

DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN

MURRAY STREET CHURCH

ON SABBATH EVENINGS,

DURING THE MONTHS OF

MARCH, APRIL, AND MAY, 1830.

BY

DR. SPRING	DR. CARNAHAN
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NEW YORK:
HENRY C. SLEIGHT, CLINTON-HALL.

PRINTED BY SLEIGHT AND ROBINSON.

1830.

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighth day of November, Anno Domini 1830, in the fifty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, William D. Snodgrass, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“Discourses delivered in Murray street Church, on Sabbath evenings, during the months of March, April, and May, 1830. By Dr. Spring, Dr. Cox, Dr. Skinner, Dr. De Witt, Dr. Miller, Dr. Sprague, Dr. Carnahan, Dr. Woodbridge, Dr. Rice, Dr. Woods, Dr. Wayland, Dr. Snodgrass, Dr. Griffin.”

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FREDERICK I. BETTS,

Clerk of the Southern District of New York.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.—2 Cor. iii. 11.

IN the passage of scripture before us, the dispensations of Moses and of Jesus Christ are presented in contrast. In the context, one is called a ministration of death, the other, of life:—one a ministration of condemnation; the other, of justification. And in the text, one is represented as temporary; the other, perpetual. Both are glorious:—but one is like the “cloudy, fiery pillar” which attended the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness; the other is like the sun, going forth in its strength, and, with a brightness never diminished, shedding light through the whole world.

The text, then, is entirely appropriate to the subject of discourse selected for the present occasion; and, taken in its connection, supports the following general proposition:

THE GOSPEL IS PRE-EMINENTLY GLORIOUS, BECAUSE IT CONTINUES WITHOUT CHANGE ; AND AFFORDS BLESSINGS IN PERPETUITY, TO ALL WHO ARE WILLING TO RECEIVE THEM.

By the gospel, is here meant the system of religion revealed in the Bible ; the method of saving sinners, with all its accompaniments and illustrations, just as they are contained in the sacred scriptures, without human additions or subtractions.

That this religion is glorious ; that, compared with all others, it “exceeds in glory,” is matter of assured belief to every christian. Because, according to his full conviction, it is an emanation from the eternal source of all wisdom and goodness. And it will continue, amidst all the changes of human opinion, “without variableness or the shadow of turning,” to dispense its blessings to man : because infinite power and divine veracity are pledged to sustain it. All this the christian entirely believes. So that, amidst the fierce assaults, and the fiercer threats of Infidelity, the anxiety of the believer does not arise from apprehension that his religion will be destroyed.—This can never be.—But he fears lest men, whom he loves, should cut themselves off from all the blessings, which the gospel provides ; and bring on themselves all the fearful evils, which it foretells.

To those, who have not made up their minds either to embrace or reject the gospel, it may be well to observe, that its perpetuity and unchangeableness are not the

mere results of arbitrary power ; but belong to it as a system suited in its nature to bless man at all times, and in all stages of his existence. It possesses the character of him, whose name is LOVE ; and who never changes.

But it seems necessary, here, to remark, that the whole argument on which reliance is to be placed in this discourse, will fail to make its proper impression, unless an objection, which has frequently been made, should be previously removed. Systems of religion, it is said, have risen up, and *had their day* ; but in the progress, or the changes, of the human mind, they have passed off, and are now unknown and forgotten.—And why may not this be the case with christianity ? The answer is easy.—Because christianity, as a system of religion, is perfectly unique ; and differs, in many material points, from every other form of religion current among men.

1. It addresses itself directly to reason and conscience. It relies entirely on evidence to support the facts on which it is founded ; and commends its doctrines and precepts to all the best feelings of our nature.

2. It puts no inordinate value, it lays no stress on mere forms and outward observances. The claims of other religions are satisfied, when their prescribed rites are duly performed. According to the religion of the Bible, all external services are acceptable, precisely in proportion as they express conformity of heart to the divine will.

3. Christianity not only disclaims Enthusiasm, Faticism, and Superstition ; but when prevailing in its purity and power, affords the only real security against those desolating evils. It so regulates the religious principle by its truths ; its doctrines so satisfy the reason of man, and take hold of the conscience with a grasp of such power, that no opportunity is left open for these irregular and violent excitements.

4. The religion of the Bible lays no restraints, the design of which is not clearly benevolent. It enjoins no penances, requires no austerities ; but recognizing every where man's desire of happiness, it bids him abstain from nothing, which infinite wisdom does not know to be injurious ; requires him to do nothing, which our kind Father in heaven does not see will work for his good.

5. The great founder of this religion has made all the duties, which grow out of man's various relations, a part of his system. As long as there are husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbours, and friends, and fellow-men, so long christianity will be adapted to the condition and circumstances of man. But it also institutes new relations. It makes, indeed, the human race, however diversified, and however scattered, all one family—and offers to all one Saviour, through whom the whole species are encouraged to approach one mercy-seat, and say *OUR FATHER who art in heaven*. It thus establishes an universal brotherhood ; it throws a golden chain of love round this

whole world. It was the just and very striking remark of the celebrated Madame de Stael, that if the author of christianity had never taught men any thing else, than just to say "Our Father who art in heaven," he would have been the greatest benefactor, that ever appeared on earth.

