

FORMATION  
OF  
CHARACTER.

TWELVE LECTURES

Delivered in the First Presbyterian  
Church, New Orleans, La.,

BY

B. M. PALMER, Pastor.

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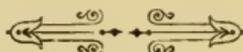
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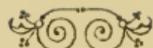


### NOTE TO THE READER.

These Lectures were delivered in response to a request signed by twenty-five of the young men of the Author's church. In a brief space of time a stenographic report of the same was placed in his hands, with request for revision, in order to publication. The whole movement was a complete surprise; and without stopping to inquire whether they are intrinsically worthy of being embalmed in print, they are herewith surrendered as a testimony of affection for a class of persons whom every Pastor desires to bring into the fold of Christ. With far greater depth and tenderness of feeling than when first uttered with the living voice, they are now reproduced in permanent form; that those specially addressed "may be able after his decease to have these things always in remembrance."

THE AUTHOR.





### ERRATA.

- Page 13, line 20, read "years" for "youth."  
Page 15, line 10, read "remain" for "remains."  
Page 27, line 26, read "crisis" for "crises."  
Page 108, line 12, read "restraints" for "restrains."  
Page 114, line 27, read "matron" for "maiden."  
Page 137, line 25, read "of" for "or."  
Page 184, line 2, read "providence" for "province."  
Page 196, line 7, and page 197, line 17, read "covetousness" for "covetuousness."



## LECTURE I.

### *YOUTH, THE FORMATIVE PERIOD.*

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ECCLESIASTES xii. 1—“*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth ; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*”

A few weeks since a communication was addressed to me, signed by twenty-five names of young men of this congregation, asking, if in accordance with my own views, for a course of Lectures to be delivered specially to them ; and I am particularly gratified to find so many of this class sitting before me to-night. In responding to this call, I simply represent the deep interest felt by the Church and the world in those who are soon to be the chief actors in life, and by whom history is to be made.

It is an interest due to a variety of causes. Before all others, is the beauty of youth ; not intrinsically greater than attaches to other periods of life, but vastly more fascinating. Like the natural seasons, all ages possess their peculiar charm. First, Winter comes with his hoar-frost

and snow, hanging up everywhere his icicles like resplendent diamonds shining in the sun ; and it is as though a magician had touched the earth with his wand, and turned it into a palace of crystal splendors. Next, Spring comes with its regenerating life, opening the bud upon tree and flower, waking the birds to their forgotten song, and clothing the earth again with her virgin charms. Then Summer with her golden fruits, the serials hanging their heads as if in the obeisance of worship, and the wind whistling softly through the corn the joy of the husbandman, until the earth laughs in the abundance of her stores. Finally, Autumn browns the fields, and with artistic skill touches the forests with the colors of the rainbow. As the shifting panorama passes before our view, and we gaze upon Nature's changing splendor, we cannot but exclaim : " God hath made everything beautiful in His time ! "

Just so it is with the great sections of human life. What moonlight serenity crowns a godly old age, which through blistering days has toiled for God and the race ; and now with its work finished, sits with folded arms upon the edge of the cold river, waiting the summons beckoning it to " the shining shore " ? Or, what is there

of moral grandeur equal to the massive strength which you find in middle life; when virtuous men, like great cliffs fronting the roaring sea, in the robustness of their vigor bear up under responsibilities which might seem to crush an angel? But youthful beauty has a glow upon its cheek, which fastens upon the imagination; not simply for the promise which may be in it, but for the traits which are peculiarly its own. Who does not admire its freshness of feeling, before it has been cankered by disappointment and care, resting upon it like the dew of an Autumnal morning? Who does not rejoice in the frankness and confidingness of youth responding generously to every overture of kindness, opening the door of its heart to every challenge of love, and pouring out its own affections without the stint of measurement? When these characteristics are brought together in their frequent assemblage, it is not strange that the old sometimes bow before the young in the homage of a true reverence.

This brings me to the melancholy interest felt in the young which you, in the dawn of life, cannot possibly understand; nor shall ever appreciate, until you shall occupy our positions and look back upon the sufferings

of the past. Life is to many clouded with ill-success and failure, even to the end. Seeking to escape from this gloom, men go back in memory to the dreamland of their youth ; and gaze upon those early pictures which Hope, with her delicate pencil, threw upon the canvas, and which now only mock them with their deceitful witchery. As an author revises his book in the light of the criticisms upon it, bringing it out in greater perfection than at first ; so the vain wish springs up in the heart, that it were possible to commence at the beginning and to put out a second and improved edition of one's life. This may not be allowed ; we make but one journey through time, and it must close with whatever of success or failure may have attended it. Young men, it is with an unspeakable pathos those who are departing from life with a broken heart turn their gaze upon you who are springing up around them, and seek with plaintive advice to guard you from the mistakes which have made their career a sad miscarriage. The tremor of a tear is felt in every voice which speaks from a disappointed life.

Beyond all this, solicitude must be felt for the young, who are always the hope of the Church and the world. I have, per-

haps, flattered you in painting the loveliness of your early morning hour; let me put beside it, in the glare of contrast, the strength of your coming noon. Soldiers tell us of "the joy of battle" when the preliminary fear has vanished in the first clash of arms. Even so, there is a proud enthusiasm in bearing the responsibilities of an honorable career; felt most when duty presses heaviest, and in conscious weakness we reel beneath the burden; then it is that weakness becomes strength, and the hero asks to live until his task is finished. Some of these are ungirding themselves of solemn trusts with which they were charged; others are still in the sweat and dust of the arena; but all look behind them to see if the race that is coming after, is a royal race—stalwart champions for the true and the right—who with faces as a flint, like those iron beaks which cut their way through the ice of the Northern rivers, make opposition itself tributary to brilliant achievements. A strong man is willing to die, if he leaves a son equal to himself. But if that son be a man of brighter nature, of larger culture, of nobler aspirations, he will rejoice to divest himself of his own honors, and cast them as a priestly robe upon him who bears his name and office.

Such, my young friends, are the grounds of that almost paternal affection universally felt for those who are just buckling on the armor of duty. We cannot look upon the flush of hope which brightens your cheek, without a prayer for your welfare; that Heaven may guide you by a straighter path than ours, freer from difficulties, and leading to nobler rewards. In the remainder of this introductory Lecture, I will simply impress upon you THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FORMING PERIOD OF YOUR EARTHLY CAREER.

I. *Consider, then, that it embraces not less than one-third of all the years allotted to man upon earth.* Common-places upon the shortness of life make but feeble impression; but here is a concrete illustration which takes hold of the conscience and the heart—one-third of life spent in simply getting ready to live. Linger over the fact, until its portentous import has subdued you with its shadow—that death has advanced one-third of the way, at the very moment when almost in mockery you are whispering to yourself, “Now I am going to begin life;” yes, beginning life when the candle has already burnt down one-third to the socket! The arrangement is not arbitrary, that you must ascend by these twenty

steps to incipient manhood ; reaching then only the first landing-place—with five steps more, exceedingly narrow and steep, before you are honored with the trusts of which death alone can disrobe you. Nature herself marks off this period of human growth, by her law of corporeal and intellectual maturity. The few instances of precocious development are but feeble exceptions to the rule. Even the differences in climate, which may lengthen or abridge the period of growth, equally determine the period of decay ; so that over the globe the same proportion is preserved between the parts of human life.

Taking up the thought in this practical form, let us observe further into how small a portion of the whole our real and effective life on earth is condensed. “The days of our youth are threescore years and ten,” saith the Scripture ; but how soon the noon of our life is fled, when the energies flag and shrink from new enterprises ? And worse than both, how soon the sense of isolation creeps upon us ? Those who had walked with us by the way in the various relationships of society, have somehow dropped through the broken planks of the bridge into the seething waters beneath ; and in the time of our age we find ourselves

more alone than when we nestled with brothers and sisters in the parental home. The picture may seem to you too deeply shaded, possibly sending a shiver through your frame ; yet I ask you to look at it with the solemnity that it deserves—this division of life into its thirds : the first third spent in learning how to live ; the last third in learning how to die ; and the intervening space, protracted perhaps beyond the limit of either extreme, into whose narrow compass all that is our efficient life is actually compressed.

I have said that Nature's decree assigning so long a period for human growth, is not arbitrary ; let it rather be proclaimed as the arrangement of a most wise and gracious Providence. Man is altogether too precious a thing to grow up as a weed. The prophet's gourd which grew in a night, perished in a night ; but man was made to endure. Within his mortal frame God has imprisoned an immortal spirit ; and the life of this is measured, as the hands move upon the face of that clock which hangs upon the walls of Eternity. It is for this we take so long to grow ; and if it should seem to you that one-third of mortal life is too much to spend in just preparing to live, remember that time has no measure but Eternity ;

and that only in its disciplinary and educational relation to this, has it any significance at all. Twenty years is not too long to form habits which are to be to us a second nature; or to establish principles which are to be the law of our activity forever; or to mould a character which, by its own development, shall crystallize into a form of beauty to endure while the heavens remains. How it contradicts the logic both of reason and of conscience to misappropriate, in idleness or folly, any portion of youth so necessary to the after-life; and which, when gone, leaves a record we must surely face at the judgment-bar!

II. *Consider that, within this period, a character of some sort must be formed.* It is not submitted to our discretion whether this shall or shall not be. We may use or we may waste our opportunities, the process of development goes on just the same. No protest of the reason, or of the will, can arrest the operation of the law which defines the conditions under which character must shoot up into its perfect crystal. There can be no greater fallacy than to suppose anything negative in its influence upon the young. At no time in our

earthly history do our acts stand apart from the dispositions from which they spring ; least of all is this possible during youth, the first stage of that continuous education where everything enters into the substance of our being. Every sight, every sound, every thought, every deed, goes right into character ; everything is positive, nothing negative in the discipline of life. Through every moment of wakeful time, character is building by accretions infinitely more minute than those by which the coral insects build up the islands of the sea. Just as the plant absorbs color from the light, drinks through its leaves the moisture of the air, or draws up by its delicate fibres the fatness of the soil, so in youth we absorb the influences around us which grow into the entire frame of our future being.

Let it be remembered, too, that character, thus formed, abides with us an enduring possession. During this mortal state it may be modified, both for good and evil ; it may be improved ; it may deteriorate ; in a religious aspect, it may even be transformed. Yet, even in the sphere of grace, the natural traits, upon which all individuality is grounded, will come to the surface—only in the Christian,

redeemed, controlled, beautified by Divine love. The fact in this connection pressing most upon my young friends to-night, is that the basis of this lasting structure is laid in our early years. The adage that "the boy is father of the man," is illustrated by a thousand examples. The children of genius almost universally manifest in childhood the tastes by which they are distinguished in their prime. When we pass from a state of trial to one of recompense, even death, which does not arrest the continuity of our being, makes no substantive change in that character upon which the final judgment has stamped the seal of destiny. Under this view, how unspeakably important this period of youth; when life is running into its mould not only for the future that is near, but for that in the great hereafter! It has been truly said:

"Sow an act and you reap a habit;  
Sow a habit and you reap a character;  
Sow a character and you reap a destiny."

III. *In youth the appetites and passions come to the front, and are most difficult of control.* It is then the conflict opens between the animal and spiritual elements of our nature; and it is largely determined which of the two shall obtain the ascend-

ency for life. The peril is far from being slight. First of all, there is a superb enjoyment in the earliest exercise of one's own will, free from the authority which has hitherto constrained it. How easily this runs into wilfulness, in the impatient assertion of its own independence! Like the "wild ass which snuffeth up the wind at his pleasure," the lawless youth swings loose from all restraint, and solicits the temptation under which it is his doom to succumb. Moreover, the pleasures of sense are the more enticing from their novelty and freshness; appealing to the imagination, which throws around them a veil of illusion effectually concealing "the dead men's bones and all uncleanness" lying within. The fatal poison is already introduced into the blood, with its raving delirium, before the unhappy victim is aroused to the first suspicion of danger. Add to all this that the wisdom, which is to be man's guide through life, has not fully gained her seat of empire in the soul; nor has experience taught her to put the curb upon these fiery appetites, through anticipation of that eternal remorse, the sure avenger of dissipation and vice.

If, then, in this forming period of life our passions and appetites are at the strong-

est, and our experience and knowledge are at the weakest, how important is the shield of parental control which guards us through the long years of immaturity and growth; and how necessary it is that we should not be surrendered to our own discretion, until principles shall be acquired which shall keep us from being swept away by the temptations of life and buried in the abyss beneath!

IV. *Finally, the probationary period of youth is immediately followed by the weaving of new ties, and by the assumption of solemn and irremissible trusts.* Nothing strikes the middle-aged with more astonishment than the recklessness with which the most sacred and enduring ties are formed under the influence of mere caprice or fancy. Young men and young women are brought together in marriage and impose upon themselves obligations which only death can dissolve, under the impulse of mere taste. Without bringing the choice before the judgment or passing it under the decision of conscience, they weave ties which afterwards bind them like iron bands to the stone wall of a prison cell. It is useless to declaim against this folly. Wisdom lifts up her voice of solemn warning in

vain ; simply because the young are swept into these domestic and friendly alliances through the intoxication of a delighted imagination, whose spell cannot be broken. The only protection is to bring this taste itself under the dominion of principle, of principle as taught in God's holy word--laying hold upon the conscience and swaying the affections to all that is beautiful and good. Thus an educated taste will be lifted above the danger of mere caprice ; and through its very instinct will make the choice which is reasonable and safe.

Equally so, my young friends, with the trusts to be hereafter assumed in life. No man can foretell what these may be. We approach them so gradually, that we are upon them before we have taken their measure. What we term the accidents of life drift us into new positions, and we find ourselves in this eddy or in that. There we are in the centre of the constant whirl, from which there is no outlet ; and there society drops down upon us the responsibilities which are to be borne until we sleep in death. I do not know that I say anything strange, that men are continually thrust into prominence as the leaders of others, who are themselves astonished at their own position. Not infrequently they

start back with apprehension and fear, thoroughly distrustful of their ability to meet the expectations which nothing in their conscious experience appears to justify. What, now, is the only protection from disgraceful failure? It is that sound preparation made beforehand, in the acquisition of a solid character and the adoption of principles capable of bearing the strain hereafter to be put upon them. With a good basis securely laid, the immediate preparation is soon made which will place any man abreast of life. I have a deep conviction—which you may take for what it is worth—that he who deals honestly with himself, with the world, and with God, will never be found unequal to any responsibility fairly laid upon him through the agency of others. These sacred trusts fall upon us from the God of Providence, and they mark out our appointed path of duty. In the acceptance of them we may, in all humility and faith, rest upon the Divine promise, “as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.”

In bringing these thoughts to a close, permit me to add that the young men of this generation, and of those which are to follow, enter upon life under increasingly severe requisitions. The whole past of

history has been but a preparation for the present and future, with their momentous issues. You recall the energetic appeal which flashed like fire from the soul of Napoleon to his soldiers in Egypt; when, pointing to the Pyramids, he said: "From the top of those Pyramids the centuries look down upon you;" even so the young men of to-day are "encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses" looking out from the historic past, and by a vast array of living witnesses breathless with anxiety to see how you are arming for the contests of the future. That future is pregnant with most stupendous events. Knowledge is throwing her electric light to illuminate the path to be trodden. Nature is yielding forces stored within her womb to drive the world forward with accelerating speed. Are we rushing near to the great catastrophe, when the final plunge will be made into the darkness that is beyond? All signs go to show that the battles of the future are to be the battles worthy of the end, when "the moon shall be turned into blood and the great and notable day of the Lord shall come." In any event, it is not the war of the pigmies, but of the giants, to which you are summoned. Let your armor be tried armor, of steel tempered in

the fire, that can turn the point of every lance hurled against it. See well to it that, as the bud opens into the flower, your youth of preparation will bloom into brilliant and successful manhood.





## LECTURE II.

### *ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER.*

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JUDGES viii. 21—“*For as the man is, so is his strength.*”

This pithy aphorism is found imbedded within a parenthesis in the history of Gideon, the Hebrew judge. After defeating the Midianitish armies in successive battles, he at length obtained possession of their two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. Referring to one of the atrocities committed during their seven years' oppression of Israel, he addresses the searching question, “what manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?” The reply was, “As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.” Then said Gideon, “They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother; as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.” The command was then given to Jether, Gideon's first-born, as the avenger of blood, “up and slay them.” When the stripling drew back from the

tragic office, through the timidity of youth, Zebah and Zalmunna, with the chivalry characteristic of the warrior, prayed to fall by the hand of an equal. They said to Gideon, " Rise thou and fall upon us ; for as the man is, so is his strength." I appropriate these words as singularly expressing the topic of this evening's discussion.

It is true in the moral as in the physical sphere, that the man himself is the measure of his strength ; we know what he can do, when we know what he is. I had occasion in the last Lecture to dwell upon the importance of youth, as the period in which character is mainly formed ; for however it be modified in after years, either improving or deteriorating, it will retain the cast of features acquired in the earlier time. But now the question recurs, what do we mean by character ? The word is sufficiently indefinite ; yet it always implies something, when applied to our fellow-men. How shall we define it ? In tracing its etymology, we find it to be a Greek word bodily transferred to our own language. In its original verbal form it signifies to cut or to engrave, as with a graving tool upon a seal ; then, by an easy transition, the term comes to signify whatever is thus cut or

engraved upon that seal—the motto or sentiment which has been carved upon its surface. Thus we have characters of various kinds and designs. The letters of the alphabet are characters invented as expressive of particular sounds, indicating their power in framing words and sentences. The numerals which are used in arithmetic, the symbols which are employed in algebra, the devices sometimes carved upon shields, the emblems blazoned upon banners to arouse the patriotism of a people—these exemplify, without further enumeration, the different uses in which the word character is popularly used. But when the term is transferred to man, or to moral beings of any grade, it may, perhaps, be best described as that assemblage of qualities which impart distinctness and individuality to each—as is vividly expressed in the familiar quotation from England's great dramatist :

“ A combination, and a form, indeed,  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
To give the world assurance of a man.”

The point, however, to be emphasized here is, that character is something to be acquired. It must rest upon a basis deeper than itself, must strike its roots into what

we are accustomed to call "nature;" precisely as the properties of matter inhere in an unknown substance of which they are the expression and the sign. Every plant has a virtue secreted within its very life, which determines its development in leaf, bud, flower and fruit. Every animal has its fundamental quality giving complexion to all its actions, and distinguishing it from every other—the lion, as the beast of prey; the lamb, as the symbol of innocent meekness. So man, created in the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, possessed a nature whose whole bias was toward God in obedience of His will and worship of His glorious majesty. But in the formation of personal character, these original aptitudes and tendencies must pass from the region of instinctive promptings, and be reproduced and reflectively recognized in consciousness. Thus perceived by the reason, approved by the judgment, endorsed by the conscience and adopted by the will, they become regulative principles, shaping the life and directing the conduct. Hence, it will be borne in mind, all moral beings of whom we have knowledge—angels and men—were placed upon probation; that, by the free choice of their own will, original dispositions may

crystallize into fixed principles, and thus by voluntary acceptance form personal and permanent character.\* The same law obtains in the sphere of Grace. The principles of faith and obedience, implanted by the Holy Spirit in the renewed soul, are gifts bestowed from above; nevertheless, they must be accepted by the believer's free choice as the guiding principles of his life—and thus in the fullest sense be made his own. He is placed to the end of life under a various discipline, subjecting these graces often to an excruciating test; in order that they may be wrought into the very texture of his being, until he shall grow “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of

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\* That accurate and subtle thinker, Dr. Thornwell, in the Tenth of his Theological Lectures (“Collected Writings,” vol. i., p. 245), uses the following language: “Now, at the commencement of a moral career, our upright constitution has not been completely identified with our personality, because it has not, in its tendencies and dispositions, been taken up by our wills and deliberately chosen and adopted. It is the determination of the will which fixes our natural dispositions as *principles*. When they are reviewed by the understanding and deliberately chosen by the will, they then become ours in a nearer and closer sense; they are reflectively approved, reflectively endorsed, and through that energy by which acts generate a habit they become fixed elements of our life.”

Christ." Just here is grounded the ineradicable sense of responsibility for our acts as the outflow of character. They are distinct expressions of our personal, individual will; as the leaf and the fruit determine the nature of the tree. And as the leaves, in their decay, fertilize the soil, restoring fatness to the tree that it may produce more fruit—so these acts which flow from character return into it again, making it stronger either for good or evil. In this we see the solemnity of life as strictly an educational process; presenting every man at the bar of Christ, fitted by his training for the world of happiness or woe.

“The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

With this brief exposition of what is meant by the word character, WE ARE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE ELEMENTS WHICH ENTER INTO IT AND CONSTITUTE ITS STRENGTH. Whenever this term is used without a qualifying adjective it is in the way of approval. Thus we say, this or that man is a man of character; meaning that he is intensely individual, with traits distinctly marked, able therefore to bear his part in life, and to discharge its varied

responsibilities. What, then, are the constituent elements of a strong character? I will seek to answer this question in six particulars :

I. *Obviously, the first requisite is a clear practical judgment, which estimates every thing in life at its true value.* God has placed the eye in front, as the candle of the body; throwing its light into the far beyond, that man may not walk in darkness; like the headlight in front of an engine, throwing its gleam into the deep midnight and opening a pathway into which the train may follow on its iron track. So, by a beautiful analogy, the mind is placed in front of all man's powers, as the directing faculty—looking through and lighting up the perspective of life. The power to weigh all that he sees or hears in equal scales, to form a just judgment of what they are intrinsically worth, and then to adjust these values in their relation to each other, will give to him who possesses it a clearness of vision piercing through all the mists that hang around human life, and making it bright as day. Through this practical intelligence we come to have an aim, which is the goal of all our endeavor; which gleams before us as

the polar star, such as that guiding the mariner along the paths of the sea.

