

THE POWER OF TRUTH AND LOVE.

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A

**SERMON**

PREACHED AT PHILADELPHIA, OCT. 1, 1828,

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**Nineteenth Annual Meeting**

OF THE

**AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

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BY JOHN H. RICE, D. D.

PROFESSOR IN UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, VIRGINIA.

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R. H. Hutton

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The following sermon was first published in the NATIONAL PREACHER for October; and the Editor of that publication generously caused several thousand extra copies to be struck off, which he gave to the Board, or circulated gratuitously himself.

## SERMON.

2 COR. II. 4.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL, BUT MIGHTY THROUGH GOD TO THE PULLING DOWN OF STRONG HOLDS.

A CONTEST is going on in this world, between holiness and sin; religion and infidelity. The earth is a revolted province of Jehovah's empire, and bears many unequivocal marks of his displeasure. Yet he has not abandoned it to all the ruinous consequences of this unnatural rebellion: nor has he dealt with our race according to the demands of unmitigated justice. He is a father, as well as a sovereign; and has adopted measures of grace to bring back his disobedient children to allegiance and love.

But man—and this shews the foulness of his revolt in the darkest colors—man has slighted this mercy, and even set himself in opposition to the “Lord's Anointed.”

The *pride of the human heart* rejects the offer of salvation, as a free gift: an “unpurchased heaven” is scorned by creatures who have no money, and can bring no price to their offended Creator.

The *pride of human reason* is offended with that truth which reason alone could not discover, and refuses to submit to the wisdom of the omniscient God. Man, in the blindness of his self-sufficiency, will not receive the testimony of the Holy One; but

demands a religion which he can demonstrate by his own ingenuity.

The *worldliness and sensuality* of man rejects and opposes a religion which places happiness in purity of heart, in love to God, and communion with him : which requires forgiveness, where the false honor of the world enjoins revenge ; humility, where the world talks of dignity ; mortification and self-denial, where the world permits indulgence.

These, and such as these, are the *strong holds* of which the Apostle speaks ; the *high things* which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and which it is the object of all, who are engaged in this warfare, to pull down, and bring into captivity, and completely to subdue to the obedience of Christ.

But with what weapons girded, are the soldiers of the cross to go forth to the assault of these fortresses ? And how are they to accomplish their great work ? “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” When men, in the proud spirit of the world, undertake to subdue their enemies, the first thought ordinarily is, to employ *force*. They love to see their adversaries quailing, and bowing down under their superior strength. But not so do the servants of Jesus Christ, when engaged in his work.

The men of the world endeavor, also, by *authority*, to bring the understanding and the will of their fellow men into subserviency to their wishes. And nothing is more grateful to the human heart, than to gratify its desires, and to execute its devices, by commanding the obedience of others. But Christ does not permit his ministers so to fulfil his purposes.

When force and authority fail, corrupt men next resort to *stratagem*; and endeavor to overreach by cunning, those whom they can neither subdue by force, nor overawe by authority. Or, when all these measures fail, they employ the bait which tempts *avarice*; and bribery accomplishes what neither power, nor authority, nor policy could effect.

These are the arts to which ambitious and wicked men have recourse, and for the successful practice of which, they receive the applause of the world. But all these are carnal weapons; and religion rejects their use with holy indignation.

True, indeed, men who have worn the garb, and borne the title of Christ's ambassadors, in utter disregard of "the great Master's law," have been forward to adopt the forbidden measures of worldly policy; and even to seek alliance with the adversary, for the purpose of obtaining carnal weapons, wherewith to maintain their unholy warfare. The arms of the soldier, the authority of the king, and the wiles of the statesman, have been employed by ambitious clergymen, to accomplish their selfish designs. Heaven has seen with horror, and hell with joy, the misnamed and misbelieving heralds of the Prince of peace, propagating a pretended Christianity by the dungeon and the sword, by fire and faggot, by fraud and chicanery, and every trick of sordid policy. Men have been cheated, and bribed, and beaten, and imprisoned, and burned, to make them Christians!—Inexpressible wickedness! And absurd as wicked.

