hebrew, when the Jews all understood and used this language, instead of giving it in the dialect of Babylon, or wrapping it up in the mysterious hieroglyphics of Egypt? Why should he have published the New Testament in Greek, the common language of the civilized world at the time, and not rather have buried it in the speech of Persia, or even in the hallowed and venerable forms of the ancient Hebrew itself? To such inquiries we can find but one answer. He gave his word in the most intelligible form to those who received it, because it was his will that it should be known and read of *all*, that they might be made wise by it unto everlasting life.

And so the thing was understood from the beginning. The Jews of old never dreamed of shutting out from the lively oracles of God, any to whom those oracles were given. They looked upon the Gentiles indeed as excluded from all part in the blessing; but they held it to be the privilege of the seed of Abraham at least to hold direct communication with the God of Abraham at all times, in the use of the Law and the Prophets. Accordingly when a part of the nation came to be settled under the Ptolemies in Egypt, they felt themselves at perfect liberty to have the Old Testament translated there into the Greek tongue for their particular use. This gave rise to the famous Septuagint, or Translation of the Seventy, as it is called, which was formed in the course of the third century before the birth of Jesus Christ, and which still remains in the church, as a monument of its ancient liberty, and a testimony for the truth of religion better than a thousand pillars of brass. This version received the approbation of our Savior and his disciples, and was in such high credit at one time both with Jews and Christians, that it had well nigh usurped the place for a time even of the inspired original itself.

That the same right of translating and publishing the sacred writings for the use of all, should have been recognized and exercised also in the beginning of the christian dispensation, is of course not strange. Within the first two centuries of this era, the sacred volume was translated into Syriac and Latin, for the benefit of the Churches using these languages; and in the third century, if not sooner, into both

the Sahidic and Coptic, the dialects of Upper and Lower Egypt at the time. Other versions followed in the succeeding centuries, which it does not fall in our way now to notice.

We know almost nothing of the history of Britain, during the first four centuries of the christian era. It has been believed that the gospel found its way into the Island as early as the second, if not in the first century; but the tradition is not certain, and but few notices of its progress after it did gain an introduction appear among the records that have come down to us from early times. In the middle of the fifth century, we know, the province being sorely pressed with enemies, and abandoned by the Roman Government, which found itself too weak to hold its own frontiers against the invasions that were pressing upon it from the north, called in the assistance of the Saxons and Angles as a last resort for safety. These barbarians turned their arms upon the unhappy people they came to protect, and gradually rose to be the conquerors and proprietors of the land. Among this wild and cruel population, we are informed, the power of christianity did not find entrance till about the beginning of the sixth century; when the foundations of the Anglo-Saxon church were planted by the celebrated Augustine and his forty assistant missionaries, sent over for the purpose by Gregory the Great. We do not read of any attempt to translate any part of the sacred volume into the vernacular tongue of this people before the eighth century. The necessity of the case, and not any design of preventing the general use of the scriptures, constrained the churches to depend altogether upon the Latin version, as this could be employed for their edification by such of the priests and monks as made it their business to be acquainted with it for this end. Indeed there was comparatively but little call for any thing more; since the very few who were able to read at all, were for the most part able to read Latin as a thing of course.

The Psalter, or book of Psalms, was translated into the Saxon language, about the year 706, by Adhelm, bishop of Sherborn. The four gospels are said to have been translated soon after, by Egbert, bishop of Lindisfern; and early in the same century the illustrious Bede, called by his contemporaries the *wise Saxon* and by later generations *venerable Bede*, made a version if not of the whole bible as some say, at least some part of it for the use of his countrymen. All these excellent men were diligent in every way in trying to bring the scriptures within the reach of those among whom they lived, and in persuading all around them to use such opportunities as they enjoyed to become acquainted with their divine contents. The great and good king Alfred, who died in the year 900, made another translation of the Psalms, and toward the close of the tenth century a considerable portion of the Old Testament was translated by Elfric, archbishop of Canterbury, at a time when the deepest night of ignorance prevailed on every side. Other translations of particular portions of the sacred volume no doubt appeared in the course of these distant ages, of which we have now no certain account.

The first *English* translation of the bible known to be extant, of which three copies are preserved in manuscript in the different libraries of Oxford, is referred by archbishop Usher, to the close of the thirteenth cen-

tury, though some critics place it later. John de Trevisa is said to have translated the Old and New Testaments into English, toward the close of the next century; but some think his translation reached no farther than to certain passages merely of the bible, scattered through his works or painted on the walls of the chapel at Berkeley Castle. About the same time, lived the celebrated John Wickliff, often styled the Apostle of England. He translated the entire bible into English from the Latin vulgate, not being sufficiently master of the Hebrew and Greek to make use of the original text for this purpose. This work gave great offence to the enemies of knowledge at that time, and a bill was brought into the House of Lords in the year 1390 for the purpose of suppressing it; which, however, did not succeed, being met with spirit by some of the members, especially the Duke of Lancaster, the king's uncle, who inveighed against it sharply, declaring that the people of England should not be the tail of all mankind, in not having the law of God, the rule of their faith, in their own language like other nations—a position, he said with an oath, he would firmly maintain against those that brought in the bill. Wickliff had died six years before this time, greatly hated and much persecuted by the ignorant priests and friars of the age, whose errors he continued to attack with a bold hand during his whole life. The translation spread with happy effect for some time after. But in the year 1408, a convocation was held at Oxford by archbishop Arundel which passed the following infamous decree: “It is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome assures us, to translate the scriptures, it being very difficult in a version to keep close to the sense of the inspired writers; for by the confession of the same father, he had mistaken the meaning of several texts. We therefore constitute and ordain, that from this time forward no unauthorized person shall translate any part of holy scripture into English, or any other language, under any form of book or treatise. Neither shall any such book, treatise, or version, made either in Wickliff's time, or since, or which hereafter shall be made, be read either in whole or in part, publicly or privately, under the penalty of the greater excommunication, till the said translation shall be approved either by the bishop of the diocese, or a provincial council, as occasion shall require. And whosoever shall do contrary hereunto, shall be punished as an encourager of heresies and errors.” This gave rise to great persecution, and many were punished severely for reading the scriptures in English, some it is said even with death. In the year 1428, the bones of Wickliff were dug up, by a decree of the Council of Constance, and burned, in order to cover his memory with reproach. The New Testament, as translated by this great man, has been printed in recent times; but his version of the Old Testament still remains only in manuscript.

With the rise of the Reformation, the demand for the sacred volume increased, as well as the zeal of pious men to bring it into circulation. The press, in the wonderful providence of God, had begun to unfold the rich resources of its power, and it soon became an object of the first interest to turn them to account, in multiplying and spreading copies of the bible among the people in their own vernacular tongues. Already had Luther begun to give his German bible by parts in this way to his countrymen, when WILLIAM TINDAL, who had been forced to leave his own

country by persecution, was led to translate the New Testament into English from the original Greek, and publish it in Holland for the benefit of the English nation. In this work, he was assisted by the learned John Fryth, and a friar called William Roye, both of whom afterwards suffered death as heretics. The work appeared in the year 1526, and makes the first printed edition of any part of the bible in the English language. In the same year, Cardinal Wolsey and the bishops consulted together on the subject of the translation, and published a prohibition against it in all their dioceses, charging it with false and heretical glosses wickedly brought in to corrupt the word of God. Still many copies continued to make their way into the country; whereupon, to enforce the prohibition, Tonstal, bishop of London, bought up all the copies he could find and committed them to the flames at St. Paul's cross. This had a hateful appearance to the people, and only led them to look after the scriptures more earnestly than before; while it hindered not at all the multiplication of printed copies, and in fact did but assist Tindal himself to execute still more important enterprizes than the first. Several other editions of this translation were published in Holland, before the year 1530, in which Tindal himself seems to have had no interest, but which found a ready sale whether bought to be read or to be burned. In the year 1530, a royal proclamation was issued, by the advice of the prelates and clerks, and of the universities, for totally suppressing the translation of the scriptures "*corrupted* by William Tindal." The proclamation declared it not necessary that the scriptures should be had in the English tongue, and in the hands of the common people, and that it was dangerous considering the malignity of the times to bring them thus into use. At a suitable time, it was said, the king would provide a fair and learned translation for the use of the nation, if it should be considered expedient. All this while Tindal had been going forward with the work of translating the Old Testament, assisted by his friend Miles Coverdale, and this same year accordingly, 1530, appeared his edition of the five books of Moses. He continued to translate afterwards, and before his death had gone over all the historical books at any rate, besides revising and correcting his translation of the New Testament. In the year 1531, through the influence of his enemies in England, he was seized and imprisoned at Villefort, near Brussels; and after a confinement of years, he was condemned to death by the emperor's decree in an assembly at Augsburg, in consequence of which he was strangled and had his body afterwards reduced to ashes. His dying prayer, repeated with much earnestness, was, "Lord open the king of England's eyes!" His translation of course had faults. He knew but little of the Hebrew, and probably translated the Old Testament from the Latin; and the work, at any rate, was too great to be executed in the best manner by any single man, though his circumstances had been far more favorable than those of this persecuted exile. Still as a whole it has been pronounced worthy of very great praise, and no doubt its influence has been felt on all the succeeding English translations, down to the time of that which is now in use.

In the year 1535, as was stated at the beginning of this discourse, appeared the bible of MILES COVERDALE, the first printed edition of the entire scriptures in the English language. This was dedicated to the

king, Henry VIII, and seems to have been substantially Tindal's translation, as far as he had gone, filled out by Coverdale himself with what was wanted to make up a version of the whole bible. It was called, however, a "special translation," and did not agree altogether with Tindal's; and besides it omitted Tindal's prefaces and notes, which had been offensive to many. At the time it appeared, the way had begun to open for a more free dissemination of the scriptures among the people. The king's supremacy in matters of religion, had been settled in Parliament the year before; and this same year, the two Houses of Convocation, through the influence of Archbishop Cranmer, were led to petition him for leave to have a translation of the bible made into the common language, by such learned men as he might see fit to appoint; which happily resulted in his giving orders to set about it immediately. Cranmer lost no time in entering upon the work, by dividing one of the old translations of the New Testament into several portions, and sending them to different learned divines to be corrected, and returned as quickly as possible for the use of the new edition. He found, however, that the zeal of others did not move so fast as his own; and before he could carry his wishes into effect, in this way, provision came to be made for them by other means. Coverdale's bible came forward, in the first place, to meet the growing demand of the times; and we find among other injunctions addressed to the clergy the following year, by the authority of the king, one requiring every parson or proprietor of a church to provide a bible in Latin and English, to be laid in the choir for every one to read at will. At the same time, the people were cautioned not to fall into controversy about difficult passages, but to use their liberty with modesty and sobriety. After the death of Tindal, another impression of this bible, with some slight alterations, was given to the world: and for this, by the intercession of Cranmer and Lord Cromwell, the king's approbation and license were formally obtained, so as to give it a standard character for the use of the realm.

This bible, bearing on its title-page in red letters the inscription, *Set forth with the King's most gracious authority*, is commonly known by the name of **MATTHEWE'S BIBLE**. It was printed also on the Continent, from the press of Grafton & Whitchurch, and under the superintendence of the celebrated *John Rogers*, who became a martyr afterwards for the truth, in the bloody reign of Mary. It contained prefaces and marginal notes, borrowed chiefly perhaps from the German version of Luther. The name of Thomas Mattheve, which it carried in front, was fictitious, as no such person probably had any part in it; only it was thought best to drop the name of Tindal, as it was unpopular with many. This bible is sometimes called also Cranmer's Bible, since he was looked upon as the prime mover in the business of bringing it forward, and drew up a preface for a subsequent edition of it published A. D. 1541. It appeared in the year 1537.

The year following, a new injunction was issued to have a copy of the sacred volume placed in every parish church, for the people to read; and the pastors were required to encourage and exhort all to make use of the liberty, as they could, for their edification. It is said, that many of these spiritual teachers were so badly affected toward the whole measure, that when they came to read these instructions from their

exact than any that had yet been made, having an opportunity of consulting for this purpose with the illustrious reformers John Calvin and Theodore Beza, who lived at that place. The name of Miles Coverdale stands conspicuous again, in the history of this version also. It was not finished until after the accession of Elizabeth, which happily restored the reformation and the freedom of God's word in England, in the year 1558. This GENEVA BIBLE was highly valued among the puritans, chiefly perhaps on account of the brief annotations that went along with it, which came all of the Calvinistic school. More than thirty editions of it were published between the years 1560 and 1610.

Archbishop Parker, by royal command it is said, undertook soon after this to form, with the help of several learned men, chiefly bishops, a revision of the "Great Bible," for the use of the church, such as might free it from the charge of being a false translation, of which the popish party was still trying to make so much. This appeared in 1568, and was called for distinction afterwards the BISHOPS' BIBLE. It went by the name also of "*Matthew Parker's Bible*." It was ordered to be used in the churches, and continued to hold this pre-eminence for forty years; though the "Geneva Bible" was more read in private houses.

The friends of popery, finding it in vain to stem the torrent of improvement, at last adopted the policy of publishing a translation of their own. Their New-Testament appeared at *Rheims* in 1582; and the Old Testament followed about thirty years after, at *Douay*. This DOUAY BIBLE, including the Rhemish Testament, forms the only English version still that is allowed to be read by the members of that church, so far as any of them have permission from their superiors to read the scriptures in English at all. The whole version was made from the Latin Vulgate, and not from the original Greek and Hebrew text; and many words were retained in it, which the mere English reader can in no wise understand without an interpreter; still it was set forth as the only correct translation that had yet appeared, and men were cautioned not to be deceived by the pretensions of any other.

We are now brought, in the course of this review, to the BIBLE OF KING JAMES, the last and crowning effort to supply the nation with a perfect translation, which happily displaced all former ones, and continues to bless the English-speaking world to the present time. James came to the throne in 1603. As complaints abounded on the subject of religion, a conference was held at Hampton Court the following year for the purpose of settling the order and peace of the church. Here a number of objections were urged against the translations of the bible then in use, and the result was a determination on the part of his majesty to have a new version made, such as might be worthy to be established as the uniform text of the nation. Fifty four learned and pious men were accordingly appointed to perform the important service; who were to be divided into six separate classes, and to have the bible distributed in parts according to this division, that every class might have its own parcel to translate at a particular place by itself. In every company, each single individual was required first to translate the entire portion assigned to that company; then they were to com-

pare these versions together, and on consultation unite in one text the common judgment of all; after which, the several companies were to communicate their parts each one to all the rest, that in the end the entire work might have the consent and approbation of the whole number of translators together. In addition to this, an order was issued by the king, making it incumbent on all the bishops in the land, to inform themselves of all such learned men within their several dioceses, as having special skill in the Hebrew and Greek tongues, had taken pains in their private studies to understand and elucidate difficult passages in the original scriptures, and to charge them to send in their observations as they might see fit for the use of the regular translators; so as to bring as it were all the learning of the kingdom, so far as it could be of avail in the case, to bear on the great and notable undertaking that was now to be commenced.

Some delay occurred in entering upon the business, so that it was not fairly begun before the year 1607; and before this time seven of the persons first nominated were either dead or had declined acting, so as to leave but forty-seven for carrying on the translation. Ten of these met at Westminster, and had the Pentateuch, with the historical books that follow from Joshua to the end of the second book of Kings, for their portion. Eight more, at Cambridge, had charge of the rest of the historical books, together with Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Canticles and Ecclesiastes. At Oxford, one company of seven had the Prophets assigned to them; and another company of eight, at the same place, were intrusted with the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse. There was a second company also at Westminster, that had in charge the rest of the New Testament; and finally, a second company at Cambridge, consisting of seven, to which was allotted the books of the Apocrypha—a part which it would have been better not to have associated in this way at all with a solemn translation of the true and proper word of God.

The translators received certain general instructions from the king, to regulate them in their work. They were required by these to go by the "Bishop's Bible," as much as the original would allow; to retain proper names in their usual form; to keep the old ecclesiastical terms; out of different significations belonging to a word, and equally suitable to the context, to choose that most commonly used by the best ancient fathers, to abide by the standing division of chapters and verses; to use no marginal notes, unless to explain particular Hebrew or Greek words; to employ references to parallel places, so far as might seem desirable. If any one company should differ from another, on reviewing its part of the translation, about the sense of any passages, notice was to be returned of the disagreement and its reasons; and if this should not induce a change of views on the other side, the whole was to be referred for ultimate decision to a general meeting of the chief persons of each company, to be held at the end of the work. In cases of special obscurity, letters might be sent to any learned man in the kingdom, by authority, for his opinion.

Nearly three years were occupied with the work—a period that seemed long to the impatience of many at the time, and was made the occasion even of charging these good men with negligence and sloth,

but not too great certainly for the solemn nature of the service itself, and the deeply interesting bearings it was destined to have on the history of the church in coming years. Ten years of so many lives thus employed had not been too much to expend, for an object so vastly momentous as the formation of a version, by which so many millions of people speaking the English language were to be instructed in the will of God, to the end of time. The work became complete in the year 1610.

II. THE SUBJECT REQUIRES ME NOW TO SAY SOMETHING OF THE MERITS OF THIS TRANSLATION. These are allowed by the best judges to be very great. Perhaps no translation, take it altogether, ever represented more fully and happily the rich and expressive features of the sacred original.

1. The simple *history of it*, as it has now been sketched, is adapted to beget a high opinion of its worth, and to inspire confidence in its character. Other countries have been content to receive their standard versions of the Bible from the hand of single individuals—the growth of one age, the offspring of solitary minds; and it is counted an honorable distinction, as in the case of Germany, to be able to refer to such a name as Luther, to support the credit of the reigning translation. But the bible of England may be said to be the result of the learning and piety of a whole nation, working toward it as an end almost for an entire century. From the time of Tindal to the time of king James, the mind of the church may be said to have been more or less actively employed, in preparing the way for the last great work, our present translation. For it was not merely the separate translators, during this period, that were engaged in this service; but all in the church, who had any sort of capacity for judging, were stirred up to examine, and to start corrections or amendments, in a way tending to help forward the same general design. The very cavils of those who resisted the whole matter, became subservient in this way, no doubt, to the cause they were intended to discourage. The variety of translations that appeared also, connected with the deep religious interest of the times, tended to keep attention constantly awake, and thought active, in this direction. Year after year, the church sat as it were in solemn council, to deliberate on this great and interesting subject; and the influence of those deliberations was felt on every single version that came from the press, and handed down from one reign to another with accumulating weight, till at last the full benefit of it came to be exerted on the studies which gave birth to the translation of king James. Surely it was a great matter, in this case, that neither the moral idiosyncrasies of a single mind, however great, nor the reigning views of a separate age, however wise, were suffered to impress their image on a work that was to be so vitally connected with men's opinions to the end of time. As the mind of one man is needed to correct the mind of another, so does the general mind of one age require to be tried and balanced by the mind of another age also, in order to yield the best judgment; and that result of thought therefore is likely to be the most safe, and the most worthy to stand, which has been reached in this way through the widest and longest comparison of views.

And altogether suitable to the preparation that had gone before, was the solemn undertaking by which at the last these rich advantages were brought to bear on their proper end. It seems, indeed, as if the God of the bible himself, having gradually matured all things for the purpose, had caused the sense of a special call to rest on the minds of those who acted on the occasion, by which they were engaged to realize in some degree the immense weight of the enterprize as it has since appeared, and to move in it with becoming seriousness and awe. Had it been fully understood at the time, that this was to be the last and crowning translation for common use in the English tongue—that it was to be the great standing bond of union among all the conflicting sects which should use that tongue, out of the communion of Rome, to the end of time—and that it was destined to pass, with the language itself, into other countries and continents, to rule the faith of nations then unborn or sunk in pagan superstition; they could hardly have moved with greater solemnity, and exhibited more earnest concern than they did, to make their work complete. Surely we are authorized to say, the hand of the Lord *was* specially at work in the whole transaction, and the entire character of it was such as to furnish a pledge that the superintendence of his blessed Spirit rested upon it, and went along with it, from the beginning to the end. That must needs be a good translation, towards which the providence of God and the efforts of the church had been conspiring for so long a time; around which so many prayers were found to cluster, as their great end; for which the best resources of a great nation were so solemnly called into requisition; on which the light of so many learned minds was brought to meet; about which was thrown the hedge of so much human circumspection, vigilance, and care; and over which, above all, the sacred undying power of the Holy Ghost so manifestly hovered, to bring it into happy execution as it now stands.

2. It may tend still farther to impress our minds with respect for this translation, if we consider the *authority it has had* with all protestant denominations using the English language, from the age of King James to the present time. After its appearance, the old translations, as though they had fulfilled *their* destiny in preparing for *its* approach and ushering its glorious light at last upon the world, gradually and silently sunk away from their place, like the last stars of receding night, and were seen to shine no more. It is true that some exceptions were taken with the new work. Some of the Presbyterians particularly, and other non-conformists, were disposed to find fault with it, as being somewhat tinged with the spirit of the establishment, and their old favorite, the version of Geneva, was not given up without some difficulty. In the established church also a multitude of severe criticisms were poured upon it, from the pulpit and in private circles; while the Cerberus of Rome of course let loose all its tongues, to bark it into shame. But notwithstanding all this, it quickly gained a complete ascendancy in every part of the nation. This was the best of all arguments in its favor. The authority of the king, and the credit of the reigning church, were indeed on its side; but we all know, how unavailing such influences are to produce uniformity in the things of religion, where the minds of men are not moved to it on other

grounds. The very fact of their coming in to support a particular interest, becomes oftentimes the occasion of stirring into action a strong antagonistic sentiment, that fairly counterbalances the other power and makes it of no account whatever. And indeed the cause must have more than common merits, which in these circumstances *can* unite the confidence of whole classes, already predisposed to fly apart at this very point. With all its excellence, the Liturgy of the Church of England sought in vain, with the help of all the authority that could be thrown around it by the intolerance of the state, to command the respect and rule the religion of the nation at large. And it might have been apprehended, that the royal translation of the bible would encounter opposition in like manner; for the spirit of party had already begun to work in some measure, with regard to this very subject, and we may see in the history of the two ruling translations of the time, the "Bishops' Bible" and the "Bible of Geneva," what jealousy there was in the case between conformists and nonconformists, and how delicate was the design of bringing in a version which should supersede the use of both. But the bible of king James happily triumphed over these and all other difficulties, and won its peaceful way in a few years, over the hearts of all classes, to the supremacy it has since continued so admirably to maintain. What an attestation was here to its intrinsic worth!