6. This religion acknowledges no *priest*, but *one*; our GREAT HIGH PRIEST, who has passed into the heavens. There are, under the gospel, none taken from among men, who, invested with divine authority, may modify their religion to suit the changes of human opinion. The *whole* of christianity is recorded in this blessed volume, which is in the hands of all disciples, and is to be made known, by the successful agency of a noble Society, to all that dwell on earth. The Bible, carrying on it the impress of divinity, the broad seal of heaven, the stamp of eternity, will go into all lands, and speak every where the same words of eternal truth. Genuine christianity is the same now, that it was in the days of Paul.

There is no other religion like it. The passing away of dissimilar systems, then, affords no proof;—no not the shadow of a presumption, that this, which differs from them all, will also pass away. Because the places of sand and sea-weed on the shore are changed by every rising tide, it does not therefore follow that the solid rocks will be removed. The gospel stands before the world, as an imperishable monument of the divine wisdom and benignity—And this, as will be shown, not

merely because omnipotence is pledged for its support. *But because it is of universal adaptation, and most beneficent efficiency.*

Before particular arguments are brought forward to support this proposition, I wish to submit a general remark. The christian religion does not present the appearance of a system devised to suit the selfish purposes of its author, and the application of power or fraud, to compel, or seduce, a timid and ignorant rabble to comply with its precepts. On the contrary, it takes human nature as it actually is ; and, disregarding all adventitious differences, it enters into the inner man, and speaks to all the same language ; addresses in all the same principles and feelings ; and supplies, every where, the same wants of this dying, immortal, rational, accountable being. It recognizes his profoundest moral feelings, the mighty movements of his spirit, and every thing in him, which loves to grapple with infinity, and rejoices in the thoughts of eternity, and longs after immortality. It shows an intimate acquaintance with his deepest musings, his most retired thoughts, the agonizing throes and throbbings of his soul, when the flesh contends with the spirit, and the spirit with the flesh ; when he feels the entanglements and enticements of worldly pleasure, and is powerfully attracted by the lying vanities of life, but yet knows that he has a nature allied to heaven, and is an heir of eternity ; when the dark cloud of guilt hangs over his heart, and truth is only like the lightning flash, which

shows the fearfulness of the coming storm. The deep anxieties, the soul-shaking terrors, the envenomed stings of remorse, all in a word that guilt suffers, and the greater torments which it fears, are perfectly known to the Bible; as well as every feeling of ingenuous repentance, every purpose of holy living, every kindling up of hope, every anticipated joy of eternal life. In this sacred word of eternal truth, we find a power of thoroughly searching the heart; a perfect knowledge of every thing in man, which compels us to believe that he who made him made the Bible also.

It is a remarkable fact, too, that they who carefully study the authentic records of the christian religion, and feel the power of its truths, possess a more extensive and accurate knowledge of human nature,* and have far worthier thoughts of the value of man, and man's interests, than any other persons whatsoever. And this, without any exception, wherever the Bible is circulated, and the religion taught in it prevails. This leads to the first argument in support of our general proposition.

I. *Christianity is adapted to all climates, to all periods, to all conditions of human existence: and produces, wherever it prevails, the same effects.*

For proof, an appeal is made to facts. This religion began in Jerusalem: it spread to Antioch: and

* At any rate they have more self-knowledge than others. A strong minded, hut unlettered native of Africa, brought to this country before the nefarious slave-trade was broken up, when describing to the preacher the effect produced on himself by the Bible, used these remarkable words—Why Massa, it turned my heart inside out, and showed me every thing in it.

thence made its victorious progress through "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," even to Troas. It then passed over to Macedonia and Greece, and made its lodgment in Amphipolis, in Thessalonica, in Phillippi, in Corinth, in Athens. Imperial Rome herself soon felt its power, and converts to the faith were numerous in the metropolis of the world. Churches were also established in ancient Spain, in Gaul, and in the British Islands. The doctrine of Christ pervaded Egypt and the whole of civilized Africa—and went far to the East. And so at this day, it is found in all the various climates, by which the divine wisdom has seen fit to diversify the physical condition of man.

It is also suited to all classes of the human intellect, and to every variety of human character. We know that the first preachers of this religion were the fishermen of Galilee; and that numbers of females in humble life, of mechanics, and soldiers, were disciples of Christ. It is equally well known that "honourable women not a few," men of learning, of military fame, and imperial connections, priests and philosophers, became "obedient to the faith." Sergius Paulus, Dionysius the Areopagite, and many others might here be mentioned. But Paul the apostle of the gentiles may stand for all. His enlarged views, his unbounded devotion to the cause of Christ, his fervent charity, his untiring labours, his intrepid zeal, and the wonderful effects of his preaching among all classes of people, show him to have been, as Longinus declared that he

was, *no common man*.* While therefore the gospel has the glory of a peculiar adaptedness to the condition of the feeble, the poor, and the afflicted; it seems to be equally well suited to the highest stations, and the most exalted understandings.

* Some farther remarks on the character of Paul, which, for want of time, were omitted in the delivery of the sermon, are thrown into the following note:

One of the most striking traits in the character of this extraordinary man was his readiness to understand, and his promptness to enter into, the great design of Jesus Christ to give the world a universal religion. His mind, with wonderful facility, threw off the prejudices of his Jewish education, and expanded to the vastness of this enterprise. It is remarkable, too, that after he had cast off the yoke of Jewish ceremonies, and abandoned his first religious connections, he manifested no bitterness of spirit towards his former friends. On the contrary his kindness was unwearied, and his disposition to accommodate his practice to their prejudices, as far as he could do so without sacrifice of christian principle, was remarkable. Perhaps a higher example of firmness united with liberality was never exhibited by any mere man.

