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BY JOHN M. KREBS, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, IN RUTGERS-STREET, N. Y.

THE PURPOSE AND SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL.

ISAIAH 55:10,11. *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow 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 forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please; and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

THE chapter, in which these words occur, is a very encouraging exhibition of the exceeding mercy of God to guilty men. It commences, by calling their attention to the munificent provision made, in the gospel, for their salvation; and proceeds to urge upon them the duty and benefit of consecrating themselves unto God. In the text, an argument is derived from the very *intention* of the gospel plan; and the appeal is to the *grace* of its author and His eternal *design* in making it known:—so that whosoever will hearken to the proclamation of Heaven, and obey the divine will, as therein exhibited, is certain to receive the entire advantage contemplated in the promise. All who love the kingdom and the cause of God, are, moreover, encouraged to hope, not only in regard to their own personal salvation, as thereby everlastingly secured; but in relation to the universal extension of the empire of holiness, over the whole ground, covered by the intelligent benevolence, and intention, and power of Him, who is *God over all and blessed forever*.

Our main design, is to contemplate the fact suggested in this argument, *viz:*

THAT, IN SENDING HIS GOSPEL INTO THE WORLD, GOD HAS AMPLY PROVIDED FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE GRAND DESIGN WHICH IT INVOLVES; AND THAT ALL THE BENEVOLENT PURPOSES INTENDED TO BE SUBSERVED BY ITS DISPENSATION, ARE AND WILL BE FULLY ACCOMPLISHED.

For as the rain cometh down, &c.

Two points, comprehended in this proposition, claim our attention, *viz.*

I. THE GOSPEL IS DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH A SPECIFIC PURPOSE; and
II THAT PURPOSE SHALL NOT FAIL.

I. THE GOSPEL IS DESIGNED FOR A SPECIFIC EFFECT.

Independent of every other consideration, this fact is sufficiently established, in the text. There is something contemplated in the gospel, which is "*pleasing*" and satisfactory to God,—and embraced in His *will*. He has not "*sent it*" at random; with a mere general, but uninfluential benevolence.

Its purpose is definite; and in effecting that purpose—"THE THING WHEREOF *He sent it,*"—He has resolved that His "*word*" shall "*prosper.*"

Such being His own declaration, the inquiry arises, *What is that purpose?* Here, it seems proper to remark, preliminarily, that, although the gospel plan and proclamation are the evidence of God's compassion toward the guilty, that compassion is nevertheless, in entire consistency with all His high attributes; and while it has the fullest scope for its exercise, it is not a weak and capricious regard for the happiness of individual sinners exclusively; but the wise and benevolent regard of the God of love toward the best happiness of His universal empire, and is in harmony with the very best exhibition and preservation of His own throne and glory.

1. *It does NOT comprehend the salvation of FALLEN ANGELS.*

For them no Saviour died. To them no mercy is offered. And 'hope that comes to all,' pays no kind and cheering visit to those gloomy prisons of eternal sorrow, in which *the angels that kept not their first estate are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

2. *Nor have we any reason to suppose that the gospel actually and absolutely designs the salvation of EVERY INDIVIDUAL OF THE HUMAN RACE.*

For then, it would long since have appeared unto all, without exception; it would effectually and infallibly secure the faith and repentance of every sinner, without exception. Those who admit the special influences of the Holy Ghost, will, of course, I suppose, accede to the substantial correctness of this statement. And even those who deny the special influences of the Holy Ghost,—since they deny any *specific* and *efficacious* design in the gospel, eternally contemplated in the mind of God, and infallibly secured in every tittle of it, in regard to the regeneration of a part of mankind,—will equally allow, what is involved in and established by the *conceded* perdition of ungodly men.

The inquiry has not respect to the nature and extent of the atonement of Jesus Christ. *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might have everlasting life.* He has *no delight in the death of sinners.* In itself considered, I believe that the benevolence of his nature prompts him to desire the salvation of all men. And accordingly he has **COMMANDED all men every where to repent.** This is his *law*; his *holy will*, by which, and **NOT his secret purpose**, mankind are bound. The proclamation of the gospel is *Ho every one that thirsteth; whosoever will let him come; he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.* This is all very plain; men are condemned and punished for rejecting God's testimony, thus making him a *liar*, and for refusing salvation, through the crucified Redeemer, sincerely offered, in the most ample manner, *to every creature and in all the world.*

Such is the provision. This redemption may be secured by every man that chooses to have it, on the terms fixed in *the grace of God which hath appeared and bringeth [or beareth] salvation unto all men.* But while this is the fact, the universal offers of the gospel do not, by any means, necessarily involve the *specific* intention on the part of God, infallibly to secure the repentance and salvation of *every individual* of the posterity of Adam. For,

(1.) Some men have been already lost. *Judas the son of perdition* has gone to *his own place*; and others have followed him, wilfully going down to *the chambers of death.* All who die impenitent die unredeemed, and likewise perish. This is conceded on all hands, except by the advocates of *Universal Salvation*, a heresy, not only, opposed to the whole spirit of the *pres-*

nal discourse;—but a delusion destroyed by its self contradictions and unholy tendencies, and by the plain, stern, and uncompromising tenor of the Bible; which, while it unfolds a scheme of mercy, wide as the wants of men, and extending throughout all the earth, and reaching to the end of time, that it may proffer a remedy as widely spread as the desolations of the curse, nevertheless refuses the salvation of the cross to every man who *will not come unto Jesus Christ that he may have life.*

(2.) While it is true that such is the general proffer of the gospel, the fact is very apparent, that many to whom it is proclaimed,—instead of being saved and sanctified by the truth, which is *able to make them wise unto salvation,—turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them, and put away from them the words of eternal life, and judge themselves unworthy of it.* They are commanded to repent; but they harden their hearts; they are urged to believe, but *they believe not the record that God has given of his Son, and of the everlasting redemption which is in his blood.* And accordingly, every impression made by the gospel is fainter and fainter; the emotions which it excites become more and more evanescent; until, in process of time the gospel is to them nothing but a *savor of death unto death,* and they are *given up to delusion that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.*

God has, we believe, no positive agency in hardening the heart. That result is the natural and necessary consequence of repeated disobedience to the truth. Customary unbelief strengthens men in opposition to the plan of salvation and to all its holy demands upon them. And the process of their ruin is one of self-destruction, the more dreadful and criminal, because it takes place through the voluntary agency and obstinacy of a sinner, under a dispensation, the grand theme of which, and its central point of glory and goodness, is the death of the eternal Son of God, as the *propitiation for the sins of the whole world.*

Now, that God designed specifically to harden any sinner, originally subjecting him to such a process by an infallible, decretive, personal, and capricious, reprobation, we do not believe; nor is such a design involved in the declaration of the text. All that we deem essential to the integrity and unity of our doctrine, is that God has so arranged the plan of his gospel, in correspondence with the real laws of the human mind, that the effect of its direction to the hearts and consciences of men shall conform to all the analogies observable in appeals on any other subject. Frequent unsuccessful appeal only results in rendering the churl more obdurate and inexorable; he is not always *wearied* into compliance by the *often coming* of the petitioner; but still resists, and finally he becomes inaccessible; and truth and argument, and prayer, and motive, fall upon his heart as powerless as the gentle rain upon a globe of adamant. The common effect of obstinacy is witnessed here. The sinner hears and refuses to turn; the next appeal less powerfully assails the conscience; and in time, it is “seared as with a red-hot iron.” But who is to blame? You are, my impenitent hearer! Did not God speak? And did not you harden your heart, and refuse to obey his voice; until now, it may be, the entreaties of heavenly grace and the thunder of Almighty wrath equally fail to disturb the fatal slumbers and ominous calm of your insensible bosom.