But, where the power of a wise government, or the progress of knowledge among the people, or, what is

most efficient of all, the *influences of vital religion*, have prevented the practice of such abominations, unholy ministers of the Gospel have resorted to other expedients, under the pretext of promoting Christianity; but in reality for the purpose of extending their own influence, and securing their own interests. Sectarian zeal has kindled its unhallowed fires; and they who had little regard for genuine piety, have been roused to most vigorous efforts in advancing the cause of a party. “The Church”—“Orthodoxy”—“Water”—“Fire”—and the like, have been the *watchwords*, or rather the *war-cry*, of different sects of Christians, and have roused them, as the notes of the trumpet, which has often called the old warrior to battle. But all measures of this kind are disowned by the religion of Christ. His ministers, imbued with his Spirit, and pursuing the course prescribed by him, do not need, and cannot employ them.

The reason is obvious:—*True religion has its seat in the soul*; its influences bear on the heart and conscience. But not one of all these measures has the least power to awaken and regulate the conscience, or purify the heart. And until this is done, nothing is done:—not one effectual step is taken in the great work of saving sinners. Force, indeed, can confine or crush the body:—authority may restrain the actions, and even overawe the mind;—wealth can bribe;—party-spirit may kindle up fiery zeal; but the heart remains unsanctified; the sinner is still in his sins. One may as well think to bind the tempest in chains, and lightning in fetters of iron, as by the use of carnal weapons to subdue men to the faith of Christ.

Yet religion *has* weapons, which are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and humbling high thoughts. The character of Christianity clearly indicates their nature. It is a religion which consists not in external form and observance: for “the kingdom of God is within you” —in the soul. And the high enterprise of the Christian minister is to win over the soul to the obedience of the just. In order to this, *truth must shed its light on the understanding, and exert its sanctifying influence on the heart.* But it is truth only, as invested with God’s authority, which can do this. The reasoning of man is in vain for such a work. There must be “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” And this may be expected only *when the truth is delivered as God revealed it, and in the spirit and manner prescribed by the great Head of the Church.*

The truth is preached as God revealed it, when the meaning of the Bible is stated, and *proved*, and pressed on the sinner’s heart;—when sinners are made to understand *just what God tells them*, and that they are bound to believe and obey, *because God has told them.* If *man* assumes authority, his fellow feels that he has a right to refuse obedience; if *man* reasons, his fellow feels that he has a right to reason on the other side of the question, and to withhold belief:—but if **GOD** *speaks*, and the meaning of what he says is clearly exhibited, then there is no subterfuge;—man must obey, or come to the direct and fearful determination that he will disregard the authority of Heaven.

But *much*, according to divine appointment, is made to depend on the *spirit* in which the truth is preached. God, in employing human instrumentality to promote religion, determined to carry on the work of grace, in accordance with the nature which he had originally given to man. He did not, therefore propose truth in abstract forms to the understanding—cold as an icicle in the bosom—but with its light intermingled the genial warmth of love. God is love: truth is an emanation of Deity; and it is the warmth and energy of love, which carries it to the heart, when torpid and cold in spiritual death. It was, therefore, a wise and gracious determination of our compassionate Redeemer, to use all the kindly and generous feelings of human nature, every thing in man that has power to melt and subdue the heart of man, to extend the influences of his religion. The Christian minister, then, in his warfare, not only opposes truth to error, but blessing to cursing; gentleness to violence; pity to contempt; humility to haughtiness; patience to insult; forgiveness to injury; and love to hatred.

But it was manifestly the design of the Saviour, to give to the instrumentality employed in promoting his religion, the moral influence acquired by the *association of numbers in one body*. It is true, that one man, like Paul, highly endowed with genius, ardent in feeling, full of courage, unshrinking in fortitude, versatile in talent—taken up to the third heaven, and sent thence, like a comet from the sun, beaming with light from the ineffable glory, and burning with the fires of heavenly love, will exert a mighty influence on the moral condition of the whole

world. But even Paul, after all his visions and celestial raptures, still derived aid and courage from the faithful men, who, through his instrumentality, were brought into the church. And he manifestly relied much, under God, on the zeal, and love, and effort of Christians *acting in unison*.