Moving in what direction soever, we must ascertain the limit beyond which we may not suffer ourselves to pass. God, for example, has made us capable of enjoyment ; He has placed us in a world regaling the senses with every species of delight, and has provided us with spiritual tastes for the more refined pleasures of the mind and heart. Pleasure, therefore, has a value not to be despised by any ; but what are its limits within which it should be restrained ? Not to recognize and respect these boundaries, is to surrender ourselves as voluptuaries to mere sensual or intellectual enjoyment, and to become as frivolous as the insect humming in the breeze. So again, my young friends, we are placed under the exactions of business ; as you will find, as soon as you have placed your feet squarely upon the platform of life. Some calling must be pursued, through which we earn our bread, swallowing up our thoughts by day and often invading the hours of rest. But what are the limits within which it shall be severely hedged ? Unless this be known, the fretting cares of work-day toil will eat like a canker into the substance of our being, and leave

nothing but the shell behind. So, too, honor has its charms. Ambition has been styled "the vice of noble minds," and God has made us to aspire. The prizes held out to noble achievements are the incentives to greatness. Yet ambition must be held with a curb; else it overleaps itself, and falls into a debasing selfishness in which all true nobility of character is engulfed forever. These illustrations suffice to show the need of a discriminating judgment, which cannot be deceived by aught that is hollow and pretentious on earth.

Observe, further, that we live in the bosom of so many complex relations, all of which mark out a separate sphere of duty and impose obligations absolutely imperative. There is the home, in whose soft nest we were born; there is the State, laying its iron hand upon us at every step in life; there is the Church, with her holier duties laid upon every heart; there is the broad philanthropy, which binds in a blessed brotherhood the whole human race; and as our vision shall enlarge in the light of "the upper day," there will be a spirit broader than even philanthropy, which, like God's own love, shall take the moral universe in the embrace of our affections. Now, to walk evenly in these varied

and complex relations, and to adjust the duties belonging to each, requires a clear, practical judgment necessary as the first element of character. One duty is sometimes pleaded as the excuse for the neglect of others equally important: it is needless to say that this is always a mark of weakness; for the highest obligation is to adjust these duties, so that they may never clash, and be equally performed with a dignity and grace that does not cringe before any obstacle. We shall be thus self-poised and equal to any emergency that may arise; like that hanging rock, of which you have read, so evenly balanced upon its own centre of gravity, that, whilst swaying under the finger of a child, it remains unmoved through the storms of all the centuries.

II. The second element of character we must find in the sphere of the will, *tenacity of purpose springing from the strength of conviction*. We sometimes complain of the difficulties encountered in the performance of duty, whereas it is from these difficulties a true heroism emerges; and he is a weakling and a coward who quails before the obstacles that oppose his progress. A proper manhood never dawdles in the lap

of pleasure, sipping the honey and wine of sensual indulgence. The heroic quality rejoices in the struggles by which its virtue is approved, and glories in the triumph with which it is finally adorned. Those alone are entitled to lasting fame who can brave solitude, enduring suffering and reproach for the cause they hold to be just and true. As the slain warrior is laid in his grave on the field of blood, with his martial cloak as his winding-sheet; so it becomes a true man to go even to his death, shrouded in his personal and inalienable convictions. For out of these convictions of what is right and lovely and honorable, the courage is born by which the world is conquered.

Young men, if I read history aright, this tenacity of purpose is the historic quality, which you will allow me to describe by that quaint but expressive Saxon word, toughness. The nation that is tough, is the nation that rules. It was this that made the old Romans the iron race, whose sceptre once swayed the earth. It was this tenacity of purpose that enabled the silent William to work out the liberty of the Netherlands from a succession of defeats, such as would have smothered any but the noblest of heroes. Force of will is the con-

stant power that succeeds, whether it be in the world of matter or of mind ; and he who consecrates his life to a noble end, and clings to it with an undivided purpose, will leave behind him a memory crowned with gratitude and praise.

III. *The formation of sound principles, and the habitual command of them, are both indispensable to those who would play well their part in life.* The sentiment of one of the great thinkers of our own time deserves to be written in letters of gold : “ The love of truth is honesty of reason, as the love of virtue is honesty of heart.” It is an immense gain to know the truth, so exquisitely described by the poet as the

“ Stern daughter of the voice of God ;”

but it is a divine benediction when this truth is embraced with the virgin love of the heart. The young man who enters upon life with this double “ honesty of reason and of heart,” will easily digest the principles which are to be the guide of his conduct. They will enter into the blood and bone of all his thinking, and will be applied in all the exigencies of his career, as safely as the sinews and muscles move the limbs upon which they are strung. This counsel, my young friends, is far from

being useless. We meet every day with those unhappy incapables, to whom the right of private judgment proves an incumbrance rather than a privilege. Swinging to and fro in perpetual vacillation and doubt, they can never determine for themselves what is truth. Such pour forth the pitiful complaint that the Bible is not throughout a Book of Leviticus, a mere record of technical rules meeting every perplexity that arises. But is it not plain that such a system could never answer an educational purpose? It may do for the period of childhood to be thus held in leading-strings; but the reason and the conscience need to be in daily exercise, if we are to grow into strong men able "to discern between good and evil." Infinite wisdom has not, therefore, prescribed stiff and arbitrary rules, as the splinters and bandages to bind up a broken will; but has revealed the great principles of truth and duty, which are to be absorbed into our very substance; and no small part of our education on earth, is to learn how to apply these in every crises through which we pass. And it will be found that these principles, whilst inflexible in their authority, are elastic enough to fit in with all the perplexities and difficulties of the most troubled career.

One point further needs to be emphasized: these principles must not only be distinctly formed, but must always be in hand for immediate use. In war an army must always be ready for action. When the midnight foe is upon them, there is no time for burnishing the armor; it must be ready for defence, or the battle is lost. So when the world opens its batteries upon the young, and the temptations of life are suddenly sprung on their path, they fail in the struggle of life unless prepared with the weapons to beat back the foe. The men whose principles of action are fully matured, and held in due subordination to each other, are never surprised in any emergency; and by mere force of character will bend to their own purpose the most obstinate difficulties that oppose.

IV. *The symmetrical development of all the faculties with which we are endowed, is indispensable to a perfect character.* Grammarians tell us of nouns declinable in but a single case, which are termed "monopotes;" so there are men educated in but a single faculty. It may be the intellect; one stands before us the very incarnation of logic, but as cold as a polar iceberg; a pure intelligence, without a pulse of genu-

ine emotion, or glow of fancy, to give complexion to his life. It is the combination of all his powers that gives strength and beauty to man. It is the intellect looking out upon truth, the affections embracing the good, the conscience discriminating the right, and the will turning all these into concrete acts of the life—it is while passing around the entire circle of all his endowments, that a man stands before his fellows in the perfect symmetry of his nature. We look with delight upon every instance of physical development; one appears before us six feet high, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, with a noble head crowning the body, erect upon the earth as with the tread of a conqueror, with admirable pose he stands the very picture of manly beauty. But this is only a picture of what is nobler yet; when, in the proportion of his intellectual and moral gifts, he stands complete in all the attributes which make a hero—possessing in the assemblage of his powers a sinewy strength which shall be equal to any enterprise.

V. *There can be no moral excellence without the supremacy of the spiritual elements of our nature over the animal.* Man is, indeed,

a miracle among the creatures, the bridge which connects two worlds. In the possession of a soul, he is akin to God; and in the cultivation of his spiritual nature he rises to his highest dignity, and becomes the peer of angels. When in all the utterances and movements of a man can be traced the flashings of an immortal soul, then he is glorified into the image of God who made him. We can but exclaim:

“What a piece of work is man! How noble  
In reason! how infinite in faculty! in form,  
And moving, how express and admirable! in  
Action, how like an angel! in apprehension,  
How like a god! the beauty of the world! the  
Paragon of animals!”

Yet with these lofty endowments, he is allied to the beasts of the field, with the same appetites and lusts, with a mortal body destined to return to the earth from which it was taken. In this commixture of opposing elements one cannot but recall the antitheses of the poet Young:

“How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful, is man!”

In the warfare between these forces of his complex being, man finds the turning point of his earthly and eternal destiny. If he gives the rein to appetite always craving

for indulgence, he sinks into the pit of debauchery and loses that nobility conferred upon him as lord over the animals beneath him. It is very sad that, when man degrades himself to the level of the brute, he becomes the meanest animal that lives, a sufficient proof that his true manhood is to be found in "the sanctity of reason" with which he is endowed; and which being lost, he falls below the guidance even of the instinct of the brute. Character in man, therefore implies the ascendancy of the spiritual over the animal propensities of his nature; without which he forfeits his sonship as made after the likeness of his Creator.

*VI. The last constituent which I will mention as entering into a true character, is the power of relating ourselves to society and to the great Being who controls our destiny*

Every man has his place in life, though he does not always succeed in finding it; then inevitable failure ensues. He who ascertains his true position in the generation to which he belongs, finds the duties assigned to him; and may reverently expect that gracious protection will ensure success in the sphere allotted to him.

This involves the great principle of self-

abnegation. True greatness does not consist in the building up of self, which on the contrary is always an element of weakness—like the flaw in machinery, which breaks down at length under the strain put upon it. There are not a few who die, as one expresses it, “from an overdose of self.” The glory of God’s love is seen in the gift of His own Son as “the propitiation for our sins;” and the most acceptable sacrifice laid upon any human altar is the supreme gift which one makes of himself, consecrating all his powers to the glory of God and to the welfare of mankind. Those who enter into this holy priesthood will ever draw upon the strength that is Divine, and rise superior to all the trials of this troubled life.

My young friends, allow me to close this Lecture with this pregnant truth, that character is the condition of success in all our undertakings. Genius, so often lauded to the skies, fails frequently for want of common sense to guide it. The men upon whom society leans for support are those of well-balanced minds, of sound practical judgment, whose solid character gives the pledge of faithfulness to every trust committed to their hands.

Young men, in the opening of their

career, ask the anxious question, "shall I succeed?" I recall the confused fear which filled my breast when I first stepped from the cloister of the student, and was turned loose upon life. It spread itself before me like a tempestuous sea, the waste of waters within the encircling horizon. Would my frail bark be equal to the pre-destined voyage? Ever since that day I have desired to stand in the presence of young adventurers like myself, if only to say just this—that success belongs to those who deserve it; but success in the sphere which Providence assigns to each. It may not be the career of the eagle, with the strong wing soaring above the storm into the very eye of the sun; yet it may be the flight of the lark shaking the morning dew from its wing, and caroling its song in the upper air. But whether the career be that of the eagle or of the lark, it will be the success of him who honestly weighs life and discharges its responsibilities. Then as under the discipline of earth the character forms into the perfect crystal, its diamond splendor will reflect the Divine glory as it shines upon him through the eternal day.



### LECTURE III.

## *INFLUENCE OF PIETY IN FORM- ING CHARACTER.*

JOB xvii. 9—“*The righteous shall hold on his way ;  
and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and  
stronger.*”

In the last Lecture, I was led to insist upon personal character as something acquired, and the elements which enter into it. In this last, I purposely omitted to dwell upon the influence most important of all ; reserving it for consideration at the present time. I PROPOSE, THEN, TO SET BEFORE YOU TO-NIGHT THE INFLUENCE OF PRACTICAL RELIGION IN GIVING CONSISTENCY AND TRUTHFULNESS TO MAN.

If you were asked to give the definition of a perfect man, you would probably reply, “it is he who can afford to be exactly what he seems.” Many deny the possibility of this, insisting that life is simply a masquerade. I would not endorse a view so cynical as this. Let us freely acknowledge the generous and noble qualities often exhibited by many who are not brought within the kingdom of Christ ;

and whilst this may be credited to the indirect influence of the Gospel, which is its outer halo, still let due honor be paid to the candor and generosity natural to many. It would be captious and illiberal not to allow the many excellent traits possessed by those who are not the subjects of grace. Even with this large admission, however, there are probably none in this world who can entirely take the covering from their hearts, and disclose every secret thought to public inspection. We may perhaps venture, in our approach to God, upon that seemingly over-bold prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts;" for this is only the recognition of His omniscience and forgiving love, but does not justify the same exposure to the gaze of our fellow-men. There is that degree of imperfection in the best of us, that a decent reserve must veil our conflict with the evil within us; or society would be disjointed by the destruction of confidence between man and man, which is the basis of all human intercourse. Even the holiest cannot describe the corruption of indwelling sin, without the use of terms which would debase those who hear the sad narration. In this imperfect state we can only

approximate the being what we seem ; and I wish now to show, that the most determinative influence in imparting truthfulness and consistency to character is to be found in true religion. After all—

“ It matters not what men assume to be ;  
Or good, or bad, they are but what they are.”

I. *Religion is the only system that spreads itself over the whole nature of man, in its various departments.* Let us enter into some detail. First of all, it takes possession of the understanding, relieving both from ignorance and doubt. These unquestionably are the two principal causes of irregularity in the conduct of life. We begin our career with a limited measure of knowledge, under which we are obliged to act as the only guide we have ; but as we advance in our course, other truths break in upon us from the right and left, which modify our practice in accordance with the new convictions that have necessarily been formed. In the course of a long life, the charge of inconsistency is sometimes recklessly preferred against men ; who cannot escape the impeachment, if they would do that which is honest and true. Manifestly, to persist in a course of error lest we should be accused of vacillation, is a shameful

dereliction of principle, and inflicts a lasting wound upon the character. Ignorance must, therefore, to a greater or less extent, involve one in outward inconsistencies which can only be justified on the plea of increasing light. Doubt also, to an equal extent, occasions indecision and unsteadiness of life. In the moment confidence in one's own judgment begins to waver, his step becomes more and more hesitating, until finally all progress is arrested.

Now the Gospel presents itself as a system of positive truth, and controls the intellect of which it takes possession. It does not deal in probabilities, nor in remote inferences. Its method of teaching is that of authoritative testimony, all its truths being on the same level. Inscrutable mysteries, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the New Birth, the Resurrection, are disclosed upon the same authority, are received with the same faith, with the plainest moral precept or the simplest historical fact. Its range of instruction is wider, covering all the relations in which man can possibly stand and all the duties growing out of the same : and what is more wonderful still, there is a congruity between the truths revealed and the nature of the human soul ; by reason of which they

secure an entrance from which it is impossible they shall ever be dislodged. So far, then, as the mind is enlightened by it, so far is consistency given to character.

Turn now from the understanding to the conscience, and see how religion takes hold of that. This is the religious faculty in man, by which he is distinguished from the brute. It is the power within us which responds immediately and necessarily to law; discriminating between the right and the wrong, just as the law authoritatively prescribes in what it commands and in what it forbids. To this conscience the Gospel directly appeals; in its ethical aspect transcending all human systems in five particulars, thus: (*a*) it places man in wider relations, and enlarges in every direction the sphere of duty. In due subordination, it presents the relation we sustain to God, to ourselves, to the family, to the community in which we dwell, to the State, to the Church, to the world; in each of these concentric circles filling the entire space with the duties appertaining to each. Then, (*b*) these duties themselves are set forth with far greater precision and clearness than under any merely human exposition. The mists which hang around philosophic speculations are dispelled by

the full light of Divine revelation, and he who has the spirit of simple obedience, is never doomed to walk in darkness. Further, (*c*) it brings into play higher principles of action than considerations of present interest or general expediency; in place of which it substitutes the fear of God and ready acquiescence in His revealed will. Of course, it follows (*d*) that it presents an infallible and unchanging standard or rule to which our practice may be referred; and let it never be forgotten that a perfect standard is needed for the measure of character as well as of conduct. Thus coming directly from God, it has the sanction of imperial law, and binds the conscience with a supreme authority. Finally, (*e*) the Gospel not only teaches duty, but enables to its performance. It reveals an agency by which the heart is renewed and all its affections turned to what is right and true and proper and good. The conscience, which before trembled under the accusations of the violated law, is now purged from a sense of guilt and renders a willing and joyful obedience to all that is commanded. Man is lifted above the fear of his fellows, moves ever in the eye of the Being whom he loves, only seeking to know what is right, and determining this

by no suggestions of a fluctuating policy, but by the unerring decisions of a wisdom that is infinite.

Let it not be urged that man is deprived of freedom, if placed under a supreme law. A little reflection will show that law is the only ground upon which the liberty of a rational agent can be based; just as the weight of a bird enables it to float in the air, or the ballast of the ship enables it to plow the waters of the deep. If man were outside law, he would be outside all relations; and there would be no sphere in which moral agency could be exercised, and consequently it would be idle to speak of will at all, much less of the freedom of its exercise.

But the Gospel covers the whole nature of man, when it gains full possession of his heart. It is in the affections of the soul the motive power resides, which is the spring of human action. They have been almost poetically likened to the wings of the bird, with which it mounts aloft in the sky; and to the sails of a ship, by which it is pressed forward on its destined course to a distant port. If a man were without desires, if he were incapable of emotions, he would be equally incapable of action. However his understanding might perceive

truth or his conscience recognize the right, he would be without the disposition to move in this direction or that. For this he is dependent upon the affections of the heart; by which the will is determined to its choice, resulting finally in the concrete act in which all the antecedent processes are embodied.

Observe now in this connection the amazing simplicity of God's dealings with man. The whole of human obedience is reduced to the single principle of love: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The two Tables of the Law are covered in one single precept, and our obligations fulfilled in one comprehensive act of love. We are thus relieved of the wearisome drudgery of a merely mechanical service, and obedience is made the joy of our life. This simplicity marks the Divine procedure in nature, as well as in grace. Innumerable worlds revolve around their respective centres, controlled by that single law of attraction which brings a falling stone to the earth, and which binds the atom to the mass of which it is a constituent part. So it is in Providence. When God placed man in Eden, his probation was reduced to a single issue:

whilst the law covered Adam's entire nature, yet the temptation was restricted to one point on which alone his destiny turned. It was an act of singular benevolence thus to simplify and render easy the trial upon which the first man was placed, when he was called to guard the one avenue by which alone the Tempter was allowed to enter. The same tender consideration is shown to the sinner in the scheme of grace. When the momentous question is raised, "What must I do to be saved?" the one answer is returned, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" The whole matter is reduced to a single and simple issue, that of a personal trust in the Redeemer of men. In like manner God rules His children through the affections of their renewed nature. The value of Christianity is seen in that it is a system of practical religion. As in the household true filial obedience springs only from the heart, so in the family of God no external conformity to the letter constitutes obedience which does not root itself in the principle of love. Thus, in taking possession of all man's natural powers, religion exerts the most influence in imparting consistency to human character.

II. *The Gospel discloses broad and comprehensive principles, which are to be applied in every case of individual duty* This point was alluded to in the preceding lecture, but deserves more articulate consideration just here. We are often tempted to wish that an oracle without, or an unerring instinct within, would guide us whenever the emergencies arise which set our judgment at fault. But if life be a discipline throughout, we need an educational system rather than an arbitrary rubric for the government of our actions. In the changing conditions of our earthly lot, new situations constantly arise in which duty can only be ascertained by a wise application of principles already adopted. Take, for example, the question of wealth in the case of Christian men. When a hungry world is lifting up its cry for the bread of life, how solemn the question, "How much wealth is it lawful for a child of God to retain in his own hands?" If wealth be a trust, how is it to be administered? Evidently, there are many vitally interested in the solution of this single problem, which can only be resolved by the principles laid down in the sacred Scriptures.

Take another illustration in the matter of worldly conformity: how far may a pro-

fessing Christian go with the unconverted in the enjoyment of their pleasures? Where is the line to be drawn between the pursuits which are lawful, and those in which Christian character would be seriously compromised? The educational value of true piety is clearly exhibited in these two sufficient examples: for as the question of duty is to be determined under the safe application of the same general principles, just to that extent will the conduct pursued become uniform and consistent.

III. *Consider that man has a religious nature; and every training that does not include this is seriously defective.* It is this capacity for religion and worship, which discriminates the man from the brute. Man knows the meaning of the word "ought;" he recognizes the obligation imposed by authority upon the conscience; and through the operation of this faculty he has the sense of guilt in neglecting the same. The brute, on the contrary, knows nothing of moral distinctions, and is therefore incapable of worship. The character, then, in which the religious element is not found, is sadly defective. The man of science who has searched through Nature's cabinet, wresting from her all her secrets

and placing them on record—or the philosopher who can dive into the depths of human conduct, and explore the motives by which men are actuated in life—let these be simply intellectual, and they have lost that seal of nobility which would be recognized by the angels in heaven. Let one's morals be of the purest type, but without any movement of the soul in worship of the Creator, and he is dwarfed in the highest part of his being. The Gospel, then, in cultivating the noblest attributes of man, not only prepares him for the duties of this life, but also develops that which is to be glorified in the eternal world.

IV. *True piety imparts that conscious sincerity so indispensable in a race of beings confessedly imperfect.* Ours may be a true love, though it be not the “perfect love that casteth out fear;” and the Christian goes into the presence of his Heavenly Father, covering his face in shame that his adoring worship does not rise to the height of the Divine majesty and glory. Yet it is much if in all sincerity he can say, as did Peter after the denial of his Master, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Our obedience to God's will may not be a covering long

enough or broad enough to give us warmth ; yet, imperfect as it is, it is something to say honestly before God and our fellow-men, "What I profess, I am." These acts, therefore, though falling short of our full duty, may yet be offered even to a holy God as evidence of a true devotion to His service.

What, then, ensures a deeper sincerity than true piety? When a man becomes a child of God, he is created anew by Divine grace ; and all the love which he feels, together with the obedience which is its fruit, flows directly from the spiritual life begotten within him by the Holy Ghost. The same sincerity will be evinced in all the relative duties between man and man. In the varied relations of life, the child before the parent, the wife before the husband, the acts performed are true acts which are not disgraceful, simply because they spring from a true love within the soul. As the new nature expands, in the growth from infancy to "the stature of the fulness of Christ," it presses out the old nature of sin which languishes to its final extinction. You recall, perhaps, the memorable discourse of Dr. Chalmers upon "the expulsive power of a new affection ;" a philosophic way of stating the doctrine

of sanctification on its positive side. Why, even our gardens cannot be kept clean by simply plucking up the weeds; the soil must be preoccupied with useful and wholesome plants: so the Holy Ghost, creating us "new creatures in Christ Jesus," fills the soul with a new life which throws sincerity and truth into the very acts which we acknowledge to be wholly imperfect before God and men. Through the force of true piety, a value attaches to actions which otherwise are destitute of merit.