And this falls in, I apprehend, with the design of God just here; that as He offers to save men, and *they regard him not, when he stretches forth his hand, and despise his counsel,* He withdraws his Spirit; no longer strives with them; and leaves them to their own hearts’ lusts:—And it is his purpose, that

while, to make his power known, He endures them through much long suffering, their perversion of his gospel shall only conduce to render them vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. Of this, the parable of the sower in the 13th of Matthew, and the correspondent testimony in the 6th of Isaiah, seem to me abundant proof. The first refusal to be saved would justify God, in destroying them at once; as would their first transgression of his law: but they are continued here, *laying up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgments of God*; and all the arrangements of divine providence, and the action of his own holy gospel, tend only, in their case, to produce in them a more depraved iniquity, until their cup is filled and the wicked are compelled to drink the fury of their insulted and rejected God. At all events it is perfectly evident from the hardening influence of a perverted gospel, in the actual observation of facts, that its mission never comprehended the *specific design* of saving every man.

3. But if God has *not designed to save all men; so has he not, on the other hand, designed that the whole race shall be ruined.* In the Sovereignty of his grace, he has *eternally designed*, afresh to interfere; and, notwithstanding the universal rebellion of ungrateful sinners, to interpose the influences of his Spirit, in his special, efficacious, renewing and saving energy. And, while he has resolved to leave some to their *chosen dishonor*,—AS HE MIGHT HAVE LEFT THE WHOLE RACE,—He has selected, *from the mass of sinful and righteously condemned men*, those whom he makes willing in the day of his power, that he may make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy which he hath afore prepared unto glory.

This he has a right to do. *As the potter hath power over the clay*, so hath God, in *having mercy upon whom, and in hardening whom he will.* And no man may *reply against God.* For his own damnation is the result of the sinner's own act; and just as certain and righteous, as far as he is concerned, as if the doctrine and truth of election had never existed; while *the election of grace* is the only hope of the redemption of a single soul. When men pursue so *wilfully and universally* the way to death, and Eternal Justice would be honored in their *universal overthrow*, the *gift of eternal life which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began* arrests the entire ruin; and the purpose and counsel of God shews its gracious and benevolent, as well as its real and operative power, in the salvation of those whom God has given in covenant to the Son; and whom He causes, in the dispensation of the gospel, and by the omnipotent energy of the Spirit, to come unto him, never to be lost,—never, *in any wise to be cast out.*

I pause here, to remark the difference between the *scriptural* doctrine of election and reprobation and the notions which are held, and the representations concerning them which are made, by some men. Those who hate the Bible doctrine upon the subject, misrepresent it as involving the positive determination of God to create the reprobate for no other purpose than to damn them; *as we be slanderously reported and some affirm that we say.** And, being

* "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." Conf. of Faith, chap. III. § 3. "The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the *unsearchable counsel of His own will*; whereby He *extendeth or withholdeth mercy*, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to *pass by*, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath, for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." Ib. chap. III. § 7. "God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of His mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory; and in Christ hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means

compelled to allow that there is an election spoken of, in the scriptures, many represent it as the purpose of God, to bestow eternal life upon those, who, He foresaw, would repent and believe. But the reverse is the truth. The purpose of God, in relation to the reprobate, and for reasons which *seemed good in His sight*, was to leave them in the sins, which he foresaw they would commit, as the whole race of mankind, without a solitary exception, naturally resolves to transgress;—while He determined also, for reasons the glory of which Eternity alone can fully reveal, and correspondent with all the high honor of His perfectly wise and holy dominion, that out of this immense and universal community of condemned sinners, there should be selected the heirs of illustrated, distinguishing grace; *CHOSEN in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world*, (NOT because He foresaw that they would be holy, but) *that they should be holy and without blame before Him, in love*. The efficiency of means and the result being alike ordained, they were *chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He calls them, by the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth*.

The design of the gospel then, is to call from all the ends of the earth, the *sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty—predestinated* to this illustrious

thereof; and also according to His sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of His own will, (whereby He extendeth or withholdeth FAVOR as He pleaseth) hath passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be *for their sin* inflicted, to the praise of the glory of His justice." *Larg. Cat. Q. 13.*

Comparing these quotations, I think that we easily gather the doctrine taught in the standards of the Presbyterian church. In the order of time, and as affected by the decrees of *predestination to life* and *foreordination to death*, men are contemplated as *fallen sinners*, to whom *favor* or *justice* are to be shewn. The *election* obtains salvation of *grace*; the *rest* are *blinded* and, (such is the legitimate inference,) left, in *justice*, to perish.

These, I know, are *hard sayings*; and many cannot bear them. But they are *no harder* than Christ used in the 6th and 10th of John, when he was in danger of being stoned for the assertion; or Paul, among other places, in the 9th of Romans: And I should not object to the employment of the scripture declarations, in the plain, common sense, meaning of the terms; substituted in any case, instead of those which the framers of the Confession have adopted. The Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians are not less plain in the assertion of the doctrines of grace, than are the Confession and Catechisms. These latter are always understood to mean what they unequivocally avow; why the former should be *wrested* to the support of meanings opposite to their express assertions, I cannot explain. If the inspired writers meant to be understood, their language is not less apt for my purpose than that of uninspired writers; and may safely be employed to express our views on this or any other topic of revelation. When our standards speak of the *decrees of God, providence, election, future punishment*, and the like, their meaning is not misunderstood: yet they are not less susceptible of *wresting* and *perversion* than the language of the Scriptures on the same topics.

It is for those who deny, as fully as for those who advocate, the doctrines of grace, to show, if they can, why a holy and merciful God chose to create so many myriads of angels and men, on the perfect foresight of their sin, and perseverance in rebellion, and necessary condemnation to eternal death. It is a point indeed, not illustrated in the revelation of that Spirit who *searcheth the deep things of God*. But it is equally embarrassing to Arminian as to Calvinistic views. The disposition to be made of men *when created and regarded as sinners*, is satisfactorily revealed in the scriptures; and with that revelation only is this discourse concerned; with that revelation only, the declarations of our Confession, in the premises.

adoption. It is one prominent and peculiar intention of the *word which goeth forth out of the mouth of God.* His children are scattered among all nations and kindreds of the earth; He has *much people* that are to be gathered, by the means, to use which Paul was divinely delayed at Corinth, out of other cities and regions of the world, and as the developments of His Providence, and the faithfulness of His church, prepare the way, *they shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

4. The gospel plan, we observe, moreover, has been arranged with the view of *declaring God to His creatures; and to explain and vindicate the great principles of His government; and clearly to develop the way of salvation and the whole duty of man.*

