

2246

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;

BY APPOINTMENT OF THEIR

STANDING COMMITTEE OF MISSIONS,

MAY 19, 1806.

Published at their request.

BY ELIPHALET NOTT, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF UNION COLLEGE IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

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1806.

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

May 20th, 1806.

“Resolved, That the Standing Committee of Missions be directed to present the thanks of this Assembly to the Revd. Dr NOTT for his Sermon, and to request a copy thereof for Publication.”

A true Copy of Record,

NATHANIEL IRWIN, *P. Clk. G. A.*

BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF
MISSIONS;

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be presented to the Revd. Dr. NOTT, for his Missionary Sermon, delivered at their request.”

Extract from the Minutes,

J. J. JANEWAY, *Sec.*

1 COR. XV. 58.

ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD,

Son of man can these dry bones live? Thus spake God himself to Ezekiel in a vision: the circumstances of which were as follow.

The prophet had been carried away in the Spirit, and set down in a valley full of dry bones. Having passed round about this valley, and while surveying its silent and affecting ruins, a voice addressed him, *Son of man can these dry bones live?* To this interrogation the prophet gives not a decisive answer, but resolves the issue into the sovereignty of God: *O Lord God thou knowest.*

The voice which before interrogated now commands, *Prophesy upon these dry bones and say unto them, hear the word of the Lord.* The prophet obeys, and as he prophesies—Lo! the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and the skin covers them above.

Over these bones, which as yet had no breath in them, the prophet was again commanded to prophesy, and again was obedient. Breath now came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

This vision contains, in emblem, a representation of the promised recovery of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. This, however, is not all that it contains. Between the captive state of Judah and the fallen state of man there is a manifest analogy. The DRY BONES which are a striking emblem of the former, are a no less striking emblem of the latter. And the miracle of cloathing these dry bones with flesh, and inspiring them with life, may be considered as the figure of another miracle, more astonishing, equally above the reach of man, and “decisively evincive of the agency of God.”—I mean the miracle of a moral resurrection. Notwithstanding the life and vigour of the intellectual powers of man, revelation asserts, and experience confirms the melancholy assertion, *that with respect to his moral powers he is dead in trespasses and sins.*

The situation of the prophet prophesying over dry bones, resembles that of the evangelist calling on the spiritually dead to hear and live. And if in the former instance there was encouragement for the prophet to prophesy, in the latter, there is no less encouragement for the evangelist to preach. Success then depended, and now depends, not on the will of man but of God. And *his arm is not shortened that it can not save, nor is his ear heavy that it can not hear.*

Behold, christians, the ground of our hope for sinners, and, beholding it, *be steadfast, unmoveable,*

ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD,
*forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain
 the Lord.*

By *abounding in the work of the Lord* may be understood an acquiescence in the divine government, and a constant and cordial co-operation with the *Divine Being*, in accomplishing its objects, one of which, and an illustrious one too, is the establishment of the UNIVERSAL REIGN OF THE MESSIAH ON THE EARTH.

To induce your co-operation, particularly with respect to those pagan tribes who are within the reach of your exertion, shall be the object of the present meditation. And, O may God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, give efficacy to the motives which may be presented!

In entering on this discourse, I might show, were it necessary, that the influence of Christianity, on the temporal as well as eternal interests of mankind, is more benign than Paganism.—But it is not necessary. You know by experience the benignity of the one, and were it possible to describe but half the malignity of the other, there is not a wretch in Christendom, who, affected at the contrast, would not exclaim, *the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage.* Waving further remarks on the benignity of the Messiah's reign on the earth, let me direct your attention to,

ITS CERTAINTY.

The kingdoms of this world will assuredly become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Had Ezekiel entertained but a trembling hope, that the dry bones which spread the valley before him might possibly be reanimated, the force of humanity alone would have impelled him to prophecy over them. I look on yonder wilderness, the abode of wretched Pagans. This to me is a valley of dry bones. But I do not ask, "can they live?" I know they can. Yes! O my God, I know it because thou hast spoken it.—Do you enquire where God hath spoken this? You shall hear.

Thus saith the Lord, *The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them: and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose. Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God. He shall judge among the nations, and they shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Delightful prospect! Then shall the bow of war be unbent, and the arrow of death loosed from its string. Then shall the huntsman, attracted by the sound of salvation, relinquish the pleasures of the chase, and the hoary warrior, touched by sovereign grace, shall lose his wonted cruelty; and turning from conquest with the benignity of heaven on his countenance, consecrate to charity the

spoils he had taken, and, bowing, lay his tomahawk and scalping-knife as a trophy at the foot of Jesus. For saith the Lord, *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 ends of the earth.*

I repeat, christians, in your hearing, these declarations of God, and by repeating them I furnish you with evidence more incontestable that the end for which you labour will not ultimately be defeated, than I could furnish to the husbandman, from the analogy of nature and the experience of ages, that the end for which he labours will not.

