

Our Obligations to God:

A SERMON

PREACHED ON THANKSGIVING DAY

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BY

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OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD.

HOW MUCH OWEST THOU UNTO MY LORD?

LUKE XVI. 5.

THERE are certain occasions in the life of men when they are called upon to take account of their obligations to their fellow-men. No man of business is unmindful of these. When he contracts liabilities and issues obligations he makes a special entry in his bill-book, specifying, with great particularity, the nature of the obligation; its exact amount; to whom it was issued; for what it was issued; and the precise period of its maturity. This book he justly regards as one of the most important which he keeps in his business. He refers to it daily; he scans its records with a critical and anxious eye; he looks often at its contents to learn the date, the nature, and the running time of his obligations, and he prepares himself to meet each, as it matures, with promptness and fidelity. There are also certain seasons of the year when the general subject of obligations comes up, or when particular payments fall due, and every wise and honest man is particularly solicitous to be prepared for these seasons, whether they occur quarterly or annually, and to be able to discharge the liabilities which are then presented.

Every man will assent to the propriety and wisdom of such a course. No man of business can expect to

maintain his credit, or to prosper in his pursuits, who is careless of his obligations. Constantly to bear them in mind; frequently to investigate their nature and amount; to expect and to prepare to meet them, honestly and promptly, is absolutely essential to the character and success of commercial men in their varied business avocations.

Equally scrupulous and mindful should men be of their obligations to God. Investigation into their nature, number, and amount, is enforced by the dictates alike of duty and policy. In importance, extent, and duration, no obligations to our fellow-men can compare with them. Beginning with our first breath, they keep pace with our existence; each day adds to their number and amount; they are entered on every page of the record of our earthly life; they extend into eternal ages, and annihilation alone can relieve us from their pressure. Yet stupendous and countless as they are, they sit far more lightly on the memory and conscience of men, than those lesser responsibilities which belong to this fleeting world, and are assumed towards their dying fellow-men. In this respect, that ancient Egyptian statue which was fabled to greet the rising of the sun, with strains of sweet, mysterious music, was no type of man. All through the silent night, though the fair moon wooed that statue with her serenest smiles, and the silver stars looked pleadingly down in their solemn beauty, still the stony form was dumb; but when the purple and gold of the eastern sky heralded the coming of the sun, the sullen statue broke forth into melodious strains, and acknowledged

the resplendent presence of the king of day with its morning song. But it is far different with man. The heart that he carries within his bosom can feel the force of lesser obligations, and responds promptly and earnestly to the calls of human responsibility; but when God comes forth in his majesty, and calls him to respond to the mighty obligations which bind his creatures to their Creator, that heart which sends forth its sweetest strains in answer to the voices of the earth, is cold, and silent, and passionless as the Egyptian statue in the starry night.

But, oh! brethren and friends, let it not be so with us, as we come on this glad festival day to mingle our thanksgivings to God for the blessings of another year. What occasion so appropriate as this for the devout and grateful consideration and acknowledgment of our obligations to our Heavenly Father. What question so pertinent to each one of us on this Annual Thanksgiving, as the question of my text? The very nature of this occasion; the character of this service; the imperative proprieties of this hour, impel me, a steward of the house of God, to ask of each one of you, his professed servants, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" I come to you to-day as God's messenger, with a statement of your account with him. It is posted on heavenly ledgers from the journal of your daily life. It is a long, but a correct account, and as item after item is spread before you, I challenge you to dispute a solitary charge, or to repudiate a single liability. It has been entered on the book of God's remembrance by angelic recorders, as with a pen of

iron, and the point of a diamond, and in the name of God, I call you to investigate and settle these stupendous obligations.

HOW MUCH OWEST THOU UNTO MY LORD?

The first item in the account of your indebtedness to God is LIFE. It is charged against you in his book; you will not dispute that charge. You will not dare—with that throbbing pulse, that beating heart, that bounding blood, those well knit muscles, those elastic sinews, that graceful form, that body so fearfully and wonderfully made, whose nerves and pulses thrill and throb with glad and exulting life to-day—you will not dare to repudiate this item in the statement of your obligations. But how much owest thou unto my Lord, for life! It is a glorious thing—mere physical existence. To go out on some bright morning, and drink in the pure air of heaven, dilating and bracing the physical frame, while the eye sparkles, and the cheek glows, and the nerves tingle, and the muscles swell with the exciting draughts; to revel in the enjoyment of that life in which even dumb nature exults, which blooms in the meadow, and waves on the mountain side, and laughs gleefully in the rill, and warbles from the grove; how grand a thing is this—and whose gift is this life? Who keeps this vital principle still active within you—who keeps in tune this “harp of thousand strings,” whose vibrations afford you the most exquisitely pleasurable sensations? Who keeps off the skeleton-king from you, permits you still to tread the earth, and breathe the air, and preserves unsevered the silver cord—unbroken the golden bowl?