And how has that attestation been confirmed, by the concurrent respect and confidence of conflicting parties down to the present time! We read indeed of some steps having been taken in the time of Oliver Cromwell to introduce a better version, which, however, soon came to nothing; and particular individuals, from time to time, have been strenuous since in urging the necessity of such a work. A strong movement for the purpose took place among many of the biblical scholars of England, during the second half of the last century, led on by such men as Pilkington, Kennicott, and Lowth. But such efforts have soon passed away, leaving the conviction more deeply grounded perhaps than it was before, that the English bible as it stands is worthy to endure to the end of time; and all along its authority with men at large has stood unlimited and supreme, throughout the English world. All parties in government, and all sects in religion, have united in doing it homage. Monarchists and Republicans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and Methodists—conformists and nonconformists—high-churchmen, low-churchmen, and sectaries of every name—the followers of Arminius and the stern disciples of Calvin, whether in England, Scotland, or Ireland; all have agreed to hold this as their common bible, and have been found alike appealing to it as the instructor of their lives and the umpire of their religious disputes. It is confessedly the bible of no one denomination. It belongs alike to all; and finds itself at home, wherever their different altars are erected for public worship, as well as in all their families, and in every closet where their prayers are offered in secret to the common Father and Savior of all that believe. And it honors no one country or government, as specially its own. It goes with its own language wherever that is carried, and incorporates itself at once with the institutions of different lands, as though it had been born among them, and not

brought in from abroad at all. It is the bible of America, as well as of England; and here, as well as there, it is as a great and beautiful bond of union, reaching through all our conflicting modes of faith, and in this very fact giving ample proof, that Christianity is sundered into so many parts, only by the perverse fancies of men superinduced upon its living form, while that remains one and simple like the bible itself through every age. What an argument of the excellence of this version, that it could thus triumph over prejudice and quell the murmurs of suspicion at the beginning; and that the ascendancy which it thus secured, should have been so successfully maintained, in the midst of all the turmoil of political and religious strife, and through all the changes in church and state, that have since taken place, in the history of Great Britain and her colonics, to the present day! If the translation had not been possessed of extraordinary merit, it could never surely have survived the shock of so many storms; in the very bosom of which it has stood all along as some rock-surmounting light-house, in the midst of the sea, as it were to rebuke the angry spirit of the elements, and guide the mariner of every tribe and name upon his doubtful way.

3. On *examination*, the value of our translation, thus recommended as it is by its very history, becomes still more clear; and the best biblical scholars, accordingly, have united in assigning to it the very highest praise.

It is acknowledged to be remarkably true to the original. "If accuracy, fidelity, and the strictest attention to the text," says Dr. Geddes, "be supposed to constitute the qualities of an excellent version, this of all versions must, in general, be accounted the most excellent. Every sentence, every word, every syllable, every letter, and every point, seem to have been weighed with the nicest exactitude, and expressed either in the text or margin, with the greatest precision." It has been said, that the Old Testament may serve for a *Lexicon* of the Hebrew language, as well as for a translation, so literally do words answer to words, and phrases to phrases, all along. In this respect, it holds a high distinction above almost all other versions. The English language is, in its own nature, well adapted to receive the forms of thought that characterize the Hebrew. Perhaps no other ever existed, if we except the cognate dialects of the East, better suited to this purpose. The peculiar genius of the Hebrew is capable of being transfused into our idiom, to an extent that is far from being common in the relation which the speech of one people holds to that of another. And besides, an actual influence was exerted by the translation itself to bring the two languages into still nearer correspondence in this respect than had place before. It was at a time, when our language was still in some degree in the process of formation, that the bible of king James made its appearance; and there is no doubt at all, but that this translation did itself contribute very materially to mould and fix its ultimate character. The translators seem to have understood their position, in this view, and to have taken a noble advantage from it to render the language all that it needed to be in order to express the full meaning of the word of God; or rather, perhaps, they found the former translations already working this happy effect, and were wise enough simply to carry out what had thus been begun. At all events, it is certain

that while the Hebrew was made to clothe itself with English forms of speech to a certain extent, these last were themselves changed somewhat so as to correspond more closely with the other. Many of the idioms of the bible, that have since become like the home growth of our language, are pure Hebrew in English words, and came in at first as foreign forms with the translation of the sacred volume. All this has worked together, to make the language fit the inspired thoughts of the original, and to give so literal and true a version as the one we now possess. "There is no book," says the illustrious Selden, "so translated as the bible for the purpose. If I translate a French book into English, I turn it into English phrase, not French English. *Il fait froid*; I say 'tis cold, not, *makes cold*. But the bible is rather translated into English words than into English phrase. The Hebraisms are kept, and the phrase of that language is kept.

Literal as it is, however, our version is neither harsh nor inelegant. On the contrary, it is characterised by the very best qualities in this respect, that language can possess. It is simple, clear, harmonious, and nervous; and answerable, at the same time, to every sentiment, tender or sublime, that is made to pour along the channel of its unpretending words. No doubt much of its excellency in these particulars, is to be attributed to the power of the glorious original itself, and the circumstances already mentioned, by which this was allowed to mould the still ductile and pliant elements of our language into conformity with its own lofty spirit. It is a great recommendation of our bible, that it has nearly altogether avoided words of Greek or Latin derivation, and made use for the most part only of such as are pure English in their origin. This renders it always plain and easy to be understood by all sorts of persons, and at the same time contributes greatly to its dignity and energy, by allowing the mighty force of the sentiments to shine out with the greater splendor. The very simplicity of the diction is necessary in many cases, to unfold the full grandeur of the things that are said; and never perhaps did translation more happily adjust itself in this way to the character and design of its original. "The style of our present version," says Bishop Middleton, "is incomparably superior to any thing which might be expected from the finical and perverted taste of our own age. It is simple, it is harmonious, it is energetic; and which is of no small importance, use has made it familiar and time has rendered it sacred." Bishop Lowth himself, whose literary taste is known to have been of the most pure and classical order, has not hesitated to pronounce it "the best standard of our language;" and Bishop Horsley also represents it to have been the means of enriching and adorning the English tongue, by its close adherence to the Hebrew idiom. I shall close this part of the subject by quoting the testimony of the late celebrated Dr. Clarke, author of the Commentary on the bible. "Those," says he, "who have compared most of the European translations with the original, have not scrupled to say that the English translation of the Bible, made under the direction of King James the First, is the most accurate and faithful of the whole. Nor is this its only praise; the translators have seized the very spirit and soul of the original, and expressed this almost every where with pathos and energy. Besides, our translators have not only made a standard

translation; but they have made their translation the standard of our language. The English tongue in their day was not equal to such a work; but God enabled them to stand as upon Mount Sinai, and *crane* up their country's language to the dignity of the originals, so that after the lapse of two hundred years the English Bible is, with very few exceptions, the standard of the purity and excellence of the English tongue. The original from which it was taken, is alone superior to the Bible translated by the authority of King James."

### III. IT ONLY REMAINS, TO OFFER SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS IN THE WAY OF IMPROVING THE SUBJECT.

1st. It becomes us to admire and bless the providence of God, so wonderfully displayed in providing this translation for the use of the church. The history of it, as we have seen already, is full of pleasing evidence, that his wise and holy Mind watched over it from the beginning, and ordered the time and manner of its end, with full reference to the mighty interests that were at stake on its success. The series of preparatory efforts that went before, the solemn order that was taken for the work itself, the mighty resources of intellect that were called in for its accomplishment, the time and learning and anxious care that were employed to carry it through, and finally the free and happy consent with which the nation was brought to bow to its authority; all was wonderful—all argued the invisible agency of a higher hand than that of man—all betokened the high and holy destiny of the English version, that was to be the vehicle of the word of life to so many millions of souls, as long as the world should stand. It may be said to have appeared just in the "fulness of time," for such a work. Had it been formed sooner, it could not have been so perfect. The language was not fairly ripe for it in the preceding century, and the discipline of time was needed to strengthen and mature the genius of the Reformation for the mighty task. Had it been delayed longer, on the other hand, it must have been too late to secure its best form, and too late also perhaps to become a standard for the nation. The language would have been less pliant, its forms less purely English, the spirit of its ancient simplicity and power more difficult to be maintained. Prejudices and jealousies too, political and theological, were coming to be of such a character, that they must have shed more or less of their complexion over any public translation that could have been made; or at least, must have powerfully hindered any general union of opinion and feeling in its favor, like that which so auspiciously won for itself by the version of king James almost from the very first. Let any man reflect for a moment, how hopeless would be the task of bringing forward a translation at the present day, which might be expected to unite the confidence of all religious parties, both in Great Britain and this country; and he will see at once how wise and favorable was the providence, which impelled the king of England to seal the vision, and settle the economy of its text, before the trouble and divisions of the time that followed were allowed to come on.

2nd. It is interesting to reflect on the mighty purposes of good, which the English bible has already accomplished, and for which still more extensively it seems to be reserved in the counsels of God. We behold in the unfolding sphere of its authority and active power, a full

reason for all the wonders of providence that attended the history of its formation. How many millions of souls have been taught the things of God, from this translation! How vast is the multitude now in Heaven, that have been led thither by its light! How has it run to and fro upon the earth, in copies beyond calculation, to bless families, and churches, and kingdoms, and generations, with its truth! Who shall compute the amount of good it is doing in the world, at this very time? Who will reckon up the blessings of knowledge and virtue and peace, which it is silently shedding on the inhabitants of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the spreading population of this new world? Only think for a moment of its instrumentality, as God is using it for his glory in the salvation of men on the single Sabbath that is now passing; while from so many thousand pulpits, in all these lands, it is made to speak to whole congregations that listen to it as the voice of Heaven. And this is but a fragment of its service; we should need the understanding of angels at least to measure the full flow of its usefulness from year to year.

The character of the people too, that call this bible their own, deserves consideration. It was made, to be the bible of the *English* nation; and the intelligence and learning and enterprise, and power, and wealth of that people, were to be refined and sanctified by its influence, not merely for the benefit of the nation itself, but for the benefit of the whole world. The religion of England, like her commerce, was to be for the use of all nations; and on this account, her bible needed to be of the most perfect order. It was due also to the "American Dispensation," as the relations and responsibilities of this country in a religious view have been styled, that it should be provided with such a bible. How vast a proportion of the piety and strength of the church, how large a part of the hopes of the world, are comprehended in the christianity of these two nations! And how interesting in this light is the reflection, that they have but one form of the bible, and that the best of all translations that are known to exist!

But this is not all. The millions that now speak the English language are but a small number of people, in comparison with the myriads that are destined to make use of it hereafter. This continent will yet be covered with a civilized race, whose reigning tongue will be that which reigns in the country now. The single valley of the Mississippi will soon bear upon its broad bosom, a world of its own, through the whole length and breadth of which this language will be spoken. With such a prospect spread out to our contemplations, what new interest is found to encircle the English bible, and what new depths of wisdom and mercy are opened upon our astonished sight in the history of its origin! But in all probability, could we extend our gaze still farther down the tract of coming ages, we should find yet greater cause for admiration. The English language is now known upon the borders of Asia, and already the design is beginning to be formed of making it the medium of letters and religion to all India! And should this design be carried fully into effect who can say where the mighty experiment might be expected to end? Or in view of such a calculation, which to me I confess is far from being visionary, who will undertake to say, to the English language,

or to the English bible, any more than he would say to the ocean itself, "Hitherto shalt thou go but no farther, and here shall thy swelling waves be stayed!"

3d. Once more; we may derive from this whole subject a reason, why we should all improve the use of the bible as we have it, with joyful and thankful hearts, for our own salvation, and all unite in endeavoring to send it to those who are without it, wherever they are to be found. Time was when the word of God was found only in rare and exceedingly costly copies, even among the people of God themselves. Every copy had to be laboriously written out with the pen, and of course but few could afford to have even a part of the sacred treasure in their own hands; for the art of writing then was also but little understood.\* The price of Wickliff's testament alone, was equal to at least a hundred and fifty dollars of our currency. Time has been too, when few could find the bible, on any terms, to read in their own tongue; or when it was at the peril of life itself, that any could venture to steal the precious opportunity, when it came within reach. But all these hindrances with us are taken out of the way. The spirit of the Reformation has made the bible free, and the art of printing has brought it within the reach of every family that wishes to enjoy its light. A copy of the New Testament may now be had for twelve and a half cents! We have the word of God in our own language, and under the most happy form; and in all places, and at all times, it is near to us with its heavenly instructions, like an angel of God, to show us the way of life and lead us to the holy paradise of redeemed and happy souls. And are we brought under no special responsibilities by all these advantages; or do they constitute no reason, why we should diligently see to it that we are not found neglecting so great a salvation, and be filled at the same

\*In the fourth century, it was accounted deservedly an extraordinary act of munificence, when the Emperor Constantine ordered *Fifty Bibles* to be carefully prepared, at the expense of the state, and placed in different churches at Constantinople, for the use of the people. Toward the close of the seventh century books were so scarce, that one volume on the history of the world was bought by the king of Northumberland from the monastery of Weremouth, at the price of eight *hides* of land, which is said to have been equal to eight hundred acres. In 1364 the royal library of France did not exceed twenty volumes; and at the beginning of the same century, the library of Oxford consisted only of "a few tracts kept in a chest." The celebrated German abbot Trithemius died in 1516; he had collected about two thousand manuscripts; a literary treasure, which excited so much attention, that princes and eminent men of that day made considerable journeys to see it. "There have been ages" says the entertaining author of the *Curiosities of Literature*, "when for the possession of a manuscript, some would transfer an estate; or leave in pawn, for its loan, hundreds of golden crowns; and when, even, the sale or loan of a manuscript was considered of such importance as to have been solemnly registered in public acts. Absolute as was Louis XI, he could not obtain the MS. of Rasis, an Arabian writer, to make a copy, from the library of the faculty of Paris, without pledging a hundred golden crowns; and the president of his treasury, charged with this commission, sold part of his plate to make the deposit. For the loan of a volume of Avicenna, a baron offered a pledge of ten marks of silver, which was refused; because it was not considered equal to the risk incurred of losing a volume of Avicenna! These events happened in 1471. One cannot but smile at an anterior period, when a countess of Anjou bought a favorite book of homilies, for two hundred sheep, some skins of martins, and bushels of wheat and rye."

time with a sacred zeal to have it widely published to all the rest of the world? If Moses on the banks of Jordan could appeal to the distinguishing favors bestowed upon the nation of Israel, in the history of God's dealings with them in the wilderness, as a reason to engage them to piety; with how much more reason may I draw an argument of duty, in our case, from the review of what he has done for our English and American Zion! "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart, all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!" And with how much emphasis may it be said to us, in view of our manifold privileges as contrasted with the moral desolations of other lands, and in view of the ample facilities we possess for sending them the word of life, "Freely ye have received; freely give!"

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**SERMON LIX.**

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**WHAT WILL NOT AVAIL IN A SINNER'S SALVATION.**

**GAL. 6:15.**—*For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

It is a question of some interest, whether the millenium will entirely destroy all differences of religious opinion. From the nature and extent of certain promises some infer that all shall think alike on those points, which now are matters of frequent discussion. But when we duly consider the great weakness of the human mind and the unfathomable depth in the great things of God, we will be apt to conclude differently. The improvements of the millenium will consist not so much in any advancements in cold speculative theology, as in preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, in more earnest attention to the plain, fundamental, and practical parts of religion, and in a great increase of holiness of heart, purity of manners, and ardent zeal. That a most wonderful and unexampled change must take place to bring about entire unity of opinion, is manifest from all church history. Even good men in every age have frequently differed in opinion. It was so in the days of the apostles. Men of corrupt minds too have as yet always existed, who have loved and propagated error. Such in Paul's time were certain Judaizing teachers, who troubled the Christians of Galatia. To oppose the doctrines of such men and bring back a falling church, seems to have been the chief object of this epistle. In prosecuting this object he states, among other things, that "in Christ Jesus"—"in the formation and subsistence of a spiritual union with Christ—"neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature:" or, as it might be translated, a new creation.

In treating this subject it is proposed,

- I. TO NOTICE SOME THINGS WHICH WILL BE OF NO AVAIL IN A SINNER'S SALVATION.
- II. TO SHOW WHAT A NEW CREATION IS, OR WHAT WILL AVAIL IN A SINNER'S SALVATION.

*I. We proceed to notice some things that will not avail in a Sinner's Salvation.*

No one, well acquainted with Scripture, can deny that it is our duty to dedicate ourselves to God in the ordinances of his house; among which baptism and the Lord's Supper are prominent. The Scriptures most clearly teach that those who, through fear of man, or shame of the Gospel, or contempt of God's ordinances, decline yielding submission to divine appointments, cannot enter the kingdom of God. For, says Christ, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels"—And "whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."\* While these passages make it abundantly evident that it is our duty to observe all the external duties of religion, and to witness a good confession of Christ before men in all suitable and divinely appointed methods; they do not teach that all who are baptized and partake of the Lord's Supper shall surely be saved. Simon Magus was baptized—Judas Iscariot probably partook of the Lord's Supper. And at this day multitudes both of those who have been baptized in infancy and in adult age, manifest such a spirit and temper as clearly proves them under the dominion of sin. And in many cases, persons having communed at the Lord's table, have gone back to the world and become the most bitter and malignant enemies of the cross of Christ. The advocates of baptismal regeneration, and of the invariable efficacy of sacramental observance, are certainly called upon to remove these difficulties or renounce their theory. But they never can remove them. In determining the acceptableness of any observance in religion, we must first ascertain whether knowledge, faith, repentance, love, hope, joy, and thankfulness, moved to the observance. If all of these are wanting the observance is sin.

The same remarks may apply with full force to any religious observance, even though not sacramental—such as tithing mint, and anise, and cummin—formal fastings and prayers—which were never intended to take the place of hearty piety. Such things could not save the Pharisees. Though they abounded in them, they still remained "a generation of vipers," and the recipients of wo. The truth is all men are naturally disposed to "rend their garments, rather than their hearts"†—to make religion consist in show, and forms, and names, and modes, and ceremonies, rather than in substantial acts of piety towards God and love towards men. Behold the superstitious Catholic, elevated on some point of observation, near some pass in the mountains of the south of Europe, busily engaged in counting his beads and chanting his prayers, and every few moments raising his eyes to observe the approach of some unsuspecting traveller, whom he has marked as the victim of his covetousness and robbery.

\* Luke 9:26, and 12:8,9.

† Joel, 2:13.

Many of the most hardened, bloody pirates, are even punctilious in their superstitious observances. Even in Protestant countries, more importance is often attached to the shape of a bonnet, or the cut of a coat, or the mode of administering an ordinance, or the name of a party, than to acts of "faith, justice, and mercy." Need men be told these things cannot avail?

In like manner, acts of *voluntary humility*, which dishonor the body and are of the nature of penance, have no tendency to fit us for the kingdom of God. "Men have sought out solitary places, exposed themselves to the inclemencies of the weather, spent weeks and months in the most miserable hovels, deprived themselves of human society, sustained nature with a very small pittance of food, treated their bodies in the most rigid manner, taken long and wearisome pilgrimages, and done even more than all this,"\* while the heart was becoming more and more lofty, proud, sullen, revengeful, misanthropic, and hardened. How long shall it be, before men shall learn that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

There can be no reason given, why men may not as well find fuel for their pride in religion as in any thing else. Present to them some object or plan, where selfish feelings can be gratified, or selfish interests promoted, and they will forego almost any thing else to obtain that one object, or execute that one plan. This remark leads to another of vast importance, which is, that it will be of no avail to have changed one sin for another; one passion or lust for another. In this way many of those reformations are produced, on which so many rely for salvation. "I am not so wicked as I have been, therefore I will be saved," is too common a way of reasoning. Some, who in youth were given up to habits of dissipation, or frivolity, or carnal pleasure, have at a later period of life laid aside those habits; and thence concluded that they are better prepared to meet their Judge than formerly. But could you search their hearts, you would soon see that they were still lovers of themselves more than lovers of God, and that instead of having forsaken their passions, their passions, or the means of gratifying their passions, had forsaken them. Besides, there are many sins, the dominion of which will exclude the dominion of other sins. A great desire to be popular will exclude the indulgence of haughtiness. Avarice excludes pomp, and riot, and dissipation. There are innumerable ways in which persons of every class, and age, and sex, may change their habits of life, their trains of thinking, and the objects of their affection and dislike, and yet never have any exercise of Christian graces, nor any desires after conformity to the will of God. Often the sinner is, according to the warnings of his conscience, so closely pursued by the avenger of blood, that he will lay aside many sinful practices, and thus attempt to compromise the matter with God. He may, like Ahab and others, seem very much humbled. He may, like Saul, send for the ministers of religion; and

\* Life of Xavier,

like them grow worse continually. External reformation, proceeding from no gracious principle within, will be totally unavailing. "The kingdom of God is *in you*."

In every age, but, perhaps, especially in this age, are men in danger of acquiring the belief that acts of *pecuniary donation* will of themselves, and without very strict regard to the motive of the giver, secure salvation. Actuated by such a belief, how many have been led to found hospitals, and lazarettos, and monasteries, and asylums, and churches. Who but God can tell how far such a belief operates on many, who are the largest contributors to our missionary, Bible, tract, Sabbath school, and similar institutions? Many a dollar does this principle procure for the poor and needy. Now it is right to support good institutions and relieve the poor, but if done with a self-righteous heart, God will not be pleased. The most costly sacrifices, thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil might be given to charitable purposes, and God would say, "the earth is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Paul held that a man might give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet fail of divine acceptance.

Neither will *gifts* avail. Gifts are not graces—nor do they always accompany graces—nor are they the least evidence of graces. Some of the most fraudulent, impious, and licentious men, now upon earth, once sang, and prayed, and spake, with a propriety, a tenderness, and a fervor, almost passing description. They had an ease and earnestness of manner, a force and copiousness of expression, which won the favorable judgment of the most judicious Christians. But time and further trial brought to light their true characters, and showed that they were the enemies of all righteousness, and the workers of iniquity. Beware of any belief of so dangerous a nature, as that gifts are graces, or even signs of graces.

Neither are those wise who rely for salvation upon convictions for sin, awful apprehensions of the wrath to come, tears, and groans, and sighs, and spiritual illuminations, which beget security and ease, or end not in holiness. The lost spirits, who are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day, believe that there is a God, and they tremble. The devils have far more of religious terror, than any soul of man on earth. They feel the gnawings of the undying worm—they have fearful apprehensions of the judgment to come—they utter not only groans but howlings; yet they are continually getting further and further from God. And it cannot be shown that the same may not be experienced by men. Indeed the Scriptures do furnish us with cases of this very kind. Felix trembled under the influence of his convictions. Judas, under conviction of the sin of selling Christ, was so oppressed that he was driven to self-murder. "Fearful looking for of judgment" is one sign of final rejection from God. Fears of this kind, and sorrow, and remorse, and such like feelings, never make the heart better, and of course fit no one for heaven.

Nor will a removal from one church to another, or a change of religious opinions, secure heaven. Some fickle people will join a church,

and remain in it for a while, and then leave that and join another, and so on. Or they obtain some sort of system of religious belief and soon become dissatisfied with that, and change again and again, vainly imagining that they are making great discoveries in religious matters. Beza says of Bolezius, that he changed his religion every time the moon changed. Such are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Besides, what good can it do a man to change his religion, if his religion do not change him? If he remain the same, it matters not what church he joins, or what system of doctrine he professes; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Many suppose themselves in a fair way for glory, because they find themselves completely disgusted at the deceit, and emptiness, and vanity, and folly, and honors, and riches, and pleasures of the world. Such have sipped at the fountain of earthly enjoyment, until through restlessness, or satiety, or love of change, they take up the subject of religion, merely for its novelty, or the pungency of its truths. But this disgust is no better than that which suicides have. Let us take the case of Ahithophel.\* He was a counsellor at the court of David, and esteemed very wise. His counsels were generally, if not invariably, followed. When Absalom raised the rebellion against his father, Ahithophel was among the conspirators. Soon after the rebellion broke out, a council was called, in which the advice of Ahithophel was overruled. "When he saw his counsel was not followed, he went home and hanged himself." Here is disgust with the world and the perfection of it; but there is no holiness. Disgust with the world is not a Christian virtue. A full conviction that this world is unsatisfying in its nature, and a correct judgment of its proper use and just value, belong to souls enlightened from above; but disgust is a different thing.