The husbandman, however encouraged by the uncertain prospect of success, sows his seed and waits, in hope, the reward of harvest. The reward for which he waits may fail: but your reward cannot—There must be a harvest of souls—a harvest immense and universal. The veracity of God is pledged to this effect. This pledge secures unalterably the event. The seasons may be interrupted in their course, the figtree may cease to blossom, and the fruit of the olive fail—the flocks may be cut off from the fold and no herd remain in the stall—nay the earth itself may dissolve and the heavens, wrapped in flames, pass away; but the purpose of God cannot fail—his promise unaccomplished cannot pass away. Resting the cer-

tainty of the Messiah's reign on the testimony of God, direct your attention to,

ITS PERPETUITY.

The homage which Jesus Christ is ultimately to receive from all nations, will not, like that paid him when entering Jerusalem, expire on the lips of those who offer it.

Man, the being of a day, is prone to consider the thoughts of God as his own thoughts, and the ways of God as his own ways. To the narrow sphere in which he moves, and to the short duration in which he exists, he confines his attention, and if all that inspiration promises is not instantly accomplished, he becomes impatient of delay and yields to infidelity. But the divine plan, whatever the thoughts of mortals may be concerning it, has dimensions, a length and breadth which cannot be measured; and to that eternal being who formed this plan, however incomprehensible the position may be to mortals, *one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.*

A want of attention to these truths, a predisposition to reduce the designs of Providence to humble human limits, has been to the enemies of revelation a pregnant source of objection, and to the friends of revelation a source of error and calamity.

It was a prevalent opinion, even among the immediate disciples of Jesus, that the dispensation of grace was then closing and that the end of all things sublunary was, literally, at hand. Happy

would it have been if a sentiment so derogatory to the Redeemer of mankind had expired with those who lived to see the first dawnings only of that day whose brightness has not even yet beamed on the world. But it did not expire with them ; it was handed down in the church, and ultimately became so general that public concerns were neglected and private pursuits suspended.

The practical refutation of this preposterous doctrine which the lapse of succeeding ages furnished, at length produced a change of sentiment. And Christians are now, perhaps generally, united in the opinion that the Messiah is yet to reign *a thousand years* on the earth.

This opinion gives a very different aspect to the present state of things, and furnishes no inconsiderable relief to the dark and dismal picture, which this world would otherwise present. How different still will be the entire view, should it appear in the sequel, that the thousand years of peace, promised to the church, are prophetic years, and denote, not a single millenary, but a vast duration. Cheering hope ! And may we safely indulge it ? *To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

It, that is the seed of the woman, shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. This laconic declaration contains the first intimation of a Redeemer, and the terms suggest that his injury will be

trifling, and his triumph complete and glorious—terms which ill comport with the idea that the duration of the reign of his adversary on the earth is to be six times as long as the duration of his own reign.

In the œconomy of redemption, four thousand years are spent in preparing the way for the introduction of Messiah, the birth of Christ. Two thousand more, in vanquishing his enemies, and fixing the boundaries of his empire—an empire which is to endure but a thousand years ! Satan triumph in this world six thousand years, Jesus Christ one ! Is this consonant to the dictates of reason, or the analogy of providence ? Above all, is it consonant to the word of God ?

The types which prefigure, and the prophecies which foretel the kingdom of righteousness, attach vastness to the idea of its duration—a vastness in comparison with which the intervening ages of sin and sorrow sink to nothing, and are annihilated.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations. For evil doers shall be cut off, and those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth, And when shall evil doers be cut off ? The prophet shall answer this question. For yet a LITTLE WHILE and the wicked shall not be, yea, thou shall diligently consider

his place and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. And how long shall the meek inherit the earth? Again the prophet shall answer. *The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein FOREVER.**

The prevalence of the wicked, which has continued from the time of the prophet until the present time, and which has still the appearance of further continuance, in his estimation was a momentary prevalence, *a little while*. Whereas the subsequent prevalence of the righteous is declared to be *abiding forever*. The terms here made use of are relative, and if they convey any idea, it is of comparative duration. If then, in the language of the prophet, *a little while* denotes several thousands of years, *forever* must denote a period vastly longer.