V. *It is no small proof of the moulding power of the Gospel, that it places its rewards in Heaven—above and beyond the competitions of earth.* How can it fail to give consistency and strength to human character, when faith with its prophetic eye peers through the gloom of the present, and sees beyond the Judgment the rewards laid up for those who love God and keep His commandments. Under the influence of this vision the world may reel beneath our feet, or through its successive disappointments fade wholly out of sight; still the knowledge of the joy that is to come will enable us to be patient and enduring under all the trials of our lot. Our plans may ravel out

in our hands, and we may feel that nothing has been accomplished of all that we desired; still these sickening failures may be the most precious lessons teaching us to "set our affections on things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." The jeers of our fellow-men may fall upon us bearing our cross, as they fell upon the Master hanging upon His; yet with Him we may be able to say, "Father, into thy hands we commend our spirit." With hopes and expectations above, we are preserved from the despondency and gloom which the disappointments of life are so apt to engender; and our walk becomes steady with the eye fixed upon the star which shines with its cheering light upon our path. In our Lord's ascension into Heaven we have the assurance that the blessings purchased by His blood are borne above as a sacred trust, where the world can never reach them with its temptations, nor Satan assail them in the fury of his rage.

It is not a little touching that the last act of our Lord, when leaving the earth, was to bless His people with outstretched hands; and in the very last look which the disciples had of Him, as the clouds received Him out of their sight, He was still

engaged in this act of priestly benediction : “ and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them ; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.” Through all the ages from that day to this, our High Priest is standing before the throne of His Father with His priestly blessing still dropping from His open palm upon His struggling Church. With this vision before his eye, how can the believer yield to despair, though seemingly crushed beneath the sorrows of life ? Thus does the Gospel inspire the soul with hope even in the darkest hour, and consistency is given to character even to the end.

My young friends, when the claims of personal religion are pressed upon you, I know how prone you are to say, “ Not just yet.” Your thought is that the old who are sitting upon the edge of the precipice, their feet almost touching the waters of the cold river, do well to take out some sort of insurance policy against the risks which are just before them ; nay, it may be wise for those who are in the fierce battle of life to find repose in leaning upon the bosom of a Saviour. But as for you, in the effervescence of youth, and with the world’s attractions spread around you, you

wish to be let alone for a season until these pleasures shall a little pall upon the taste.

Ah ! that you could know the true secret of happiness here on earth. The whole Christian world rises to tell you that there is more joy in the repentance of a sinner, than in those vain pleasures which the wise Solomon compares to "the crackling of thorns under a pot." Not all the frivolous enjoyments of earth can one such drop of joy afford as a Christian feels when he is able to weep over forgiven sin. Accept the testimony of the old, who were young once like you. Accept the testimony of him who is now addressing you, who once fought against the convictions of conscience rather than submit to the authority of Christ. Believe me, it is no professional utterance I bear to you to-night. It is not so long ago I held up my hand against God and warred against all the principles of Grace : yet I am here to proclaim to you the testimony of the universal Church, here on earth as well as in heaven, that the secret of true joy is to be found alone in the pardon of sin and in acceptance with God.



## LECTURE IV.

### *OBLIGATION ARISING FROM A PIOUS ANCESTRY.*

2 TIMOTHY i. 15—“ *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.*”

Before entering upon the subject of this evening's Lecture, I desire to present to the young men before me the Apostle Paul as strikingly illustrating all I have said upon the importance of character and upon the elements which enter into it. Intellectually and morally he was of massive proportions ; strong in his convictions, which were not allowed to slumber in his bosom, but were wrought into all the activities of life ; he stands out like an island rising up from the sea. Even in his earliest career, what an intense Jew he was ! “ An Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church ”—such is the portrait drawn by his own hand of himself. But when by Divine grace he is brought to the

feet of Jesus, what life-long devotion does he display in "preaching the faith which once he destroyed?" During three years in the solitudes of Arabia studying the symbols of the Old Dispensation, he comes forth from that strange school under the power of one ruling idea: carrying the truth that the Gospel was for all mankind, against the opinions and prejudices of the world, he established the catholicity of Christianity. With incredible toil and sacrifice he proclaimed "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;" in whom henceforth "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for all are one in Christ Jesus." Yet what strange gentleness nestles in this rugged character! Throughout these two Pastoral Epistles he breathes the most tender affection to one whom he calls his "son;" and in the verse immediately preceding the text, refers with touching pathos to the tears of Timothy, as he lay upon his bosom at the hour of parting. What a picture is here, as the strong warrior of the Cross takes into his loving arms the young disciple who weeps under the paternal benediction

which falls from those polemic lips! What a strange combination in the after history between the two: this tender nursling by the side of the rugged athlete, his confidential friend and the companion of his travels; then located at Ephesus, receiving these affectionate letters which shall guide and cheer the young pastor amid the trials of his responsible and difficult field. If we should ever be disposed to regard ruggedness of character incompatible with the tenderness of love, let the delusion be dispelled as you view the gentle Timothy in the embrace of the massive Paul.

In the text, however, Timothy is presented as standing in the line of a pious descent, from his grandmother Lois, and through his mother Eunice: which properly introduces the topic upon which I desire to address you to-night, to-wit: THE OBLIGATION RESTING UPON THE YOUNG WHO ARE BORN OF A PIOUS ANCESTRY.

I. *Consider, then, the greater probability of conversion with those who come of a godly parentage.* Of course, you understand that piety is not hereditary: it does not descend with the blood. On the contrary, the Gospel has the same work to do in each generation. Let us suppose that at the

moment I am speaking, every adult on the globe should be a Christian—and not only every adult, but every child old enough to understand the terms of salvation—bring all these before you as included within the kingdom of Christ, how long would the world stay converted? Just as soon as this favored generation has passed away and another generation is born, the Gospel is called to the new enterprise of bringing each individual of this also under the influence of saving truth. Let this be pondered by those who mock at Christianity, because of its slow progress in converting the nations of the earth. When was such a momentous task ever assigned to an organized society, as we find laid upon the Church of the Redeemer? All who are born upon earth are born with a depraved nature, needing to be renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and this work must be performed upon every individual of the countless millions composing each generation successively coming into the world. It is a work constantly renewed, as often as it is performed; always beginning, and never finished until time itself shall cease. Evidently, therefore, piety does not flow in the way of carnal descent: it does not follow that because the father

is a Christian, the son shall be the heir of his faith; nor that the daughter will possess the traits of a godly mother. Yet the grand fact remains, standing out prominently in history, that the Church is largely perpetuated through the conversion of those born within her pale.

This may be partially explained upon the principle that grace sanctifies all the relations and ties of life; and turns them all into instrumentalities for the salvation of those around us. Every soul brought into the kingdom of Christ, touches a larger or smaller circle of those who are near at hand: and thus the current of influence flows through innumerable channels of tender and affectionate intercourse; so that few are so remote as not to feel in some degree the power of Divine truth. But the final solution of this problem is unquestionably to be found in the promise of Jehovah's covenant, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." What adds to the preciousness of this promise made to the Church, is that it is a perpetual promise, transferred from generation to generation through succeeding ages. Nay, more: whilst in the administration of His government God "visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third

and fourth generation of them that hate him," He is "the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a *thousand* generations." His judgments upon the wicked are thus seen tempered with mercy; but in the outflow of His love, there is no limit to the blessings secured in His covenant to His people. In "the families that call upon His name," there is a special blessing for the children upon whose brow the seal of the kingdom has been impressed; and upon this gracious principle we understand how it is, that those born of a pious ancestry are so largely led in the way of salvation.

You perceive, then, my young friends, how peremptory is the obligation resting upon those of you who issue from Christian homes. As I speak, it may be that the image of a godly father rises before you, or the still more tender remembrance of a dear mother, who have passed from your embrace into the skies above. By the sacredness of those memories I would press upon your conscience and heart the duty of possessing their faith and their hope. By the seal of that covenant, which through them binds you to the service of God, I would adjure you to assume and to

discharge the supreme obligation it imposes. If perchance you descend from an ancestry which has been godly from generations back, remember that the argument gathers force by the very accumulation of influences from the mother that bore you, and from the grandmother that bore her, and from the ancestors lying further back ; all urging upon you the obligation to serve and to worship the God of your fathers. How can it be, that you shall have grown to manhood and assumed all the other responsibilities of life, without recognizing the higher duties which spring from the privilege of birth under the seal of Jehovah's covenant in a Christian home ?

II. *Consider again the benefit derived from the prayers of pious parents and of godly ancestors.* We naturally seek to trace the connection between prayer and its answer. It is not satisfactory to find that connection simply in the reflex influence upon the petitioner. Undoubtedly, prayer does prepare us to receive the blessings of a kind Providence, but this cannot be its whole design and effect. Whether we understand it or not, when we bend the knee before God in secret, we feel that a real tie exists between the petition offered and the bene-

fits afterward bestowed—that somehow in the economy which God has established the prayer is of account before Him, and has a determining agency in securing the blessings we implore. Even in the natural sphere no want is supplied, until it is recognized. Hunger must precede the enjoyment of food; we are thirsty before we can drink; and until the eyelids are worn down with fatigue, sleep is a stranger to our couch. The Divine Being seems to have established these conditions upon which earthly blessings are conferred; and by analogy we may expect that our spiritual wants will not be met, until they are felt and are distinctly acknowledged. This thought may be pressed a little further. God is a Sovereign, and moves under the promptings of His own will. “He giveth not account of His matters;” but requires of all intelligent creatures that they shall submit to His authority and acknowledge the supremacy of His will. Whether, therefore, we can explain the mysteries of Providence or not, we are compelled in the dependence of our nature to cast ourselves upon His wisdom and His strength. It is of His own munificence that blessings are bestowed upon men, who have forfeited every claim upon His favor; and His grace,

no less than His Sovereignty, should be acknowledged, and man's responsibility in reference to the same must be brought out in the duty of prayer. A substantive and true connection is thus shown to exist between the prayer and its answer—a true relation between the petitioner on earth and the “Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.”

How many prayers are offered in every pious home, accumulating the obligation which rests upon those brought up in the same! It is written in the Scriptures that the tears of God's people are put in His bottle, and that “a book of remembrance is written before him for them that fear him and think upon his name.” Who can tell how these remembered tears and prayers may prove a shield to many of you, sheltering from dangers and snares of which you little dream? And what a fearful doom awaits those who will face these unanswered petitions at the judgment-seat! Oh, young man, lift up that profane foot which perhaps is trampling on a dead mother's supplications; which, though looked upon with indifference by you, are written in God's book of remembrance as a challenge for your obedience and homage. As they are recorded in Heaven,

let them be a sign for blessing and not for woe; that they may yet be answered in your conversion and final salvation.

III. *Consider, further, the obligation arising from the training and example of sainted parents.* I use the term, "training," because it includes the two elements upon which I desire to insist. There are the counsels which we receive from those wiser than ourselves, and in the case of parents there is the discipline with which these counsels are enforced. Just as the mind is opening to recognize the truth, a matured mind is at our side already charged with the truth and holding it in the form of love for the more ready communication of it. A fountain is provided in the very home in which we were born, sending forth its magnetic waters to stimulate and refresh the young inquirers who drink and bathe in the same. Remember, too, that the knowledge thus pouring upon the plastic mind of the child, is not the knowledge derived from books, nor yet drawn from life's experience; but it is also that higher knowledge which is bestowed through the teaching of the Divine Spirit. These Christian guides who stand by us from the cradle till manhood is reached, have a

spiritual discernment of God's holy truth ; and at every moment in our childhood's growth they have been imparting this knowledge to us.

Nor should the value of authority be overlooked which, before parental counsels can be rationally apprehended, enforces them with a consistent and wholesome discipline. During the years when character is unfolding we are under this gentle pressure, which moulds and shapes the will without binding its action or fettering its freedom—only breathing around us the moral atmosphere necessary to the exercise of all the faculties with which we are endowed. Before we have intelligence enough to frame resistance to this mild control, we have learned the first great lesson of human life in the submission of the will to lawful and needful authority. With this self-control we are in a measure fitted to assume the responsibilities of life, through which we are brought in contact with our fellow-men.

So far, then, as regards the training of a Christian home, under the double aspect of instruction and discipline. But beyond all this, there is the exemplification of goodness and virtue in the character of godly parents. No influence can be more

pervading than that of personal character ; which, like the light, is the more effective because of the silence in which it moves. It is virtue not in dogma or precept, challenging the scepticism of the mind or the antagonism of the will ; but it is virtue incarnate, living, breathing, and showing its power in every act. Who can wholly resist an influence like this, always present and ever penetrating—insinuating itself as through our very pores until it secretly fashions the form and movement of our future life ? Even the momentary touch of one who is intellectually stronger than ourselves galvanizes by the contact. It argues a nature either exceedingly weak or superlatively strong, which does not feel the electric influence flash through the frame coming from a mind stronger and nobler than our own. As it is intellectually, so it is morally. The moment we are brought in contact with a positive character, such as Paul's—a character always pronounced—always under the control of principles—always a character moulded by convictions too powerful to be resisted—we cannot touch a battery like this without feeling an unwonted energy swiftly pervading our own being. If such be the effect of occasional intercourse with an

intellect or will superior to ours, what must be the influence of permanent association with those who shape our entire nature from the cradle to mature age? My young friend, there stands before your eye the image of a father who, in your earlier years, was to you in the place of God. I pause a little under the solemnity of the utterance, which involves a reciprocal and fearful responsibility. There is a brief period in the history of every child, when he knows no other authority but that of the parent, and recognizes no other Providence save that of parental watchfulness and care. If the parent trembles under the assumption of such a trust as that of being God's representative to the child, who can measure the equal responsibility of resisting the infinite Jehovah as expressed in the authority and piety of the parent? If any of you before me to-night call up the memory of a pious home with its godly training, I implore you to prepare for the account to be rendered for such a privilege at the bar of judgment.

IV. *In estimating the influence of a Christian home, consider also the sweet associations with the good and the stimulus it afforded.* Remember that every household is the

centre of an outer circle, in which the associations woven around the parent are also woven around the child. These are often the most shaping influence of early childhood. If you will pardon a reference to my own personal experience, I recall among the most distinct and pleasing memories of my youth the conversations I was permitted to hear between my father and his ministerial friends sometimes gathered around the evening fireside. As far back as my memory goes I bring before me the pleasant circle, as I sat in my little chair in the shadow, unnoticed by all, drinking in with eyes and ears the wisdom poured forth from those consecrated lips; the influence of which toned my whole life, and the sweetness of which is upon my tongue to-night. Bear in mind that we do not begin to count in the world's estimation, until we are found in conjunction with others. Take any single number by itself, and what is its value? It is two, or three, or four, or six, or nine; but as long as it stands alone, it is that and no more. But place even a cipher behind it, and you multiply it tenfold. So it is in society. When we are brought together in close fellowship one with another, in the influence re-echoing between the two we have a

numerical value given to us never enjoyed in our individual sphere. Hence the sweetness and power of these early Christian associations, which linger in the memory with an influence always in favor of virtue and truth.

V. *Finally, I suggest the relation of a pious home to future happiness in Heaven* Of course, our earthly relations terminate at death: our Lord impressively teaches that "in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God."

But while the earthly relations are abolished, the spiritual ties which spring out of them are not cancelled. If the future world be a world of retribution, as we are distinctly taught in Holy Scripture, then memory will abide; and with memory there will be in Heaven a complete transfiguration of our earthly affections and associations. If I can go back to the period of childhood and recognize that under God I owe all that I am to the influence of a godly mother, will not this spiritual tie forever bind me to her as to no other of the redeemed in glory? If the children of my loins have passed, through my moulding influence as an instrumental agency, into

the kingdom of Grace, then surely the spiritual tie will be as distinctly recognized in Heaven as upon earth. If, as the Master has told us, there are "mansions in our Father's House" prepared for them that love Him, we shall surely be closely associated with those with whom our Christian life was most closely blended upon earth.

If, moreover, our heavenly joy should prove the outcome of pious influences accumulating through past generations, from sire to grand-sire back to the third and fourth generation of those who were all the children of God, how will the family swell into a great tribe bound eternally together in a sacred relationship? Ah, my friends, if the family be the original society in which God first planted the Church—if in the relations of the family He illustrates His adopting love, by which we become His children in Christ Jesus, who can tell how the spiritual ties of the earthly home may be glorified above? And who can deny but that from these transfigured affections our joy will be increased as we worship before the throne?

In bringing this Lecture to a close, you will perceive that the whole argument may be reduced within the compass of a brief but familiar maxim, "*Noblesse oblige.*"

Rank carries with it its unchangeable obligations. You expect the son of a king to behave as becomes his royal blood. The nobility of his station pledges him to a noble demeanor. You are justly disappointed if, in a child born of cultivated parents, you do not find the wisdom which should be displayed in all his words and actions. What then do we not owe to that Providence which has given us our birth in a Christian home? And does not this oblige us to a Christian life answering to our privilege of birth? How unspeakable the shame of a son who confesses himself unworthy of the father who begat him! Young men, if you are born of godly parentage, you have a patent of nobility greater than an earthly kingdom can bestow. In the sovereignty of God you are born of Christian parents in a Christian land, whilst myriads came to the light under some heathen god. Surely this distinguished mercy throws upon you a corresponding obligation to engage in the service and worship of the living and true God. It will be a fearful doom, to find yourselves separated forever from those whose faith and piety should have been your eternal heritage. May God avert it through His infinite mercy and grace!



## LECTURE V.

### *OBLIGATION ARISING FROM THE TRUSTS OF LIFE.*

I JOHN ii 14 — “*I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.*”

In this instructive chapter, the Apostle presses several things upon the attention of Christians. He shows how utterly worthless is a religious profession, which is not marked by reverential and loving obedience to the Divine law. If however any be surprised into sin, refuge may be found in the Atonement and Intercession of Christ: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” From this the Apostle passes to the more particular duty of brotherly love; which he enjoins as both an old and a new commandment. It is an old commandment, inasmuch as love from the beginning was the root from which all obedience must spring: “thou shalt love

the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It is a new commandment, in that it is enforced under a new sanction and by a new motive—even the love of Christ Himself to a lost world in "giving His life a ransom for many." To make these admonitions more impressive, He distributes the Church into three leading classes; "the little children," or those just brought into the kingdom—"the Fathers," who have had long experience of the truth and have "endured hardness as good soldiers of Christ"—and, intermediate between these, those whom he styles "young men;" in the early but ripe development of their Christian experience, and who are thus equipped for all the responsibilities of life. These classes are addressed with motives especially adapted to each: the young believer, because he has just tasted the joy of pardon in the knowledge of God as his Heavenly Father; the old Christian, because he has had such long acquaintance with his Saviour and is so near to the eternal home; the young

men, because their piety has been tested and "the word of God abideth in them." Then follows the grand exhortation, to which all this is preliminary, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Here, it is noticeable that he makes a three-fold classification of the temptations to which all men are exposed in life; which lie in the pleasures, or the profits, or the honors of the world. The young are most in danger from the first, classified under the title of "the lust of the flesh;" the old are in peril from the second, indicated as "lust of the eye," in the greedy craving after gain; the busy actors are most likely to be snared by "the pride of life," in the ambitious endeavor to secure the vain honors which wither in the first hour of enjoyment. It will thus appear that "the young men" of the text are those who are enrolled as members of the Church of Christ; but it is not an unwarrantable extension of the phrase to include all of the class which, in the maturity of its strength, is about to assume the duties and to discharge the trusts of life. I am thus brought face to face with the topic of this Lecture; to press THE OBLIGATION RESTING UPON YOUNG MEN FROM THE FACT OF THEIR EQUIPMENT FOR THE RESPONSIBILITIES

WHICH THEY MUST IMMEDIATELY AND NECESSARILY UNDERTAKE.

I. *Let me press the fact itself of the necessity for action on the part of young men.* The world in which they live is a world of action. Change and movement are everywhere. The very globe on which we stand revolves perpetually on its own axis ; whilst, in the system to which it belongs, it sweeps in its orbit around the sun. On its surface all is shifting and change. “The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north ; it whirleth about continually ; and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea ; yet the sea is not full ; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” So it is in the orderings of Providence : “one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.” If you stand upon the plane of history, nations and kingdoms move to and fro like figures upon a chess-board ; and when you come to individuals, they play their little part in the activities of life, and melt away as the mist. Everything partakes of movement. Who now are to

be the chief actors on this stage of excitement and whirl? Not the old who have fought their way through this life of storm and battle, and are about to strip off their armour; but those who, in the zenith of their strength, are facing the issues which they cannot avoid. There are many reasons why the old cannot be the principal performers upon the stage which they are shortly to abandon. First of all, their physical and intellectual vigor is upon the decline. True, it is not easy to draw the line at which vitality begins to decay; just as we cannot determine the moment when the keel of the ship cuts the equator which separates two continents. However it may vary in different cases, there is in the life of every man a line which divides the two hemispheres; a point where vitality begins to decay, indicating that he must remit the burdens and cares of life to more youthful and competent workers. Again, the old lose that elasticity which needs only the removal of a burden to restore the toiler to his original activity, showing that no injury has been sustained under the pressure. But in all men the point is reached when this spring of elasticity is weakened, and we refuse to regain the vigor which is lost; and this inability

discovers to us that our duties must be devolved upon other and more stalwart champions. Nor is this the worst: the care and sorrow which accumulate upon the old impart a sombre hue to life, unfitting them to engage longer in the struggles that remain. They are not able to accommodate themselves to the changes of time, and to do in the future what they resolutely performed in the past. They have exhausted the world of all it has to give; they have sucked the orange dry, and hold in their hand only the squeezed and empty pulp. Finally, is there not a propriety in the old retiring from the dust and turmoil of earth, that they may fix their thoughts and hopes upon the life beyond? As the light breaks upon them from another world, should they not have leisure to lay their hand upon that solemn future and weigh the trusts which are beckoning them above the stars?

If this world is to be a world of action, to whom can the aged remit their responsibilities except to the sons who should inherit the names and destinies of the fathers? These, too, are prepared to assume the imposed burden. They have passed through the discipline of their early years, they have been educated in the

school of obedience and self-control, they have been shaped for all the contingencies of the future under parental authority, stern in the hand of the father but gracious and gentle in the hand of the mother—why should they not be ready to assume and fulfil the most sacred trusts which society may impose? Does not this fact of his equipment for the life upon which he must of necessity enter, hold every young man responsible for fidelity in the duties from which he cannot be discharged?