*Mere zeal*, however ardent and durable, is not decisive proof of piety. There may be a zeal for Christianity of precisely the same character with the zeal of a Mohammedan for the imposture of his prophet. There is a vast amount of this sort of zeal now in the world. Men are compassing sea and land to make proselytes to Popery, and other systems of destructive error. "I bare you record," says Paul, "that ye have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Zeal is often nothing more than constitutional ardor directed towards religion. Or perhaps it may be a mixture of pride and vanity, of malice and turbulence, of severity and sanctimoniousness. Zeal often degenerates into impatience and restlessness. True zeal is not heat without light, but has a due proportion of heavenly light and holy love.

Again: An increase of *speculative notions* on religious subjects is not religion, even though these notions be correct. A man may be sound in faith, but rotten in heart. Many men's minds become so overloaded with queries, and theories and thoughts about religion, that there is room for nothing else. And they show the state of their minds by their conversation; and when they have talked much on the subject, appear well pleased with themselves. But "the kingdom of

\* 2 Sam. 17:23.

God is not in word, but in power"\* Nor is there any value in that religion which occupies the head, but warms not the heart.

It ought not to be necessary to say that religion consists not in strange sights, and sounds, and dreams, and presentiments, and unaccountable impressions. The whole of many religious experiences consists in some such imaginations and delusions. Many, who thus obtain religion when asleep, will when they awake in eternity not awake in God's likeness. Many tell about what voices said to them, who do not obey the voice of God in his word. Indeed, such people generally have an utter contempt for all religion obtained through the instrumentality of the word, yet God has no where in the Bible mentioned even the possibility of obtaining true religion in any other manner. One apostle declares expressly that God's people are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."† Another apostle says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."‡ A contempt for Bible truth is one of the worst evidences respecting piety. It is of the very essence of fanaticism; than which nothing is more contrary to God and genuine religion.

It is proper to add, that religion is not obtained by *birth* or *inheritance*. Believers are expressly declared to be born "not of blood." The Jews gloried in it, that they had Abraham to their father, but showed by their rejection of Christ, that they were not fit for the society of Abraham in heaven; for when he was on earth and by the visions of prophecy saw Christ's day, he rejoiced in it; but they who lived in that day were sore displeased at Christ, at his doctrines, and at his miracles. Let not us then deceive ourselves with idle reflections on the piety of our ancestors, supposing that their relation to us will secure us from righteous judgment. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Even the piety of Eli and of David could not screen their ungodly children from the just punishment of their sins. No more can the piety of our parents be transferred to us in any possible manner, so as to save us from an everlasting overthrow, if we continue unregenerate and unholy.

\* 1 Cor. 4:20.

† 1 Pet. 1:23.

‡ James 1:18.

## SERMON LX.

BY WILLIAM S. PLUMER,  
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### WHAT WILL AVAIL IN A SINNER'S SALVATION.

**GAL. 6:15.**—*For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

#### II. WE ARE TO SHOW WHAT THIS NEW CREATION IS.

THERE are several modes of expression found in the sacred Scriptures, all of which will throw light on this subject: such as—circumcision of the heart—a renewal of the Holy Ghost—being born again—born of the Spirit—putting on the new man—a resurrection from the dead—a quickening of those who are dead in trespasses and sins—and a creation in Christ Jesus unto good works.

There are also passages of Scripture which speak of the subject at length, as the following: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you.”\* From these and other passages of Scripture we learn, that this new creation is a real and thorough change, in which the soul, being enlightened by saving knowledge and spiritual perceptions, receives a living principle and a gracious habit; and has the law of God and a holy nature implanted in the heart; and that all this is done by the powerful working of the Holy Ghost.

It is proper to state, that in this great change no new faculty is imparted to the soul. Man has, by creation, all the physical powers necessary for serving God perfectly. This change rectifies, regulates, and renders holy the native powers of the mind and heart. Neither is this change confined to any one power of the soul. As all its powers are disordered, so all of them must be subjected to divine operation. In fact, the soul is a simple, indivisible being—a unit, and if the understanding, or will, or affections be wrong, the effect will be manifest on the whole moral man.

The Scriptures represent unregenerate men as “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”† This passage is introduced, not for the purpose of entering into any subtle questions on the nature of the mind, but for the purpose of showing the state of unregenerate men, and the extent of the work to be wrought by the Holy Ghost. The first thing we shall notice then in

\* Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

† Eph. 4:18.

this change is the removal of this darkness by spiritual illumination. When God would make a world, he said, "let there be light;" so also does he begin the new creation by diffusing divine light through the soul. "If the things of religion are rightly *understood* they will affect the heart. The reason why men are not affected by such infinitely great, important, and glorious things as they often hear and read of in the word of God is undoubtedly because they are spiritually blind."\* A blind man may be able to speak correctly of light and colors, of their different effects and powers, and of the laws by which they are governed; yet no one imagines he has a real perception of their true nature. One of the best books ever written on the subject of light was written by a man blind from very early infancy; yet any child ten years of age, who is blessed with vision, has a better and more correct perception of the true nature of light, than had that great man. So unrenewed men may be able to discourse intelligently about spiritual matters, but until the Holy Ghost enlightens the mind, there is no correct perception of spiritual things; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." The image of God consists in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness; but that whole image is lost. Of course, when restored, knowledge is restored also. Unrenewed men continually misapprehend and misapply truth, and they will continue to do so until born from above. These views correspond precisely with the experience of every soul that has passed from death unto life. Every such soul did find, when first drawn towards God, how foolish, and ignorant, and erroneous, were all its conceptions of divine things, previous to the entrance of light from God's Spirit. This enlightening operation extends to the whole of revealed truth. New views are imparted respecting God—respecting his holiness, justice, goodness, love, majesty, power, and indeed the whole of his nature. New views are entertained respecting the person and offices of Jesus Christ. Once he was regarded as a root out of a dry ground—without form or comeliness—having no beauty why we should desire him. But when the understanding is illuminated, the fixed and deliberate judgment of the mind is, that He is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely—possessed of unparalleled charms and excellencies. The unrenewed soul sees no necessity for a mediator, or if it sees the necessity of one, it sees no suitability in the character of Christ as Mediator, but no sooner is divine knowledge communicated by God's Spirit, than the necessity of a Mediator, and the suitability of Jesus as a Mediator, are both fully admitted. The law, too, is adjudged to be holy, just, and good, and receives the most full assent of the understanding. Sin is looked upon as deformed and loathsome, ruinous and abominable, involving in it a turpitude, a baseness not to be described. In this enlightening operation, the views of the comparative importance of time and eternity—of this life and the next—of present and future happiness and mis-

\* Edwards.

ry, are very much changed. Heaven and hell—life and death—sin and misery—holiness and happiness, are held up in strong contrast, and the mind forms its judgment accordingly. The things that are seen are found to be *temporal*, and the things that are not seen are found to be *eternal*. Without continuing this process of detail further, it may be remarked, in general, that by this enlightening the whole system of truth assumes a new aspect, and is clothed with pleasant solemnity and simple majesty. All this flood of light is poured into the soul in a manner the most easy and natural. The soul is not aware of any violence done to it, because no violence has been done to it. Accordingly in regeneration these two things take place: 1. The soul is filled with wonder that it did not see these things in this way all its life-time. They are so plain, that it supposes itself to have been exceedingly stupid, and blind, and ignorant. Nor is it erroneous in this supposition. 2. Divine truth seems so clear and so plain, that young converts ordinarily have a pretty firm conviction, that if they might be permitted to address their impenitent fellow-men, they could make all things appear before them as if written in a sun-beam; and could thus compel a belief and acceptance of the truth. Melancthon, after his conversion, thought it impossible for his hearers to resist such views as he could present respecting the gospel; but soon after he complained that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon. Such forget the author of their discoveries, and the deep depravity of all men, in the rapture occasioned by them. All such views are frequently referred to in the sacred Scriptures. For such the Psalmist prayed when he said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." "The entrance of thy law giveth light—The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." By the word "eyes" we are evidently referred to the understanding; and truth being the object of the understanding, we ask the same thing in both these petitions—"Open thou mine eyes—" "Lead me into all truth." An excitement of the affections, without this illumination, can at best but amount to superstition. Knowledge always carries the lamps full of oil, trimmed and brightly burning, when the heart is truly wedded to the Savior.

But there are not only new perceptions of truth, but there is a new apprehension of it, and that apprehension of it is by genuine faith. This faith credits the divine testimony in all points, and receives the truths of God as they are plainly stated in his word. And while this faith believes as entirely on Christ for salvation, as if it did not work at all, it works as diligently as if salvation depended on human merit. The true genuine faith of the gospel purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. No system of belief or practice—no austerity—in short, no device of man has ever been able to destroy one sinful propensity. The faith of the gospel, and that faith only, can wage a successful war against the raging lusts and appetites of human nature. Bunyan calls faith, Mr. Greatheart, because of his valor and success in holy war.

And as the truth is received by faith, so is the heart melted into contrition by the truth. Repentance is necessarily connected with faith. Indeed, perhaps the best popular definition of repentance is, that "it is the tear which stands in the eye of faith, when that eye of faith is looking at Christ." This seems to correspond with the Bible account of the matter—"They shall look [by faith] on him whom they have pierced, and mourn and be in bitterness." This sorrow of soul is something very different from the mere meltings of nature. There is a gracious character attached to it, which is most pleasing. The language of the true penitent is—"Oh! how could I be so ungrateful and perverse as to continue in sin after all God's mercies to me, especially after the sufferings of Christ to save me from sin and ruin." How can a widow look with any other emotion than that of abhorrence and dread upon the sword that took her husband's life? How can a believer look with any thing like complacency on the sins that made the Savior bleed? The sight of Cæsar's bloody robes incensed the Romans against those that slew him. So when believers behold him that cometh from Bozra with dyed garments, red in his apparel, and remember that their sins caused his death, they resolve on a war that shall not end till sin be exterminated. Every renewed soul exclaims:

"Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,  
My heart hath so decreed;  
Nor will I spare the guilty things  
That made my Savior bleed."

The knowledge, and faith, and repentance, of which we have spoken, are essentially connected with love. Indeed, he must possess a remarkably constructed mind, who can imagine one perceiving loveliness, and yet not loving, or a being exercising the confidence of faith in one for whom he has no affection, or a being filled with contrition for actions committed against one in whose character there is no delight. This love, produced in the new creation, regards the whole character of God. God's holiness is a source of enjoyment to such a soul. One created anew in Christ is glad that God is holy—that no impurity can attach to him—and that although other beings may be conceived of as changing from holiness to sinfulness, yet God is unchangeably pure. In like manner, his power—his wisdom—his knowledge—his majesty—his omniscience—his truth and faithfulness, his love and mercy, are objects of the good man's love. Even the justice of God is an attribute, without which a good man could find few pleasant reflections. The same general remarks apply to the whole word of God—Law and Gospel. "Oh!" says the believer, "how I love thy law; it is my meditation day and night. Thy precepts are more to be desired than honey and the honeycomb—than gold, yea much fine gold. I live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

And who can tell how cordial and hearty is the love of a new-born soul towards the blessed Jesus. There appears in all his character

such dignity and love, such glory and condescension, such ability and willingness to save, that the soul is drawn with the cords of love, and its language is, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. Bring me to thy banqueting-house, and let the banner over me be love.

This love extends to divine ordinances. Once the soul said of holy time, "What a weariness is it"—and "O that the Sabbath were gone, that I might buy, and sell, and get gain;" but when renewed it says, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."\* The renewed soul calls "the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord and honorable."

In the new creation a principle of love to the brethren is established in the soul. Hypocrites are like poisonous serpents, which cast their coats, but retain all their venom. But God's own people love the followers of Jesus. An unrenewed man, too, may have a high respect for God's people—nay, he may have a love for them, because they treat him kindly, or seem interested in his welfare. But Christians love Christians, because they bear the image of Jesus. Here permit a little explanation to be offered. Suppose that a family of children, whose father was dead, had a little brother, who, in appearance and countenance, much resembled their father now in his grave. Well, because this little child was little, and because he was their brother, they would feel tenderly towards him. But suppose when they looked at him, they could all say in truth, "Why, he is the very image of his our father," how ardently and tenderly would they love him. Just so it is with God's people, when they behold the image—the moral likeness of their Father above, in any, even the youngest of his children. It is the likeness of God which is the peculiar object of brotherly love. How different, then, is true brotherly love from that affection, called love, which some have for those, and only those, who are of their party in religion. Besides, if we have stated the matter correctly, then it follows, that those who exhibit the image of Christ most fully, do receive the greatest amount of love from their brother. Suppose you were travelling, and should fall in company with one who seemed intelligent, and courteous, and social, you would of course be pleased. But suppose, that after travelling with him one or two days, he should give you substantial proofs that he loved the Savior, would you love him, and instantly make room for him in your heart? But suppose, in a day or two after he should try to say Shibboleth, and instead of that should say Sibboleth; or, in other words, should let you know that he preferred a mode of worship, or a form of government in the church, different from those you were accustomed to, would you still love him as heartily as ever? If you would not, your love is spurious. This love to God is warm, and generous, and liberal, and counts not its labors. Jacob for fourteen years forgot toil and labor for the love he bore to Rachel.

\* Psalm 122:1, 2.

“ While duty portions out the debt it owes  
 With scrupulous precision and nice justice;  
 Love never measures, but profusely gives,  
 Gives like a thoughtless prodigal, its all,  
 And trembles *then*, lest it has done too little.”

We should be presenting a quite imperfect view of what is done in the new creation, if we were to omit mentioning *hope*. As the hope of earthly happiness was once the prime-mover of action, so now the hope of unfading glory and everlasting blessedness impels to activity. This hope is sure and steadfast, and looks to that within the veil. This hope is an anchor to the soul, cast not on the earth but in heaven; and when the waves of affliction and the billows of adversity roll mountain high, and with angry foam dash and break about the soul, it can remain in some good degree, calm, and steady, and fixed.

“ Hope looks beyond the bounds of time,  
 When what we now deplore”

shall receive the eclaircissement of a holy and omniscient God; and thus the heart will praise God for the darkest nights—the most mysterious dispensations it ever passed through on earth. The Christian in adversity, with the light of hope, is like the mountain whose bosom is darkened and beaten by the tempest, shaken with thunder, and rived by lightning; but whose head is radiant with the unobscured rays of a summer’s sun.

And as a man has a new set of hopes, so has he of fears. Once he was afraid he would not be great, or honorable, or learned, or wealthy, or popular, or healthy. But when renewed he is afraid he will not be learned in the mysteries of the kingdom, or rich towards God in faith and good works, or that his soul will not have health and prosper. He is afraid of sin—more afraid of sin than of the sufferings of hell.

Joy, too, is an important item in estimating Christian character. There are carnal joys which are sinful—there are innocent joys which are confined to earth—such as the joys of friends when they meet. But there are pure and holy joys that shall last for ever. To such we are exhorted when the apostle says, “ Rejoice, and again I say rejoice.” Peter, speaking of Christ, says, that “ in him, though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy *unspeakable and full of glory*.”

That these remarks be not misunderstood, it is proper to state that there is nothing of levity, or giddiness, or dissipation of mind, accompanying “ joy in the Holy Ghost.” All the substantial joys of human life are sober, serious joys—much more are all such religious joys, as make the heart better. A tendency to laughter or merriment, under the influence of religious joys, shows that the soul has lost its balance. Religion is too grave a matter to be laughed at, even joyously. It is much to be lamented, however, and one among many evidences of the low state of piety in our day, that there is so much

dejection of heart and depression of spirit among professors, and so little of that joy and gladness, of which the first Christians were so bountiful partakers. Christ commanded his disciples to rejoice and be exceeding glad, even when reproached, and slandered, and persecuted, and cruelly tormented, and they obeyed him. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God at midnight, when in the inmost prison with their feet made fast in the stocks; and the prisoners heard them. So mighty is the principle of truth in furnishing "*strong consolation.*"

In like manner, *every affection of the heart* is renewed and regulated, in such manner as to correspond and harmonize with what has been previously expatiated upon. Esteem and disesteem, desire and aversion, fondness and hatred, are all different in their objects and nature, inasmuch as divine authority possesses uncontrolled dominion. Every sentiment of dislike is fixedly set against sin, while sentiments of attachment are directed towards God, and Christ, and heaven. So far as the friendship of the soul is concerned, the heart is like the needle of the compass, which always settles in one direction. Sometimes, like the magnetic needle, the heart, as by base metals, is drawn aside. Sometimes sin and Satan do great violence to it, and divert it from its heaven-ward direction, but when thus drawn aside it never settles, but always trembles. The heart of a true child of God is never so fastened to the world or selfishness, as is the sinner's. It is not more natural for smoke to ascend, than for holy desires and gracious affections to proceed from a renewed soul towards God.

And as the understanding, will, and affections are changed, so is the practice. The churl becomes liberal—the heart that was once locked up in selfishness is opened—the profane man becomes reverent—the blasphemer prays—the mouth, once full of cursing and bitterness, pours blessings on the name and followers of Jesus—the lion puts on the nature of the lamb—the serpent assumes the innocence of the dove—the formalist heeds the "weighty matters" of the law. In short, the whole life is fashioned after the model of the gospel. Phil. 4:8.

This new creation communicates a living principle. Before this change, spiritual death reigned, but when the Spirit of the Almighty breathed into it, it received a principle of life. Sometimes this principle seems to be very weak, and so it often is. Sometimes it seems to be extinct, but on closer examination, it is found still to exist. The spiritual pulse beats though feebly and slowly. This vital principle is to spiritual life in the soul what the soul is to animal life and activity in the body of man. So long as the soul is in the body there is life.

And as God at first gave life so He supports it, feeding the holy principle continually. When "Christian" saw the fire burning continually, notwithstanding the vast quantities of water thrown upon it, he could not understand it, until he was led into the secret by being shown one who was privately feeding the flame with abundance of oil. He received from the "Interpreter" the following explanation—That fire is the gracious principle in the soul—the water thrown on it is the temptations of Satan—the oil is divine grace—and he that supplies it is

the Holy Ghost, who secretly nourishes and supports divine life in the soul.

This new creation has an abiding influence. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."\* That is, he does not make a trade of sin—he does not allowedly commit sin—he does not *work* iniquity, and for this plain reason, the abiding gracious principle "*remaineth* in him." The new nature which he has received, is opposed to all sin as much as his former nature was in love with it. So that when a good man is in any way entangled or defiled by sin, he is restless until he escapes the pollution. It is agreeable to the nature of swine to wallow in the mire, but if you see a sheep in the mire, you may conclude that something is wrong—that it is and will continue to be uncomfortable, until freed from its unpleasant situation. So it is the nature of a sinner to commit sin—"The wicked shall do wickedly"—but if a regenerate person be overcome, he says "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."† Thus there is permanency; for "the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you."‡

These are some of the effects of this new creation; but we have not time even to allude to all the particular ways in which it manifests itself—influencing, as it does, all the habits of life—all the modes of thought and speech—begetting a spirit of benevolence, charity, modesty, self-denial, compassion for dying men, forgiveness of those who injure us, reparation to those whom we may have injured, &c. If such be the change wrought, you doubtless are ready to assent to the truth that it is a *great* change—that it is a great thing to be religious. And although this change be so great, yet it is necessary, if man is ever to be admitted into the holy exercises of heaven—a change, too, that brightly displays the power of him who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean—can fill dry bones with marrow—clothe them with flesh and command them into life. This change will "*avail*." God loves his own image, and shall for ever love it; therefore he does now, and shall for ever love his people. To deny his people would be to deny his image—his hand-writing—his seal.

Let us, my dear brethren, improve this subject—

1. By inquiring earnestly whether we have ever been new-created. An error here is fatal. If any man be in Christ [in a state of salvation] he is a new creature. There are in the church, at this day, two extremes with regard to the evidences of piety. One is that which requires a kind and amount of evidence, which the Bible does not require, and which no honest man can give. This is a species of fanaticism; and if its demands were gratified, a state of the utmost confusion and disorder would certainly ensue.

The other extreme is by far more common, but not less dangerous. It reduces the standard of evidence so low that there are few persons of moral character, who may not claim fellowship with Christ and his

\* 1 John 3:9.

† Psalm 51:2.

‡ 1 John 2:27.

church. Thus souls are deluded, carnal hopes gain possession, false peace enters, sin is indulged and the soul is undone. Many live as they list, and when they die, look for the resurrection of the just, as a pleasing prospect, but when it shall come they will have no part in it.

It is not half so difficult, as some imagine, to arrive at a correct decision in this matter; and even if it were almost impossible, still it would be wise to make the effort. Especially should we make the effort, because, if our title to heaven be unsound and we can ascertain that fact, there is still room for us in the Savior's heart, and time for us to make peace with God. Have we then been new-created? Have old things passed away and all things become new? Have we spiritual illumination, faith, repentance, love, godly fear, joy, hatred to sin and a holy life, as the foundation of our "rejoicing in ourselves?"

2. If we have experienced this great change, let us give the glory to God, to whom it is due. When Christ came to the grave of Lazarus, and weeping said, "Lazarus, come forth," he, bound and in his grave clothes, came forth. How would this affecting narrative be changed, and how wicked would Lazarus appear in our eyes, if in the close of the story we were told, that Lazarus went about telling his friends that he had reanimated his own body and raised himself from the dead! It is not less inconsistent with truth, and not less dishonorable to God, for those who have received a spiritual resurrection, to say "we did it by our own exertions," or "such an one of our fellow creatures did it by his exertions." People are much disposed to ascribe some of the power to the eloquence, or earnestness, or persuasiveness of their preacher, or to their own poor endeavors. This is all wrong. God is still jealous for his glory, and he will not give it to another. Those who believe are "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." When the head-stone of the great building—the church—shall be laid, then all the redeemed, as with the voice of one man, shall with shoutings cry grace, grace unto it, and shall unite in harmonious anthems of praise "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Beware, then, lest you give not God the glory, which is due unto his ever-blessed name.

3. At the old creation, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy; and at the new creation of even one soul, there is joy in the presence of God. And it is not wonderful that there should be. The old creation has by sin been consigned over to the conflagrations of the last day, but the new creation, composed of the ransomed of the Lord, shall never be subjected to the ravages of sin. It is surrounded by impregnable walls of fire and salvation. It is becoming filled with a holy population. They are coming from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and are sitting down in this kingdom of God. Rich and poor, great and small, are finding that the violent can enter it by force. Perhaps not an hour passes, that some believer does not finish his course with joy and commence the unceasing song, "Unto him that loved us and washed us in his own blood." No wonder, then, that there is joy in heaven in

beholding the increase, and triumphs, and glories of this kingdom. Now, unconverted man, if you will still refuse to give joy in heaven, and will still neglect the receiving of a portion in this new world that grace has made, will it not be just, will it not be right, that you should be for ever shut out, where men shall blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains, and their plagues, and their woes, and shall find no place of repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears. Perhaps the Savior may this moment be passing by. Then like the blind man cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And if your companions or your sins rebuke you, cry still the more earnestly, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." But let him pass by this time and you may never be near him again. He may be gone and gone for ever. And when you come to die, you may call but he will not answer; you may exclaim, as Queen Elizabeth, "A world of wealth for an inch of time;" or, as the expiring George IV., "Oh! this is not right—this is death—Oh God! *I am dying*"—and the curtain will drop, and you will be pushed out of this world and shoved up into the presence of God,

"Greatly mourning, greatly mourning,  
Because you ne'er were born again."