His history shows, also, a noble instance of intellectual and moral courage. His design most evidently was to spread the gospel through the whole world.—Rom. i. 5. He went to his work in full expectation of success, without any human means, but the use of reason and persuasion. His confidence in the power of truth seems to have been unlimited and unwavering.

His physical courage was of the highest order. There never was a bolder or braver man. His activity and industry were indefatigable. No man of common discernment can read his writings without believing his sincerity—his sacrifice of personal ease, wealth, pleasure, honour, and all worldly considerations, was unhesitating and entire. He was firm and devoted in his friendships, and ardent in his benevolence. His lofty spirit towered amidst the persecutions which he had to endure. In no emergency did his self-possession forsake him: and it is impossible not to admire his dignified and majestic calmness, under heavy accusations before the great men and nobles of the world. Among all the fine subjects for the pencil furnished by the Bible, there is scarcely one more worthy of an artist of the first order, than Paul, as he stood before Festus and king Agrippa, and said, while he raised his arms, and gently shook his chains, “I would to God, that not only thou, but all who hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether, such as I am, EXCEPT THESE BONDS.”

His power as a public speaker was certainly very great. The proof is found in his success. He persuaded innumerable multitudes to believe what they were predisposed to reject; and to do that, to which antecedently they had a strong aversion. As a writer, he has been studied and admired, in every age, from his own down to the present.—and this although his style is abrupt, involved, and harsh. In his manner of reasoning, too, there is something very peculiar; and exceedingly unlike that of the polished writers of antiquity. But a just consideration of this case will exalt his character in the estimation of every impartial observer. The Jews, at that time, were dispersed in great

The case is just the same in modern times. We daily see this blessed religion going like a ministering angel, with both hands loaded with blessings, into the cottages of the humble and uninstructed. And beginning with living men of talent and genius, we can go through a long catalogue of splendid names, the connecting links between human and spiritual existence, up to Boyle and Bacon, and other master spirits, who led the van, in the present march of the human mind.

numbers through all parts of the Roman empire, were much favoured by the emperors, and in every considerable city had their synagogues. And history assures us that multitudes of the heathen, disgusted with their polytheism, frequented these Jewish places of worship; and were accustomed to hear their scriptures read; and to listen to the comments of their doctors.—Acts. xv. 21. The Jewish style of writing and manner of reasoning, then, were familiar to all, both hellenistic Jews and gentiles, who were first converted to Christ. The apostle, therefore, felt it to be his duty to address them in a way conformable to their habits of speaking, and modes of thinking on the subject of religion. And to appreciate his value as a writer, or even to understand his reasoning, one must take the trouble to become well acquainted with his peculiarities. Certainly, he who has refused to do this, is no more prepared to judge of his writings, than he would be to criticise Homer, on reading Cowper's or Pope's translation.

If a man, whose power was deeply felt by the age in which he lived; and whose writings, though few in number, and composed, in the manner of familiar and confidential letters, amidst many labours and perils, yet have lived from age to age for eighteen centuries, and through this long succession of generations, have exerted, and do still exert, a powerful influence on thousands and millions—if such a man is not, in every proper sense of the term, *truly great*, where shall we find one who is; and, what are the criteria and the evidences of greatness?—Who can help pitying the intellectual waywardness of those, who call the apostle Paul a “*dupe*?”

But let any one read the writings of Paul, with an honest desire to ascertain their moral influences—let him mark the sincerity which characterizes every sentence; the abhorrence of fraud, deceit, and hypocrisy, every where conspicuous: the strong terms in which reliance on mere religious forms and ceremonies is reprobated; and the urgent manner in which honesty, industry, temperance, chastity, kindness, forgiveness, and universal charity, as well as sincere piety, are recommended—let him, I say, mark well all these things, and he will be able to judge of the moral obliquity of those, who can bring themselves to represent the apostle Paul as an “*impostor*.”

We can also turn to the history of the Moravian missionaries, and see those excellent-brethren, seeking in the farthest north the snow-built huts of the Greenlanders; or traversing the burning plains of southern Africa, in search of the Caffres and Hottentots, and by no human means, but the simple preaching of the gospel, transforming these lowest and harshest of human beings into humble, gentle, pure, kind-hearted christians.

Our own brethren, too, and the particular friends, no doubt, of some here present, have gone to the "scattered and peeled" children of our western forests, of whom both the sport and the occupation was war, and by the power of the gospel have made them sons of peace: they have gone to the islands of the sea, and have transformed the inhabitants, though sunk into the last degree of ignorance and sensuality, into intelligent, chaste, and charitable men: they have shown us, too, that the degraded Hindû can be washed from the pollutions of the Indian Moloch, and raised into manhood, so as to break the iron oppression of *caste*, and assert his liberty as a man and a christian.