(1.) Here, He brings to view his Eternal existence, and all His natural and moral attributes, in a way, which no other plan, of which we have any knowledge, is calculated to exhibit. In the great facts of the redemption-scheme, and in the doctrine or truth of the facts, there is a practical and most magnificent illustration of the essential and glorious perfections of the Divine Being; the offices of the Holy Trinity; the justice, goodness and stability of the eternal throne; the matchless and universal Sovereignty of God; and the relation which these perfections and interests sustain to the happiness and immortal destinies of created beings; *and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things, by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* These exhibitions of the wisdom and grace of God are intended to be made, in such a manner, as to excite the contemplation, wonder and praise of all the holy and intelligent orders of the highest ranks in creation; and accordingly, when this world, which was to be the scene of such great and splendid events, as the gospel designs, sprung forth into being, and beauty, and fair proportion, from the hands of its Creator, *the morning stars sung together and the sons of God shouted for joy; at the announcement of the Saviour's birth, a multitude of the heavenly host, inspired by a theme, into the mysteries of which angels desire to look, and so eminently connected with the great Creator's honor and the security of human redemption, swelled high, in heavenly harmony over the plains of Bethlehem, the "harping symphonies of the celestial Choir," in celebration of that grand event which secures *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace good will toward men; and, in like manner, when the Son of God had destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is the devil, having spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness, and made a shew of them openly triumphing over them in his cross, then, "burst the bars of death and rose triumphant over the grave," ascending up on high and leading captivity captive, we may not inappropriately refer to Him, the splendid description in the 24th Psalm, as of the Mighty and Victorious Redemer, returning from the field of his achievements, surrounded by the heavenly phalanx that come forth to meet Him, "with songs and honors sounding loud" and to instal him amid the sublime glories of His everlasting throne, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift***

them up ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory. The Church on earth celebrates the wonders of redeeming goodness, in the lofty ascription, *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever; ever acknowledging the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; and, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* With these sympathize the bright spirits of the just made perfect and the angels that are before the throne of God, saying *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honor and glory and power, for thou hast created all things, and, for thy pleasure, they are, and were created.* But highest and sweetest on the harps of God is the *Song of Moses and the Lamb.* The glory of creation, providence, holiness, justice, victory and grace ineffable, is all combined and harmonious, *Great and marvellous are thy ways Lord God Almighty, Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.* The doxology of the redeemed sounds forth the signal for sublimest praise, and awakens the glad response of all the holy and glorious beings of God's universal empire: the echoing praises of Israel and that eternity which God inhabits fill all worlds with joy, and summon up the hosts of the blessed to participate in the shouts and songs of celestial triumph as the seals of that mysterious book, in which are written the high purposes of God, are loosed by the hands of the Lamb; *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thou-ands of thousands, cast their crowns before Him and raise the NEW SONG saying Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory, and blessing,— for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and every creature which is in Heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, respond saying 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'*

What glory is this! What rapture to share it! How precious the gospel of the grace of God! How sublime and magnificent that prosperity, how venerable the pleasure of its Author; how worthy to be accomplished; and His word to return unto him not void!

(2.) Here too, is it intended, that men shall be informed concerning their duty, and the way of peace. All other systems of ethics are "defective and unsanctioned," and

"———prove too weak
To bind the roving appetite and lead
Blind Nature to a God yet unrevealed."

But, in the possession of the gospel, he that reads may run to do God's will, in the way of His commandment. Morals the most pure; with sanctions the most impressive; and urged by authority the most obligatory, and by all the tender and winning argument which appeals from Gethsemane and Cal-

vary; are dictated here to the human heart and conscience, with power to bind our affections to the throne of God. It is the gospel *alone*, moreover, which discloses the way of salvation; and brings its direct and well-defined offer of eternal life to the wants and understandings of sinners.

"'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,
Explains all mysteries, except her own,
And so illuminates the way of life
That fools discover it, and stray no more."

It exhibits with all needful accuracy the ways of God, asserts and vindicates External Providence; and teaches His will concerning our salvation. It designs that men shall see light to guide them unto everlasting rest; and if they perish, that they shall *have no cloke for their sin*, but perish under *this condemnation, that light is come into the world, and they have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

5. Finally; we observe generally, that it is the intention of the gospel to *instruct, comfort, and sanctify the Church; and to extend the dominion and the triumphs of the cross, over the hearts and minds of mankind throughout the world.*

The former part of this statement needs no illustration, it is fully proved by the whole tenor of the gospel. With respect to the latter branch, the scripture teaches us, that the gospel is to be preached for a witness among the nations; to scatter abroad the blessings of knowledge, and civilization, and the refinements and sweet charities of life; and through its saving influence, the whole of this revolted earth is to be brought back, in willing subjection to its lawful Sovereign and gracious Redeemer. The Church which is the kingdom of Jesus Christ is destined to increased and universal triumph; *the heathen shall be given for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for the possession of Jehovah-Jesus. The Lord shall comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings; the brightness of thy rising; thy righteousness shall go forth as brightness, and thy salvation as a lamp that burneth; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth; the abundance of the seas shall be converted unto thee; the sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel; I will make of thee an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations; thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified; I the Lord will hasten it in His time.* This is to be accomplished through the influence of the gospel. To secure the destruction of sin and the curse, and the overthrow of all the enemies of the Redeemer's throne, and the conversion of the world, the gospel is to be sent forth every where. *Zion that bringeth good tidings shall ascend into the high mountains; Jerusalem that bringeth good tidings shall lift up her voice with strength, and fearlessly call upon the nations to behold their God; the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Such is the purpose of God in the gospel. This is the good pleasure of his will. For this, He has sent His word.

It remains to shew,

II. THAT THIS GREAT PURPOSE WILL BE EFFECTED.

I mean, by this remark, that the purpose of God, in the facts of the gospel record, and, in designing and sending forth the doctrine or truth of the facts, will infallibly be accomplished; that the death of Jesus Christ, the great foundation of the gospel scheme, will secure every thing that God intended to secure by it; that the gospel will be preached to all for whom it is designed; that it will secure the conversion of every individual among mankind, whose conversion it specifically intends; and that for this purpose, it shall spread and triumph eventually over the whole earth. There will be no disappointment whatsoever. In the progress of ages, and in the ultimate winding up of the great plan, it will appear that, although *the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die, in like manner,—His word shall not pass;* every tittle of it shall be fulfilled; *His salvation shall be forever, and His righteousness shall not be abolished.*

In the attempt to illustrate the purpose of God, as far as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and it is to be inferred from the course of divine Providence, I have necessarily, in some degree anticipated; and therefore, I shall not insist on all the topics properly comprehended under the proposition now to be considered; while some that have been merely introduced under the preceding head require here a fuller illustration and support.