Then the day of grace will be closed for ever, and ever, and ever; and eternity—"Oh! that dreadful word, eternity"—eternity will be your dwelling; and the voice of eternal justice will unceasingly proclaim, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."\* O, turn unto the Lord, for "why will you die?"

\* Rev. 22: 11.

"O God of mercy, hear my call,  
My loads of guilt remove;  
Break down this separating wall,  
That bars me from thy love.

Give me the presence of thy grace;  
Then my rejoicing tongue  
Shall speak aloud thy righteousness,  
And make thy praise my song.

No blood of goats nor heifers slain,  
For sin could e'er atone;  
The death of Christ shall still remain  
Sufficient and alone.

A soul oppressed with sin's desert  
My God will ne'er despise;  
An humble groan, a broken heart  
Is our best sacrifice."

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## SERMON LXI.

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### JESUS IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

GEN. 49:10.—“*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the People be.*”

THE Jew in common with the Christian, believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament, and in a Messiah therein promised as “the glory of his people Israel.” Whether his faith be well founded, in a future advent of the promised Messiah, or ours in one that is past, must be determined by a careful perusal of those Scriptures which we each regard as the word of God.

Our reasons for believing in the past advent of the promised Deliverer are mainly three: 1. The *Time* has elapsed at which he was to appear according to the promise made to the Fathers. 2. The *Marks* by which he was to be recognized on his appearing are to be found in Jesus of Nazareth and can be found in no one else: 3. The *Credentials* exhibited by Jesus of Nazareth proved him to be “a Teacher sent from God.” Whatever arguments a Jew may adduce from Prophecy or from miracles in favor of the divine mission of Moses, will be at least equally valid in favor of the divine mission of Jesus. We admit his reasoning to be conclusive in the *former* of these cases, and we only ask him to apply it with candor to the latter. A full exposition of the evidence we have for our faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah, would require an illustration of each of these heads at large. We must necessarily, however, confine our attention at present to the *first* division. We accordingly propose to prove,

**THAT THE TIME AT WHICH MESSIAH WAS TO MAKE HIS APPEARANCE IS PAST AND COINCIDES WITH THAT IN WHICH JESUS OF NAZARETH APPEARED AND LIVED.**

It will be necessary to examine the text critically in order to refute the glosses of those who are inimical to Christianity. This passage is a part of the prophetic benedictions of the Patriarch Jacob. The “room in which this good man met his fate” presented an interesting spectacle. His children and grandchildren in breathless eagerness station themselves around his dying couch, while the Patriarch filled with the spirit of Inspiration proceeds to unfold some of the most prominent events in their future history. He begins with Reuben the first-born, proceeds according to their seniority, and closes with the prospective history of Benjamin the youngest. Each is addressed as the Head and Representative of his Tribe, and the predictions relate to their *posterity* rather than to their *persons*. Of this the Patriarch gives intimation in the preface of his address—“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that

which shall befall you *in the last days*"—v. 1. This view of the subject is confirmed by the subsequent history: The things predicted befel the *posterity* of his sons and not their persons.

He had concluded his predictions in relation to Reuben, to Simeon, and to Levi. He now proceeds to the history of Judah on which he enlarges more than on that of any other. The most remarkable prediction relating to this Tribe is that contained in our text: "The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

*The advent of a remarkable Person out of Judah is here foretold, and a history is furnished of what would be the condition of the Tribe before and at his advent:* These, as we suppose, are the two particulars comprehended in the text.

1. The person whose advent the Patriarch predicts is called Shiloh. This name is significant.\* It designates one who will promote *tranquillity* or peace. The Prophet Isaiah applies to him a similar title, "The Prince of Peace" or tranquillity,† and assures us that "of the increase of his government and *peace* there shall be no end." Is. 9:6,7. That the advent of Messiah is here foretold by the Patriarch is evident from the following considerations. 1. The uniform testimony of all the ancient Jewish Commentators, a specimen of which is furnished in the following quotations: "Until the time when the King Messiah shall come"—(Ben Uzziel): "This is the Messiah, the Son of David, who shall come to rule the kingdoms with a sceptre"—(Jerusalem Talmud): See also Jerusalem Targum and Kimchi. 2. What is predicted of Shiloh is applicable to Messiah and to no one else: "To him shall be the gathering of the People." The noun is in the *plural* number "Peoples,"‡ in reference to the calling of the Gentiles. The Scriptures speak in similar terms of the Messiah—"He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Is. 42:1. "To it (the ensign of Messiah) shall the Gentiles seek (be gathered) and his rest (tranquillity) shall be glorious." Is. 11:10. 3. It is admitted by all, That Messiah is to be of the Tribe of Judah, and that his connection with that Tribe will constitute one of its prominent advantages. It cannot be supposed that the Patriarch in enumerating the characteristic blessings of the several Tribes should make no allusion to that which more than any other is distinctive of the Tribe of Judah! And yet unless the advent of Messiah be alluded to in our text, there is no mention made of it in this farewell address.

2. The Dying Patriarch assures his children, That the advent of Messiah will precede the transfer of the Sceptre from the Tribe of Judah. As the Tribe of Judah ceased to have a national existence nearly eighteen hundred years ago, it must be obvious, that the promised advent has taken place. To evade the force of this reasoning it is alleged by some, that the word here rendered "Sceptre"|| ought to be translated "Rod." The Patriarch is supposed to predict *afflictions* to the Tribe of Judah until the coming of the Messiah. The term will admit of either translation—It is a "rod," whether of government or chastisement must be determined by the context. That in the present instance it refers to government every one must be convinced who carefully ponders on the following considerations: 1. The ancient Jewish Commentators all explain it in the present passage, as having reference to government and not to afflictions; nor was this interpretation ever called in question until it was found to be so conclusive in favor of our Lord's claims as the promised Messiah. "There shall not be taken away from Judah *one having the principality* nor the scribe from the sons of his children till the Messiah shall come." (Onkelos.) See also the Paraphrase of Jonathan and of the Jerusalem Talmud.

\* Schiloh.

† Schar-Schawlome.

‡ Ammim.

|| Schaibe;

The different members of the sentence as rendered in the present translation harmonize with each other. The "Sceptre" appertains to the "Lawgiver," so that the latter part of the text is in unison with the former. But if the Patriarch allude to afflictions, the two members of the text will contradict each other. In the former part afflictions are predicted as the portion of Judah until the coming of Messiah, and in the latter legislation or principality is guaranteed to this Tribe during the same period.

3. The subsequent *histories* of the Tribes prove that the Patriarch alluded to Sceptre or Supremacy and not to afflictions. Jacob in his dying address may be said to *characterize* the Tribes severally. He rehearses what would be *peculiar* to each above every other. The Tribe of Judah would be distinguished above the others by retaining the "sceptre" and "Lawgiver" until the advent of Messiah. This corresponds with the history of the Tribe. In almost every important transaction it took the precedence: In the encampment in the wilderness, (Num. 2:3)—in presenting the oblations at the sanctuary, (Num. 7:12)—in the choice of plots in Canaan, (Josh. 15)—in forming the van in the day of battle, (Judg. 1:1, 2)—in furnishing the royal family, and finally and principally in furnishing the Messiah who is "the glory of his People Israel." To understand the patriarch as referring to afflictions, is to suppose that his prediction was falsified in the events.

The ancient Jewish writers invariably represent the sceptre as having allusion to *political* pre-eminence, and the term Lawgiver as implying *ecclesiastical* pre-eminence, in reference to the interpretations of the Sanhedrim or grand politico-ecclesiastical council, and that pre-eminence in both these important particulars was conferred by God (through the Patriarch) on the Tribe of Judah. The Scriptures teach us the same doctrine in numerous passages—"Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head, *Judah is my Lawgiver.*" Ps. 108:9. This interpretation of our text will be confirmed by adverting to its connection or to the circumstances in which it was uttered. Reuben as being the firstborn would naturally aspire to the pre-eminence among his brethren, but while the Patriarch recognizes him as his "firstborn, his might, and the beginning of his strength," he refers to his unnatural crime (v. 4), as having shorn him of his primogeniture. The sanguinary and vindictive spirit of Simeon and Levi are referred to (v. 6, 7) as disqualifying them for pre-eminence though the next in seniority. Judah the fourth in age is noticed next in order, in language as follows: "Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies, thy father's children shall bow down before thee"—thus conferring on *Judah* that pre-eminence which had been refused to his three elder brethren. Language could not be more explicit. The promise is confirmed and enlarged on in our text, "The *Sceptre* shall not depart from Judah, nor a *Lawgiver* from between his feet, till Shiloh come." Some have endeavored to evade the force of the argument derived from the text, by substituting the following translation—"The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet *for ever, because* Messiah shall come." There are two reasons which show the incorrectness of this version: 1. The Sceptre *has* departed from Judah for nearly 1800 years: so that a prediction implying that the Sceptre should never depart on account of the Messiah's advent in the Tribe of Judah, would be falsified by the history. 2. The grammatical structure of the original will not admit such a rendering. The word (*ad*) when used *alone* or with a preposition refers to an endless duration, but when conjoined, as in the present instance, with the particle (*kee*), it defines the period at which a specified event is to occur.

Having finished the critical examination of the text, its exposition will be plain and its application obvious. We believe no candid inquirer, in view of the foregoing criticisms, can question the truth of the following proposition.

*The Patriarch guarantees to the Tribe of Judah its national Government and religious Institutions until the Advent of the Messiah.*

An enumeration of the following particulars, supposed to be more or less clearly embraced in the text, will still further elucidate this proposition.

1. It is intimated, though indirectly and somewhat obscurely, that the *other Tribes* would lose their national existence and religious ordinances *before* the advent of Messiah. "The Sceptre shall not depart from *Judah*, nor a Lawgiver from between *his* feet," evidently intimating that the Tribe of Judah would be distinguished above the other tribes in this respect, and that *they* would lose these important advantages previously to the advent of Shiloh. The ten tribes were accordingly carried into captivity by Shalmanezzer, several hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth made his appearance, (2 Kings 17.) The Sceptre was wholly wrested out of their hands, and even their *location* is not known with certainty. The tribe of Benjamin became merged in that of Judah about the time of the Babylonish Captivity. From that period it had no existence as a distinct tribe: its Sceptre and Lawgiver had departed, and its members were called Jews, i. e. Judeans or sons of Judah. The tribe of Judah still retained its Sceptre and Lawgiver. Even during the Babylonish Captivity, a government and religious ordinances were still maintained in Judea, though in subordination to the king of Babylon, and after an interval of seventy years the Jews were re-instated in the full enjoyment of their political and religious privileges.

2. It is intimated, that the government of Judah would be in its *decline* at the advent of Messiah, and would soon after be wholly subverted. How literally was this accomplished! About sixty years before the nativity of our Savior, Pompey the Great subjugated Judea and pillaged the Temple.\* Judea now became a Dependency of the Roman empire, but still retained its distinct government and institutions, subject to a general supervision and sort of negative of the Emperor. In the twelfth year *after* our Savior's birth (the eighth according to the common reckoning) Archelaus the reigning Ethnarch was deposed for maladministration by the Roman Emperor. Judea was now reduced to the form of a *province*, and was governed by persons sent from Rome, as a component part of the Presidency of Syria. In the seventy-third year after the birth of Jesus, (the fortieth after his crucifixion,) Jerusalem was taken by Titus. More than a million of Jews were massacred; the remnant was sold into slavery and scattered over the face of the earth. The temple was deluged with blood and the whole city was razed to its foundations. An impression prevailed among the Roman soldiers, that immense treasures were buried beneath the houses, and especially in the various apartments of the temple; as a consequence, "not one stone was any where left upon another" in seeking for the hidden riches. From that period till now Judah has not had even the shadow of a sceptre, and his sons have been "a by-word among all nations."

3. The Jewish nation being dispersed soon after the advent of Messiah, the question would naturally arise, Who are to be the subjects of Messiah's government? An answer is furnished in the latter part of our text: "To him shall be the gathering of the *peoples*," that is, the nations or Gentiles; for the word is in the plural number. How strikingly does this accord with the predictions relating to the government of Messiah, which are to be found in other parts of the Scriptures. As a specimen take the following quotations: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and *all nations shall flow unto it; And many peoples* (the word is plural and is the same which is used in the text) shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Je-

\* It may not be out of place to remark here, that Pompey who had previously been one of the most successful generals, never succeeded in any thing subsequently, and soon after lost his life as a fugitive on the shores of Africa.

rusalem: *And he will judge among the nations and shall rebuke many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more: O house of Jacob come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*" Is. 2:2—5. This prediction is to be accomplished "in the last days" (v. 2); the very period alluded to by the patriarch who calls his sons together to hear "that which shall befall them *in the last days,*" Gen. 49:1. "Behold I have given Him (Messiah) for a Witness to the peoples, a Leader and Commander to the peoples; behold thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee," Is. 55:4, 5. "It is a light thing, that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the *tribes of Jacob,* and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a *light to the Gentiles,* that thou mayest be my salvation unto the *end of the earth,*" Is. 49:6. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth *judgment to the Gentiles.* . . . . I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a *light of the Gentiles,* Is. 42:1—6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, (i. e. the Shiloh the Tranquillizer): Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it, with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever," Is. 9:6, 7.

The time within which the advent of Messiah was to occur, is also defined by the prophet Haggai, 2:6—9. "And I will shake all nations and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of Hosts. . . . . The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts, and in this place will I give *peace* saith the Lord of hosts." The Jews, after the completion of the second temple, were dejected on account of its great inferiority to that which had been built by Solomon, (v. 3.) But the prophet was instructed to console them with the assurance that the glory of this latter temple, notwithstanding its inferiority as a mere edifice, should exceed that of the first temple. Messiah would honor it with his personal presence, which would more than compensate for its inferiority in other respects. Messiah is here called, "The Desire of all nations," or the person desired by all nations in reference to the extent of his government as embracing the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Under the reign of this remarkable person the Lord assures us that he "will give peace" or tranquillity. Unquestionably this "Desire of all nations who will confer peace" on the human family is the same to whom the patriarch refers as "The Tranquillizer" to whom "will the gathering of the peoples be." The prophet assures the desponding Jews that this Desire of all nations would make his appearance within a limited time before the destruction of the second temple, an event which occurred more than 1700 years ago. The second temple was repaired and beautified, and in a great measure rebuilt by Herod the Great; but inasmuch as it was taken down piecemeal and by friendly hands, it was the second temple still, and was always so regarded by the Jews. "And from the *second* building of it, which was done by Haggai in the second year of Cyrus the king, till its *destruction under Vespasian,* there were six hundred and thirty-nine years and forty-five days." Josephus, Jewish War, b. 6, ch. 4, sect. 8.

About forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus Jerusalem was destroyed. It was the hope and anxious desire of Titus to save the temple as one of the most remarkable edifices in the world. This hope was wholly frustrated through the madness and delusion of the Jews. The temple was the spot where the last, and keenest, and bloodiest contest was maintained: "Nor did any one of them escape with his life. A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made

a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance." Josephus, Jewish War, ch. 5, sect. 2. The ruin of the temple being thus completed, the soldiers (as has been observed already) were permitted to dig up the very foundations in their search after treasure, so that the very site it occupied is now matter of conjecture. How impossible is it that the prophecy of Haggai can be verified unless Messiah appeared at or before that period!

The time of Messiah's advent is referred to still more explicitly by the prophet Daniel: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, (i. e. sin-offerings) and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, (as contra-distinguished from the temporary righteousness of previous sin-offerings) and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the MOST HOLY. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks: The street shall be built again and the wall even in troublous times. And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: And the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Dan. 9:24—26. Three distinct periods are here enumerated of different commencements but having the same termination, at the expiration of which Messiah was to be cut off, not "for himself" but for the purpose of "bringing in an everlasting righteousness;" and soon after this event, the city and sanctuary were to be destroyed by a flood of desolations and abominations unknown in the annals of the world. The first of these periods consists of *seventy weeks*, or 490 years, from the time probably of the vision, (v. 24.) The second consists of *sixty-nine weeks*, or 483 years, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," and the third of *sixty-two weeks*, or 434 years, from the time when this decree was fully accomplished. The edict of Cyrus for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the restoration of its public worship, was but partially accomplished. Cyrus was then very old, and died soon afterwards, so that the Samaritans and others retarded the work for forty-nine years, or seven weeks, of troublous times. But in the 7th year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Nehemiah was commissioned to *complete* the work which had been so long delayed. In four hundred and thirty-four years from this time Messiah was to be cut off, "not for himself," and the ruin of church and state were speedily to follow.

At the time when Jesus was born at Bethlehem, there was an almost universal expectation of Messiah's speedy appearance. The *time* at which he was promised had now arrived, the sceptre was now held with but a feeble grasp, the Lawgiver was fettered in the exercise of his office, the "shaking of all nations" indicated his approach to whom they were to be gathered as their object of desire, and the "three score and two" were evidently about to expire. "But now what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was found also in their sacred writings, how about that time one from their country should become *Governor of the habitable earth*," (Jos. B. of Wars 6, ch. 5, sect. 4); that is, should be "the Desire of all nations," to whom "the gathering of the peoples should be." "There was a general impression produced by the ancient writings of the priests, that about this time the East should gain the ascendancy, and *one born in Judea* should attain to supreme dominion." Tacitus Hist., b. 5, ch. 13. See also Suetonius Vit. Vesp. Do we not then truly decide, that "this is He of whom Moses in the Law and in the Prophets did write?"

#### INFERENCES.

1. The Scriptures are not "a cunningly devised fable," but "given by inspiration of God." The argument illustrated in the previous discourse is the argument

from prophecy. This is but one of the many sources of evidence which establish the truth and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. These arguments are severally conclusive, and in combination present a chain of moral evidence stronger, it is believed, than can be adduced in favor of one of the many thousands of subjects, the truth of which no one pretends to question.

Human sagacity may form *plausible* conjectures as to future results from facts already known; but to predict remote and improbable events with *unerring certainty* is possible to him only who knows the end from the beginning. Some of the events alluded to, in our text, were nearly 2000 years future when predicted. How could the patriarch know that the tribe of Judah would retain the ascendancy over the other tribes? or that the other tribes would lose their national existence previously to the coming of Messiah, while Judah would remain until his advent and then be swept as "with the besom of destruction!" In order to obviate the force of this reasoning, it has been alleged, that these are not prophecies but histories foisted into the Jewish Scriptures subsequently to the events alluded to. But such a supposition is wholly inadmissible, for the following reasons: 1. It is wholly unsupported by evidence. 2. The prophecies are so interwoven with the books which contain them, that it would be impossible to abstract them on the one hand, or to foist them in on the other, without detection. 3. It would be impossible to give them that *shading of obscurity* which constitutes their prophetic feature: the imposture would betray itself in the attempt to render it obvious what precise event is alluded to in each case. 4. The Jewish Scriptures had undergone several translations previously to the occurrence of the events alluded to: In particular, a translation into Greek, usually called the Septuagint, was made by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the second in succession after Alexander the Great. These translations all contain the predictions in question. Supposing it possible to interweave these prophecies in the original as alleged, could they be interwoven in all the translations, and in so ingenious a manner that no one ever suspected the villainy! The impostor must be further supposed to have obtained and destroyed all the copies previously existing in whatever language, and to have also bribed all the writers of his own age and of ages immediately subsequent, since not a whisper has reached us of the villainous part he is supposed to have acted! 5. These prophecies are found in the *Jewish Scriptures*, and furnish a principal source of evidence that Jesus is the promised Messiah. The Jews find it impossible to explain these prophecies in a manner at all satisfactory even to themselves. No people ever took one hundredth part of the trouble to preserve any writings pure, as were taken by the Jews in relation to their Scriptures. The verses, words, letters, and marks, were named, and numbered, and described. Criticism on the Scriptures was the high road to literary and political distinction, and hundreds of persons were employed in reading and explaining them to the people. Could an imposition escape the notice of every one of the hundreds alluded to, especially an imposition of the sort supposed, which militates so strongly against their peculiar faith!

In confirmation of these prophecies we may refer to the history and present condition of the Jews. For nearly eighteen hundred years they have been scattered over the face of the earth, and yet till this day they are a distinct people. Even those of them who have little or no regard for Judaism more than for the Christian faith, are seldom found to intermarry with others. How is this to be accounted for! There is no distinction of *color* between them and others; there has been no want of inducement for effecting an amalgamation. Force has been often resorted to, and persuasion sometimes. They still remain "alone," and ere long we doubt not the truth of prophecy will be mercifully signalized in reclaiming them, as it has been righteously signalized in scattering them over the face of the earth.

2. Let us advert to the stability of the Divine purposes. The wheels of Providence in execution of Divine purposes move slowly, almost imperceptibly, but yet with unerring progress—mountains cannot impede them nor morasses retard them. Faith in the renewed man is the principle which mainly serves to distinguish him from others, and the entire procedure of Divine Providence is suited and designed to invigorate this principle. "Abraham believed God," and yet he was required to wait

long and in very discouraging circumstances, in order that his faith might take root downwards and bear fruit upwards. The fathers believed and yet waited for the *first* advent of Shiloh, we believe and wait for his *second* advent, although we have nothing to indicate it or to guarantee it, but his promise "who cannot lie." The natural man must see in order to the exercise of an operative faith. "Where is the promise of his coming?" is his interrogatory: "For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" is his insurmountable objection, and "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Dearly beloved reader, the promise is now fulfilled which is itself the foundation and guaranty of all the promises! Of the certainty of whose accomplishment the Evangelical Prophet felt so well assured, that in predicting it he foretels it as a matter accomplished, "unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." Embrace him with a true, and living, and growing faith; put "the government" of your affections into his hand. Be willing to be saved through his infinite merits, and to be conformed in heart and life to his holy example.

Dearly beloved, Jesus holds a sceptre which will never depart from his grasp—a sceptre of *gold* for those who trust in his mercy, and of *iron* for such as refuse the overtures of his grace! His promises are infallible, so are his threatenings; his veracity is as much at stake in the one case as in the other. His promise has been fulfilled, and yet how *slow* apparently it was in arriving at its accomplishment! He is equally long-suffering as to his threatenings, "not willing that any should perish, but waiting to be gracious." Yet "he is not slack as some men count slackness." If you reject him he will also reject you. He is now before you "as a Lamb slain to take away sin," whose "blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Oh! reject not his offered mercy, or he will appear before you in the end, as "the LION of the tribe of Judah," from whose power there is none that can deliver.

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## SERMON LXII.

BY THOMAS CLELAND, D. D.,  
OF KENTUCKY.

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### THE DESTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE OF SINNERS.

ECCLES. 9:18.—"One sinner destroyeth much good."