This religion is indeed of universal adaptation. There is no mind so great, that christianity cannot fill it with its truths; no reason so exact, that it cannot satisfy it with its evidences; no aspirations so lofty, that it cannot answer them with corresponding glory and felicity. Nor is there any ignorance of savage man too profound for its instructions; any stain of guilt too dark and

deep for its sanctifying power ; any misery so extreme, as to be beyond the reach of its consolations. Let there but be faith in its doctrines, and obedience to its precepts, and it will bless all, from the monarch on his throne to the slave in his cabin, or the prisoner in his dungeon : from him whose mind is filled with all the stores of human knowledge, to the poor naked savage, who has not yet learned the use of fire.

II. *The gospel is adapted to all parts of man's intellectual and moral nature.*

1. Assuming the existence of the Deity, and all the truths of natural religion, it leads its votary through all the beauties and glories of creation, and teaches him that all this loveliness and magnificence is only a spark struck out from the everlasting source of light and love. But it advances to a higher and more recondite knowledge : it tells man of "things not seen and eternal ;" it unveils the glories of infinite wisdom and mercy ; reveals the counsels of the Almighty ; gives enlarged views of the moral administration of the universe—*and in a word, applies the strongest stimulus to the human mind ; gives the widest range to human thoughts.*

The sacred books of the christians, too, contain many specimens of the noblest writing in the world. There is no poetry, no eloquence, no history, no graphic delineation of human character, like that to be found in the Bible.

The justness of all these remarks will be apparent to him who considers the fact, that wherever the Bible

is generally diffused, there is wakened up a general spirit of improvement among the people. Common schools are well supported. The population is intelligent. The wealthy classes feel the pressure of those below them in their efforts to rise; and *the higher education* flourishes. It is in such circumstances, that we often see suddenly springing even from the lowest ranks of society, men, in whom there has been kindled an ethereal fire, which bears them upward. They rise in a column of pure and heavenly light, which sheds brightness through the land, and sends its radiance even to distant nations and ages.

The founder of christianity manifested his love of improvement, and conferred on mankind a benefit, the value of which is yet unacknowledged, when he made his church a school, and ordained that the gravest, the kindest, the holiest, and wisest of his disciples, should be teachers. This is the peculiar and appropriate office of the ministers of this religion. It is a deplorable and most mischievous perversion of the ordinance of Jesus Christ, when they assume to be priests, and, by virtue of their authority, to convey, through rites and ceremonies, spiritual benefits to the people. But when by plain, strong, and manly expositions of christian doctrine and duty; by vigilant and faithful attention to the interests of education in every department, they communicate the most important information to young and old in all classes of society; they then "fulfil their ministry," and are blessings indeed to the people. The

gospel, which on divine authority has instituted such a course of perpetual instruction, has ensured to mankind a greater amount of valuable improvement, at a cheaper rate, than has ever been in any other way afforded. All enlightened christians with reason glory in the gospel as the religion of intellectual improvement.

2. *The suitableness of the gospel to the condition of man is apparent from its treatment of his affections and passions.* The authors of other systems have, in regard to this difficult and delicate point, run into various errors, and opposite extremes. They have destroyed that balance of the human mind, which is necessary to peace and virtue; and under the character of public teachers have done incalculable mischief to the world. But the founder of christianity has taken man as a being compounded of matter and mind, with reason, conscience, passion, and appetite; and has treated him according to his natural constitution. This religion is equally removed from stoical or monkish severity, and epicurean licentiousness. It does not exterminate any principle of our nature, or indulge any evil propensity; but with most consummate wisdom and benevolence, it regulates the wonderful machinery of man.

A volume would not afford more than room enough for the discussion of this one topic. In a single discourse, only a very few particular cases can be selected for illustration. Let us first take *love*, that delightful, tormenting, ennobling, degrading passion. Its ordi-

nary effects, when supremely fixed on worldly objects, are too well known to be here described. It is the religion of the Bible only, which turns it at once on objects worthy to be loved by rational and immortal beings. All other religions present their deities as objects of fear and terror. The gospel reveals one eternal Jehovah, the kind parent of all, as slow to wrath and abundant in mercy. It sets him forth in the infinite glories of his moral character, and awakens our highest, purest, holiest love to him, by bringing down to our very senses the strongest proofs of his love to us. When once the heart of man answers the claim of the divine law, and is fixed on the Almighty as its all-sufficient portion, the whole nature of man is balanced and regulated; and we are prepared to love every other object, just as we ought. None manifest love so true, so tender, so unwearied in *all* the relations of life: none pursue the objects of this world with affections so tempered and so wisely directed, as they who have been brought under the full power of this blessed religion.

I shall next advert for a moment to *hope*. It has been called the "wine of life;" it has been personified as "a gay deceiver." It is certainly, to use another figure, the main-spring of the soul. It gives energy to man in all his pursuits, and elasticity to all his movements. As long as it keeps its place in the human heart, you may see man urging onward in his course, with vigorous step and joyous eye. But let it depart from him—let him feel that it is "clean gone forever,"

and he sinks at once into utter apathy ; his enterprise, his hardihood, his activity, his living spirit, are also gone. Now it requires but little knowledge of human nature to enable one to understand how important it is, that a being such as man, who cannot be happy without an object before him sufficient to create a lively interest, should have his *hopes* wisely directed. But in this case, all human wisdom has utterly failed from the beginning to the present day. Men have hoped for things unattainable ; or for things, which, when attained, have disappointed their expectations. Thus has much labour been wasted ; and in the end we have heard, ten thousand times repeated, the bitter cry of "Vanity of vanities ! vanity of vanities ! all is vanity."