Hence we see the nature and extent of the instrumentality to be employed in propagating the gospel. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, both ministers and people, enlightened by divine truth, and moved by holy love, exert all their influence to impress *this truth* on the hearts of their fellow-men, softened and subdued by *this love*. **THIS IS THE LEGITIMATE METHOD OF PROMOTING THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.** There is no other. No case, either of individual or associated enterprise, can furnish an exception to the rule. When one, in the true spirit of the gospel, makes his first attempt to bring sinners to Christ, he dare not, for his life he dare not, adopt any other measure than in love to speak the truth which God has revealed. And when he makes his last and greatest effort, he can do nothing more. He has no weapons of higher temper, or more celestial force, with which to assault and pull down the strong holds, and the high things, which exalt themselves against the law of Christ. If he resort to other means, he at once throws himself out of the list of approved warriors of the cross, and fights under false colors. He uses carnal weapons. His success is not that of the cause of Christ. The places which he wins he does not annex to the kingdom of the Redeemer. Nothing but truth and love can make men real Christians. God blesses nothing else.

Once, when the church, though a very feeble band, went forth against the whole world, with no defensive armor but that of righteousness, under no protection but that of God, wielding no weapon of offence but the sword of the Spirit, our doctrine was fully recognised, and carried out into action. And the strongest holds of the powers of darkness felt the first shock, to their deepest foundations: and the first clash of the opposing weapons, showed that the church wielded the sword of Michael, the touch of which "neither keen nor solid could resist"—and one thing after another was brought down, and subdued to the obedience of Christ. At length, in an evil hour this armor was laid aside; one of earthly fabrication and temper was used in its stead; and the enemy recovered much of his lost dominion.

In these latter ages there has been a revival, in some measure, of the spirit of primitive Christianity; and the church is again heard to declare, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Her ministers are seen going forth, as in the beginning, protected by the shield of faith, and wielding only the sword of the Spirit; and just in proportion as they do this, the kingdom of God is extended among men.

From this brief discussion may be drawn some principles of great importance to the general cause of Christian benevolence; and of course, to those particular interests which claim our attention on the present occasion.

I. RELIGION MAY BE MOST SUCCESSFULLY PROPAGATED, WHERE IT IS PERFECTLY FREE FROM ALL HUMAN AUTHORITY.

For, since religion has its seat in the soul, and is a matter of conviction and feeling, no man can possibly be a Christian, any farther than he voluntarily and heartily embraces the truth, and feels its sanctifying power.

But every man's heart rises in opposition to *constraint*. It is universally felt, that he who attempts to impose it, is doing what he has no right to do. And when even the truth itself is urged by human authority or force, it has to encounter not only the natural resistance of the corrupt heart, but the repugnance superadded by the absurd attempt to compel conviction and force the conscience. None can tell how much influence the church has lost by such preposterous measures.

Again; whenever religion is shackled by human policy, there is always some entangling alliance between it and "the powers that be." The state, for instance, engages to support the church: but it is on the condition that the church will submit to the authority of the state. Now, the rulers of this world, generally, have purposes of their own to accomplish, by means of religion: so far they support it; but no farther. It enters not at all into their plans, to submit themselves and their greatness to the power of the gospel. Nor are they willing that its divine authority over others should be pushed too far. Accordingly the wily politician has always invented checks and balances, by which to lessen the force, and control the influence of Christian doctrines, and ordinances, and teachers. The most solemn rites of religion, connected as they are with truths of the most affecting and awful character,

have often been desecrated by an application to measures of state policy. The temporal head of the church prescribes the methods to be pursued for the promotion of piety: the officers of the church are appointed by patronage: no public prayers must be offered, no doctrine preached, but such as the ruling power has previously approved. Who does not see, that in this case, the main-spring of religious action is greatly weakened?

But if the nature of the alliance between state and church is such, that none are too high for her discipline; then every expedient, which long practice in the wiles of courts and stratagems of law can suggest, is resorted to, for the purpose of corrupting doctrine, and destroying discipline: and the state is felt as an incubus on the bosom of the church, causing her life-blood to stagnate, and diffusing a benumbing influence through every member.

The whole history of religion supports these positions; and fully warants the general conclusion, that although superstition may greatly prevail, where no religious liberty is enjoyed, yet evangelical piety most abounds where the freedom of religion is most fully secured.