This inquiry has great pertinency when we call to mind the fact that we, as a community, have been particularly distinguished by the providence of God, in this matter of the preservation of life and health, above some of our sister cities in neighbouring States. How fearful has been the history of Norfolk and Portsmouth during the past season! How terrible the scourge which has been suffered to visit those ill-fated cities! The terrific pestilence has brooded over them, with its black wing, for long and dreary months, and the angel of death has been busy sweeping away with relentless stroke, thousand of victims to the tomb. Smiling infancy and beauteous youth; noble manhood and venerable age; the fair maiden in her bloom; the young wife; the happy mother; the scholar; the man of business; the beloved physician; the minister of God, all have fallen beneath the destroyer's hand. Oh! what an appalling wreck of hope and happiness has been effected there! And how, for long years to come, will its fearful desolation be attested by bleeding hearts and sad memories; with tear-washed graves and outward signs of woe?

How much owest thou unto my Lord, for life? As, on this glad festival day, you feel the thrill of life and health within you, and look upon your loved ones still safe around your fire-side, and sharing with you the rich boon of existence, think of your obligations to that God, “who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness, and tender mercies.” How much owest thou unto my Lord?

But this blessing of physical existence you share with the world around you—with the beast, the bird, the tree, the flower. But how much owest thou unto my Lord for those things which make your life so much more grand and glorious a thing than theirs.

You have reason—the mind, the thinking mind, which, like Promethean fire, illuminates this clay tabernacle with heavenly light. What is mind worth to you, with its wondrous powers; its deep and sublime capacities; its unlimited range of thought, and feeling, and aspiration?—mind, that can make man “tread the firmament, like Newton, with the step of a master; or sweep the harpstring, like Milton, with the hand of a seraph.” Can you compute the value of those intellectual and moral capacities, which cannot be filled and satisfied even with the accumulated learning, wealth, and splendours of a world? For such capacities do you owe nothing to your Creator? For the ample means of intellectual cultivation and enjoyment which surround you, are you under no obligation to Him? And then the affections; those inlets of ravishing pleasure to the soul—the life of the heart—the capacity to love and be loved; the warm play of kindly emotions and friendly feelings; the gushings of conjugal, or parental, or filial affection; are not these a glorious boon from God to you? Mother! as you press to your bosom that unconscious babe, while untold and unmeasured stores of love crowd and swell your heart, as you breathe in the whisperings of the purest of all earthly loves, the magic words, my child! my child! is not the rich and blessed life of the affections worth something to you? When

you sit, as every mother often does, all alone in your chair, and listen to the merry music of your children at their play, as the glad cadences and full rich notes are borne to your ear, and you hear their shouts of childish glee and the rapid pattering of their little feet upon the floor, and your eyes fill, and your bosom heaves, and your deep maternal heart is almost oppressed with its wealth, its untold wealth of love, oh! is there not something to be grateful for to Him who has opened that blessed fountain in your heart and bid its waters flow? And what if there be a little chair vacant in your circle, and a little cap hanging on the nail that is not taken down, and a handful of bright clustering tresses in the drawer, and a pair of little shoes that once were worn by “the little boy that died,” are there not sad, sweet, blessed memories of him, as he was in his young beauty, and glorious visions of him as he is in his angelic loveliness, that are worth more than uncounted gold to you, and would you not rather bear the anguish of the parting than give up the cherished hope of the meeting when you shall go to him, though he shall not return to you?

For life then, for physical life, with all its peculiar joys and gladness; for intellectual life, with all its attainments and triumphs; for social life, with all its beauty and blessedness, “how much owest thou unto my Lord?”