But the gospel fastens the hopes of man on infinity, and eternity ; and gives for their warrant the sure promise of Jehovah, and the redeeming love of the Saviour. All other interests and pursuits are valuable, only as they subserve his great purpose of obtaining eternal life and never-fading glory. How then can his "expectation perish ?" How can the changes of this world destroy his hope ? How can the bubbles, which dance and glitter before him in the brief sunshine of worldly prosperity, deceive and mislead him ?

Once more : we find in man universally, an intense, insuppressible desire of pleasure : a constant craving for present gratification. It is more manifest in the young than the old ; because youth *lives* on actual *enjoy-*

ment, and old age on *reflection*. But the desire is felt, the demand is made by all.

Now all experience and observation convince us, that here is one of the most fearful dangers to which human nature is exposed. Other enemies slay their thousands, but this its ten thousands. Alas, how many hapless youth in this city, and this nation, are at this moment going after this syren "as the ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through their liver!" "Her house is" indeed "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death!" How many thousands, urged by the desire of present gratification, have looked "on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright;" who have even "tarried long at the wine, and have gone to seek mixed wine;"—and thus, "have woe, have sorrow, have contentions, have wounds without cause, and redness of eyes?"—Believe it, young friends, that which stands before you now, in grace and beauty, is decked with meretricious charms. You are deceived.—Pleasure! She is the fellest fiend that ever led man to destruction. The great *destroyer* has no minister of evil so faithful, so successful. Her dwelling is near to the gates of hell.

But it may be asked, shall this desire of pleasure never be gratified—must the demand be forever resisted; and man live an austere, joyless life, during his appointed time on earth? I answer, assuredly not. Those good christians, who think it their most solemn duty to be

miserable, have greatly mistaken the genius of their religion. It is none of the least of the blessings, which christianity has bestowed on man, that it has afforded to him an endless succession of *innocent* pleasures. The gospel, when it comes in its power to the human heart, so changes it, that man can be excited, and deeply interested, yea rendered alert and joyous, without the "snappish dialogue" and buffoonery of the theatre; without the pungent stimuli of strong drink; or any of the purchased indulgences of the sensualist. The religion of Christ gives to the christian pleasure without pollution, daily, hourly, pure, uncloying, ever growing pleasure. It allows every thing to natural desire, which is not injurious; and intermingles with gratifications derived from this source, others which flow from the everlasting fountain of joy in heaven. It is most particularly beneficial to the young, in the ardour and vehemence of their desires; because it answers their incessant and urgent demands for something of high interest, something corresponding to the intensity of their feelings. And it is wonderfully adapted to the condition of the aged; because, even when *life is worn out*, it still presents to them objects of hope, so glorious, that they can stir the sluggish currents of age, and kindle up in its cold heart the ardour of youth.

III. *The beneficent and wise adaptation of this religion to the nature of man is apparent from its operation on his conscience.*

In pointing out the difference between christianity and other forms of religion, it was remarked, that it directs its main force to the reason and conscience of man. Its value, in this respect, is apparent from the fact, that the conscience, from want of proper discipline and exercise, may be inert and feeble: and also that, under powerful excitement, it may be deplorably misdirected. Instead of guiding us into the way of virtue and piety, it may mislead us then to our utter ruin. Hence it is of unspeakable importance, that we should have access to truth, which has power to awaken the slumberer within us. The Bible has that power, and it has been exerted times without number. It is the voice of the Almighty, speaking directly to us: it tells us, with divine authority, what we are, and what we must do, and be, and avoid, that we may escape the perdition of ungodly men, and be prepared to dwell with "the saints in glory." It strikes on the heart of the sinner, even "when dead in trespasses and sins," and sends a thrill of powerful feeling through his whole soul. His moral torpor is gone. He is awakened. He is *all alive*. But the effect of evangelical truth is not mere excitement. By the communication of knowledge respecting our Creator, our relations and obligations to him, and to one another, our moral faculties are most wisely directed. The harmony of all man's duties is most beautifully displayed. His whole intellectual and moral nature is admirably balanced. And we see, in the well instructed christian, an edifying and

delightful example of fervent piety, united with calm, dignified, and incorruptible virtue. In the best human characters, formed under any other influences, we discern, either most hurtful excesses, or deplorable deficiencies. In the warrior and statesman, we find patriotism sadly intermingled with ambition, envy, jealousy, and other evil passions. Most distinguished philosophers have been notorious for pride, vanity, and even sensuality. And universally, where the power of christian truth has not been felt on the heart, the most estimable individuals have shown the operations of selfishness, in some way or other marring their moral character. But the religion of the Bible embraces, in the wide range of its influences, every part of the human mind, and every department of human life. Nothing is necessary to make man all that he ought to be, to give its finish to the human character, and adorn it with every grace and beauty, but the sincere, hearty application of the entire truth of the gospel.

4. But again : *no religion knows what to do with the guilty and troubled conscience, but the religion of the gospel.*

It is not enough for the religious teacher to tell me to be virtuous and pious ; for, I am a sinner. It is not sufficient that he should tell me to repent ; because, while conscious of the imperfection of my best performances, I never can be assured that my penitence goes as far as is necessary. There are many sins which I have wholly forgotten : many, which I very indistinctly re-

member. I am under the influences of self-love, the worst judge, perhaps, in the universe, of the aggravation of my own offences. Besides, I cannot perceive the relation which exists between present penitence and past offences, so as to see how the one can nullify the other. The doctrine of repentance alone, then, is worse than nothing to him, who deeply feels that he is "a sinner exceedingly great before the Lord." It does not awaken hope enough in man's heart, to make him a sincere penitent. And while it is insufficient for his reformation, it is incapable of giving him peace of conscience.

