

THE

ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION

THE

CLAIM OF THE TIMES.

BY

✓
ANDREW REED, D. D.

WITH

A RECOMMENDATORY INTRODUCTION

BY

GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

THY KINGDOM COME!

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M. W. DODD,

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INTRODUCTION.

AT the request of the publisher, I have paid some attention to the work of Dr. R. with the view of expressing my humble judgment of its merits. The reverend author is favorably known to the churches of this country ; and this work, will detract nothing from his reputation. With portions of it, I have been exceedingly interested, as throwing together very important thoughts upon the most important topics of religious instruction ; well arranged, and favorably expressed. The work obviously cost the author time, effort, and prayer ; and it is well worth the labor and solicitude it cost. Whoever reads it will be abundantly compensated, and if he reads it with the spirit with which it was written, cannot fail to become a more enlightened and useful Christian. The object and aim of the writer is not a selfish one, but it is to do good. He takes a wide range ; and yet after

having read the work, the attentive reader will find that the substance of it is easily remembered. If our churches and our ministers would possess themselves of its principles and imbibe its spirit, they would have less cause to lament the decay of vital godliness, either in their own hearts, their families, or their congregations.

The publisher deserves commendation and encouragement for the attractive form in which he presents this volume to the public; and I take great pleasure in recommending it to all who purchase books for the sake of reading them.

GARDINER SPRING.

NEW-YORK, MARCH, 1843.

P R E F A C E .

THE Lectures composing this work were delivered at the close of the year 1838, and previous to that state of religion already reported to the public. A formal but earnest request was made at the time by the deacons of the church, and by those students of various colleges in fellowship with the church, for their publication.

Perhaps the best apology, under the delay, is, that their solicitations have neither been forgotten nor dishonored ; that, now, health has been put in peril for their preparation ; and that it is possible, amidst conflicting motive, the balancing consideration and encouragement may have been found in their kind and cordial request.

Now that it is done, it is far from bringing satisfaction to the writer. While constrained to wait, he has been deeply convinced that, if it should be prepared with common-place feeling, it would be altogether nugatory. That the right state of mind and heart has been sought, with trembling and tears, he can truly assert. Would that he could assuredly say he had found it !

If any shall propose to give the book a serious perusal, he would request special attention for the second Lecture, and on a twofold account. First, that it is likely to be overlooked, as compared with others ; and, secondly, that if it is disregarded, no real benefit is likely to arise from the other portions of the work. It is true, that its prevailing sentiments may be regarded as known and familiar ; but the fact is, that by this very familiarity many of the vital truths of religion may pass through our mind, as the sterling currency of the realm does through our hand, without our marking the image and superscription. We require to dwell on them long, and to recur to them often and earnestly. Of the many things wanting, at this time, to the forcible expression of Christian life, no one thing is required so much as THAT WE SHOULD BE CONVERTED TO OUR OWN OPINIONS.

It will be seen that a considerable portion of this book is *suggestive*. He hopes that it will not, on that account, be condemned as visionary and impracticable. He thinks he may safely say, that all the suggestions are the fruit of actual *experiment*, or of careful *observation* and comparison. Of those which, from their nature, admit of being tried in a long course of ministerial life, he can certainly say, *They have been proved*.

Of course it is not to be thought, that suggestions, however good in themselves, and in particular cases, must be alike applicable in all circumstances. On this account, such suggestions

as are most practical in their aspect are chiefly resolved into great principles. Detail must always be regulated by discretion, while principle is invariable and eternal.

He also trusts, that because suggestive, no one will therefore conclude the work to be *accusatory*. He rejoices in all the good that has been done, and in the men who have done it. Yet must we be careful to admit, that if still we are to go forward, it must be by improvement. He has therefore claimed to exercise freedom of remark; but he has labored to speak the truth in love. Where objection is necessarily taken, it is not so distinctive as to find an application to any one person, or society of persons, exclusively; and it is not taken at all, except where it may contribute to more improved spiritual action in ourselves, and in our institutions.

Although these Lectures preceded the most important and interesting period in the pastoral labors of the Author, and may have been useful in preparing for it, they are not to be confounded with those exercises which were directly employed, to secure a revived state of religion. They were, on the whole, different in their subject, their bearing, and their character. A hope is still cherished, that a favorable opportunity may arise to supply at least a specimen of such Addresses and Sermons, as were found most efficacious in working directly to the proposed end.

If what is now committed to the press shall, in any measure, contribute to clear and fix attention on the one final object, the *advancement of vital religion amongst men*, it will not have been in vain. The church still wants that singleness of eye and of purpose, which shall give firmness and force to character. She must pass from the *secondary*, and seize on the *primary*—from the little to apprehend the great. Every one venturing to name the name of Christ, must ask for union; give himself to devoted labor; and consecrate his service by breathing prayer to his Saviour.

All things now demand this of the church. It is time that she laid aside her puerilities, and put forth the manliness of Christian life. It is time that she felt the force of that love from the skies, which unites her to every Christian, and which separates her from all besides. It is time that she distinctly heard, and instantly obeyed the voice of Providence—the will of her Lord. It is time that the wailings of a lost world should pierce her heart, and constrain her to forget her differences, spring from her slothfulness, and devote herself for its salvation. It is time—surely it is time—that the one church became one in action and in love; and that the ONE CRY of the united church should go up to heaven, *THY KINGDOM COME!*

HACKNEY, *January 2nd*, 1843.

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LECTURE I.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
DESIRABLE.

LECTURE I.

ITS ADVANCEMENT DESIRABLE.

“Thy kingdom come.”

THIS, my brethren, is a familiar and comprehensive prayer. It comes directly from the hallowed lips of our Saviour, and it is like himself. It is to remain with the church, and to be breathed forth in strong and expanding desire, till desire shall be absorbed in its accomplishment.

The prayer which we are thus taught to make our own, fixes our attention on religion ; on the advancement of religion in the world ; and especially on its advancement as inexpressibly desirable. This, therefore, will indicate the course of the present exercise. If it may be truly said, that the subject is important at any time, and in any state of the church, it may be affirmed, without exaggeration, that it derives to itself unusual importance from the times in which we live, and the circumstances by which we are surrounded. Let us mingle with our meditations prayer, and with our prayers meditation, that we may lose nothing of the grandeur of the theme in its familiarity ; that our minds may be filled with the subject—yea, filled with all the fulness of God !

Religion, of which we have to treat, is susceptible, as a term, of different senses ; and these are mostly determined by the connection in which it is found. Sometimes it is used to designate a system of truth ; and then it has God for its author, and the gospel for its substance. At other times, it is employed to denote the exercise of devout affec-

tions ; and then it is a principle of grace in the heart, ascending in worship to God. Again, it is often used to mark relative conduct ; and then it particularly refers us to Christian morals. While capable of being [limited] to these partial senses, it properly comprehends them all. In its unrestricted and general sense, therefore, it may be defined, as the just and efficacious operation of Divine truth on the mind and conduct of men.

Religion, then, as we have to regard it, is not various, but one. It is not a form, or a ritual, or a creed, or a catechism ; but the life of truth and of God in the soul of man. It divides nothing with false religions ; and it knows nothing of the divisions which men have sought to fasten on the true. It knows nothing of Arminius, or of Calvin, or of Luther. It is not of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Peter. It is not from Jerusalem, or Rome, or Oxford. It is from heaven ; it is one. In the Bible it is one ; in Christ it is one ; in the Christian it is one, undivided and indivisible. Its simplicity is its sublimity ; and both are the clear and indubitable evidence of its divinity.

It may be equally necessary, before we pass to the principal subject of discourse, to have a common understanding of what is comprehended in the *advancement* of religion. We propose to use the term to indicate the following particulars :—

1. The revival of true religion in the spirits of the sanctified ; so that where there is spiritual life, it shall exist in greater vigor.

2. The extension of the means of religion to places and persons which do not enjoy them ; and,

3. The successful use of these means in the conversion of the ungodly, and in the edification of such as have believed the testimony of the gospel.

It may be also needful to remark on the *degree* and *rate* of the advancement which we are contemplating. We do not understand by it, such a progress as allows of one and another, month after month, to subscribe with his hand to the Lord by public profession ; nor such progress as will supply the wastes of death and defection ; nor even such progress as will leave a clear balance in favor of the church. We refer to a movement more decided, more rapid, more triumphant, in which not one but many shall profess Christ, and at shorter intervals ; in which not many, but thousands and myriads, shall be gathered to the arms of the rejoicing church. We refer to an advancement in which continually growing congregations shall be continually absorbed by the church ; and in which the progress of the one church shall be so evident, that the unobservant world shall be made to see it, and tremble, and adore !

Such an advancement of true religion is demanded by the exigency of the times in which we live ; it is to be expected from the dispensation which we enjoy ; and it is assured to us by the bright page of prophecy, made glorious by its very announcement !

Having offered these introductory explanations on the terms, it remains that we should commend the advancement of religion to you as *desirable*. But why, it may be said, enlarge on so very obvious a proposition ? Is it not admitted ? Do we not pray for it ? Do we not labor for it ? Is not the church looking for it with eager and daily expectation ?

It is cheerfully allowed that much of hope and of effort has been directed to this end. Still, in our judgment, we are not prepared for the event to which we are looking. Success, abstractedly considered, is without doubt desirable to us. But if the advancement of religion is to begin

with ourselves in penitence, humiliation, sacrifice, and self-denial, then we are not prepared for it. If it shall require of us the abandonment of cherished prejudices, and the sacrifice of distinguishing peculiarities of our party, then we are not prepared for it. If it shall have for its forerunners agitation and conflict, darkness and tempest, the overthrow of things as they are, to make way for better and grander formations, then we are not prepared for it.

On the contrary, if this day of the Lord should come with less of present evil, and with more of present and sensible blessedness than we are authorized to expect, who is prepared for it? If suddenly the power of truth should establish itself in the consciences of myriads; if the majority, after being so long found with the adversary, should pass over to the profession of the Saviour; if the church were at once to rise to a station of eminence and honor, and become the admiration and wonder of men, who of all her sons is prepared for it? Where is the minister that would not suffer by elation and vanity? Where the church that would not abuse such extraordinary prosperity by extravagant assumption and selfish complacency?

That the advancement of religion does not sufficiently possess our desires, or that our desires are not wisely regulated by it, has been made painfully evident by recent experience. The church more than once has been partially awakened to the subject; solemn meetings have been convened; our sanctuaries have been thronged; and there has been much of appropriate prayer and expostulation. What is the fruit? Have they, as a whole, satisfied any that they were begun and sustained in a right spirit? Is it too much to say, that they were the fruit of impulse rather than of principle? Had the desire displayed been genuine, instead of being exhausted by temporary expression, would it not

have become more pure and more intense? Instead of taking up such exercise, from an aspiration to do some "great thing," should we not have sought to become as nothing in the Divine presence? Must there not have been such bitter sorrow for past deficiency, and such fixed resolve for future conduct, as could not be forgotten, and as must have given a new character to the temper and activities of the church? Had the effect in any adequate sense been good, could the church be now as we really find her; flattering herself on her sound and improved condition; cherishing unbelief in all special effort, from the recollection of her own palpable failure; and generally diverted to secondary interests from those which are primary and paramount in the kingdom of God?

There is reason, then, my brethren, ample reason for directing your mind to the desirableness of this object; and even if our desires were far more intelligent and intense than they are, there would be sufficient reason for seeking their increase where, though they were infinite, they could not be in excess. Let us, therefore, hope for your deep and prayerful consideration of the following particulars:—

I.

In the first instance, then, let me ask you to look on *the present state of the world*.

By the world we understand, without exception, its rational inhabitants. Religion is to operate on man; and we cannot be suitably affected with its desirableness without a careful attention to the state of mankind.

Take the better and nearer view of the subject first. Look on the church. To assist your conceptions, limit your

attention to that portion of it with which you are connected, and of which, therefore, you have the better acquaintance. You see instantly much to inspire you with admiration and gratitude. But does it satisfy you? Where you discover, certainly, the presence of religion, does it display itself in power and glory? Is belief the full assurance of faith? Is expectation the full assurance of hope? Is knowledge the full assurance of understanding? Is Christian life so vigorous, Christian character so articulate, and Christian devotedness so complete, as to leave you nothing to desire? Do the Christians you esteem, and with whom you communicate, in comparison with primitive examples, suffer nothing? Is there any thing in the church so holy, so great, so elevated as to clothe it in your mind with apostolic character?

Then, of that very assembly, with whom you are accustomed to offer your acts of public worship, how many create fear rather than hope! How many pause in their career; how many draw back from their solemn vows unto perdition; how many dishonor a holy profession by an unholy and worldly conversation; how many remain dead in trespasses and sins, insensible alike to the mercy which woos them from heaven, the deep condemnation which awaits them in hell! Oh, what sources have we of holy and ineffable grief within the very sanctuary where it is our privilege to worship!

Now, rising from this limited sphere of vision, let your eye comprehend the whole Protestant church. What do you see? Are there any signs of unity, strength and spiritual life? Are not the prevailing features those of deplorable weakness and carnality? Torn by schism; wasted by heresy; relying on rituals, to the neglect of living piety; and courting alliance and support from the world she was

born to subdue ; she has a name to live, but is dead ! Instead of being, in the hand of the Most High, a prepared instrument for the regeneration of the world, she is to this hour a fearful and a sinful impediment.

Now look abroad on the world, and what remains ? The several forms of corrupt and false religion. What is Popery but baptized Paganism ? What is Mohamedism but an arrant imposture, addressed to the vices of our fallen nature ? What is Paganism but the religion of Demons, and not of God ? a religion which has for the very objects of its worship personifications of all the vices which torment and destroy mankind.

Mark, then, my brethren, the present state of the world. Those who bear the Christian name under any form may be computed at two hundred millions. Of these, about eighty millions may be considered Protestant ; and of the whole Protestant community, it would be making a liberal allowance to say that there are twenty millions living truly under the influence of the religion they profess. But twenty millions is so small an amount, as compared with the world's population, that it scarcely affects the aggregate sum ; and it may still be said, that there are eight hundred millions of beings on our earth who are neglecting the great end of life, and the great and adorable Being who is the single fountain of life and blessedness.

Thus, then, we have, and in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, a world without God, without Christ, and without hope. A world wholly given over to idolatry—dishonoring and disowning the God that made them. A world lying in wickedness, and perishing in sin. A world enveloped in the shadow of death, and sinking down into the realities of second death and endless despair.

And all this is happening on this earth we inhabit ; and

in the family of man, of which we are part ; in our streets, and at our very doors, it is happening. And it is happening always—happening now ! While we are meditating on their course, many have reached its close, and are precipitated from a life of sin to a state of punishment, and shriek to find themselves lost for ever !

My brethren, are we men, and shall the state of our fellow men be foreign to us ? Have we no pity for their sorrows—no arm for their redemption ? Feeling at once the vanity of all human aid, have we no desires for the accession of that kingdom which has the promise of the life that is, and of that which is to come ?

II.

In the second place observe, *that the religion of Christ is admirably adapted to the condition of the world.*

That our apprehension may be the more distinct, let us limit ourselves to a single aspect of the subject. Religion, as a principle, is love, essential love.

It is love from God to man. The love of God not only appears, it reigns and triumphs, in the religion of Christ. In the exercise of this love to men, there were difficulties to be overcome which were insuperable to all but Omnipotence ; but love is stronger than death, and many waters could not quench or enfeeble it. It has converted every obstacle into an advantage to itself ; and it is revealed in all its splendor and power by the gospel. God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son. God was in Christ reconciling a rebellious and recovering a lost world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. Herein was love—divine and infinite.

Religion is love from man to God. His first love to man generates responding love to him. Love casts out fear and enmity. The sinner appreciates the method by which God is reconciled to him, and is himself reconciled to God. The fountain of the affections is purified, and the soul rests on God in the confidence of love. Love brings complacency ; complacency brings fellowship ; fellowship brings assurance. Man, restored from sense and sin, rises above himself, above the creature, above earth and heaven, and says, " Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none on earth that I desire in comparison with Thee."

Religion is love from man to man. At peace with himself, at peace with God, he is, by consequence, at peace with his fellow-man. His great fault, as a sinner, is selfishness ; he finds in himself the centre and reason of action. Restored from this vile idolatry to the love of God, religion, by adjusting his affections to their supreme source, regulates them in all their social exercises. He is commanded, and he is disposed, to love his brother as himself. The love of God is the true and perennial spring of all true philanthropy.

Now is not this the very remedy which is needed for the manifold ills beneath which the world is groaning ? Various and heavy as they are, is there any evil which this divine charity would not subdue ? Is there any good, which we can conceive as desirable, which it would not secure ? What lessons of humility, gentleness, kindness, and beneficence would not this charity teach ? By destroying selfishness, would it not destroy crime, and misery the effect of crime ? Would it not be the fulfilment of all righteousness and of all blessedness ? Can you conceive of this charity being perfectly exemplified, without instantly conceiving of Paradise restored, and this world of guilt

and tears converted into a heaven of purity, bliss, and joy!

My brethren, this remedy is with you. You are partially the witnesses of its efficacy. It is as necessary for each, for all of mankind, as for you. Shall it not be your one fervent desire that it may be applied to you, to them, in all its virtue, and developed in all its blessedness?

III.

In the third place, I would invite you to remark, that not only is the religion of Christ adapted to the state of the world, but that *it alone, and exclusively, is adapted to their condition.*

This is certainly an important declaration. Providence seems to have designed that its truth should be determined by time and experience. At a much earlier period, therefore, such an assertion might have been premature. It cannot be so now. The experiment has been fully made; the results have been ascertained and recorded.

For nearly six thousand years, in the neglect of the true religion, men have indulged their own inventions to see if they could find out God and his worship. The result has been that they have lost the knowledge which tradition brought them, and have sunk into whatever is most false in faith and corrupt in devotion. All that national policy, and authority, and endowment could do to uphold the acceptable falsehood has been done; but it has carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction. System after system, great and flourishing in its time, has lived only to die. Where now are the gods of Egypt, of Assyria, of Persia, of Greece, of Rome? They have perished like men.

Of the systems which remain amongst living things, the doom is equally certain. The longer they continue, the severer is the test to which they are submitted. Even now they are not what they were. They have shrunk away from their former dimensions ; they are shorn of their pristine glory ; their devotees have lost their enthusiasm ; and on the forehead of every mosque and temple there is written by an invisible hand the fearful words which first revealed the doom of Babylon, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting ;" wanting, as tested by the lights of eternal truth—wanting, as tested by the necessities of fallen man—wanting, as tried on the assumption of a divine and heavenly origin !

Of the inventions of men, then, nothing is *left* to us. And what is to *come* ? Nothing. It is too late now to invent a new religion. The very term would suggest ridicule to the mind, which would be fatal to its pretensions. There is no opportunity now for a subtle invention to fold the date of its birth in mystery, to insinuate itself gradually into the reverence and prejudices of a people, and to hide its deformities in the meretricious garments of superstition. It would be forced into the light, and in the light it would expire.

True it is that, in our own times, men, still unwilling to accept a religion which proposes to make them happy only by making them holy, have sought to satisfy the cravings of the mind by various fabrications ; but their very attempts confirm the truth we assert. Within our time, a nation great, civilized, and refined, wearied of religion in its corrupt forms, sought to supersede the claims of superstition by those of philosophy. And with what success ? Already it is spoken of as a thing that was, and is not ; but the events it evolved are written in blood and

tears, and with the hands of fiends, on the page of history, never to be effaced.

More recently, both here and there, by inferior persons and on an inferior scale, schemes have been devised and are devising, which are to bring to society a true worship and true felicity. And much has been said of the dignity and perfectibility of human nature ; and much of existing institutions as the fatal barrier to our progress. And marriage has been denounced as a prejudice ; property as a usurpation ; and the Bible as an obsolete book ; and men are promised to be introduced to a “ new moral world,” in which they are to find their character in circumstances, their honor in the worship of the God of nature, and their harmony in having all things common amongst themselves. A new moral world ! and on such premises ! and with the vaunt of man’s perfectibility ! Vain and visionary fancies ! Abortions of a sickly imagination and a corrupt heart ! Too feeble to do harm or to preserve life. While we speak of them they expire. Though they flatter human passions, they cannot sustain human hope. Like the insignificant wave on the great waters, they appear and dazzle for an instant, and then disappear for ever, leaving all beneath as cold and as dark as it was before !

Yes, my brethren, it is *too late* now to invent a new religion. Men are left without an option. They are shut up to the gospel of Christ. If it fail, there is nothing left—the world of mankind must live without hope and lie down in despair.

But religion—the religion of Christ—will not fail. It has been tested more than all ; and it has survived every trial to which it could be submitted. It has passed through the waters, and they have not overflowed it, and through the fires, and they have not kindled on it. It has shown itself

to be divine, ethereal, from heaven. It is the hope of the world and the life of men. It is prepared to satisfy the understanding as the supreme truth, the will as the supreme good, the affections as the supreme beauty, and the conscience as the supreme authority. And when men, wearied of their own devices and oppressed with guilt and fear, shall make it their own, they shall call it blessed.

My brethren, you are in possession of this remedy for the vices and miseries of mankind ; it is not only a remedy, it is the *only* remedy ; men are sickening under the bitter disappointment of their own vanities, and dying out of life without help or hope ; should it not be your first desire to convey to them those words of life and immortality which are all your salvation and all your desire !

IV.

The *means now employed* to advance religion in the world should make it an object of increased desire.

This is called, perhaps with too much self-complacency, a day of exertion. It is not so, as compared with what it should be ; but it certainly is so, as compared with time past. This is equally true, whether we look at home or abroad.

At home, the means for the extension of true religion are in excess of all former periods. The whole evangelic church is awaking from her slumbers, and clothing herself with strength. The ministry is increasing in numbers, in intelligence, in piety, and in power ; and is called to a measure of service such as the previous generations did not know. No mean number of private Christians are making their worldly vocation subordinate to their religious profession, and are consecrating themselves and

their property chiefly to the advancement of the gospel. Our particular congregations are becoming centres of light and activity to their respective neighborhoods ; where they are, there are the library, the Bible-class, the Sabbath-school, the daily school, the Christian Instruction Society, the Benevolent Society, and those combinations of Christian charity which are meant to reach the ends of the earth. The Bible, the tract, the evangelist, and the schoolmaster are abroad in the land ; and the resources of literature, of opulence, of station, and of voluntary association, are put in requisition for the coming kingdom of God.

What is said of the church at home may be asserted, with equal emphasis, of the church in America ; and even the Protestant church of continental Europe, after the torpor of ages, is raising her eyelids on the scene, and stretching her limbs, as if about to shake herself from the dust, and to claim her assigned station in the battle of the Lord against the mighty.

But the most remarkable feature of the times is the instrumentality provided by the church for the conversion of the world. Large as the field of foreign service is, the means are assuming a character of adequacy to the proposed end. The simple facts will illustrate this most impressively.

The general organization for the advancement of religion in foreign parts is found in our Bible, Tract, and Missionary Societies. The Holy Scriptures have been, in whole or in part, translated into all the primary languages of the world, and into very many of the dialects. Tracts and religious treatises have been translated into more than one hundred languages, and distributed by millions. There are forty printing-offices, and not less than three hundred presses at work in this service. There are not less than

six hundred stations spread over the face of the earth, with their chapels, schools, residences, and machinery. There are upwards of one thousand ordained missionaries, and about one thousand of teachers, assistants, and printers; and there are several hundred native preachers as the fruit of past labor. To complete this statement, it should be understood that not less than a million annually is now raised for this great object!