But, while we “prize beyond all price” this privilege, we wish to be fully understood, when we speak of *freedom of conscience*. It is not the right to cast off all religious obligation, and live as we list; the right to set at nought the authority of God, and renounce allegiance to Heaven; to take from his parental throne the father of all; to make the universe without object or end, and man a being without hope, or reason of existence;—in a word, it cannot

mean a *right to have no conscience at all*.—Nevertheless, it is admitted, that if one resolves so to degrade his own nature, and blight all his best hopes, and suppress all his finest feelings, *he can do so*;—and if no overt act of his disturb the order and peace of society, there is no rightful authority in man, to inflict punishment to restrain these baleful opinions. Religion disowns all carnal weapons for arresting even these portentous evils—*She opposes them only by truth and love*.

But by freedom of conscience we mean, the unrestrained enjoyment, by one who feels his obligations to his gracious and almighty Maker, of the right to worship him according to his convictions of truth and duty; and to do whatever he may think incumbent on him, both in his individual and social capacity, for promoting piety and good will on earth: provided that in so doing, he interferes not with the rights of others.

Now, when this is the happy lot of the Christian, he is precisely in the condition to feel, in full force, all the powerful motives of Christianity. Believing the Bible to be God's truth, without mixture of error, he feels as though God were speaking in his word, directly to his conscience; the truth comes to him clothed with divine authority; and no inventions of men intervene to lessen its force.—The awe of God's majesty pervades him; the sanctions of eternity press his conscience; the worth of the soul, the misery of fallen man, a Saviour's redeeming love, the joys of salvation, the glories of heaven, the horrors of perdition, apply their highest and holiest stimuli to his heart. Yet fully understanding that God's

religion is a religion of beneficent action, his excitement is not expended in mere effusions of feeling, but in doing good—the utmost possible good. The truths of the gospel, in all their awful grandeur and eternal majesty, are his motives; the honor of his Redeemer, and the happiness of his fellow-men, are his objects.

Now this is precisely the condition contemplated by the Apostle, when he says, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty.” The Christian freeman is not only, as was said, in a situation to feel the fullest power of Christian motives; *but is accustomed to act under their influence.* His whole course is one of voluntary agency, prompted by enlightened views of truth, and a deep feeling of its value.—He understands the worth of religion for himself, his family, his country, the world:—and, therefore, cheerfully bestows his money, his time, and his influence, to support religious institutions, and enlarge the sphere of Christian benevolence. It is all, with him, a matter of deep reflection; of profound consideration of human interests; of hearty good will. Similar views and feelings draw men together. They take counsel, deliberate calmly, and act in concert, under convictions of truth and duty. They act too with energy. The power of eternal truth conspires with the vigor of *voluntary action*; the whole strength is put forth in every effort—and the labor is not in vain. The history of Bible and Missionary Societies, *as voluntary associations*, formed within the last thirty years, shows, better than a thousand arguments, the truth and value of our principle. And, here brethren, is the true secret of

evangelizing the world. *The mighty work is to be done by voluntary associations, formed on the unalterable principle of using no carnal weapons; of preaching nothing but the simple gospel of Christ; in no spirit but that of Christian love.*

It deserves to be remarked, too, and remembered, that associations, counsels, united efforts, such as these, promote intelligence, order, peace, and in a word, all that blesses and adorns human nature. One may see their happy influence spreading through the youth, the manhood, and the old age, of every community where they exist. There all is healthful and active;—all is life, and hope, and joy.

But if one asks, why this scene is not fully realized in our country, where religion is perfectly free; I answer—*it is going on to be so.* But, from the nature of man, moral causes operate slowly; and time must be allowed for the production of their full effect—especially where counteracting causes are in full activity. Our forefathers, unavoidably, brought with them many of the habits, feelings, and principles of the countries from which they came: they brought, with their good things, the fatal policy of using carnal weapons; of mingling the church and state; of employing human authority instead of the authority of the Bible: they brought the spirit of fierce contention for doctrine, and with it, in many instances, that death-like coldness in regard to vital religion, which had, during a long period, spread through the churches of Europe. Now all these evils were to be done away; and the people brought *directly under* the full influences of Bible truth, before they would pursue the course marked out by the Apostles,

and trodden by their immediate disciples. *This was not the work of a day.*

The spirit of infidelity, too, has been imported into our country; and that dread of the influence of religion, which has arisen from its perversion and abuse in other lands. These have been so great, as, in the minds of many, to justify the natural repugnance of the human heart to religion. And opposition has been made—it is still made—to its propagation, both in this country and abroad. Suspicions are entertained of its friends, and sinister objects are attributed to all their plans of Christian benevolence.