But the gospel addresses the guilty in the voice of divine authority, mingled with divine love. It tells him of the infinite atonement; it assures him of mercy, which knows no bound; of mercy, displayed in consistence with all the demands of justice, and with the perfect holiness of our eternal Sovereign.

5. *The gospel is wonderfully adapted to the nature of man, because the unlimited reach of its truths is suited to the progress of our intellectual and moral faculties.*

Such is the nature of man, that when he has attained an object, and ascertained its extent, so that he is able to say, *this is all*:—when he has found just what the thing can do for him; and knows that it can do no more, he is at once disgusted. But the truths of Christianity are ever enlarging before the mind of the believer. Let its growth be what it may, still it feels

that there is something in religion, which goes beyond his grasp, and that it gives his understanding work for eternity.

The same is true in regard to the christian's progress in holiness. In proportion as his moral taste becomes refined, and his perceptions clear, he perceives new beauties and glories in evangelical holiness; he sees a higher fitness and excellence in the moral precepts of the gospel. No mind of man, however cultivated and sanctified, goes beyond the discoveries made in the beginning, by the revelations of the gospel. After the progress of eighteen centuries, not a doctrine of this religion has become useless, not a precept obsolete. The meaning of the gospel is inexhaustible.

I do not say that new religious truths are discovered, in man's present state. But the case is this:—When one for the first time reads such a work as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or sees West's picture of *Christ Rejected*, if he has any taste or any feeling, he perceives many splendid beauties, and enjoys them most highly. But every new examination shows him something, which he did not discern before. In looking at the picture, for instance, it may be that he first examines the individual figures; and is subdued by the mingled majesty and meekness which appear in the Christ—or he is melted in sympathy with the impassioned Mary—or is kindled into indignation, when he beholds the envious and malignant Jews. After having studied every particular figure, he then considers the harmonies and con-

trasts of the various groupes, the propriety of their positions, and in a word, every thing which shows the genius of the painter, and the skill of the artist. The subject is not exhausted, until the spectator has comprehended the whole plan of the work, and examined thoroughly every beauty of its execution; not until he has been brought to think and feel about it, as the artist did. And so, but in a much higher degree, of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every careful study of this glorions system, shows new beauties in truths a thousand times considered—and the subject never can be exhausted, until the mind of man rises, if I may say so, to the conceptions, the thoughts, the feelings, and the great plan of its DIVINE AUTHOR.

Having thus shown that the gospel is, with admirable wisdom and benevolence, adapted to man, in all regions, in all periods, and in all conditions of human society; and moreover, that it is suited to the whole of his intellectual and moral nature, I wish, in the remaining part of this discourse, to notice some *special* blessings conferred by it, which it was not convenient to introduce under the foregoing divisions:

1. In the first place, it blesses *individuals* by giving to them an *elevation of character*, otherwise unattainable.

This is effected, not by fostering human pride and self-consequence.—To do this is to curse, and not bless.—But it is achieved by giving, in addition to all the benefits which have been enumerated, to the mind

of man, the clear and strong impress of immortality. That it does so, no one doubts. That truth, which the wisest ancient sages *groped* and *felt after*, with inexpressible anxiety to find it, is now familiar to the most unlettered christian. Even children 'in the sabbath schools now *know*, what it immortalized Socrates and Plato to have rendered probable. It is because they have had the lessons of him, "who spake as never man spake," for their instruction.

But to ascertain the full effect of the christian religion, in regard to the matter now under consideration, it is necessary to connect the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, with that of the immortality of the soul; and to suppose that these truths are fully believed. Let one, then, habitually realize, that he is to live forever; that he is capable of an endless progression in knowledge and holiness; that he is the heir of eternity; and that this body, which is now the instrument and organ of his mind, instead of sleeping always in kindred dust, will be raised by almighty power, and rendered immortal; that he himself, as a true, complete human being, may hold companionship with the highest and holiest of created beings, and communion with their LORD—let a man, I say, daily bring home to his "business and bosom," such thoughts as these, and they will cast his whole character in the mould of heaven, and give him, even in this world, the port and bearing of an angel of light. What, in all the range of human knowledge and thought, is so well suited to

raise man above every thing low, and sensual, and grovelling? Accordingly, if one will go into the humblest habitation of the truly pious, he will find, amidst poverty, and toil, and self-denial, persons familiar with high and noble thoughts, and enterprizes in real grandeur and magnificence, going far beyond the cherished purposes and meditations of the great ones of the earth. I have seen the tenant of a log-cabin, with a heart large enough to embrace the world, and aspirations as lofty as heaven. Every generation has admired the sublimity of the saying of the ancient artist, when he said, "I paint for eternity." There are tens of thousands of obscure and humble christians, who, with a far loftier spirit, and more dilated conceptions, are saying every day, *we LIVE for eternity.*

And yet there are not a few, I fear, among us, who try to persuade themselves and to seduce others into the belief, that they are creatures of ephemeral existence—that no morning is to rise after the night of death; that no light is to dawn on the deep darkness of the grave! Merciful Father, what desperation of guilt drives thy creatures to renounce the highest honours of their nature; and while thine own hand has stamped immortality on their brow, to grovel in the dust, and claim kindred with the worm!