My brethren, such a movement as this has not been known in the church since the glorification of the risen Saviour. It is the great proof of the vitality and vigor of Protestant and evangelical truth. It has been sustained now for nearly half a century with growing power, and is accumulating its force from year to year and from day to day. It has effectually called up the attention of the world; and men are marking its onward course with fear or hope, as they affect or oppose the interests of true religion. You are not merely spectators of the event, but participants. Is not its successful issue an object of infinite moment to you? All this swelling expectation in the heart of the church, shall it be crushed by bitter disappointment? All this devoted labor at home and abroad to convey to a perishing world the bread of life and the water of life, shall it become, through failure, a mockery and a by-word amongst all people? The minister,—shall he labor and toil in vain? The missionary,—shall he exhaust himself, and then lie down in the wilderness and die in vain? The noblest efforts ever put forth by Christian charity for the world's redemption, shall they be in vain? The noblest hope that ever animated the breast of men, shall it expire as a spark which the fire kindleth? Oh, what life has already been sacrificed—what treasure has already been expended—what prayer has already been made—what examples of sanctified heroism

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have already been presented, in this service of our faith ! And is it nothing to us ? With what accumulated desire should we thirst and pray that the kingdom of heaven may come !

V.

Apart from the means employed by the church, let me direct your attention to *the facilities supplied by Providence at this period* for the advancement of religion.

The circumstance first demanding notice, from its great importance, is the advancing state of *religious and civil liberty*. Liberty is the child of religion. Its principles were first asserted by Christ and his disciples, and sanctified by their blood. They were, however, resisted and held in bondage for ages, by the lust of power natural to men. At the Reformation they burst from long confinement, and appeared before an astonished world in all their majesty. Still proscribed and persecuted, they fled to the wilderness for refuge ; and the wilderness was glad for them, and became as a field which the Lord had blessed. They are now better understood and appreciated. The confusion and mixture in government of religious with civil claims is becoming the practical difficulty of all nations. The advocates of despotic principle in ecclesiastical and civil polity are becoming weaker, and tremble for their fate ; and the friends of true liberty are increasing in number, in confidence, and in power. A broad and visible line of demarcation is being drawn between the prerogatives which belong to God and conscience, and those which belong to Cæsar ; and speedily men will not suffer any earthly power to dictate to them any article of faith or any mode of worship.

The effect of this is, that we have an unexampled measure of liberty, both of speech and of action. Every thing is forced into discussion, and discussion is the arena in which error dies and truth is renovated. The power of public opinion is about to supersede all other power ; and it shall declare itself in favor of liberty and conscience, and shall sweep from the earth the last obstructions which have prevented the free utterance of the gospel to all nations.

The advanced state of *education* is another facility for the advent of the kingdom of God. It is light ; and education is light ; and light is power. The common mind is being enlightened, and popular ignorance is fast disappearing. Nothing engages more of public attention. All the nations of Europe are looking to it. America has an educated people. Even barbarous governments are asking for letters and the schoolmaster. Especially it should be understood, that education prevails extensively over China ; its inhabitants are a reading people ; and they comprise nearly the half of mankind. The result is, that not the few, but, for the first time in the annals of the world, the million are readers. The methods of teaching have received a popular, economical, and expansive character. The infant and the adult are alike taught ; the school and the college are appearing in the East and the West ; in the village and the wilderness ; from Iceland to Japan—from the river to the ends of the earth !

Hitherto the great obstruction to the utterance of the gospel has been found in the deep and deplorable ignorance of the people. The missionary especially has been called to sink his character in that of the schoolmaster ; and life has been worn away in reducing language to grammar and writing, and initiating men to the first elements of knowledge. But now that language is fixed, that the

sacred Scriptures are translated, that the rising generation read, and that the whole world thirsts for knowledge, may it not be said that his night of toil is past, and that the dawning of a glorious harvest-day is come?

Again, *peace* is not only an eminent blessing in itself, it is also a facility in the spread of true religion. For a quarter of a century, when the church was awaking to a sense of her duty to the world, her efforts were checked at home by the absorbing interest of war; and they were interrupted or prevented abroad by the hatred and conflict of contending nations. But for nearly as long a period peace has dwelt on earth. Men have had leisure to consider their own interests and pursue their own improvement: the various nations have dwelt together as a common brotherhood; points of difference have been settled by friendly arbitration; and nothing has prevented one portion of the human family communicating with every other portion. Is not this a great facility? Must we not think that it is granted by a gracious Providence for a special purpose? The temple of Janus was shut, that expectation might be free, and the way prepared for the advent of the Prince of Peace in flesh; and now that it is again shut, may it not be to prepare the world for his second coming in spiritual glory? The whirlwind of passion is past and gone, and God was not there; the storm and thunder of war have raged through every land, and spent themselves in desolation, and God was not there; and now there is heard a small still voice, like the rustling breeze of the coming day, whispering peace to the perturbations of earth—Oh, is it not the voice of God?

Finally, *commerce* must be named as a facility for the accomplishment of our object. Commerce, as it is the acknowledged means of civilization, so it is the great means

of evangelization. It never was so extensive or so rapid as it is now. The surprising improvements in the method of communication have virtually reduced the distance between one place and another by one half. Commerce, too, with all its improved facilities, is chiefly committed to the two nations most devoted to the propagation of religious truth and religious freedom over the world—England and America. Their sails whiten every sea and float on every breeze; their people are at home on all waters and in all countries; and all nations look up to them, and wonder at their superiority. Can this be by chance? Does it not supply remarkable facilities for the exhibition of the gospel? And when the nations learn that all their superiority springs from their religion, will they not refer their own inferiority to the want of it? And will not this be an inducement to abandon their vanities for the true religion and the true God?

My brethren, we speak of facilities—are they not all with us? The world is open before us. Art and science, liberty and knowledge, peace and commerce, occasion and Providence, are all with us, and cheer us on our way. Seeing we are encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses and helpers, shall we pause in our course or relax our desires? Was there ever such a period for action, or such encouragement supplied to the activity and sacrifices demanded? A statesman of our own time, at a great crisis of the world's affairs, exclaimed, "I would give a whole life to be prime minister for one fortnight!" Ours is a crisis as real and more important. Oh, what would Wycliffe and Luther, Whitefield and Wesley have given to have lived in such a time, and labored with such advantages! And shall we be unworthy of them? Remember, that it is the order of Providence to supply the church with seasons of grace and

usefulness, and to withdraw them in anger if they are neglected. Italy, the seat of papal power, was open to us for twenty years; no school was erected, no missionary was sent, no Bible was distributed, and the door was shut, and in judgment is still shut. None can doubt that peace and power, science and freedom, are given to us as means of conveying religion to the world's extremities; and none must doubt, that they will be speedily withdrawn if we are unfaithful to our sacred trust.

The premises before us lead to a still higher conclusion. It is not only desirable that religion should advance; it is essential that it move at an *accelerated pace*. Every interest of mankind is thus progressing. To stand still, yea, to move at our accustomed rate, is to be left behind. Already, notwithstanding the means now employed, this is the predicament of religion. She has allowed herself to be outrun by inferior, and even by contrary interests. Infidelity has entered where she has not; and vice has found retreats where religion has not dared to follow. Art has penetrated where religion is not; science has distributed her gifts where religion is not; and commerce has conveyed the merchant where the missionary is not. Our name is known where the name of Christ is unknown; we are known as Britons where we are not known as Christians; and many a distant strand has been stained by our crimes, that has never responded to our prayers! Yea, British power is felt, and the British sceptre wielded, where the kingdom of heaven and of God has not been proclaimed!

My brethren, religion has not only time to improve, but time to redeem. Of all things that move, religion has been the slowest; and if she is to do any thing for the world's salvation, her course must be accelerated tenfold. The angel of the Apocalypse is now planting his foot on the sea and

the dry land, as commanding both, and swearing that delay shall be no longer ; and shall not the church adopt and confirm the sacred oath ? The wide world is beseeching her help ; and shall she not at last—at last—make haste to grant it ? Oh, how long shall every concern of this world find more of energy, and property, and zeal devoted to it than religion ! Talk of martyrs for religion ! my brethren, the poorest interest of this poor perishable life has more martyrs to record than religion could ever canonize !

VI.

Finally, let us glance at *the results* of the advancement of religion amongst men, as rendering it desirable. This is itself a large subject ; and the utmost we here propose is to supply food to your own meditations.

Look, then, at the benefit which might come to *yourself*. The first great movement of religion might include your salvation from a state of sin, or your elevation to a state of grace which you have not known. Such, perhaps, is your pride, prejudice, and worldliness, that you have hitherto resisted all means for your conversion to God ; but this greater efflux of his power should bear down all resistance, and make you submissive, penitent, and grateful as a little child. Or, perhaps, being converted, you are low and feeble in the divine life ; this movement should raise you to a state unspeakably less worldly and more happy. Do you not often conceive of a state of light, and holiness, and peace above you ? Do you not often feel as though you were on its very margin, and that another decisive step would place you there ? Do you not often desire and pant to enter, and cannot ? A decided advance in religion would raise you to that serene,

holy, and happy state for which your nobler nature is yearning !

The influence which blessed you might also comprehend your *dearest connexions*. Your father, your mother, your husband, your wife, your sister, your brother, your daughter, your son—what names are these!—might be visited by the heavenly mercy. That particular individual in your connexions, so near to your heart, so bitter to your memory ; for whom you have offered so many prayers, shed so many tears ; and whose state makes your happy lot so unhappy ; might be subdued to God, and become the crown of your joy ; and might live to learn, in the bosom of a holy family, how congenial are the pleasures of domestic life even with Paradise itself.

Then, how happy would be the effect on the *church universal* ! You now mourn and perhaps weep over the evils of its present state ; its formality, its divisions, its carnality. Sometimes you seek relief from the painful reality, by reverting to what the church should be, or by anticipating what the church shall become, in the brightest period of her history. Then, with what a different aspect she appears before you ! Her worldly alliances broken off ; her meretricious ornaments cast away ; the truth, in its integrity and simplicity, enthroned in her affections ; and herself relying, not on stately temples and a pompous ceremonial, but on the felt presence of Deity, and the fellowship of the Spirit with him, for the power and glory of her worship. What profound abasement, what intense prayer, what rejoicing hope, what seraphic adoration would be there ! What unity of faith, what bliss of charity, what preparedness for action would be there ! All the members of the one church realizing their oneness with each other, by their living connexion with their glorious Head ! The church

would stand before your imagination like the vision of Ezekiel, in all its stupendous majesty; as manifold, yet one; perfect in order, irresistible in power, complete in intelligence; full of eyes, full of life, and full of God.

Then, what would be the effect of the prevalence of religion over *the world*--over this fallen, guilty, and miserable world? We have seen that religion is its only hope; but religion is its *sufficient* hope. It can educe light from darkness, order from confusion, and life from death. It can restore man to himself, man to his brother, man to his Creator. Think, my brethren, of a world where virtue dies and vice is triumphant; of a world where God is disowned, and the creature is idolized; of a world enveloped in the shadow of death, over which angels weep, and God frowns terribly, restored to its rightful allegiance and lost happiness. Think of man, so lawless and rebellious now, so renewed in holiness and rectitude as to become a *law to himself*. Think of the spirit of love and of piety so prevalent in all his engagements, as to make all his duties religious, all his days sabbatic, all his refreshments sacramental, and the very state of his mind a perennial thanksgiving to God. Think of religion becoming so fully predominant amongst men, as to obliterate the line of distinction between the world and the church; and to make the world itself one living and universal temple for the Divine residence and praise! Think of this spiritual renovation as so deep, so holy; and the blessedness springing from it so strong, so overflowing, as to express itself on the very face of earth and heaven; to make itself visible and audible in the repose, the melody, and the benignity of nature; and to become to the posterity of Adam another and a better Paradise, from which they should never fall, in which

no serpent should be seen, and where the voice of God should be heard amongst the trees of the garden !

But the results at which we are glancing relate not so much to earth and time, as to *heaven and eternity*. Man is regarded as an immortal being ; and worlds unseen have a strange interest in his destiny. This interest terminates not in man ; it springs from the relation which his conduct has to his Creator. Here, we poor selfish creatures think chiefly of ourselves ; but other worlds, the evil and the good, look higher. The hate of the one is only satisfied with opposition to God ; and the love of the other is only content with the advancement of his glory. Our world, ruined or restored, is a mighty thing ; but it is little to them compared with the honor or dishonor done to God. The universe is thus pledged to the strife. All beings are parties ; none are merely spectators ; and the issue is to determine the fate of man, the condition of angels, and the stability and honor of the Divine government !

Religion is to dispose of this conflict ; and so to dispose of it as to bring the highest glory to God. God takes occasion from the misery of man, and the malice of his enemies, to come out of his place, and reveal himself to his creatures as he was never seen. The capital difficulty of pardoning the criminal, and yet taking vengeance on the crime, is met by an expedient passing all wonder and all praise. The Son of God dwells in flesh ! and in true humanity offers an illustrious sacrifice for human redemption. It is enough—it is enough ! The prey is taken from the mighty. The sinner is absolved. The world is reconciled. Law is more honored by the atonement of Christ than it could have been by the obedience of man. God, in all his perfections, pity and power, purity and goodness, mercy and

majesty, grace and truth, is revealed in the effulgence of glory. The adversary of man sinks away from the insufferable splendor into deeper darkness; and the sons of light, cherubim and seraphim, renew in heaven their admiration, confidence, and praise !

My brethren, what shall we say to these things ? Do misery and mortality abound in our world through sin ? Does religion supply an adequate remedy for all the evils by which it suffers ? Does it present the only hope of life and peace to man ? Are the means put forth by the church for the advancement of religion more considerable than in any former time ? Is the Divine Providence encouraging the efforts made by propitious circumstances and remarkable facilities ? Are the great results rather for eternity than for time ; and do they involve the noblest interests of man, the highest glory of God ? Is this the crisis of the world ? And does the whole creation groan under the burden of death and sin for the promised redemption ?

What, then, have we been doing ? How is it that the great end of life, the advancement of the Saviour's kingdom amongst men, has had so little of our attention ? Is it life to live for any lower object ? Is it life to live to gratify our senses and appetites ? Is it life to live to indulge a few tastes, which may flatter us into a belief of our superior refinement ? Is it life to live to secure a name to ourselves, and to add house to house, field to field, and equipage to equipage ? Is it not life to live to God ? And have not God and his interests been sadly excluded from our life ?

Surely the present subject should teach us to regard the advancement of religion not only as desirable, but *indispensable*. It is for our world the one thing needful ! Think

not that we depreciate other things. They may be good in themselves ; they are as nothing when compared with religion. Bestow what you will on the world, it is not available for its necessities without religion. Enlighten it by science ; refine it by art ; civilize it by liberty and education ; it is still a *lost world* without religion. But give religion to it, and, in that very act, you save it, enlighten it, civilize it, and felicitate it to the utmost, and for ever !

Resolve, my brethren, that henceforth this shall be to you the great end of life. Cultivate your tastes for the spirituality and blessedness of the kingdom of heaven. Know the bliss of angels, by identifying yourself with its interests and triumphs. Consecrate to it your whole being—your talent, your energy, your influence—your body, soul, and spirit. Now, that you are admonished of negligence and delay ; now, that the fulness of time is come ; now, that the work of redemption is done, and waits its application to a guilty world ; now, that the world, disappointed in every other hope, is looking towards heaven for some Just and Holy One to restore it to peace ; oh, make haste to bring back the Saviour and the King ; make haste to proclaim him as the rightful Sovereign and blessed Potentate to the ends of the earth ; make haste to establish his kingdom over all empire and all people !

It shall come ! and when it comes you shall see it, if in this spirit you are laboring for its arrival ! In this blessed confidence, let the inspired prayer become your one, breathing, persevering, infinite desire :—“ **THY KINGDOM COME !**”

LECTURE II.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
IN THE PERSON.

LECTURE II.

ITS ADVANCEMENT IN THE PERSON.

“Tarry ye—until ye be endued with power from on high.”

IN the previous Lecture we have spoken of religion, and of the advancement of religion, as inexpressibly desirable. May we not hope that, assisted by your own reflections, it has brought renewed conviction to your mind, and strengthened the most hallowed desires for the advent of the Saviour's kingdom amongst men?

If this effect is secured, you are conscious of a measure of self-reproach, and are cherishing a purpose of more entire devotedness. “But what,” you eagerly ask, “what can I do? As yet I have done little, very little, for this great cause. Much is required to be done. Time is short, and life is slipping away. I would fain do something. What can I best do?”

You look abroad on the instrumentality of the Church. It is various and manifold. You feel instantly, that to do good service you must concentrate what power you have, chiefly in some one method of usefulness. Public charity, social improvement, general education, domestic and foreign missions, the conservation of divine truth from error, and its circulation to the ends of the earth, all put in their claims for help. You will give them careful consideration; and you will endeavor to commit yourself to that department of service, for which your tastes and circumstances best qualify you.

This is natural, but nevertheless it is wrong ; and it is the prevailing error of the day. The calls of various objects are so clamorous, and our eagerness to obey one or several so great, that we are tempted to forget, that there is one object greater than they all, and necessary to them all ; and that is, *the advancement of religion in ourselves*. Religion must be promoted by religious men. The measure in which it is possessed, is the measure in which it is bestowed. We cannot hope to raise others to a higher level, except as we first occupy it ourselves. If religion in us is feeble and deformed, we shall fail to propagate it, or it will become that poor, spurious, amphibious thing, unworthy of the care of propagation.

What we first and chiefly need then, is, before we look to others, to look to *ourselves*. The reason why so many do almost nothing, why what they do is done so ill, why the attention is so readily diverted to secondary and sectarian considerations from the great things of our peace, is, that they require to possess religion for themselves in greater vitality, purity, and vigor. They may have received the Holy Spirit to their personal salvation ; but if they are to make that salvation known in power to others, they require to be more fully assured by its truth, enriched by its consolations, and elevated by its power to a higher region of Christian life. The primitive disciples, while their Lord was yet with them, had faith in his name ; but they were not prepared to declare that faith, with intelligence and power, for the salvation of the world. They were about to receive a great commission, and they were to tarry at Jerusalem, in penitence, prayerfulness, and expectation, till they should receive a larger dispensation of the Spirit of grace.

This subject, though different from the former, should not be less interesting. That was general, this is partic-

ular ; that was exhilarating, this is searching and humiliating. It is of infinite moment ; but it can only become so to us, as we are prepared to dwell on our deficiencies, and to thirst for a higher state of spiritual and personal religion.

Is it too much, then, to hope that in this exercise you will separate your thoughts from others, and fix them on *yourself*? That you will leave nothing to vague desires and unprofitable generalities? that you will resolve to familiarize your mind with your state of darkness, deficiency, and sin? that you will resolve to seek an advanced state of religion for yourself, as indispensable to its advancement amongst men? This is the character of our present subject, and this is the claim which it has on you. You need more of the light of truth, if you are to enlighten others; you need more of the "grace of life," if you are to impart life to others. You need a supplemental conversion, if you are to convert sinners to God; and you need a richer endowment of the Holy Ghost, if you are to express his unction and energy to the world. Let these be the living convictions of your mind. Nourish them in the immediate presence of God. Prostrate yourself before his Majesty in penitence and prayer; and wait in breathing expectation, until you shall be endued with the Spirit from on high.

We shall endeavor to fulfil the intention of this Lecture, by calling your attention to some *particulars essential to your advancement in personal religion*, and then to *such means* as may contribute to the proposed issue.

I.

1. In considering what is needful to an advanced state of personal religion, it will immediately occur to you, that

it includes an *increase of spiritual knowledge*. Knowledge is the food of the mind; and it can realize no state of improvement but by improved knowledge. Growth in grace and in knowledge are therefore united in scriptural exhortation, since we can only be affected by the unseen and eternal as we know them. The subject, though plain, is of such importance as perhaps to demand yet more distinct illustration.

This knowledge comprehends a *clearer perception* of divine things. It is in this first element of life that Christians are generally deficient. While anxiously inquiring for a state of salvation, they seek knowledge; but when that state is thought to be secured, they repose on their attainments. This is the great cause of feebleness to themselves and of unprofitableness to others. If you will treat the subject candidly, and entertain it with serious reflection, you will be surprised to find how obscure, indistinct, and feeble are your conceptions of the great objects of faith. Now, what is wanted is, that they should stand out before you in all their light and evidence,—that your eye should dwell on them,—that your mind should be filled with them and reflect them. They would then come to you with the power of a revelation. You would rather see than believe. You would *see* man bleeding and dying in his apostasy. You would *see* Christ crucified, set openly before your face. You would *see* God in the majesty of his perfections, and would be surrounded by his glory. “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,” you would say, “but *now* that mine eye *seeth* Thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes.”

It is in this sense chiefly, we apprehend, that the Holy Spirit is styled, “the spirit of revelation.” Not so much that He reveals new truths, as that He clothes existing and acknowledged truths with new light and power. It is

this also, which constitutes the main difference between one Christian and another. In every age, there have been some men who have surpassed others in eminence of piety and service; and these men, be assured, have excelled in their knowledge of God, and of the world to come. It is just this which has created a difference in the *same* person, at two different periods in his life. A pastor of admirable talent and fruitfulness has recorded the fact, that it was not until the middle of his ministerial life, the grand truth of the mediation of Christ broke on his mind with overwhelming light and glory; and it was from that period he dated his happiness as a Christian and his success as a minister of the New Testament.

This knowledge, then, you will perceive, comprehends a *deeper sense* of divine things. The objects of which we are discoursing are such, in their own nature, as to affect the heart and conscience. In the proportion, therefore, in which they are known, they must be felt. All Christians have some feeling, but they have not enough. They speak of a sense of the Divine presence, but they have it not. They are far more sensible of things visible and worldly than of such as are spiritual. The evils by which the body suffers, are felt far more than those which afflict the soul. The world is near, felt, appreciated; but God is not near; heaven is not near; eternity is not near. There is no abiding awe of God; no solemn joy in his presence; no elevating sense of his superincumbent grace and majesty. The first disciples are our example in this particular. "That," say they, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you." Mark the passage: no repetition of terms, no climax of speech is sufficient to express their inward con-

sciousness of the truth, or their earnest desire that others should embrace it. They make manifest to men, what is first *manifested* to them. Their words are all light and life; and they convey light and life to the earth's extremities.

Allied to these remarks is another, that the knowledge we are commending to you, includes *fellowship*. Fellowship is the intercourse of the spirit with God. As the truth which reveals Him is known, and as the heart is suitably affected by that knowledge, we are prepared for this high and blessed communion. It is not only reasonable, it is necessary, that it should be so. The soul, enlightened by truth, and dwelling under its influence, is restored to God, and seeks and finds its bliss in Him. As the eye communes with the light; as the ear feeds on sweet sounds; so does the renewed spirit rejoice in God its Maker. Advancing knowledge is advancing fellowship. The Apostles knew nothing of religion as a mere philosophical speculation. "That which we have seen," they say, "we declare—make *manifest*—unto you; that your fellowship may be with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Religion with them is light, and it is love; and if we walk in the light, God who is light, who is love, dwelleth in us and we in Him.

This communion is the fountain of all good to man. It prepares him for all happiness and all usefulness. At a distance from God, he is destitute of all good; brought near to God, he is the subject of a great restorative influence by which he is recovered to all excellence. The mind and heart of God are brought to act on his spirit; and he is drawn out of himself into blessed fellowship with God. He sees in His light; walks in His strength; reposes in His love; and is enveloped with His glory. He thinks not of himself; he is full of God. He lives—greatly

lives—yet not he—God liveth in him. Beholding His glory, he is changed into the very glory on which He gazes, by which he is surrounded, by “the Lord the Spirit.”

2. The advancement of personal religion comprehends an *increase of true holiness*. It will be immediately felt by you, that the very knowledge and fellowship to which we have referred is itself a state of holiness; and that as it grows, our purity and desire of purity must advance. It shall be sufficient for us to indicate the growth of this moral taste, by two or three particulars.