But—everlasting praise be given to God!—this opposition has been overruled for good: and still greater good will hereafter be educed from it. It was, perhaps, the very thing which the church needed, to make her see and feel, that carnal weapons cannot be safely or efficiently used in her warfare; and that, although invincible and invulnerable, when clad in the armor of righteousness, she is weak and defenceless without it. In other countries, when pressed by her enemies, and feeling her weakness, she looks to the arm of flesh for protection. Here she is pressed by the wholesome necessity of putting “to silence the ignorance of foolish men, *by well doing;*” she is obliged to act in such way, that, if her enemies speak evil of her, they must speak falsely. She can do nothing but go forth, in the spirit of her redeeming Lord, and proclaim the truth in love, and stretch out her hands in prayer for the blessing of the Almighty. *And this is the very thing which God intended she should do.* In the sure, but silent operation of moral causes, this truth will yet be more

clearly seen, more deeply felt, and more fully acted on, in this country: and there will be great improvements in the measures adopted for promoting religion in the world; and great increase in the efficiency of the means employed. No new truth, indeed, will be discovered in religion. That which was heard from the beginning, which the eyes of apostles saw, and which their hands handled of the word of life, will be proclaimed through every age, until Jesus Christ shall come the second time: nor will there be a discovery of any new principles of action, in pulling down the strong holds of sin, and building up the kingdom of Christ. But the disciples of Christ will just do, what the Saviour has always told them to do: and the ministers of religion will go and tell the people what the Bible means, and thus make them understand what God has said, and done, and requires. And they will so breathe the love of God, that the people will feel its heavenly warmth;—and God will honor his own word;—and it shall have free course and be glorified.

Is it presumptuous to suppose, that one great end which God had in view, in—I had almost said—revealing this country to our forefathers, and freeing it from all foreign authority, and establishing here complete religious liberty, was, that the church might be restored to her primitive purity, and have a full opportunity of learning again the true method of promoting religion; and that the Bible might recover all its lost honors? Did not God intend, by sustaining the cause of rational liberty, during the revolutions and fearful convulsion of half a century, to af-

ford new facilities for discovering the entire energy of true religion; and showing by what instrumentality, and by what mode of using that instrumentality, every strong hold in the whole empire of sin is to be pulled down; and the city of God built up, in all its beauty and glory? And is not this work going on? Do we not see that, wherever liberty is enjoyed, there also is now displayed, in some degree, the energy of the Bible and Missionary cause? And that wherever men go, with the simple purpose of declaring the truth of God; and where they clearly state the meaning of the Bible, there sound revivals of religion take place? God is teaching us important lessons: and it is every day becoming more apparent, that they who are contending for the mere dry bones of theology, or the outward forms of religion, or for ecclesiastical authority, are digging the grave for their own favorite systems—while, everywhere, the blessing of Heaven attends efforts made in the true spirit of the gospel.

Providence has placed us in a situation very peculiar, in a country, where, as far as the mighty influences of religion are concerned, nothing has authority or power but the Bible. This is more and more seen, every year. And when it shall be fully understood, that among the teeming millions of our country there is nothing to regulate the awful energies of the religious principle, but the authority of the word of God, the Bible will be studied with an intensity of interest, and used with a fidelity of application, as yet unknown in these latter days. And it will carry its authority more entirely through every depart-

ment of the church, than has ever been witnessed since the days of the Apostles. The truth will then go with lightning glance and electric force, from heart to heart, and from land to land—and the earth be soon filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord.

This leads to a second general proposition, deduced as an inference from the preceding.

II. IT IS PECULIARLY THE DUTY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS, TO ENLIST AND COMBINE THEIR ENERGIES FOR ENVAGELIZING THE WORLD.