With respect to the general tendency of the gospel to do good, and the certainty that it will diffuse itself and its blessings, and triumph over all opposition, and eventually establish the kingdom of God in the earth, thus securing every subordinate and specific part and minutest detail of its entire plan, I remark,

1. *That the intention of God contemplating just such a result, is necessarily efficient and infallible in its production.*

We have seen that such is the intention of God; His eternal counsel, unequivocally and explicitly asserted; and that *thus far*, the gospel every where is fulfilling His eternal will, in the very manner in which, His counsel and purpose designed it should operate. And if he has declared such an intention, and has formed such a purpose, in regard to the *future success and glory of the gospel*, it cannot fail to take effect. *The Lord hath prepared His throne in the Heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all. His counsel must stand, and His pleasure be accomplished.* Recal to mind the beautiful language of Holy Writ, quoted a few minutes ago, in which, He has so fully and solemnly declared, that through the gospel, *His kingdom shall come and His will be done in all the earth.* He has promised *that all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God:* and not all the saint-heartedness of His friends, nor the unbelief and opposition can make void that promise. *What He speaks shall be done; what He commands shall stand fast. He hath said it, and shall He not do it?*—THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS. I THE LORD WILL HASTEN IT IN HIS TIME.

This is enough to settle the question. But the proprieties of the occasion will justify some further remarks.

2. *God has adapted His truth, with perfect wisdom, to operate successfully on the human mind, in accordance with the nature of mind, and to about the universal reign of holy principles.*

Is not my word as a fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, the soul and spirit, and proving a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual; and are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down high imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.

(1.) What a surpassing grandeur, is in the simple story of the cross! What power to arrest the thoughts, and captivate the imaginations of men! What appeals does it make to the conscience! What tender and moving argument does it address to the heart! How, when the charms of philosophy, and the alluring strains of human rhetoric, and the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, have failed to move the heart and to amend the life, has the preaching of the cross, which is to *them that perish foolishness*, demonstrated itself to be the *power and the wisdom of God unto salvation*. The enlightened and refined and courtly; the lofty and the humble; the ignorant and the degraded; *the Greek and the Jew; the barbarian and the Scythian*; the bond and the free have felt its power and submitted to its demands. Amid the splendors of imperial Rome; the learning of Athens; and the luxury of Corinth; in the frozen snows of Greenland, in the kraal of the degraded Hottentot, and amid the lust and blood and cruelty of Hindoo rites; man has been reached by the *foolishness of preaching*; believed and been saved. For,

(2.) The saving energy of the gospel is derived from the presence and influence of the Spirit of God. Without that influence, and as to the mode of its reception, man is properly compared to the *deaf adder which stoppeth her ears, and refuseth to listen to the voice of the charmer, though he charm never so wisely*. But in the *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, this treasure, though it be *committed to earthen vessels*, has a secret and controlling *excellency* which is altogether of God. The truth always owes its triumphs to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Without that agency it hardens and dooms. With it, men are brought under the agency of an influence, which *might and power* cannot emulate; nor the malice of Satan defeat. And while the promise is left us, that the Holy Ghost shall go before the heralds of the cross, as they advance and preach every where, *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*; we rejoice to contemplate the success which is to attend His gospel, and diffuse its *grace and peace—according as His divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue*.

3. It is inconsistent with every intelligent and intelligible admission of the *Divine Wisdom and Power*, to suppose not only that so great an apparatus of means as He has devised, should not be adjusted to a definite result; but that it should fail of accomplishing the fullest success contemplated.

Why was this world created; why was man so wonderfully endowed; and why permitted to fall; why did the Son of God, the *heir of the world-creation*, become incarnate, and die; and why are providence and its *well* volutions of the world; and the angels of God; and the very *wro'*

as the piety of man; and the Eternal Trinity; all employed in furthering the *great salvation* of the gospel; unless it be, that God, the Supreme, designs, in the most glorious manner, to establish His Holy throne, and gracious rule, amid the *armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth?**

4. *The engagements of the Covenant of Grace require this result.*

In the everlasting councils of the Godhead, the divine veracity, and omnipotence, and grace, are pledged to establish Messiah's throne over all the world, and to make it *endure as the days of Heaven*. This stipulation cannot but be performed. *The Lord will not suffer His faithfulness to fail; His covenant will He not break; nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips.*

5. *God is designing to exhibit His glory, through this very plan.*

He who, for the manifestation of His glory gave the world its being, and is bringing all events to pass, will lose nothing of the glory, which the full success of the plan of mercy is divinely adapted to secure. He is jealous of His honor; and *will not give His glory to another*. *All nations that He has made, shall come and worship before the Lord, and shall glorify His name*. This is the result of the gospel plan. *Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.*

6. Finally, *Experience and observation correspond with the declarations here made; and lead us to infer that the entire result will be gained, of which we already possess the earnest and first fruits.*

An ignorant objection has been urged against the gospel, on account of the comparatively little progress, which it has made, during the long period that has elapsed, since its original proclamation, and in the view of its high claim to be the only system of truth and salvation. For eighteen hundred years, it has been avowedly designed for the world; it has aimed at the conversion of the world; its Author is *the light of the world*; it is the last and best and exclusive hope of a ruined and dying world: Consequently, it is said, that it cannot be from God; for His Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, would have long since secured its universal diffusion and its universal triumph.

But I argue on the concession of the philosophic Gamaliel. *If it were not of God*, it would long since, have come to *naught*. And, independent of the limitations, which, it must be, and that not obscurely, conceded, divine Sovereignty *has a right to fix*; and of the criminality of the Church of God, in neglecting so long to attempt the *full execution* of that *command* which was given to her by the risen Redeemer,—her only rule of duty—; and without contemplating the *times and seasons*, assigned, for the universal exhibition of the truth of the gospel, and the universal extension of its influence, and its permanent establishment, by the *sure word of prophecy*, correspondent with the specific design of God, although that design is completely related to the agency and *immediate duty*, and enterprise, and prepared-

See Isaiah 9:6.

ness of the Church,—let us glance a moment at the *facts of primitive days*, and the *results of modern Christian enterprise*.

(1.) “Meek and beautiful as she was,” remarks a fine, though anonymous writer, “Christianity commenced her course amid the frowns of kings; the jealousy of superstition; the contempt of philosophers; and the jeers of the rabble; but the star of her glory rose, with steadily increasing brightness, over all the troubled waters, until it ascended the very culminating point.” In a little period, *the gospel was preached throughout the then known world*. ‘Thousands in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in the *islands of the sea*, were converted to God; and almost every country witnessed the triumphs of a system, which was, emphatically, the *power of God unto salvation*. On the day of Pentecost, there were at Jerusalem, dwellers in every nation under heaven, who heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. By them; and by the apostles and their fellow laborers, who were scattered abroad by persecution, and went every where preaching the word; the gospel was carried to Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. The apostle Paul preached the gospel as far west as Spain and it is conjectured also in Britain, and far in the east, modern travelers have discerned the traces of the Apostles’ labors. While pure and kind as it came from the divine mind, it had free course and run and was glorified. It overturned the altars and destroyed the temples of pagan idolatry; and, in three hundred years, extended its power over the empire, and waved its sacred banner high over the palaces and thrones of Byzantium and of Rome, the proud dominion of the conquerors of the world.