You will recollect the memorable vision of Daniel, in which an emblematical representation of future events was furnished him†. Unable to comprehend the meaning of the vision, he asks and obtains an explanation. He is told that the four beasts which came up out of the sea, are four kingdoms. That the fourth will be diverse from the rest, and devour the earth. That out of this kingdom ten kings will arise, and that another will arise after them, exalt himself against the most

* Psalm xxii. Also Psalm xxxvii.

† See Dan. vii.

High, and wear out the saints of the most High, who are given into his hand : and how long are they given into his hand ? The answer is subjoined : *Until a time, and times, and the dividing of time.* But he who gave the explanation adds, *The judgment shall sit and they shall take away his dominion, and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, who shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom.* And how long shall they possess the kingdom ? Again the answer is subjoined, *Forever, even forever and ever.**

Here also, the comparative duration of the triumph of the righteous and wicked on the earth is brought into view, and the terms made use of are such as to lead to the same conclusion as in the preceding passages. Indeed if the terms here adopted do not express vast duration, I know of no terms by which this could have been expressed.

The power spoken of in Daniel, into whose hand the saints are delivered, is again spoken of in the revelation of John, and again their sufferings under this power are described. Here also these sufferings are limited to *a time, and times, and half a time*, or as it is elsewhere expressed to *a thousand two hundred and three score days*. Whereas the

* Dan. vii. 18.

- subsequent triumph of the righteous is expressly declared to continue *a thousand years*.

Could we have any doubt concerning the comparative duration of two periods, expressed in the same book, the one by *twelve hundred and sixty days*, the other by A THOUSAND YEARS, it should seem that *that* doubt must vanish when we consider the terms *a little while* and *forever*, by which these same periods are also expressed; *a little while* being clearly explanatory of *twelve hundred and sixty days*, and *forever* of *a thousand years*.

In the language of prophesy, a day is frequently put for a year. Thus we interpret the *time, and times, and the dividing of time*, which occurs in Daniel. Thus we interpret the *forty and two months*, which occurs in revelation, and, not to mention other passages, thus we interpret the *thousand two hundred and three score days*, which also occurs in revelation. And why should we doubt whether the same construction is to be put on *a thousand years*, used to denote the reign of Jesus Christ; whose reign, if the same interpretation be adopted, which is adopted in determining the reign of his adversary, will continue three hundred and sixty thousand years. Such a kingdom rises as we contemplate it, into an importance which gives meaning to the epithets which the inspired writers apply to it. Such a kingdom may well be said to be an *everlasting kingdom*, and to endure *forever*. And with reference to this kingdom, if such be

its duration, the triumph of the wicked, though continuing for ages, is justly termed short, *a little while*.

Whether *a thousand years*, when applied to the reign of Messiah, means precisely three hundred and sixty thousand years, or some vast, though indefinite period, I will not here attempt to determine. But, however this phrase is interpreted, to me it appears evident, that the scope of prophecy requires that it be so interpreted as to give to his reign a duration, in comparison with which, all preceding reigns will appear transitory and unimportant.

It is not improbable that the constitution of this world, and the laws by which it is governed, were originally adapted to its final destination, and that instead of being arrested in the beginning of its course, and destroyed in the midst of its glory, it will be spared till the one is finished, and the other departed.

What reason intimates, revelation renders certain. Says David, *Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yeu all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall be changed.**

Says Isaiah, *Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall va-*

* See Psalm cii.

Isa. li.

Heb. i.

nish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment.

Says Paul, *And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands, they shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.*

The similitude so often repeated in these passages is drawn from a very familiar object, and, concerning the idea which the repetition of it suggests, there can be no doubt. How a garment waxes old, is worn out, and becomes unfit for use, you all know. As doth a garment, so God declares heaven and earth shall wax old. And till they have so waxen old they can not be destroyed. They must first be despoiled of their beauty, marked with the lines, and palsied by the influence of age.

That the present system is not to be eternal, philosophy as well as revelation asserts. Deep in its nature are implanted principles of decay, and the laws which govern it are hastening on its end. The sun is burning out its splendours—subterranean fires are consuming the bowels of the earth; the planets are known, by an examination of ancient eclipses, to be converging; and the sage perceives distinctly in the movements of nature, a constant and solemn advance towards that dreadful catastrophe, of which revelation pre-admonishes the saint.