The next item in the statement of your indebtedness to God, is YOUR COUNTRY. How much owest thou unto my Lord for your country? It is not in that braggart

spirit which is often charged upon us, and perhaps not always unjustly, that we say God has given us a goodly heritage in our country. Taking into consideration all the elements of greatness which are centred here, we may say, with truth, the sun shines not on such a land as this. Where is the country which possesses such an extended habitable territory; such variety of soil, climate, and production; such fertile prairies; such noble streams; such grand old hills; such magnificent inland seas; such sublime forests; such splendid waterfalls; such smiling meadows; such lovely vales. It is common to talk of European scenery as far superior to our own, but I greatly doubt the correctness and justness of this comparison. I doubt whether, after all, the far-famed Rhine is more beautiful than the Hudson; whether the Bay of Naples is so superior to the Bay of Manhattan; whether there are not quite as lovely lakes in America as the far-famed "Lochs" of Scotland; whether there is not within our own Pennsylvania, as grand and beautiful scenery as can be found in any quarter of the globe. But however this may be, I say thank God for such a country as this. The lines of the poet may well be applied to her:

"There is a land, of every land the pride,
Beloved by Heaven o'er all the world beside,
Where brighter suns dispense serener light,
And milder moons emparadise the night:
And thou shalt find howe'er thy footsteps roam
That land *thy* country, and that spot *thy* home."

But it is not for the grand and beautiful physical features of our great land; not for her magnificent cities, thriving towns, and lovely villages; not for her

waving cornfields, snowy cotton lands, deep mines of coal, and tall mountains of iron, that I thank God for my country. I thank God for her history; a history which reaches farther back than the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on the rocky shore of New England—pages of which were written in the wilderness of Germany, amid the Saxon wars of Old England, in the time of the Norman Conquest, the wars of York and Lancaster, in the days of the English Reformation and the Scottish League and Covenant.

Through all those distant eras and ages the seed was being sowed, which afterward sprang up to such a goodly harvest on these western shores. It is a great error and injustice, to suppose that our history covers only the comparatively brief space which has elapsed since the Declaration of Independence, or even the settlement of Jamestown. Had the principles which underlie our institutions been of such recent origin, we might listen with some forebodings to those malignant vaticinations which predict the downfall of our republic. But it is not with us, as it has been more than once with an enlightened and powerful nation on the Continent of Europe. That nation tried the experiment within the memory of living men, of establishing free institutions on the ruins of despotism, without that long and careful discipline and training which is needful to ensure their vigour and perpetuity. The world looked on in wonder, and many hailed the movement as the dawn of a new era in human progress. But they were soon and fearfully undeceived. The failure, the utter failure of that memorable experiment, would have been

ridiculous had it not been appalling: "It would have been a broad farce, had it not proved an awful tragedy." The repetition of the experiment in 1848, is within the memory of us all. What some thought a new star rising in the firmament of freedom has proved to be only a wandering meteor, and its fitful light has gone out in darkness.

But our country's history, in the history of those principles which are the life of her institutions, is not a thing of yesterday. It is not like Jonah's gourd, to spring up in a night; nor do I believe it is to be withered in a night. Were I to write the history of my country I would begin in 1215, at the signing of *Magna Charta*. I would trace the steady growth of the principle of constitutional liberty down from age to age, and when I came to 1776, and the glorious Declaration, I would say, That instrument is indeed a *declaration*—it originates nothing, it discovers nothing; it is what jurists call "a declaratory act"—neither altering old principles, nor introducing new ones, but asserting and vindicating and pledging its noble signers to stand by to the death, what were and always had been the law of constitutional liberty, and the principles of Republican Institutions.*

So we have a history, and a grand history, and we owe something to the God of our fathers for it.

Intimately associated with that history, and swelling the amount of our national indebtedness, are the men whom God has given us—the *great men* of our country.

* Hon. W. T. Gould's Oration at Covington, Georgia; 1853.

Great men are among the best gifts which God bestows upon a people. In this respect how much do we owe to Him. What illustrious names are those which are emblazoned on the records of our country. To say nothing of Brewster, and Carver, and Winslow, and Standish, and Allerton, and Winthrop, and those ancient Puritan heroes who laid the foundations of this country, what men were they who saved and completed the glorious superstructure!—Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson, Marshall, Jay, of the elder day. What a galaxy is this! How serene and perennial the radiance which surrounds them yet. And then to come down to our own times—when shall we again see such men as that pure minded, upright, patriotic statesman, who sleeps in an honoured grave amid the snowy cotton fields of Carolina? or that idol of the nation, whose silvery tongue so long held the Senate of his country spell-bound by its melodious, persuasive eloquence; and who, in times of peril, warned his countrymen of their danger, as with an inspired prophet's voice, and by his wisdom kept them from disunion and strife?