EVERY man has his influence, more or less, in the circle where he moves. If his powers be great, his principles corrupt, his practice vicious; and his example alluring, then is his influence the more pernicious and destructive. Imitators swarm; coadjutors increase in numbers and boldness; while pupils, taught gratuitously, and with great facility, speedily become graduates in vice, and adepts in all manner of wickedness. But as there are various ways and methods adopted by sinners, whereby they verify the declaration in the text, we shall, in pursuing the subject, attempt an illustration of it, by pointing out its truth, *First*, in the fall of man and his subsequent history; *Secondly*, in families and neighborhoods; and, *Thirdly*, in the church of God. By a little reflection on the character and conduct of men, in these departments, we shall soon discover how "one sinner destroyeth much good." It is discoverable,

I. In the fall of man and his subsequent history.

The Apostle Paul has informed us that, *Adam was not deceived.* (1 Tim. 2: 14.) He was not seduced by the serpent. He sinned knowingly. His sin, there-

fore, was the more highly aggravated. His fond affection for her who was bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh, induced him to follow her, in his first transgression.

—————"He scrupled not to eat,  
Against his better knowledge, not deceiv'd,  
But fondly overcome by female charm.  
Earth trembled from her entrails, as again  
In pangs; and nature gave a second groan;  
Sky lour'd and uttering thunder, some sad drops  
Wept at completing of the mortal sin  
Original."

Here the father, the head, and representative of the human family falls. Here human nature lost its virtue, its innocence,—and the image of God. In this fall, all Adam's posterity became involved and ruined. *By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners;—by one man sin entered into the world. and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. In Adam all die:—the wages of sin is death.* Who can tell how much good hath been destroyed by this one man. His whole race is corrupt. *They are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one.* (Ps. 14:2, 3.) They are under heaven's curse. They are *by nature children of wrath.* They are now liable to all the miseries of this life, the wrath and curse of God, and the pains of hell for ever. The very ground is cursed for man's sake. *The creature is made subject to vanity, not willingly; and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth under the dreadful weight.* This sad moment of departure from God has brought wretchedness and woe, in all their dreadful forms and consequences, arising from penal, moral, and natural evil, upon all our unhappy race; all of which would have been prevented, and unknown, had not sin entered into the world *by one man, and death by sin.* Truly this one sinner hath destroyed much good.

But man's subsequent history affords many lamentable instances of the truth of our text. A few only shall be selected as specimens. The direful effects of the great transgression, are awfully exhibited in the *first murder* ever committed in the human family. Who can tell the good that was destroyed, when Cain wickedly rose up and destroyed the precious life of his righteous brother,—rent the tender bosom of him that begat him, and of her that bare him,—destroyed his own peace for ever, entailed an additional curse and a reproach upon his posterity through many generations,—and whose very name associates with it, upon every mention of it, the horrid invention, the shocking deed, and the terrible example of making away with life, by murderously opening the channels of its precious fluid, and letting it out upon the ground!

Another sinner that destroyed much good, was *Achan, the son of Zerah*; that troubler in Israel who, in direct violation of the law of God, (Joshua 6:18.) made *the camp of Israel a curse*, by coveting, taking, and concealing, a *Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold.* In consequence of this wicked conduct of this one sinner, the Israelites could not prevail against their enemies;—*they fled before the men of Ai, who smote of them about thirty and six men.* Israel was greatly troubled: Achan is detected: the foul deed is confessed; and lo, here follows the direful result:—*Joshua and all Israel took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had:—And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.* Surely much good was destroyed by this covetous wretch, as many a one has done since his day, under the influence of the same wicked propensity, which has procured the destruction of the lives and property of millions in our unhappy world, and finally brought down the curse of heaven upon their own heads.

The time would fail, the ear be pained, and the heart sicken, were I to present before you the ten thousandth part of the history of human wickedness and woe, occasioned by the *royal sinner*,—the proud ambitious *monarch*, and the *favorite*, still prouder,—the rebellious *subject*,—the slaughtering *general*,—and the bloody *assassin*:—Of Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, who in consequence of h

imbecility and ambition, in a few weeks goaded ten tribes out of twelve to revolt from his dominion, and set up a rival government, which produced a source of great uneasiness and endless bickerings amongst brethren hitherto dwelling together in unity and amity under one head;—Of Jeroboam *who made Israel to sin*, by setting up calves at Bethel and Dan;—Of Manasseh, *who shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another*;—Of Absalom, who stirred up multitudes to insurrection and rebellion against his father David, and involved the nation in the horrors of civil war;—Of Jezebel, *who slew the prophets of the Lord*, and Saul of Tarsus, *who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*;—Of Haman, the Amalekite, whose pride and envy led him to lay a wicked plot for the extirpation of all the Jews under the dominion of Ahasuerus, his master, but which, by a reaction, caused the destruction of himself, his ten sons, eight hundred men in Shushan the palace, and seventy-five thousand more, who fell by the sword of the other Jews that were in the king's provinces, who had gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives.

These are a few out of the many instances found on sacred record, where the truth of the declaration in the text is abundantly substantiated. But who can, without mixed emotions of grief, horror, astonishment, and indignation, turn over the pages of profane history, both ancient and modern, and there learn what seductive arts, what disgusting lewdness, what cruel butcheries, what savage conduct, what barbarous treatment, and what horrid enormities, of every description that hell could invent, have burst forth from that dark source, and found abettors and practitioners among all ages and classes of men! But we proceed to show how the declaration in the text is strikingly illustrated,

## II. In families and neighborhoods.

Here objects swarm, and press upon our notice. We must select the most prominent. See the unnatural conduct of the *imperious, ill-natured husband*. With all the ardour of youthful passion, he sought for that amiable woman, to make her *the wife of his youth*. For her he professed to sigh and languish, while she hesitated, and thereby rendered his final happiness doubtful. He swore that he loved her, and could not live without her. He called heaven to witness his fond attachment,—his solemn pledge of perpetuated affection and fidelity, if she would consent to become *his companion, and the wife of his covenant*.—Overcome by teasing importunity, and won by the flattering expectations of a terrestrial paradise with an unclouded atmosphere, she sustains his plea, reciprocates his attachment, and becomes his wife, the companion of his days, and the fond mother of his children. But, alas! she is deceived. Instead of a tender, affectionate husband, she soon finds herself in the possession of an ill-natured savage, who knows not how to honor the wife as the weaker vessel. Having previously lost the fine, chaste sensibilities of youthful passion in the forbidden course of sensual indulgence, he wanders like the brute, in search of other objects, and goes to the house of the *strange woman*, which is in the way to hell. His avowed fondness for his wife, which one would suppose to have been rivetted with tenfold endearment by the infantile smiles and innocent prattling of a tender offspring, has vanished like the morning cloud and early dew. His scowling brow, when he enters her room, appals her. She is alarmed at his approach, and trembles when he speaks. Day after day, and night after night, she sighs, and deep calleth unto deep, while wave upon wave of wretchedness and sorrow break in upon her spirits, render life a burden, and reduce her to a living skeleton. What a monster must that man be, who treats his wife as a slave,—who daily violates the sacred pledge he solemnly gave before God and man on the marriage union, that he would be to her a faithful and affectionate husband, until separated by death. *The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.* (Mal. 2:14.) May every such wicked husband seriously think on this,—consider his ways,—and timely lament that so much good has been destroyed by his chilling indifference, his savage ill-nature, his violated fidelity, and his imperious disposition and cruel barbarity towards her whom he is bound to love as his own body,—whom he ought to nourish, and cherish, and love, *even as himself*.—*He that loveth his wife, loveth himself.* (Eph. 5:28, 29.)

enough to make a wise man mad;—to embitter his days and drive him to desperation. The good man's peace is destroyed. His happiness is gone. His life is a continued scene of vexation and wretchedness. She is a great curse to him instead of a blessing. *The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping*,—worse than a leaky house when it rains, affording no comfortable place either to sit or lie down in. "A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind." (Prov. 27:15. He may as soon hush and conceal the noise of the wind when it blows, as silence her clamor, or conceal her imprudent and froward conduct. A brisk shower, though sometimes inconvenient and troublesome, is nevertheless, soon over; but a constant, soaking, sleet drizzling rain, driving all day long, admits of no remedy but patience. Such is the unfortunate lot of that man, whose companion is a cross, ill-contrived wife. "It is better to dwell in the corner of the house top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house;" "who upon every occasion, and often upon no occasion, breaks out into passion, and chides either him or those about her, is fretful to herself, and furious to her children and servants, and, in both, vexatious to her husband." "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." (Prov. 21:19.) There is doubtless more comfort enjoyed in the solitary wilderness, exposed to wind and weather, than in a palace with such a woman. And even the roar of the lion, the howling of the wolf, and the screaming of the owl, would be music in his ear, compared with the continued clatter of her scolding tongue. How wretched must that man be whose house is Bedlam; under whose roof there is domestic misery enough to canker all his gold and silver; to corrupt all his wealth; to embitter every enjoyment; and to make him groan even upon most the downy bed or costly sofa! Instead of being received with open and welcome arms, by a loving and affectionate companion, he meets with a thorn in his flesh; he is compelled to continue in the element of discord; his house is the seat of strife, the house of bondage and misery. Conjugal felicity! whither hast thou fled from the abodes of hundreds who are suing to our judges, and importuning our legislators to break the unwelcome tie and dissolve those bands, which, a little while go, were sought after with all the seeming ardour of youthful love, impassioned friendship, and prospective happiness! The daily discord, the unhappy bickering, occasioned by the ungovernable wife, or the imperious husband, has driven thee far away, probably never to return. The want of good temper, or the lack of self-government, is doubtless the fruitful source of more than half the mischief that arises to interrupt, if not destroy, all matrimonial happiness and domestic tranquillity, so desirable in the married state. It requires more reciprocal attention, and cultivation, than many are either aware of, or, if aware, yet unwilling to bestow. "Connubial happiness," says one, "is a thing of too fine a texture to be handled roughly. It is a sensitive plant which will not even bear the touch of unkindness—a delicate flower which indifference will chill and suspicion blast. It must be watered with the showers of *tender affection*—expanded with the glow of *attention*—and guarded by the impregnable barrier of unshaken *confidence*. Thus matured, it will bloom with fragrance in every season of life, and sweeten the loneliness of declining years." All this good might be enjoyed, and the contrary ills prevented, if every husband and wife would attentively listen to and carefully follow the advice of heaven:—"Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love.—Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands, love your wives. Yea, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Behold the *refractory, disobedient, prodigal child*. Here is a sinner that has destroyed the happiness of father and mother, disgraced the family, and brought wretchedness and infamy upon himself, perhaps, for ever. Here all the flattering hopes of a fond mother, and the expectations of an anxious father, are blasted in an instant. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." A promising daughter, like "Dinah the daughter of Leah, went out to see the daughters of the land," and

does he repent; but pushes on in his course of dissipation, until he becomes habituated to vice, and established in every evil work. The restraints that were at first upon him are all broken, and the bands of moral obligation dissolved. The anxious father, who often said to him, "My son, if thou be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine," now learns, with a sorrowful heart, the unwelcome lesson, that "the father of a fool hath no joy." The fond mother, whose tender solicitude for his welfare, so often induced her to exclaim, "What, my son, and what the son of my womb!" now, alas! is taught the heart-rending lesson, that "a foolish son is a heaviness to his mother." But see the father without property, the mother without a home, and the son without a character, and learn, that "he that wasteth his father and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach," and in so doing, "destroyeth much good." "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. If sinners entice thee consent thou not. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Yonder sits the gambler! amidst his cards, his dice, his cups, and his profane companions like himself. He has wasted his precious time, his strength, and his money. Or he has by fraud and cunning robbed his unwary fellow of his earthly all. He either "getteth riches, but not by right, and in the end shall die a fool," or, in one unhappy night, is reduced to beggary, with all his family. How uncertain and hazardous must be the condition of that amiable female who gives herself and her fortune to a gambler! While "she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness, her candle goeth not out by night, but layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff," behold the wicked monster of a husband, under some lying pretext, deserting her amiable society whole days and nights together, and, ere he returns, has put in jeopardy, if not actually gambled away, the property she brought him, the house that covers her, the bed that rests her, and the very bread which she and her children depended on for their sustenance. Ye fair damsels, take care how you give away yourselves and your fortunes into the hands of men whose trade is gambling, whose gains are the fruits of cheaterly and fraud, and with whom you are destined to rise or fall in this world, by the casting of a die, or the fling of a card. Rather spend your days with the parents who love and will provide for you, and ever esteem it one of your highest privileges, one of heaven's richest blessings, one of life's sweetest enjoyments, to escape the curse of being yoked for life with a beastly drunkard, the wasting prodigal, the wicked gambler.

Yonder comes the tale-bearer! with all the little stories he can pick up, whether true or false, going from house to house, industriously employed in the devil's work, which is to make mischief and sow discord among friends and neighbors. What an odious, mischievous character is here! "A tale-bearer revealeth secrets, and a whisperer separateth chief friends." Unprincipled wretches! They reveal secrets with which they have been entrusted, and which they swore not to divulge, or they have, by unfair means, come to the knowledge of secrets which honor, peace, and happiness, require them not to reveal. They sow in the minds of people deep-rooted jealousies of their rulers, of their ministers, of their relations, and of one another. The whisperer, the backbiter, and the tale-bearer, are vile incendiaries, who, loaded with combustible matter, feed and spread the fire of contention throughout a whole region. Yea, their "tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity—it setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.—Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!—The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds," deep and dangerous; they strike the very vitals; they wound the reputation of him who is belied; they wound the love and charity of him to whom they are spoken; they give a fatal stab to friendship; they paralyze all good and social feeling between neighbors and relations, and excite contentions like the bars of a castle. Happy is that town, that village, that neighborhood, which is not infested with these factors of the devil! "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer the strife ceaseth." This odious practice meets with too much indulgence and encouragement. The tale-hearer, as well as the tale-bearer, is guilty of no small fault here. Many an ear is itching and widely opened to admit the tale of

mischief and scandal, while the tongue administers neither caution nor reproof. Heaven has pointed out a successful remedy against this shameful, deleterious practice, and put it in the power of the hearer to employ: "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." (Prov. 25:23.) Let every one, instead of countenancing, promptly discourage this sin. Let them frown upon it. If ever an "angry countenance" was justifiable and praise-worthy, it is so here. Sin, for the most part, is cowardly:—it is conscious of its own shame. Let the whisperer, then, meet your frowning brow, when he comes with his defiling tongue, instead of your open ear, and there will soon be a check to this common, this growing, this wide-spread evil, which indeed destroyeth much good.

Nearly allied to this mischievous character, is *the base slanderer*: whose "lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it:" who utters false speeches against his neighbor whom he avowedly hates, to the prejudice of his fame, safety, welfare, and that out of malignity, vanity, rashness, ill-nature, or bad design. He is the "ungodly man that diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is a burning fire." What pains does he take to find out something on which he may found a slander, or give some colorable pretext for it. "If none appear above ground, rather than want it, he will dig for it, by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back, or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced inuendoes." Ten thousand are the vehicles on which infamous, malignant slander is conveyed. "Of all characters in society, a slanderer is the most odious, and the most likely to produce mischief." "His tongue," says the great Massilon, "is a devouring fire, which tarnishes whatever it touches;—wherever it passes, leaves only desolation and ruin;—blackens what it cannot consume;—a disguised hatred, which sheds in its speeches the hidden venom of the heart;—an unworthy duplicity, which praises to the face, and tears to pieces behind the back;—a deliberate barbarity, which goes to pierce an absent brother."—"It is a restless evil, which disturbs society; spreads dissensions through cities and countries; disunites the strictest friendships; is the source of hatred and revenge: fills whatever it enters with disturbance and confusion; and every where is an enemy to peace, comfort, and christian good breeding. It is an evil full of deadly poison: whatever flows from it is infected, and poisons whatever it approaches; that even its praises are empoisoned; its applauses malicious; its silence criminal; its gestures, motions, and looks, have all their venom, and spread it each in their way."

Another sinner, who destroyeth much good, is, *the vile seducer*, who, like the devil, described by Milton, found in Adam's bower, by Ithuriel and Zephon,

"Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,  
Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy,"——

So this incarnate devil enters the abode of peace and happiness, and decoys the darling daughter, or defiles the wife of his unsuspecting neighbor. Do you hear the sighs, and behold the tears of yonder disappointed, broken-hearted parents? Alas! the cruel spoiler came. Their beautiful flower is blasted: their tender plant is withered, and destroyed for ever. Their fond hopes, their pleasing prospects, are all vanished. O had it been death, instead of the beguiling serpent, that had entered their humble mansion, and prostrated their beloved child, their grief and sorrow had been hushed, and their tears dried up long ago. To have laid her in the grave, and embalmed her memory in their tender affections, in their parental bosoms, would have been hailed as a high privilege, a precious boon from heaven, instead of the foul disgrace, the disappointed hopes, and the everlasting reproach under which they must groan, until their hoary heads go down with sorrow to the grave! Behold the grief-worn countenance of that dejected, forlorn, wretched husband! Ah sweet peace and domestic comfort, which once smiled upon his humble abode, and lightened the toils of the day, are gone for ever. The wily serpent, the unsuspected monster in human shape, has unhappily succeeded in alienating the affections, and destroying the fidelity of her who was the desire of his eyes, the wife of his youth. This "poor man had one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: it did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom." It was the partner of his joys, the soother of his sorrows, and the solace of his life. Thrice happy days! had they but continued. But, instigated by the devil, and hurried on

by the force of a base passion, the fell destroyer came. The worst that could happen was success. He *took the poor man's lamb*, and pierced his bosom with many sorrows,—beclouded his moral atmosphere,—embittered his days, and hurried him to the tomb.

Yonder comes the *duellist!* *Honorable* man! he has just slain his brother whom he hated in *honorable* combat! He has, like a bloody savage, shot him through the heart, and hurried him, unprepared, to meet his righteous Judge. Behold what mischief he has done! That happy family whose earthly prosperity under the smiles of an indulgent Providence, depended upon the fostering care and skillful management of an affectionate husband and kind parent, is now beclouded with sorrow, and threatened with poverty. Ah! who can hear the grief-vented sighs, and behold the flowing tears of that new-made widow; who can hear the tender cries of those fatherless children who so lately prattled on a doting parent's knee, but must, with all his soul, for ever execrate the horrid practice, which has its origin from hell, is the fruit of malignity and hatred, having the name of *honor*, falsely so called, and, being fostered by pride and ambition, ends in blood and havoc here, and in eternal perdition hereafter. To this rash, mistaken mortal, his great Creator, his righteous Sovereign says, "Thou shalt not kill!"—"Vengeance is mine." And, moreover, tells him that, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;" and that "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Heaven-daring rebels! who can thus despise their Maker's laws, contemn his authority, assume his right to take vengeance or dispose of life, and in an awful moment, blinded by a mistaken notion of honor, and under the domination of the wicked passions of malice and envy, hatred, ambition, and murder, hurry themselves, stained with each other's blood, before the dread tribunal of their offended Sovereign.

"O shame to men! devil to devil damn'd  
Firm concord holds, men only disagree  
Of creatures rational, though under hope  
Of heav'nly grace: and God proclaiming peace,  
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife,  
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,  
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:  
As if (which might induce them to accord)  
Man had not hellish foes enough beside,  
That, day and night, for his destruction wait."

Finally, *the sinner who destroys his own soul*, awfully verifies the declaration before us. The soul of every man is of incalculable value. This at once appears from the excellency of its nature, the perpetuity of its duration, and the amazing price of its redemption. One single soul outweighs ten thousand worlds, "and twice ten thousand more," and "calls the astonishing magnificence of unintelligent creation poor." "The *eternal* salvation of one soul," says Dr. Doddridge, "is of greater importance, and big with greater events, than the *temporal* salvation of a whole kingdom, though it were for the space of ten thousand ages: because there will come up a point, an instant, in eternity, when that one soul shall have existed as many ages, as all the individuals of a whole kingdom, ranged in close succession, will in the whole have existed in the space of ten thousand ages: Therefore, one soul is capable of a larger share of happiness or misery, throughout an endless eternity, for that will still be before it, more than a whole kingdom is capable of in ten thousand ages." How great, then, is the loss of one soul for ever! The gain of all this world, and ten thousand such, with all their boasted enjoyments, would not indemnify one man for the loss of his soul. So our blessed Savior, who knew the worth of souls, has taught us. (Matt. 16:26.) And yet how many are destroying their souls as fast as they can, by daily transgression, by neglecting the only way of salvation, by pride and self-righteousness, inordinate love of the world, by error and delusion, and the various ways suggested by a depraved heart, and devised by the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not, and leads them captive at his will. But we hasten,

III. To show how the divine apothegm, in the text, is illustrated and verified, in the church of God.

And here the first who meets the eye is *the slothful minister, or idle shepherd*. He is placed as a watchman on the walls of Zion. His duty is to warn the sinner when the sword cometh; to feed the flock over which he hath taken the oversight; to watch for souls, as one who has to give account; to be instant in season and out of season; to nurture and discipline souls for heaven. But in all this he fails. He seeks his own ease, profit, and pleasure. The church languishes and pines away under his hand. His preaching is calculated neither to edify the body of Christ, nor to convert the sinner from the error of his way. Instead of being an ornament to his profession, and a blessing to the world, "he brings his sacred function into reproach, scattering the flock whom he should have gathered, and destroying whom he should have saved." Should he, moreover, be scandalous in his conduct, by intemperance, covetousness, or lewdness, he offends the people of God, hardens the hearts of sinners, brings a reproach upon the ministry, weakens its influence, and proves a stumbling-block to sinners wherever he goes. Such an one is Satan's best friend, and the greatest enemy of God and man. But if a *heretical teacher*, who can tell the good he destroys, by "privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." For, alas! "many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." They "handle the word of God deceitfully;" they "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine of Christ, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Such false teachers ruin many souls by causing them "to depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." Then it is that "they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." The good Lord have mercy on those ministers, who, denying the proper divinity, and real sacrifice of the Son of God, deny "the Lord that bought them!" If these be not "damnable heresies," then where shall we find any? Yet these are industriously taught, and too successfully propagated under the plausible name of *Unitarian*, or the more beguiling and unsuspecting name of *Christian*, assumed by those who are well known in this country to have been long and industriously engaged in disseminating and inculcating the damnable doctrines of Arius and Socinus. One such *reverend sinner*, active, popular, and influential, at the head of a party, a university, or roving through the country, "handling the word of God deceitfully," deceiving the "hearts of the simple, by good words and fair speeches," (See Rom. 16:17, 18,) can destroy more good than a host of candid, open, avowed infidels. The licentious antinomian, likewise, who teaches that the law is no rule of life to believers under the gospel, that nothing is required in man's salvation but faith in Christ, thereby destroying the obligation to good works and holy living; as also the teacher of universal salvation, which destroys all distinction of character—strikes at the root of all experimental religion—confounds all notions of virtue and vice—saps the foundation of morality—takes off every restraint from vice—opens the flood-gates of iniquity—and speaks peace to the wicked; from such teachers may the Lord speedily deliver our land, and from their poisonous errors save the souls of men!