1. *We owe it to Him who is both King in Zion, and Lord of the whole earth, to perform our part of this service.*—It is his gracious providence, which has placed us in the peculiarly favorable situation which we have just considered. He has removed every yoke from our necks; separated us from every restraining influence; and given us the fullest opportunity, ever enjoyed by any people, to put forth all our strength, to show the entire power of religion, regulated by nothing but divine truth. The gospel finds us in circumstances more happy, in these respects, than those of any other people, from the time when the heavenly host sang their song of glory and of peace, at the advent of the Messiah, to this day. And we owe it all to God. The Head of the Church has ordered it so.

Now, according to the religion of Christ, every opportunity of doing good, brings with it a corresponding obligation. And as our opportunities are peculiarly favorable, so our obligations are peculiarly

weighty. We are more bound than any other people on the face of the earth, to advance the cause of the Redeemer, in proportion to our means and numbers. Heavy, indeed, will be our reckoning, and terrible the visitations of justice, should we fail—great our glory and felicity, should we feel the extent of our obligations, and bring our conduct up to the measure of duty.

2. *We owe it to our country, to make her a blessing among the nations of the earth.*—The world has seen enough of the glory of war, and the honor of warriors. The desideratum in the great community of nations is *one people*, which, without ambition and the pride of conquest, shall stand forth an example of the mild virtues of justice, mercy, and piety. Mankind have suffered enough from “wars and fighting.” Smitten with unnumbered evils, the human race is sighing for the reign of peace. The world needs the moral influence of a great nation, where public sentiment is sanctified; and whence shall emanate a blessing, to be felt wherever the winds of heaven and the waves of ocean can bear its inhabitants. This will weave a garland of higher fragrance, and more unfading colors, than any which the warrior or the statesman can wreath round the brow of his country. It will do more, too, for national security, than any thing else which the wit of man can devise. For every thing depends on national character. To this, free institutions communicate energy, activity, versatility, and great richness of resources; but nothing can purify it, and raise it to a lofty tone, and sustain it, except true religion.

When an individual under the influence of Christianity, is brought up to the determination that he *will be a benefactor* to his fellow-men, his character is formed according to a high standard, and is fixed on a sure foundation. So with a nation: let the great body of the people in a free Christian country resolve that they will bless the whole world—that their liberality shall send the pure gospel to all the benighted tribes of men—and the national character is elevated; a spectacle of moral grandeur is exhibited, which angels must contemplate with rapture.

3. *We owe it to the nations of the earth, to send them the blessings of salvation.*—Religion teaches that the human race constitutes one family. God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the whole earth. And Christianity obliges us to recognize this common brotherhood; “to do good, and to communicate.” Among pagan nations, *alien* and *enemy* are synonymous terms. But the religion revealed by the common Father of men, acknowledges all as his children; and enforces, by all the sanctions of eternal love and justice, the duty of doing all the good we can, to every part of the human family. No matter what curse of color or condition has been inflicted; no matter what form of misery weighs down the sufferer; no matter how low he is sunk in the scale of wretchedness; the only question we have to ask is, Can we do good to him without injury to another? And the answer determines the measure of our duty.

But if we cannot, *separately*, do the good which the Bible tells us must be done; we can do it *collect-*

*ively.* According to the gospel rule, this is enough to show that it is our duty to *unite* for that purpose. And all the knowledge, the wisdom, the energy of our best men, ought to bear on this mighty subject of co-operation, among American Christians, for evangelizing the world. I do not presume to undertake so great a theme. I only throw out a few hints, to show the incalculable importance of the object.

The moral power of a people is in the compound ratio of their liberty, intelligence, and virtue. Of this England affords striking evidence. She is inferior, in population and territory to many other countries: but not so in influence on the affairs of the world. The United States present another instance. Our remote situation from other civilized nations, and the greenness of our youth being considered, the influence of our country, on the public sentiment of the world, is truly astonishing. Spain began her work of colonizing the Southern Continent, before England planted settlements in North America. Yet, now, the United States exert greater moral influence on the world, than all of Spanish name or blood in Europe and America. The reason is, we have liberty; we have the religion of the Bible; we have general education.