The first is a *sensibility to the presence of sin*. The laborious effort of the sinner is to palliate his offences, to pervert his judgment, and to hide himself from himself. But the Christian cometh into the light. He flatters not himself; he compares not himself with others. He brings himself, at once, to the inflexible rule of the Divine testimony that he may detect all his obliquities. Under such a test, applied to the human heart, he exclaims, “Who can understand its errors?” He is amazed at himself, at others. Sin cannot now deceive him as once it did, by various appearances and subtle plausibilities. No; sin is sin, though she come to him as an angel of light. Now, that sin is seen always, it is seen *every where*. In his heart and in his life; in what he does, in what he omits to do; in his prayers, in his confessions, in his tears. It is unsearchable, overwhelming. He has seen the glory of the Lord, and he is of unclean lips, and he dwells amongst a people of unclean lips!

Sin thus seen is seen only to be *abhorred*. By this expression, I do not merely refer to the frank confession of sin, and an ordinary resolution to oppose its ensnarements. I refer to that wakeful and holy sensibility to its presence

and character, which makes it most loathsome and intolerable. The Christian, in advancing fellowship with God, has the mind of God. To His holy mind and infinite wisdom, sin is only evil. It is the abominable thing ; He hates it with perfect hatred ; He cannot even look on it. This in measure is the spirit of the Christian. Sin to him, under every name and form, is hateful. God hates it infinitely ; and he must try to hate it infinitely. There is no distinction in his mind of venial and mortal sins. No—all sin is mortal ; and no sin is little. Every sin, though small it seems, is the plague-spot, and carries death with it. He shudders at it for the misery it brings ; but more for the pollution. Its presence distresses him ; his heart is broken, that he cannot come into the very presence of God without bringing what most He hates with him. He would part with life, to escape from sin !

This points to the settled temper of mind, in relation to this evil, which is *humiliation for sin*. He has holy indignation ; but his habitual feeling is not so much that of anger as of sorrow. The one might be nourished by pride ; the other is repentance unto life. He has sinned ; the weight of that thought overwhelms him. “ What have I done ? ” he says, “ I have sinned ; against Thee I have sinned ; against Thee, my Maker, my Benefactor, my Saviour, I have sinned. Against Thee, to me so good, so patient, so kind, I have sinned. Against Thee, who hast loved me through life and unto death, I have sinned. Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ? sin, which I abhor, is still with me and cleaves to me like a leprosy ! What shall I do ; whither shall I flee ? ” He sinks down before the feet of his Saviour in sorrow and in love. He is ashamed, confounded ; he will never open his mouth more to palliate his offences or vindicate or exalt himself.

These remarks lead to one other ; that such a state of mind involves a *positive taste for holiness*. An antipathy to sin is, in fact, a love of holiness. He dies to the one and lives to the other. He sees it, he admires it, he longs and labors to possess it. It is his life—his world—his heaven. Pardon he needs, but not so much as holiness. He desires to escape punishment, but more to find himself holy. Annihilate hell and heaven, he would still pant for holiness, and in having it, would have all things. This is the highest reason of his love. It is the bond of his attachment to saints, to angels, and to God himself. God is perfectly holy, and therefore he is the object of perfect complacency. His holiness gives depth to his devotions, repose to his trust, and elevation to his hopes. He charges himself and every creature with folly ; and wrapt in worship he exclaims with all the sanctified, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.”

Religion in our world is the only antagonist of sin ; and who is to assist her in this mighty conflict ? who but the man that is penetrated with the evil of sin ; that detects it every where, and hates it with perfect hatred ; and is one with the Almighty in seeking to banish it from the habitations of men ?

3. In the third place, to advance the kingdom of heaven amongst men, you need the *spirit of faith*. It is not meant that in the common acceptation of the term, you must truly believe ; but, that you need that measure of faith which the apostle would designate as “the full assurance of faith ;” you need that faith which realizes its objects ; which has confidence in them as unquestionably true ; and rejoices in them as inconceivably excellent.

Such a faith will operate thus : Religion asserts the

claims of the good, the eternal, the infinite, over the claims of every thing in this world, which she shows to be temporary, finite, and perishable. Now, if these two classes of objects were placed equally before us, and the mind were unbiassed by any corrupt tendencies, it would be natural and necessary, that it should prefer the first class to the second. But it is not so. The good, the infinite, the eternal are not seen, are not believed, are not allowed their due weight in the balance of reason. The world is present, is pressing on the sight, and soliciting the affections ; and too soon allures the willing mind to a fatal confidence.

It is the sole province of faith to reclaim us from this ruinous preference. Faith brings near the distant, makes visible the invisible, and clothes with present substance and reality the spiritual and eternal. Now, that they are presented to the mind on equal terms, seen together and in contrast, and judged impartially, all that the world has, and of which it boasts, is vanity and lighter than vanity, poised against the heavenly and everlasting.

Such is the character of faith ; and as it prevails it conveys to erring and feeble man, something of the might of its author. It emancipates us from the dominion of sense and of sin ; and places us in immediate fellowship with God. The mind of God is its mind ; the will of God its will ; the arm of God its strength. What is it that this faith has not done ? What is it that it hath not suffered, and rejoiced to suffer ? Let but this faith abound in you, and it shall do what it has ever done. The mountain shall be cast down and the valley exalted ; sin shall be spoiled of her snares and death of his terrors ; men shall feel in you the powers of the world to come, and shall abandon all for its sake !

4. Finally, advanced personal religion implies an increase in the *spirit of love*. Love is the fruit of faith, and its best companion. The "love of the Spirit" is the spirit of religion. It is the most noble, generous, and operative principle with which we are conversant.

In us, however, it is mostly very deficient. We have a divided heart. Our very state is often made doubtful to us. It is a question, whether the love of the world or of God predominates in us. This leaves us listless, feeble, and unhappy.

Yet religion is most favorable to its life and growth. It is not only revealed as a doctrine; it is made vital and visible by example. The Saviour was the incarnation of love. His was love, pure, constant, changeless, inexhaustible. His love is that of the Creator to his creatures. It is that of a friend and benefactor to his enemies. His is the love of preference; he passed by the angels, and his delights were with the sons of men. His love was the love of sacrifices. It was more to him than heaven; for he came down from heaven to seek and to save us. It was more than life; for he gave up his life freely that he might redeem us from death. It was in him the spirit of perfect devotedness. He lived out of himself and in others. Their interests were his interests, and their happiness his happiness. Poverty was wealth, ignominy was honor, death was gain, if he could bring good to the objects of his love.

This example of unparalleled love is given for us to copy. The same mind that was in Christ should be in us. Our love should be supreme, fixed, undoubted and unbounded. Ease and honor and wealth and life itself, should not be dear to us, if they may testify the breadth and depth of our love to him. To be like his, it must be of this char-

acter. If of this character and force, it would instantly improve all our modes of thinking and acting for the advancement of his kingdom.

You now speak familiarly of *two* interests, your own and his. But this love would destroy this heterodox distinction. Love makes two one. His honor would be yours, his prosperity yours, his life yours. Your interest would be absorbed in those of Christ, and you would be identical and one.

You now speak of *sacrifices* made for his cause, and expect sympathy and admiration in making them. His love would destroy the very sentiment, and make it abhorrent to you. What! sacrifices—painful sacrifices—for Christ! His sacrifices for us were real; our sacrifices for him are mere figures of speech. The true love of Christ would not only reject the sentiment, it would *reverse* it. It would place all the sacrifice and self-denial on the other side. The sacrifice would then be found, not in giving, but withholding; not in action, but in doing nothing; not in suffering, but in exemption from suffering.

All this, so far from being extravagant, turns on a simple principle of our common nature. It is this; *when once an object is supremely loved, we live in that object*; and our happiness is found in all that pleases it. While it is unhappy, we cannot be otherwise; and to diminish its suffering by suffering ourselves, is to us happiness. Tell an affectionate mother that she must not watch at the couch of her dying, her only son. Where is the self-denial? She must be with him! You are cool, to calculate on injury to herself, and to advise; but does she calculate on the probabilities of disease and death to herself before she determines? No; she must be with him, gaze on him, soothe him, love him to the last, come what may! Suffer what she may,

she will suffer more, if you tear her from the presence of her child.

It is this love, not merely real, but ardent, supreme controlling, that we so greatly need to render the whole service of Christian life easy and delightful. It would be in us the spirit of entire consecration. We should be not our own, but Christ's. What relates to his interest and honor would be every thing to us, and what held not that relationship nothing. Have what we might, we could not be happy while his name was despised, his cause languishing, his will unaccomplished. It would be our meat and our drink to do it, though it were to be done in tears and in blood. We should suffer more if it were not done, than all we could endure in seeking to fulfil it.

Could the church be said to want any thing, if she were only baptized with this spirit? If this love of Christ were so shed abroad in the heart, as to obtain the power of a reigning passion, how far should we be from a millennial state? how long before the world would be prostrate at the feet of our Lord and Saviour?

I think it must be felt, that these elements of Christian character, though briefly illustrated, are with much propriety comprehended under the general denomination of "power from on high." Light is power, faith is power, love is power, strong as death. Apart they are strong, together irresistible. To suppose a Christian possessed of this inward piety, not in a perfect, but in an advanced and matured state, is to suppose him prepared for "every good word and work." Such a man would be strong in unity of purpose; strong in weight of character; strong in resolved devotedness. In him there would be no fear and no presumption; no excitement and no apathy; none of the perturbations of vanity and selfishness. Blind in difficulties,

deaf to discouragements, assured of his object, nothing should be able to divert him from his course. Identified rather with the interests of heaven than of earth, he would move amongst men almost with the facility and grace of an angel, in seeking to restore them to their lost allegiance and blessedness. Happy beyond expression should he be, if by any mode of life or of death he might thus contribute to bless his kindred on earth, and to glorify his Saviour in heaven ! Such was Abraham at Moriah, Paul at Rome, John in Patmos, and Stephen in Jerusalem.

II.

It remains for us to consider *the means* by which we may hope to enjoy this advanced state of personal piety.

We shall content ourselves, on this occasion with a limited reference to the subject, as it is suggested by the passage already quoted. The disciples were to fulfil a great work ; at present they were wholly disqualified for it ; and they were to wait at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high.

1. It teaches us to mark *the source* of this improved character. It is from "on high." Heaven is the region of power. "That which is of earth is earthly ; that which is from heaven is above all." Man is a fallen creature, and has not spiritual life in himself ; he is weak, and has no power of reproduction. He can never know this life, except he is quickened from on high ; he will only advance in it, as it is nourished by heavenly fellowship. All his tendencies are in the opposite direction. He is corrupt and inclines to corruption.

Your only hope must be in God. Life is from Him. We are treating of life in its highest manifestations ; it is from Him. Light and humility ; faith and love ; all the elements of true and living piety ; are from Him. They are in Him abundantly. In what glory can He reveal the truth to the mind ; with what power can He sustain the holiest emotions ; with what grace of speech, of manner, of feeling, cannot He endow us, for his service ? Entertain large hope in Him. Let your mind be shut up to the conclusion that none, on earth or in heaven, can help you but God ; yet fully believe that He can do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think. In His resources He is infinite ; He has pledged those resources of wisdom, grace, and power, by promise to his people. What He is to them, He is to you ; you by fellowship with him may be greatly participant of all that is in God ; and God may so dwell in you as that the world may see it and exclaim, Will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth !

2. Acknowledge to yourself and to God your *need* of qualification. By this I do not mean, that we should make our ordinary admissions, with our ordinary state of feeling, of personal insufficiency and dependence on God. I refer to the subject as cherished by reflection and self-inspection, till it becomes the familiar, habitual, deep conviction of the soul, that we have *almost no preparation* for the spiritual service to which we are called.

If the former portion of this Lecture has passed before the mind to any good purpose, it must have created such impressions ; and these should be nourished in us by present and daily meditation on our unfitness and disability. How is it that you have, up to this time, done so little, enjoyed so little of that religion which has every claim to service,

and every element of felicity ? Is it not to be referred to the simple fact, *that you possess so little?* Can you enjoy what you have not ? Can you bestow what you have not ? Your piety is too low to discover itself, too feeble to reproduce itself on others. You complain “that it is vain for you to try—that men are so indifferent—that when you make an effort they feel nothing.” Oh ! it is of yourself you should complain ! you are dark and you are indifferent. They do not see, because your perceptions are so weak ; they do not feel, because you are so luke-warm. They return to you only the reflection of yourself !

You have perhaps professedly sought the welfare of others, when you have not been assured of your own salvation. Grace has been so low in your heart, that when you have sought for it, it could not be found. You have exhorted others to faith, and have doubted of your own. Your prayers have been without life, your hope without joy, your temper without seriousness, and your speech without savor. Often when conscience suggested the needful rebuke or entreaty, it has died on your lips ; and you have received an impression *from* the world, instead of imparting one *to* it. And is it thus, that men are to be persuaded to adopt our religion ? Is it thus that the world, which is enmity to God, is to be subdued to Himself ? Too many, alas ! already, from the poor forms of religion as seen in us, have been fortified in infidelity ; and have made haste to conclude, that in declining such a religion they did but reject a doubted good, and oppose a doubtful authority.

Come at once, then, under the living sense of your spiritual necessities. If religion is to be to you a fountain of enjoyment, and a means of blessedness to the world, it must be known by you, dwell in you as it has never been ! Confess, freely confess, your darkness, your estrangement, your

unbelief, your unpreparedness. Feel, deeply feel, that for any good purpose, you have nothing and need all things. In your emptiness and sin, place yourself before God ; and wait, where archangels wait, in profound humiliation, and you, even you, shall be filled with all His fulness !

3. The spirit of the instruction is, that we are to *seek* this power from on high. The disciples were to wait, but not to loiter. They were to use the means appropriate to the end at which they were looking, and in expectation of the promise. We are to wait, but not to the neglect of present duty and opportunity. The neglect of one duty will never qualify us for another. We are to fulfil needful duty, in the hope that it may contribute to advance us to a better state ; and every where and in every thing we are to be penetrated with the thorough and humbling conviction of our unspeakable spiritual necessities.

Suitably to entertain this spirit and to seek the good we need, we must *retire*. It is not meant that we are to leave the world. If it is to be converted, we must not abandon it, nor must we be conformed to it. On the whole, we are too much in the world and to far too little purpose. We receive its character ; we are fretted by its anxieties ; burthened with its cares ; and perhaps seduced by its pleasures.

But if we are Christians, it is by our instrumentality that the world is to be converted. Yet it is manifest, that *in this spirit*, it will never be effected. We must retire. We must break the charm practised on us by the world, by shutting it up from the senses. We must consider, that we live in the world for its salvation ; and that, even in seeking it, we are exposed to dangers. We must brace up the mind to an abiding sense of our high vocation, and by

solemn sequestration from the world prepare to fulfil it. By all means we must be alone ; alone, that we may be with God ; alone, that we may nourish our faith and hope in heaven ; alone, that we may place the world at a distance and recollect ourselves from its endless bustle and frivolous engagements.

Meditate. Retire, not for reverie, not from spleen, but for deep and profitable meditation. The world has every thing to fear from reflection, you every thing to hope. Assert your independence. Exclude the vain, the trifling, the perishable ; and welcome the great, the unseen, the eternal to your thoughts. Dwell on them long and earnestly, till you shall rest in their shadow, and partake of their calm and solemn elevation. Under the light of Holy Scripture, acquaint yourself with the present condition of men, and with the predominant design of God in relation to this world. Know that you should live only to do his will ; and rejoice to know that his highest will is to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Fill your heart and mind with the contemplation of all the blessedness which shall come to men on the restoration of that spiritual empire, and take up the deliberate resolution to live only for its sake. In this temper of mind, pour shame and reproach on the folly of your past life, and register the better convictions of the present hour in a faithful memory. Admit freely, fully, to yourself the sense of poverty, want and sin which will come over you, and assure yourself afresh that God is able to make all grace abound towards you. Be still with God ; rise from yourself to Him ; be filled with the thought of Him. Your remedy is not in yourself, nor in self-contemplation ; it is with God. You will never be recovered to greatness, but by His greatness ; to goodness, but by His excellence ; to happiness, but by His favor ; or to service,

but by an unction from Him. *Be still with God*—and you shall be as the sun coming forth from his chamber, full of light, power, and influence from heaven.

Pray. Such a state of mind as we have intimated is prayer. Recognise it, indulge it to the utmost. Restrict not the spirit, when it would discourse with heaven; give it space to breathe, to wrestle, to soar. Especially at such a time, give *unity* to your prayer. What, of all things, you desire, is the accession of the kingdom of God; and, subordinate to this, your personal preparation to assist its arrival. Concentrate all desire in this, and you shall be mighty in prayer.

Let your prayer be full of *hope*. Feel that you are in the presence of a Father, who is more ready to give than you are to receive. Know that now the Son is given, there is nothing so much in the heart of the Father, as to *give the Holy Spirit* to renew the world, and to renew you. This is *the* promise of the Father; of all promises the greatest. Take firm hold on it; expect that it shall be accomplished; accomplished in you. That you, dark and sinful as you are, may, according to the riches of his glory, be strengthened with might in your inner man by his Spirit; that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that you may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and that you may triumph in making it known to others.

Persevere in prayer. It is well and wise to improve the favorable season, when the mind is awake and the heart suggestive; but we must not limit ourselves to it. Duty is uniform, and the more needful when the least desired. In prayer, if we believe the promise of the Father, and his faithfulness to his promise, and do not persevere to ask it, we do not *mean* to have it. But, so far as prayer is con-

cerned, the benefit we do not mean to secure, is the benefit God does not mean to give. If you *can* take a denial, you may expect a denial. The state of grace to which we are referring is of infinite excellence, and it must be regarded with unlimited, infinite desire. It is life to you, life to the world ; yea, it comprehends the life and glory of our Lord and Saviour. It must be to you as of the first necessity. Have what you may, you must feel that you cannot be happy if your Saviour is not glorified, if his kingdom is not advanced, and if you may not assist its advancement. You can part with any thing if this may be accomplished. In this mind, you will lay your grasp on the promise, and look up in unutterable prayer to your Father in heaven, feeling that it would be easier to suffer death than denial.

Receive the Holy Spirit. Much of our prayer is selfish and imperfect ; its energy springs from earth rather than from heaven. We often wrestle in prayer, as if we were most willing to receive, and God were unwilling to give. But the command to receive the Holy Spirit, like the whole tenor of the Gospel, implies that God is willing, and that *we alone are unwilling*. Under the full weight of this truth you must come. God is most true ; he has promised the gift of his Spirit to those who rightly ask it. If, then, the Spirit is not given, and you do not receive it, the obstruction and blame must be with *you*. Suppose a broken-hearted parent should say, "There is a home for my wandering child, a father's arms are spread ready to receive him. I have sent him my assurances, that if he forsake his ways, and return to me, he shall be freely pardoned, graciously received, and endowed with his lost inheritance ;—but he will not come." Where, in such a case, would be the blame, the guilt ? And in your case, if you receive not the Holy Spirit, where will rest the blame ? Can you have a

richer promise ? Can you have kinder invitations ? Can you be supplied with stronger assurances ?

Awake, then, to the affecting conclusion, that you are not straitened in God, but that you are straitened in yourself. God is ready ; all things are ready ; but you are not ready. The promise is near ; the Spirit is near ; you move in an element of light and glory. Darkness and obstruction are alone with you. Your pride, your prejudice, your worldliness, are to you a thick veil, which prevents your perception and participation of the glory which surrounds you ! Will you endure any longer to be excluded, by your own hand, from this state of excelling light and blessedness ? Cast away, once and for ever, all that hath hindered your entrance to the kingdom of God. Open your whole mind and heart to the full accession of the Spirit of grace, and you shall be filled with the might and majesty of his presence. He shall dwell in you, walk in you, reign in you. You shall be inspired with all wisdom, strengthened with all might, fitted for all service. You need infinitely the Holy Spirit ; you need nothing besides. Receive the Holy Spirit.

What is the summary of this exercise ? It is this,—that the high and ruling purpose of God our Saviour is to establish his kingdom on earth ; that this, as his true disciple, should be also your chief purpose in life ; but that you cannot rightly entertain the purpose of advancing religion amongst men, except as it is itself *advanced in you*. What accumulated motive does this supply to seek a state of pre-eminent piety ! Apart from the personal felicity it would secure, it is the only adequate means of extending the Saviour's empire amongst men. All things wait for this. It is not property, or talent, or numbers, that we want ; it is exactly the right mind and the devoted heart. We need

a clearer perception of the truth, a deeper humiliation before God, a realizing faith in the life to come, and the consecration of our united affections to Christ. We need that ruling love to Him which shall make His afflictions more to us than our private sorrow ; and His prosperity more to us than our private gain and enjoyment. From want of this the missionary languishes in the field, and the merchant hoards his profits ; the Christian lives to himself, and the church slumbers at her post ; or springs into fitful action from the jealous fear of being outdone. The enemy is strong, and we are weak.

Is this a discouraging view of the subject ? In one respect, at least, it is the reverse. You have often looked abroad on the manifold causes which, in your judgment, impeded the progress of religion in the world ; and feeling that most of them were beyond your reach, you have regarded them with a measure of despondency. You are now to mark, that there is one, *one only cause* for this evil ; and that is, the want of more holiness in its professed disciples. This would at once secure to us all that we could desire. We should have men enough, and of the right temper ; means enough, and of the right character. Prayer would take a deeper tone ; property would be given on a larger scale ; the mind would receive a juster conception of the grandeur of our object ; the heart would be braced by one magnanimous purpose ; and the band of the redeemed would be as one man to claim the world for Christ.

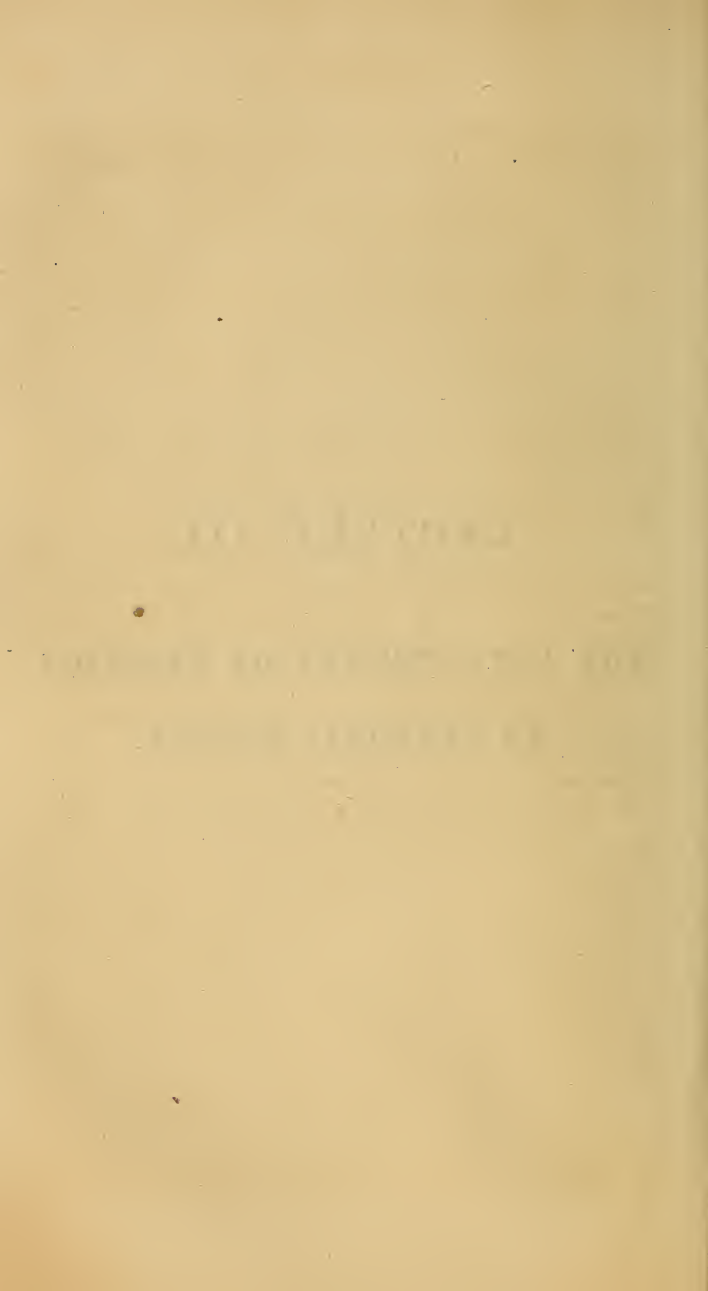
This, so far as you are concerned, resolves itself into the fact, that to advance religion, *you need, deeply need, a more elevated state of knowledge and holiness.* This is the only practical and profitable conclusion. While each Christian shall content himself with looking on others, and deploring generally their state, no reformation will

come ; but when each one shall look at himself apart, and mourn apart, and apart pray as in agony, that the kingdom of heaven, which is to be set up in the world, may first come within himself, then the millennial day is begun ! And will you delay to seek this blessedness for yourself—for mankind ? Can you endure that religion should stand still with you ? and that you should be an obstacle to its predictive triumphs ? Can you endure that Christ should be dishonored in you ; and that at his coming he should find you slothful, worldly, selfish, living to yourself and not to him ? In this great service, are you willing to be regarded as a hinderance rather than a prepared instrument ? Oh, what a responsibility is yours ! What a destination is yours ! What a joy may be yours ! Angels covet your position for glorifying the Saviour, reviving the church, and converting the world to God ! Your individual interests are inseparably linked with the highest and the best. The redemption of lost men, the honor of the exalted Mediator, are become motives to your personal holiness, and universal eternal devotedness. Know your calling. Enter into the kingdom of God. Receive, with an expanded heart, the Holy Ghost !