II. *Observe further that we must take up life just where it meets us.* Nothing is fortuitous; God is sovereign in all His allotments. We enter upon life exactly at the point where we touch it. Like a party crossing a river, the moment we strike the opposite shore we must land. It may be where a thicket, thorny as a Mexican Chapparal, grows down to the water's edge; and right there we must cut our way through to the inviting plains beyond. The introduction of one into life may be under the most favorable circumstances; he may be born of parents having liberal views, who have given him the advantage of the highest education, who have set before him the example of the noblest en-

durance, and whose potent influence may lift him into position at once; or he may be born of parents poor and obscure, who have been able to afford no opportunities for improvement, and who can wield no influence for his promotion; yet the one and the other must take the chances for success, under the precise conditions in which life presents itself. As I look around me upon the young men in this city struggling for a foot-hold in the world, my deepest sympathy is stirred for those boys of fourteen and fifteen years, who through stern poverty are driven out upon life—whom a hard necessity has deprived of their childhood, never having had their run in the free air, rejoicing in the exuberant freshness of youth's early morning, but who under the pressure of premature care are old before they were young. Yet how many true heroes, through this severe discipline, have carved their way to dignity and station? Under this pressure are fashioned the men of brain, solving the most intricate problems of life; the men of muscular will, whose sharp sword cleaves through at a stroke the complications of an unpropitious destiny.

What need, then, has every young man for a firm character, full of faith and hope,

strong in its principles and settled in its purposes, as he enters upon the responsibilities of life? Let him abandon useless complaints against what he terms inexorable fate, as well as false conceptions of what he calls luck or chance. Let him resolve to conquer fortune, even if she meet him with a frown; for only thus can life be mastered at all. Young men—

“ A sacred burden is this life ye bear,  
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,  
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly,  
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,  
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win.”

III. *Consider also the debt we owe to the past, whose cumulative influence has made the present what it is* An honorable sentiment must respond to the claims of those who have gone before, handing down their trusts to us. There can be no haphazard or accident in the government of that august Being who “doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth;” and surely those creatures are not abandoned to chance, who are “made in his image and after his likeness.” If our reason be the reflection of the Divine intelligence, if our conscience be the interpreter of His holiness, if our will be the shadow of His omnipotence,

then it becomes us to take up the duties of life in the solemnity of that high relation we sustain to Him whose image we bear on earth. Life has come down to us through a long succession, deriving its cast and color from those who preceded us; and we have "entered into their labors." Yes, we owe a debt to the past, we are under obligations to the ancestors from whose loins we sprang. Every father leaves to the son, who is his heir, the obligation of family honor to transmit that name untarnished to those who shall come after; and in a large sense we are the heirs of the generations which have trodden the earth from the first moment of recorded time. The pressure of sixty centuries rests upon the conscience and heart of all who now sustain the burden of the world's history. Ancestry ought to mean something; and if the subject of this evening's Lecture does not lift into prominence the higher considerations which are drawn from the Gospel of Christ, I feel it right to appeal to that sentiment of honor with which every noble heart swells.

IV. The last proposition may now be reversed: *if, as heirs, we owe a debt to the past, as ancestors we are under equal obliga-*

*tion to the future.* As our hands are reverentially stretched forth to take the trusts falling from the hands of our fathers, so the day is approaching when our half-discharged obligations must be rolled over upon those who are born of our loins. When those children shall arise to assume the self-imposed trust, it will be for them to pronounce upon our fidelity, and to declare whether it has been honorably transferred from our keeping into theirs. Each generation stands thus upon a narrow isthmus between the two continents of the past and the future; and it is difficult to decide to which of the two the obligation is the more solemn. In the one direction, it reaches back over the centuries up to the beginning of time; in the other direction, it stretches forward to the consummation of all things, when the "angel standing upon the sea and the earth shall swear by Him that liveth forever and ever that there shall be time no longer." If in the one case the obligation is enhanced by the feeling of reverence, in the other it is enforced by the natural affection cherished towards one's offspring. The law of the Scripture is, "the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children;" and under this rule the debt we owe to

posterity is of sacred and binding character. Let no one enter upon life thinking that he liveth only to himself. The race is linked together in solid unity; and the unfaithfulness of one generation may entail woes upon those that follow, which shall draw upon its head the bitterest execrations. It becomes every young man to be serious and thoughtful, as he weighs the duties devolved upon him in the great drama of life.

*V. Permit me now to dwell upon the gravity of the trusts imposed often without our consent, but from which there is no retreat.* There are obligations which we voluntarily contract; as when, stepping from the paternal home to create our own, we clothe ourselves with responsibilities of the most tender and delicate kind. It is not my purpose, however, to speak of these; but rather of those imposed by society, usually dropped upon us suddenly often against our will. A word of wisdom uttered in a moment of perplexity and trial, marks one as fit to be a counsellor and guide; and when enthroned in the seat of the legislator or judge, there is no escape from the responsibility which accrues. Or, it may be that in some public emergency, one

displays a promptness and energy which at once determine his destiny. He is called to executive functions, and his record becomes a part of the history of the Commonwealth. Thus, a man "wakes up some morning to find himself famous;" and though he may tremble in his secret soul lest he be found unequal to the high positions to which he has been so unexpectedly advanced, he must abide in his lot and either do or die. My young friends, I know not what counsel to give in this matter, except to say, let a young man see to it when he steps forth into life, that his principles are fixed and his character formed. With this antecedent preparation, he will readily fit himself for the duties which are suddenly sprung upon him; and will not be overwhelmed with shame under the discomfiture which he dreads.

VI. *Finally, I urge upon you the solemn issues of the eternal world; lying so close to the young, and for which they are in immediate preparation.* I am aware that a young man of twenty feels that a stretch of twenty years is an age; yet when he comes to forty, he is as though he had not escaped the awkwardness of early youth; he looks through the vista of another twenty years, and at sixty feels that the experience of

years has but just fitted him for the responsibilities of life. At last bending under the weight of fourscore years, he discovers that life is gone. Swifter than the shadow cast upon our path, swifter than the eagle's flight to his eyrie on the mountain-top, is the flight of time; and life is spent before it is half-recognized as begun. Ere we know, with a single bound we are precipitated upon the dread realities which lie behind death and the judgment. I desire to impress upon you the startling truth that these eternal responsibilities are nigh to you even before you have attained your majority. The moment character begins to crystallize in its final shape, it reaches forth to the life beyond "unmeasured by the flight of years." It is not wise for those whose lives are so short on earth, to put out of sight the tremendous issues of an eternal state. Our real life is the life that never ends, in the great hereafter. We begin to live when the risen body and the immortal spirit are forever emancipated from the decree of death. The life is life, which is rescued from the curse of sin and is spent forever in the presence and in the joy of our Father above. Beyond the intermediate duties which press upon you here, I urge those immense trusts which will occupy the ages of eternity.

## LECTURE VI.

### *OBSTACLES TO PIETY IN YOUNG MEN.*

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TITUS ii. 6—“ *Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.*”

In the preceding lecture I sought to present the influence of early piety in the formation of character; it falls in with this course of thought to consider to-night THE OBSTACLES TO PIETY IN THE YOUNG. Going, then, to the root of the matter, the final and comprehensive difficulty is “the carnal mind which is enmity against God.” Mark the force of the expression; the Apostle does not say of the “carnal mind” that it is inimical to God, but that it is enmity itself. That which makes it “the carnal mind” is its entire estrangement from God, which cannot be removed except by renewing and sanctifying grace. But, then, this enmity takes on special forms at different periods of life: it is inconsiderateness and levity in the young, selfishness and greed in the middle-aged, indifference and callousness in the old. The young are not

easily persuaded to become Christians, because they are fascinated by the pleasures of the world ; those in mid-life, because they are absorbed in the pursuit of wealth ; the old, because the habit of resistance to the truth has grown into a second nature. Hence the exhortation of the text bears upon a single point, “ young men likewise exhort to be soberminded.” The word here employed by the Holy Ghost is compounded of two, as in our version, which together mean “ a sound mind ”—a mind well poised upon its own centre, and not easily thrown from its balance ; a mind weighing all things with unerring judgment, and therefore marked by the moderation of the desires. In delivering his pastoral instructions to his son, Titus, Paul tells him to press specially upon the young the duty of sobriety. But this levity, so characteristic of those in the morning of life, manifests itself differently in different persons ; never perhaps presenting all its forms in one individual. It will thus be important to notice some of the ways in which this inconsiderateness is disclosed.

I. *It is seen in the difficulty with which young persons can be held to continuous reflection and study, and the ease with which they*

*are borne away by new and transient impressions from without.* In natural vision three things are required: the organ of vision, the object of vision and the medium of vision. When the eye which sees, and the external object which is seen, are brought into relation through the light as the medium, then only is sight enjoyed. So it is with the mind: there is first the inquiring mind, then the truth to be apprehended; and when these are brought together through some form of disclosure, then only knowledge takes place. This cannot be had except through a right exercise of the understanding assimilating the truth to itself. In religion that truth comes to us through a Divine Revelation; but however perfect this Revelation, it goes for naught with any individual until it is studied; there must be reflection upon its contents in order to Piety. As it is with all other truth, so it must be with Divine and Revealed truth; the mind which is the organ of knowledge must bring its powers to bear upon these sacred verities, as facts disclosed to its apprehension. It must take them into itself, and by a process of mental digestion incorporate them into its own substance. Of course, I am not disallowing or undervaluing that spiritual illumination

through which these truths are inwrought into the affections of the Christian and made the spiritual food of the soul. Of this deeper process of spiritual enlightenment I am not here speaking; but of that natural process by which the mind obtains its knowledge in the sphere of philosophy or of science. In the sphere of religion no less than of these, there must be the comprehension of the propositions in which truth is revealed in the sacred Scriptures; involving the same natural operation of the understanding in all cases alike. But what multitudes read the Scriptures and wait upon the services of the Sanctuary, without even an intellectual grasp of the fundamental principles of the Gospel, or comprehending in any degree the method of grace therein revealed? Here then is the first serious obstacle to practical religion with the young. Now couple with this the ease with which youth surrenders itself to impressions intruding at inauspicious moments from without. With what persistency these chase each other over the whole field of thought, distracting the attention just when it should be fastened upon some given truth. The mind, instead of being magnetized and held firmly to the investigation of what is

before it, is swept away by these cross currents of impertinent and foreign associations. Under the combined influence of natural reluctance to serious reflection and the seductive temptation to drift upon these wayside suggestions, the characteristic levity of the young is constantly displayed.

II. *It is discovered, further, in the too eager pursuit of enjoyment.* I touch this topic gently, not to anticipate the next Lecture; it cannot however be entirely omitted in this connection. As we first step forth into life we are very much under the domination of sense. Everything is novel and fresh. As Isaac Taylor vividly puts it, the five senses are so many gateways by which the soul comes out from its seclusion; walking up and down the avenues which open before it, and taking possession of a world foreign to itself. On every side vistas of beauty and delight stretch before the eye in almost endless perspective; and the young saunter forward in a strange and delirious bewilderment. The succession of pleasures is so quick as to forstall satiety and weariness. We have scarcely thrown aside the toys of innocent childhood, before we encounter the more

robust pleasures of boyhood ; and we have scarcely outgrown these, before we enter on the more enlarged and varied enjoyments of ripening manhood. The rapid transition from stage to stage prevents each from palling upon the taste, and the appetite is constantly whetted by the anticipation of new pleasures in prospect. In reaching our majority a zest is given to life in our complete emancipation from parental and educational control. The young man is in danger of being intoxicated with his suddenly acquired freedom ; and may seek to realize it in the rush to excesses of every kind. Just then the world bursts upon his view in the display of its innumerable attractions : throughout it is a vision of loveliness. Is it strange, with temptation addressed to every sense, they should sometimes forget that—

“ Sure as night follows day,  
Death treads in pleasure’s footsteps around the world,  
When pleasure treads the path which reason shuns.”

Let it be remembered too, that, in this period of dangerous fascination, the young do not come near enough to these pleasures to discover their hollowness and vanity. It is only in the experience of later years, when perhaps recovery is born of remorse,

the cruel deception is unmasked. Like the beautiful soap-bubbles blown into the air by our children, irradiated with all the colors of the rainbow, yet broken with a breath and bursting into emptiness and nothing ; so with these sensual enjoyments upon which is painted every form of delight, but which break at last into disappointment—if not into despair. How difficult in the early moments of infatuation to persuade the young to pause and consider the claims of personal religion ! It is enough that piety assumes the appearance of stern restraint, and puts out the false lights luring them on to destruction, to cause it to be thrust aside with positive aversion. How impossible, without Divine grace, until experience shall dispel the illusions of sense, to win them from the world to the truer and higher enjoyment to be found in usefulness and duty ? My young friends, it would be easy, though painful, to tell you of the wrecks which bestrew the shore of that treacherous sea glistening beneath the sun, upon which you are tempted to spread your sail. Do you ask how I come to know ? Remember that the old were once young, and may have had hard knowledge of the temptations which spring now with surprise upon

you. It is only necessary to draw on memory, from whose chambers they will come almost as fresh as when they were undergoing the discipline through which you are passing now. Even were this not the case, pastors are made the keepers of many secrets poured into their ear by the victims of dissipation and vice. In the dark hours of biting remorse, these unhappy wrecks know where their truest friends are to be found. They cross our thresholds and tell of the flatteries by which they were enticed; and how their virtue crumbled under temptation, until they took that which was not theirs to secure the means of continuance in sin; and how exposure came at length, with character gone and all hope of advancement in the future; thus with scalding tears they breathe out their remorse, and ask how they can again be restored to society and happiness. Oh, this fearful abandonment to a life of pleasure, if the young could but know the snares and pit-falls which lie along that dangerous path! But whilst the delusion lasts, practical religion sues in vain for recognition at their door.

III. I trust you will not smile when I mention the third form in which this levity

is displayed ; *it is the proneness to what is termed " Castle building "*--a lazy dreaming, in which the mind drifts upon any current that seizes it at the moment. It is more seductive, because partially an intellectual vice. The pleasure is chiefly mental, from the indulgence of the imagination ; and the young enter upon it as a thing wholesome in character, because of its intellectual aspect. They know not how it emasculates the mind, as leading to no vigorous thought by which that mind may be disciplined into strength. It is only drifting upon the fancy, swept on its current into this eddy or that, dancing like a bubble on the wave and bursting into air.

A worse result even than this obtains : it not only emasculates the understanding, but it debauches the heart. It nourishes a selfish egotism, which is fatal to the exercise of every virtue. It is so easy to become the hero of our own story ; and by a mere flight of fancy to rise to the height of fame, without one manly effort to achieve the greatness which is the burden of our epic. The precious hours of life's morning are thus worse than wasted in idle dreaming ; dreaming dreams as unsubstantial and untrue as those which visit us by night. This sentimental musing, like the opium

drug, relaxes while it bewitches the mind. Under its seductive charm, the vain dreamer floats into the valley of enchantment, where Thompson's poetic wand raises the "Castle of Indolence : "

"A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,  
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,  
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass  
Forever flushing round a Summer sky :  
Then eke the soft delights, that bewitchingly  
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast ;  
But whate'er smacked of noyance or unrest,  
Was far, far off, expelled from this delicious nest."

It is difficult to exaggerate the enervating influence of this seductive habit upon the young, in all the paths of human life ; but it is peculiarly destructive of religious feeling. How can one given over to this intellectual vice project his thoughts beyond these intoxicating delights ? Who can arrest the attention to the solemn claims of God and the soul ? How much more pleasing to turn away from harsh and forbidding subjects, such as those of sin and its future rewards, to the delicious intoxication of the novelist's fancy, when that novelist is the dreamer himself, and he the hero of the unwritten tale ?

IV. *This levity of the young manifests itself further in their vanity and self-conceit.*

These words are not happily chosen, and I cancel their harshness in the very utterance. I will come at the thought by an indirection. There are young men endowed by the Creator with noble faculties, in the cultivation of which they become at length distinguished. It is scarcely possible for such to remain wholly unconscious of the power latent within them; undeveloped though it may be, like the mines of silver and gold, or of iron and coal, still hidden in the bowels of the earth. With this dim consciousness of reserved power, there will arise in those who possess it a desire to express it in words and deeds before their fellow-men.

I hold it the duty of every man to bring forth whatever of intellectual or moral force may be within him; he must not allow it to remain an undeveloped energy. He must go down into the dark and dreary colliery with pick-axe and shovel, and dig out what is there concealed; and his whole life should be an incarnation of the living force with which he has been entrusted of God. Now the young man but half-conscious of his dormant power, looks out upon the world and turns pale at imaginary difficulties. A sickly self-love greatest with the young who have not been toned under

the discipline of life, causes him to shrink from possible discomfiture and shame ; and he sinks, perhaps, under a morbid dread of the conflict before him. This is what I mean when I speak of youthful self-conceit—that undue tenderness for one's self, which is the worst form of vanity, as it shrinks from duty through a sickening fear of failure amid the uncertainties of the future. My young friends, I suppose most of us have gone through this kind of experience: and it has been a happy discovery to find that, when the first shock of the battle is felt, these preliminary fears are given to the winds. The first resistance to our entrance upon life has rendered the will more compact ; and with a firmer purpose we have conquered success in what we first feared to undertake.

But so long as the young are thus wrapped up in self-contemplation and self-love, how difficult it is to make them estimate the value of personal religion. Ah ! if they did but know the holy courage which is born of that fear of God which casts out every other fear. He who plants his feet upon the rock of Divine truth, and looks with the eye of faith upon the realities of the eternal world, will hold his own under all the disasters of life and win his

triumphs from the very defeats he encounters. But he who bows in idolatrous worship of self, bows in homage of the feeblest god to whom sacrifice was ever offered. On the contrary, it is said of the Most High, "in the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge."

V. *The saddest form of levity in youth is seen in the secret tendency to scepticism.* I ascribe this tendency to levity of character, because the scepticism does not spring from investigation. It is frivolous in its origin, as being simply the recoil from previous restraint, and is a false assumption of independence. It is, therefore, perfectly shoddy in its pretensions. The authority of the father, saying, "Thou shalt not," is withdrawn; perhaps the more tender voice of the mother is hushed in death; and the young man, who has just been emancipated from the restraints of home, thinks it necessary in the assertion of his manhood to trample upon all the faiths of his childhood. He is not completely free from the authority which controlled his youth, until he has mocked at the piety of those who have gone before him. Without being able to assign a solitary reason

for deserting his father's altar, in the spirit of mere self-assertion the son casts aside the restraints of heaven as well as of earth. The desire also of being unhampered in the enjoyment of worldly pleasure, or in climbing the dizzy heights of ambition, increases the madness which throws away the checks that reason herself would impose. Just because religion comes at that moment as a law, in the intoxication of their newly acquired freedom the young rend aside her salutary restraints and follow the dictates of their own judgment and the decisions of their own will. Alas, not until too late do they discover that they who "walk in the light of their own fire and in the sparks which they have kindled, shall lie down in sorrow." It is this vanity of mind that makes a young man think himself superior to the superstitions of his gray-haired sire; and in the insolence of his spirit, he plunges into the temptations and snares of life without the protection which true piety would surely afford. Imagining himself clothed with all the majesty of freedom, other eyes see that in the fetters of a slave he is "drawing iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as with a cart-rope."

As I conclude this lecture, indulge me in a single reflection. Archdeacon Paley

somewhere remarks that every man selects some one illustration of the Divine goodness, which is more striking to his mind than any other. He goes on to say that the instance which impressed him most was the enjoyment of little infants with their little toys :

“ Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw ;”

and finding, in the changes of infantile life, a succession of pleasures before its powers had fairly opened upon the world in which it lived. If then I were called to furnish the illustration of God's goodness more constantly impressing me than any other, it would be the sovereign mercy which so largely spares the young—not taking them from life between the ages of twelve and twenty years. Look at the record of mortality in every morning's paper, and see how few deaths occur between these limits. I do not attempt to give the vital statistics ; but certainly a very large proportion of the human race dies between the ages of one and three. That is to say, before the little ones can distinguish between right and wrong, and can be held accountable for their acts, they are safely sheltered from all sin in the bosom of Him who has redeemed their souls from death. Suppose

this benevolent order reversed, and the large proportion of our guilty race to be hurried into eternity between the ages of twelve and twenty, what a fearful gloom would shadow many a home that now hears, in the death of infants, only the voice, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven?" In the period which forms the middle passage between boyhood and mature years, the mental development puts beyond question their moral responsibility; whilst the inconsiderateness which marks that epoch indisposes them to think seriously of the soul and its immortal interests. Through the abundance of His grace, God is pleased, for the most part, to bridge over this critical period; sparing the young until they reach the maturity of their powers, and are more likely to weigh the solemnities of death and the judgment.

My young friends, suffer me to urge the obligation and importance of an early consecration to the service of almighty God, as a protection from all these perils. If you could be persuaded this night to give your hearts to the Saviour; if you would go into life's conflicts, which may be severe with some of you, equipped with the grace and strength which you need, you would

find the world sweeter, brighter, easier to your tread; because, in the pledge of Divine aid, you would hold the secret of all your future triumphs.





## LECTURE VII.

### CHOICE OF AMUSEMENTS.

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ECCLESIASTES xi. 9—“ *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*”

It was intimated on last Sabbath evening that THE SUBJECT OF THE PRESENT LECTURE WOULD BE THAT OF YOUTHFUL PLEASURES: yet in taking it up, I am impressed with the difficulty and delicacy of the task. On my part, there will be required a due discrimination so as not to confound things that differ, and a wise moderation so as not to push just views to an unjust extreme. On your part, will be required patience and candor—patience, not to run away with half-sentences; candor, to put a right construction upon what shall be said.