But the influence of our country rapidly increases. Our population grows at the rate of more than a thousand a day. With this, there is an equally rapid increase in the facilities of intercourse, between the nations of the earth. Half the distance between this country and Europe has been annihilated, within the

last five and twenty years. During that period, our population has risen from six to twelve millions. Look forward twenty-five, fifty, a hundred years. When the population of our country shall equal that of all Europe, who can calculate the extent of her influence? It will emanate from the intellectual and moral character of the people. It will take its coloring from our religion. According to the principles of obligation laid down in the gospel, this country does indeed owe, and long will owe, a deep debt to mankind. Its amount must be determined by our moral power, as a people, of affecting their interests. And verily it is not small. Free, educated, with the Bible in our hands, and nothing to prevent its full influence on our hearts; at perfect liberty to meet in any numbers, and consult on any measures; there is nothing here to hinder the entire concentration of all the resources of the church. And I cannot help repeating, that American Christians are in the best possible condition to do good, precisely in the way in which most good can be done; to use just the weapons of warfare which apostles found to be mighty; to go in the simplicity of the gospel, with the single-heartedness of truth and love, and carry to our perishing fellow-men, the blessings of salvation. Indeed we are debtors to the world. The Head of the Church has brought this great debt upon us, *and it must be paid*. Now how shall we pay it? This is the question for most solemn consideration; and let none put it off; for *the debt must be paid*.

4. *We owe it to the universal church of Christ, to do our part in carrying forward his cause, and accomplishing his purposes of mercy in the world.*

As there is but one true religion, so there is but one church of the Lord Jesus Christ among men. The obligation to send the gospel to every creature rests on the whole body of the faithful. They must see to it, that the messages of mercy are sent to the ends of the earth. All must do their part of this work of love. But as God has placed us in a situation peculiarly favorable to our feeling the full power of religious truth, and so of being peculiarly holy, and peculiarly devoted to the cause of our gracious Redeemer; so the church at large, and the world, ought to be made to see and feel our warmer piety, our higher and holier zeal, our more expansive benevolence.

For ages, the true method of promoting religion had been sadly misunderstood. And when Providence placed the church in America on its own resources, the general expectation was, that we should become a nation of infidels. And even now, thousands in the world imagine that religion cannot live and flourish without the fostering care of civil government. America, therefore, owes it to the universal interests of the church, and to that method of promoting religion, which must be every where adopted, before religion can have universal sway, to be very holy, very zealous, very benevolent—to undertake enterprises on a scale which measures the earth, and to demonstrate that they can be accomplished by the power of truth and love. The church in this country must not only

sustain herself, and purify the nation, but she must stretch out her arms, and make the whole world feel the strong embrace of her benevolence.

There are Christians enough now in the United States—if they will only throw aside every carnal weapon, and take the whole armor of God, and go forth in their strength—to subvert all the ancient foundations of error; and pull down all the strong holds of sin; and erect the standard of the cross over every demolished temple of idolatry; and pour the light of life into every dark habitation of cruelty, in the whole world.

“These weapons of our holy war,  
Of what almighty force they are!”

The world does not know it yet:—the church does not fully understand it. The omniscience of God’s word, the omnipotence of God’s truth, only need be fully appreciated, to show that the church has resources, which render the evangelizing the world a reasonable enterprise.

III. THE VIEWS WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKEN OF OUR SUBJECT, SHOW HOW UNFOUNDED ARE THE SUSPICIONS AND JEALOUSIES WHICH ARE ENTERTAINED OF THE MISSIONARY CAUSE, AND HOW UNWARRANTABLE IS THE OPPOSITION MADE TO IT.

They who are engaged in this cause, declare in presence of their Maker, and before the world, that they renounce all the use of carnal weapons: that they acknowledge the lawfulness of no measures, but such as

Christ and his apostles approved. A single sentence expresses their means and measures—they *speaking the truth in love*. They, indeed, feel horror at opposition made to the pure and benevolent religion of the gospel; but they are entirely willing—nay, earnestly desirous, that the use of any means or methods of extending its influence, different from those appointed in the Bible, may be denounced and exposed. And the more clearly, the better. For they wish only to know what God teaches, and to do what God commands.