LECTURE III.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION

BY PERSONAL EFFORT.



LECTURE III.

ITS ADVANCEMENT BY PERSONAL EFFORT.

“Let him that heareth say, Come.”

LIFE is communicative. It is so in the Creator : his works are the proof of it. It is so even in the creature ; and the more excellent the order of life, the greater the power of communication.

Religion is life ; the most excellent mode of life. It is communicative in the highest degree. Not to desire to impart it to others, is evidence that we have it not ; and the degree in which we are blessed with it, is the degree in which we shall labor to bestow it.

These remarks comprehend the essence both of the past and present exercise. We have treated first of the advancement of religion in ourselves, because we cannot give what we have not received ; and in the full recollection of that subject we now proceed to remark on the advancement of religion in others by our personal effort.

This subject is of great importance. It is one in which every Christian has an interest. It has not been sufficiently regarded. It is eminently practical ; and requires to be treated with simplicity, with earnestness, and with some experience of character. Let us look on it with seriousness, and with a prayerful desire to profit.

The theme is large as well as important, and is to be approached in various ways. It may be of advantage, therefore, to concentrate our thoughts on one simple propo-

sition—*That it is the duty of each Christian to seek the conversion of men to Christ.*

It may be proper to refer to the *duty*, because it has been neglected; it may be equally necessary to supply some *directions* in discharging it, because many have thought it difficult; and it may be desirable to glance at the *motives* which should sustain us, that we may not fail under discouragement.

I.

Then, it is the *duty* of the Christian to seek the *conversion* of men to Christ.

If the importance and universality of this obligation have been overlooked, it is of so self-evident a character as scarcely to have been disputed; and what therefore is chiefly wanted is to revive in the mind the apprehension of the subject.

1. First of all, have respect to the plain *testimony of Holy Scripture*. What can be the import of the following precepts? “Thou shall not suffer sin on thy brother.” “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “He that winneth souls is wise;” and “he shall shine as the stars for ever.” “He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.” “Freely ye have received, freely give.” “Let him that heareth, say, Come.” Do we not suffer sin on our brother except we seek his conversion? Can we love our neighbor as ourselves, unless we labor to impart to him what to ourselves is most valuable? If we do not endeavor to deliver the soul that is drawn unto death, can we be innocent? Have we

freely received the gospel, that in our turn we may freely give it to others; and can we be faithful to our trust, if it is withheld?

2. Regard your *profession*. What is it? Essentially, it is a profession to love God. Can you with any consistency or even sincerity maintain such a profession unless you are jealous for his interests and anxious to promote his honor? Can it be an insignificant circumstance to you, seldom crossing your mind or disturbing your peace, that you live in a world where He is disowned, dishonored, and blasphemed? Where men are in common rebellion against him? Where vice and crime in their most malignant forms are ever offending his sight? If you supremely love him, must it not embitter your bread and trouble your spirit day and night? When I beheld the transgressors I was grieved, because they kept not thy law!

3. Consider your *relationship*. Man, what is he to you? Is he not your brother? Have you not one Father—one nature—one immortality? Do you owe him nothing? Is he not bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh? Do you owe him nothing? You must deny the relation, before you deny the claim. He was the first murderer, who exclaimed, "Am I my brother's keeper?" And he is no less a murderer in the sight of our common Father, who dares to repeat it. And to him who utters it, and to him who repeats it, earth and heaven reply, "Yes, sinful man, you are your brother's keeper!"

4. Listen to the dictates of common *sentiment*. How does it express itself? If a fellow-being were exposed to perish by fire or water, and you were able to render assist-

ance and did not, would not the general voice of humanity break forth to denounce and condemn you? Yea, would not your own heart condemn you, and would you not blush to feel yourself less than man? And since, as a Christian, you profess to be awake to the spiritual interests of man, must you not, at least, feel equally on interests which you believe to be infinitely superior? But I forbear to multiply considerations, where conviction must be at once established.

5. Let it be observed, that the duty contemplated proposes to *convert* men to Christ. We are to seek *nothing less* than their conversion. There is much mistake here; and much zeal is vainly expended, which, under better guidance, might lead to the most happy results. Many who labor for the good of others, especially amongst the young, seek far too little. They would induce them to read, to pray, to abstain from evil, and to observe the ordinary means of grace, and they are more or less satisfied, if for the present they succeed to this amount. There is a world of error in this; and it ends in the fatal delusion of multitudes. To avoid this course, establish two points firmly in your mind. First, that nothing is done for a sinner till he is *converted*. I have known many a parent, truly anxious for the welfare of a beloved child, remark, "My son, I cannot say, is converted; but he is, I trust, in a *hopeful* state." This is an unsound and dangerous distinction. An unconverted state cannot be a hopeful state. He who is unconverted is at enmity with God, is in a state of sin, and is a child of wrath even as others; and this is his unmitigated condition, whatever fair appearances may be assumed, up to the moment of his conversion.

Second, remember carefully, that conversion is not *progressive*. Great error prevails on this particular; and it

is mostly the source of the error we have just noticed. Means may be used in reference to conversion ; and the use of them, as well as their influence on the mind, may be spread over a progressive period ; but conversion itself is not progressive, it is instantaneous. It consists essentially of that *one act* in which the will is determined for God ; and it necessarily occurs at some *instant* of the sinner's life. The prodigal of the gospel must have been the subject of much reflection and conflict ; but he was only converted at the instant in which he resolved that he would arise and go to his father. This would seem so clear as not to admit of various opinion.

Yet different opinion has obtained in the church ; and to this day it is exercising a paralyzing and deadly influence. It is thought not only that means have a progressive character, but that conversion itself is progressive ; that if instantaneous conversions are possible, they are not desirable ; and that conversions are sound in proportion as they are slow in their development. Can any thing be more absurd, more mischievous ? If conversion must be a work of time, then it would be folly of you to expect it now ; if it must be spread over months and years, then the sinner may postpone his conversion, and satisfy himself that his present state is the best possible to him now. And all this time, he is hardening his heart by cherishing at once his hope and his enmity !

Be not partaker of other men's sins. While you give to means their place and honor, let no sinner, through you, be deceived by them. Claim nothing less of him than to repent of his sins, to turn to God, and to submit to the righteousness of Christ. Let him know that this is essentially comprehended in one act of the mind ; that it occurs at once ; that it ought to occur now,--instantly ; and that

up to the moment in which it is refused, he is unpardoned, and in the bonds of iniquity.

Permit me to connect another caution with the subject of conversion. Do not seek for *more* than this. One regrets that such a remark should be needful. The consideration of the sinner's enmity and peril, and of his instant reconciliation to God, should have an absorbing power on the mind. But there are few, alas! so Christian as not to be sectarian. They would have the sinner indeed converted to God, but they would also convert him to *themselves*. It is not enough that he should become a new creature, he must also become Independent or Baptist, Methodist or Episcopalian. It is not enough that, renouncing vain idols, he should worship God who is a Spirit, "in spirit and in truth;" he must bow at their altar, use their forms, and strengthen their party.

Mark such a course only to condemn it. At such a crisis of the sinner's life, to mix any secondary considerations with the momentous subject of his salvation, would distract his attention, would lead him to suspect your motives, and would certainly show that you had but a feeble impression of his awful estate. Oh! be content if, by Divine grace, he shall be brought to Christ, though he be brought not to your sanctuary; be content that he is added to the number of the redeemed, though he swell not the number of your particular fold. Mar not your efforts, at such a time, by any secondary subject. It is vital that he should be saved—that he should be a Christian. You may safely leave him afterwards, with the New Testament in his hand, to decide on lesser points; and if your opinions on them are scriptural, they are the more likely to be adopted.

6. Finally, remember that this duty is *yours*. Yes, if you are a Christian, then it is yours. It is the high and imperative duty of every Christian to seek the conversion of men to God. Age, sex, circumstance, [form no release. There is not a Christian who hears me, so young, so inexperienced, so feeble, but he is bound to fulfil it to his utmost capacity. He that heareth is to say, Come. Not the Spirit merely—not the church merely—not the minister merely—but he that *heareth* is to say, Come. The duty is coextensive with the privilege. Have you heard the blessed sound of the gospel? then you are bound to repeat it. Have you received it as your salvation? then by the very act of receiving it, you are bound to bestow it. Has it brought life and peace to you? then must you labor to convey it as life and joy to others. The rule has no exception.

If this is so true as to be self-evident, it is singular, that the question of *lay agency* should have been thought to have a refined and difficult character. Some deprecate it; some renounce it. Many who allow it have their misgivings, and in their fear surround it with precautions. There is reason to apprehend that such discussion, even when wisely maintained, may, on the whole, weaken the sense of obligation. Where there is room for dispute, there is place for doubt; and what is held to be doubtful will be more or less the subject of neglect. Now there may be some care required in drawing the line of demarcation between personal and official service; but there never ought to have been a doubt cast on the great truth, that every Christian is bound to the full extent of his power, to make known to others the gospel which has brought to him pardon and life. *Lay agency is as extensive as lay piety.*

This great truth, so well known to the primitive disci-

ples, is the truth chiefly requiring to be revived in our day. It is by its efficacious operation on the conscience, that we are to expect the spread of religion over the world. Men look indeed to methods more combined and imposing. They say, Erect churches; secure opulent endowments; protect yourselves by the patronage of the state. No: there is yet a method more simple, more philosophical, more spiritual, which shall effect more than they all. It is just this: *that the man who has believed in Christ shall make him known to other men.* This is what we want. The church will never go into her millennium without it. When every man who knows the Lord shall say unto his neighbor, "Know the Lord," it shall quickly be followed by the fact, "that all shall know him, from the least even to the greatest." "Let him that heareth say, Come."

II.

We are now to consider the *directions* for the discharge of this duty.

The means which may be employed for the conversion of men are manifold. We, however, are proposing to limit attention to one, that of *direct* personal intercourse. As this is both the most important and the most difficult, it is proper that the instructions should be treated with care and precision. We will endeavor that they shall be such, as not only agree with the nature of the subject, but such as have the warrant of experience.

In relation, then, to the conversion of sinners to God, I would say—

1. *Make it your business.* Not your only business, but your chief. You have other occupations, but your highest

profession is that of Christian. You seek to honor the claims which arise to you as a relative, and as a citizen; do honor also to those which come on you as a Christian. When all things are held in subordination to Christian life, then even the temporal becomes holiness to the Lord. Consider that you are not born into this world only for worldly purposes; far less are you regenerated into the kingdom of Christ to amass wealth, pursue honor, and live in earthly indulgence. No; you are born into the family of God that you may be happy in his favor and live to his glory. How better can you follow the great end of your spiritual life, than by seeking to impart it to others? Let the world, if it will, take its course, and pursue its vanities; it is no guide for you. You have an avocation higher, nobler. You are to do the will of your Father in heaven. His will chiefly is, not that men should die in their sins, but that they should be saved. Adopt this as your will likewise. Deliberately resolve that you will live for this purpose. You will then have what so many want,—an *end* in life; and that end so elevated and benevolent as to be a constant spring of personal felicity.

2. Possess your mind with the great *importance* of the subject. If it is to be your business, it must have your attention; if your chief business, your chief attention. It must be present to your thoughts, it must dwell in your heart, till it is thoroughly and habitually realized. Place man before you as a sinner; and judge of his sin by the light of Scripture. Look on him in his state of misery, delusion, and guilt; separated from the life of angels; in the hands of an angry God; condemned already by a righteous law; and upheld only from death and hell by the brittle thread of life, which a breath may break asunder!

Let these plain, great, momentous truths have a full, but never a common place in your mind. Entertain them till they stand out as facts ; till his salvation is felt to be only next to your own. This living interest in the subject will supersede many directions ; and will give you a surprising aptitude and power in winning souls to Christ.

3. Be sure to *employ opportunities* as they arise. That you may do so, *watch* for them. Those who watch for them, seldom want them ; while those who are indifferent seldom or never find the right place, or the convenient time. “ Watch for souls as one who must give an account.”

Create opportunities. We are daily surprised by observing what may be done if there is first the willing and resolved mind. What invention, what toil, what perseverance, are displayed ! If a man is only resolved on making an acquaintance thought to be profitable to himself, will he not compass sea and land to effect it ? Recently a person came as a stranger to this metropolis ; he was soon observed, as such, by two evil-disposed men, accustomed to prowl on the innocent and unwary. It appeared that they watched every movement ; that they invented methods of approach to him ; that they followed him incessantly for two days and a night ; in fact, that they never left him till they had robbed him of all he possessed. Shall wickedness have all this policy and zeal to destroy, and will not you put forth your invention and energy to save ? Like your Saviour, if you would save the lost, you must *seek* them.

Ask for opportunities. If all events are at the disposal of Providence, and if the Lord knoweth them that are his, then it is most wise that we should recognise his hand. I

know a Christian who is in the habit of committing this subject to his prayers, that God would so regulate his circumstances, and form his connections and friendships, as that they may best supply him with occasions of usefulness in the conversion of sinners to himself. Nor has he prayed in vain. Opportunities arising in answer to prayer are, on every account, the most auspicious.

4. Have *special regard* to those persons over whom you have *special influence*. In the most limited connections there are many such. Over some you have influence by relationship; over some by interest; over others by esteem for your character. You have power with them; power, perhaps, which none other has. God has given it to you. Consider it as a precious talent intrusted to your care. Use it faithfully for their good, and for his glory, and God shall give you their life for a prey.

5. Communicate, if possible, *privately* and *alone*, with those you would thus benefit. You will meet with less resistance; you will be able to speak with more freedom, and they will soften sooner under what is said, than when other eyes are on them. Especially it will assist to justify your motives. Mostly those you address will at first resist the attempt, and they will look about for some plausible defence in so doing. Nothing is more important than that they should be compelled to allow to themselves, that you are not influenced by vanity or ostentation, or any sense of superiority, or any possible form of self-interest, but purely by a benevolent regard to their welfare.

6. Mark *differences of character*. We do not refer to the nice shades of character; this might be difficult, and

you might think yourself excused from it. But all have some leading characteristic ; this lies on the surface of conduct, and the slightest acquaintance reveals it. In some, levity predominates ; in some, thoughtfulness. Some are proud, and some are diffident. Some neglect religion, and some are slaves to its forms. Some are self-righteous, and some licentious. Some are in error, and some in ignorance. Some know much, but hold the truth in unrighteousness ; and others know little, but live above their knowledge. It is plain, that to use exactly the same treatment for all would be unwise and injurious. Be at pains to know the character of the person you would restore to the way of life. "Of some have compassion, and others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire."

Yet if you should not be always able to satisfy yourself in this particular, be not discouraged. After all, the points of difference between sinner and sinner are slight, compared with those on which they essentially agree. All are alienated from the life of God, and are given over to a worldly idolatry ; and all are required to be recovered to the love and favor of God. You cannot be materially wrong, while dealing earnestly with these two capital circumstances, and if there be any particular obstacles, they are of less magnitude, and shall reveal themselves to you.

7. Present distinctly the *truth* as it is in Jesus, and in the New Testament, to the mind. Settle it in your heart, that the truth is your only legitimate instrument, that all feeling not produced by it is spurious and dangerous ; that it alone can convert and sanctify the sinner ; and that if you honor it, the Spirit, its author, will honor you.

Present the truth in its *simplicity*, without subtle distinctions, and without controversy. In speaking of it, as-

sume that it will be admitted as the truth of God. If important truth is disputed, still do not generally run into disputation. In most cases it is used as a diversion, and you must not be diverted. Go at once to such truths as are undisputed; you will find that the most skeptical still hold truth enough for their utter condemnation. Work this allowed portion of truth into the conscience, and it will clear the way for the rest. He believes himself a sinner; does he repent of sin? He admits there is a God; does he worship, love, and trust him as God? He allows a life to come; does he make this short life a preparation for that immortality?

If the truth remains undisputed, then explain and apply it in strict relation to your object—his conversion. Place conversion before him as *one great decisive act* of the mind—the volition, the heart—that by this act the sinner renounces the world, its honors and its pleasures, as his supreme good; and embraces, with the preference of conviction and affection, the love, service, and favor of God as his portion for ever.

As conversion comprehends repentance and faith, you may illustrate the *one* by the *other*, till distinct ideas are received on the subject. Show repentance to be a right state of mind in relation to sin; that sin is seen to be as “exceeding sinful,” as opposed to the Divine government, and as bringing ruin on ourselves; and that when thus seen it produces sorrow towards God, and constrains us to forsake and avoid it as the “abominable thing.”

Explain, that while this is a right state of mind, there is in it nothing meritorious; that still he is guilty and still deserves punishment; that there can be no remission of sin and death without an atonement. Show that this atonement is in Christ—that it is for the chief of sinners—that it

is adequate and all-sufficient—so that God can be just, and yet accept and justify the sinner.

Show that so soon as the doctrine of righteousness and life is known, it should be accepted by a cordial *faith*. That it is the office of faith to perceive it, to embrace it, to rejoice in it, and to live and act under its influence. Urge him to a present act of faith, in the name and grace of Christ. Let him know that he is invited, that he is commanded to this; that there is no hinderance but in himself; that to refuse is to rebel. If he sweetly yields to the truth, refer it to that hand which makes us willing in the day of its power. If he resist, quibble and rebel, use it to unfold to him the wickedness and wilfulness of his heart, and throw on him the whole weight of his responsibility. Let him not refine on questions of Divine sovereignty and free will; this is mere trifling. He may have imbibed false notions on them, but these are artificial and superficial; beneath them lies the deep consciousness which he cannot disturb, that he acts freely, and that he is fully responsible for his actions. Shut him up to the conviction, that if he is lost, he destroys himself; that if saved, he is saved by the might and mercy of Christ.

Surround him with motive. Speak to him of himself—of his capacities to know, to love, to enjoy—of the life to come, and of his immortality. Speak to him of God as a Father—lamenting his departure from his presence—inviting him to return—spreading his arms to receive him in anticipation of his return—rejoicing over the erring child that was lost and is found. Speak to him of Jesus, who dwelt in heaven, but who came to earth “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Tell him of his poverty and his tears; of his life and his death; and assure him it was all

for our sake. Tell him of his pity, his power, his love; and repeat his own gracious invitations to him till they melt on his ear, and sink into his heart. Speak to him of the grace of the Holy Spirit—that it is only made necessary by his perversity and unbelief—that it is sufficient for our renewal in holiness—that it is *now* not a sovereign bestowment for which we are to wait in doubt, but a promised blessing which we are at once to ask, under the assurance that we shall receive. The Spirit says, “Come.” We do not wait for the Spirit; the Spirit waits for the dilatory sinner.

Whatever particularly seems to get nearest the heart, enlarge on it—urge it—as though your own life were in it; and endeavor that the sinner shall be brought to renounce his reluctance and delays, and to lie down, as one ready to perish, on the truth and mercy of the Saviour.

8. Bring the sinner to a *pause*.

If you think you have succeeded to any amount, be *careful of your means*. The fear is, that when you leave him, one half of the impression will vanish. Induce him to regard it as a crisis in his life; that if he does not decide for God he will be confirmed in sin. Entreat him to pause—to retire—to entertain the subject with consideration. Salvation is impossible without consideration. A day or two might be redeemed from business, to dispose of this greatest of subjects. A more favorable time will never occur. Whether he gives more or less of attention and retirement, he should not relax till he is decided. Decide *now*. Indecision is sin.

Should opportunity permit, offer to pray *with* him. If an impression is made, he will thankfully accept it. Let not your prayer be general, but suit the occasion. It should spring from what has been said, and what felt. Es-

pecially enlarge with tenderness on what has most affected you or him in utterance. Much will depend on the spirit of *that* prayer. Many a sinner has submitted in prayer; but feeble prayer, at such a time, hardens the heart.

If you cannot pray *with* him, pray *for* him. The character of your engagement supposes this spirit to be awake within you. Through all your address, and in all its discouragements, your silent prayer should be rising to God without whom you entreat in vain. In retirement you should make memoranda of such cases as interest you, and separately and solemnly commend their peculiarities to the eye of Him you serve and would glorify.

If happily you are conscious of having made a just and salutary impression, then be careful not to *injure or weaken it* before you separate. Beware, at such a time, of sinking down to ordinary topics and innocent pleasantries. Speak not of other subjects. Retire, and induce him to retire. Leave him with that solemn and affectionate manner which springs from feeling aright, and which is so likely to administer grace to the observer. I have seen the most promising effects withered at once by three minutes' light or ill-timed conversation.

9. Let the spirit of your intercourse be *eminently Christian*. To be so, you must watch against *formality*. Those who give themselves to prayer and speech on religious subjects, frequently settle down into certain modes of expression, from which the living meaning is nearly departed. Such persons may be busy, but they effect little. If words are to convey life, they must be vital.

Your intercourse should be characterized by *fidelity*. Nothing can be more important. You profess to speak to

others on their dearest interests ; you are aware they are mostly reluctant to know the truth ; you can hardly be said in any sense to engage in such service without the resolution to be faithful. Yet here many are deficient. They want courage for the occasion, or they want a living conviction of the truths they should utter. They cannot give pain ; they cannot be directed ; they deal in hint and implication, but not in assertion ; they go about and about the subject, but they do not speak *of* the subject, and *to* the person. Such individuals flatter themselves that this course springs from kindness of heart. There may be much kind feeling mixed up with such conduct, but is it right ? Is it kindness on the whole ? If the evil we purposed to cure is uncured because we have treated it with too gentle and trembling a hand, should we flatter ourselves on our kindness, or blame ourselves for unfaithfulness ?

The service to which we give ourselves requires, if any thing, a firm hand and a truthful tongue. We owe something to delicacy, but much more to the salvation of our friend. We must be willing to give pain, if we may bring peace. Even the hopes and consolations of the gospel must be so used as not to diminish but to increase conviction of sin, and the humiliation of the spirit before God. Be direct ; be personal ; be earnest ! You must be free of the sinner's blood. You must utter the truth, whether he hear or forbear.

Your intercourse should be characterized by *meekness*, "the meekness of wisdom," as Scripture beautifully expresses it. I greatly admire prudence ; here it is eminently necessary. Yet there is a fear that it may be misapplied. It has often been another name for false shame and selfish negligence. By all means be wise—wise to observe character, to mark occasion, and to adapt means to their end ;

but decline the wisdom which is always waiting for some better occasion, which fixes its eye on the difficulty, but forgets the extremity of the sinner.