It will be well, in the outset, to ascertain on what points we agree in this discussion, and where we are likely to part company. I assume then that we are at one, at least, upon two points:

I. *That youth is to a large degree the season of enjoyment.* It is by no means granted that it is the only season; on the contrary, God shows His wisdom and benevolence in providing suitable pleasures for all periods of human life; universal experience testifying that the serene enjoyments of the old are more captivating to them, than the more brilliant pleasures of the young. I do not suppose that this can be easily understood by those whose experience is limited to their single age; it is impossible that the young shall put themselves in the place of the old, so as to know how they feel. Those alone, who have stood at both ends of human life, are able to make a just comparison between the two. Still, the analogies of nature may suggest to the young that the Autumn of life may have its charms no less than the Spring. In the latter, the youthful year appears as a beautiful maiden bedecked with the blossoms upon her green robe: in the former, the brown forest is adorned with a thousand kaleidoscopic colors which charm the eye; and we say of the sober maiden, gray with age, she is as beautiful as when she was a youthful bride. Even when the dying Winter is wrapped in its winding-sheet of snow, and

the icy crystals glisten like diamonds in the sun, we say that nature is beautiful as she sleeps in death. Equally true is it of all the ages through which we pass—and I may add, of all the conditions of human society—that all have their several enjoyments, which would not be exchanged for those of any other period or condition. It is, however, freely acknowledged that youth is the season for enjoyment.

There are, indeed, many proofs of this, obtruding themselves upon our notice. The full tide of animal life gushing from its hidden fountain within, the warm blood flowing through the veins, both make the very frame in which the soul dwells instinct not only with life, but with joy. The animal spirits, which we share with the beasts of the field as they gambol on the meadow before our eyes, mark youth as the time for enjoyment. Consider, too, the comparative absence of care in early life. I say, comparative absence; for it is an error to suppose that happy childhood has no care. Those anticipated rebukes from parent or teacher, which hang like a cloud over the young heart, are they not as heavy a burden as any that are borne in after years? But then these are limited cares, likes clouds drifting over the face of the

moon—evanescent, and leaving no scars upon the heart. They are not the cares which cut the deep furrows across the brow, in which the passing years are buried. In this freedom from corroding anxiety and trouble, and in the wild exuberance of animal life, we may trace the signature of God assigning this season of youth for casting the character in the mould of happiness.

II. *But we agree further that it is unwise and injurious to interdict pleasure to the young.* One of three results would accrue: by violent reaction these restraints would be thrust aside, with a more impetuous rush towards the pleasures which are forbidden—just as a sluggish stream may be converted into a foaming torrent; or, if retained, they might prove bandages swathing the free powers of the soul—by compression forcing the character into unnatural shape and hindering its expansion into those generous and noble qualities which adorn life and make it fruitful of good; or the tumultuous energy pent up within, will force an outlet for itself in grosser vices which shall deform the character and ruin the soul.

Here, then, is a substantial agreement

between us; that youth is largely the season for enjoyment, and that it is injurious to interdict pleasures to the young. We are more likely to diverge when we come to consider the class of pleasures to be indulged, and the grounds of their selection. The question, then, emerges just here, are there any general principles which may be formulated to guide us in this matter—principles which can be digested into a code and put into the hands of the young, enabling them wisely to discriminate between enjoyments which are healthful and such as are hurtful? If this is possible, I much prefer to present these in portable compass so as to be carried in your consciences and hearts, rather than to indulge in detailed criticism of the various forms of worldly pleasure into which the young are enticed.

I. The first principle, then, which I lay down for your guidance, my young friends, is this: *those amusements are to be avoided which cannot be converted into the means of a good moral education.* You perceive that I ascend to a higher plane than has ever been dreamed by the advocates of earthly pleasure: I not only concede that pleasure is lawful, but affirm that it is obligatory.

It not only may be enjoyed, but should be enjoyed, as a part of that educational system by which men are the better fitted for the duties and responsibilities of life. Through happiness our sympathies are nourished, and those kindly charities are begotten, by which we are bound together in the fellowship of society. It is in harmony with God's fatherly discipline over His children, which mingles love-tokens with the rod. Through a wise use of both He educates His children, not only for usefulness on earth, but for glory and immortality beyond the grave. Solomon says: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider; God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." When the great Vine dresser goes into His vineyard with His pruning shears, you find inscribed upon its two blades the words, "prosperity" and "adversity;" and upon the reversed sides the two terms "joy" and "consideration." Between the sharp edges of the two we are placed; and as the two blades, in His strong hand and with their powerful leverage, are brought to bear upon us, we are made fruitful in the clusters of ripe grapes which are finally gathered by the Master.

Those pleasures, then, are to be chosen which educate us; those are to be declined, which interfere with our advancement in whatever is useful and good. The statement is very general, but it has an immense sweep; and it possesses the advantage of being a working principle, capable of easy application to every form of pleasure springing up in our path. Lay it over, for example, against the manly out-door amusements with which our young men should be familiar. How these invigorate the body, causing the glow of health to pervade the whole frame, and preserving from the incursion of disease; and how, through this increase of bodily vigor, men become good-tempered, charitable in their judgments, and free from disparaging criticisms which evil men cast as fire-bands upon their enemies. In such wholesome amusements the physical condition, and incidentally the moral, is improved—all tending to the right education of man in all his faculties. But what moral education is there in the ball-room, or at the race-course, or in any other place of mere sensual enjoyment? On the contrary, the undue stimulus which is afforded to pride, self-love, vanity, envy and jealousy, warps the character and renders it deformed and

unlovely throughout. I am simply illustrating the principle, to show how easy it is of application in all the conditions of society and to every form of temptation to which we are exposed in life. Write it then in red letters upon your tablet: our pleasures are a part of our moral discipline, and should be selected with reference to education for the highest ends of life in this world and in that which is to come.

II. Let us pass to the second principle: *those pleasures are to be avoided, which we cannot share with our seniors, and which require entire exemption from restraint to give them zest.* The natural pleasures which God has ordained, belong to men in all ages and conditions of life. Permit me to sketch a scene which may be disclosed in a hundred homes in our city. We will open this door and that: the father and the mother are the central figures in the group; between the two range the children, in all degrees from infancy to robust manhood or the gentler charm of early womanhood; over there in the corner of the fire-place sit the grand-parents, with the frost of age upon their brow, looking through their dim glasses upon the cheerful scene; old and young are together—old and young are

happy at the same moment with the same pleasure—by reason of their diversities of age and experience, they are acting and reacting upon each other, echoing and re-echoing the same note of domestic enjoyment. The father came in, a little while since, with wrinkled brow; for his business had been all day in a wretched tangle. He heaved a bitter sigh when his hand was on the lock of the door; and he sought with an effort of will to throw off the burden of care, that its gloom might not cast its shadow upon those within. Now he has taken the little prattler upon his knee; who, with that silvery laugh that belongs to early childhood, puts out its dimpled hand upon that rugged brow—which becomes so strangely smooth under its magic touch. The heart that was sinking in half despair, grows brave again; and he resolves to go back to his burden, and by industry and thrift beat back the storm which threatens to turn those nestlings out of their happy home. Who could have dreamed of such power in an unconscious infant's touch; but it must be a touch laid upon careworn age. And look upon those half-grown boys overflowing with merriment, because the father steps down from his dignity, and for one hour on that happy

evening becomes the oldest boy in the house. We know it all, for we had in other days the homes in which these things were.

God means that society shall be held together in bonds of reciprocal love; and those pleasures which make us happy in the end, are put right here in the endearments of domestic life. But when we begin to dismember the social fabric by separating the classes which God has ordained to be together—when we put the young in one room, and the old in another, and say the glare of our brightness is too much for your dim eyes—in that separation, we are proving the infelicity of the enjoyments which cannot be common to all. Why, we can separate the water we drink into the elements of which it is composed: but then we have oxygen and hydrogen, and no longer the water which quenches thirst. We can take the beautiful light coming from the sun, and with childish glee rejoice in the prismatic colors into which we have resolved it; but then it is no longer the light which is so sweet for the eyes to behold. So, when we take society to pieces by the joints, we dissolve that which God has constituted for our highest enjoyment as well as noblest improvement. It is a

safe working principle, therefore, to eschew all pleasures which we cannot share with the serious and the old.

III. *Those pleasures, again, are hurtful which intoxicate and bewitch the senses.* Healthful enjoyments have their natural bounds: as seen from the fact that they cease to be enjoyed as soon as these limits are passed. It is with them as with our food and drink. When hungry, food is grateful; the moment hunger ceases, it is easier to swallow physic than the most delicate viands. In consuming thirst, the water bursting from the mountain spring is more delicious than the costliest imported wines: but when thirst is assuaged, we dash the goblet from our lips. Having reached the point at which enjoyment stops, the temptation to further indulgence is removed. In like manner, in natural pleasures excess is prevented because at a given point they cease to please, and therefore cease to tempt.

But as there are pleasures which are safe and healthful, so there are others which madden and inflame. Brandy may have its uses, when the fever has died out and the patient is in danger of collapse; and opium may have its use when the

nerves have been for hours upon the rack, and the taxed brain is ready to slip into madness unless it can have the medicine of sleep : but in the heyday of youth it would be as well to leave the brandy and opium alone, when it shall become a strange fire setting the blood on flame—a catastrophe not unlike setting on fire the whole ocean—making it a universal and consuming flame. Yet constituted as society is, it is to these maddening and destructive enjoyments the young are chiefly exposed. Forgive me, if the suggestion strike you as grotesque ; if there be any class to whom these intoxicating enjoyments should be remitted, it is the old rather than the young. Give up the wild dance to your father, when he begins to freeze and stiffen with age ; it may do him good by suppling his limbs : but for you who need it not, avoid the fascination of those pleasures in whose intoxicating power lies your inevitable destruction.

IV. *Again, those pleasures are forbidden which contravene any known duty, or any truth in the word of God.* There are circumstances in which even lawful enjoyment becomes criminal. Take a concrete illustration : here is a youth of 18 years ; his

father died when he was but fifteen; his widowed mother, under the pressure of grief, has struggled through three years to maintain the household plunged by that unhappy death in extreme poverty. This son has obtained employment which yields a moderate salary, sufficient barely to sustain the feeble mother and two dependent sisters. He is surrounded by gay companions who generously wish him to share their costly amusements: evidently what may be lawful to them, is forbidden to him. He cannot engage in pursuits of any kind which disable him from performing those solemn duties of protection and care, which he owes to those now dependent on his earnings.

Allow me, my young friends, to tear a leaf from my own history in enforcement of this position: for I read a day or two since, that to give power to any utterance it must cease to be abstract, and the man must stand behind his thought. When I was seventeen years of age, I was thrown into a large city as much given to gaiety as this, without being subject to any control, I was irreligious, nay, worse than that, I was hostile to religion, in decided hostility to God and the Gospel, in such evil posture that, had I fallen into the hands of

scoffers, I might have become as infidel as they. Surrounded by companions as unrestrained as myself, most of whom sank into premature graves, through the mercy of God I was saved. And what instrumentality saved me from ruin? Simply the fortunate combination of poverty and pride. Over the chasm of fifty years I recall the tempting invitations of that period: "to-night we are to have a supper, and will have a gay time of it, and we want you to be with us and add to our pleasure." "No," was the reply, "I thank you for your kindness, but I cannot come." "Why cannot you come?" "Because I cannot afford it." "Cannot afford it! You are not asked to pay for the supper, but only to eat it." "Yes," I replied, "but if to-night I eat your supper and drink your wine, very soon -after you must eat my supper and drink my wine: and I cannot afford it." Thus the poverty under which I chafed at the time, was God's protection of me. Easier fortunes came later and floated me over those days; and within a year I found a home in the Church of the living God, where I have been sheltered from that day to this.

I have chosen to run the hazard of being charged with egotism, in order to give

a personal illustration of the principle before us—that pleasures which are lawful to many, may be unlawful to us who are placed providentially in circumstances which render indulgence criminal. Bear in mind that pleasures are intended as a tonic, to bring up the energies that would otherwise flag: and the moment they interfere with the duties assigned us, they become temptations and a snare.

The prohibition is stronger whenever these pleasures constructively contravene any principle taught in Holy Scripture. Is it lawful, for example, to enter any calling which gives him something for nothing: when that something for nothing does not come in the way of a gift, and represents no feeling of kindness? Place against any such system of finance the prescribed law of labor under which all men are placed, that “if a man does not work neither shall he eat;” is there not a law in the Decalogue, which says with solemn emphasis, “thou shalt not steal”? Or am I by unwise extravagance to involve myself in embarrassments from which there is no extrication without injury to others? You can seldom take up the journal of any morning, but the staring headlines report some enormous defalcation: and in almost every instance the cause as-

signed is fast living, the plunging into gaieties which could not be sustained. Driven at length by necessity, the victim of his own folly breaks the commandment of God and finds himself on the way to the Penitentiary.

V. I am brought to the last principle which should rule the young in the selection of their pleasures; *that those amusements are injurious which are hostile to an early devotion to the service of Christ.* It is just as obligatory for you to be a Christian at twenty, as at seventy years of age. The epicurean maxim is fatal in its consequences, that because youth is the season for enjoyment therefore it may take reprisals for the cares hereafter to devolve upon it. No proverb is more hurtful than that which allows the "sowing of wild oats" while we are young. These wild oats will crop out in the field when we are old, laying the foundation for future toil in weeding the garden and supplying it with plants which are wholesome. Every period of human life is covered with the authority of God; and to the young he speaks with loving emphasis, "My son, give me thine heart." It is robbery in the young, as it is in the old, to withhold that heart upon

which the Almighty is ever enforcing His just claim : and if there are forms of enjoyment which hinder this early consecration to God, this alone stamps them as evil.

Nor is there a single natural pleasure which interferes with early piety. A boy of ten may be a Christian, as well as a man of thirty : but it should be the piety of the boy, and becomes hypocrisy whenever it is anything else. The very mirthfulness of the child may be sanctified by divine grace and made tributary to God's glory. The characteristic feature of all true enjoyment is that it is consistent with the claims of Jehovah, in all the relations and conditions of human life.

In conclusion, I trust I have sufficiently shown that neither the old nor Christians have any jealousy of the true pleasures of the young. You may possibly think—if not saying it—“oh, you are a church-member and cannot be expected to engage in these our enjoyments!” Why, my young friends, we are Christians because we choose to be such ; and have as good a right to be wild and rollicking as any of you. You cannot therefore urge any plea of this sort, in evading our remonstrance. If I am a minister of the Gospel, it is because, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, I chose to be :

but there was a time when I did not so choose; and I could have gone forward in a course of recklessness and folly, if it had seemed fit to do so. We wish it to be understood that the old, by their past experience, have sympathy wit<sup>h</sup> the pursuits and enjoyments of youth. But I would be unjust to you, if I failed to remind you of the purer enjoyment to be found in the service and worship of the blessed God. If the world could only know it, there is more true joy in the penitence and sorrow of the Christian, when he melts in gratitude as the Father above sweetly whispers, "thy sins are forgiven thee," than in all the pleasures which Solomon compares to "the crackling of thorns under a pot." I commend to you this night the sober pleasures of religion as immeasurably greater than all the glittering pleasures of this poor world. The logic is very short: if the sorrow and the weeping of the pious are happier than all your joys, what must the ecstasy of the Christian be when he basks in the full light of his Heavenly Father's favor, with assurance of eternal blessedness in the world to come? May God bring you at last into His presence where is fulness of joy, and to "His right hand where are pleasures for evermore."

## LECTURE VIII.

### *SIN OF PROFANE SWEARING.*

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EXODUS XX. 7—“*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*” Also.

MATTHEW V. 34-37—“*But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, yea, yea,—nay, nay—for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*”

The preceding lectures were upon general topics, and were approached without reluctance. But the four which are to follow will be more special, and will be approached with some misgiving because they partake of the nature of censure. It is never pleasant, in Church or State, to assume the function of prosecuting Attorney and to file indictments against our fellow-men. Certainly the preacher of the Gospel would far prefer to dwell upon the infinite love of God, and so persuade men

to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is sometimes necessary to lift the voice of warning against the sins and vices prevailing in society, and so to pluck men from perdition.

From the passages of Scripture just recited, you perceive that I propose to dwell upon THE VICE OF PROFANE SWEARING. It would be natural to present the lower aspects of the case: such as the inappropriateness of the language employed, when used simply to adorn our speech or to lend emphasis to what we utter. In most instances the oath is a mere expletive filling up a hollow utterance, or confirming its truth. The indecency of the language might also be urged as a dissuasive: for the fact that those given to it find themselves constrained to suppress the oath in the presence of those whom it would outrage, is an involuntary confession that it is an offence against good manners. Yet if conventional usage sustains the practice, no conviction of its indecency or absurdity will arrest it. Indeed it would only weaken the impression I desire to make upon you, should I linger upon these lower considerations. Let us then ascend at once to the higher plane upon which all moral advice should rest.

I. *Profane swearing pours contempt upon the perfections of God, as these are symbolized in His various names.* Names are given to things in order to distinguish them ; they are the handles by which we take them up, and present them to our own view and to the views of others. We cannot get along in ordinary intercourse without designating the various objects to which we direct our attention ; and this is done shortly and conclusively by the names which describe them. At the beginning, names were never arbitrary, but were significant ; inasmuch as they set forth some of the properties conspicuous in the objects indicated. Certainly this is true of the name of the Deity. Some of the ancient fathers were accustomed to say, that God was the only being in the universe who needed not a name ; since being alone of His kind, he had no need to be distinguished from others. But if God is pleased to reveal Himself as the object of worship, and if the creature must approach Him with his wants, then certainly a name is needed as a medium of address. It is not a little instructive on this point, that in the recorded prayers of the Bible the names of the Deity always embalm the substance of the petition. The

mind naturally seeks that in the character of Jehovah which warrants the prayer: and through this attribute, as embodied in some of the Divine names, ventures to approach the throne with its petition. The names of God in the Scripture are derived sometimes from His essential being—as “Jehovah,” or as the “I am,” or as “He was and is and is to come:” sometimes again from His attributes, both natural and moral—as when we speak of Him as “the Most High,” or “the Almighty,” or as “the only wise God,” or “the King eternal, immortal, invisible,” etc; at other times, the names are derived from the relations which He sustains to the creature, as ruler, preserver and judge. The point then to be made here is this; as these names are all of them significant of some property or excellence in the Divine Being, the special vice of profane swearing consists in disassociating them from the perfections which they symbolize. You will perceive how completely this anticipates and refutes the apology usually offered to palliate this offence. A man may say, I intend no disrespect to the Almighty when I use His name as an expletive: it is done thoughtlessly, not even having that august Being in my mind at all; and He who

searches the heart knows that it was not in my thought to disparage His character, or to throw reproach upon His awful majesty. Now what is here offered as an apology constitutes, in my view, the essence of the sin, to-wit: that it disassociates those things which should ever be closely and reverently joined together. It is a serious injury to a man's moral nature, when the two can be so separated that no suggestion of God's majesty and holiness comes with the mention of His name.

I recall at this moment a story once read in my youth, strikingly illustrating this matter. It was the story of an Italian nobleman unfortunately addicted to the vice of gambling. One eventful night proved to him the night of destiny. He first staked upon the board all the ready money that he could command; then the revenues accruing from his landed estates: after this, those estates themselves, one after another until they were all swept from his possession. Nothing remained of his ancestral domain, except the palace in the imperial city, in whose proud halls high revelry had been kept through centuries past by his forefathers. When relentless fortune had wrested this, too, from his grasp, with the intense passion of the

gamester he exclaimed, "One tie alone binds me to life ; it is the bride who was shortly to have been worn as a jewel upon my bosom." It was the last stake to be thrown upon the fatal board—the fair and noble creature who should have shared with him the fortunes of life. When the cruel dice decided this against him, he rose in the madness of despair : with a horrid imprecation, he said to his successful rival, "You have taken from me the estates of my progenitors, the palace in which they lived ; you have cut the last tie which bound me to the future ; I stand, a ruined beggar, before you in your triumph : there is but one thing left ; I stake my name—a name illustrious in Italy's history, a name never tainted with reproach—the name to which I am heir, coming down to me through a proud and honored ancestry ; it is all that is left to me ; I pledge it as my last stake." His evil fortune could not be appeased : this, too, was lost, and the ruined gamester rushed madly through the brilliantly lighted halls into the "outer darkness." Just think ; he could not tell to any being on earth so much as who he was. He had deliberately put away from him that by which he could be distinguished from others of his race ; he

had severed the last tie by which he was bound to the rest of mankind, and stood confessed at the bar of his own conscience an apostate from himself. The story goes on to say that, a fugitive over the earth, he chanced to encounter the antagonist who robbed him of his all. Rushing forward he kneeled at his feet, saying, "Keep, keep all, my lands and estates, my palace and my bride, only give me back my name." When this was disdainfully refused, he rushed upon his foe in deadly combat. But fortune was still unrelenting: falling to the earth with the sword of his antagonist through his breast, he gathered the clotted blood and threw it back upon him with a muttered curse, and passed away to meet the retribution of his crime.

This story, whether fact or fiction, forcibly teaches us, what is in a name: it represents our personality, and to forfeit it is to forego our identity. If this can be true of a name which is arbitrary, in that it is significant of nothing, what must be the guilt or the attempt to rob the living God of the names which represent to our thought all His glorious excellence? Is it not because of this necessary association between the names and perfections of God, that the sin of profane swearing is so hard-

ening in its influence? By destroying, in one's own mind, this association with all of sweetness and love, a man's whole conscience and heart becomes as impenetrable as the nether millstone.

II. *Observe further that the oath is ordained as an act of religious worship; of which profane swearing is the perversion and travesty.* All swearing is not forbidden; only that which is profane. In the Old Testament, God testifies His willingness to save the sinner by an oath: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." (Ezekiel xxxiii 2.) What more stringent oath can there be, than thus to swear by His own necessary and eternal being? Equally solemn, if not even more startling, is the oath founded upon His consummate and unchangeable Holiness: "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." (Psalms lxxxix 35.) So in the New Testament the superiority of Christ's priesthood over that of Aaron, is proven by the fact of his induction into office with the solemnity of an oath: "for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said

unto him, the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." The Apostle Paul, refers to the covenant of old made with Abraham, that it was confirmed with an oath; "for when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them the end of all strife." (Hebrews vi. 13-16.) Paul does not hesitate to call God to witness to the truth of what he averred. (Romans 19.) And I am not sure that the asseveration so commonly employed by our Lord, "verily, verily, I say unto you," does not partake of the nature of an oath. It is at least the solemn and duplicate deposition of one who recognized that He was a witness for the truth.