That perfect religious liberty, too, which is secured to Christians of this country, is regarded by them as all-important, nay, necessary to the success of their enterprise. The full and free use of their weapons requires it: deprived of it, indeed, they could not put forth half their strength. Indeed, should revivals of religion proceed as they lately have done; and the church go forward as she has gone; it is a thousand times more probable, that the enemies of religion will endeavor to lay restraints on conscience, than that her friends in this country will seek an alliance with the ruling powers. And truly the indications are already such, as may well rouse up Christian jealousy. Let the church be awake, and watchful of the liberty with which God has blessed her. Many already show that they want nothing but power, to break up every plan of religious benevolence which Christians have formed, and scatter their resources to the winds of heaven. But, brethren, stand fast, and fear not. The God of benevolence is with us—the Lord of hosts is our refuge, and our weap-

ons are of everlasting strength. We will hope by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and allay all evil suspicion of our designs. But should opposition increase, sooner will we part with all that we hold dear in life, and with life itself, than relinquish the privilege of labouring without hindrance, in our Lord's vineyard; of pursuing our efforts to glorify God, and bless mankind, in the way pointed out in the Bible.

Opposition is altogether unreasonable. Express its true character, and it amounts to this:—'You shall not, if you can be prevented, carry the truths of the gospel to the heathen. You shall not turn them from their base and foul idolatry to the living God. You shall not convert them from their impure and bloody rites, to the pure and spiritual worship of the Holy One. Their licentiousness, their dark fanaticism, their human sacrifices, and all their hopelessness shall continue. The morality, the doctrine, the hope of the gospel shall not be made known to them. They shall never hear the voice of mercy, nor see the light of life. But the unabated curse shall rest on them, and they shall wither and die under it forever.' Redeemer of men! why should the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against thee, the Lord's Anointed? What spirit possesses the enemies of thy cause—the cause of truth; of love; of heaven?

But let us pause a moment, to look at the subject a little more minutely. See one of our villages—not that one, where an infidel lawyer and physician have stationed themselves, to live on the vices, and (the

proper fruits of vice,) the diseases of their fellow-men; where gambling, and the tricks of gamblers, are made to supply the place of knowledge and industry; and where ardent spirit brings in its legion of devils to possess and to destroy. Alas! the faithful missionary is needed there, as much as in the islands of the sea! But turn from this odious place, to that, where the people, appreciating the value of religion, have chosen for themselves, a pious, learned, and faithful minister, to teach them and their children the doctrine of Christ and the way to heaven; where grandsires, just on the verge of heaven, repeat old Simeon's song, and then look on children, and on children's children, following in the same path to the Mount Zion above; where fathers hold forth the word of life by a holy example, before their families; and mothers enforce the lesson by all the sweetness of female piety; where the young are strong to do good, and find their pleasures in the fulfilment of their duty; and where lisping infancy is taught to sing hosannas to the Son of David. O, what a scene of loveliness! Here are the charities of domestic, and the kindness of social life. Here peace descends like the dew of Hermon: and love, like the holy oil, which consecrated God's high priest, diffuses its blessedness through the whole society. Here are heard the inspiring notes of hope, and the higher strains of heavenly joy—Nor need we wonder; for heaven is here begun on earth. Now contrast this scene, with the ignorance, the tyranny, the licentiousness, the cruelty, the debasement, the brutality of heathenism!—Well; it is the object of the missionary enterprise, to shed light into all those

dark habitations of cruelty; to pour through those sinks of sin the purifying waters of salvation; to awaken love in the hearts of the cruel, and hope in the bosoms of the wretched; and to give the bread of life to the perishing, and salvation to the lost. And must this work of love, in this land of light have to encounter the fierce and steady opposition of determined enemies!—Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!

But the work must be done—and it will be done. God has said it. The church has heard his voice; and is girding on her armor of heavenly proof; and is going forth in the name and the spirit of her Redeemer; and the Lord goes before her. Every mountain shall be levelled, and every valley shall be exalted; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God: and all kindreds and tribes of men on earth, and the ransomed in heaven, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, and the cherubim and seraphim, that stand in presence of the divine glory, in strains,

“Loud as from numbers without number, sweet  
As from blest voices uttering joy,”

shall celebrate the everlasting triumphs of Truth and Love.