At that early day, then, the truth had made astonishing progress. And the conversion of the first disciple to Christianity, it has been well remarked, illustrated the philosophy and the practicability of the world’s conversion. Moreover, *all that the gospel then contemplated it secured*. Its early heralds went to the Jews; and many believed; many were awakened that never became real Christians; and as a body, they put from them the words of eternal life, and judged themselves unworthy of it. The heralds of the cross turned then unto the Gentiles; and many of them believed and brought forth the fruits of righteousness; flourishing churches were gathered, while many to whom the distinct offers of the gospel were made, rejected the truth, and it was justly hid from their eyes. All nations appear to have had the gospel. But there came a falling away; regions once trod by the feet of holy apostles, and honored by the presence of Christian churches, were doomed for sin to subjection for a time to the dominion of idolatrous superstition, and the sway of the beast and the false prophet; and even the churches apostatized, and their glory departed, and the destruction denounced against them by the apostle John,* has swept them away. This has all been predicted in the gospel itself; and has fallen out in righteous and terrible punishment for the sin of refusing and neglecting the authority and salvation, which was published to them, in that record which God has given of His Son.

† Had the same efforts that were made originally, and the same success

* Rev. ch. 2 and 3.

† It may be necessary to suggest, that it is not intended by the above remarks, that the Church is excusable, for her neglect and delay to spread Christianity throughout the world, as far as she has had the ability to do it. The set time to favor Zion, is when she is putting herself in the attitude to be favored; and is preparing the way of

been continued, the gospel, *speaking after the manner of men*, would have reigned long ere this day, *from sea to sea and from the river unto the end of the earth*. Unfaithfulness in those, with whom it was deposited, not less than the disheartening opposition of its foes, during a long and gloomy night, stayed its triumphs and obscured its glories, debased it to become the mere engine of state policy, and perverted it to become the instrument of ghostly tyranny and priestly selfishness. But *the Church* still lived. Though driven into the wilderness, *God sent out with her His light and truth*; and the *gates of hell prevailed not against her*.

(2.) The dawn again broke forth. *The captive daughter of Zion shook herself from the dust, and loosed herself from the bands of her neck*. The chaste bride of Jesus *came up out of the wilderness leaning upon the arm of her Beloved, and looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and TERRIBLE AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS*. And though till this

the Lord, and making straight in the desert a highway for our God. Ours is the blame of sin; of neglected duty; and perverted opportunity. To God, belongs the honor, resulting from the establishment of holiness in the hearts of men, and from the perfection and success of His plans. The point which I am, here, endeavoring to illustrate, and, I am conscious how imperfectly, (a) is not so immediately the responsibility of the Church for the extension of the gospel, as the absolute certainty of the gospel triumph. If the Church is faithful, she will see, and share, as she must help to promote that triumph. God has connected her agency with that triumph, in His comprehensive and perfect plan; and the Church shall yet fully come up to her duty, with her most cheerful activity; *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*. (b)

I would ever keep distinct, for all practical purposes, the subject of our commanded duty and *reasonable service*, from that of the *unrevealed* and of course *misunderstood secrets* of the Council chamber of the King of kings. *It is not for us to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power*; but to be *witnesses unto Christ unto the uttermost part of the earth*. Duties are ours; defined by His revealed command, and covering all our ability; and encouraged, by His promises, which are so far the revelation of His purposes. He has commanded a certain thing to be done. He has promised a certain result. This is all that we have to guide us. It is the rule of our duty. And we have no right to sit down, and leave to Him the conversion of the world without going to work ourselves, under the pretence that He has a time, and a controlling purpose, respecting the introduction of the latter-day glory. *Secret things, purposes, modes, reasons, times, belong to the Lord our God. Things revealed, commands, promises and some purposes too, though but parts of His ways, belong to us and to our children*, and measure our obligation; and every promise and rightly interpreted purpose of God, only increases our obligation to energetic and zealous action.

"Christians have not done what they could, to place Christianity in the midst of the heathen nations. No argument and no promise of the Bible, can make it certain that Christianity will prevail universally, so long as means and men are wanting, to carry out and sow these principles in heathen soil. That faith, which is not accompanied by action, in respect to this enterprise, is irrational and absurd." One subordinate reason of the highest importance, if it be not admitted to be the "only reason why the sound of the gospel has not vibrated through the most obscure corner of the heathen world, and reached the most distant isles of the sea, is that Christians have been remiss in their duty. The certainty that the world may be renewed in process of time by the means now in operation, does not exculpate us, while we make no effort to hasten the accomplishment of the work. If all nations could be instantly enlightened and saved, it would be our duty, yes, and if we are the true disciples of Jesus, we should rejoice to labor and pray for such a glorious event." (c)

(a) 2 Maccabees 15: 38.

(b) Isaiah 2: 2, 3. Mic. 4: 1, 2.

(c) See on this subject a valuable essay on "The Diffusive Nature of the Christian Religion," in the Christian Spectator for December; particularly, in the close of the article, the consideration of two objections to the view there taken, derived from "the decline of religion in the middle ages," and "the large portion of the world still enveloped in the darkness of paganism."

late period, since the Reformation, the true gospel has been spreading over nominally Christian lands, and there, making known its pure and peaceful nature, and discarding other than *papal* trammels, yet it has come to bless these shores, and dignify this empire of freemen settled and founded by Christian patriots who were taught by the Bible what true freedom is ; and now again with all their gathering impulses to urge them forward, Christian truth and enterprise with renewed and increasing energy are spreading abroad, toward every land, and promise *the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth, for the inheritance and possession of* JEHOVAH JESUS. With an intelligent beneficence, instructed and energized by its beneficent author, the gospel is going forth to *gladden the wilderness and the solitary place, and to make the desert rejoice and blossom like the rose*. It maintains its character as the permanent and essential principle of civilizing and enlightening mankind. Wherever it penetrates it is the pioneer of knowledge, and sanctity, and blessedness. It has invaded *the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty, and sorrow and sighing have fled away*. Unlike the devastating march of ambition, her progress is not to be ascertained by heaps of slaughtered victims; the groans of widows and orphans; and the smouldering ruins of stately cities and humble villages. Her course is marked by the industry and enterprise which follow in her train; by the monuments which learning, refinement and the arts have erected to her honor; and by the flourishing and smiling landscapes, which attest her beneficent triumphs over barbarian ignorance, and the unholy and savage nature of man. The gales which spread her banners are the grateful breathings of those whom she has delivered; and the motto inscribed upon it, in characters of living light,—the pledge of her own supremacy, and the hope and refuge of mankind—is “GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST! AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN!” and all the joy and magnificence of her character, are an emanation from the *glory of God and the Lamb*; the very light of Heaven reflected down to earth, to cheer and save and guide the soul to everlasting bliss, illumined with the beamy splendors of that brilliant throne, which radiates eternal day and every springing joy, throughout the upper sanctuary,—the dwelling place of the eternal Jehovah.

The course of this blessed gospel is onward: and the *signs of the times* indicate not faintly, that not long shall the chariots of salvation delay to roll around the globe. It is *prospering*; the word of God *returns not void*; it is *accomplishing the pleasure* of its Author. It ought not to be overlooked, that the *resources* of the gospel are proportionately enlarged by every conversion it effects. The revivals of religion, with which our country has been favored of late years, have been the occasion, of turning the hearts of a thousand young men, it is computed, to the *work of the ministry*. These will spread the news of salvation; and through their instrumentality, others will be converted; who, in course, will preach unto yet others. The heathen world will not be dependent for ever for an emigrant gospel and ministry. Our ancestors were once pagans; and were converted by the gospel; of them, came many ministers, who preached to their *kinsmen according to the flesh*; and it is just in this way that the world will hear the glad tidings proclaimed—even by many now born or yet to be born, in Hindostan, in China, and in the darkest regions of Africa. The Schools and Churches in the heathen world, are yet to be *Schools of the prophets*, and multiply continually native missionaries of the cross.