There is likewise the *proud, conceited, ignorant, disputatious sectary*. If the people are awake to the concerns of religion—if they are hungering for the bread of life—if they are desirous to be taught "the good and the right way"—instead of promoting their spiritual interests and the good of the church, he forms parties, stirs up strife, distracts the minds of the simple, weakens the bands of brotherly love, and is made rather a successful instrument of satan to depreciate real Christianity. He fights about matters that are comparatively indifferent; offends the pious of other denominations by misrepresenting and ridiculing their religious sentiments, hardens the hearts of the ungodly, and disgusts the people of God, and caricatures the pulpit, by his indecent, fulsome, ridiculous stories and expressions, designed "to court a grin, when he should woo a soul." In the church, likewise, among its inferior officers and private members, is to be found many a "Hymeneus and Philetus," with their "profane and vain babblings"—"and their word will eat as doth

a canker." Many an "Alexander," to weaken the hands of a pious minister, as "the coppersmith" did St. Paul's, when he did him *much evil*—"for," says he, "he hath greatly withstood our words." Many a contracted, bigoted, imperious, intolerant "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence—prating against" those who are God's servants, and followers of the blessed Savior, "with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would." (3 John 9:10.) Whose cry is "stand by, I am *sounder* than thou"—"The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Who is ready to exclaim—"I only am left"—yes, "they are *few* indeed, if none belong to Christ who do not belong to their party—that do not see with their eyes—or hear with their ears—that sing not with them—that are not dipped with them, or sprinkled with them—that casteth out devils, and yet followeth not them." This abhorred spirit hath done more mischief in the world than can be possibly estimated. "The readiest way in the world," says the excellent Mr. Jay, "to thin heaven and replenish the regions of hell, is to call in the spirit of *bigotry*. This will immediately arraign, and condemn, and execute all that do not bow down and worship the image of *our* idolatry." Such a religion is without judgment, though not without teeth: it bites and devours, and in times past has deluged the church of Christ with the blood of her martyrs! The forbidding sternness of bigotry is yet destroying the peace, the happiness, and the spiritual interests of many. It enters not into the kingdom itself, and others that would go in, it hinders. It not only assumes the authority to dictate, but likewise imposes its dogmas upon others, a wife and children perhaps, under pain of eternal damnation. What a usurpation of power, what an unauthorized stretch of domination is here!

"Let Cæsar's dues be ever paid  
To Cæsar and his throne;  
But *consciencs* and *souls* were made  
To be the Lord's alone!"

May this implacable spirit, whose ignorance and folly are written in characters of blood—whose ensanguined crest has so long been reared to affright the children of men—and whose rash accusations, cruel surmises, and malignant anathemas, have withered and blasted the tender endearments of brotherly love, the fond enjoyments of domestic harmony, and ruined the souls of men, be speedily banished from the earth, to curse the world no more,

"Till joined in Christian fellowship and love,  
*The church on earth shall meet the church above.*"

Time would fail, my brethren, and your patience be exhausted, were we to attempt an enumeration of all the evils occasioned by the unhappy conduct of wicked and mistaken men in the church of God. I shall therefore only mention *the professor that walketh disorderly*. This is a character, alas! too frequently to be met with:—and scarcely is there any one that does greater injury to the church and the souls of men than he. His covetousness, his dishonesty, his lewdness, his intemperance, his inflamed face, and inebriated breath, his carnal conformity to the world—yea, one act of his brings the whole church into disgrace, and makes religion to stink in the very nostrils of those around him. "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me stink amongst the inhabitants of the land, amongst the Canaanites and Perizzites". The disorderly walk and conduct of professors, forms the most popular and successful objection against christianity. 'Tis here the Philistines rejoice, and the uncircumcised triumph. 'Tis here the ungodly laugh, and exclaim, *Ah, so we would have it*. Christianity is stigmatized, and its professors arraigned as hypocrites. The wicked are hardened and emboldened in wickedness, the weak are offended, the saints are dishonored, and the very name of God is blasphemed in the world. See how God himself complains of this in the case of David, (2 Sam. 12: 14.) "Because, by this deed, thou has given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." How great then, must the evil be, when by such conduct a man's own household, and the multitude around him, become discouraged and offended, and set against the very means of salvation!

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**SERMON LXXII.**

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**THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.**

JOHN 6:44 “*No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him.*”

The change, which the Scriptures represent as passing upon every one that becomes a servant of Christ, is radical and thorough. “Born again,” “raised from the dead,” “created in the image of God”—these are the terms used to express its *greatness*. Language not less remarkable and significant is also used to describe the *effects* of this transformation upon our present condition and future destiny. In consequence of it we become “the children of God,” “partakers of the divine nature,” and “heirs of glory.” The interest naturally excited by any wonderful and momentous event, might lead us to examine, how this change is effected. But we are impelled by a much stronger motive, as we learn that ignorance on this subject may draw after it the ruin of the soul. In regard to the way in which our spiritual renovation is effected, there are two opposite errors, each of them fatal—and one or other of them, men are generally inclined to adopt. The one consists in the notion, that the divine agency is not exerted in the conversion of a sinner—the other in the notion, that human agency is entirely superseded. It will be our object to show that there is a union of both these agencies in conversion—that there is a work of God, *the drawing of the soul*; and that there is a work of the sinner—*the coming unto Christ*. **GOD’S AGENCY IS EXERTED IN MAN’S CONVERSION.**

1. *The general drift of Scripture, exhibiting man as dependent on God for all spiritual good, establishes the truth of this doctrine.* Learning and acuteness are valuable for elucidating occasional scriptural difficulties and clearing up occasional obscurities; but these rare gifts are not necessary to an intelligent apprehension of the leading parts communicated in sacred writ. The poor were to have the gos-

pel preached to them. The bible was written for the mass of mankind, and not merely, or even mainly, for the learned and ingenious—it was designed to exhibit to plain and ordinary minds certain great truths, which were to affect the heart and regulate the life. The impression, then, which the current scriptural language, on any particular subject, makes upon the common understandings of the great bulk of readers, must accord with the truth; for it is the impression made by the language of Him, who perfectly understood what conceptions his words would convey—it is the impression which God designed to make. And certainly every one who has ever read the sacred volume, has felt that the general flow of scriptural phraseology tends to produce the belief, that for all spiritual good man is entirely dependent upon God. This belief is forced upon us, by the plain and obvious meaning of the strong and simple expressions pervading every part of the inspired record.

The force of this argument can be fully estimated only in a prayerful and humble perusal of the scriptures. On page after page expressions are found, sometimes crowding upon each other, which, taken collectively, form an accumulating and irresistible body of evidence. Of this evidence our limits permit us to present but a specimen. “Elect through sanctification of the Spirit.\* “Blessed be God—who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again.”† “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.‡ “Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.”§ “Without me,” said the Savior to his disciples, “ye can do nothing.”|| These disciples had been long receiving instruction from the lips of the Son of God, they had, for years enjoyed the benefit of his holy example, they had witnessed his mighty works, and they had themselves been endowed with miraculous powers,—yet with all these unparalleled advantages, they were assured by the Savior, that still they could do nothing without his gracious aid. Could any form of declaration more clearly convey to our minds the idea of the entire dependence of every man on the divine assistance? “When I am weak, then am I strong,”¶ is the declaration of the great apostle of the Gentiles. This man had been miraculously arrested in his career of iniquity, he had been richly imbued with spiritual wisdom, he had taught multitudes the hidden mysteries which God had revealed to him, he had for years endured labors and trials in the service of his Master, he had been long cultivating habits of holiness—yet even he assures us that his strength

\* 1 Pet. 1:2. † 1 Pet. 1:3. ‡ 1 Pet. 1:5. § 1 Pet. 1:22. || John 15:5. ¶ 2 Cor. 12:10.

was found in a consciousness of weakness, and a consequent complete dependence upon God. The greater portion of these ever-occurring expressions, to which we allude, convey the idea, that even the strongest and most experienced *believers* are absolutely dependant on the grace of God for every holy thought, and word, and work—thus teaching more forcibly than by direct declaration, that the *impenitent*, if they ever turn from sin to holiness, must owe their change to a power not their own. When those who have been long emancipated from the slavery of sinful habits, cannot retain their freedom without constant divine assistance, how is it conceivable, that those yet under bondage can ever deliver themselves by their own power? How can those who are “dead in trespasses and sins,” revive, without the divine power quickening them, when, without it, even those who have been already “made alive in Christ,” cannot continue to perform one vital act?

2. *The propriety of prayer to God, on the part of a sinner, involves the truth of this doctrine.* If God, in the gift of his Son and his word, has done for our salvation all that is necessary, and all that he can do, or will do—and if, as it is sometimes said, he has taught us this in his revelation, then the prayer of a sinner for help from God is worse than vain—it is *improper*: it is asking for what he does not need; it is asking for what *cannot* be granted; it is virtually refusing to help himself, when he is fully able to do it; it is virtually reproaching his Maker with a want of liberality. It would be both ungrateful and even disrespectful even to a fellow mortal, to importune him for further assistance, when, after cheerfully, and without solicitation, furnishing us with all necessary means for relieving ourselves from our difficulties, he had assured us that he could do no more. Would not our petitions imply that we thought we had not received enough, and that we did not credit his statement, that he had done all he could? Would it not imply that we expected him to depart from his word, and do for us still more than he had done? If, then, the interposition of God, in our behalf, *could* extend no further than to communicate his word, as soon as we are in possession of that word, there is nothing more for which we can pray—to ask for any thing beyond what we have, would be a folly and a sin. But no one, with the bible before him, can believe that prayer for the divine influence to enlighten his understanding and purify his heart, is unreasonable and criminal. What means the declaration of the Saviour, that our “heavenly Father is more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children?”\* What mean these prayers, which

\* Luke 11:13, and Matt. 8:11.

“holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” offered for themselves and for their brethren, when they asked God to “sanctify them,” “to fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power,” “to give unto them the spirit of wisdom,” and “strengthen them with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”\* These prayers are utterly irreconcilable with the idea, that the gift of his word is all the aid which God can or will impart for our enlightening, renewal, and sanctification. Were an invalid to receive a prescription from a kind and skilful physician, with the assurance that it would infallibly effect his complete restoration to health, would it be a mark of respect towards him who prescribed it, if the patient should regard the remedy as altogether insufficient, and should importune him for further means of recovery? And if God had assured us, that his word alone is sufficient for our salvation, and had placed it in our hands, would it not be a mockery and an insult, to ask him to do aught further either to sanctify or to renew us?

3. *This doctrine is fully established by direct scriptural declarations.* It is taught most clearly in our text. “No man,” says the Son of God, “can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him.” The phrase, “coming unto Christ,” is used, in scripture, as equivalent to *believing on Christ, or receiving his truth into our hearts, and acting on it in our lives.* Here, then, it is declared, that divine influence is necessary to draw us to Christ, or induce us to believe on him to the saving of the soul. This passage is so simple and explicit as to seem, at first sight, incapable of misinterpretation. But ingenuity has attempted to extract from it a meaning which may be consistent with the belief, that God exercises no immediate agency in conversion—that there is no internal influence imparted. “To be drawn of God can only signify,” it is said,† “to be persuaded by the consideration of those mighty works, which God had done to testify that Christ was the true Messiah, or to be moved by the great promise of eternal life.” The Father’s drawing would, then, mean merely Christ’s own drawing by his word and works, and the Savior’s object in uttering these words was to teach the unbelieving Jews that none of them would come to him, unless he persuaded them to come! What information was such an annunciation intended to convey to his hearers? This interpretation would evidently strip the words of our Savior of all point or force. It is also clearly refuted by the design of the declaration, as inferred from the context. The Jews had just expressed their

\* 2 Thess. 1:11. Ephesians 3:14, 19, &c. &c.

† Whitby in loco.

disapprobation of the doctrines he had been delivering. He rebuked them for this conduct—"Murmur not among yourselves." And then, to intimate that he was unaffected by their displeasure and rejection of his truth—that it was what he had expected—he tells them, that his doctrines could not by their intrinsic force secure a reception in the hearts of men, but that those only on whom the Father exerted his influence would become disciples. "It is written," he proceeds, "in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." Another teaching is here declared to be necessary—they would receive the communications of the Savior, only when God had imparted to them his instruction. The teaching of the Father is clearly distinguished from the teaching of the Son—the one is necessary to give efficacy to the other. When, therefore, the Savior affirmed that no man could come to him except the Father drew him, he asserted the necessity in conversion of a divine influence—an influence distinct from that of the mere intrinsic efficacy of the word.

"Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Savior."\* Language could scarcely be conceived, which would be capable of expressing more clearly the fact, that our salvation is to be ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit shed upon us through the merits of the Redeemer. We are here said to be saved by *our renunciation of sin and reliance on Christ for pardon and purification*, (of which the washing in baptism is God's appointed sign or emblem,) and by *the influence of the Holy Spirit changing or renewing our hearts*.

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."† Here the agency of the Spirit, and the agency of the truth, are exhibited as distinct things, though inseparably connected in man's salvation. Each is asserted to be a necessary prerequisite to the attainment of the salvation to which God chooses us.

So great is the power exerted in changing our hearts, that an inspired apostle compares it to the working of that mighty power, which was displayed in raising Christ from the dead, and setting him again at the right hand of the Father. He prays for the Ephesian believers, that they "might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward *who believe* according to the working of his mighty power, which

\* Titus 3:5, 6.

† 2 Thess. 2:13.

he wrought, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places."\*

No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."† As no man influenced by the Spirit of God can speak evil of the Savior; so, the apostle tells us, no man can acknowledge him as the Lord, but by the influence of the same Spirit. Saying that Jesus is the Lord, or confessing the Lord Jesus, is, in the language of the New Testament, equivalent to *professing true faith in him*—and this is here said to be the result of the Spirit's influence.

"And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."‡ The apostle communicated the truth, the Lord wrought upon the heart of the woman, her attention was given to the word, and her salvation followed. The operation of the Lord is here mentioned as something distinct from the truth, and superadded to give it efficacy.

"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."§ The truth presented by even a Paul or Apollos, without the divine influence accompanying its exhibition, is here shown to be unproductive of any good effects.

Thus, the doctrine of God's agency in our conversion, is interwoven with the whole texture of scripture, implied in every act of prayer, and often expressly and unequivocally affirmed by the inspired writers. The objection most frequently urged against it, is, that the free agency of man, which the bible and our own consciousness prove us to possess, would be destroyed by a divine influence upon the soul. But what is the free agency which the bible and our consciousness represent us as possessing. It consists simply in the power of choosing and refusing. Let any one examine his own mind or examine the sacred writings, and see whether either of them shows any thing else, except the possession of a power of choosing and refusing in the view of motives, as necessary to make a man a free and accountable being. Is it not, then, absurd, to represent our free agency as impaired by the action of God on the soul—an action which does not destroy or impede the power of choice, but which only causes us to choose and refuse aright? No one considers our freedom as infringed upon, when *men* influence our choice—when they present motives, inducing us to choose what they approve. Nor is it any more infringed upon, when God influences us to choose what he approves. Our fellow men, indeed, act

\* Eph. 1:19, 20. † 1 Cor. 12:3. ‡ Acts 16:14. § 1 Cor. 3:6.

upon us in one way, our Creator acts upon us in another—they act upon us by an external presentation of motives, *He* acts by an internal communication; but neither mode of action destroys our freedom. God at first organized our bodies and constituted our souls; and when we began to act we must have acted according to the constitution which we received from him. Were we not *then* free agents? Did the fact, that our choices were the result of the constitution he had given, prevent us from being free? The idea, that immediate divine action upon us would deprive us of freedom, would, if correct, prove that the Almighty could never create a free agent. And if he should now exert an influence upon us, as he certainly did when we were created, would such an influence leave us less free than we were, the moment after his creative energy had formed us? It appears strange that men should ever have conceived the wild phantasy, that God, in his action upon his creatures, was limited to the use of such an instrumentality as man is obliged to employ in acting upon his fellows. What can be imagined more weak than the argument, *we cannot act upon men, as long as they are free agents, except by the presentation of motives, therefore God cannot?* Thus to take our power as the measure of omnipotence, is less wise than to hold up a fathom cord as a line that can sound the depths of the ocean. Should we assert that the stars, which the telescope brings within the field of vision, were all the bright orbs which even the eye of omniscience could discern, it would not be more reckless or impious than to look at the extent of human power, and then assert that the Creator can do no more.

But it may be said, we cannot *conceive how* the divine power can act upon the soul. True; nor do we comprehend how he created us. No man can conceive how one disembodied spirit can communicate its thoughts to another. It is beyond the range of our experience and analogies; for now we communicate ideas by the intervention of the material organs of sight and sound. Do we, then, conclude that spirits, without a corporeal organization, cannot communicate with each other? We cannot conceive even *how* the mind acts upon the body. And from the inconceivableness of the mode of this action, some philosophers, acting in the full spirit of this objection to divine influence, *have denied that there was any such action.* They have affirmed that the mind and body of a man do not act upon each other, but only move in harmony, like two independent and well-regulated clocks keeping time together—that there is no more action of the mind on the body with which it now moves in concert, than on the body of one who died before the flood. There is no end to the absurdities which must be

forced upon our belief, if the principle be adopted, that nothing can be done unless we can conceive the mode of operation. This principle would, indeed, not only exclude all divine influence from the soul in conversion, but it would place even the material world beyond the reach of divine power: for we can no more conceive how the energy of Deity acts upon matter, than we can conceive how it acts upon mind. The creation, then, or even the arrangement of matter could never have been a work of God, as the mode of performing such a work is to us utterly incomprehensible.

Thus, we see the fallacy of the only important objections which can be urged in opposition to the strong array of scriptural proof sustaining the doctrine, that divine influence is imparted to man in conversion.

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### SERMON LXIV.

BY JOHN C. YOUNG,  
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JOHN 6:44. "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him."

While we should avoid the destructive error, that man is the sole agent in his own spiritual renovation, we should shun the opposite and equally fatal mistake, that man has nothing to do in this important work. The scriptures represent the influence of the Spirit not as superseding, but securing the action of man; not as destroying, but quickening his powers. We shall proceed, then, to show that HUMAN AGENCY IS EXERTED IN MAN'S CONVERSION.

1. *The instrumentality of the truth in conversion shows, that men are not spiritually renewed without their own exertions.* The inspired writers furnish us with ample proof, that, by God's word as a means, our change is effected. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in (or by) obeying the truth.\* "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God."† The word is here, as in the parable of the sower, represented figuratively as seed which produces the new nature of man. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."‡ "Chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."§ The use of the word of God as means necessarily implies action on the part of man. For this word can only operate

\* 1 Pet. 1:22. † 1 Pet. 1:23. ‡ James 1:18. § 2. Thess. 2:13.

in the operation of the mind. If man, then, does nothing, conversion, by the means which God has appointed, is impossible.

2. *The language used to express what takes place in conversion, shows that the work is not effected without our own agency.* There are found in scripture various phrases, denoting what occurs when a sinner is converted. They all represent the same essential change, but it is represented in its different aspects by different phrases. Thus the fact that a sinner was converted is sometimes expressed, in the sacred writings, by saying, "he believed," sometimes by saying "he repented," sometimes by saying he "received Christ," and sometimes by saying "he came to Christ." All these terms, unequivocally and clearly signify *action*—they indicate *something done by the man*. And we are taught that, unless these terms can be applied to an individual, he is not renewed—unless it can be truly said of him, he has "repented," "believed," "come to Christ," and "received Christ," he is not a new creature. The use of such language, then, is scriptural declaration of the fact of human agency, expressed in the strongest form.

3. *These direct scriptural proofs of man's activity in conversion are corroborated by our observation of the successive changes through which the soul passes, before it is united to Christ.* The fact that there are successive acts of the soul which take place before it has passed from death unto life, does not imply the idea, that a change of heart is necessarily a protracted and slow process. The rapidity of thought and feelings is such as to render it possible for the mind to be the subject of various changes of state, even in a moment. Of the truth of this every one has been often made sensible. There is nothing in the nature of the human mind, which renders it necessary, that a sinner should delay and hesitate before he accepts the mercy of God, and reposes faith in the merits of the Redeemer. And the sudden conversions, recorded as the results of apostolic preaching, show that, when faithful exhibitions of evangelical truth are accompanied by the divine influence, the sinner is not long in turning to Christ.

*A serious concern for its eternal welfare* is, usually, the first act of the soul in coming to Christ—the first effect of the drawing of the Father. From stupidity and false security the sinner awakes to some apprehension of his danger as an enemy of God—he begins to feel that the world beyond the grave is a dread reality. The power of God in producing this effect on the soul, is, as far as we have observed, always connected with the operation of some suitable means. A signal display of God's majesty and power, is often used to arouse the soul from its false repose. The storm, the pestilence, or the earthquake—the

stroke of calamity which paralyses the energies, destroys the hopes, and humbles the pride of man, often compels the sinner, who witnesses it, to behold the terrors of his Judge, and extorts from his lips the cry of the trembling jailer, "what must I do to be saved?" The personal afflictions with which God visits men, are frequently used as the means of exciting forebodings of future wrath. Thus, fetters of iron and the gloom of a dungeon forced even an idolatrous and bloody Manasseh to feel that there was a sin-avenging God, whose hand was upon him. Thus, we sometimes see the stroke of disease, the destruction of property, or the loss of beloved friends, imparting new perceptions to the soul. The special mercies of God, too, often impress us with our first strong sense of accountability. A strikingly undeserved and extraordinary manifestation of the divine kindness often drives the dagger of reflection deep into the bosom, and effectually destroys its false peace. Thus, the condescending visit of the Savior penetrated the heart of Zaccheus, and he found rest only in the renunciation of sin. The holy lives of the followers of the Lord are often the means by which the security of the ungodly is disturbed. They are made to feel that there must be a reality and power in religion, when its effects are so peculiar and decisive—that its objects must possess value, when they induce so much exertion and self-denial. They are harassed with the reasonable reflection that so great a difference of principle and conduct as exists in this life, between them and the righteous, must be followed by a difference of destiny in the life that is to come. But the word of God is the instrument most frequently employed for imparting this first symptom of life to the soul that is dead in sin. In it "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Its simple, solemn, and earnest warnings of a judgment to come fill the mind with forebodings and fears. That these means, however, have not intrinsic power sufficient to break the sleep of the soul, is not only proved by the declarations of holy writ, but might be strongly inferred from the fact that, in many cases, their effects are directly the reverse of those which we have described. Displays of divine power, often furnish occasions for impious levity—personal judgments draw forth blasphemy—signal mercies communicate a stronger sense of security in sin—the faithful conduct of the pious induces a more determined opposition to holiness—and the preaching of the gospel excites rancorous hatred. Thus, the means of life often become "a savor of death unto death."

*A deep conviction of sin is the next feeling, which rises in the soul, after the apprehension of danger.* When the attention is fairly fixed

on God's law, and it is seen requiring perfect purity, and reaching, in its prohibitions and commands, even to the thoughts of the heart; *then* is realized the experience of the apostle, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." There is a clear perception of the mournful fact, that we have been "alienated from the life of God," that we have "walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air," that we have "fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and that we are "children of wrath." The law is seen to be "holy, just, and good," and the holiness of Him against whom we have sinned, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and in whose sight we stand exposed, is flashed upon the soul. The beauty, which the sinner had imagined he saw in his own character, has fled—he sees in it only deformity: his former self-complacency is gone, and he is filled with self-loathing. He feels like one beholding himself for the first time in a glass, after some dreadful disease has swept from his countenance every lineament on which his eye had formerly lingered with pleasure, leaving it seamed and disfigured with hideous and loathsome scars.

*Earnest purposes of amendment follow this conviction of sin.* Not yet sensible of the nature as well as acquired strength of its depravity, the soul determines to eradicate the cause of its self-loathing, by abandoning all its iniquities, and commencing a rigid and thorough course of obedience to God. Vague ideas of the divine mercy encourage also the hope that reformation will, in some way or other, procure pardon for past offences. And conscious that all the sins, which have wrought his degradation, have been voluntary, the sinner imagines, that, for an entire reformation, nothing more is requisite than a firm determination, that he will henceforth abandon them. Under this delusion resolutions are formed, and vows often recorded.