Meekness springs from true wisdom, and it is indispensable to you. Without it, fidelity would become severity ; but severity would harden the heart. Many have labored hard and faithfully without profit, when the gentleness of Christ might have made them great. You need the meekness which is without assumption ; which is gentle in manner and even in tone ; which cannot be irritated or provoked ; which is always prepared to render good for evil. In such meekness there is might.

An excellent minister in America, referring to his conversion, said, " When I was yet a young and thoughtless man, a pious deacon addressed me about my salvation. I was angry ; my heart rose in bitterness against him. I reproached him ; pointed out the inconsistencies of professors ; talked indeed like a madman, while my conscience was grinding me like a millstone. He bore it all with meekness perfectly unmoved. If he had only given one retort, shown one angry feeling, it would have relieved me. His Christian meekness was too much for me. I went into the wood smarting from my wounds, fell under what he had said to me, and went and asked his pardon." This was the time of his conversion ; and he owed it instrumentally to the Christian temper of his friend. Wisdom is mighty, meekness is mighty ; but the meekness of wisdom is *almighty*.

Your intercourse should be full of the spirit of *love*. This must be a predominant motive. It must be so present, as to be seen and felt. The love which rules, which constrains, which is the parent of holy devoted zeal. To it the thing to be done, is the thing that *must* be done, done

now if possible, done *thus* if possible ; but at all events *done*.

This love hath tenderness : and the tenderness of love is of all things most subduing. The sinner you would save is the sinner you must love. You must surround him with your love. It must beam over a countenance troubled for his salvation. It will give its unction to your actions, words and intonations. You will feel with him, weep with him, be one with him. He will find himself in an element of love, and will be dissolved by its power.

Finally, your spirit should be that of *prayer*. We have referred to it in a particular instance ; but it must be an abiding and prevailing spirit. Prayer is not to supersede action ; it is to suggest it, sustain it, and sanctify it. The work you would accomplish is above your power ; the very subject on which you would operate is totally averse ; and your single warrant and encouragement is found in the promise of God. You must know your weakness ; confess your dependence ; wait, pray and wrestle. You must do the utmost, and then rest on the promise and truth of God. When you are weak, then you are strong. The man of prayer is the man of power. He is strong in the might of God.

10. Let all you do be sustained by your *Christian character*. There should be no doubt about it. It should be unblamable and without reproach. As you would live a useful life, jealously watch inconsistency, and place no stone of stumbling in the way of your brother. Shun the world, its fashions, its maxims, its indulgences, its very spirit. Aspire to a high, holy, and happy exemplification of Christian life. This is indispensable if you would have a right temper ; and equally so, if you would produce a

right impression. We all know what is meant by weight of character ; and it is this, in its Christian form, that we need for usefulness. " O sir," exclaimed a dying penitent, of a person who had visited him with profit—" That man is a saint ; I never met with such a man ! It is impossible not to be affected by his kindness and his prayers !" Now that his labors are ended, I can also say, That man was a saint indeed !

Whatever be the present issue of your labors, look well to it that this be the impression of your religious conduct.

11. If you should still think, that there are difficulties in your way, *begin immediately*. This is the only course. Many, declining to take it, have trifled through life, and left no trace of good behind them. He who says, " There is a lion in the way," will be sure to find one. Difficulties grow by delay ; as you advance on them in the path of duty, they will mostly, like shadows, vanish before you. Let there be only the sincere desire to improve the present talent and occasion, and what more you need, " God shall reveal even this unto you."

Say not, that you have *no talent*. All have some. It does not need much talent or great knowledge. It needs only common sense and earnest piety. The lowest and the least can speak freely of the things they love, and with which they are conversant. What mother but can discourse about her children ? What mechanic but can talk reasonably and well about his trade ? If religion is to you a subject of interest—that which you have seen and handled and tasted—you have talent enough to make it known to others. If you pray, you can tell what prayer is. If you have mourned for sin, you can tell of its bitterness. If you are converted, you can explain what it is to the uncon-

verted. If you love the Saviour, you can make others understand that He is worthy of their love. Oh, if there be first the willing mind, and the gracious heart, you have all that is needful for this labor of love!

Say not that you have *no confidence*; that is offering an excuse where you should confess a sin. Want of confidence is want of fidelity to Christ and love to men. You may have naturally much diffidence and a retiring disposition; and this will claim to show itself in ordinary circumstances. But who ever thought of pleading it in a case of extremity? If your neighbor was threatened with some fatal calamity, would your want of confidence prevent your giving the alarm which was to save his life? Would natural diffidence have any power at such a moment? Say not, then, I am a child, and cannot speak! You must speak or be confounded! Extremity has compelled the dumb to speak. Yours is that extremity. You must not allow sin on your brother! You must not be ashamed of Christ, unless you would that he should be ashamed of you before his Father and his holy angels.

Say not, that you have *no time*. By good economy all may find time. The busiest and the poorest do actually find time for the merest vanities. All have the Sabbath, and that is time to be sanctified by holy use. Besides this, all may find time, and many much time for religious uses. I fully believe that, by a wise arrangement and firm resolves, very many Christians might, apart from the Sabbath, devote one day in a week to spiritual claims, without temporal loss, and with much religious profit. Remember, all time stands related to eternity; and in the use of it you should preserve this relation unbroken.

Say not, that you want *influence*. You have it. You must dwell in the desert, silent and alone, not to have it.

You have more than you think. Ah ! you complain of the want of it ; consider whether some may not complain of your evil use of it ? Are there none the worse for you ? Want influence ! You have too much, if it is not to be used for good. Correct yourself on this subject, and hold what you have as a steward for God. All possess this invaluable talent, and generally beyond what they admit. I have known a child of fourteen bring, by his persuasions, nine other persons to worship on a special occasion. I have known a child of seven, the instrument of converting one parent, and of bringing both under the means of grace. I have known a Christian woman, a poor widow, unusually deaf, the means of introducing seven or eight persons to the fellowship of the church ! Who, then, shall deem himself exonerated from such service, disqualified for such pleasure !

Again, we say, if any difficulty still remains, *begin at once.*

III.

Let us now glance at the *motives* which should animate us in the discharge of this duty.

1. That it is a *duty* we have already seen ; and this consideration, to a rectified mind, will itself constitute a motive. The will of God is the highest reason of conduct to an intelligent creature. Though the service should bring with it no pleasure ; though it should be a source of continued pain and mortification ; it should be enough that it is the will of God. Let no other consideration disturb the supremacy of this in your conscience.

2. Consider that it is a *means of grace to yourself.*

God has condescended to make it so. In every thing He has linked our profit and our duty together; so that we cannot serve him or our fellow-men without advantage. When Job prayed for his friends, his captivity was broken. While you linger, hesitate, and do no good to others, no good comes to you. If you would prove that you have spiritual life, do it by action. If you would improve the evidence and power of that life, still do it by action. If you would have the truth appear to you in greater clearness, endeavor to make it plain to others. If you would dissipate your doubts and anxieties, plunge not into subtle questions, but be up and active at your Saviour's bidding, and you shall know your love to God and to your brother also. If you ask me once and again, What is the best evidence and the surest nourisher of life? my answer still is, Action, action—holy and benevolent action! Exercise is at once the cure and the preventive of a thousand religious ailments.

3. Consider *your obligations*. These are to the amount of your receipts; who then shall enumerate them? All that you possess you have received; and all that you have received, you are freely to bestow. It were a robbery to retain what is given us to ourselves. No creature is made for itself. The sun shines for others; nature is made for man; and man is made for God. Your talents are for others, and not for yourself. Your privileges are for others, and not merely for yourself. You lose what you selfishly keep; you multiply the treasure you generously bestow. You have been privileged to hear the blessed tidings from heaven of pardon, peace and life; and by that very circumstance you are bound to make it known to others. "Let him that heareth say, Come!"

4. Consider *your negligences*. Perhaps this great subject has never yet had that measure of attention which you are now giving to it. How much of life is gone! What opportunities of usefulness have been lost! How often you have been silent when you might have spoken! How much you might have done which you have left undone! How many you might have benefited whom you have neglected! and of these, how many are now placed beyond your reach! They were once near you, they looked up to you, you had great power over them; but they lived and died without warning and without hope! Once a son, on the couch of death, sent for his father, and fixing his eyes on him, said, "I am dying—I am lost—and I am lost through you!" There was agony! No one, perhaps, wrung by despair, has thus torn your soul; but does conscience refer you to no child, no friend, no neighbor, who, if not restrained from regard to your feelings, *might* so have uttered himself?

How little time remains to you! The past cannot be recovered. The dead cannot live over again, that you may show yourself more faithful and kind to them. But there are the living; thy child, thy friend, thy brother, thy neighbor. Shall they also perish, and you raise no warning voice, and stretch forth no helping hand? Rather let your right hand forget its operation and your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth!

5. Consider the *misery* of man, of all men, in an un-renewed state. You know it, for you have felt it. Call it to mind; let it be present to you in vivid recollection as an unwearied motive of action. In life what misery! His mind darkened, his will perverted, his passions disordered, and conscience preying like a vulture on the false

peace he would bring to himself! To him, poor child of folly and of sin, life is without a reason, events without a providence, and the universe without a God! Will you not pity him? Are you a man? is he not your brother? Do you not know the wormwood and the gall, the bitterness and the guilt of his condition? Will you not pity him?

Look on him again! In death, what misery! He has, like yourself, a soul, conscious, immortal, of vast capacities for bliss or wo; but for that soul he has made no provision. He dies; that is, his hope dies, his illusions die, his peace is annihilated; but he exists and cannot die. He is forced into an eternity which he should have made his home and his inheritance. Nothing is now between himself and God—the God he has neglected and despised! He is confounded to find himself in his presence. All the truth breaks on him. He shrinks to see himself undone; sinks down and away from the insufferable glory into darkness, deep, unfathomable, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Oh! wretched, wretched sight! A lost universe were less calamitous than a *lost soul*!

Will you not make haste to save one? Have you, even now, any in particular, that you are seeking to shield from the wrath to come?

5. Consider the *blessedness of success*. This is so great as to be difficult to appreciate or explain. Yet it is to be regarded, dwelt on, and made a motive to earnest exertion. "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, let him know that he saveth a soul from death, and preventeth a multitude of sins." Let him *know* this; let him ponder it; let him ask himself what it is to save a *soul*—to save a soul from death, everlasting death—and if he has

labored to this issue, let him take the blessed consciousness and satisfaction to himself.

You have perhaps been the favored instrument of saving a fellow being from temporal death. Can you make the mind, which cares only for itself, understand your felicity ?

I once looked on a veteran seaman, who, by his heroic courage, was supposed to have saved upwards of one hundred lives on the Goodwin Sands. When the circumstance was referred to, he attempted not to explain his joy ; but a calm and complacent pleasure beamed over his fine countenance, and assured you that he was conscious of having lived for a great and noble purpose.

You have read of Harlan Page. What must have been his humble gratitude and joy, when on the bed of death, though his life was short, and himself a private Christian, he could say,—“ I trust, through the blessing of God, I have been the means of saving not less than one hundred souls !”

Oh ! know the bliss of blessing others, and not merely for this life, but for ever ! Let the thoughtless multitude seek their bliss in wealth, in fame, in ease, in appetite, in the world and in themselves : but, do you obey your noble vocation. Find a bliss they shall never know, in laboring for the salvation of your fellow-men, and the glory of your common Saviour ! Resolve, by the grace of God, not to go to heaven alone. Think little of your personal bliss, and much of that bliss and honor which shall accrue to the Redeemer, by causing him to see of the travail of his soul, and you shall be happy indeed.

6. Finally, consider the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know it, but *consider* it. His one great purpose was

“to seek and to save them that are lost.” This filled his whole mind and spirit. He must fulfil it at all expense, at all hazard. He could not be happy with this unaccomplished. For this He came down from heaven, and, being God, became man to save man. For this he lived through life in poverty, ignominy, and sorrow ; and for this He died the death of agony which none other could die. For this He still lives in glory ; and to this He is making all things in nature and providence contributory.

Oh ! dwell at the feet of your Saviour. Think of His love and His grace ; His tears, and His triumphs. Have fellowship with His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death. Let the very mind that is in Him be also [in you. Let what is little to Him be trivial to you. Let what is great to Him be great to you. Live His life. Gather in the lost to His fold. Participate His joy, in the kingdom of His Father, and your Father.

Connect habitually the salvation of the individual sinner with the accumulated and glorious results of the Great Redemption. That one sinner whom you save is indispensable to the perfection of the whole family of the redeemed ! This thought shall bring you to participate in the joy which springs from its perfected numbers and endless felicity !

LECTURE IV.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
IN THE FAMILY.

LECTURE IV.

ITS ADVANCEMENT IN THE FAMILY.

“ Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.”

IN the last Lecture we have treated of the advancement of religion by personal effort. As this is the duty of every Christian, so it must be equally evident that, in endeavoring conscientiously to fulfil it, he should begin with his own household.

A family is an admirable specimen of social economy. It is the best form, having of course respect to the members which compose it, in which it can be presented. It supplies us with an instance of authority tempered by love, and of love sustained by authority ; which, if it could be realized on a larger scale, would go far to secure the peace of the world and the happiness of men.

It is the original form. It is essential to all, and the germ of all. Several families make the village ; and a multitude of families constitute the town, the city, the nation. A family is admirable as a specimen of religious economy. It is meant for this, and not merely for civil uses. It is an institution of the Father of all, in which He is to be recognised, and through which he is to be glorified. It is composed of rational and immortal beings ; it is to contemplate their spiritual and lasting welfare ; and it is to be regarded as a state of preparation for eternity.

Under this aspect we are now to observe it. It is as-

sumed that the claims of religion are generally admitted ; that in your families you do acknowledge God, and desire to walk in his ways. It would be intolerable to you to be part of a family in which no worship was offered to him, and no blessing sought from his hand. Rejoicing, then, that religion dwells and is honored in your habitation, it is for us to treat of its advancement in your household as the great means of advancing religious prosperity.

Can you think the subject unnecessary ? Does religion dwell with you in such vitality and power as to leave you nothing to desire ? Is God so worshipped, loved, and honored by you and yours, as to place you above the need either of counsel or exhortation ? When, in apostolic times, a family could receive the high compellation of “the *church* in thy house,” what did it not imply of love, piety, and Christian fellowship ? Would it not be a bitter sarcasm, if applied to most religious families ? Do you feel that it could be appropriate if applied to yours ? Would it not convey censure rather than praise ?

I ask, then, your candid consideration of this important subject. Willingly come under a just sense of deficiency ; and prayerfully crave for your beloved household an advancement in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.

Let us have respect to the *Method* in which we may look for this advancement ; and then to the *Inducements* disposing us to it.

I. *The Method.*

In speaking of a family, if we chiefly refer to the connection of parent and child, it is for the sake of greater simplicity. We are far from meaning to exclude the do-

mestics. They have their claims, some in common and some peculiar. But there is no fear of culpable deficiency towards them, if we can only secure right feeling and conduct in the first relationship. The Christian who religiously regards his child, cannot despise the claim of his servant.

In a family, the most intimate ties are between the *parents*; and they participate in a common responsibility. It is therefore of the first importance that they should come to a full understanding, and should earnestly seek the improvement of mutual piety. Especially they should be *one*; one in love, one in confidence, one in co-operation; most of all, in co-operation. At no time, under no circumstances, should it be felt by the family that they were divided in opinion or feeling. No separate excellence could atone for so serious an evil. It would neutralize their authority; it would hinder their prayers; and it would tempt their children and domestics to play off one parent against the other. They must place themselves above the whispers of vanity and partiality; they must yield something to each other, rather than present a divided authority to those who should respect it. They must be one in mind, one in purpose, one in effort; so that the action and presence of one may always have the weight and authority of both. Blessed are the parents who are so united to bless their households.

Much has been said, in this connection, of maternal influence, and chiefly to its praise. We most cheerfully concur in that praise; but we must not forget that there are other lights in which it may be profitably contemplated. The fact is, that in the economy of a family maternal influence is necessarily the most powerful. It is the most present, the most insinuating, and the most operative; and,

over the early periods of life especially, it is paramount, and almost alone. It is meant to be so by the gracious Father of us all. Of course this influence is mighty alike for good or for harm.

We have properly rejoiced over its salutary power a thousand times, without perhaps marking sufficiently its sinister operations. These, however, are very fearful, and not infrequent. A family is almost certain to go wrong, if the mother leads the way. I have mourned over many a family restrained from the profession of religion by maternal influence, and at last scattered and lost in worldly connections. I have now before my mind a large and fine family rising up to maturity. The father follows a profession, and has few opportunities of intercourse, except for occasional recreation. The mother is ever with her children, but she is worldly in her temper and desires. The father is pious, anxious, prayerful; but his beloved children, one after the other, give themselves to the world; and so his hopes wither, and his spirit is broken. What wonder that this should happen! What grief that it should come from a parent—a mother! What child shall overcome the temptations of this world, who is allured towards them by the persuasive voice and leading hand of a beloved mother!

1. To give some order to our remarks, let it be fully admitted, that the advancement of religion in the family must spring from *improved personal piety*. This is indeed a distinct consideration, but it is also relative and indispensable. We have treated of it separately; yet it requires to be uniformly present to our thoughts.

A family should be habitually regarded as a smaller church. Our relationships should be held from God, and

for his glory. Though they exist for temporal uses, it should be felt that these are to be subordinate to such as are spiritual and eternal. Virtually, the connections of parent and child, master and servant, run into eternity; and they will be an occasion of eternal delight or eternal anguish.

Those who sustain authority in the family should live under these convictions. They should feel that to their families they are the representatives of the heavenly Father; that they have the charge of souls; and that their first object should be their salvation. To advance religion in their beloved circle, they should seek its advancement in themselves. Because they hold such important and happy relationships, they should stand nearer to God in daily fellowship, and covet more earnestly the communication of all spiritual good. This growing, ardent desire after improved personal piety makes all the difference between the form of religion and the power, the letter and the spirit; and our preparedness or unpreparedness to bless our household. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2. *Improved instruction* may contribute to the advancement of religion. Happily this is a day of education; so that the subject is familiar to the thoughts of men. As might be expected, general inquiry has given birth to many theories and methods, some of them sufficiently artificial and empirical. The administration, however, is not, in its mode, complex or difficult. The great end of education may be missed or attained in the use of the same method; and whatever the detail, it shall approach in result near to perfection if but one rule predominate: always to *speak to the understanding and the heart rather than to the memory.*

This particularly applies to education as we have now to consider it. It is moral, it is religious ; and is to be administered in the bosom of a family. The more simple the method the wiser and the better. On the character of it, I would say, let it be *more scriptural*. Religion is what you propose to teach ; but religion in its pure and perfect form is only found in the sacred Scriptures. The Bible, therefore, must be your text book and authority. If other books are used, they must be held as subsidiary to it. You should approach it with deference ; and those you instruct should at once feel, that you regard it as distinct from every other book ; as separate as the divine from the human. Use it not as a book of tasks, but as a book of life. Overload not the memory with its contents ; but awaken towards them the reverence, the expectation, the love of the pupil. Deal most with the truth in which is bound up our salvation. Speak of life as lost by man ; of life as restored by Jesus Christ ; of life as abounding in immortality by the Gospel. Treat it as news, news from heaven. Show that you expect it should be at once received with great joy. Leave it on the mind as the word of God ; and that it is an offence not against your authority, but His, if it is rejected.

Let it be *more affectionate*. Be not content to impart a measure of religious instruction from a cold sense of duty, it will languish on your lips if you do. Your theme is love, heavenly love ; you address the special objects of your love ; when should your heart glow and your lips be ruled by the law of kindness if not at such a time ? Whatever you want, at least bring your heart to it. Your doctrine shall then drop as the rain on the tender herb, and distil as the dew. The mind is open to manifold influences, but nothing works like love ; and there is nothing of

which the young especially are more conscious than the presence or absence of affection. A little girl once said to her father as she sat on his knee, "Papa, pray with me as my mamma does." He was not used to free prayer, and was yet unwilling to refuse his child. He took a book, and they knelt down and read a prayer. When they arose the child looked in her father's face and said, "Papa ! you didn't pray for the *dear little girl*, as mamma does." She was conscious of the want of a tone and manner which had often gone to her heart.

Let it be *more frequent*. Too often, even in religious families, these engagements are made to wait on more clamorous, but less important claims. They should not usually be put aside ; they should never be hurried over ; but they should be approached with that respect and pleasure which will give a just impression of their character. When the periods of religious intercourse are the last considered ; when a preference is readily given to inferior things ; when an excuse is not only made, but, perhaps, invented for neglecting them ; must there not be any thing rather than a favorable impression ? On the contrary, if the opportunities of a family are really few and brief, while they are eagerly embraced and a real pleasure is shown in seizing such as unexpectedly occur, the best results will follow.

Let it be *more earnest*. All teachers are liable to become mechanical. This is bad in every case ; but it is fatal in religious teaching. It is nothing if it is not earnest. Watch, then, against formality. Connect with the detail, great and momentous considerations. Place the state of your child distinctly before you, not in the lights of your own partiality, but in those of sacred Scripture. Feel for it—be in anguish for it—let nothing satisfy you but its

salvation. Look at once for decisive results. Be not satisfied with mere hopeful appearances. They are all illusive while the heart is unchanged. Nothing is done till the soul is converted to God. Seek this not at sixteen or seventeen years ; but much earlier. A parent once replied to some remonstrances, that he did not expect a child to be decidedly religious till he was sixteen. He has waited till that period ; and his son is gone wholly into the world. What wonder ? If the father could delay a matter of such importance for so long a period, might not the child also postpone it for a time ? I should tremble to have a child rising into youth without professing religion ; every day would diminish the likelihood of his making profession at all. If a servant shall be three months in a religious family without receiving a serious character, the probability is that none will be produced. First impressions are the strongest, and to resist these hardens the heart. Look for fruit at once.

Take care that your earnestness be *prayerful*. That is its proper temper. If not so, it will be anxious, irritable, severe. Prayer will assist you at once to work and to wait. Every effort for your family will be sustained by breathing desires towards heaven. You will not be tempted to tease a child into religion ; while you will always be ready to use the favorable occasion. You will lean on God, and preserve your equanimity. Too many parents, who think that they do so, really fail in this particular. Their faith is in their relationship, their influence, their authority, rather than completely in God. They expect these to secure attention—perhaps conversion—and are disposed to resent it personally if disappointed. Settle it as a maxim, that though the object of your solicitude is a relative, a child, nothing whatever will win his heart to the Saviour but the grace of

God. Let your faith be strong, and your prayers will be strong. You will pray for and with the objects of your care. Prayer will inspire all your teachings. You will rest in prayer.

3. *Improved devotion* will contribute to the advancement of religion.

It is taken for granted that you observe domestic worship. A family cannot be considered religious without it. But is it what it ought to be? Is it not often so hurried as to exclude all composure? Is it not so short, as not even to interrupt the stream of worldly thought and domestic care running through the mind; and though not constrained by printed forms, is it not, in fact, often so formal as to have nothing of the power and joy of life? Have you not sometimes a painful consciousness that the effect, as a whole, is rather bad than beneficial? Certainly we have known it so used, as that it were more honored in the breach than the observance. However, the cure is not in neglect, but in amendment.

It may contribute to the proposed end if you endeavor to give a *distinct* and *sacred character* to every religious engagement. The less it is in itself the more it needs this protection. From want of this, a "grace before meals is often a most graceless thing. It is frequently finished before half the family are aware it is begun. The mere act of *standing* will assist in securing decorum, and calling up attention to this appropriate exercise of prayer and thanksgiving.