"A watchman, on his lofty tower
His thrilling trump still warned the State
When fraud or danger was at hand;
By him, as by a beacon light,
Her pilots still kept course aright;
As some proud column he, alone,
Had strength to prop her tottering cause.
Now is the stately column broke,
The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still,
And heard no more o'er dale or hill."

And still there is another name, dear to the American people as that of one of their greatest men, who gave the strength of his mighty intellect, and the beatings of his great heart, ever to what he believed the best good of his country demanded. Aye! that great heart, which now lies cold and pulseless in the grave, where the ocean, as it thunders along New England's rocky coast, sounds his majestic requiem, throbbed to its last faint beat, with vast and generous love to us and our native land; and when it ceased to beat, courts and cabinets might well mourn the loss of one who was their glory and their strength; the forum might well clothe itself in sable for one who was its acknowledged master; the halls of legislation and the popular assembly might mourn that they should no longer be thrilled by his impressive eloquence; letters and art might bring their tribute of sorrow, at the quenching of the radiance of that brilliant mind: but when Webster died, *our country* was his mourner. She wept, that he who loved her with such a mighty affection, who shrined her honour and her glory in his heart of hearts, and daily bowed in fond and sacred reverence there, and only forsook her at the summons of his God, must leave her for ever. When that majestic form, which so well represented a great and glorious land, was stricken down; when that gigantic soul, which was absorbed and inspired by the sublime idea of America, passed away, *our country* felt that the great day of her mourning had come. The granite hills of New Hampshire were left, but he who resembled them in the strength and grandeur of his

being, was gone. The majestic ocean still thundered along her coast, but her wild waves were sounding a fitting dirge for him whose mind was as vast, whose soul was as deep, as her mighty waters. Plymouth Rock, indeed, was left; but he who smote that rock with the rod of his eloquence, causing streams of wisdom and patriotism to gush from its flinty bosom, was sleeping the sleep of death in Pilgrim soil. Departing day might still linger and play on the summit of Bunker Hill Monument, but he who laid its foundations, and placed its top-stone, would no more recount the heroic deeds, and embody the sublime principles which that lofty pile was intended to commemorate. Our country was left in her vastness, her beauty, and grandeur, when these were taken from her; but they were gone who added lustre to her glory, and now "mountain and ocean cannot adorn her, as their presence gilded her soil and her name."

But such men are a nation's pride and glory; they are her wealth—her noble minds, her generous hearts; these are her treasures, these make her rich and honoured, and useful and powerful in the earth:

"What constitutes a State?

Not high raised battlement and laboured mound

Thick wall or moated gate—

Not cities proud, with spire and turret crowned,

Not bays and broad armed ports

Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride;

Not starred and spangled courts

Where low-browed baseness wafts perfume to pride—

No! men, high-minded men!

* * * * *

These constitute a State."

Great are the obligations of those who have a country like ours, with such a history, such institutions, such men as these. If of those to whom much is given, much also shall be required, then how vast are our liabilities as a people? Every individual member of every community ought to feel the weight of these liabilities. The providence of God has ordered our lot in this fair land. It might have been cast in other lands, where ignorance, oppression, degradation and wretchedness are the portion of the people. But the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage; and we ought to feel that we owe much to God for our country. I hope I feel on this festival day like blessing God for my country. I think it is the dictate of true religion to make men patriotic, and that the Christian minister is bound to be a patriot. I do not care in this sacred place to say much about our stars and stripes, the beat of our drum, or the thunder of our cannon, but I may feel inspired by their influence, so far forth as they are expressions of a self-respect which may add to the dignity of a Christian freeman. The pulpit is no place to boast that our shores are the boundaries of the two mighty oceans of the world, but my heart expands at the thought, that "these shores are to be lines of light which are to illumine the East and the West, Africa and Japan." I have no well rounded periods on the value of the Union of these States, but that Union is enshrined in the very core of my heart, because I believe, that with that Union the interests of free thought and free speech, of that truth which loves

freedom, of the church, and of the world, must stand or fall. And I say, that while this glorious country of ours may have faults, I would speak of them with that reverential tenderness with which I would speak of the faults of a mother. I would not, on their account, put asunder what God has joined together. And in a day when so much is said and done by hot-headed and hasty and designing and fanatical men of all creeds and parties, to sunder the bonds which bind us together as a people, I would invoke the Christian patriotism of my country to rally to the rescue, and blot "that atrocious word *disunion*" from the American vocabulary. In such a land as this, and in such an age as this, an unpatriotic Christian, like "*an undevout astronomer, is mad.*"*

Yet the most important item in relation to our indebtedness to God for our country is, that it is still a Christian country.