*A sense of entire moral helplessness is soon the result of his purposes of amendment.* Every effort that is made in conformity with his resolutions, shows him their inefficiency as well as his own weakness: he is thus made to feel, that determinations to do good will not change his love of evil and aversion to holiness; and that, though his transgressions are voluntary, it is still as certain, that he will not of himself forsake them, as it is that the Ethiopian will not change his skin, or the leopard his spots. He thus becomes experimentally acquainted with the truth, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," while he loathes his own degradation and vileness, he sees, that still he loves sin too well to forsake it. It is impossible to describe the distress and horror which often seize upon the soul while engaged in this struggle, in its

own strength, for victory over its evil propensities. Convulsed and lashed into a tempest by its conflicting feelings, it still foams out only its own shame. The sinner, when first convinced of the debasing and ruinous consequences of his sinful habits, felt as if it would be easy to shake them off. But now he finds that it is not so. He finds that they are coiled around his soul, in folds that he cannot loosen; and his struggles only make him more sensible of their pressure. This discovery fills him with anguish and dismay. The wrath of God terrifies, and the consciousness of guilt oppresses him; while the hope of deliverance is fast expiring.

The convicted sinner may have passed through all the changes which we have described, and yet even from this point of his progress he may "draw back unto perdition." Like the young ruler in the gospel, who would not sell all that he had and follow Christ, he may only "lack one thing," he may be "not far from the kingdom of God;" and yet he may never enter heaven. For he may resign himself to despair, he may seek relief from distress by embracing destructive error, or he may succeed in silencing all serious thought by the din of business, or in drowning it by draughts of pleasure. But if he will press forward, there remains only another change of feeling, and he becomes an heir of salvation.

*Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, is the act which constitutes him a new creature.* The soul's resignation of itself to the Redeemer arises, under God's grace, from its consciousness of its guilt and helplessness, and its perception of his ability and willingness to save, as well as of the reasonableness and necessity of his terms of mercy. His sufferings for us are seen and confided in, as the only ground of pardon—his grace is seen and depended on, as the only source of strength—and consecration to his service is seen and accepted, as the condition on which he communicates his blessings. Many who are awakened go back to the world, while many others remain long under convictions, before they come to Christ. The causes which produce the criminal delay of the one set, as well as the final impenitency and destruction of the other, are, unwillingness to trust in the merits of the Savior for pardon, or unwillingness to rely on his grace for strength, or unwillingness to renounce all that he prohibits, and engage to fulfill all that he commands. Sometimes the opposition of the sinner to God's plan of salvation appears to spring from one of these feelings, and sometimes from another; while, in some minds, they all appear to co-exist in equal strength, and to exert their joint force in keeping them away from the Savior. These feelings

have a common root from which they spring—the depraved nature of man; yet we can trace the origin of each from a peculiar and distinct principle. We are accustomed, in our intercourse with our fellow-men, to receive benefits, only when we can return some equivalent—our desert or our ability to repay, is the constant measure by which we regulate our expectations. Hence, then, the difficulty of believing, that so great a benefit as the pardon of our sins will be conferred, without any thing on our part to entitle us to it—the mind is slow to conceive of such unmerited kindness. Pride, too, in many minds, increases this difficulty. Further, in our natural condition, forgetful as we are of our dependence on God, we are accustomed to rely, for the success of all our efforts, solely on the strength which we are conscious of possessing. Hence, undertaking what we feel inadequate to perform, and relying on strength to be hereafter imparted, appears to us a strange and unreasonable mode of acting. Again, our affections are naturally fixed on objects which the Savior tells us we must relinquish; we have been long engaged in practices which we know he commands us to renounce; and there are duties that we dislike which we know he enjoins. Hence arises the reluctance to yield ourselves up unreservedly to his control. These feelings are not the less criminal, because we can thus see how they naturally spring up in the mind—our forgetfulness of God and total alienation from him in thought, feeling, and conduct, is the root from which they grow.

The Holy Spirit, in the work of conversion, uses various truths adapted to the removal of the various causes which hinder the awakened soul from coming to Christ, and thus different persons recognize different views of divine truth as the immediate means of their conversion. With some, the glorious character of Christ, with the reasonableness and excellency of his service, has been the view which has produced faith; with others, it has been a view of the fulness and firmness of the promises securing divine aid; while with others, it has been a view of the fitness of the Savior's work to procure pardon and life.

Some important practical lessons may be drawn from this subject. It teaches,

1. *The propriety and duty of cherishing a deep sense of our dependence on God.* The very regularity with which our heavenly Father supplies our natural wants induces, in our atheistic minds, a feeling of independence. We scarcely ever recognize the fact, that our strength, wisdom, and enjoyments are all communicated to us—we feel and act, as if they were self-derived; and thus we live, “without God in the world.” To destroy this false and pernicious impression,

God declares, in the most emphatic terms, that, without his assistance, even the most necessary work which we are ever called upon to undertake—the work to which the strongest motives impel us—the work of our eternal salvation, will remain unaccomplished. Though we can see the means through which he operates upon us, he challenges all the power and glory of the work as his own. The feeling which such a representation is designed to produce, is a deep and abiding sense of dependence on divine aid for our salvation. Without such a sense of dependence, there is no correspondence between our feelings and our true condition. This feeling, then, it is our duty to cherish. While we recognize, with gratitude, the hand that has “begun a good work” in us, we are constantly to look to that hand as needed, to “carry it on unto the end.” Nor is the sense of dependence, thus excited, to be limited, and felt only in reference to the one great work of our salvation. It should be extended, until we feel, that, for every natural as well as for every spiritual act, we must rely on God—until we feel, that God, not only “worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure,” but that “He worketh *all* things according to his will,” and that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” In proportion to the depth and extension of this feeling will be our advancement in holiness.

2. *The necessity of impenitent sinners earnestly seeking help from God.* If they are entirely dependent on Him for salvation; their first and great business unquestionably is, to secure his assistance. In popular governments, where the favor of the people is necessary to raise a man to power, we see the ambitious assiduously courting this favor, by every effort: and in monarchies, where the affection or esteem of the ruler is the sole means of advancement, every exertion is put forth to win his regard. “The children of this world are wise in their generation”—they act on wise principles in seeking to gain their worldly ends; and thus they are not found expecting success, until they labor to secure the prerequisites for its attainment. But men, when acting in spiritual affairs, reverse all the wise principles which they apply in the management of their worldly concerns. We find them often expecting spiritual advancement, even the salvation of their souls, while they use no efforts to secure the indispensable means of its attainment—the assistance of God. The reason why so many, who seek to enter heaven, fail, is, simply, because they do not seek direction from the only true guide; and thus they fatigue themselves with wanderings that lead them farther astray. God has promised his aid, he has

pointed out the way in which it may be secured, and he has declared it to be essential to success; yet it is the last thing which men usually seek for—even those who do secure it, often try first every thing else. We might as well expect to gain a victory by rushing into a conflict unarmed, or with weapons that would shiver at the first blow, as expect to come off conquerors in the spiritual contest without first receiving the armor which God only can furnish.

It has been sometimes imagined, that sinners have nothing to do but wait, until God shall convert them. Not a solitary declaration of the inspired word countenances such an idea. We are taught to wait upon the Lord, by earnestly seeking that aid which he is ever ready to bestow, and attempting, *at the same time*, with all our might, to discharge every *duty which he has enjoined*. How did David act, when he depended on God to deliver into his feeble hand the champion, who had defied the armies of Israel? Did he wait, until he saw the gigantic Philistine prostrated upon the earth by the stroke of the Almighty? No: he asked earnestly for the divine assistance, and went forward confidently to the battle. When the Savior commanded the invalid to stretch forth his withered arm, did the sufferer wait, without an effort, until he felt that strength had returned to his diseased limb? No: in obedience to the command, he made the effort, and his arm was healed. "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," was the prayer of the Psalmist—but he did not refrain from looking into God's law, until he felt that his eyes had been already opened. He expected that while reading and trying to comprehend the oracles of truth, God would enlighten him. And thus must the sinner act, if he would receive help from on high. He must both seek divine assistance by earnest supplication, and must go forward in the discharge of all his duties, relying on the aid which he has sought. "Ask and ye shall receive," is the assurance of the Savior to every sinner; and he has, if possible, strengthened it still further, by declaring that our heavenly Father is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him for it, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.\* The doctrine of divine efficiency in the work of salvation was revealed, not to prevent, but to encourage our own exertions. When we attempt to rise to purity and obedience by our own energies, the conviction of our weakness, produced by invariable failure, would soon induce despair of any amendment, and all exertion would be abandoned as hopeless, were it not for the assurance which this doctrine conveys, that there is help for us in God. This stimu-

\* Luke 11:13.

lates to renewed and better-directed effort. It would, indeed, be a matter of perfect indifference what a sinner believed, if he had nothing to do in the work of his own salvation. Why should he be taught, that grace is needed to change his heart, if the knowledge of this truth is adapted merely to lull him into a more profound inactivity and repose? God's full and careful communication of the fact of his dependence, teaches the sinner his first great duty, and it should excite him to fulfil it.

3. *The danger of delay in seeking divine aid.* If we are dependent on God's assistance for changing our hearts, his abandonment of us must seal us up to perpetual impenitency and unbelief. He has warned us of the danger of resisting his Spirit. He has warned us, that we may provoke him to withdraw from us forever. "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"—"he is joined to his idols, let him alone," are sentences which have often gone out against others; and until we have obeyed the admonitions of the Holy Spirit, we can never be secure that they will not be pronounced against us. If the Spirit has striven with us through the workings of our conscience, and we have resisted, and have striven against him by putting off to some future day a compliance with his suggestions, we are in great danger of his deserting us forever. "Strive, then, to enter in at the straight gate." Stop not to determine how your working can be reconciled with the truth that God must "work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Were you pursued by an enemy with a drawn sword, you would not stay your flight to determine how your exertions could be reconciled with the fact that strength had to be communicated from God at every step. You would feel that it was no time for speculation—you would fly, and as you fled you would pray. But remember that the sword of divine justice, which is now pursuing you, is more terrific than any weapon formed by the hand of man—where it strikes, it slays the soul. It may reach you in a moment—will you then stop and expose yourself to destruction? Determine *now* to abandon all your sins, pray to God for his assistance, trust Him for strength to fulfil your resolutions, and devote yourself unreservedly to that Redeemer who has bought you with his precious blood. Then shall the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you.

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**SERMON LXV.**

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**INSTITUTION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.**

1. COR. 9:14 *“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”*

It has often been asked with anxiety, why has the church been so slow in extending the influence of divine truth throughout the world? When our Savior ascended to heaven he left a commission binding the whole church, to go “and preach the gospel to every creature,” and the prophecies of Scripture assure us, that the time will come, when all nations shall be brought into the church; and why is it, then, that for eighteen hundred years, the church has made so little progress?

Sometimes this whole subject has been resolved into the sovereignty of God; God has his “set times to favor Zion.” There can be no doubt, that a belief in divine sovereignty, and a constant dependence upon it, is one of the most important exercises of religion, and whenever a church loses its disposition to look to God for all its success, its efficiency will be crippled; still, however, it will not do to resolve this subject into divine sovereignty in such a manner, as to excuse the deficiency of the church. God has appointed means—has promised his blessing upon them, and whenever these means are faithfully used, the prosperity of religion is to be expected.

When the church shall arise, in the true spirit of Christian obedience, to search out her errors by comparing her practice with the word of God, and with a determination to reform whatever may be found amiss, we may then believe, that “the set time to favor Zion,” and to make her a praise in the earth, is come. And such an examination is one of our most important duties in the present day. We have every reason to believe that whenever the prosperity of the church falls below what the promises of Scripture would teach us to expect, there is something wrong in the church herself, from which she ought to be purified—something which has offended God, and caused the Holy Spirit to forsake her.

In reviewing the history of former times, we think we can see causes in every age and century, which in a Scriptural view, were sufficient to prevent the prosperity of religion. Paul tells us, that in his time the mystery of iniquity had begun to work; and in subsequent periods the

church was almost entirely overspread by the spirit and corruptions of the world. Indeed, in surveying the history of the church generally, with the exception of a short period during the reformation, the causes of the church's spiritual weakness and decay is most apparent in the corruptions of the church itself; and we are not tempted to wonder why God did not bless her with a more remarkable prosperity: the cause of wonder rather is, that a merciful God should have sustained her in existence at all.

But it is easier to see the errors of former times, especially when they have been condemned and laid aside, than to see the errors of our own times. We cannot always see ourselves as others see us, and the errors which are near ourselves are concealed by the same causes of delusion. It is not my intention to go into a general enumeration of the errors which may exist in our own denomination, and prevent its prosperity; our text will turn our attention to one matter of prime importance, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Now if it be asked, why is the preaching of the gospel of so little efficacy, or why its success so much below what we would hope and desire? it would seem to be a pertinent, and at the same time a mortifying answer, that the great ordinance of God which relates immediately to the ministry of the gospel is too much neglected; is overlooked and trampled on by the church. In treating this subject I shall,

**I. GIVE SOME EXPLANATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF GOD AS TO THE INSTITUTION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.**

**II. MAKE SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE AND THE MEANS OF SUSTAINING THAT INSTITUTION.**

In the first place, then, I shall give some explanation of the appointment of God as to the institution of the gospel ministry. In this place it is not my intention to discuss the subject of the ministry at large, and to show its different bearings on the church. The text turns our attention principally to *one point*—the separation of the ministry from secular occupations. And for this circumstance, or for this part of the ordinance, the apostle draws his authority from the Old Testament dispensation. He informs us that in *this respect*, the will of God is the same in all ages of the church. "Do you not know," says he, "that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." This mode of exhibiting the subject seems to give it a double claim on the attention of the church, as it establishes the truth by a twofold sanction. The matter is first propounded on the authority of Moses and the Prophets, and then established by Paul, with the authority of an inspired apostle. And the apostle does not even leave the subject here; he gives it a further confirmation, by a moral argument, which addresses itself to the feelings of justice in every human mind. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things," says he, "is it a

great thing if we reap your carnal things." This is an argument of special force, an argument drawn from a comparison of the greater with the less. If the minister had conferred only a temporal favor, justice could not have withheld the remuneration. But spiritual advantages were conferred—advantages which outweigh temporal things as eternity outweighs time, and how then would the receiver hesitate to make a suitable return? The hearer of the gospel, after the best return he can make, is still a debtor. Paul says to one of his converts, "thou owest me even thy ownself;" this is the ground on which the apostle's argument places the claim of those who sow to us spiritual things. In point of justice it gives a claim, compared to which, other claims appear insignificant. But if the faithful minister should sometimes find this claim withheld, even to his embarrassment and distress, let him not be discouraged; he serves the Lord Christ, and his reward will not always be withheld.

Under the Old Testament economy, to which the apostle refers us, the separation of religious teachers from secular pursuits, was as complete as divine arrangements without miracles could make it. God says expressly to the tribe of Levi, "I will give you no inheritance among your brethren, the Lord God is your inheritance." This, when applied to the gospel ministry, is not only full of encouragement and beauty, but it shows infinite wisdom in arranging the plans of the church. The teacher of religion is not to be secularized; even his constitutional feelings, and natural desires for property, are to be consecrated, and turned into a holy channel. "The Lord God is his inheritance"—the prosperity of the church is his prosperity. What wiser provision could have been made to save the ministry and the church from that most baneful of all principles, a worldly spirit—a spirit which in our day is destroying the very vitals of religion?

In the first epistle to Timothy, 4th chap. and 15th verse, the apostle lays this injunction on his disciple and fellow laborer, "Meditate on these things and give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." And towards the close of the second epistle, he charges him, "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to preach the word; be instant in season and out of season." It appears from this, that if the rule of ministerial duty is the same for all who sustain the sacred office that it was for Timothy, entire and unreserved devotedness to the work is required.

The directions which our Savior gave to the apostles and seventy disciples, when he sent them forth to preach, is expressly to the same point. In the tenth of Luke we have his instructions to the seventy disciples, "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way." The admonition, to salute no man by the way, or to spend no time in useless salutations, shows the intensity with which they were bound to give themselves to their sacred employment, and the injunction to carry no raiment or provision which was not of immediate use, is given on the principle, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." When any house or city should receive those disciples, they were to exercise their ministry among the people: "But into whatsoever city ye enter and they receive you not, go your ways out into

the streets of the same and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, do we wipe off against you. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable in that day, for Sodom than for that city." A very important question here presses on the mind—what does our Savior mean by the receiving or not receiving of his disciples? Does he mean that the people were bound to receive them, according to their ability, on the principle that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," and that those who do not so receive them, incur the guilt of rejecting them? This question places the subject in a very serious light; there may be much more guilt than is generally imagined, in those parts of the church where the clergy are much secularized, and without any necessity, turned into mere farmers and teachers.

If the separation of religious teachers, from worldly employments, is to be as complete in the gospel church, as it was under the law, which is certainly the apostle's argument, it will then follow, that the commands, threatenings, and promises of the Old Testament writers, respecting the maintenance of religious ordinances, are still in force, when applied in accordance with the change of circumstances. It must be recollected, however, that the law is always spoken of in comparison with the gospel as a burdensome dispensation. For supporting their different religious services, the Jews or Israelites gave a double tithe, and the first fruits of all their produce, amounting altogether to more than twenty per cent. on their annual income. Much less than this, or less than the half of this, would place our clergy in a situation to devote themselves entirely to this sacred calling, and would also give energy to all the other institutions of the church.

To prevent misconstruction on this subject, I think it necessary to observe, that when I speak of separating the clergy from temporal avocations, I would not, as has sometimes been done, pronounce it wrong for a minister to live on a farm. In country places, such arrangements might be made on a farm as would leave a clergyman as much liberty to attend to the duties of his calling, as he could enjoy in any other situation; the common marketing for a family, living without a farm, would probably produce more embarrassment. I would also think it rash to assert, that it was in all cases criminal for a minister of the gospel to teach a school. A minister is not, by his office, released from the obligation to "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" and from Paul's example we infer, that he may be thrown into a place, which duty does not require him to leave, but in which he is called upon to minister to his own necessities; and in such a situation, perhaps a school would be the best expedient which he could adopt. And above all things, I should deprecate any attempts for the reformation of our present errors, which went to remove the clergy from the superintendence of our colleges and literary institutions; a college is perhaps one of the best fields for pastoral usefulness.

But whilst I admit the propriety of the things just mentioned, I think the Bible clearly shows, what the will of God requires, as to the institution of the gospel ministry. It appears to me that the separation of religious teachers from worldly avocations, where it can be effected, is as much the law of the Christian as it was of the Mosaic dispensation;

and that the contrary practice is as plainly forbidden, as ecclesiastical tyranny, or religious persecution. The error of the Romanist consists in yielding too much to the unscriptural demands of the church; in departing from that system, we have gone into the contrary extreme, and given too little. They destroyed religion by a superstitious profusion; we have greatly injured it by an excess of parsimony; the rule of the Bible, is in direct opposition to both extremes. I remarked before, that it is much easier to see the errors of distant ages, than of our own times; perhaps a period may come, in which the church may view our mistakes and infatuations, with the same kind of wonder which we bestow on the mistakes of the dark ages. I shall now proceed,

## II. TO MAKE SOME OBSERVATIONS, ON THE IMPORTANCE, AND THE MEANS OF SUSTAINING THE SCRIPTURAL INSTITUTION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

My first observation as to the importance of sustaining the divine institution, is simply this, that it is and must be the only way in which we can please God. God, of his infinite mercy, has given us a church and a ministry—has established rules for conducting the ministry; and in all this he has not been trifling with us, nor does he allow us to trifle with him; and to follow out the divine appointment in this matter is the only way in which we can please God. This is an argument for duty superior to all others, for it comprehends every thing. Unless we act so as to please God, the church or the ministry can be no blessing to us. All the promises of God are made to those who walk in his ways; who take their rules of duty from his word, and if we willingly depart from the plain directions of his word, the promises are forfeited.

These observations are the more applicable, from the consideration, that the institution of the ministry is the most important organ of the church. The preaching of the gospel by the living voice of a faithful and able ministry, is the great appointed means of forming and edifying the churches. It is plain from the history of past times, that the ministry will always impress its character on the churches under its care. If the ministry be faithful and holy the church will be pure; if the ministry falls into heresy, the church will be corrupted; if the clergy be lukewarm the people will be formal; and if worldly minded, the people will be covetous. The high importance of the ministry to the church—its natural tendency to spread its influence through the whole body and conform every thing to itself, is no doubt the reason, why God has given such plain directions for the management of this institution, and for keeping the clergy, as a consecrated order, devoted to himself and to his work; but in the extent to which our ministry has been secularized, there has been a sad departure from the plans of infinite wisdom.

In the next place, I will observe, that the importance of sustaining this institution, appears from its adaptation to the circumstances of the case. The ministerial services of a congregation will give full employment to the time of a pastor; and no material deduction can be made from those services, without serious injury to the cause of reli-

gion. President Davies said it cost him four days hard study to prepare a good sermon; other distinguished writers have assigned a much larger portion of time to this work. But I suppose that those writers contemplated the preparation of a finished sermon for the press; for it is manifest that a minister who officiates frequently in the week, cannot devote so much time to each portion of service. It is, however, very important, that a preacher should, as far as possible, avoid the habit of serving God with what costs him nothing. A minister by one day's study on his subject, may exhibit the truth so as to instruct and impress, without attending to the finer ornaments of language; and such discourses will be very different from mere unpremeditated harangues.

I would think it a good general rule, for a pastor to give something more than half, perhaps two-thirds of his time, to reading and study, and one-third to pastoral visits and catechetical instruction. In this way he might hope, under the blessing of God, to maintain the interest of his labors in the pulpit, and to keep alive the spirit of religious inquiry and improvement among his people. But if this system be broken up, by the necessity of temporal avocations on the part of the minister, catechetical instruction will be in a great measure lost, Bible classes and Sunday schools will languish, or die, and the whole machinery of the church be deranged. And if a minister comes frequently into the pulpit with little or no preparation, common place sentiment and repetition will characterize his preaching; the attendance of thoughtless people will cease, and those who do attend will be but little benefited.

It appears, then, that according to human calculation, no plan is so favorable to the prosperity of the church as the plan of infinite wisdom: "God has ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." If the minister must give half his time to temporal occupations, the half of his ministerial labors are lost to the church. But this is not all; secular employments will secularize his own mind, and he and the people together will fall into a worldly spirit. If we would reason about the church as we do about any other concern, it would certainly not be too much to assert, that our departure from the appointment of God, in this particular, has cost the church one half of the prosperity which otherwise it might have obtained. The apostle says the church is "God's husbandry;"—if the husbandman should withdraw half his time and attention from his employment, we would expect a failure in his business, in the full proportion of that deficiency, and I do not see that the Scriptures authorize us to reason in any other way in spiritual things.