Our holy religion has maintained its *identity*, while other systems *wane, and fade as a leaf*, and are perpetually changing. It is the same that, in the

days of prophets and apostles, encountered and subdued the wrath of man ; warred successfully against superstition, and pride, and *spiritual wickedness in high places*; and, while philosophy and the Schools accomplished just nothing, she by the power of her moral means alone, effected her bloodless and shining triumphs, and extended over the hearts of men, that spiritual kingdom, which consists in *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. It still goes on to conquer ; it still encounters the same character in its foes : and, by it, still, the rebel is subdued ; the sinner converted to God ; and the church of Jesus Christ, prompted by the demands of the gospel itself, is increasing her activity, and coming up every year, more and more to her duty of *holding forth the word of life*, to a benighted and afflicted universe.

The object of the gospel has never been defeated ; it never can be. While men may suppose that it has ; and they reason from false assumptions of the character of God, and from promises, commands, and apparent designs, the full comprehension of which is in the mind of God alone ; and while Christians may mistake and despond ; and ministers despairingly ask, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?* and all suppose that but little good has been effected, or is likely to result, and that the progress of truth must be stayed for centuries and centuries yet to come, and fall more and more behind the wants of future generations, our unbelief is rebuked and our faith and activity encouraged, by the evidence of recorded facts, and by the illustrated promises and declarations of God.

"His purposes are ripening fast,
Unfolding every hour ;"

and not more surely do the *rain and the snow from heaven* carry into effect the benevolent designs of God, than His word and grace that fall as the rain and *as showers that water the earth*, shall accurately accomplish the high purpose and eternally glorious intention of the gospel of the grace of God, which hath appeared, to offer salvation unto all men.

REMARKS.

The subject excites, in my own mind, many a delightful theme of practical-reflection ; and in consideration of the few minutes, for which I cannot but trespass on your patience, it is difficult to select and urge those only, that are more peculiarly appropriate to the spirit of the occasion.

In view of the subject, I observe,

1. *The very great importance of the ministry of reconciliation.*

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. The very simplest instrumentality of divine truth is effective. The word of God, uttered in disjointed syllables, by the lisping lips of an infant-school child, has more than once rebuked vice and ungodliness and profanity, and taught wicked men to tremble before the majesty of truth. A pious mother, in all the retiring modesty of her spirit, takes her child into her closet, and, with solemn mien, and affectionate earnestness, represses the waywardness of his feelings ; instructs him in the way of salvation ; and prays with him, and for him, that God would *command His blessing, even life for evermore* : and often is she permitted to see the fruit of her labor ; her heart is *made glad by a wise son* ; one perhaps who is honored to be the herald of salvation to thousands, and a missionary of the cross among the heathen : Or it may be that when her body rests in the grave, her rejoicing spirit looks down from the abodes of bliss, and, among the angels of God, indulges a *peculiar joy*, in contemplating the repentance

of a sinner, because that sinner is her own child, converted through the instrumentality and recollection of her pious cares.

And if such be the influence of means so comparatively humble, and unobtrusive, and unofficial, how great may that be supposed to be, which God Himself has instituted and ordained to be the *salt of the earth and the light of the world!* No matter how *weak their bodily presence*, and their *speech how contemptible*, the truths which the ministry proclaim are *weighty and powerful*. Although they are only *earthen vessels*, frail and dying men; they are the *depository of a treasure*, and instrumental in the diffusion of a power and influence whose excellency is of God. Truth and good sense and fidelity in the ministry, present a claim which may never be scorned; and the right by which they appeal to the faith and obedience of men, is derived from the appointment, and sanctioned by the averment of the Son of God, *Messiah the Prince and Regent of the Universe*, and the glorified *Head of the Church; He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Let me *magnify mine office*. As the permanent means of correct and saving moral influence; as the main-spring which, under God, puts in motion the energies and efforts of the Church, in every department of holy enterprise, the ministry is indispensable. Let it die or be corrupted; let any other system of influences and means be adopted to its exclusion; and the church is paralyzed, degraded, and enfeebled; and the world loses its best means and surest hope of reformation and blessing. What is the *wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world?* God has poured contempt upon them, and turned their wisdom into foolishness; and it has *pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* It is the pulpit, which succeeds, where other means, subordinate and simply auxiliary, or in open contempt of it,

“Spend all their force and make no proselyte:

——— the pulpit, in the sober use

Of its legitimate peculiar powers,

Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,

The most important and effectual guard,

Support and ornament of virtue's cause.

There stands the messenger of truth; there stands

The legatc of the skies; his theme divine;

His office sacred; his credentials clear:

By him, the violated law speaks out

Its thunders; and, by him, in strains as sweet

As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.”

Whether it be sustained by the rich eloquence of Apollos; or by the cogent argumentation of Paul; or by the slowness of speech and stammering tongue of one, in this respect, like Moses; the themes they utter are but entrusted to them; they are the inspired messages of God; and *able to make men wise unto salvation.* Excellency of speech and wisdom are not out of place; but *what is the chaff to the wheat?* Truth fresh from the mouth of God; simple and sincere; and urged by the kind affection of a renewed and devoted heart, is the grand means of converting the world.

None of the intelligent scriptural labors of the ministry, are, I suppose, without effect. They may be feeble; they may be few; but their *record is on high.* Where we utter God's truth, there is He present to bless it. Sometimes, it *reproves, rebukes and exhorts with all long-suffering and doctrine; sometimes it converts and instructs in righteousness, and thoroughly furnishes the man of God to all good works; sometimes it reclaims the*

backsliding; sometimes¹ penetrates the heart of hard impenitence and unbelief, and brings it a contrite suppliant to the mercy seat of God; it *converts the soul; makes wise the simple; and rejoices the heart*; it "trains to glorious war the sacramental host of God's elect;" and not less operative is it when men are heedless; and as when they *behold their natural face in a glass, and straightway forget what manner of men they were*; reflecting not on the portraiture of themselves which the light of Heaven reveals, and rejecting the claims which the appeal of heavenly mercy makes upon their souls. It is a fearful influence which is exerted here; often confessed in that honest hour when men must speak their thoughts, and on their dying beds deploring, and mourning at the last when their flesh and their body are consumed: *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.* Despised promises and overtures of mercy afford no relief; the threatenings of God are remembered in their solemn import; and the soul sinks under the pressure of His apprehended wrath; and the truth of God causes the *pains of Hell to take hold* on the dying sinner. Hell, too, has its revelation yet to make of the hardening power of the truth of God, when men abuse and pervert it. There is an awful implication of guilt and abandonment in the declaration of the Apostle, *If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*