In the morning and evening devotions look to the same result by similar means;* they may seem trivial, but to

* Where, for instance, the same room is used for worship and meals, the simple rule always to have the table cleared, will work beneficially.

those who best know our nature they are important. Approach the exercise with solemn pleasure. Read the sacred Scripture as indeed the very word of God, and of eternal life. Let the prayers spring from the present wants and mercies of the family, and be sustained more or less by the sentiments suggested by the word of truth. If possible sing. It is a delightful exercise ; it is most interesting to the young ; it is the natural expression of cheerful piety. It has mostly prevailed in our families as a living and healthful form of religion has prevailed. Its general abandonment in our time is an unfavorable indication ; and when piety shall revive amongst us, again shall be heard the voice of solemn grateful praise in the tabernacles of the righteous.

4. Carefully *improve the Lord's day*. It is nearly all the time which most families can fully command ; and it is invaluable. Honor it, welcome its approach, rejoice and be glad in it. Let every member of your family feel that it is the happiest time that passes over you.

Use it for strictly spiritual purposes. Show [that you regard it as precious time, set apart for the benefit of the soul, and preparation for the blessed life which is to come. be covetous of its improvement. Prepare for it. Disengage it as much as possible not only from worldly business, but domestic care. Provide not for the flesh, but for the spirit ; and thus train those about you to think of a life superior to the body and boundless as eternity.

Regard the institutions of the Sabbath. Revere the house of God—not the building of wood and stone—but the living church of the redeemed. Hasten to the assemblies of the saints, both as a means of personal edification, and of profession and conviction to the world around you.

Feel that your relationship to them is more sacred and more enduring than any others which you sustain. Go not to hear a man and to sit in judgment on his opinions ; go to worship God in the beauty of holiness, and to hear the word of truth as from His lips. Be sure to place yourself and family, at whatever trouble, under a ministry that is most adapted to impart and advance spiritual life. Honor that ministry in the presence of your children and domestics. Good cannot possibly come to them or to you from a ministry which you treat with levity, or expose to ridicule. No surer cause of spiritual barrenness to a family can be found than an unprofitable ministry, or a ministry which they have learned to disesteem.

Carefully sustain the good effect of public worship, by a corresponding temper and conversation at home. The finest effect of the sanctuary has frequently vanished before a little levity or worldliness in the family. Secure on this day some opportunities of religious intercourse with your household. When good impression has been made treat it as confidential and private. Encourage those who are the subjects of it to retire for reading, reflection, and prayer ; and supply the busiest with favorable opportunities for so doing. A period for retirement should be as much reckoned on in a family as a period for meals. All find time to dine, and all should find time to pray. Prayer is the food of the soul.

5. *Improved example* will contribute to advance religion in the family. After all, example is the great teacher. To the adult it is so ; to the young it is more especially so. Hence our Saviour embodied his doctrine in his life. What avail, at this hour, would his doctrine be to us, if it had not been sustained by his entire conduct ?

Children make more use of the eye than the ear ; and the impressions are clearer and stronger from the one than the other. They will not be influenced so much by what you say, as by *what you do*. In vain do you exhort them to be spiritual, while you are worldly. In vain do you point them to the narrow path which leads to heaven, while you decline to walk in it. In vain do you warn them from carnal indulgences, in which you seek your gratification. You must live what you teach ; you must be what you desire them to become. This is the necessary price of a happy state of religion in the family ; and it is, alas ! a price many parents decline to pay. They desire that their children should be religious—it is safe and convenient ; but they cannot afford to promote their desires by a strict and full example. They judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.

Look, then, carefully to your example. There is in it the power of life and death. Whatsoever is just in principle, lovely in carriage, true in utterance, fair in report, generous in sentiment, and noble in aim, think of these things, cherish these things, as the grace of Christian life. All meanness, vanity, equivocation, trickery, low desire—the desire of gain the most sordid of all—are worse in you than in other persons. Common vice is made prodigious by the character of your profession. One cherished inconsistency may perplex the faith and destroy the soul of a servant—a child. They may know little, but they are exceedingly shrewd in marking improprieties. A dissipated youth, once appealed to by the name and profession of his father, turned away and sneeringly exclaimed, “My father’s profession ! the less said of that the better !” The son had come to know, that some of the father’s transactions had not been so upright as his profession demanded.

Oh ! as you value the life of your household, look

well to put every stumbling-block out of their way. Whatever infirmities may still cleave to you, take care that nothing disturb their conviction of the sincerity and integrity of your Christian character. Let the ruling purpose of life be perfectly clear, and the total impression salutary. So that when those who best knew you and most loved you, shall witness your end, and bear you from your dwelling in sorrow, and commit you to the grave, and look for the last time on you before the earth covers you, the spontaneous voice of conscience may be, "Well, he was a true Christian! Let my life and my death be like his!"

If such effect is emanating from your living character, one half the good we are contemplating for your family is already secured. Education is, after all, a different thing from what many suppose it. They confine it to books, to classes, to lessons, and the professed teacher. No, it is not, in its most essential parts, so ceremonious a thing; and it is always going on. Your principles are education; your temper is education; your habits are education; your governing desires and pursuits are education. The society you keep, and the conversation you maintain is education. These are silently, but potently working good or ill for your household every day, and every hour. If these are in harmony with your profession, you need not be diffident of results. There may still be wanted the aids of science and of art; but the great elements of education are with you; and your tender charge is training for the duties of this life, and the joys of a future, beneath the most auspicious influence.

6. I will close this series of remark by one other, and that is, *Begin afresh*. This may seem a trite observation; but, in my judgment, it is, of all others, the most important.

You may have been satisfied, by reflection on the subject, that you have *never been right*. You have not habitually regarded God, as the common and gracious Father of parent and child. You have not walked in his presence ; you have not upheld his authority ; you have not rejoiced in his worship, nor have you trained your household chiefly to his fear and service. Your religion has been a form without life, an instrument without power. You have honored God with your mouth, and with your knee, but your heart has been far from Him. Religion has found from you a ceremonious acknowledgment, because her observances are decent, or her restraints are desirable, or her name is hallowed to your memory by previous example ; but the spirit of the world and of this life has reigned over your mind, your family, and all your arrangements for its welfare. If such should be your convictions ; and if you have the candor to entertain them ; with what emphasis does the Past say to you, *Begin afresh !*

But it may be, that you have a pleasant consciousness of having begun in the Spirit. Still a comparison of what was your happiest state, with your *present disposition* and conduct, may carry you to a profitable though unfavorable conclusion. The tendency of the mind is to slip away from what is most difficult in religion. Nothing is so difficult as to preserve its spirituality. Insensibly your heart may have slid away from your first love, first faith and former simplicity. In this state of declension, habits may have been formed and opinions generated, prejudicial to the life of godliness. Your very tones of speech, and modes of address and prevalent temper, may have been silently altered, and altered to the disadvantage of religion. Prayer may be so uttered as to quench the spirit of prayer ; and the hosanna of praise may languish and die on the formal tongue.

What is the remedy in such a case? Begin afresh. Compare the present with the past—compare things as they are, with things as they should be. Fall willingly under the convictions of defect and sin. Pause in your course. Break up existing habits. Revise all your arrangements in reference to a revived state of religion. Set an elevated standard before you. Deeply consider the one great end for which you are constituted a family by the Father of us all. Ask anxiously and prayerfully, how each member may be best prepared for a bright and blessed eternity. Reconstruct all your methods, when the mind is most solemnly affected by the power of religion and the world to come. Be jealous of the tendencies which you have detected in your own spirit to depart from God; and, from time to time, correct yourself by a penitential recurrence to the standard of all excellence and grace. Always, Begin afresh!

II.

We are now to glance at the *inducements which should incline us to this service*. These are manifold. You will naturally recur, in the first instance,

1. To your *relationship*. The persons for whose benefit we are now discoursing are *yours*. Yours by the most endeared ties—your wife—your child. You value them as such. You protect and provide for them as such. Of all that is yours, they are most yours. They stand the nearest to you; and they have the first place in your affections. They are more to you than property, more than fame, more than pleasure, more than life. What a poor thing would life be without them? What would you not do for them? What would you not sacrifice?

But why? Who made you what you are? Who gave thee the wife of thy bosom, the children of thy youth? Who has brought to you so much of comfort and endearment, from these blessed connections? Who has made you to differ from the most bereaved and unhappy; and who might strike your choicest comforts dead at any instant of time? And why are you thus blessed and thus dependent? Unquestionably, that you may acknowledge God; that you may see that the various links of domestic life are sustained by the one prior link which unites you to Him; that, as you derive all from Him, you may yield all to Him; that your lesser claims may rest on his authority, and your daily bliss be gathered from his favor.

2. Then remember *the vows* by which you are pledged. By solemn vow you have become yourself a consecrated person; and by solemn vow you have dedicated your children and household to God. You have perhaps done this by a public act and before many witnesses. Implied or expressed, you have done it a thousand times. In the anticipation of these relationships, you have said, They shall be thine. In the fearful hour of solicitude and pain, and in the grateful hour of deliverance and joy, you have said, with unutterable tenderness, They shall be thine. All sincere prayer and all spiritual desire have taken this character.

By every such purpose of heart you have resigned your inferior claims to the superior right of God. And shall it be an empty mockery? The vows which your lips have uttered in distress and in deliverance—in agony and in rapture—shall they be despised and forgotten? or if remembered, remembered only on high, to be recorded against you? It cannot be! This would be to expose yourself willingly to the infelicity and guilt of knowing the Master's will and

doing it not. You will recollect yourself. You will revive the past. You have promised, and you will perform. You will gratefully say, "I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid ; and these, the children thou hast given me, behold, They are all thine."

3. I beg of you to consider *the influence* which you have over your family. That you have this influence, is placed beyond proof. It is meant that you should have it. It springs necessarily from your age, your character, your knowledge ; from inexpressible endearments and obligations. It is greater than that of any other human being. Who knows like you the temper, the infirmities, the necessities of your household ? Who like you can so readily win their attention and confidence ? Who is loved, as you are loved ; or trusted as you are trusted ? A word, a look, from you, what power is in it to rebuke, to regulate or to cheer !

Again we ask, Why is this ? That you may despise it ? That you may use it to your own selfish purposes ? No. It is a means of happiness to yourself, but it is something more. It is a trust as well as a treasure. Over all the chords that unite you in harmonious relationship, there is a voice that says, "Train up this child for me, and I will give thee wages." It is a claim prior to your own, superior to your own. You cannot dispense with it. None can give you a dispensation from it. No godfather, no godmother, no teacher, no minister, can release you—you are bound to Heaven, and none on earth can set you free !

4. Then revert to the *state* of your relatives in domestic life. Nothing is more certain than that they participate with you in a common state of sinfulness. And can any

thing be more affecting? That the objects of your tenderest love, who are growing up around your table in beauty like the olive plant, and about whom are entwined the dearest hopes of life, should be alienated from God, destitute of his likeness, and children of wrath, even as others! That those who daily love and serve you, should decline His service and withhold their hearts from Him! Can any thing be more afflictive to a generous mind?

Yes, there is yet a nearer view of the subject which is more distressing. It is that you, as a parent, have been accessory to this state of things. They are the subjects of darkness, perversity and alienation: but they derive it from you. They are born in your likeness; in miniature, they are what you are. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"

Are you a parent? Have you any tenderness? Can you do otherwise than deeply commiserate the evil estate of those you love—an estate to which you have brought them? Suppose you had taken a malignant fever; and that after life had trembled in the balance, a change came over you which secured your recovery. But, while recovering yourself, suppose you should learn that your family had taken the disease; that your beloved children were sinking—dying—beneath its raging power; what would be your agony! "Unhappy parent," you would exclaim, "that I am! I am spared; but where are all my beloved ones—my children? Writhing in agony—gasping in death! and all through me! would to God that I had died for them!"

Are you a Christian parent? Are you more afflicted by physical evil than by that which is spiritual? Are you concerned for the bodily life of a child, and not for its eternal welfare? Is death more than hell? Will you not

hasten to redeem the objects of your love from evils which are illimitable and everlasting—evils which have found their bitter source in your apostasy from God ?

5. Then bear in mind, that you have *special promises* to encourage you in looking to the salvation of your family. It is evidently the design of God to regard us in our social, as well as in our separate and individual capacity. It should seem that he has peculiar delight in revealing himself under the parental character, and in recognising the same character in us. “I know him,” he said of Abraham, “that he will order his household after him ;” and then follows the promise of blessing to his seed to the latest generation. We are to train up our child in the way he should go, with the assurance, that when he is matured in life he shall not depart from it. As the tender branch retains in age the direction which was given to it in youth, so shall the future man display the habits and principles of the child.

The New dispensation looks, as one might expect, not with less, but with more complacency on the young of our families. The promise of the Holy Spirit is “to us and to our children.” Yea, the believing husband sanctifieth the unbelieving wife for the sake of their offspring—such is the exuberance of grace. And the blessed Saviour breathes the whole spirit of the economy, when he says to those who would prevent it—“Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

As much grace might have been intended for our families, without these assurances. But since we have such exceedingly precious promises, shall they not stimulate you to give all diligence for the salvation of your households ? Beneath trial, discouragement, and labor, will you not believe the promise, plead the promise, rest on the promise,

resolving not to relinquish it till it is fulfilled ? Thousands of blissful children are already before the throne of God and of the Lamb ; ultimately the majority of the saved will be found amongst the young of our race. And shall not your children have their names written in the Book of Life ? Will not you claim and plead your interest in that covenant which is for you and yours, and which is ordered in all things and sure ? Oh ! if there were *no* promise how intensely would you desire one ! Now that every thing is full of promise, surely you will use all means for their salvation.

6. Finally. Have respect to *the benefits* which would arise from success in laboring for the salvation of your family. Of success, in the right use of appointed means, there can be no place for doubt ; for He is true and faithful who hath promised. But who shall appreciate its blessedness ?

To *yourself* what joy would it bring ! It has been questioned, whether there is such a malady as a broken heart. Allowing for the figurative character of the expression, I believe there is ; and if any were to be found on earth, it is with the parent of an ungrateful, disobedient, and ungodly child. And the agony would be complete and beyond a cure, if the errors of the child were to be traced to the negligence of the parent. Reverse this case, and measure the joy by the grief.

A beloved child, having arrived at maturity, was seized with consumption, and was now in the last stage of feebleness and of life. She begged to see her father alone. A thousand times that father had prayed for her ; and always had watched for her conversion to God. He had done so through some discouragements, but with many

hopes. In this extreme affliction nothing did he desire so deeply as some explicit intimation from the lips of his child which should remove doubt, and confirm his confidence. In this temper of mind he hastened to her presence. She was low, very low, and gasping for breath. She begged to be raised on her pillows, and seemed calmly intent on fulfilling a duty. She placed her hand on his arm, and said with broken utterance, "My dear father, listen to me. Timidity has prevented my speaking before—weakness almost prevents me now—but I must speak. I trust I have seen myself to be a sinner—I trust I have seen Christ to be a gracious and sufficient Saviour—I trust I have believed in Him as my Saviour—I trust he is about to take me to heaven. Dearest father! I owe this chiefly to you—to your prayers—to your counsels. Let this comfort you—think of your child as in heaven. We shall not be long parted—I shall meet you in heaven." Tell me, if you can, the gratitude, the joy of that parent!

Look at the happy effect on the family. Whence come those bickerings, jarrings and lesser alienations in the sacred inclosures of domestic life? Whence also those oppressive cares, worldly anxieties, and selfish emulations? Come they not in the absence of true religion? Wherever she is in reality, they are qualified; wherever she is in power, they are subdued. Piety in a servant, in a child, not to say in a parent, has brought a surprising measure of bliss into a family otherwise unhappy. But suppose that most, or that all the members of a family are living under the influence of true piety, and what a scene offers itself for admiration! Those who live in one house are of one mind. All know their relationship to each other, because all preserve their relations to God. Order is there, and peace, and love, and worship. No one lives to himself;

but each one for the good of all. Cares are lightened by participation, till they almost lose their name ; and pleasures are multiplied till each one has a double portion. A green spot springs up in the arid wilderness of life, where are found again fountains of water and the tree of life. Angels, as they fulfil their commissions of mercy and judgment in our world, pause over such a scene, and are refreshed on their way ! Ah, would you not, that your family might be such as that in it Paradise might be restored, angels visitants, and God, a present God, your glory and salvation !

Look at the effect on the *church*. The church is a larger family. It is necessarily composed of the members of our families ; and it ought especially to find its increase and strength from the bosom of professedly religious families. But frequently the accessions from this source bring with them more doubt and less profit, than such as are made from the world. The church languishes, because domestic religion languishes.

It was a saying worthy of the piety and experience of Richard Baxter—"If," said he, "parents did their duty, adult conversion would be as rare as it is now common." What a truth is this ! Adult conversion then, which the church has been accustomed to regard as so great a blessing, is really an evil to be deplored, and chargeable on the defective piety of our families ! If our professing families were as disconformed to the world, and as truly religious as they ought to be, our children would be well taught, early converted, and publicly devoted to God. In their profession they would be intelligent, steadfast, humble ; living for the extension of the church in which they had been nourished, and for the glory of the Saviour by whom they had been saved.

What a church should we then have ! For numbers, like the doves flying to their windows ; for beauty, like the moon walking in her brightness ; and for power, like an army with banners. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings should the ordained praise be expressed, and the enemy should be silenced in the gate. Infant piety should become giant piety ; she should burst the bands which the world has cast around her in her sickness and decrepitude ; and in renovated life and plenary grace, should stand forth to save and bless her spoilers.

Do great objects inspire ? Here is one ; and one, perhaps, which you have too much overlooked. You may bless the church through your family ; you cannot bless it in the neglect of your family ; you know not what bearing the conversion of a single child may have on the prosperity of the church. Hannah, when dedicating her child to God, little knew that Samuel was to be a prophet and saviour in Israel.

Let me, finally, entreat you to look at this subject in the lights of *death* and *eternity*. It is the part of wisdom and piety to respect the end. All the ties which we hold on earth must be broken. The term on which we meet, is, that we must separate, child from parent, parent from child. How important that the event of death, sufficiently awful in itself, should not be aggravated by the horrors of the second death ! It is my privilege to know a person who can deliberately say, " I have not a relative, nor have I lost a relative, of whose future happiness I have a single doubt." What an unfailing source of domestic felicity is this ! Strike where he may, death cannot find one unprepared ! Then, indeed, death has lost his sting, and the grave its victory, and all the members of such a family are

gathered in the fulness of time to a better and more glorious life.

Should not this be a prominent object of Christian ambition? To create no doubt to survivors, if called yourself to die; and to have no doubt, no self-reproaches, if called suddenly to resign those you most love. Ah! a single doubt at such a time will be dreadful, dreadful. Some time since I knew a youth of about sixteen years of age, who was of generous but froward temper, and he resolved to go to sea. His friends were therefore constrained to make an arrangement to suit his wishes. He was tenderly beloved by his mother; and she had educated him with as much religious care as most parents bestow on a child so young. No sooner, however, was he placed beyond her reach, than memory and conscience were busy with her; and she thought bitterly of the many things she might have said, and had not—of the many occasions which might have been improved for his spiritual welfare, and were not. She reproached herself, but found present relief in the sincere resolution, that on his return she would surely, and without delay, be more in earnest for his full conversion to God. Alas, for her—he never returned!—he was lost at sea. The shock laid her prostrate, and left her distracted. It was not merely that her son was lost to her, but that he was lost to God, and that she had been a guilty party to his ruin. What she regarded as her negligences rose on her mind like the great waters, and threatened to overwhelm her. And still that tender and gracious spirit is battling, in doubtful conflict, with unavailing regrets, and bitter accusations, which no earthly hand can subdue. Ah, pray to be spared the agony of losing a beloved relative without hope in his death—pray to be spared

the greater agony of feeling that, if lost, you have not done what you might and ought for his salvation !

Death removes us from time into eternity. All our relationships have a bearing on that eternity. We are all immortal, and must dwell for ever in a state the most wretched or blissful. Do we entirely believe this great truth ? Can any thing equal its solemnity ? Should it not be your chief, your uttermost desire through life, that all your beloved connections should awake to a glorious and blessed immortality ? Can any thing equal the honor, the bliss, the joy of then appearing a redeemed family—a holy family—a united family—a family in heaven ? Would you not willingly encounter all toils, any sufferings, any death to realize it ?

Allow the reverse to present itself to your mind. Suppose that in that great day there was an exception; that all of your beloved family were admitted to the heavenly bliss—except one. That all were there—but a revered father ; all—but a devoted mother ; all—but an endeared son ! How could you bear the agony of that discovery ?

If so fearful, so irretrievable, *then*, should you not seek with your whole soul to prevent it *now* ? In your family, as it is now found, is there not at least *one* member, of whom you must think that he is unprepared for death and heaven ? If he were to die now, die as he is, would you not have just reason to fear that he would never see light, never see you in peace ? And can you bear to think of him—your child, your parent—falling away from the bliss of heaven and the presence of God, down, down to the lowest depths of darkness and perdition for ever and for ever ? Oh, if you would prevent the horrible catastrophe, prevent it now ! Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. To-morrow may be too late. Your relative

may be lost, and you may be guilty of his blood. You ought not to endure to live in comfort a day with him who is living without God ; nor to accept with complacency the love of him who declines to love the highest object of affection.

Awake, then, from your slumbers ; listen not to the subtle spirit of procrastination. Too much time has been lost already. Every hour the unconverted and impenitent remains such, he remains in rebellion against the Author of his being, and stands exposed to his righteous but inexorable wrath. By all the considerations which have passed before you, with all their accumulated power ; by your tenderest relationships and most solemn vows ; by the misery and the guilt of those you most deeply love ; by the encouraging promises and abounding mercy of God ; by the bliss of heaven and the untold horrors of perdition, aspire to be a saved, a happy family !

LECTURE V.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
BY THE MINISTRY.

LECTURE V.

ITS ADVANCEMENT BY THE MINISTRY.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

THE ministry is a divine institution. It has God for its Author ; truth for its substance ; and salvation for its end. It is not only a means of grace ; it is the best and chiefest. The world may account it to be weakness or folly ; but in a higher judgment it is “the wisdom of God and the power of God.” It is the ministry “of grace, of reconciliation, of life, of the Spirit, and of glory.” It, more than all other means united, is to reveal the Father, glorify the Son, gather in the church, civilize the nations, and bless mankind.

The success of this ministry, on its institution by our Lord, is sufficient to justify this statement. By the living testimony of a few disciples, the word of the Lord had “free course,” and was abundantly “glorified.” In one day three thousand persons were converted, and added to the church. Speedily afterwards we are told, that many heard and believed, and that “the number of the men was about five thousand.” Still it spread ; and Jew and Gentile, bond and free, yielded to its power and magnified the name of the Lord Jesus. All the forms of superstition and idolatry quailed before the simple exhibition of the cross. In the course of about half a century large and flourishing churches were established in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth,

Ephesus, and Rome ; and “ the glorious gospel of the blessed God ” had been proclaimed to all nations.

This ministry is still with the church. But does it carry with it the same evidence of its power and efficiency ? Certainly not. Over a great portion of Christendom it is not a living but a dead letter ; and where it has life, it is, in most cases, in so feeble a measure, as not to be a prepared instrument of imparting life to others. Under a primitive ministry, thousands were converted by one sermon ; now a thousand sermons may yield but one conversion. And we are so accustomed to this state of things, that we scarcely expect any considerable improvement. If several persons should profess to have been renewed by one discourse, we should regard it either with surprise or suspicion ; and if they should shortly after be added to the church, surrounding churches would cherish fear, if they refrained from condemnation. “ We stagger, through unbelief,” at the very promise which we formally plead in our supplications.