But though these concessions are made, and tho' it is also conceded, as Peter asserts, that great changes have already taken place, it does not appear that those heavens and this earth, which, after the lapse of six thousand years, still display so much magnificence, and shine in so much glory, will, in little more than a thousand years, have *grown old as doth a garment*, and become unfit for use. Till this, however, shall be the case, this earth will continue the residence of the righteous, who, according to divine promise, are to dwell in it, in peace, *forever—to all generations, even as long as the sun and moon endureth.*

What ideas does this article give us of the designs of Deity in creation and redemption! How august appears the character, how complete the victory of Jesus! Where once stood his cross now stands his throne. And the same world which once saw the transitory triumph of his adversary, now sees his own abiding triumph, and pays to his divinity a perpetual homage. This glorious period the death of Christ principally respects. All previous conquests are unimportant. Those subdued by his grace during six thousand years, will be few compared with the number who shall crown his final triumph. How great that number will be I dare not even conjecture. But, though I dare not, I love to agitate the question—to recount the hundred and forty and four thousand—to contemplate, and to become absorbed, in that great

multitude of the redeemed, from among all nations, a multitude which no man can number.

True; misery will continue, and abiding examples of the consequences of apostacy will forever furnish to the universe an awful *memento*. But these examples will be comparatively few, and this misery will be comparatively small; and infinitely more than counterbalanced by the superabounding happiness of myriads of myriads without number, and without end, who, entering on a blessed immortality, shall throng the courts, and fill the house of God.

You see, christians, the extent and the perpetuity of the Messiah's reign—a reign which is to be introduced

BY HUMAN EXERTIONS.

As in the natural, so in the moral world, visible and intermediate agents effectuate the designs of the unseen first cause. The piety, and the prayers of Asa produced in Israel a memorable reformation. Jehoshaphat, inspired by the example of a venerable father, extended and perpetuated the heaven approved work. And when under a succession of guilty princes Judah became corrupted, Jehoiada, the priest, espousing the cause of expiring virtue, rescued from perdition that apostate tribe.

From the Jewish turn your attention to the Christian church, the era of whose commencement was emphatically the era of miracles. Ere an age

had elapsed, the reign of Messiah was extended from India to Ethiopia, from Seythia to Britain. And how was it extended? Apostles were ordained, evangelists commissioned, and sent forth the advocates of the cross, conquering, and to conquer. The facts they attested were believed; the opinions they inculcated were adopted, and thousands, in every country, and of every age, recognized the promised Messiah, and paid a willing homage to the son of God.

From this bright period, pass on to that dark and dismal epoch, when authority prevailed against reason, and superstition triumphed over virtue. A glorious reformation is again to be effected: and again illustrious advocates of righteousness are raised up, by whose efforts the kingdom of error is shaken, and by whose light the city of God is made glad. In one word, wherever Christianity hath been extended—in Europe—in Asia—in Africa—it hath been extended through the intervention of human agency.

Late indeed, and with a feeble sound, has the gospel jubilee been published to the wandering native, in these ends of the earth. And yet, even here, the publication has not been vain. From among the savage tribes, which once inhabited these shores, evangelists, commissioned by our pious fathers, won many souls, as the seals of their ministry, and the crown of their rejoicing. These souls were the first fruits of a more abundant and

glorious harvest. And if the first fruits have been gathered by the use of means, can it be a question how the residue are to be gathered?—That they are to be gathered, in some way, does not admit of a doubt.—I have read you from the records of eternity, the CHARTER of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. A charter that covers all nations, extends over every clime, and comprehends the islands of every sea. That wilderness, inhabited by savages, belongs to Jesus; it is his husbandry, and in spite of *Hell*, he will one day gather its precious fruits.

Open your eyes, christians, for the fields are already white to harvest. Wherefore double your exertions, and, looking up to God, pray him to send forth labourers into his harvest.

No new method of salvation is to be expected. Converts to christianity, have been made by the exertions of the saints, in time past, and thus will converts be made in time to come. Hence, to the original commission, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*, were added those memorable words of Christ, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*—Behold the presence of Jesus accompanies his ambassadors, *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.* But how shall benighted pagans, call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall

they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? And I may add, who shall send them, if christians will not? Christians, who have tasted the love of God, and felt the power of the world to come.

IN SUCH AN UNDERTAKING, TO SUCCEED
WILL BE GLORIOUS.

On this article, no one, who either knows, the blessings of christianity, or appreciates the worth of souls, can entertain a doubt Every enterprise tending to meliorate the condition of man, reflects glory on its author. How many individuals have rendered themselves illustrious, and immortal, by deeds of charity. But if benevolence appears divine, when visiting the prisoner's dungeon, and ministering around the sick man's couch, how must she appear, when entering, unsolicited, an inhospitable wilderness, enquiring for the habitations of the wretched, and bearing to the unknown sufferers the cup of heavenly consolation?