The oath then, when analyzed, is an act of religious homage: it is a recognition of the Divine existence, of His necessary attributes, of His supreme relation to us as lawgiver and judge. By it a man binds his soul under the Divine law, and challenges the omniscient Jehovah as witness to what he says and does. If God be wit-

ness and judge of every transaction of man upon earth, is not this oath by which God is specially invoked an act of worship singularly impressive in its solemnity? Is not the guilt therefore of using this name irreverently correspondingly great, which travesties all that is sacred in the character of that august Being before whom we must stand in the final judgment? I remember a class of young men in a college, more than fifty years ago, who engaged one night in a mock prayer-meeting: and went beyond this in a sacrilegious travesty of the sacrament of the Supper. Now I am far from saying that the ordinary and thoughtless profanity of men partakes of the malignity of these acts; but I do say that it is always and everywhere a travesty of that which God ordains as a medium of communion between Himself and the human soul; and the guilt cannot be slight which profanes this worship.

Do not deem me harsh when I add that, as I pass along these streets compelled to hear the blasphemies that fall upon my ear, I pause and ask myself "do these men know that unwittingly in their oaths they are testifying to the most fearful truths revealed in the Word of God?" When you hear them sending themselves and others

to endless perdition in terms which cause one's hair to stand on end, do they not proclaim the doctrine of Hell with an emphasis which the pulpit would not dare to use? How do you explain it? How comes it that these men who turn contemptuously away from all the overtures of infinite love, with that instinct of justice planted in every bosom do so conspicuously challenge the judgment of Heaven upon themselves and their fellows? Nevertheless, as it is done inconsiderately, it remains a perversion and travesty of what Almighty God ordains as acts of solemn worship.

III. *Profane swearing weakens the bonds of society, by lessening the value of the Judicial Oath in our Courts of Justice.* Man's religious nature underlies all the institutions of society. Look at this assemblage here to-night: several hundred human beings sit together, each with a separate will, and each will exacting all within its control: yet is this assembly but a miniature representation of the world at large; how is society to be preserved amidst this clash of wills? Civil government must lay a forcible restraint upon the passions of men; although we have been under discipline

and accustomed to restraint from the cradle upward. How is it that men, with passions as fierce as those of the bear and tiger, and with intelligence far exceeding that of the beasts, can be held in check? We may dream as we please about mankind coming up from a state of barbarism and brute force, and sitting in council to devise constitutions and laws by which their mutual interests might be protected; but the truth underlying all this mystery; is that Almighty God has made man a religious being. With a conscience ever responding to the authority of law, and held under a supernatural control, man is capable of subjection to human law: and without this religious nature underlying all obedience, the government could not be framed strong enough to hold in check the passions and lusts by which society would be convulsed. But the last resource of human government is an appeal to this religious sentiment in man. In our Courts of Justice, in every case that is tried whether of life or death, or where property interests alone are involved, the witnesses are not allowed to utter a syllable of testimony, until they have been placed in the presence of the Omniscient One, and are bound under penalty of the Divine

law to speak only the truth. This is no idle form ; but a solemn acknowledgment that perjury, though it may escape detection here, will surely be overtaken by the swift and unerring justice of Jehovah. It thus appears that human law and human courts can protect the interests of property and human life, only by laying its reverent hand upon the sanctions of the eternal world ; and bringing all parties under the scrutiny of that Judge who has power to read the secrets of every heart.

If now, we weaken this sentiment of reverence by a light and frivolous use of the venerable name, of what value is the oath in the sacred precincts of human justice? If no higher consideration can prevail, a common interest in the welfare of society, and the need of mutual protection, should restrain the useless oath in which God's holy and dreadful name is daily profaned.

IV. *Profane swearing exposes constantly to the danger and guilt of perjury.* The legal definition of perjury, given by Sir Edward Coke, is—“ when a lawful oath is administered in some judicial proceeding, to a person who swears wilfully, absolutely and falsely in a matter material to the

issue or point in question." This definition, it will be perceived, is narrowed within the scope of merely judicial proceedings; which is all that law is technically called to do. But there is a wider sense in which a shade, at least, of this guilt may be contracted. It is where men swear to that which is false in any case; whether in the interests of litigants in the courts of justice, or beyond legal jurisdiction altogether. Now see how the common swearer may graze the edge of this fearful crime, in the loose way in which he throws about his terrific asseverations. He may swear most solemnly to do that which, in the next moment or the next day, he may conclude to leave undone. Or upon misinformation, he may sincerely swear to the truth of that which is afterward shown to be false. There may be a hundred different ways, in which a man careless of his speech may be trapped into glaring falsehoods; and these when confirmed by an oath, bring one into hazardous nearness to a crime of which he may not dream; and which brought home to his conscience would fill him with horror.

In this connection, permit me to suggest a thought not often used as an argument against swearing. Why should a

man swear at all? The reply is, to give emphasis to what he is saying. But what need is there of any emphasis? Why is it not enough in ordinary intercourse to say, yea, yea, or nay, nay? What more is wanted between man and man than the simple statement of truth? Why should any one put suspicion upon his veracity by unnecessary and continual emphasis on what he says? If he knows that he speaks the truth, what need is there of these expletives? And why must he clinch every statement with these tremendous oaths which drag the Almighty into the conflict with the unbelief of his neighbor? Untruthfulness may be disclosed not only in deviation from the truth, but also in the suspicion that others know it. It should be a sufficient protection against this common vice, that the "oath for confirmation" weakens the word by the intensity of the useless emphasis. If a man be recognized as honest and true, his word will be accepted as his bond; and he betrays a foolish fear, if he undertakes to bolster that word with a profusion of imprecatory oaths. I commend this thought to those who find it necessary to back every assertion with an appeal to the omniscience of God.

V. *Profaneness is aggravated by the thought of its utter unprofitableness.* Most vices offer a balance sheet of profit, even though it be both temporary and small; but what possible gain is found in profane swearing? Robert Hall, in his caustic style, terms it “the superfluity of naughtiness”—a sort of “pepper-corn rent which a man pays in acknowledgment of the Devil’s authority.” And the milder Barrow of the English Church says, “of all the dealers in sin, the swearer is the most thriftless; because he sins gratis.” It is therefore without the poor excuse of necessity or advantage, by which other sins are apologized for: it is the most wanton of all offences against the Divine law. What defence can be set up for this vile and pernicious use of the tongue, which David declares to be the glory of our frame? Under every aspect in which it can be viewed, the habit is without excuse or palliation. The language is unintelligent, even silly: it must be proscribed as an offence against good breeding; it always loosens the bond by which society is held together; and it violates all the instincts of religion in the soul.

In closing this lecture, I may be asked by some of the young men present “Why

do you address this particularly to us, seeing the habit is so universal?" My answer is, just because it is universal there is no way of stopping it in its course but by breaking the succession of those who transgress. The stream must be cut off at the fountain: if the young could be persuaded to abstain from this unwholesome practice, it might possibly be dried up in a generation or two. Again, the young are perhaps peculiarly exposed to this vice. The liveliness of their disposition may easily betray them into extravagance of speech: their want of experience has not shown the importance of measuring their words, so that they shall never pass beyond the bounds of truth. At any rate, my young friends, the habit is not so confirmed in you, as in those who are older; and it may be, you will be inclined to listen to the voice of reason, if not to the authority of religion, when both set before you a practice which even common sense universally deprecates.



## LECTURE IX.

### *SIN OF SABBATH-BREAKING.*

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EXODUS xx. 8-11—"Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it."

Pursuing the line of criticism opened in the preceding lecture, I am led to-night to URGE THE CLAIMS OF THE SABBATH AND TO SHOW THE GUILT INCURRED IN ITS DESECRATION. Perhaps of all sins forbidden in the Decalogue, not one rests more lightly upon the conscience than the violation of the Sabbath. For this, three reasons may be assigned: first, it is regarded by many as a positive institute merely, based upon authority alone and without any

moral ground of support. So it is argued, the transgression is comparatively slight as not committed against one's own moral convictions. Again, the observance of the Sabbath clashes with earthly interests at every point, exposing to the temptation of constant evasion; and there is no surer way of debauching the conscience than by the constant suppression of its testimony. Further, the allowed exceptions of "necessity" and "mercy" are somewhat indefinite, and call for wise discretion in determining them. It is therefore the more necessary to set forth the grounds upon which the obligation of the Sabbath may be firmly established.

I. *Taking then the lowest ground, that the Sabbath is a positive institute only, having no foundation but the Divine command, it follows that its desecration is an act of naked rebellion.* God's authority is final, in every case binding upon the conscience. Is it allowed under any government, human or Divine, to go behind the law and determine its propriety before obedience shall be rendered? Would not such a principle vacate all law, and disable every government? In the instance before us, the assumption is peculiarly flagitious.

We know that the Lawgiver here is infinitely wise and good; His commands must therefore rest upon sufficient grounds, whether they are disclosed to us or not. The Divine character is guarantee for the wisdom and beneficence of the law; and the reasons, if revealed, ought to satisfy the judgment of every creature. The fact that He sees fit to withhold these from our knowledge does not weaken, but rather strengthens, the obligation to obey; because then the obedience finds not upon our judgment of the law, but upon the guarantee of His perfections. What therefore is often urged in extenuation of Sabbath-breaking, turns into an aggravation of the offence.

A significant illustration of the principle here involved, will be found in the history of man's original probation in the garden of Eden. This probation, it will be remembered, turned upon a point in itself indifferent—precisely adapted as the test of obedience. A single injunction was laid upon our first parent: “of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis ii. 16-17.) Here then is a posi-

tive command touching an act which, aside from this restriction, was morally indifferent; and which consequently was simply an expression of the Divine will. But for this very reason, that it was an assertion of the Divine supremacy, it tested perfectly the spirit of obedience which rested nakedly upon the authority of the Lawgiver. So with the law of the Sabbath: let it be granted that no reason can be assigned for the reservation of it, except the bare authority of Jehovah—this alone constitutes it the test of our obedience. It is needful that such a test should exist, under all the dispensations of law or grace in which man shall be found, as illustrating the nature of the obedience required of him. If such dismal consequences followed the first transgression of authority, when

“ Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat  
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe  
That all was lost ; ”

surely the danger of trifling with it is sufficiently shown. Through all the Scriptures God is shown to be jealous of His sovereignty, making the denial of His supremacy a perilous issue to be joined.

II. *But the Sabbath is not without a sup-*

*porting moral foundation. It was appointed at the very beginning as the memorial of God's creative power, and of the rights accruing therefrom.* It is expressly stated in the Decalogue that, "in six days God made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." On turning to the earlier record, you will find this a reproduction of the language employed at the Creation: "on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made; and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." (Gen. II. 2-3.) Those of you who are familiar with the speculations in philosophy through all the ages, will understand the importance of this Divine testimony as to the origin of the Universe. Science, by her own acknowledgment, can only observe the phenomena, and trace the causes by which they are immediately produced and the laws under which these forces are seen to operate. What occurred at the earliest beginning, from the nature of the case, can be known only from testi-

mony: and the only being competent to deliver that testimony is the Creator Himself. Hence the value even to philosophy and science of these first two chapters in the book of Genesis. From these alone we have knowledge how the universe came into being; and we know it from the declaration of Him by whose voice it was called out of nothing—"so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." We may lengthen the interval which separates us from that beginning, as much as we please; and we may imagine the process by which the worlds were fashioned and thrown into space; but we know from infallible testimony that matter is not eternal, and that it exists alone by the power of Him who first brought it into being. The Sabbath then lifts its shaft from the moment of the Creation high above all history, testifying through the ages to the end of time that "through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God."

Associated with this great truth are the proprietary rights of Jehovah as the Creator of all things. The Sabbath comes to man asserting God's supremacy over him; and in keeping this holy day, he makes acknowledgment of his dependence upon

“the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.” It is the confession of man’s creatureship, and of all the duties which grow out of it. Like the ancient tithe, the Sabbath is a Divine royalty, reserved by Jehovah to Himself and His own uses. It does not belong to man in fee-simple; it never did so belong to him; it never will be his by absolute right, to the end of time. It is given to him for specified uses, and only under these limitations is it his at all. From the beginning God separated the Sabbath from the week as the property of man: the six days are his, but the Sabbath is the Lord’s. It lies between the weeks of labor, the golden clasp which holds them together—the condition upon which Jehovah has granted this arrangement of time which shall be continuous through human history until the consummation of all things.

The obligation of the Sabbath rests primarily upon this; that it belongs to God by a solemn and exclusive reservation of it to Himself; and it is ours to be employed for Him and to the manifestation of His glory. It raises its testimonial spire from the first Sabbath in Paradise to the eternal Sabbath in Heaven, proclaiming that Jeho-

vah is the proprietor of all things, and the supreme object of worship in Heaven and in Earth. The misappropriation of it to foreign uses is simply theft. What right has any man to that which is not his? Ah, my friends, when we are talking about rights, let us remember that Almighty God has His, as well as we; and of these He cannot be divested: for of all proprietors, He has the most power to enforce His claims. Never forget that, however long these may be held in abeyance through the audacious usurpation of the creature, there will come a fearful reclamation when the world is summoned to the judgment of the great day. The violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath is not only an act of simple disobedience to authority, but of contumacy and constructive apostasy.

III. *The Sabbath is allowed to man in mitigation of the curse of labor, which imposes upon us the obligation of gratitude.* Immediately after the Fall, the curse was pronounced in these words: "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou

taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." (Gen. III. 17-19.) It is before your eyes wherever you turn, that this curse is upon the sons of men to the present hour ; the mass of the human family are simply struggling for subsistence everywhere, living not so much from day to day, as from meal to meal. God in His mercy has exempted the holy Sabbath from the operation of this curse, and has made it a day of rest. Were it kept as it should be, the hum of industry would be hushed over the earth, every spindle would be stopped, and the world would have its appointed repose. The vision of the poet would be realized :

“ How still the morning of the hallow'd day.

Mute is the voice of rural labor, hush'd

The plowboy's whistle, and the milkmaid's song.”

There is an accumulation of facts, easily produced if wanted, showing man's need of the supplemental rest of the Sabbath, in order to keep him in body and mind fairly in repair. So far is it from diminishing the products of toil, they prosper most who by this supplemental rest are better fitted to endure the six days' toil. I remember when first coming to this State asking a sugar-planter, not fifty miles from this city, whether it was really necessary

to violate the Sabbath during the grinding season: the emphatic answer was, "Sir, the leather bands by which our machinery is run need the rest of the Sabbath." Certainly this is a strong statement of the necessity of the Sabbath: if even inanimate things cannot undergo a ceaseless strain without disintegration, how much more is this stated intermission of labor required for so complicated a structure as that of man?

Take another view of this matter, involving a moral element. The inequalities of life introduce many forms of servitude: it may not be in the severe form of slavery; but in some form or other the necessities of life will compel some to labor for others whom Providence has placed in better positions than themselves. All over the land the distinction is drawn between the employer and the employed. The clerk must work through the hours appointed by the merchant; and so with the laborer in the field, and the artisan at his trade: the necessity of earning to-morrow's bread by the toil of to-day, will put one man under the control of another. How gratefully should these children of toil welcome the Sabbath, which blots out for a little moment these artificial distinctions,

and brings the whole race to equality before God! Beyond the works of necessity and mercy equally binding upon all, the Sabbath brings a remission of the woe denounced against sinful man; and by giving bread without labor affords to all the pledge of providential care. Of what priceless value to the poor man is the day of rest, affording time for the indulgence of the affections, and drawing closer the ties of domestic life? In every social and temporal aspect, the Sabbath comes to every home with a Divine blessing, and sanctifies the days which must be given to necessary toil.

IV. *Finally, the Sabbath urges its claim upon our regard as the symbol of religion under all Dispensations; and is designed for the culture of our higher and religious nature.* To cancel the Sabbath is to abrogate all worship, if not to ignore the Deity by whom we have been created and fashioned. Even in natural religion, when man first worshiped God in perfect holiness and without the taint of sin, it is found. It is a significant fact that the first day which the created man spent upon earth, was the Sabbath which the Lord God had sanctified. As he opened his eyes on the new-

created world, he was greeted with the light of the first Sabbath morn; and in the holy service of that day, as the priest of nature, he gathered up the praises of all the creatures and poured them as incense before the throne of God. As before he was constituted vice-regent, with dominion over the lower animals, in the act of giving the names to each; so again, he is inaugurated in his solemn priesthood in this earliest act of representative worship on the first day of the Lord. Not only so: on this first day of his own being, he brings the first fruits of his life and offers it as a sacrifice upon the Divine altar. It was the pledge that all of thought and desire and worship and life itself, which should be his in the years to come, they were all brought in this comprehensive worship and offered to the Creator.

We find the Sabbath, after the Fall, still the symbol of religious homage, transferred from the religion of Nature to the religion of Grace—showing that God will still be merciful to the transgressor. It is incorporated in the Decalogue, when the Mosaic Economy was set up with its imposing ritual of worship—a symbol still of the rest which should be the portion of the believer through the redemption by Christ,

which was the burden of that typical Dispensation. Thus it passed again into the Christian Economy, becoming the memorial of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews the Apostle elaborately argues, that He (Jesus) having "entered into His rest had ceased from His works, as God did from His." Thus the Sabbath rest at the Creation passes down through every intervening Dispensation, Jewish and Christian, until it points to the eternal Sabbath in Heaven, where the glorified Redeemer will gather all His saints forever. The Sabbath then is to be a day of rest, not only in cessation from bodily labor, but in that repose which we are to find in the salvation of the soul by faith in Jesus Christ. Whether in Natural or Revealed religion, and under all the Dispensations of Grace, it is the symbol of worship and a pledge of the rest we are to enjoy in the bosom of God forevermore.

Three practical suggestions will enforce the obligation of the Sabbath presented above. First, the Sabbath is as great a necessity to us as ever it has been to others in the past. The physical rest is imperatively needed by us, even more than by those who lived in the more easy-going

ages of our forefathers. Our civilization is vastly more complex; competition in all the industries of society is more severe; the forms of labor are being constantly changed; in all directions there is more drive and push than was ever known in the history of the world. As the inventive genius of the time is daily substituting the endurance of machinery for the sinew and muscle of the living arm, lifting up new forms of industry whilst abolishing the old, the hold on life becomes to the laborer more slippery—increasing by so much the necessity for incessant toil. Do we not then require the repose which the Sabbath brings, above the generations preceding our own? Of all nations upon the face of the earth, the American people are most in need of this supplemental rest. With their characteristic energy and push, there is an expenditure of nervous force, which, increasing with the progress of time, threatens the direst results at no far distant period. As a single illustration of the impending danger, take but the fearful rate at which insanity increases in our time—due in no small degree to the intense strain upon the brain and the entire nervous system. Remember, too, that evils of this kind accumulate in their transmission

from father to son; and measure, if you can, the inheritance we are bequeathing to posterity in the transmission of only this one frightful disorder. Is this the time, and are we the people, to yield to the greed of avarice that measure of repose which the beneficent Creator has provided in the peaceful Sabbath? See in the incidental reference to one form of physical disaster made above, what resources are in the hand of the Almighty to punish the infraction of His holy law. The Sabbath, like those ancient Egyptian monuments whose mysterious inscriptions antiquarians are now laboriously seeking to decipher, is a monumental shaft proclaiming the rights of God as the Creator, and of man's responsibilities as a being fashioned in the Divine image for the worship of the Supreme.

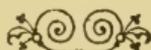
Again: the Sabbath is commended to our special care, because assailed by combined forces in the day in which we live. The insane passion of men for the accumulation of wealth, denounced even by heathen moralists as the accursed lust for gold ("Auri sacra fames"); the sensuality which would appropriate its leisure for the indulgence of its lusts; the infidelity which, as in the French Revolution, would destroy

the Sabbath as the bulwark of Christianity ; and above all these in the sweep and power of its influence, the greed of soulless corporations, pleading the necessities of commerce for the obliteration of this sacred landmark of time from the beginning : all these seriously threaten the existence of this holy day even in this Christian land in which we live. For this reason I am the more importunate with the young men of this assembly, to feel the responsibility upon them to rescue it from desecration and possible destruction.

Beyond both these considerations, I urge the importance of the Sabbath for the cultivation of your religious nature. You cannot throw this aside without lowering yourself to the condition of but a higher brute. The educational value of the Sabbath cannot be overestimated, not only in bringing men together in united worship of Jehovah, but in teaching those subordinate duties which men owe to each other in the various relations of society.

As the final utterance of this Lecture, I press the fact attested by the observation of Christian men everywhere ; that the first step to utter demoralization and ruin with young men, is the desecration of the day which God has reserved for Himself as a

day of rest and solemn worship. Of all the classes of young men, this observation holds true, with almost unerring certainty, of such as are born of pious parents, and who break away from all the traditions and instructions of their early youth. Peculiarly to them it is the entrance upon the downward path, becoming steeper as they descend: and too often they are cut off mid-way in their declension, and are suddenly precipitated in the abyss below.





## LECTURE X.

### *INTEMPERANCE AND SINS OF THE FLESH.*

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PROVERBS xxiii. 31-32—“*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright : at last it biteth like a serpent, it stingeth like an adder.*” Also,

EPHESIANS v. 18.—“*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.*”

With confessed reluctance I entered upon the discussion of vices, which implied their prevalence in society around us: it is always a distasteful office to become the accuser of others, especially as in possession of the same sinful nature one may be overtaken by his own indictment. In addition to this reluctance, which I must express anew, there is a peculiar embarrassment in taking up the subject of this evening's Lecture. It arises from the fact that I desire to be understood as meaning a great deal more than I dare openly to utter. I wish you to perceive an undertone of warning in the voice that

speaks to you to-night—a hidden meaning in the words falling from my lips, which your own penetration must discover and apply. If intemperance in the use of intoxicating drinks forms the leading topic, it is only one of the many sins committed against the flesh. There is gluttony, for example, that voracity of appetite in which a man resembles a ravening beast, when it falls upon its prey. There are the varied forms of debauchery; the uncleanness of which is so debasing that they cannot even be mentioned by name, nor discussed in detail before any public assembly. Yet I wish them all understood as included in the censure of this discourse: and though it may be impossible to frame the language specially for each, I must ask you to carry the application over to all THE VICES OF WHICH INTEMPERANCE MAY BE REGARDED AS TYPICALLY REPRESENTATIVE.