The day of Eternity will reveal,—if it be obscured till then,—that no truth of God has ever been uttered ineffectually. Many appear indifferent, under the sound of the gospel; long falls the truth unheeded on the seemingly careless ear; but who shall say, in vain? Conscience has been at work, and the strivings of the Spirit of God, when the placid countenance and the undimmed eye, gave no token of the inward commotion. The most trivial remark has taken effect; and shown the mighty power of truth. The seed may be sown and long lie hid; and yet at length sprout forth; the *bread which is cast upon the waters, may return after many days.* One man may plant; and another water; and yet a third receive the *increase given of God.* One may lay the foundation, and another may build thereupon; but the full result shall appear in due time, if we faint not, and become not weary in well-doing. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening, withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

I have no doubt that the light of Eternity will disclose an important influence, in deciding and securing the everlasting destinies of individuals and of the world, from every word of God's truth faithfully addressed to the consciences of men; and that every sermon, and exhortation, and effort to do good, has had its place,—so indispensable to be occupied, that without it, the grand result of the gospel plan might not have been secured—(for so related are all the events and developments and, "parts of that stupendous whole," which is comprehended in the plan of God's universal system,) that each agent, no matter how despised and dishonored by men; each effort, howsoever illy received and estimated, is an important link, in that mighty chain of necessary agents and influences, by which the gospel plan is consummated; and which binds remotest time and the history of all worlds to the throne and purpose of the Eternal God.

Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ; and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place: For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; To the one we are a savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And this is always true when as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, we speak the truth in Christ.

We learn,

2. *The propriety of preaching the whole counsel of God.*

This includes the *doctrines*; and the *duties and reproofs* of His word.

(1.) Men should know the truth of God, and search the records of His revealed will. And they may not lightly esteem truths, dazzling and confounding though they may be, which He has seen fit to make known. Many think that there are some doctrines of the gospel which ought never to be preached. But why has God revealed them? *All scripture*, says the Apostle, *is profitable*. And if you would keep men from contemplating those doctrines of grace, which have animated and sanctified the children of God, you must shut up the Bible, and counteract the command of Jesus Christ, to *search the Scriptures*; for, on every page, appear those testimonies which elevate and establish the high sovereignty of God, and stain the pride of them that would *glory in His presence*.

(2.) In exhibiting *duty* and administering *rebuke*, the *servant of the Lord must not strive*, on the one hand; nor timidly shrink from declaring the will of their Master, on the other. Not in denunciation and wrath, but in tenderness and love, must they *persuade men*, as *knowing the terrors of the Lord*. He will bless His word; it is for the edification of men; it is necessary to instruct them in the way of life, and to teach them their danger; they are benefited by our faithfulness, and grateful for the intrepid rebukes of the gospel; but are hurt and lost by the silence of the *watchmen on the walls of Zion*; while they despise that timidity, which to retain their favor, fears to withstand their sins.

We learn,

3. *The ground of encouragement to prayer for needful grace; and for the success of the gospel.*

With such a blessed certainty as the word of God reveals, how are we excited to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*; and to *come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy and grace that we daily need*. *The foundation of the Lord standeth sure*. Hence we may *labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God*; and His purpose cannot fail, or His promise lie unredeemed. Guided by His truth, we solicit His Spirit, which is pledged to *them that ask Him*; and *we have this confidence in Him that if we ask any thing agreeably to His will, He heareth us*. In the midst of despondency and gloom, the disquieted spirit of the children of God may indulge in hope, and rejoice in Him who is the *health of their countenance and their God*. *The Covenant of His faithfulness shall not fail; nor will He alter the thing that is gone out of His lips*.

And as God has determined to *send forth His light and His truth*, and make the gospel the means of redeeming the world, how confidently may we approach Him, and pray the *Lord of the harvest that He would send forth more laborers into the harvest*; pray for the universal diffusion of the knowledge of the *true God and Eternal life*; and for the predicted *outpouring of His Spirit upon all flesh*.

Hence we remark,

4. *The very great encouragement afforded to the Church in prompting and sustaining benevolent enterprise.*

The duty of the Church to be co-workers with God, is not to be called in question even seemingly, by an effort to prove it.

We have no reason to despond, in view of the arduous labors and difficulties to be encountered in sustaining and diffusing a preached gospel. *Lo! I am with you, says Christ, to the end of the world.*

It is worthy of distinct remark that no intelligent scriptural effort to do good by the spread of religion has utterly failed. It were indeed, a "deed of noble daring," to perish in the enthusiastic attempt to accomplish some great and happy achievement. The moral sublimity, the lofty heroism of almost a visionary philanthropist, consecrate and justify his enterprise, and approve it to the admiration of the world. And it is worth all the expense of life and property that it may require to enterprise so splendid a consummation as the conversion of this world, by carrying the gospel to every creature. But this is no visionary; no needless scheme. *The work is not in vain.* God has vindicated it, as He does every thing, which on scriptural principles, intends His glory; and He *makes the wrath of man to praise Him.* How recently did the announcement of the *Temperance Reformation*, its plan, and its hope, excite the laughter and ridicule of the world: but **NOBODY LAUGHS** now. The grandeur and the majesty of the cause appear; its coming triumphs are too certainly seen and beheld too near; and it is regarded by its foes with stern hatred and the preparation for the conflict, between interest and appetite, on the one hand, and on the other, *humanity, morality and gospel truth* and the Spirit of God urging to glorious victory. The result to one party must be confusion, if not conversion; to the other the joy of the conqueror. What difficulties, of appalling character, beset the *missionary* enterprise; and when it was first conceived, (in our own country,) a little more than twenty years ago, how dark and desperate appeared the project. Yet behold the results already. See the vast preparation that is made and making; the field that is explored; the laborers already engaged in its cultivation; and the numbers that prepare to follow; the good that *is* accomplished, though it be like an oasis in the desert; the civilization and many social and domestic benefits conferred upon the heathen; the schools; and the churches of christian disciples planted among them; the obligations of science and commerce to this very enterprise; the cords of love by which christian denominations are drawn together; the principle of Union, inherent in the constitution of the Church, yet in her, almost the worst developed hitherto, but now in its rapid evolution and power; and the spirit of the Church, in meeting the demands upon her benevolence; and how the world itself is appalled at the magnitude of the undertaking; and openings in Providence are every where courting the enterprise of the gospel; and from every land, *the whole creation groaning and travailing together in pain*, is literally imploring the Bible, and the Tract, and the living teacher, *and earnestly expecting such a manifestation of the sons of God.* See all this; and ask, *What hath God wrought!* Is it not true that the aspect of the times, is affording a fairer prospect of success than has been seen since the apostolic day? Who should regard the jeers and ignorant reproaches of infidelity; who fear in such a cause; with such earnest; and with such a God of Salvation for the leader of our Host! Who shall *despise the day of small things?*