In what but a Christian country would there be such a day as this—a day when a great commonwealth, at the call of its chief ruler, bows before Almighty God in thankfulness for the many blessings of his hand. This very service is the offspring of Christianity. It is a religious festival—not in honour of some senseless idol, but of the living God; not observed with puerile mummeries and degrading or bloody rites, but with the faith, and gratitude, and love of living men. There are connected with it some of the most sacred and tender memories and associations; memories and

* Rev. Prof. Park's Discourse before the Legislature of Massachusetts, 1851.

associations which are nowhere found but in the homes and hearts of a Christian country. Many a son this day will remember the return of this festival in the days of his childhood; perhaps in his home in the valleys of New England, where this day has always been the great day of the year; and the image of his pious father, as he knelt at the family altar in the midst of his household, and sent up the warm tribute of thanksgiving, in tremulous tones, from a full heart, for the mercies of another year, will come back to him from the heaven where the old man has gone; and visions of the loving circle that there gathered around the fireside, and recounted the history of the year, with its lights and shadows, its joys and sorrows, will gently break on memory's eye with subduing and touching power; and he will thank God that he had a godly father and a praying mother, and a Christian home in a Christian country. No country on earth had such a purely Christian origin as ours. It was the love of God, and not the love of conquest or gold, that brought our fathers here. They came, "because they believed in God with all their hearts, and loved the gospel with all their souls, and would have a place where they might worship and live according to their belief, though it were an ice-bound rock and howling wilderness; they would have such a place, and plant their children in it, or starve and perish in the attempt." And we thank God to-day, that the spirit of those men has not utterly died out. The fire they kindled on the icy shores of New England is burning still, and spreading towards the setting sun. Though there may be stains

on our mother's garments, and sin in her heart, and dark clouds in her horizon, yet, take her all in all, the sons of no other land have such a mother. Thank God, thank God, she is a Christian mother still!

Let us, my brethren, bound as we are to this our mother by the ties of nature or adoption, and jealous as all true children are for her honour and her glory, let us labour to keep her still a Christian country. Let us have faith in the conservative power of a free Protestant Christianity, rather than in popular education, republican institutions, or anything else which distinguishes us as a people. Unsanctified education is a fearful agent for evil, as the more knowledge a bad man has of chemistry, the more subtle and dangerous will be his power to poison. And republican institutions, dissevered from Christianity, have not in themselves any element of perpetuity. "Let the power of a Bible piety pervade the homes of a people, and that people is safe. For, after all, it is true that the roots of the liberty-tree twine round the thresholds and warm beneath the hearth-stones of our unnumbered homes; and as long as these homes present a quiet refuge from the toils and trials of life; so long as the graceful prattle of childhood, and the gentle smile of womanhood, remain to welcome the husband and father to his cheerful fireside; so long as the meek-eyed dignity of the mother, and the twining tenderness of the wife, and the budding loveliness of the daughter are blended in hallowed union to gild the household altar and grace the household board; so long as the quiet light of the Sabbath comes in at the casement alike

of cottage and of palace, to brighten the hard realities of weekly toil and trial with the radiance of a rest that tells alike of the paradise that is past, and the paradise that is to come; in a word, so long as a people have that home on earth that is made by the teachings of Christianity concerning the home in heaven, the liberties and prosperities of that people are as firm as the rooted oak."* Such a people cannot be led astray by the Eutopian dreamings of Socialists, or the fiery zeal of Radicals, or the cunning schemes of Demagogues. They will be banded together by something stronger and more enduring than straps of iron—their common love to that Christianity which has made them what they are. And they never will strew the graves of their pious and honoured fathers with the shattered fragments of a country, for whose union and glory those fathers prayed, and struggled, and died. Here, my countrymen, is the grand conservative element of our freedom and glory; the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that godliness, which hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Here are the bulwarks of our nation; not her fleets or her armies, but her free pulpits, her open Bibles, her family altars. The magnificent structure of our country was built on this foundation—it is a monument to Christianity, and may it long stand, as was said of the pile that crowns the summit of Bunker Hill, "may it long stand to greet the sun in its coming, while the last rays of departing day shall linger and play on its summit."