I. *I would say then that drunkenness, with all the sins of its class, offends against the sanctity of the human body. This body, declared by the Psalmist to be "fearfully and wonderfully made," is it not entitled to reverence? Stand by the anatomist, as he takes the curious mecha-*

nism to pieces. How multitudinous its parts, and with what singular harmony they are adjusted! How wonderful the net-work of nerves strung, like telegraphic wires, along the frame and conveying all reports from without to the hidden seat of the senses! Behold that mysterious power which touches all the keys of this marvelously complex instrument; sending, on these wires of secret communication, to the most distant member the dictates of the will. Look at this body, erect in stature, the last workmanship of the Creator, after He had fashioned the sun, moon and stars, and pronounced them "very good." How worthy of veneration this human form, which God has consecrated as the temple of the indwelling soul; the shrine of that image of the living Jehovah after which he was formed! How indispensable this earthly frame as the medium of intercourse between man and man! How great the glory with which it is invested by redeeming grace, ennobled in its resurrection from the grave, transformed by the power of the Holy Ghost into the spiritual body, and blessed with an immortality akin to that of the soul!

You are perhaps surprised at the warmth of this eulogy, pronounced upon

that part of our being which is so often delivered over to indiscriminate and silly abuse. Permit me to say that the genius of Christianity is infinitely removed from that Manichean sentiment which affects to despise the body as the seat of sins truly chargeable upon the spirit, and of which the body is but the instrument and organ. Nor, on the other hand, does it foster that idolatrous self-love, which pampers the flesh and thinks only of its adornment. It is nevertheless a part of our complex being ; through the possession of which we are distinguished from the angels above, as by the possession of spirit we are distinguished from the brutes below. The body is so truly a part of man, that it is not destroyed even in death : while the structure is dissolved, its identity is preserved and manifested in the resurrection. Indeed, to destroy it, would be to destroy him ; merging him into a distinct class of beings, from which it is intended he should be separated by this union of matter and spirit.

What shall we think then of those habits and acts which degrade and deface the body ? The Apostle declares that of the Christian to be “ the temple of the Holy Ghost : ” shall this temple be defiled

with any of the sins of the flesh, which it is not lawful so much as to name? Pass them secretly through your mind, as I suggested at the outset, and see if it be not a profanation to render the body the organ of these enormities. It becomes every man, therefore, to reverence his body as God's workmanship, given for worthy and even sacred uses, and which he should keep in purity in some measure even as the soul.

II. *Though not logically distinct, I signalize the fact that these sins of the flesh are the source of physical disease, and are therefore to the last degree criminal.* In one particular there is a distinction between the sins committed against God, and the offences committed against society. The former are ordinarily reserved for punishment in a future state : whilst the latter are overtaken with early and condign punishment in the present life. A man may be an atheist, proclaiming his denial of God through a long life of seeming prosperity and happiness: the blasphemy is not avenged by the lightning's stroke, nor does the earth open to swallow him up as it did Dathan and Abiram of old. A man may deny the Lord Jesus Christ all his

days, throwing contemptuously behind him the offers of salvation made to him by the Gospel; and the Divine displeasure will not be visited on him by any Providential calamity. On the contrary, the offences against society are subject to immediate arrest by a penalty which the Creator has infixed in the constitution of the human frame. The reason for this discrimination is obvious to every reflecting mind. The sins committed directly against God are acts of simple and futile insolence. The arrows shot from any human bow do not strike the stars, much less the throne of majesty on which the Ruler of the Universe sits secure. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." He, almighty in power and supreme in authority, can afford to be patient and postpone retribution until the judgment of the great day. But those transgressions which unhinge society, must be checked; or the disintegration of society will bring it soon to utter ruin. Hence the sins of the flesh are visited with early tokens of the Divine displeasure. You notice it in the diseases which fasten themselves incurably upon those who give themselves over to debauchery in any of its forms. The mere naturalist may allege

that this proceeds alone from the violation of recognized natural laws : it must not be overlooked by whom those natural laws were in the first instance ordained, and under whose supervision they continue to be enforced. It is the Divine hand imposing a restraint upon the indulgence of appetites and lusts which, unless checked, will destroy society. The inspired writer marks the distinction, when he says, "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment ; and some men they follow after." (1 Tim. v. 24.)

Human legislation is at pains to express abhorrence of certain crimes, which especially militate against the temporal welfare of mankind. The murderer and suicide, for example, are held in open detestation ; for the reason that life is the gift of God, and once taken or lost it can never be recovered. No man therefore is allowed, in the madness of passion, to seize that which God has given to another, and which he has no power to restore. One may be robbed of his wealth and may live to recover more than he lost, as Job did ; but if his blood is spilt on the ground, the power does not exist on earth which can make good his loss. In the case of the suicide, the old English law expresses its abhor-

rence by a peculiar enactment, to-wit: the body of such should be buried where two roads cross each other, that it may be trampled on by the greatest number possible; and as though denying it the privilege of resurrection, it was ordained that a stake should be driven through it, pinning it to the earth in which it was laid.

If now, in the judgment of fallible men, it be such a crime to take one's own life by the pistol or dagger, will you tell me where he comes short of the same who is slowly but surely wasting his life through the wanton indulgence of appetite and lust? What right has the creature to whom God has given life as a trust, to sap the vital force within him through unnatural indulgence? Is the melancholy confession made that he cannot reform? Alas, to what a condition of slavery is such an one reduced! But let that wretched victim of appetite know that there is a Divine power able to break the fetters in which he is bound, and restore him to the freedom he has lost. Let him but get conscience fairly on his side, with full conviction that he is responsible before the bar of God for the most heinous of crimes; and under a clear sense of his own helplessness, let him lay hold of the strength which comes

from above, and he will be saved. Because these vices lay the foundation of manifold diseases, therefore it is a crime to indulge in any of them. We have no more right to take our own life by degrees, than at once by immediate violence: and no more right to take our own life than the life of another.

III. *The guilt of intemperance is seen in that it is treason against the higher intellectual and moral nature given us of God.* In the beautiful language of Milton, man is "endued with sanctity of reason," and by this distinguished from the brute creation; in token whereof he was invested with dominion over the creatures. In addition, the arbiter of right and wrong was implanted in his bosom, which we style conscience. By virtue of this double gift man becomes a being under law, bound to render account of all his deeds at the bar of eternal justice: in testimony of which he is sisted, in this present life, before this lower tribunal; which is but the shadow of that higher court in which the Judge will pronounce the final destinies of men.

But what is drunkenness save the sponging out of those characteristics by which

men are distinguished from the beasts of the field? What is it but to "put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains?" Alas, it is more than to extinguish the light of reason: it blunts, and for the time disables, the faculty by which we recognize the authority of the Divine law, thus completing the apostasy from ourselves. You will recall the words of Milton, which so powerfully describe the foul transformation of the God-like into something worse than the beast:

"Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,  
Th'express resemblance of the gods, is changed  
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,  
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,  
All other parts remaining as they were:  
And they, so perfect is their misery,  
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement  
But boast themselves more comely than before;  
And all their friends and native home forget,  
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty."

We are accustomed to glory in the dignity of man: I willingly allow it all. The Divine testimony is given, that he was "made a little lower than the angels and was crowned with glory and honor." Those redeemed by grace are represented in heaven as being nearest the Lamb, and as giving the keynote to that immortal song; to which the angels, the elder sons

of God, respond as they swell the mighty chorus, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." Of the two parts of this celestial choir, who sing the praises of the Most High God in strophe and anti-strophe, the glorified saints alone are able to say, "for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by thy blood." It is a glorious distinction to have been in the beginning made in the likeness and after the image of the Creator; but it will require the dialect of heaven to set forth the glory of redemption, and the honorable destiny of those who teach the angels the wonders of their salvation. My young friends, we yield to none who are wont to sing the glory of man, in the rich endowments both of nature and grace. But then this dignified being owes it to his Creator and to himself to protect that glory with which he has been crowned. He owes it to his intelligence, by which he is a creature of knowledge; he owes it to his conscience, by which he is a creature of law; he owes it to the Divine image, in which he is a creature of worship; he owes it to that destiny, which he is to fulfil beyond the grave; he owes it to the majesty of God

and to his own sense of honor ; he owes it to every motive by which a rational and immortal being can be controlled, never to allow himself to be entangled in those vices by which he can only be disfigured and destroyed. If any one dear to me were ensnared in the meshes of this fearful vice, I would implore him by all the terrors of the final judgment and by all the attractions of heaven, to burst the fetters of this fatal bondage and no longer remain a slave to the most cruel of masters, his own passion and lust.

IV. *Intemperance disables from performing the duties of life, and exposes to the commission of every crime.* I need not repeat what has been the burden of the preceding Lectures, that life is filled with sacred trusts. Every relation we sustain has its peculiar responsibilities. Consult now the records of our courts, and you will find at least three-fourths of all the crimes committed to be the acts of men who, for the time being, were divested of their reason by strong drink ; and who, in their moments of sobriety, would have recoiled with horror from them. Why should a man voluntarily put himself in a condition which exposes to such

tremendous hazards? Is he without guilt, who, in the heat of passion or by the force of evil habit, has lost the control of himself? The bare suggestion is enough, and need not be further pressed: the condition is simply frightful of an intelligent being resigning the use of reason and the control of his own will, and becoming a wild beast such as a leopard or a tiger. It is the argument of prudence as well as of conscience, dissuading from indulgence of appetites which thus disable from all relative and social duties, and expose to the commission of the most fearful crimes to be found upon the calendar of our courts.

V. *Finally, I urge against intemperance and all cognate vices, that they incapacitate for religion.* Beyond dispute, the duties which man owes to God are supreme. Can we worship God, when deprived of reason? Can we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour from sin, if conscience is paralyzed within us? Is it possible to fulfil any of the duties of practical religion, without the full possession of all the faculties? The highest obligation resting upon a reasonable being is to love, obey and worship Him in whose image he

was fashioned, and at whose bar of judgment he must stand. What then is the verdict to be pronounced against a habit, which ends in stripping one of all the powers which constitute him a moral and immortal being? I do not specify other vices; though it would be easy to show that they all blunt the sensibilities, and render men unsusceptible of spiritual influences and unmindful of spiritual obligations. The denunciation of one is the denunciation of all, as bearing upon them the stamp of the Divine displeasure

But why are these counsels addressed with such emphasis to the young? It would be sufficient to reply that the habits, this evening inveighed against, are not confirmed in these, as they are in the old. It is easier to guard against the invasion of disease, than to conquer it when seated in the frame. But there are special reasons for urging these considerations upon the young. The first is, that these vices have their root in our animal nature, through which the temptation assails us. No man is safe from transgression, as long as he carries about this body of flesh. But the period of greatest peril is when the physical powers are approaching their maturity; when the appetites are

freshest, and the passions are the most clamorous for indulgence. At this period, too, there is little experience of life, and consequently little apprehension of danger; and so the young are to be carefully warned by the knowledge of others. Again, a young man is under fewer restraints, which afford a measure of protection to the old. Those in mid-life who are surrounded by the children of their loins, have given pledges to society for their good behavior. The husband and father is often held in check by domestic ties, who might resist the appeals to his religious nature. The young man is apt to regard himself as free from social obligations: imagining himself the irresponsible master of his own movements, he is apt to drift into habits which at length in their swift current sweep him into sudden ruin.

The danger to the young is immensely increased by the fact that intemperance is pre-eminently a social vice; and the temptations soliciting to the indulgence of appetite are on every side. Observation shows that the generous and the warm-hearted are the most apt to fall under the bondage of this destructive habit. Intemperance is therefore singularly insidious in its approaches. It invites to cheer and

good company, and the gay saloon throws open its hospitable doors for unlimited enjoyment : meanwhile the meshes of inveterate habit are being woven closer, and the web is drawn tighter around the unhappy victim until he sinks into a dishonored grave. Oh, the temptations which everywhere are thrown upon the path of the young, ensnaring their feet and luring them on to certain destruction !

“ Ha ! See where the wild-blazing grog-shop appears,  
As the red waves of wretchedness swell,  
How it burns on the edge of tempestuous years,  
The horrible Light-house of Hell ! ”



## LECTURE XI.

### *THE SIN OF GAMBLING.*

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PROVERBS xvi. 33.—“*The lot is cast into the lap ; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*” Also,

2. THESSALONIANS iii. 10-12.—“*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.*”

I am happy in being relieved, after to-night, from the office of censure: although, as you perceive from the passages of Scripture just recited, I shall be led to denounce now THE SIN OF GAMBLING. These verses have been chosen as the foundation of my discourse, because they present this vice under two distinct aspects: the one showing its profaneness; the other, its contravention of the law of labor. The guilt of it consists of both conjoined.

Gambling has been briefly defined “the staking and winning property upon a hazard.” The following considerations are urged against it:

I. *It is a profane invasion of the government and province of God.* The vices of men, like their virtues, grow together in clusters as grapes which hang from the same stem of the vine. And it would be a curious speculation to trace the connection between them; to decide upon the principles which associate certain vices together in one man, or certain virtues together in another. Whether our philosophy can explain it or not, a kind of intermarriage takes place in both cases, by which a definite relationship is established. In regard to our vices, they have a common origin in the sinful nature we inherit from our first parent, the single root from which springs all the evil to be found in our character and conduct. But apart from this, some secret tie seems to bind certain sins together and to hold them in a unity of their own. There is, for example, a strange resemblance between gambling and profane swearing, as though they were twin shoots from the same parent stem. The essence of profanity, as shown in a preceding Lecture, is the separation of the name of God from the perfections which it symbolizes and commemorates. Frivolously used as a mere expletive, it is finally disassociated from all thought of

God and His worship. In like manner, gambling founds on the notion of chance, and makes open breach with the providence of God. In both alike we have the same profanation of the attributes and government of the Most High; and the two are resolved into different faces of the same sin. There is no such thing as chance in the administration of a wise and beneficent Ruler; and the use of the word is altogether without meaning. "The lot," says Solomon, "is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord:" this concludes debate; "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." Its only significance is that of concealing our ignorance of the immediate cause by which any effect is produced:

" Behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping  
Watch above His own."

Science knows nothing of chance: it goes through all the province Nature, patiently seeking the cause of the phenomena presented to the eye; and always assuming that they are effects for which an adequate explanation may be found. When these two are brought together, the sufficient cause and the necessary effect, then Science feels herself justified in the conclusion which is affirmed. You will observe that true science unites with

Divine Revelation in denying that there can be any such thing as chance, either in the natural or moral government of the Most High. As before said, the word is void of significance, save as it declares a matter lifted from human jurisdiction into the Divine. When a case occurs which cannot be decided in the exercise of human wisdom, the lot is employed in order to remit it to the decision of Him who rules the universe. It is therefore essentially a prayer, an act of solemn worship offered to the Supreme Being. If it be frivolously used, either in sport or for gain, and without reverential feelings, it becomes a profane act; akin in its nature to the reckless oath, which separates the name of God from the attributes of His character. As the latter is an assault upon the personal glory of Jehovah, so is the former an assault upon His government and providence. In both, an equal contempt is thrown upon the being, authority and perfections of the great and dreadful Being, of whom we should never think without reverence and awe.

It does not militate against this argument that the events which appear to be determined by the lot come under the operation of the laws of nature; for God

administers His whole providence by and through these same laws which He has ordained for this purpose. Undoubtedly we can trace the laws by which the dew is formed upon the grass and flowers—the laws which govern the rising and setting of the sun—the laws by which the vapor is lifted from the sea and returned again to refresh the parched earth : in short, it is easy to trace most of the ways by which the secret forces of nature are controlled by the Supreme Creator for the benefit of mankind. But this does not disallow the privilege of prayer, simply because these forces are under His control and can be managed for our good in answer to our petition. Thus, while it may be true that there are natural laws determining the face of the dice as it is turned up, still they are laws unknown to us and beyond human reach ; and the employment of the lot remands this to the knowledge and power of Him by whom these laws were ordained. It is therefore like the prayer which the Christian addresses to his Heavenly Father, that He would hold the wind in His fist in the dreaded cyclone, or hold the waves in His hand on the tempestuous deep. Here then is a religious argument against the sin of gambling: the hazard

which it employs is an appeal to God to interpose in a given case, when that appeal is not intended as a reverential prayer and devout worship. It is therefore simple profanity, just like the oath of the swearer. It is a noteworthy fact that where our knowledge is most perfect, the movements are too distant for our interference ; whilst the objects which are near us, are under the operation of laws which we imperfectly comprehend. Science can tell us, for example, more about the stars which are millions of miles away, than it can tell about the pestilence and the earthquake which are near at hand. Thus wonderfully does God protect Himself and His government over the creature, by making us dependent upon Him in prayer for the blessings we desire to obtain and the evils we desire to avert. All events are under the control of law ; and yet we must bow at the feet of Him, to whom alone these laws are perfectly obedient. Prayer is always proper, if offered in reverence ; but never in mockery either of God's being or providence.

II. *Gambling is simple robbery.* Only by one or other of two ways can we come lawfully into the possession of what be-

longs to another ; it must be either by gift, or by purchase. The property acquired by any man is his, as the product of his industry ; and may be disposed of as he will. He may enjoy it himself, or he may generously bestow it upon another. Now gambling is not a gift : for the stake, whether large or small, is not transferred to the winner at the desire of the loser, or with his good will. Nor, on the other hand, is it a purchase: for no equivalent has passed from the winner to the loser. If it be neither gift nor purchase, what is it ? Upon what ground is such property held ? Under what name shall we register the transaction ? Is it not, in the last analysis, an act of robbery pure and simple ? In reply to the dilemma stated above, it has been argued that the gain and loss in gambling are the result of a compact between the parties, in which both consent to the risk. This, it is alleged, renders the transfer of the stake from the loser to the fortunate winner constructively a gift ; at least, there has been no violent wresting of property from the hand of the one ; and no unlawful placing it in the hand of the other. Thus it is speciously concluded that gambling cannot be proven either a sin against God, or a crime against men.

It seems to me, however, a clear principle in ethics, that what it is unlawful for a man to do, it is unlawful for a man to bargain to do. No voluntary agreements among men can alter the essential nature of what is condemned by the testimony of conscience and by the law of God. In fact, this antecedent contract between two or more gamesters, so far from mitigating the offence, duplicates the guilt. It renders the offence more deliberate, and in the co-operation of two wills doubles the crime. There is not only the guilt of doing a wrong thing, but the guilt of conspiring to do it. With forethought and predetermination two or more men bargain with each other to set aside the judgment of God, and to construe as right what He has declared to be wrong.

Property, whether it come by inheritance or through one's own industry, is a trust; and he who holds it is, in God's sight, only a steward. The proprietary right is with the "Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift:" the usufruct of which is with him upon whom the gift is bestowed. As there is no power of alienation, the property is to be held for the uses designed by the giver, and for which a strict account is

finally to be rendered. What right has the gamester to stake this property, of which he has only the enjoyment, and pass it over to another on a game of hazard? If it be a trust, and a trust to be accounted for on some day of reckoning, is it not sheer profligacy to throw it away, without good to himself or those for whom he ought to care? Then reversing the statement, what right has any man to take that which is another's without rendering an equivalent? For the doctrine that property is a trust from God makes us responsible for the way in which it is acquired, as well as the way in which it is alienated. In the gamblers' contract therefore a double crime is committed; in that both agree to stake what neither has the right to throw away, and to seize what neither has the right to appropriate.

The matter may be illustrated by the case of the duelist. By the laws of God and man, no one has the right to take the life of another: but two men agree to go on the "field of honor," as it is sarcastically called, each striving to do that very thing. Does the agreement between these two make that right, which, without the agreement, would be an atrocious crime? Has either the right to throw away the

life which God gave ; and has either the right to take the life which he cannot restore ? The parallel is a just one. As the duelist cannot escape the charge of murder in taking the life on which he has no right to lay his hand ; as he is guilty “in esse ” of a twofold murder, in risking his own as well as in the intention to take the life of his antagonist ; as the crime is the deeper, as done with deliberative purpose ; so is the gamester convicted of a crime in risking the loss of his own property, and in the intention of taking that which is another's : and the solemn agreement to either the one or the other of these criminal acts, stamps them both with a deeper guilt.

III. *Gambling is an offence against the law of labor.* The Apostle declares as the penalty of transgressing this law, “if a man work not, neither shall he eat.” No state in which man is found on earth, exempts him from the operation of this universal law. Even in his primitive holiness, man was appointed to “dress and keep” the garden in which he was placed. It may have been a light labor assigned him, but it was the recognition of his dependence on the Creator. After the fall, the

curse was pronounced against the ground for man's sin, "thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." From that sad day to this, man has lived under the necessity of labor. Let it be noted here that no exception is to be found anywhere to the enforcement of this law. The plowman in the field is the son of toil, so is the blacksmith as his ponderous blows ring out the music from the anvil which he strikes.; so is the seaman, as he reefs the sails of his ship in the exposure of the storm. This law of labor obtains in the domain of mind, no less than of matter. The lawyer pleading at the bar; the judge decreeing justice from the bench; the physician in his daily round ministering to the sickness of men; the merchant in his retired room touching the wires which send the currents of commerce over the globe: all these are men of toil—the work of mind, often more exhausting than of the body, because it wastes the energies of both. Even the millionaire, supposed to be free from toil because of his excessive wealth, finds full employment in keeping from waste and productively investing what he owns; and often confesses this to be attended with

more anxious care, than the original acquisition itself.