Where the ministry is acting directly, and with most power, it is still a feeble instrument for good. In a congregation of five hundred persons, if one hundred are brought to a state of decision and fellowship, and if this proportion is sustained from year to year, by eight or ten conversions, it is sufficient to satisfy expectation if not desire. But such an advance hardly covers the wastes of defection and death ; and is not at all commensurate with the advancing numbers of the world’s population. The ministry therefore, at this moment, instead of an advancing movement, is, as compared with the increasing numbers and wants of mankind, falling away to a greater and more palpable state of inefficiency !

What then is to be done ? The ministry, to become

the means of renovation so the church and the world, must *itself be renovated*. This is the aspect in which we propose to contemplate it. Let us do so with the solemnity and prayerfulness which its importance demands. And may the renovating influence, which we recognise as necessary, be so freely bestowed as that this may be the *hour* of our spiritual renovation !

Without being constrained by the passage which we have read to you, let us follow its suggestions so far as they may assist in giving method and force to our meditations. Mark the *subject* of this ministry ; the *manner* in which it should be exercised ; and the *motive* which should stimulate us in this service.

I.

The great subject of this ministry is *the truth*—revealed truth—the truth as it is in Jesus—the truth of the New Testament.

1. The truth we utter must be *scriptural* even to its very *manner*.

It must not be hidden in technicalities, nor dissipated in philosophical refinements. It must be expressed, not in syllogisms, nor in systems, nor in human formularies ; but with all the life, light and freedom of Scripture. As it is our sure, so it is our sufficient guide. The Bible, my brethren, is orthodox enough for me ; the Bible has symmetry enough for me ; the Bible has philosophy enough for me. It must be our exemplar as well as our warrant. As we are filled with its spirit and catch its manner, we become able ministers of the New Testament ; when we would be

wiser than it, we are weak and foolish indeed. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

2. The truth is to be delivered in its *fulness*. We are to preach all the law and all the gospel; the whole counsel of God, whether it relate to our ruin or our recovery, the Divine sovereignty or human responsibility, the claims of this life or of the life that is to come. This we are to do sincerely, faithfully, perseveringly, whether men will hear, or whether they forbear to hear.

We soon find, by experience, that the heart of man is at enmity with the truth of the gospel; and we then come under strong temptation to withhold, to conceal, or to palliate. This would be to deal "deceitfully with the word of the Lord;" and as it would expose us to Divine reprehension, so it would assuredly disqualify us for all real usefulness. The truth is the sole instrument of repentance, conversion, sanctification, and spiritual life. Not a mind can be enlightened, not a sinner saved, without the application and belief of the truth. To withhold the truth, therefore, in whole or in part, or to adulterate it in its exhibition, that it may become palatable, is to be ashamed of the cross; it is so to please men as to cease to be the servants of God; it is to be stricken in the right eye and in the right arm—to be sightless and powerless for all the high purposes for which a ministry exists in our world.

Yet there is considerable mistake here. Many persons have thought that in order to faithfulness, every kind of truth should find place and prominence in each discourse; and many preachers, adapting themselves to this opinion, have thrown together on one occasion a variety of subjects, with as little connection as beads on a string. The indolence of the most indolent might be satisfied with such a

course ; but as it costs nothing, so it is really worth little to the hearer. Even where the defect is not so serious, the consequence is still prejudicial. I have heard a discourse on the great subject of the Judgment, in which an effort was made throughout to render it both consolatory and alarming. It was, therefore, neither the one nor the other in a high degree. Otherwise, it was an excellent sermon ; and but for this fault would have been powerful.

In a discourse, let it be remembered, unity is power. He who ventures to speak should have one great end before him ; and he should be so seriously affected towards it as to induce whatever might lead to it, and as carefully to exclude every thing that was not necessary to the issue. We need not fear, in such a course, that important truth would be forbidden to us. Truth is one. We have failed from want of sympathy with the truth. Deeper fellowship with the truth would have shown us, how the effect of any one truth is sustained by its connection with all other truth ; and would have given more simplicity to our purpose and more force to our ministrations. Our eye should have been single, and our whole body would have been full of light.

Extremes meet each other. Some preachers, quick to detect the error on which we have remarked, have run into an opposite one. They have studiously sought to conceal every portion of the gospel from the awakened sinner, lest it should interfere with the process of conviction ! Can this be correct ? Is it after apostolical models ? Does not this kind of management savor rather of human, than of the divine wisdom ? True it is, that the gospel may be so used in a season of conviction as to allay anxiety and weaken impressions ; but well we know, that it, above all other things, may be employed to establish conviction and gene-

rate repentance unto life. What like it can reveal the sinfulness of sin, the wilfulness of the sinner, the forbearance of God, the love of Christ, and the uttermost expressions of infinite mercy? And what like these considerations can become constraining motives to godly sorrow and absolute submission to God? Again we say, The Truth is one; it cannot work against itself. Fear nothing for the Truth, my brethren! Fear only lest it should be warped or discolored by the unskilful or the polluted hands through which it passes to your fellow-men.

Shall I sustain these remarks by an illustration, which has recently occurred to my notice? It is that of a person who had many religious privileges in early life, and who was led with much feeling and zeal to make a full profession. From that profession, under the influence of worldly pursuits, he fell away. He was successful in business, but unhappy in spirit; and he sought to quiet anxiety, not by full repentance, but by sinful indulgence. For twenty years he remained in this state, his religious friends often urging, and himself often resolving to return. Suddenly he was seized with sickness, which left him in no doubt of his condition—he must die! What confusion—what agony was his! His friends heard of his terror, and made haste each one to comfort him; but no, he refused to be comforted.

A minister, who knew something of the case, was requested to visit him. He resolved to deal faithfully with him. He heard all he wished to say, and then endeavored to release his mind from the past, whether for hope or despair, and to fix it on the present. His privileges, his knowledge, his profession, the mercies of God, and the unutterable sorrows of the Son of God, were all employed to aggravate his guilt, to reduce him to utter despair in his

own resources, to constrain him to a total surrender of himself into the hands of God, even though he should be condemned. From a state of wild agitation, he sank down, like a child, into tenderness and tears. "Ah, sir," he cried, clasping the hand of his friend, "*that is it*. That is what I want. I do not want comfort—I am afraid of comfort at present. It will not do for me to trust in a past conversion. I want to be *converted now*. I want to see more of the evil of sin—I cannot see enough. I long for a broken heart and a contrite spirit. I am a guilty, guilty sinner. Let God be glorified, whatever becomes of me." Repentance on a death-bed is seldom to be trusted; this, however, through all its stages, was highly satisfactory. It is admitted the gospel may have been unskilfully used in the first instance; but where, in the absence of the gospel, shall we look for such ultimate results?

3. The truth, on which we have thus briefly remarked, is to be presented to "*men*." "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It has respect to *man*." Our ministry turns not on ourselves, but on others. If we hold it and use it for ourselves—for our personal interest, or pleasure, or honor—we are not the servants of God; and the ministry, in our hands, is not an ordinance of God for the salvation of men. Philanthropy must be the spirit of our ministry.

As it regards man, so especially the better part of man, his soul. His soul is himself. We are to win souls—to watch for souls—to labor for souls, as they who must give an account. Man is distinguished by a spiritual nature and an everlasting being—these are every thing to him. Our ministry is prepared to meet his highest necessities. It has no temporal character. It is adapted to impart benefits

suited to his nature, and lasting as his duration. Its spirituality is its glory.

Again, man is the subject of this ministry *absolutely*. It respects not the circumstances of human existence, but man. Not opulent man; not literary man; not titled man; not civilized man; not man commended to us by any extrinsic distinctions; but man as man. The minister, like his Master in heaven, is to have no respect of persons. He is to be superior to the accidents of life, and to look steadily at its essentials. His great ruling maxim should be—*All souls are equal*; and he should labor and pray and feel equally for all.

This may be readily admitted; but it is not so easily fulfilled. How few are there who are not, more or less, class preachers. Before wealth and fashion, they task themselves; with a poor congregation, they are negligent. Numbers will excite them to action; where two or three are gathered together, they are torpid and indifferent. Others, more at fault, affect learning and the learned. They themselves are intellectual, and they thirst for refined and intelligent hearers. They hardly expect, perhaps scarcely desire, that the poor and the ignorant should understand or admire them. Ah! it may be well if that ignorance, which they do not seek to dissipate, is not made the object of ridicule, as it is of secret contempt. Can any thing be more vicious? Again we say, *All souls are equal*. Apart from external circumstance; yea, apart from the measure of cultivation, all souls are equal; since all are rational—all are immortal—all are capable of infinite joy or wo.

Finally, man—*unconverted man*—is the subject of this ministry. This would seem to be exceedingly plain; but an opposite opinion has been held, and held with great te-

nacity. It has been said, that we are not to preach to sinners. Indeed! But does not the gospel suppose a state of sin? and may it not be addressed to sinners? Is it a remedy for sin, and may it not be announced to those who are perishing under the malady? Not preach to sinners! To whom did the Saviour preach? To whom did Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preach? To whom did the apostle to the Gentiles preach? In a world of sinful men, without exception, to whom, in the first instance is it to be proclaimed, if not to sinners? My brethren, surely the absurdity of the opinion is its sufficient refutation!

Yet, where an opinion is professedly rejected, it may exercise an indirect influence. Practically, I think, we have much to correct. Our ministry, I have reason to believe, is too exclusively addressed to men as regenerated, as professed, as in a state of fellowship. It is to the church rather than the world—to saints rather than to sinners, that we speak. Too little effort is made to bring the world under the ministry; too little attention is given to the worldly when they are present; and too often the whole assembly, however promiscuous, is comprehended under the common appellation of Christians. Now, without doubt, the ministry, especially the stated ministry, ought to be greatly directed to the edification of those who have “through grace believed;” but certainly not to the neglect of those who are still in a state of sin through unbelief. *Man*, let it be remembered, is the object of this ministry. Not man as regenerated, nor man as elected; but man as a fallen, sinful creature, needing all the appliances of the gospel for his salvation.

II.

In the second place, let us mark the *manner* in which

this ministry is to be exercised. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we *persuade* men." The ministry is to be persuasive, eminently persuasive. Whatever else it may be, it is essentially defective if it is not persuasive.

The suggestion which first springs to the mind is, that to persuade others we must be *ourselves* persuaded. This, however, is not merely to preach the truth. Many in our day announce the gospel, or a preparation of human and Divine sentiment much resembling the gospel, who have no perception of its glory, and no participation in its grace. The gospel, it may be, is popular; it is the only means of securing the needful congregation, or of efficiently opposing the rising sect; and therefore it is zealously proclaimed. But how shall the blind lead the blind? How shall the deaf teach the deaf? How shall the dead breathe life into the dead? The very gospel loses its vitality in such hands.

To preach the truth, we must be persuaded of the truth. It must have come to *us*, not only in word, but in "demonstration of the Spirit," and "in much assurance." It must have shone into our mind, subdued our sin, and reconciled us to God. We must be as fully persuaded of its truth as of our own existence, and of its ultimate success, as though it were spread in glory before our eyes. This is, indeed, the force of the term. With our apostle it is a graduated expression. It is more than seeing—more than believing. It is not only sight, but trust; not only faith, but assurance; not only interest, but blessed enjoyment. This is persuasion. Such is the qualification of the true minister. He dwells in the light and in God. That which he hath seen, and tasted, and handled of the word of life, he declares to others, and life and persuasion hang on his lips. Men vaunt themselves of an apostolical succession; he alone is

apostolically descended—he alone breathes the spirit, apprehends the commission, and exhibits the credentials of an apostle. The true minister is the *true Christian*—the *true* and *earnest believer*.

The apostle maintains, that he who is thus persuaded will persuade others. It is this persuasiveness, this unction and life, which he commends to us ; and it is of this that he himself is the great example. Whatever excellency our ministry may possess, in this particular there is great and lamentable deficiency—it is not an *efficient* and *fruitful* ministry. It may be profitable carefully to inquire, *how it may be advanced to a higher state of usefulness*. We cannot profess to exhaust this important subject, nor fully to illustrate it ; yet the following remarks may be worthy of consideration.

1. Then we think, the ministry to be more persuasive, must be more *enlightened*. We speak not now of preparatory courses, though they supply room for large discourse, but of their results. Our ministers, whatever the process, require not merely the run of a college, the use of languages, and a certain acquaintance with books ; beyond all this, they need chiefly that knowledge which books cannot give, and which wealth cannot buy. They need to know themselves ; to know what is in man on whom they have to operate ; to know the world, and the things most admired by the world, that they may be despised and condemned on knowledge. They need that measure of information, and that ripened state of the faculties, which will secure to them freedom of thought, correctness of judgment, power in argument, and firmness in conclusion.

Especially, the knowledge of the minister is to be *theological*. Theology is his profession. For it he is to pre-

pare. It should be the chosen study of his life. All other pursuits and acquisitions are to be valued only for its sake. Things are to be precious or worthless to him as they may affect his advancing acquaintance with the will of God, in the word of God. Scripture, therefore, is to be his Divine treasury. He is to be the student of the Bible, and to aspire to be "mighty in the Scriptures." They are to be the test and the judge of his own opinions and of all others. His knowledge of human theories and speculations, on the great subjects of theology, is to lead him to a more enlightened appreciation of the excelling glory of the New Testament. The manner, the spirit, the doctrine, of Paul, of John, and of Jesus, must become very life to himself and to his ministry likewise.

The light, then, of which we are chiefly speaking, is from above. It is not of earth, but from heaven; not from the schools, but from Christ. Piety, indeed, is not sufficient; nevertheless, it is indispensable. Where there is true piety, there may be much darkness; but where piety is not, there is no light at all. Of all the errors which have brought confusion and shame on the church, the chief are to be referred to the absence of piety, or to a defective piety. Theology is a spiritual science; and it can be seen only by a spiritual faculty, and through a spiritual medium. The finest minds on the simplest subject will otherwise be utterly at fault. Two expositors of the Holy Scriptures shall be equally acute, equally learned, equally industrious; the one shall give you the just sense, and the other shall fail of it. What is the reason? Simply that the one has a more spiritual apprehension of the truth. After all, Scripture is a sealed book; and it is disclosed only to the lip of prayer and the eye of faith.

God is light; and he that dwelleth in God dwelleth in

light and in love. He who would apprehend clearly the mysteries of the kingdom ; he who would have deep fellowship with revealed truth ; he who would become an able minister of the New Testament—of the spirit and not of the letter ; must dwell in an element not less elevated, not less pure. “ We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.”

2. Our ministry, to be persuasive, must be *more ardent*. The ministry, like its first example on the opening of the dispensation, must be a light that burns as well as shines. The man who thinks, that so the truth is uttered, it matters not in what way it is exhibited, disqualifies himself for the pulpit by that single opinion. Our service admits of no cold formalities. It must engage the heart equally with the understanding. Truth animated with love, reason burning with passion, should be the characters of this ministry.

Think not that we are pleading for noise, for extravagance, for mere physical excitement, or for the affectation of feeling where nothing is felt. No. We are asking only for earnestness—deep earnestness—an earnestness in some measure proportioned to the grandeur of the subject we have to display, the tremendous interests which are at stake, and the unutterable responsibility of the minister who has to plead them. This alone would sweep from our path manifold vices of style and manner, which have embarrassed the course of others. We should feel the truth, and make it to be felt.

This is essential to our work ; and this, though many think not so, is the essence of real eloquence. Eloquence is not that ornate, pompous, gaudy, meretricious thing which it is often supposed to be. It is not declamation, however splendid. It is not the multiplication of tropes and figures.

It consists not, nor can it consist, in an effort to be eloquent. It is not found while sought ; it is found when forgotten. Eloquence, especially on great and momentous interests, is simple ; eloquence is direct ; eloquence is condensed thought in condensed expression. It is a thrilling and absorbing sense of the subject, which makes us impatient to impart the like impressions to others, without respect to ourselves or our mode of doing it. Eloquence, therefore, in its sublimest forms, is brief, abrupt, impassioned—deeply impassioned. It finds its last and more perfect expression, perhaps, in a sentence—perhaps in a word ; a word, but that word has a world of meaning—a word, but that word is a spark that inflames the soul—a word, but that word is “ a nail fastened in a sure place by the Master of assemblies.”

Resolve, it has been repeatedly said, to be a *good* preacher. Resolve, we would rather say, to be a *useful* preacher. The one will turn your attention on yourself, and will produce either despondency or self-complacency ; the other will assist you to forget yourself, and to think only of your subject and your hearers. Choose the more excellent way. Have large sympathy with man in his misery ; with God in his perfections ; with Christ in his love ; with eternity in its majesty ; till yourself and all beside is forgotten. You shall then have hope in the fruit of your labors. Oh, believe it, grace is here ; tone is here ; power is here ; life is here ! Without this, you may study your gestures at the mirror ; regulate your voice to the best inflexions ; and prepare your sermon after the most approved models ; but, though a crowd may admire you, your words shall die away from the heart, and sinners shall not be converted unto God. In one word, *Be in earnest*. *Feel*, and you shall be *felt*. What comes from the heart, goes to the heart.

3. The ministry, to be more useful, must be more *simple*. We have seen that simplicity is necessary to true eloquence ; and this may dispose of it as a question of taste. But it may still require attention as a means of usefulness ; the more so because it is found so difficult of attainment. On entering the ministry, we come fresh from the schools. Our memories are filled with scholastic terms, and definitions, and formularies ; and our habits of thought have been formed amidst learned men and those who were in the zealous pursuit of learning. It becomes, at once, needful, that we should unlearn much that we had learned ; and to very many, the last labor is greater than the first. Some may have chosen to remain in the element in which they have been trained ; others have sought to forsake it, and have not been able ; both classes, whatever else they may have been, have failed to be extensively useful in exhibiting the word of life. The ministry, to be more generally successful, must become more simple in *style* and *method*.

The *style* must be simple. The good minister of Jesus Christ must, with the apostle, study great "plainness of speech." All refined definition, technical terms, labored phrases, and involved or complicated sentences, must be sedulously avoided. If two expressions offer themselves to his use, he must prefer that which is the easier and more familiar. That style is on the whole the best, which is best understood by the largest number of our hearers. He must resolutely adhere to it. If he should be thought unlearned because he declined a learned style, as was ridiculously the case two centuries ago, he must take up the cross. His must be a *mortified* style. Its perfection will be found, not in its being admired, but in its not being-observed. The object he is anxious to present will alone

be seen ; so clear, so transparent, is the medium through which it is presented.

Still more, if possible, the *method* should be marked by simplicity. It must at once be felt, that labored disquisition, involved argument, abstract and doubtful or erudite speculation, are utterly out of place. Our ministry must speak to the eye as well as the ear ; it must deal in narration as well as in argument ; and neither must be so complicate or remarkable as to take attention from the *subject* of discourse. One object must be before speaker and hearer ; it must be readily seen from the first ; every movement, in thought and word, must be sensibly a nearer approach to it, by which it is more clearly seen, more deeply felt ; till it alone possesses us. A method that would divide attention between itself and its subject, is not only defective, but inefficient. By the very law of our mind, a divided attention is fatal to all deep and salutary conviction.

As an auxiliary to the simple utterance of the truth, *repetition* has frequently great power. We refer not to a practice which obtained in a former age, of repeating formally the skeleton of a discourse at its close. Far from it. We speak of that repetition—it may be—of a word, a sentence, a sentiment, or an argument, which may give it force at the time ; or which may gather fresh clearness and force from the advancing light and warmth of the appeal. A celebrated pleader at the American bar ascribed all his success to well-timed repetition. “He never expected,” he said, “to succeed with his jury without it.” We are satisfied that in the pulpit it is no less efficacious.

The simplicity of manner which we have commended springs from an excellence greater than itself—simplicity of mind. The first teachers are our best examples ; theirs

was "the simplicity of Christ." They sought only to know him, to make him known to others, and to do him service and honor. They were no apologists for the gospel, before a world whose frown they dreaded. They did not conceal unpalatable truth in courtly phrase or unmeaning generalities. They had no yearnings after literary distinction and learned honors. They had no aspirations to preach great sermons, or to be reputed great men. Oh, no—nothing of all this! They were emancipated men—devoted men. A dispensation of the grace of God had been committed to them; they lived only to make it known, in utter forgetfulness of themselves; and it was in their hands the power of God to the salvation of myriads!

4. Our ministry needs to be *more direct*. By this it is meant, that the truth should be exhibited not merely as *before* the hearers, but as *to* them. We and ourselves should feel that they have, in one form or other, an immediate and deep interest in all that is uttered. Every thing should receive this direction. There is ample scope for illustration and for argument; but they must be subservient to the application. Application is to the sermon what the edge is to the sword; there may be the form and strength of the sword without it, but it will do no execution. Nathan made a most beautiful and pathetic representation to David, and admirable it was as a preparation to a given issue; but what would it have been without the application? The king, peradventure, had applauded the prophet as the most eloquent and courtly of men; but he had not smitten his breast, and, with a broken heart, confessed his sin.

When a man is reluctant to believe a truth, we all know how difficult it is to obtain its admission. This is

uniformly our difficulty. All the efforts of the sinner are to parry and ward off the truth ; and all the skill and effort of the ministry must be employed to prevent his success. The human heart must be laid *open*, and the truth must repeatedly receive the shape of personal address and appeal. Hearers must be classed, yea, they must be isolated ; and each one must feel that the appeal is to him. “ He means me, and I’ll go no more,” exclaimed a hearer under such a service. But he was constrained to come again and again, till his proud heart bowed before the majesty of truth.

Application, however, to be efficacious, should mostly be brief, sudden, unexpected, and natural. It should not always occur, where it is looked for, at the end of a discourse ; especially it should have a decided, and not a mixed character. The practice of dividing an application at the close into four or five parts, and addressing it to as many classes of persons, is generally to be condemned. Far better is it to be satisfied with giving it *one* direction, and throwing into it the whole momentum of the discourse. In the variety of pastoral labor, of course, there are exceptions. This is the rule, and the end should ever be, whatever the means, not only to reach the hearer, but to enter the heart.

5. Our ministry, to be more persuasive, must be *more pungent*. It must, by its directness, reach the heart ; and by its power it must penetrate it, search it, try it to the quick. We have a prescribed work to do, and it must be done, though it bring pain or offence. The word of God, committed to us, is sharper than any two-edged sword ; and if it lost any thing of this character, it would be damaged in our hands. There must be nothing hidden that is

not revealed. The sinner must be made to see, as in a mirror, himself, his follies, and his sins. The pride, the ingratitude, the unbelief, the enmity, of which he was not conscious, must be made bare to him. He will stand back, and resist ; but you must not be refused. Negligent of all hazard to yourself, yours must be the onward course of truthfulness and fidelity. All his excuses must be exposed as empty pretences ; all his objections must be exploded as without foundation ; and every refuge of lies in which he obstinately trusted destroyed before his face. His whole fault, his whole guilt, all the aggravation of his offence, without palliation, must be forced on him. The truth, the whole truth, must be worked in, through the understanding and the affections, till it fairly fastens on the conscience like a vulture—till he find no rest, no relief, no hope in himself or the whole world—till he sink down into the dust, a subdued thing, before a God of inexorable justice, and infinite mercy !

Could such a ministry be in vain ? It might not always be followed by the results we desire ; but whether it awakened deep resentment, as from the lips of Stephen, or produced full conversion, as in the case of Peter, it could not be in vain. How unlike the ministry of our time ! a ministry which is powerful neither for conviction nor conversion ; which is neither “ a savor of death unto death, nor of life unto life.” That ministry cannot be right, which leaves men *indifferent*.

6. The ministry, to be more persuasive, must be *more compassionate*. We must fulfil our duty to the conscience most strictly, most faithfully ; but we must be not the less kind. Love must be the very motive to fidelity, or fidelity will become harsh and severe. The minister, while not

like the indulgent parent who declines the medicine in pity to the child, must not resemble the unnatural parent who insists on obedience and withholds sympathy. In either case, he might fail of his object. A lady suffering under one of the most severe diseases which affects our nature, was urged to see a practitioner of the first eminence. His opinion was all that could be desired. He saw through the case, and could afford her essential relief; but she could never be persuaded to see him a second time; she had rather languish on, beneath excruciating pain. And why? Just because he showed an utter insensibility to her sufferings.