If to shed on the ignorant the light of science, and restore to the oppressed the joys of liberty, be magnanimous, by what words shall we express their magnanimity, whose zeal pours on the valley of death the light of salvation, and restores to the souls whom satan has enslaved, the privileges of the sons of God?

Christians, can you conceive of any thing more glorious, than extending the blessings of

christianity to those tribes of wretched pagans who dwell upon your borders?

You admit the object glorious: but the difficulties of attaining it discourage you.—What difficulties? Can the ingenuity of statesmen, or the infidelity of christians, suggest difficulties insuperable to GOD? Are there any intricacies in the way which OMNISCIENCE can not trace? Or mountains which OMNIPOTENCE can not sink?

You say the natives are indolent, vicious, abandoned to drunkenness, passionately fond of the pleasures of the chase, impatient of restraint, and utterly averse, not to the purity of the gospel only, but also to the restraints of civilized life.—We admit this statement. They are indeed subjects every way unpromising. But let it be remembered, that the dry bones, over which Eze-kiel prophesied, were no less so. And yet, these heard and lived. And who knows, but those also may hear and live?

There are always difficulties to be encountered when reformation is the object. And there always must be, while human nature remains perverse. Do you imagine, however, that these difficulties excuse you from exertions?—Had Asa reasoned thus, Israel had not been reclaimed. Had the Apostles reasoned thus, Holland, Germany, and Britain, countries which gave birth to our pious ancestry, had remained, to this day, ignorant of the gospel and its benefits. Had the Apostles

reasoned thus, you, whom I address as children of the light, and partakers of the liberty of the sons of God, would now have been enveloped in impenetrable darkness, and bound in accursed chains.—And in place of thee, venerable House of God; of you, holy Altars,—Ministers of grace and witnesses of Jesus, with which I am surrounded, mine eyes had beheld a pagan temple, cruel altars, priests stained with blood, and worshippers paying homage unto idols.—But they did not reason thus. No; blessed be God! they did not. And yet their difficulties, in diffusing the knowledge of the Saviour, far exceeded ours.

In proof of this assertion shall I call back the scenes of apostolic sufferings? Shall I retrace those paths covered with the bodies, and stained with the blood, of the witnesses of Jesus? Shall I lead you to the confessor's dungeon, to the martyr's stake, and point to fires, and racks, and gibbets, means of cruelty and instruments of torture till now unknown?—In addition to the obstinacy of those whom they sought to christianize, such were the difficulties with which the early friends of the Redeemer struggled.

Both Jews and Gentiles obstructed their course, and counteracted their influence. Emperors persecuted, and princes combined to crush them. But they combined in vain. Their love for Christ was stronger than death, and floods of ungodliness could not quench it. In prison

and in exile; on the scaffold, and from the cross, salvation was published, and multitudes were converted.

Such were the exertions, and such the success of the primitive saints. And if our motives were as pure, and our exertions as vigorous, who knows but our success would be as great?

This, however, is not the ground on which I rest the argument. I dare not promise you immediate success. I know that the reign of Messiah will come, because God hath said it. But whether it will come in your day, and be introduced by your exertions, I know not.

Instead, therefore, of encouraging you by such assurances, I propose a consideration of a different kind—a consideration, which must subvert every objection which avarice or infidelity can suggest; it is this:

That to fail after having made sincere endeavours in so good a cause, will be glorious.

Zechariah did not succeed in reforming Israel, but fell between the porch and the altar. He fell, however, covered with glory, and his name stands conspicuous on the list of martyrs. Wickliff did not succeed in rending the veil of Papal superstition, and yet the attempt added celebrity to his life, and in the bosom of the church embalmed his memory. But why do I mention these instances! Jesus Christ himself did not succeed in

his mission to the Jews. But though Israel were *not gathered, yet* was he *glorious in the eyes of the Lord*, and in the eyes of all his people.

There are those who exclaim, whenever the salvation of the heathen is proposed, *There is a Lion in the way*. And were it so, this would not diminish the propriety, nor would even failure mar the glory, of the attempt.

The interposition of the Son of God in behalf of sinners, is the highest act of benevolence that the universe ever saw. Redemption by the cross—how admirable, how passing admiration. Creation assumes fresh loveliness, and the Creator shines in brighter glories wherever it is published. What then must be the glory of its publishers? What their glory who contribute to its publication.

God, from his throne, beholds not a nobler character on his footstool, than the fervent missionary, the man, who inspired with zeal, and burning with love, bids adieu to his friends, abandons his comfort, and his home, braves the perils of the deep, encounters hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and persevering through dangers and deaths proclaims the Saviour to those who know him not.