Even where the efforts seem to indicate failure, the *word of God returns not void*. How hopeless appeared at first the missionary efforts in the Sandwich Islands! Yet when God's arm was fully trusted, it might almost be said that a *nation was born in a day*. Even the very discouragements and failures that frown upon the enterprise, only nerve for exertion; and like the fabled Antæus, the adventurous friends of the cause of missions rise strengthened and refreshed from their apparently untoward prostration. Their falls have bid them raise their cry to Heaven, and God has appeared in their behalf. And, although precious lives have been sacrificed, those who have fallen, neither lived nor died in vain. They led the way for others; and their labors prepared the way for the greater efficiency of their successors' labors. And even, though the mysterious dispensations of Providence struck our hearts, in the very commencement of that enterprise, with reference to which we are assembled to night, yet we see no reason to despond. A voice comes from the early tomb of the lamented Barr, whose youthful heroism but one short year ago enlisted our sympathies, as he plead for benighted Africa;* and bids the Church to occupy the field, on the limits of which he was not permitted to enter. And from another youthful soldier of the cross, the missionary of a sister branch of the Church, who fell so soon upon that field, we hear a voice that comes like a commandment from the world of spirits. *Being dead they speak*, and in obedience to their voice, the young heralds of salvation, in greater numbers, are preparing to act in the spirit of that cheering cry, which, as if in presentiment of his own early decease, was uttered by the departing Cox, before he left these shores, and sweeps in echo from his grave across the Atlantic, to admonish and impel to ceaseless and uncomputed effort, "**LET THOUSANDS PERISH, BEFORE AFRICA BE GIVEN UP!**"

And this is the feeling which is to gather strength; and pour its accumulatif influence upon the dark places of the earth. It is the purpose of God that His word shall go forth, and all flesh shall see His salvation. By the power of the truth, through the agency of men, shall be accomplished "Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true;" a purpose,

———"which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy?"

The contemplation of the latter-day glory, seen through the dim vista of rolling centuries, and thousands of years to come, filled the bosom of the prophet with enraptured bliss, and bade him call upon the Church to sympathize in his joy, and behold the blest vision of her coming triumph; *arise shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*. And when the vision of accomplished mercy seems already to arise, in near

* Mr. Barr preached for the author, on behalf of the African mission, on the last afternoon, (Sabbath,) that he spent in New York. On that day at the table, while speaking of the trials which he expected, I inquired whether he were married, or intended to marry, previous to his contemplated embarkation, and referred to the importance of a missionary, particularly, having a wife. "What you say is true," he replied; "but dear as would be the solace of a companion, in my toils and privations, I cannot think of exposing a female to encounter the dangers and hardships that I expect; I had rather endure them alone; being *unmarried I can care more for the things of the Lord; and if I fall, I shall leave no desolate widow, in that unknown heathen country!*" The remark illustrated his *singleness of heart*, and the martyr spirit which he would have carried to his work.

prospect, and to fill the whole aspect of the future, may we not be animated to labor for its consummation? being *steadfast unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch ye know your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* May we not respond to the call, which bids us look for the day, and hasten its approach, and rejoice in its anticipation? Behold the exalted destiny of the Church of God!

“ Rise, crowned with light, Imperial Salem, rise!
 Exalt thy towering head, and lift thine eyes!
 See a long race thy spacious courts adorn!
 See future sons and daughters, yet unborn,
 In crowding ranks on every side arise,
 Demanding life, impatient for the skies!
 See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend;
 See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings
 And heap'd with products of Sabean springs;

See Heaven its sparkling portals wide display,
 And break upon thee in a flood of day.

One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze
 O'erflows thy courts; the light himself shall shine
 Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine!
 The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
 Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
 But **FIX'D HIS WORD**, His saving power remains;—
Thy realm forever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns!”

5. *The vanity of infidel boasts and predictions.*

Their hatred and scorn are directed against the truth and gospel of God. Persecution has sought to destroy Christianity. But all the efforts of Pagan and Popish superstition and bigotry; and of Atheistic infidelity; have not only failed; but redounded to her honor, and illustrated the strength of her impregnable and everlasting foundations. Voltaire introduced the awful watchword of his party against the cause of Jesus, “*Crush the Wretch!*” and the wickedness and cruelty of his compeers led to the denouncement of Christianity by the whole nation, and ultimately brought on that deluge of blood, which insatuated France poured out in the madness of her Atheism. He hoped and boasted; and the nation afterwards vainly hoped that Christianity had received a blow which could not be survived; and that not many years would show the ruin of the gospel. But low in the dust lie the heads of the dishonored prophets; their predictions have failed; and truth has triumphed over the empty opposition, and unbaptized imaginations of mad and impious philosophy! And thus must it be ever. *No weapon that is formed against the cause of God can prosper.* To those who resist the gospel, it opposes an influence which hardens its perverters, and renders them ripe for ruin; for it arrays against them the mighty omnipotence of God. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands in sunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. He shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

While the memory of the wicked shall rot; and they that, in opposition to God, and in the ways of worldly enterprise, have sought an imperishable name, and the honor that cometh from men, shall be disappointed; and many be remembered in infamous notoriety; the gospel holds out to its disciples and ministers the meed of unfading renown. *They, and they only, that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* The names that history has preserved in the annals of the earth, and sought to render immortal, shall be forgotten. But, the names that are written in the Lamb's book of life, the children of God, who have conquered and are clothed in white, and have palms of victory in their hands, and possess thrones and crowns of immortal joy in the City of the Great King, their titles and achievements shall be recorded in sublimest blazonry in the high registers of Heaven; made glorious in the history of the world's redemption by the Son of God; that theme of angelic study, and admiration forever of the intelligent universe.

6. *How full of personal responsibility and interest to every one of my hearers, is the present moment.*

Every gospel sermon has its purpose; and it is the duty of men to fall in with that purpose in its great and benevolent contemplations. It is fitted to convert and sanctify you; and to lead you to assist in the accomplishment of its design in the conversion of the world. It commands you to REPENT.

Recollect, I pray you, the awful influence of a perverted gospel; and that you hear that gospel *always for eternity.* Whenever you come under its sound, you are under the action of an influence that is forming your character for eternity. Every word bears upon eternity. It is constantly operating to save or to damn. Despise not then its message. It benevolently offers salvation; and as you receive or reject it, you are in the hands of a wise and powerful God; whose designs are every moment affecting you, and who is arranging His providence so as to meet your constant circumstances, and thereby making all His truth the means of your safety or the pledge of your ruin.

His purpose and command are kind. They leave you free; and no decree of God can diminish aught of your responsibility. His word and its intention urge you to repent. The truth of this text will meet you, in all its dreadful glory, at the bar of God, and seal your happiness or secure your miserable doom. God's omnipotence will effect all His designs. And He designs to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of His Son.

Abuse not His Sovereignty: be not unmoved under the representation of His purpose. That purpose and sovereignty involve your responsibility, and require you to act; impel you to act. And without that action in accordance with the pressing claims of the gospel, you die. You do not any where rest in inaction. Seed time and harvest are pledged forever; yet does not the husbandman yield himself to careless sloth. The pledge is his argument and encouragement to plough and to sow. So are God's purpose and your dependence, the reason why you should Repent and turn unto God and do works meet for repentance. *What a man soweth that shall he also reap. If you sow to the flesh you shall of the flesh reap corruption, disease and death. If to the Spirit you shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* God

sends His messages to invite your confidence in Him,—and because He has a purpose in His gospel, He bids and encourages you to repose in Him. His purpose, if you are wise, is the argument of your salvation. For the encouragement of sinners He has used the words of my text; to move them to come to Him, and see how true is His promise, how safe and secure the salvation of them that believe.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down and the snow 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 forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.