* Rev. Dr. Moore's Address before the Societies of Jefferson College, 1853.

Thus have I spoken of some of our obligations to God; great items in the statement of our indebtedness to the Almighty; they are of a general character, and yet we are individually liable for them. There are other national blessings which we have enjoyed during the year, for which we owe much to our Lord. The horrid din of war has not been heard within our borders. The sickening scenes of Alma and Inkermann have not been spread before our recoiling vision. The purse and heart of the nation have not bled to pay the fearful price of victory on the field of carnage. The labours of the husbandman have been crowned with a most abundant harvest, and the industry of the nation has been amply rewarded. In some parts of our country the pestilence has indeed raged and destroyed many victims, yet on the broad scale of our whole country's history, the blessing of health has been generally enjoyed by the people. Our national character has not suffered, nor our credit been weakened by any aggressive wars, any fillibusterism, or repudiation. The history of the year has been one of general prosperity and blessing from the good hand of God. "*He hath not dealt so with any nation!*"

And when we turn from the broad field of our country to our own homes and to our own church and congregation, we shall surely find much for which to be grateful. God has continued to us our happy homes in this goodly city. The pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day, hath passed us and our loved ones by. By day and by night, God, who never forgets us though we

often forget Him, has watched over us with a love that has never wearied, a tenderness that has never been exhausted. Sorrow has indeed visited some of our dwellings, but it has come not from the hand of an enemy, but from Him who hath done us good, and not evil, all the days of our life. The grass is fresh upon the graves of some we revered and loved, but we know that God who gave hath taken, and blessed be the name of the Lord. We shall miss some loved one from the home circle to-day, but we shall be grateful that so many are left to share in the precious memories which are our common inheritance. We have been prospered as a church and congregation during the year that has past. Forty-six have been added to our list of communicants since the commencement of the present year. A noble spirit of effort and enterprise has been manifested by the congregation, in carrying forward measures for increasing our outward prosperity; this house of God has been filled with attentive hearers of the word; some precious souls have been born into the kingdom of Christ; your pastor has to record many tokens of respect and affection for himself and family; and in fine, the account of our blessings during the year is swelled to fulness, and renders very pertinent the question, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" Oh! let us at this glad season examine and acknowledge our obligations—"what shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" How shall we discharge our infinite obligations? We never can pay the debt we owe our heavenly Father, our blessed Saviour; the Holy Spirit of grace and consola-

tion. The devotion of our whole lives would only prove us unprofitable servants, we should only do that which it is our duty to do. But let us at least be grateful, and show our gratitude in our future fidelity in God's service. What are our own hopes as Christians worth to us? What are the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary worth? What is it worth to us when God changes the countenances of those we love and sends them away, to be able to say, as we anticipate the blessed heaven where parted ones shall meet again, "they shall not come to us, but we shall go to them." What is it worth to us, as we look forward to the journey through the dark valley, to be able to say, "The Lord is my shepherd." What is the hope of heaven worth to us, where faith and hope shall be swallowed up, but love shall remain for ever! where, freed from every stain of sin, we shall walk in white robes in the midst of the paradise of God! Oh! dear Christian brother, sister, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" Not in this phase of our subject, for this life, but the better life to come; not for such a country as this, but for a better country, even a heavenly; not for freedom from political bondage, but for that glorious soul-liberty, wherewith our Lord Christ makes his people free; not for fruitful seasons, and happy homes, and temporal blessings; but for glory, honour, and immortality in eternity. These are the things which should constitute the grand theme of our jubilant songs on earth, for these will inspire the loftier thanksgiving anthems of heaven. It is a great thing to be a citizen of this fair land, but it is a

greater thing to be a citizen of the better country in the heavens. It is worth much to claim as our brethren such men as our country has nurtured, but it is worth far more to claim brotherhood with Christ and the glorious company of the redeemed. Gladsome as is this festival, there is a thanksgiving day in the future far more gladsome and glorious, when all God's people shall come home together, and long parted ones shall meet again—and "we shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and shall lead us to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." "For the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!" When the pealing notes of the archangel's trump shall call God's people to the eternal thanksgiving of the skies, may we all be there, to greet each other with heavenly salutations, and amid the hallelujahs of angels and the smile of God, enter together into the joy of our Lord. AMEN!