Yes! venerable messengers of salvation, who preach Christ in deserts, and publish *glad tidings* on the Islands of distant seas, we admire your zeal; we emulate your virtue, and by contributing to

the object in which you are engaged, would become partakers in your glory ; and partakers we shall be if we truly aspire to it.—In the estimation of heaven our services are appreciated, not by the good we accomplish, but the sincerity, the strength, and constancy of our exertions.

Cease then christians to object ; act worthy of yourselves, and remember, that *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.*

Convinced of your duty, do you ask how, situated at a distance, as you are, you can contribute to the alleviation of pagan misery ? How ?

By your prayers. God hath promised that the gentiles shall be gathered in. He is hastening to accomplish what he hath promised, and yet for this will he *be enquired of by the house of Israel.* Wherefore, *ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

By your property. To christianize the heathen, as well as to succour your destitute brethren on the frontiers, missionaries must be sent to them ; these missionaries will be the channels of your kindness. But missionaries cannot be maintained by prayers ; you must give of your property : without this, your prayers will be unavailing. *Curst be that charity which says to the hungry, be ye*

fed ; to the naked, be ye cloathed, and to pagans, be ye saved, and relieves them not.

Here then I come to the conclusion of this discourse. Your love for Jesus, your concern for souls, is now to be tested by your contributions for their relief.

The Saviour could easily furnish means for this, from his own resources.—He could command the heavens to supply the ambassadors of his grace with bread, and the flinty rock to furnish them with water. But, *it is more blessed to give than to receive.* This the Saviour knows, and having, in the profusion of his goodness, loaded you with treasure, he condescends to ask, and to receive from you, a part of that treasure : and this he does, not that *He* needs it, but that you may have an opportunity of likening yourselves to God by the imitation of his sublime munificence, who delights in doing good, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

In this light I place the subject. And now O my God, what more shall I say? Can the unfeeling heart of man contemplate miseries the most extreme, and not be moved?—From the hill of Zion, beaming with light, and smiling with life, let me direct your view to the vale of darkness, and the shadow of death.

Yonder are the pagans. Friends of humanity, O that I could describe to you!—cold, naked, famished, friendless; roaming the desert, burning with revenge, and thirsting for blood.—

Yonder are the pagans. Friends of Immanuel, O that I could describe them to you, assembled on the ground of enchantment, practising the delusions of witchcraft, insulting the heavens by the sacrifice of dogs, and paying their impious adorations at the shrines of devils!

From these profane devotions, the hoary warrior retires. His steps totter with age, he reaches the threshold of his hut, and sinks beneath infirmities, on the cold earth, his bed of death. No sympathizing friend partakes in his misery, no filial hand is stretched out for his relief. The wife of his youth has forsaken him,—his daughters are carried captive,—his sons have been slain in battle. Exhausted with sufferings, and weary of life, he turns his eye upon the grave. But the grave to him is dark and silent. Not a whisper of comfort is heard from its caverns, or a beam of light glitters on its gloom.—Here the curtain drops, time ceases, eternity begins: Mighty God, how awful is the scene which follows! But I dare not attempt to lift the vail that covers it. A moment since, and this immortal soul was within the reach of prayer: now its destiny is fixed, and just, eternal Sovereign! are thy decisions. From that bourn beyond which submission is our only duty, turn again to the living world, where your prayers and exertions may be availing.

Is there a father in this assembly, who, high in the hopes of heaven, brings his infant offspring

to these altars, and places them by faith in the arms of Jesus? I plead in behalf of fathers who have never heard of heaven, and whose offspring have no Saviour.

Is there a mother in this assembly, blessed by the affection of her husband, and solaced by the smiles of her daughters? I plead in behalf of mothers, whose husbands are tyrants, and whose daughters are slaves.

Could I believe, that dead to the stranger's sufferings, you needed kindred objects to awaken your sympathy, and open your hearts to charity, I would here direct your attention to the frontier settlements, and beseech you by the strength of parental affection, by the tenderness of fraternal love, though deaf to our intreaties for the pagans, at least to hear us in behalf of christians, of your children, your brethren, your kindred with whom you once took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company: but who, now removed far from the pleasaut habitations of Zion, without a temple and without an altar, wander in the deserts of Hermon, and pour out their complaints on the hill of Mizar, *How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

But I will not believe that you are dead to the strangers sufferings. I blend therefore the inter-

ests of pagans with the interests of your kindred. I add together their miseries, and by the vastness of the amount implore your assistance.