2. In the next place, *the religion of the Bible has conferred on DOMESTIC LIFE its choicest blessings.*

It has done this by destroying, wherever it has gone, the endless and harassing evils of polygamy: but espe-

cially, by *making marriage a divine institution*. It deserves particular notice, that wherever the stale and wearisome clamour of *priestly influence* is raised, one of the favourite themes of reproach is, that marriage is made a *religious rite*. And even where infidelity preserves some show of decency, the effort is made to convince the people that it is a mere civil contract. It is only when miserable *creatures* have gone to the very last degree of wickedness, that it is represented as an odious monopoly. The reason of all this is perfectly understood. The sacredness of marriage is the great preservative of purity and chastity in human society. Let it be only a civil contract, dissolvable by mutual consent—or even let human laws alone sustain its perpetuity—and at once there is set to work a cause of evil, of uncontrollable energy, and boundless extent. Licentiousness, too gross to be described, would spread its pollution through every part of domestic and social life; all that gives grace and dignity to woman; every thing in her that charms and solaces us when we retire from the world, into the privacies of the family circle, would be blasted and consumed by the fierce, unhallowed fires of sensuality. The son would be ignorant of his mother, the daughter of her father. From these desolating and horrible evils, we are preserved by the sanctity which religion gives to marriage.

Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In paradise of all things common else.
By thee adulterous lust was driven from men.

Among the bestial herds to range ; by thee
 Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
 Relations dear, and all the charities
 Of father, son, and brother first were known.

It is of these charities, and all the blessed influences of a chaste, hallowed, and sanctified domestic life, that the modern infidelity, cast forth among us by the convulsions of Europe, with its callous heart and ruthless hand, would rob us. It would persuade us, that our long tried and faithful pastors, are knaves and impostors ; that the bands of marriage are galling chains ; that the benediction of our nuptial contract is a piece of priestly mummery ; and that in the midst of what we have always thought to be true bliss, of our “fireside enjoyments” and “homeborn happiness,” we have all along been poor miserable slaves ! Such are the ravings of itinerant sceptics :—such is the desperate fanaticism of Infidelity !

But to return : the gospel blesses domestic life by determining the relative situation of husband and wife, of parent and children. It settles the point, that the husband is the head of the wife : but it requires him to love her as he does himself, and give her honour as the “weaker vessel.” It commands children at all times to render to parents reverence and obedience ; but it forbids parents to exercise authority with harshness. It gives one law of love to the whole family ; it sheds on them its selectest influence ; it connects them all with the great family of heaven, and with the hopes and glories of eternity. In estimating the value of these blessings

on domestic life, we are greatly assisted in forming a just conclusion, by viewing in contrast, the families of christians and heathens.

In the former, authority is tempered with love: woman takes her place as the helpmeet of man: children mingle affectionate confidence with filial reverence: the intercourse of all is free, easy, joyous: their pleasures are pure and simple: and their hopes take the lofty character of eternity.

But where christianity has not exerted its kindly influences, woman is the minister of man's pleasure, and his children are slaves. He reigns a dark and stern tyrant; his house is a domestic Bastile, rather than a homestead; and is ruled by physical strength, instead of the law of love.*

3. *The gospel bestows its peculiar blessings on social life.* A community made up of individuals—such as the gospel, in its proper influences, forms—whose understandings are excited, whose conscience is instructed, and whose passions are regulated, must indeed be happy. But on these considerations we have not time now to dwell.

I wish here to notice, what I have not seen stated elsewhere, that the power of the gospel is great in producing real refinement and genuine politeness, in social intercourse. Much of the refinement of this world con-

* It is remarkable that in nominally christian countries, where the Bible is taken away from the people, and its influences on domestic life are unknown, females generally think it a privilege rather than a hardship to be placed in convents. The reason is, they suffer so much from the tyranny of the stronger sex.

sists in presenting gross ideas in what are thought delicate terms. Wit is displayed by making one feel as disagreeable and ridiculous as possible, without giving what the laws of honour would denominate an insult. And the highest politeness is a mere mimicry of disinterestedness, for the purpose of insuring the greatest regard to *one's self*. But the religion of the Bible produces the *reality*, of which the world affords only a sorry imitation. By surrounding every human being with the glories of immortality, it causes man to regard his fellow with high consideration. By infusing its own pure benevolence, it destroys that selfishness, which seeks ease, indulgence, or applause, at the expense of another's feelings; and it prompts the wish always to promote the comfort and happiness of those with whom we have intercourse. By sanctifying the heart; by implanting the love of holiness; and by fixing man's thought and affection on "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," it raises him above that sensuality, which pollutes the mind, and which retains its proper character, whether it comes through the channel of coarse and vulgar ribaldry, or the polite vocabulary of licentiousness.

The religion of the gospel alone, purifies all the fountains of social life; and produces that uniform gentleness, and meekness, those "kind designs to serve and please," which give the highest charms, and the most enchanting graces to social intercourse.