It will hardly be objected, that this view of the matter, is inconsistent with just notions of divine sovereignty. Divine sovereignty never supersedes the use of means, and the Scriptures teach us to believe, that means will be blest, in proportion as they are faithfully and diligently used; the man who prays but little, cannot expect as great a blessing as he who is much in prayer; the minister who is sometimes faithful, and sometimes indolent, will not be as successful, as he who is "instant in season and out of season;" if Paul was the most efficient

of the apostles, he also "labored more abundantly than they all." Indeed by secularizing the clergy, and robbing the church of half their services, I see no reason to suppose, that we have not robbed it of half its prosperity and spiritual riches; and to this we must annex the additional consideration, that in secularizing the clergy, we have violated the plain appointment of God and made ourselves liable to his displeasure. This whole subject must have, to every Christian, a very serious aspect, we shall never understand it fully till we witness the decisions of the final judgment. How many souls may be lost; and how many branches of christian families may be cut off, by this neglect? Surely these considerations should awaken the church to the adoption of efficacious measures for correcting our error, and of separating the clergy from temporal occupations.

To this purpose, the remaining part of this discourse shall be principally directed. As many parts of the church have greatly departed from the institution of heaven, the first thing, in the order of means for our recovery, is to ascertain whose fault has occasioned this departure, or where does our blame lie? Does it lie on some particular part of the body, or does the guilt of it involve the whole church? My opinion is, that the guilt extends to the whole church, involving both the clergy and the laity.

Any thing which implies a reprehension of the clergy, ought to be approached with tenderness, both on account of the office, and on account of the general character of the men. Perhaps few periods of the church, since the primitive age, have been blessed with a more upright and devoted clergy, than that with which we have been favored. Our clergy in general have been men of zeal and self-denial, and have taken the lead in all the personal sacrifices which the interest of the church required.

When a youth, I was acquainted with four young men, who finished their collegiate education about the same time, perhaps in the same class. Three of those men went into the ministry; the fourth, and the least talented of the whole, devoted himself to the law. Some years afterwards, I had an opportunity of observing their situation, and I learned that the lawyer was in the habit of receiving as much compensation for the management of one case, as either of the clergymen received for the services of a whole year. And this was not a special case; any young man of talents, at that day, who went into the ministry made similar sacrifices; the lucrative professions were not then full, and any young man of talents and education, who entered them was sure of an immediate emolument. This then furnishes an example of self-denial on the part of the Presbyterian clergy, which will not easily find a parallel in our age, or in any age. The Jews were required by their law, to tithe twice and give their first fruits, which amounted to above twenty per cent. on their annual income; these men prospectively, gave many times the amount of their income.

If it then be asked, in what respect are such clergymen chargeable with that perversion of the *ordinance of God*, which has led to the secularization of their office? I answer, that they have yielded to a natural, but at the same time mistaken delicacy, which has prevented

the instruction of the church in its duty. When forced upon their farms and schools, they retired in silence. Paul did not act in this way; he was sometimes obliged to labor with his hands, when preaching the gospel; this was generally in heathen cities, before churches were established; but it sometimes happened in other places: but he always informed the churches of their duty, and of the guilt they would incur if they neglected it. Had Paul retired silently when the parsimony of the churches threw him upon his own resources, without warning them as to what the appointment of God required, the injury to religion would have been immense; and ministers of the gospel are as much bound, as he was, to declare the whole counsel of God.

Perhaps it may be thought, that the duty of ministerial support, is so plainly laid down in the Scriptures, that preaching on the subject is unnecessary. But what is the object of preaching, if it be not to enforce the truth of Scripture? If a mere written revelation were sufficient for the edification of the church, the institution of the ministry would have been comparatively useless. It is well known, that truths may be plainly revealed in the Bible, which if not enforced from the pulpit, and brought into general practice, may be long unknown and disregarded by the church. The duty of religious toleration, seems to be as plainly revealed in the New Testament as any duty could be, and yet its obligation was not felt, nor the duty itself understood, till about two hundred years ago.

The duty of separating the clergy from worldly employments has, I think, never been fully set upon the church. The office of a pastor has been thought an easy office; and that about one-half of a minister's time was sufficient for the performance of its duties. Those clergymen whose salaries were competent to relieve them from worldly avocations, have not performed more pastoral services than those who gave half their time to farms or schools, and therefore the church has never understood the advantages of a ministry wholly consecrated to their work. These are evils which none but the clergy have power to rectify, and the best mode of rectifying them, is by an unreserved devotedness to the sacred work, so far as health and temporal necessities do not prevent. In former times when ministers gave but half their time to pastoral labors, the people gave them about half a support, and perhaps, they did not think that more was required, on the principle that "the laborer was worthy of his hire."

The man who enters the sacred office, should have his worldly affections, even more mortified, than those of other-Christians. "The Lord God is his inheritance;" the prosperity of the church, is his prosperity. A minister may be rich by inheritance, but the sacred office is not the place for acquiring a fortune. I have never known a minister indulge the love of the world, without manifest injury both to his usefulness and his temporal happiness.

It is no doubt a delicate matter for a minister to instruct the people, on the importance of ministerial support; but Paul did so, and it is a part of the "counsel of God" vastly too important to be kept back. The duty should be performed with prudence and affection, and without any feelings of personal resentment, because his own claim might have

been withheld. The whole body of the clergy should unite in taking a temperate stand on this subject; and after all, diligent devotedness by the clergy to pastoral duties, will have the greatest power in the enforcement of their claim.

I shall now proceed to address some considerations to the attention of the people. This is a very important part of the subject. If we are to succeed in reforming the church, and in obtaining a holy ministry, consecrated to their work, as the word of God requires, the agency of the people is indispensably necessary for that effect. The first thing to be attained on this point is, to lead the people to estimate the ministerial office, as becomes Christians. The office in itself is certainly of the highest importance. It has God for its author, and the salvation of the soul for its end. It is therefore of superior importance to any other office in the world.

Unworthy or degrading views of this office is one of the worst symptoms of the church in the present day, and stand connected with the secularization of the ministry both as cause and effect. The existence of such views is manifest in many places from the small number of young men who seek the office, and from the fact that many professors of religion would rather see their sons in other employments. This indicates a spirit which ought to alarm us. When that office is undervalued, which God has placed at the head of every thing which he holds dear on the earth, God himself is insulted, and his authority undervalued. The son of a Scottish nobleman in the last age, determined to enter the gospel ministry. His father opposed the plan, as tending to degrade his family; the young man respectfully replied, "Sir, the office cannot degrade your family; the great God had but one Son, and he made him a minister of the gospel." The sentiment contained in this reply deserves the attention of many professors in the present day.

Could the church be brought to a right estimate of the gospel ministry, I should then hope that a reformation as to other errors might take place. I would think it not very difficult to convince the people, that the word of God required the ministry to be separated from worldly avocations; nor would I despair of seeing a strong desire excited in the pious, for the accomplishment of that object. I believe the principal difficulty will arise from the discouragement, which may be produced in many minds from the mere mention of the subject. Some will at once exclaim, that in many places, to support the ministry without a dependence on temporal avocations, is impossible. To this reply, that when such is the case, it will not be required; for God in such cases never requires impossibilities. Let the people cheerfully and perseveringly perform their duties to a reasonable extent, and if not able to perform all that they could wish, yet they have reason to believe that God will not forsake them. It is only when duty is neglected; *when the rich professors give no more than the poor*; and when the whole business of clerical support is almost forgotten by the body of the people, that I apprehend the displeasure of heaven will rest upon our churches.

Some will think it impossible to bring the people to combined action

on this point. This I believe is a mistake. Where there are any just feelings of piety in a church, I have no doubt, that the timely and vigilant agency of the eldership, and of other influential professors would make a very great change in the state of affairs. If indeed a few men in every religious community, would give a small portion of their time, to the business of raising a competent clerical support, with the same diligence and spirit with which they manage their own affairs, I have no doubt the clergy might be devoted to their office, and that their efficiency would be doubled in many of our churches. I once knew an elder, who without much trouble, by attending to every thing in the proper time, kept the affairs of a congregation in good order for fifteen years. After his death, when the business passed into other hands, which appeared even more competent, pecuniary matters, for want of attention, sunk into irretrievable confusion. *Timely and persevering* attention on the part of a *few* men will do wonders in this respect, in almost any congregation, and without that attention the best congregations will prove greatly deficient.

I think it very important that the pious should understand how much may be done by the activity of a few men. I have known churches, who were on the point of expiring in a pecuniary view, revived and brought into a flourishing state by the exertions of a few members, who were not able to bestow large sums of money, but who excited the people to simultaneous action. I have known a few individuals, raise a competent support for the ordinances of religion, in communities where there was almost no church when their efforts commenced. People of the world often take it kindly, to be invited, in a friendly manner, to assist in supporting the ordinances of religion in their neighborhood, and great numbers have first been induced, in that way, to attend the house of God, who have afterwards become religious men. Those who have never made the attempt, know not how far they might succeed in exciting a general disposition to support the service of God. And surely such attempts ought to be made. We have seen how much the church has lost of its prosperity, by robbing it of half its clerical labors, and that at a time, when every Christian is lamenting that "the laborers are few." How can the church pray "the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into the harvest," if she does not take measures, for having those already in the harvest, devoted to the work? It ought also to be remembered and felt, that no duty is more important, than to hold up the hands of the ministry. The ministry is the appointed organ, on which the power of the church is to be concentrated, and through which it must send forth all its energy for subduing the world to Christ.

For feeble churches there are many remedies. In some places where they are not able to give a competent salary in money, the people supply the deficiency by presents, which enables the pastor to devote himself to his work. In other cases it might be expedient for two or more churches to unite under the care of one minister. This plan would require an efficient eldership; for the people ought to meet on their vacant Sabbaths, to keep their Sunday schools in operation, and to unite in social worship; and surely an eldership competent for this purpose

might be found; and the people might expect more benefit, from the labors of a man, whom they would have less frequently, but whose heart was in the work, than from the more frequent services of one, whose heart was chilled by the labor and cares of the world.

I will observe, in the next place, that a system of well regulated economy must be adopted by Christians, before the church can perform its duty. If the love of fashion and show be indulged, it will waste the resources of the most prosperous communities, and leave nothing for the service of God; but under a system of decent and prudent retrenchment, the church may prosper in temporal things, and perform its religious duty at the same time. The Jews must have regarded their expenditures carefully, when they gave more than *twenty per cent.* of their income to the service of religion; and yet when they lived in conformity with this law, they were the most prosperous people in the world. What retrenchments could be made, most consistently with comfort, I shall not attempt to explain. It is thought by many, that the ardent spirits consumed some years ago, in the nation, perhaps in the church, *caused more expense than all the institutions of religion required.* Certain ornaments of dress, and luxuries of the table, might be greatly abridged, without any diminution of either comfort or health. A system of this kind, taken up by general consent, would save more in almost any community, than would be necessary to free the man who watched for their souls, from secular cares.

To enforce the duty which I have aimed to illustrate in this discourse I shall urge but one motive. That is a motive which every Christian will cordially feel, and which can be felt by none but the Christian;—it is the prosperity of Zion. Wherever the clergy are withdrawn half their time to secular employments, the church is deprived of half its ministerial services, and no doubt of half its prosperity; and I believe the evil would be in a great measure removed, if the clergy would manifest a strong desire to consecrate themselves wholly to their work; and if the eldership, and a few active laymen, would give a small portion of their time to the resources of the church, in the same spirit with which they manage their temporal business. United action, both on the part of the clergy and the laity, will be necessary to effect this object.

To present the matter in another view, I would request every church to inquire for what purpose it employs a minister? The Scripture says it is to watch for their souls; but perhaps, whilst the watchman is necessarily busy about others things the object of that watchfulness may be greatly injured, or lost; and who will recompense that loss? If thirty years ago, the church had taken a Scriptural view of this subject and acted upon it, how different would have been its condition at the present day? and may I not add, how different the condition of multitudes who have gone to eternity? There may be other things, much overlooked, of great importance to religion; but I confess, I can think of nothing, of more vital interest, than the separation of the clergy from temporal avocations, and the entire consecration of them to that field of labor to which God has called them. I do not wish to free the clergy from worldly cares, that their lives may be pleasant

and easy; I wish it to be done that the ordinance of God may be obeyed, and that the church may have the undivided benefit of their labors.

There are some things in the present day which encourage a hope, that this reformation may be effected. Many of the clergy are disposed to raise the standard of ministerial duty, and to give themselves unreservedly to the sanctuary of God; and in some places the people seem to be determined, that their pastors shall not be obstructed, in the execution of this holy resolution. Should this spirit be extended, the churches are certainly able to do more than they have heretofore done. It is a fact worthy of consideration, that there has never been a civilized people on the earth, whether Heathens, Jews, Mohammedans, or Christians, who did not give incomparably more for their religious ordinances, than is given by the people of the United States. The rites of the Heathen were probably more expensive than those of the Jews. The Jews considered their first fruits, which was discretionary as to its amount, as a mere pittance in comparison with their other contributions; and yet under this article alone, liberal men gave a thirtieth of their annual produce, and even those who gave grudgingly, or with an "*evil eye*," contributed a fiftieth or sixtieth part. There are many professors in our churches, who do not give to the ordinances of religion even this last amount. This will undoubtedly show, the *possibility* of an arrangement, which will enable those "who preach the gospel to live of the gospel."

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## SERMON LXVI.

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### THE RELATION WHICH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH SUSTAINS TO TRUTH.

1 TIMOTHY, 3:15. "*The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*"

The Christian church is a divinely constituted society. By this assumption, I desire not to involve myself in a controversy, about forms of ecclesiastical polity. Variety in forms does not destroy the enduring essence of the church; for the essence we claim a divine origin, while we are prepared to ascribe a great deal, which is found in all our forms of church government, to a human origin. The language of the text is sufficient to establish the heavenly descent of the Christian church. It is called "the House (or household) of God"—"the church of the living God." These expressions imply, that God is the Author, Head, and Proprietor of the church. Within it his family reside; over it he exercises authority; it belongs to him.

Is not civil society also of divine origin? Under certain limitations we believe it is. Human nature is the work of divine power and wisdom. The social principle belongs to our nature; and civil government arises out of the increase of our species, the wants and conveniences of our nature. Political associations are, abstractly considered, in accordance with the will of God. But the church occupies higher ground. She owes her origin to special revelation. She appears, not as the offspring of natural wants in a constantly increasing race, but as the offspring of a special system of redemption through a divine Redeemer. The church is founded upon mediation; the rites, laws, customs, and objects of the church, all centre in Christ. As mediation is a special system, adapted to a peculiar state of things in the divine government; so the great moral association, called the church, is peculiar in its character and divine in its origin.

Divine wisdom and goodness appear in the organization of the church. It is a blessing to those who live within its pale; and extensively beneficial to those who do not. To illustrate this position fully, would enlarge our field of observation beyond the limits of this discourse. I shall contract my remarks to one department of this extended subject. The point from which I propose to view the subject is brought out in the text—"The church of the living God, *the pillar and ground of the truth.*" I will briefly illustrate *the relation which the Christian church sustains to TRUTH.*

All men speak in praise of *truth*. All profess to love and seek truth. In the abstract no one will own himself a foe to it. Even those who in works deny the truth, in words applaud it. If, then, I can prove the church to be the pillar and ground of truth; those who love truth must love the church. The language of our text is figurative; the figure is borrowed from the fine art of architecture. The ground, basis or foundation, is that on which an edifice is placed and remains. A good foundation must be solid and durable.

Pillars are used both for ornament and for service. For service; because they support different parts of buildings, both within and without the walls. For ornament; as will appear to any one who studies the different orders of architecture; or examines a fine building, which has been erected conformably to art. As pillars serve the double purpose of use and ornament; so they require to be strong, symmetrical, graceful, and adorned. The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth; or *the support and ornament of truth*. This needs proof or at least illustration.

I. Look at the influence of the Christian church upon general knowledge. Take a map of the world; draw a pencil mark around the church. Tell me, what is all the knowledge worth that lies exterior to that line? What is done to enlarge and perfect knowledge or to diffuse it among the people? Are you a lover of Philology? The Christian church preserved the classics of Antiquity. The missionaries of the church are now studying the languages of all nations and revealing the literature of the most ancient and enlightened kingdoms to the scholars of Christendom. Do you take delight in Geography, in Natural History, in the history of manners, customs, and civil constitu-

tions? On all these subjects, the church, by her self-denying missionaries, has thrown a flood of light. We do not expect the philosopher—the mere worldly philanthropist to peril his life in visiting savage nations for the enlargement of knowledge or the melioration of the heathen. No: a higher motive must operate; that motive is found in our religion. The primary object of the missionary enterprize is to spread our religion. But its reflex influence is, the enlargement of our own knowledge.

Within the pale of the church, science and useful knowledge increase about in the same ratio with the prosperity of true religion. Education finds its most efficient patron in the church. Religious people make efforts to educate their children; and by charitable institutions, bring the means of knowledge within the reach of the poor. Read the history of the past; observe the state of education at present; and say, is not the Christian church “the pillar and ground” of general knowledge. How chimerical are the fears of those who tremble for the well-being of science, because clergymen and other religious persons engross so large a share in the management of schools and literary institutions? True science has nothing to fear from true religion. “Wisdom is justified of her children.” What would become of literature and science if the Christian church were now abolished? If you bury the church, you will very soon be called to perform the same sad office to science; as it was with Sapphira, those who interred her husband but just returned in time to inter her. So will it be with science and the church. I have not forgotten the restrictions which the Romish church imposed in former ages, upon free inquiry and rational studies. But these ecclesiastical dignitaries, who imprisoned astronomers and persecuted philosophers, were not more the disgrace of science than of religion. The persecuting church of Rome has long ceased to be the pillar and ground of the truth. Her tyranny and superstition make no part of our holy religion.

But I must especially illustrate the relation between the church and religious truth. To this the apostle doubtless referred especially. The church is the pillar and ground of religious truth—1. Because she most sacredly keeps and guards the word of God. Persecutors often attempted to banish and burn the Bible. But no power or miracle have been able to break the church's hold upon God's word. To the church the holy oracles were given as a sacred deposit. The tables of stone were put into the ark; a fit emblem of the care which extends to the whole Bible. The word of God cannot be mutilated—it cannot suffer interpolation. Against both the church always guards. To the Bible in the original languages we appeal—and we keep it pure and entire. If the Bible be truth, the church is the pillar and ground of truth; the guard, support, and ornament of the heavenly book. All things considered, the existence of the Bible in its pure un mutilated state, is not a little wonderful; a special Providence is apparent in this thing. Providence employs the agency of the church.

I think the church should frown upon the presumption of those individuals, who make new translations of the Bible. Translation of Scripture is a responsible business. The church may cease to be the pillar and ground of the truth, if any of her sects encourage these un-

authorized translations. A fondness for them is a bad symptom of our times. It indicates a restless spirit, inconsistent with the titles here applied to the church. Bad translations strike at the foundation; and "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Some professed Christians speak disrespectfully of the Old Testament; they say it is grown old and vanisheth away, they profess to take all their religion from the New Testament. This too is likely to render the church unworthy of being called the pillar and ground of the truth. Suppose all Christians to drop the Old Testament, who would preserve this large half of the Bible? Not the world: it would be lost and the church would be unfaithful to her trust. This will not do; we are bound to keep, guard, and use "all Scripture."

But the Romish church keeps the Bible from the people, or gives it to them in the Latin language. History proves this; and at this day Romish Priests do all they can to keep the people from reading the Bible in their own language. This proves the Catholic church to be, not the pillar and ground of the Bible, but its *grave*. Her priests bury the truth.

II. The church is the pillar and ground of religious truth, by means of her creed or confession of faith. The word of God is the ultimate infallible rule of religious faith and practice. A church creed is or professes to be a regularly arranged system of Scripture doctrines. It expresses the sense in which the church understands the Bible; exhibits the truth which she expects all her ministers to teach for her edification. I cannot doubt but our Confession of Faith has had and still will continue to have a most powerful influence in supporting and disseminating the truth as it is in Jesus. In her creed the church bears her public testimony to those great essential doctrines, by which sinners are converted and saved.

I am aware of the objections raised against creeds. But they are necessary. The universal sceptic has a creed; it is very short to be sure; but he has a creed: the sceptic says, "*All things are doubtful.*" This is his creed: the sceptic holds his creed with great tenacity. And if all things are doubtful, as he says, then his creed is doubtful. The creed of some in the church is, "*to have no creed.*" This dogma is held by some with great pertinacity. Like the sceptic's it involves a contradiction. Others suppose that a simple profession of faith in the Bible is sufficient. "The Bible, say they, is our confession of faith." So say we; but the next question which necessarily arises is, in what sense do you understand the Bible? Unitarians, Universalists, &c., profess to believe the Bible. Peace and edification would both be destroyed by uniting all in Christian fellowship, who profess to believe the Bible. Association implies similarity of views; "how can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" We must have creeds if we have Christian societies and social religion. All reflecting men have a creed; and he pays himself no compliment, who says he has none. If we have a creed, it is more honest and more manly to profess it openly. Creeds impose no unnecessary check upon free inquiry. The human mind is prone to wander from truth. Creeds check a restless, fickle, mind; but minister a salutary restraint upon sober minds. Besides,

creeds are chiefly designed to bear upon ministers and church officers. And they are charitably supposed to have made inquiries into these matters before they accept office. A man has no right to hold office in any society, who does not adopt and enforce the fundamental principles of the society. By framing, publishing, and sustaining her creed, the church becomes the pillar and ground of the truth, so far as her creed is true.

III. By her discipline, the church supports the truth. Discipline is the faithful application of her laws to all within the pale of the church. The object of discipline is twofold—the spiritual good of the offender and the self-preservation of the church. Every society, no less than every individual, has an undoubted right to preserve itself. But if discipline be broken down, the church commits suicide. Discipline refers to both doctrine and moral practice; because both are vital. Immoral, ungodly members, if tolerated bring disgrace upon the church—“for the church of God is *holy*.” In this all agree. But some think it oppressive to eject a man for errors in doctrine—or “mere matters of opinion,” as some call heresy. We do not question any man’s right to have and to propagate his sincere belief. But the church has rights, no less sacred than those of individuals. She says to her ministers, you may have your opinions; but do not abuse my influence, my pulpits, and my credit, to support and spread them. A man has no right to make his neighbor’s dwelling the centre of operations hostile to himself and his family. All men enter the church from choice; and are received in love. He who is unhappy in his relation to the church can change his relations peaceably. He lays himself liable to the suspicion of interested motives, who remains in a church, after he has ceased to maintain her creed, and after a respectable portion of the church desire his removal. But the church is in duty bound to exclude those who by wicked lives dishonor her holy name; or by wild or heretical opinions deviate from her creed. By wholesome discipline, the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth.”

#### REMARKS.

1. Truth performs an important office in the sinner’s salvation. Regeneration is effected by it—“who are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which abideth forever.” By truth we are made holy, “sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” The strong holds of sin are taken by truth—“the sword of the Spirit.”

2. How absurd is the opinion, that if a man’s practice be good, it matters not what his belief may be. If a man be consistent, his practice will be an expression of his creed or principles. It is an enlarged and dangerous charity, which expects a man to live in constant opposition to his belief. We are held accountable for our belief, “for without faith it is impossible to please God.”

3. If the church be the pillar of truth, then must harmony in opinion be the basis of her peace. Those who do not agree in religious faith may enjoy temporary peace, by silence on disputed points. But such repose is as precarious as the slumbers of the family whose house is built on a volcanic mountain. Some occasion of strife will arise.