In advocating such a cause, the cause of humanity, the cause of Immanuel, you will pardon my importunity. What am I saying? Would to God I were capable of being as importunate as the cause I advocate demands. O that I could infuse into my words, the ardour which I feel. But I can not. Ah ye wretched aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; ye strangers from the covenants of promise, who have no hope and are without God in the world, my heart melts within me at the recollection of your danger, and my mind fills with motives to charity too big for utterance.

Brethren, have you sufficiently considered the duration of eternity? have you duly appreciated the value of the soul? if not; pause,—In the name of God, I adjure you, pause, and reflect on both, before you bring your offerings to the altar. The narrow isthmus which intervenes between you and the world of spirits, is already sinking: presently death will have swallowed it up forever! Let your thoughts carry you beyond it; lose yourselves in the immensity of those ages which have no end.—Ages which the soul inherits, and during which its powers encrease, its capacity of happiness and misery expands, and expands, and expands, till, (overwhelming thought,) it is capable

of enjoying the joys, or of suffering the miseries of a *world*.

Such souls those probationers possess, in whose behalf I now address you. To that eternity, with which your minds are filled, they are hastening. *Before they launch into it*, look up to heaven, and see the preparations grace is making, and the glory to which grace is waiting to receive them; the crown of life—the presence of God in which there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forever more.

Before they launch into it, look down to hell, and see the punishment with which justice threatens them; take one deep and solemn view of that fire, which is never quenched, and of that worm, in the midst of it, which never dies! Ah me, what a spectacle of woe! venting unavailing cries to a devouring flame, and pouring out vain complaints to an unpitying dungeon; which, when the sufferer asks, How long? echoes back, **ETERNITY**. Ages heaped on ages intervene; again the sufferer asks, How long? and again is echoed back, *Eternity!*

Before they launch into it, go to Calvary, approach the cross, listen to the groans, and fill your minds with the idea of the great Immanuel agonizing on it. Then estimate the value of those souls by the grandeur of the victim slain for their redemption, and having made the estimation, and before you leave the cross, say, will you suffer them to perish through neglect.

Perhaps, by our charities this evening, we shall reclaim some profligate—perhaps we may convert one pagan, and should we *one*, (my heart burns within me while I make the supposition,) who among us will begrudge the pittance he has given? Let me indulge the thought—a convert made by the charities of this evening—no matter whether an Albion, an Ethiopian, or an Indian—no matter from what ancestry descended, in what rites instructed, or by what principles of vice corrupted; and tell me, O believer, what will your emotions be, when entering the world of spirits, and opening your eyes on the redeemed of all nations, you shall see among them, one soul whom your charity hath saved? What will your emotions be, when that soul, first of all, shall fly to your embrace, and welcome your arrival? What, when conducting you to the throne of *eternal majesty*, and in the presence of that *Divinity*, which sits upon it, he shall say, “To this man, under thee great Emanuel, am I indebted for this crown of life, which glitters on my head, and this palm of victory, which blossoms in my hand.” Moment of unutterable extacy! Angels, could Angels covet, might emulate your bliss, and sigh to become partakers in it.

But great as the joy of this moment is, it is not greater than will be the glory which follows it. To the man who had saved the life of a Roman citizen, was presented the *civic crown*, the highest of earthly honours: but of what *insignia* shall he be

accounted worthy, who has saved a soul from death, and restored a citizen to heaven? I cannot answer this interrogation? and I exult at the idea that I cannot; because my inability to give an answer, results from the sublimity of those symbols in which the answer is contained.

But I will not confine my hopes to a single individual. Our charity may do more, it may reclaim many profligates; it may convert many pagans; these may reclaim and convert others, and these again, in their turn, may continue to reclaim and to convert: and thus the benevolence of a single christian Assembly, collected from different denominations, but actuated by the spirit of their common Master, may be extended to distant countries, and operate benignly on succeeding generations, till the kingdom of Christ shall come.

This kingdom, christians, is at hand, let us anticipate its glory; let us fill our minds with ideas of its duration and extent; let us endeavour to hasten its approach; let us invite by our charities and our prayers, the Saviour from the skies; let us show that we are willing to receive him on the earth, and, placing on his altar the humble means which we are able to furnish, for advancing his interest, with one general burst of passion, that shall fill the heavens, and reach the place where His Glory dwelleth, let us say, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."——— I pause, not because the subject is exhausted, for it expands, and expands,

as I contemplate it—not because I fear that an auditory of christians can already be weary of such a contemplation ; but the delightful duty of charity remains to be performed, and I pause that I may give place to the performance of it.