4. The plan which I have adopted, obliges me to advert to the benefits conferred by the religion of Christ, on man in the relations of *civil life*. Its value in giving new sacredness to “an oath for confirmation ;” in clothing human laws with a power, which no human legislature could give ; its peculiar appropriateness to a free government, in which the rights of all are recognised ; and in which habits of self-government in the citizen are of unspeakable importance ; are topics of common discussion ; and have just for a moment been brought to view in this place, for the purpose of assisting the hearer in forming an adequate view of the value of the gospel.

I cannot, however, do justice to my own feelings, without declaring it to be my full conviction, that complete civil and political liberty, such as we understand it to be, never has been, and never will,—nay, never *can* be enjoyed by any people, without the influences of pure christianity. Sure I am, that in the most celebrated republics of the heathen world, there was nothing like the degree of true, rational, well balanced, and well secured freedom, which is now the birthright of the people of this country. I am equally sure, that, if ever the day should come, when the religion of the gospel shall cease to be the prevalent religion of this nation, the splendid temple of Liberty, erected by the labour and skill of our forefathers, and cemented by their blood, will be shattered to pieces by a dreadful and wide-wasting convulsion, and scattered over the surrounding

desolation, as the polished fragments of the great city of the desert, are scattered over the burning sands of Syria. And I feel that while I am attempting, in this humble manner, to discharge the offices of a christian minister, I am at the same time performing one of the most sacred duties of a citizen—contributing, according to my feeble ability, to perpetuate the institutions of my country.

But while I forbear to enter into the interesting subjects, at which we have just glanced, there is one particular topic, which I cannot wholly pass over. *The pure gospel of Jesus Christ affords the only security for the preservation of the dearest right of a freeman, his religious liberty.*

Human legislators may make laws for the “security of religious freedom,” and they may repeal them. For myself, if the majority of the people of the United States were decidedly anti-christian, I could not rely on the law of the land to protect my life and person, while pursuing what I do now believe to be a course of christian duty. If, for very shame, the constitution should remain unaltered, public sentiment would not enforce that part of it, which guaranties my christian liberty. We see enough of the bitterness of infidelity, we hear enough of its “deep” curses, to assure us, that its prevalence would speedily tear down our altars, and desecrate our churches. It was in no remote period of the world, nor was it among a savage and ignorant people, that Infidelity, with the malignity of a fiend, adjudged the ministers of religion, without trial or defence,

to death on the lamp-post. Its spirit is unaltered. And even now, when restrained by law, and by public sentiment enforcing that law, we can hear its growl, like that of a tiger in a cage. The very freedom of speech, which it owes to the influence of christianity on this nation, is employed in calumniating the Bible, and traducing all who believe its sacred truths. Christians have tokens enough to show them what they may expect, if Infidelity should gain the ascendancy.

It would be easy to trace, in ten thousand ways, the influences of the gospel in securing liberty of religion. It clearly enough denies to man any authority over the conscience. It makes religion a personal concern, and teaches every one, that he is to give account *for himself* to his Maker. It comes to every individual, and plainly tells him what he is to believe and to do, that he may be saved, and solemnly charges him to judge of the doctrine of every religious teacher, by the plain truths, which are continually before him. And while it thus informs the conscience, and makes man feel the inexpressible value of religious freedom, it wakens up a spirit, which human authority cannot put down—which human power cannot subdue—which rises in its strength against the whole apparatus of tyranny, and looks undaunted on the stake and the wheel, the faggot and the fire. Since men first felt that they had a right to freedom of conscience, they who have maintained this right at every peril, amidst all reproaches and sufferings, have been devoted, evangelical christians. Philosophical

statesmen, borrowing without acknowledgment, their thoughts from pious christians, have reasoned well respecting the abstract right, when, in perfect security, they have had nothing to interrupt the course of their meditations: but *they were christians*, who offered themselves willingly to the sword, and gave their bodies to the flames, that they might thus seal their testimony to the truth, that there is no lord of conscience, but the eternal Sovereign of the universe. If any doubt of these facts, let them tell us where, in all the world, has religion been free, while the gospel has been unknown, or kept back from the people. In *every other case*, the miserable and oppressed people have thought, that the religion of the state was good enough for them.

I have thus shown that the gospel, by its adaptation to all climates, all ages, all conditions of human life, and to all the faculties of the human mind, dispenses blessings, which can be bestowed in no other way, through every department of human life; and that it **EXCELS IN GLORY**, because, from its very nature, it is unchangeable, and confers its benefits without measure, and without end, to all who are willing to receive them. Its great design is to pardon, to sanctify, and to save sinners. It finds them in guilt and misery; takes them "out of the horrible pit and the miry clay;" places them in the king's highway of holiness; and scatters its blessings all along the path, by which it conducts them to heaven.

But, after all, the gospel is a system but partially known to us. Our faculties are feeble; and this dark world is between us and that glorious orb of light. I am just holding up my little spy-glass for you to look through: and you see—O! do you not see, all round the dim edge of this globe, the breakings over, and the streamings of a light, which shows what is behind? The brief hour of this eclipse will, however, soon, very soon, pass away; and then a flood of glory will pour on you, and your fellow-christians around you. All will be transformed into the same image. And when that great multitude, which no man can number, gathered out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb; and when he shall be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all that believe; when chérubim and seraphim shall crowd around to learn new wonders concerning *their* Lord, and the *sinner's* Saviour, and shall behold them reflecting his light, resplendent in his image—*then*, and not till then, shall we form some adequate conception of the glory of the gospel.