This curse of labor Divine grace has converted into a blessing. In the exercise of all our faculties, both mind and body are invigorated; and the employments in which we engage open to us constant sources of happiness. There is a principle covered here, which I must disclose. Labor becomes a blessing, whenever it blends with the purpose of God in securing what He desires to bestow. The two factors unite in producing a joint result. The Divine Being bestows, and through labor we receive. Even in religion where eternal life is so entirely the gift of God, there is not a solitary point in the scheme where human agency is not called into play as co-ordinate with the Divine. If we are to be saved through the righteousness of a Redeemer, there must be on our part the acceptance of it through faith. If God graciously pardons our sins, there must be the repentance with which these sins are confessed and bewailed. If God pledges His grace to keep the believer safe and land him at length in the eternal home, it is necessary that the Christian keep the commandments and preserve his garments unspotted in the world. Di-

vine sovereignty and human responsibility meet at every stage of the believer's progress through life. Equally so is it in regard to the temporal blessings bestowed in the administration of providence. God gives the sun, the rain, the dew ; and we mingle with these the industry which procures for us the abundant harvest. The labor becomes a blessing, because in it we unite with our Heavenly Father in securing the gifts which His munificent hand bestows.\* It is true work, since through God's concurrence it is productive. Nothing deserves to be called work, which is not productive of some benefit. Beating the air with my hand is not work, although it may exhaust the physical energies, because it results in no good to any one : but if I drive the plow in the soil, or reap the harvest which is ripe, I am blending my agency with the appointment of God in producing that which He ordains for my sustenance. But what work, in this Divine and true sense, is there in gambling? What is done beyond the exchange from one hand to another hand, without the production of anything or the adding additional value to what has already been acquired? Clearly, then, gambling is to be condemned as contravening one of the

most important of nature's laws, the law of labor. It is an attempt to lift one's-self above the uniform condition of creaturely existence, and is thus in another form an assault upon the providential arrangements of the Most High.

IV. *Gambling feeds the natural covetousness of men, which the Apostle denounces as idolatry.* If I should cite the portions of Holy Writ which condemn undue love of the world, I must repeat much that is contained in the Old and New Testaments. The uniform testimony of both is in words like these: "labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life:" and again, "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Worldly goods are bestowed as a trust, to be used for the glory of God and the benefit of man—with a liberal percentage allowed for our own use and enjoyment. When thus employed in accordance with the Divine grant, the earthly treasures are changed into the heavenly treasures which abide forever. Undoubtedly wealth is a

great temptation which few are able to resist ; for it is the source of power to those who possess it. And whenever our attachment to it is supreme, so that it displaces God in our esteem, it becomes idolatrous. But in what individual of the race does covetousness become the ruling passion, as in the gambler ? The love of gain swallows up every affection and controls every thought. Hence the antagonism between this vice and true religion : so that if the grace of God should overtake the gambler, he is constrained to abandon his calling. It is not possible that he shall continue it and still be a child of God. Because the grace by which he has been subdued strikes at the root of that covetousness, which in him had become the rankest idolatry. Its opposition therefore to the spirit and genius of the Gospel stamps it as fearful sin against the Redeemer of men.

V. *Gambling is seen to be a vice from its disastrous consequences.* It has a two-fold root : first in the covetous desire to accumulate wealth rapidly and largely ; and then in the love of excitement which belongs to our nature. The passion for gambling grows into a frenzy : the excite-

ment blazes into a consuming flame which burns up the man. His moral convictions and sweetest social affections shrivel in this consuming heat, until they are blown at length into the air as powder and dust. On this account, and because of its opposition to that labor upon which worldly progress depends, it unhinges society, by which it is universally execrated. There is not a civilized community which does not put the brand of infamy upon it. Our law-books are full of statutes against it as an evil which strikes at the very existence of society, rendering it impossible that the body corporate can be held together. Not only so, but the indignant voice of public sentiment drives it, under the pressure of its reproach, to practise its dark deeds in secrecy and under the cover of night. Let all men become gamblers, abandoning themselves to the intense greed which cuts them off from their kind, and what is the fate of society? Hence the brand of reprobation everywhere put upon this vice.

I recall, as I speak, the startling testimony of a noted gambler whom I personally knew, and who was an unusually respectable man of his class : speaking of his only child and son, he openly declared :  
“ I would a thousand times rather see him

in his coffin and follow him to his grave, than see him live the life that I daily live before him." Is it strange, then, that the practice should be condemned by the universal conscience of men and restrained by the enactments of human law, seeing it is thus denounced in the testimony of the gamester himself? If we shall take the trouble to follow this vice to the end of the gamester's career, we shall find it overtaken by the just judgments of heaven. Ill-gotten gains are ever breaking out in curses, like the leprosy in the blood. Count up the raving mad-men it shuts up in our asylums; and the wretched suicides every year terminating a life of unnatural warfare against the human race by the last atonement they can make in self-destruction. Put these things into the estimate you form of this frightful vice, and you will approximate the estimate of God Himself.

The cautions of this Lecture are addressed to the young men of this audience, for two reasons: first, because the young crave excitement; which makes the passion of gaming peculiarly dangerous to them. Secondly, because this vice conflicts with all proper business habits, upon which your future prosperity and happi-

ness depend. There is the greater need for pressing this advice, as the spirit of gaming appears to be invading the very forms of business itself. It may be difficult to draw the line of separation accurately between the hazards which attend all commercial enterprises, and that hazard which constitutes the definition of gambling. This, however, may be safely affirmed; that when in any transaction every thing is staked upon simple chance, without commercial calculations of any sort, this is gambling. To what extent these hazards are run in the business transactions of the day, I certainly would not undertake to decide. But the difficulty increasingly experienced of entering upon business without large capital, as against the heavy combinations formed to force commerce in particular channels, is driving men into these extravagances which border upon the practice of the gamester. I trust there is virtue enough left in the land to hold these evils in check; or that in the providence of Almighty God the evils may work out their attendant cure. But if all business is to be swept into the vortex of this enormous vice, one shudders at the universal wreck of society which is near at hand. Because of the imminency

of this appalling danger, I am disposed to plead with the young men now listening to my voice to cultivate the virtues of their forefathers ; to learn how to be rich by being content ; to be satisfied with small gains, building up a fortune at the close of life rather than at its beginning. If they do not pile up enormous wealth, they will at least pass into the eternal world without the regret of having violated the obligations due to society and to God.





## LECTURE XII.

### *THE SCRIPTURES, OUR RULE.*

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2 PETER i. 19.—“ *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day-dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.*”

The Apostle Peter opens this second Epistle with earnest exhortations to Christians to cultivate the graces of the Spirit, so that in their abounding fruitfulness they may stand approved in the sight of God. He declares his purpose to keep them constantly reminded of these duties, taking pains to have them brought to remembrance even after his decease. He is the more earnest in delivering this testimony, having been eye-witness of the glory of Christ when He was transfigured upon the Mount. The language of the text is then uttered, showing how ancient predictions of the Redeemer's glory had been confirmed in this fulfilment; involving this fundamental principle, that every statement concerning the Saviour and the sal-

vation of the soul, must be tested by an appeal to the sacred Scriptures: "to the law and to the testimony—if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The supreme authority of this Holy Book is presented with decisive force—that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I am thus brought up to the subject of the present Lecture, the WORD OF GOD THE INFALLIBLE RULE OF LIFE TO MAN.

It is the topic above all others riveting with final authority the counsels which have been addressed to you on successive Sabbath evenings. They have not been without a connection of their own, as may be seen by bringing their titles together: "the importance of youth as the formative period;" "the elements which enter into what we term character;" "the influence of practical religion in moulding the same;" "the obstacles to piety in the young;" "the obligations resting on those born of a godly ancestry;" "the obligations arising from the trusts of life;" "the principles which should guide the young in their choice of amusements;" "the four special vices by which youth is assailed, Profaneness,

Sabbath-breaking, Intemperance with other lusts of the flesh, and Gambling." I cannot now do better than to bind these advices together with the authority of God's word; and to show how it "shines as a light in a dark place," guiding you through all the intricacies of life, proving itself a "lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path."

I. *Consider then the majesty of the truths therein delivered to us.* There is the truth concerning God Himself: in the first line of Revelation we read, "in the beginning God"—a Being uncaused, underived, having the ground of existence within Himself. With what majesty is the announcement made? Without a word of comment or explanation, the incomprehensible mystery is to be received through the responsive echo of the mind to the naked utterance. Man made in the image of his Creator, is expected to recognize Him as soon as presented to his thought. And how august the revelation, when this awful Being instantly calls all things out of nothing, simply by the word of His power: "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Without preface of any sort, two of the sublimest

mysteries are disclosed, the necessary self-existence of Jehovah and the absolute creation of all things else that appear. Overwhelming as both the propositions are, the mind of the creature receives them by an instinct of its own as matters of fact; and it is only when it attempts with its finite line to measure the magnitude of either, that it reels and staggers beneath the infinite task.

Then we have the correlative truth concerning the soul in man, the spiritual element by which he is distinguished from the brutes below him. As though a spark from the Divine life animated the body which had been fashioned from the dust of the ground, the seal of immortality is stamped upon him in the possession of a nature henceforth indestructible forever.

And what shall be said of that eternity which these Scriptures reveal; through whose vistas the imagination peers with quickened vision, until it is lost in the boundless duration beyond? What a life prolonged is here offered to the creature; a life continuing even through the mystery of death and running through the stretches of unmeasured eternity, by the power of "Him that was and is to come?" How perfect the truth concern-

ing these high mysteries? Truth, not such as we gain by partial glimpses, gathered piecemeal here and there, and woven into proud philosophies as the workmanship of our own thought: but truth in its complete roundness—truth in its two hemispheres of revelation concerning God and man, settling down upon each other and making the perfect globe—truth which the expanding intellect shall employ its eternal life in comprehending and enjoying. Ah, let those testify how sweet a thing truth is, who spend their earthly life in acquiring it. The wealth of all the mines cannot so enrich the possessor as that substantial knowledge coming to us in the search for truth, which is forever incorporate with the mind itself. But the truth drawn from the Holy Scriptures, is truth pure and unalloyed—truth free from misgiving and doubt—truth received through a Divine faith, of which the knowledge is without suspicion, the eternal food and refreshment of the soul.

If the word of God is so precious in its disclosures of God and the human soul, consider what it has to reveal concerning the holiness and love which shall form the inheritance of the saints in heaven. It is a holiness without the soil of sin; holiness

of thought, holiness of affections, holiness of desire, holiness of will, holiness of action, the complete holiness of the complete nature. With what aspirations are we filled in the bare contemplation of this ! The possibility of rising out of our infirmities and bewailings here into the perfection of our sanctified nature there, bewilders us. Yet it is as certain, as that we live and are redeemed by grace of God. But this holiness draws after it an equal perfection in love ; love that knows nothing of jealousy, never wilting under a suspicion of unfaithfulness, love filling the whole heart, and flowing out in ascriptions of praise and adoration to Him who has shed this glory upon the creature.

I have sketched only an outline of the truths which are discovered in the Scriptures : but they are so sublime as to fill the soul with a sense of their importance and worth. In the entire range of human speculation there is nothing to compare with these majestic disclosures : and if the Bible only came to man as the climax of human philosophy and science, as emanating from the genius of a Confucius, a Plato or an Aristotle, it would be received with the homage of universal acceptance. With how much deeper reverence should

it be acknowledged, when stamped with the authority and authorship of the Divine Being Himself?

II. *The Scriptures are the more valuable as a guide, in that the truth is delivered in the form of testimony.* It is not truth reasoned out from premises to conclusion, subject to all the errors of doubtful inference; it is truth revealed and therefore clothed with dogmatic authority, as being unfolded through a witness competent to deliver the testimony. Look at the chances of mistake in any process of deductive reasoning. Take the calculations of the mathematician, as they are thrown upon the blackboard; how intricate they are; and then the almost despairing confession that the slightest error in the body of those figures will vitiate the result, reveals the uncertainty of knowledge in the most exact of all the sciences. In the Bible, we have the immense advantage, that every truth comes in the form of testimony; and the only question which can arise respects simply the credibility of the witness. The sacred Book stands before us like the earth itself, the work of the Creator's hand; profound mysteries lie hid in both not open to human criticism, and before which

man's intelligence bows with reverence at the manifestation of the Divine glory.

If we ask who is the revealer, whose supreme authority overbears the critical judgment, and makes it the passive recipient of his testimony, the answer is not only ready, but absolutely convincing: He is the Second Person in the adorable Godhead, "the Word that was with God and was God;" whose official distinction it is to be the Revealer of the Godhead to man. "All things were delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 37). Again it is declared, "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). Coming from the bosom of the Father, He proclaims Himself the "Light of the world," lifting out of the depths of the Divine nature the transcendent mysteries of the being and perfections of Jehovah, and disclosing all that the creature needs to know of His counsels and designs. This supernatural revelation is made in human language, and is instinct with all the sympathies of the human heart; so that it

can be understood as a statement of actual facts, however incommensurable to human reason. The competency of the witness cannot be questioned; and the language in which His testimony is conveyed, bears the stamp of infallibility through the inspiration of the record in which it is transmitted.

The notable advantage here is that the comprehensible and the incomprehensible, the plain and the mysterious, are placed on the same level as inspired truth. This sweeps away the cavil against the Scriptures, that they are so full of incomprehensible mysteries. Never was objection more futile than this. Why, even in the sphere of Nature mystery prevails; it is the sad condition of all human knowledge that it retreats into the unknown. There is not a path of science which, trodden backward, does not bring one to a blank wall which arrests his progress. If this be so when dealing with the created and the finite, how much more may mystery be expected in a Revelation which speaks of the Infinite Jehovah in His relations to man? Indeed, it would be the absence of mystery which would be conclusive against a Revelation claiming to be from heaven, of which the presence of mystery is the

strongest presumptive proof. The plain propositions of the Bible rest upon the same footing with the most inexplicable; they are both received upon the veracity of the witness who testifies; and neither becomes a Divine truth to us, until so accepted in faith. It is not a question whether we fully compass what is revealed, but whether we accept it as a matter of fact; it is not a question of understanding, but of responding. We believe what is found in the Bible, not because we comprehend it, but because it is declared to us upon the veracity of Him who cannot lie. We may understand it, or we may not; but the authority upon which it is received, is the infallible testimony of the Revealer. It is needless to argue the value to short-sighted, erring man, of an inspired and infallible guide.

III. *The value of the Scriptures is further seen in that it addresses itself to all the faculties of the human soul.* It speaks, of course, directly to the understanding as the organ of knowledge; for there could be no revelation without intelligence to receive it. At every step, the mind finds its exercise in taking up and interpreting the terms in which the truths of the Gospel

are made known. But the conscience is equally addressed with the intellect. The truths which man is to believe, are truths which he is also to practise. Hence that pregnant phrase employed by our Lord, "doing the truth." The Bible covers the whole field of human duty, evermore appealing to the conscience to distinguish between the right and the wrong. It seeks equally to enlist the affections; holding up before us a Being of infinite love, to whom the heart of the creature should flow out with unceasing delight. It no less recognizes man in the sphere of his activity; and calls upon him, in the free choice of the will, to assume and discharge all the responsibilities of life. Without expanding further what is so plain, it is easy to see that no system of truth goes so entirely around the circle of the human faculties, as that which is taught in the Word of God.

You cannot fail to perceive that the concurrent impression made upon these different faculties strengthens the conviction which is thereby produced. The truth thus takes hold upon the entire nature of man; and the interaction between his different powers largely protects against the misinterpretation of the record, to which he is constantly exposed. The error

which might occur in the understanding, will be corrected by the impression upon the heart ; and that which might be made through the affections, will be overruled by the decisions of the conscience. The truth is seen in its symmetry at the intersection of these lines, towards which the different rays of light converge as their common focus. The aberations to which we are prone, are thus corrected in the reflex light shed upon them from these various directions ; and the truth is ascertained for us, as by a jury of inquest. Because of the distinct impression made upon all the faculties of the soul, the Bible is of especial value as the rule of conduct.

IV. *The fundamental truths of the Bible receive an immediate response from the religious instincts of our nature.* This will be best understood by giving instances of what perhaps I have obscurely expressed. Take, for example, the being of God. It is a little remarkable that the Scriptures everywhere assume the Divine existence as an unquestioned fact, without any attempt to prove it. It is a truth independent of argument, and does not need to be proved. It is as nearly allied to what we term "a first truth" as can be, without

being itself an intuition. The inference by which it is received is so immediate, that the mind accepts it upon the first presentation. There is no need of argument, except to verify to one's reason that which has already been received in faith ; or else to paralyze some objection which an obstinate scepticism may choose to raise against it. And it is worthy of note, that the argument when exhausted has not added one particle to the antecedent conviction of the truth. If in the intellect of man can be traced any part of that natural image of God in which he was created, it should be expected spontaneously to recognize the Divine existence as soon as disclosed to it. Those who have ascended the river Saguenay in Canada, will easily recall the three mountains, known as "the Trinity," situated in a little bay ; and as the steamer swings into position between them a pistol shot is echoed and re-echoed in a thousand reverberations, dying away at last in the dimness of the distance. It needed but the configuration of these mountains relatively to each other, to awake these echoes ; and the echoes needed only the original sound to call them forth. This spontaneous recognition of the Creator is but the mind's echo to the truth which calls it forth. If in right

position between the human understanding and conscience and heart, a voice proclaims the name of God, Jehovah, a thousand echoes will repeat the sacred name, as from hill to hill, until they are blended and lost in a perfect but silent acquiescence.

Find another illustration in the obligation of obedience to the Divine law, instantly recognized by the conscience; and the sense of justice responding to the penalty as its necessary sanction. Strange contradictions meet in man's experience as a sinner before God. On the one hand, the will is ever prompting to the utmost degree of self-assertion; and the creature would fain seek to be the arbiter of his own destiny. On the other hand, he is constrained to bow, often with a reluctant homage, to an authority higher than himself. Jehovah commands; and conscience, as the organ of law, binds the duty of obedience upon the recalcitrant will. Were it not for this instinctive recognition of the Divine supremacy, it is hard to see how submission to human authority could be secured. The force which would be required to compel obedience, would utterly destroy every noble quality of man's nature; rendering him an automaton rather than a

free and loving subject. The illustration is even stronger with the response of the human conscience to the necessity of punishment, in case of transgression. - With all the sinner's recoil from the doctrine of a future judgment and the final banishment of the wicked from the presence of a holy God, the conscience of the race has never been able to thrust it aside. Man must reflect, however dimly, the image of his Maker in which he was fashioned from the beginning; and the sense of justice in him must respond to the justice that is infinite in the Lawgiver.

More mysterious still is the ineradicable persuasion of God's conversableness even with those whom His justice condemns. Reason may not explain the consistency of the two; but there would not be the possibility of hope in the sinner's breast without the deep underlying conviction that the Divine Being may be propitiated. The whole doctrine of the Atonement grounds upon this necessary enforcement of the penalty in case of transgression; but the revelation of it to the sinner would be ineffective, if there were no antecedent persuasion of the possibility of reconciliation with the offended Lawgiver. It is one of the most striking proofs of the truth

of Christianity, that with all the mysteriousness of its doctrines, utterly incomprehensible to human reason, they find points of attachment in the deep-seated convictions of the soul, where they secure a firm lodgment. A book which obtains such ready access to the heart and conscience, with the vast array of truth which it delivers to man, may surely be commended as the sufficient guide of his life.

V. *The Bible reveals truth to man in every condition in which he is placed, and is therefore capable of immediate verification.* It has a word of blessing for those who are happy, pointing to the "Father of lights from whom cometh every good and perfect gift." It has a word of comfort for those who are in sorrow, and shows how—

"The broken heart  
May, like the plants that throw  
Their fragrance from the wounded part,  
Breath sweetness out of woe."

It explains the discipline of life, and how every trial may be overruled for spiritual good. A promise stands against every trouble; which we have only to accept, and thus verify its truth in our own experience. The challenge of Scripture is on

every page: "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." What can be more fair than this? The Book that proposes to guide men to eternal life, offers itself to the test of immediate and practical experience to be accepted or rejected, as its fidelity is established or overthrown. In all cases in which the test has been fully made, the conclusion finds expression in the words of the Apostle, "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

VI. *The Bible bears the seal of Divinity upon it, since it is God Himself who is behind the word.* In saying this, I do not propose to discuss the great doctrine of the plenary Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures. What I allege is, that the power of Divine truth depends upon the fact that Jehovah, in His awful personality, is behind every utterance. If, for example, an orator sways an assembly, it is because he stands with his truly magnetic power behind all that he says. Another may use the same words without producing the same effect, because it is not the orator

who is flashing the emotions of his own heart upon those who listen. It is, at last, the individuality of the speaker that gives force to the words which fall from his lips. Similar illustrations suggest themselves in all the departments of life. The word issuing from the throne is a word of power, because it is the King who speaks it. It is the General, dressed with the symbols of military authority, who gives value to the order which he issues. It is the authority of the Judge upon the Bench, lying behind his decision, which gives it the force of law. The words of the Bible are words which can never fall to the ground, because God Himself, in His threefold subsistence, is behind them to give them power. Hence it is declared: "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please" (Isaiah lv. 11). Again, "The word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. ii. 9). And again, "The word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Peter i. 25). If, then, the truth of the Scriptures can be put to the test by Him who receives it, know well that every declaration in it will be verified by Him who delivers it. A book is not to be undervalued as the guide of

human conduct which will be thus finally authenticated by its Divine author.

In urging you, my young friends, to accept these holy writings as the rule of faith and practice, I must remind you that you must come into living contact with their teachings, in order to any profit from them. Until the words enter into the mind and heart, they bear no fruit. Just as the seed germinates only when placed in the soil, and feels the influence of the moisture and the sun; so the truth floating in the air, or hid in the sacred text, is fruitless until it is laid upon the conscience and the heart. Thus alone can the Bible become "a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path." "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." The condition is imperative: only by bringing his way into harmony with the Divine precepts, can he walk safely amid the temptations of a sinful world. But if the light of this word shine directly upon his path, he will march with the firm tread of a conqueror amidst all the snares of Satan, and win the prize of heavenly joy. The promise of Divine aid is given to all who use this word aright; and this renders the result certain. Not only does the light direct in

the way of safety, but the grace to strengthen in every duty and in every trial is assured. The weakest shall triumph, if they draw with confidence upon the resources of the Almighty. To each young man in this assembly I address the question of the Prophet: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

"His hand the good man fastens on the skies,  
And bids earth roll nor heeds its idle whirl."