Brethren, the vast objects which the plan of redeeming love contemplates, are now before you, and you are about to contribute to carry that plan into further execution. Before you cast your gifts into the Treasury, permit me to propose a single interrogatory : It is not whether the objects be important? your hearts testify that they are so. Neither is it, how much you *now* feel as if you could afford to give? but how much, at the day of judgment, standing at the bar of Jesus, eternity spread out before you, the grandeur of the world perished, and not a vestige of all that you once possessed, except the charities you may have laid up in heaven, remaining—then when the loans made unto the poor, for which God became responsible, are repaying—when the poor widow, approaching, receives for her two mites, infinite remuneration, and to the disciple, who gave but a cup of water, because he had no more to give, is awarded an inheritance among the saints—then, when looking back in thought on this evening, which furnished such a glorious opportunity for evincing your love to Jesus, and signaling yourselves by deeds of charity ; *How much wilt you wish that you had given?* To conscience I appeal—

to the day of judgment I refer you. Exhibit now the liberality you will then approve, and reprobate now the parsimony you will then condemn.

Yes, in the light of that day, as if earth were already dissolved, the heavens departed, and the judgment seat of Christ erected, let each according to his ability, and with reference to the whole amount, so desirable to raise, make an apportionment.

Let the mechanic say how much of the scanty fruits of his labour, he will consecrate to succour destitute settlements—how much to send missionaries to the pagans. Let the merchant, whose wealth flows from a thousand sources, and whose property floats on distant seas, say how much of the profits of his trade. Let the advocate at the bar, say how much of his fees. Let the minister of the altar say how much of his salary. Let the magistrate say how much of the income of his office. Let the man, whose dwelling has just been consumed, say how much of the remnant of his property, which was raked from the ashes.*—And the man, whose dwelling has been preserved, when flames encircled and cinders covered it—the man, who hath passed, literally, with his family and fortune through the fire, and it hath not kindled on him, let him say how

* A few days before the sermon was delivered about thirty buildings were consumed by fire, in Philadelphia, and liberal contributions have just been made for the relief of the sufferers.

much of that fortune he will consecrate as a testimony of his charity, and an expression of his faith in God.

Were I addressing an auditory unaccustomed to feel for human misery, whose stinted pity was cruel, and the stream of whose charity congealed as it flowed, after the repeated calls upon your bounty, which have been made the last week, I should despair of success, but I am not addressing such an auditory ; though a stranger, I am not ignorant that Philadelphia, like that primitive city whose name it bears, is famed for deeds of mercy. With unutterable emotions, I have visited yonder consecrated grounds, on which stands assylums for the poor, and the wretched—ILLUSTRIOUS MONUMENTS, which your charity has erected—monuments, not like the pyramids of Egypt, which cherished a vain, self-glory ; not like the temples of Greece, which fostered a cruel superstition, but left at their threshold, the unpitied sufferer to converse with sighs, and tears, and wretchedness, and death.

And can it be that the tender mercies of such an auditory are exhausted ? Have you, then nothing more to lend to Jesus Christ : have you no longer any alms to bestow on your suffering brethren, and shall I tell them you have not ; shall I recall the missionaries you have sent them, and extinguish the hopes with which your former charities have inspired them ? Shall I pronounce on the sa-

vages their doom, shall I say to the pagan, just emerging from the gloom of nature, and directing his steps toward the hill of life, GO BACK INTO YOUR FOREST, COVER AGAIN YOUR ALTAR WITH VICTIMS, MUTTER YOUR NIGHTLY ORISONS TO THE STARS, AND BE SATISFIED WITH THE VAIN HOPE OF THE COUNTRY BEYOND THE HILLS? Are these the sentiments of christians—christians, whose hearts have been softened by redeeming love, whose immortal hopes rest on sovereign mercy, and whose unceasing song, through eternal ages will be, grace, rich grace. I was going to add, but the presenee of that august personage, whose glory fills the place of our devotions, awes me. Open your eyes christians, and behold God-Emanuel in this Assembly. Redcemer of our souls, who inhabitest eternity, and dwellest in the high and holy place, wherefore art thou present in this temple, made with hands? “I am present that I may witness the strength of the affliction which my redeemed bear me—that I may in person record their charities, in that book of life, where their names already are recorded—characters, which I will publish to the universe at judgment, and reward, through eternity, in heaven.”

Motives are now unnecessary—a sense of that divinity which overshadows us, melts every heart to love and swells every breast with mercy.

Go then, ye collectors for the wretched, receive

the alms of a people, already moved with pity, and emulous to excel in deeds of charity.

Almighty God, help us so to act on this occasion as shall meet thine approbation, and to thy name shall be the glory in Christ.—*Amen.*