The spirit of our ministry must be compassion—deep compassion. Can any service demand it equally with ours? Are any sufferings of an earthly life comparable to the sufferings of the soul? Can any sight be so pitiable, so deplorable, as that of a dependent creature wandering through the paths of this dark and miserable world without God, without a Saviour, and without hope? Miserable—most miserable now; ingulfed in endless misery hereafter. My brethren, if you know what pity is, here is its object. You cannot truly believe in his condition without commiseration. You must help him—must save him. Every thing must be done, every thing must be risked, even his good opinion and friendship, to secure his salvation. You must exhort, rebuke, persuade. You must be one with him; feel for him; pray for him; weep over him. Yes, weep for him! For a man to weep for himself—his own sufferings or losses—were base and unmanly; but for a man, on great occasions, to weep over the miseries of others, is noble, is sublime. So David wept; so Paul wept; and so Jesus wept!

And if, my brethren, many, more or less, under our

charge, remain, as too often happens, month after month, year after year, shutting their ears to the words of life, and resisting, neglecting the great salvation; becoming the worse, the more hardened, and the more guilty, for all our instructions, prayers, and entreaties; shall we not weep for them? Can we see them, perhaps our friends, our children, with their breath in their nostrils, liable at any instant to die; heaping up wrath against the day of wrath; madly walking on the precipices of destruction, insensible to the liquid and eternal fires, which threaten to overwhelm them at once, and for ever; and shall we not weep for them? Ah, earth and heaven might weep at such a sight!

7. The ministry to be more persuasive must be *more urgent*. After what has been said, it is not necessary to use this term, otherwise than in a *restricted* sense. We wish to connect it particularly with time. We should look for immediate results. There is, we are persuaded, great and extensive error on this subject; and it has contributed most fatally to check the advancement and triumphs of our ministry. Conversion has been treated as though it were the work of months or years; and was not to be expected, but as the fruit of much and continuous preparation. The character of the ministry has been moulded on these opinions. We have not looked for immediate conversion and faith in Christ. The most striking appeals have been closed only with an expressed hope, that they might be entertained, and at leisure made the subject of thought and of prayer. If the subject is allowed to take this form only in the mind of the sinner, the impression will be most false and often most fatal.

In the first place, it permits him to think, that, for the *present* at least, he is in a right state of mind, and can only

come to a better state by a process of time and attention. Whereas every moment in which he declines to submit to God and his righteousness, he is at enmity to God, and the child of death !

In the second place, the view which is thus taken of conversion is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. Conversion not only is not usually, it never can be, a progressive work. Many things may lead to it, as many effects will flow from it ; but it itself is *one, single, supreme act* of the mind, by which the sinner yields himself to God, and from being a rebel against him, becomes a penitent at his feet. It cannot, therefore, be progressive ; and must occur in some *one instant of time*. If time and means are spoken of in this connection, they must on no account be confounded with present obligation ; the sinner must distinctly know that they ought not to be necessary, and cannot palliate his state of rebellion. The gospel admits of no delay, tolerates no compromise, demands no prerequisite. It demands instant belief, instant submission, on pain of everlasting death. Had the memorable sermon of Peter closed with a hope that the subject would be considered, and that in due time it might lead to a true conversion, where would have been its point, its vitality, its efficiency ? The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, would have been blurred and blunted on either side, and would have fallen powerless from his hand.

Our ministry, then, must stand corrected. It must receive a more decisive, prompt, and peremptory character. It is not we who are speaking, but God who is speaking through us. His voice must not be trifled with. His commands must not be postponed. If possible, the person we now address, must not leave us in such a state of mind as to require a second appeal. The second appeal will be less

likely to succeed than the present. We should leave nothing to the future. The present occasion should be treated as though it were the last. Now, while we are speaking, we should expect and demand repentance towards God, faith in our message, and submission to the Saviour. The sinner should be surrounded by light and love, argument and persuasion ; shut up, as in a circle, to a full decision ; so as to be made conscious of present resistance or present subjection ; so as to be in Christ, or without excuse.

8. A persuasive ministry needs to be marked by *more perseverance*. We must be urgent, always looking for present results ; we must be patient, always waiting and working for them if they are delayed. This combination would contribute greatly towards the perfection of ministerial service. Fitful zeal and temporary effort will not suit our engagements. The minister must have one thing to do, and he must be always doing it. He must be in season and out of season alike devoted to it ; and equally prepared for action or suffering. To save men from death must be his meat and his drink ; his work and his rest, his care and his comfort, by day and by night. The energy which is given by the world to temporary objects must be transferred to those which are spiritual. "There," exclaimed an artist, on finishing a perishable work on perishable material, "it is done, and it has been thirty years in doing!" We labor for eternity, and shall we think a life long to devote to endless results ? The Thugs of India are known to devote themselves with imperturbed and dogged perseverance for days and nights, for months and years, to the destruction of their fellow-man ; and shall the minister of the cross do less for his salvation ? Oh, if there is any thing in our world touching on the miraculous, it is the

fruit of this calm, concentrated, sustained, unconquerable energy. It was this that made Loyola the first of Catholics, Luther the first of reformers, Xavier the chief of missionaries, and Whitefield the chief of preachers ; and if it should so far prevail as to give a character to our ministry, it would be clothed in such forms of mysterious power and divine marvel, as should overawe and subdue the alien world to Christ !

The perseverance of which we speak, must find its life and aliment in true faith. Faith in God ; faith amounting to confidence ; confidence resting alone but completely on the simple promise and truth of God. Under the influence of any less principle, we shall faint and fail. Leaning on earth, we shall partake of its fluctuations ; outward circumstances, our abilities, favorable prospects, must be no ground of dependence. The minister must look away from every thing to God. The sole reason of his service must be that God commands it ; and the sole hope of success in his service must be that God has promised it. He must entirely believe, that though he had the opportunity of announcing the heavenly message to the whole world, not one of all the human family would receive it without the promise ; and that, having the promise, it is utterly impossible that he should labor in vain in the Lord. He will do his utmost ; and then lie down on the word and truth of God, in the bliss of hope, and the full assurance of faith. He that believeth all things, to him all things are possible !

9. Our ministry, to be more persuasive, should be *more extemporaneous*. No one will conclude that in the use of this expression, we plead for less preparation ; we ask only for more freedom in presenting the fruits of previous study.

We would have the lamp still used ; but we would have it less perceptible.

For instance, why should there not be more freedom of person and action ? Some persons, on passing from the vestry to the pulpit, are actually so changed in appearance as scarcely to be known as the same. And the chief evil is, that the change is usually not an improvement. Fully we understand how it is, that true feeling of our message should raise and solemnize the manner of the speaker ; but why should it give a manner frigid, constrained, and unnatural ? Why should the eye lose its light, the features their flexibility, the hands their motion, and the whole person its grace, just when the word to be delivered might be thought to breathe into them the life of inspiration ? When the living word was committed to our lips, was it not meant to be uttered by living men rather than by an automaton ? There needs higher preparations ! The spirit is bound, and the outward man but expresses its contortions.

But more particularly, why should the fruit of our studies for the pulpit be written and read ? We speak not of special occasions, but of the ordinary discharge of the ministry. We are satisfied that the renewed tendency to this practice in our day is a retrograde, and not an advancing movement. It is said to supply the means of more correct statement and profound thinking. Occasionally it may have this advantage ; as a *habit* it scarcely can. He who writes every thing he says, must write in haste ; and look rather to the end of his task than to care in its execution. He has the trouble without the benefit. He writes ; but without time to mature his thoughts or to improve his style.

Besides, the time consumed in manual exercise prevents him, by meditation, conversing with himself ; or, by read-

ing, becoming familiar with the thoughts of other men. The mind is little cultivated; it is meagre and barren; it is wearied and worn by mere mechanical service; and its productions are cold, feeble, and artificial. We have observed carefully its influence here and in America; and these we think are its tendencies. The least that can be said of the practice is, that it is *inefficient*.

This is the faith of the world. Do they trust their vital interests in the senate and at the bar to written speeches and reading advocates? Would they tolerate read speeches, even in their theatres? Would it be suffered in the pulpit, if men were as fully interested in their spiritual as in their temporal welfare? Least of all does it suit our engagements. It is the chief cause of constraint in manner; and it is fatal to vivacity, freedom, and emotion. Our service should be free as air. Whatever our preparations, there should be sufficient spontaneity and aptitude to put ourselves at once into fellowship with the people. We should think with them; feel with them; become one with them; and existing appearances and impressions should at once be made tributary to our designs. Our word should dwell in the heart; and the heart should dwell on the lip; and the lip be touched as with a living coal from the altar. Our communications should have all the freshness of a revelation, and all the vitality and reality which are found in "fear, and trembling, and tears."

Such was the ministry once; and such it must become yet once more. My brethren, we shall never go into the Millennium with read sermons and read prayers! Imagination is versatile; but it is difficult even to imagine Paul, or Peter, or Timothy reading a sermon, or repeating a pre-composed prayer. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Our modern methods are the sign and

the cause of weakness and degeneracy. We must have a ministry free, disencumbered ; relying on the heart and on God, not on the memory and the manuscript ; breathing of life, love, and heaven !

10. To be more persuasive, our ministry must be *more catholic*. In *opinion* it should be so. The mind should seize on great truth, and be satisfied with it. We are sent to preach the gospel ; it should be enough for us. We must not allow secondary considerations to rank with such as are primary, nor magnify trifles into importance. The good minister has not time for it—has not heart for it. Those who commune with the little, will disqualify themselves for the grand and eternal. Many have dwelt so long and so fondly on their peculiarity, that inconsiderable as it was, it has become their gospel, their glory—and their shame ! The little in no sense suits the character of our ministry nor the claims of our times.

To be great, the ministry must be magnanimous. It must live, not for sect and party, but for man and for God. Points of difference must be seen for confession, for humiliation, not for strife ; points of agreement must be resolutely made the centre of unity, fellowship, and co-operation. All who are not against us are with us and for us.

In *spirit* the ministry requires to be more catholic. Many, who are not bigoted in opinion are close in affection. They care for their own things—their own charge—their own section of the church—their own personal gratification in service ; and seldom do they travel beyond this limited circle.

These limits, however, must not confine us. There may be much of piety mingled with such habits, but there is also much of selfishness. We must come forth from our-

selves—forth from the little circle of daily effort. We must participate by fellow feeling in the common weal and the common wo. We must rejoice in every good word and every good work; and bless the lips that uttered it, the hands that performed it! The circle which bounds the entire family of the faithful must be the limit of our fellowship; and the circle which bounds the world the limit of our benevolence. A minister of Jesus Christ is of no country; he lives for mankind; and while he is indifferent to the happiness of any human being, he wants the spirit of his office!

In *action* the ministry should be more catholic. Such devotedness as the Romanist yields to his church from factitious motive, we should yield to our Lord and Saviour from purer principle. It should be implicit, cheerful, absolute; so complete as to induce a forgetfulness of our own interests, and an abandonment of our own will; and leave us but one end in life—to live for Christ. Considerations of place, time, manner, should not even be placed in the scale, against the simple claims of duty. If it is my duty to labor abroad, in foreign and barbarous climes, I must be prepared cheerfully to go there, though all my preferences should be at home; and if it is my duty to labor at home, I must be equally ready, though all my preferences should be abroad. He is prepared to labor nowhere, who is not prepared to labor anywhere for Christ.

In expressing this devotedness, the minister needs to be eminently *practical*. Of all subordinate qualities, nothing is more requisite to the ministry, as a means of usefulness, than the principle of *adaptation*. It should be bland, pliant, sagacious, and generous; readily accommodating itself to all circumstances and all persons. We are to become all things to all men for their salvation. We are “to sow be-

side all waters ;” to have a facility in the appliance of all means that may bring us to our object. We must be the slaves to no habits of our own, to no prejudices of others. We must accustom ourselves to all modes of composition and of communication likewise. Preaching itself admits of far more variety than we think. It is not necessarily an exercise in the pulpit ; nor of a prescribed length ; nor of a continuous character, without pause or interruption. To be available, especially with the missionary and evangelist, it must often be brief, admitting of pause and question ; and frequently running out into the freedom of conversation and personal entreaty. Our ministry must be above mannerism. Like the ministry of Providence, it should be single in principle, various in action ; free, elastic, mighty ; contracting to the least, comprehending the greatest, to secure one simple but magnificent issue.

11. Who, then, my brethren, ah, who is sufficient for these things ? If the defects of the existing ministry are so many and so palpable ; if the qualifications for a successful ministry are of such high and excellent order ; whither can we look but with utter despair ? Are we not shut up to one final conclusion, that this ministry can be only sustained safely to ourselves, beneficially to the world, by a larger communication of the Holy Ghost ? The whole subject is spiritual ; what can we know, what can we do, without the Spirit ? If ordinary Christian life is characterized as living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, being led of the Spirit ; how much more must he whose office it is to impart this life to others, require to dwell in the Spirit ? Too carelessly—perhaps profanely—many, on entering this ministry, have said they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; but full certain it is, that none can rightly enter, *except as he is so*

moved! Who shall reveal to us a spiritual world; bestow spiritual qualifications, and secure spiritual results,—who, but the Spirit of God? The natural world was without life, and void, till he moved over the waters and the dry land; and the whole moral world is dark and dead, except as enlightened and vivified by his grace and presence.

What hope brightens on our path, as we look up from earth and ourselves to this Blessed Spirit! This is His dispensation, in which He is to be pre-eminently glorified. To act without Him at such a period, or to despair of his presence and power, were alike presumptuous wickedness. He is freely promised to us; yea such is the grace and certainty of the promise, that we are commanded to be “filled with the Spirit.”

To receive the Spirit, by large and copious fellowship, would put an end to the deficiencies we deplore, and bring to us the qualifications for which we sigh. We should become *new men*, totally unlike our former selves. All that was difficult, and even impossible, to us before, should become easy and delightful. He would be in us as the Spirit of wisdom, of love, and of power. What light of life, what power of faith, what bliss of love would be ours! What patient diligence, strict fidelity, tearful tenderness, persuasive words and freedom of action! Filled with the Spirit, we should rise into a superior region of spiritual life; and should move amongst men with the serenity, facility, and power of an angel for their salvation.

Such a ministry, thus qualified, would not merely be prepared for success; it would *secure* it. It would be admirably, fully adapted, to revive religion where it was, and to advance it to the extremities of the world. Could we only suppose that all who now bear the ministerial office in the various portions of the Christian church were thus

renewed and qualified for the utterance of the Gospel, what could we want beyond it? It would break on a dark world like the light of morning and of spring, the promise of a bright and blessed day. The earth should be clothed with beauty, and the heavens suffused with glory. The habitations of men should become the dwelling places of purity and peace, love, joy and melody. The Lord, the Saviour, should descend in majesty, attended by the myriads who ministered to His coming, to dwell amongst men; and a cry, like the sound of many waters, should go up from the redeemed family in numbers innumerable, to meet him in the air—"Lo! this is our God! we have waited for him." Lo! this is our God! "we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

III.

It remains for us to glance at the *motive* which should stimulate us to fulfil this ministry. "Knowing *the terror* of the Lord, we persuade men."

1. Respect is had in the first instance to our *Lord* and Saviour. He, counting you faithful, put you into this ministry. He is to be regarded supremely through its whole course; and to him an exact account of the trust is ultimately to be rendered. You cannot for a moment be at a loss to know what is its character, or what the spirit in which it is to be sustained. It is the ministry of reconciliation, and it is to be fulfilled in the *spirit* of reconciliation. By all means, as in Christ's stead, you are to seek to reconcile sinful men unto God. This is His supreme desire, and it must be yours. It must give dignity to the least, and unity to the various, effort you put forth in his king-

dom. To this end Providence ministers, and angels joyfully minister. For this prophets have taught, apostles have labored, and martyrs have bled. For this, oh, strange to tell, He, the Lord of life and heaven, came down to earth—and toiled, and wept, and died. And now that he has ascended in glory to the heaven whence He came, this is the burden of his intercession, and the high purpose of his government. He died, and He lives, to seek and to save them that were lost !

And can you want a motive to live and die for the same beneficial purpose ? Would you find pleasure in pleasing Him who hath called you to this ministry ? Would you give to his mind a satisfaction as exquisite and deep as were the sufferings he bore, bring to his footstool and his fold the soul that was lost, but is found ! Oh, that ever it should be in the power of a human being, while seeking to confer on his fellow the highest benefit, to impart also richer satisfaction and joy to his Maker and Redeemer !

2. The passage, so far as it respects time, points to the *judgment*. Although the terrors of the Lord have occasionally swept over the earth, it has been rather to intimate a judgment still to come than to supersede it. That is, by emphasis, the great and terrible day of the Lord ; terrible, because universal ; terrible, because righteous ; terrible, because final ; terrible, because eternal.

To that day you must come ; in that judgment you must stand. The commission you now hold you must then resign. Your Lord and Judge, whose flaming eye you must then confront, will then demand of you—“ What hast thou done with thy talents ? Where is thy flock, thy beautiful flock ? Give an account of thy stewardship.”

For, each and for all, you must then render account; motive as well as action will be weighed in the balance; and one brief sentence, without appeal, will reveal your real character and everlasting doom. Ah, would you find mercy of the Lord in that day—would you meet it with joy and not with grief—place it ever before you—watch and labor, labor and watch for souls as they who must give an account.

3. The passage has respect to the fact, that those to whom you commend the word of life will appear in the judgment, and that *many* will be *unprepared* to meet it. Can you doubt it? And should it not always be present to you? However successful your labors, you cannot hope that all will be brought into a state of salvation. Many whom you entreat will not be persuaded. They will, perhaps, wait on your ministry with respect; they will be spectators of your performance from formality, or for amusement; you may be to them as one who playeth skilfully on an instrument; they may reward you with their plaudits, perhaps with their affection; but they decline to accept your message. You cannot recover them from the world, or awaken their attention to the realities of the life to come. Oh! how will you bear to meet them, how will they bear to confront you, in the final judgment!

See, where they stand in the presence of their Judge! Familiar to your eye still, and yet how changed! They are at last awake to the claims of the eternal world, and the unutterable misery of their own condition. Silent, dejected, shuddering and self-condemned, they are waiting the last sentence which is to unfold and fix their doom for ever. The righteous Judge raises his hand, and opens his lips and says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." What wail is that! What curses are those! What vain

entreaties—what bitter regrets—what awful blasphemies! See how they look around in wild despair for help, for hope, in vain! See how they cling to each other as they fall away from the presence of the glory—struggling yet falling—struggling yet falling—from deep to deep—from darkness to darkness—down to eternal night! Oh! what would you not do to save them! And will you not do *now* what you would do *then*? “Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.”

4. The passage points also in another direction. It supposes that the *minister himself* is unprepared for the solemn scrutiny of the Judgment. It is difficult, indeed, for a considerate and candid mind to recur to the fact, that many under his charge will perish, without feeling himself more or less implicated in their state. They may have perished through his unskilfulness or negligence. True it is, that if he have done *all in his power* for their salvation, he is clear of their blood. But how much is comprehended in that? Who shall venture to think that he hath done all that he could?

But even the *ruling principle* of ministration might be wrong. You might be conscious of diligence, of power, and even of usefulness, beyond many. You might be distinguished and honored through life; and close it with satisfaction and hope. It might require the revelations of the last day to undeceive you. Oh! what confusion to look for the first time on the countenance of the Judge and the Saviour, and to see it clothed with silent displeasure! What can it be? “Lord, Lord,” you venture to plead, “have I not spoken in thy name, and in thy name done many wondrous works?”

“Inasmuch as thou didst it not to me,” He replies, “thou art condemned.”

“Have I not,” you say, “upheld thy truth on the earth,

and zealously sought to promote thy kingdom to the last; and have not many sinners been turned from their ways?"

"Inasmuch as thou didst it not to me, thou art condemned."

"Have I not," you still urge, "given myself to charity?—Have I not fed the hungry, clothed the naked, healed the sick, and visited the captive in his bonds?"

"Inasmuch as thou didst it not to me, thou art condemned—Depart!"

Depart! What! just when looking on heaven, to meet despair! Just when expecting the living honors of immortality, to be overwhelmed with shame and everlasting contempt! What! after having saved others, to be yourself a cast-away! Oh, agony of agonies! Oh, horror of horrors! What are crashing worlds and a dissolving universe to you—except you might die with them? Depart! Ah! anywhere would you go to mitigate your wo, to hide yourself from the face of the Lamb—to darken those burning lights of conviction which leave nothing to hope or to fear! But you cannot go. The terrors of that living frown, the gnawings of that awakened conscience, are with you still—they will never leave you—they make a present and eternal hell!

My soul, are these things possible? Is it possible to maintain the truth of salvation in the spirit of falsehood; to utter literally and fully the mind of God, and yet to fall under his displeasure; to work good in the earth, and yet to be denounced as "the workers of iniquity?" Is it possible that many, many who hold this ministry may fulfil it with honor and applause on earth, only to be overwhelmed with final and aggravated disgrace! Can there be an additional motive to holy fear and resolved fidelity to our Saviour, which his mercy has not supplied? "Our God is a consuming fire!"

5. It is justly supposed in the passage, that this plenitude of motive can only be efficient as it is *known*. It exists alike for all, but all are not alike susceptible of its power. They *know* not the terrors of the Lord. A cold admission of the truth, here, is not knowledge. The term is emphatical. It is not only knowing, but seeing—not only seeing, but appreciating ; it is knowledge which settles in the heart as a vital principle of action. The terrors of the Lord must be present to us, not with slavish fear, but by intimate contemplation and deep fellowship. He who ministers in this vocation should be awake to the invisible state, and commune with invisible realities. He should live already in the world to come, and should descend only to warn and bless the inhabitants of this world, which is passing away. He should move as under the eye of God, and determine on the great and the little in the balances of eternity. He should preach as within sight of the cross, and as the witness of its bitter agonies. As though he heard the rising wailings of the lost, as though he caught the living harmonies of heaven, as though he stood already in the Judgment, surrounded by all its terrors ; so should he vindicate the ways of God to men—so should he exhibit to them the method of his redeeming mercy !

Behold, then, your *ministry* ! It is charged with the only elements of life and salvation to a lost world. Behold the *spirit* in which it is to be fulfilled—persuading men as though your salvation were bound up in theirs. Behold the *motive* which is to constrain you through the whole service—your Saviour's approbation—the bliss of his smile, which is more than life—the terror of his frown, which is more than death ! *Be thou faithful !*

LECTURE VI.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
IN THE CHURCH.

LECTURE VI.

ITS ADVANCEMENT IN THE CHURCH.

“ Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

THESE words express a Divine command. They are addressed to Israel. God is about to fulfil his highest promises to them as a redeemed people ; and with the most glorious displays of his power. He demands devout attention and universal preparation to wait on the wonders of his hand.

We are discoursing on the advancement of religion. Not Palestine, but the world, is now promised to the church for a possession. The time is come, we think, in which God is about to honor his promises, and glorify his name, by doing wonders on the earth. At such a time the church is to be full of wakeful expectation, and most solemnly and exactly is she to prepare to meet her God.

It is for us, in this exercise, to consider in WHAT CHIEFLY THIS PREPARATION MAY CONSIST.

By the church, of which we have to speak, we refer not to place, but to living and renewed men ; we refer not to party, but to principle ; and, at this time, we have regard rather to primary than secondary principle. We decline all the limitations which Denominational terms might supply, as the invention of men ; and we comprehend in the true church all who sincerely believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and who are concerned to assemble together,

under his authority, to profess his name, and advance his kingdom. Whatsoever is of the world, is not of the church ; and whosoever is not of this world, is essentially a member of the one redeemed church. It is throughout this church, whatever its existing dimensions, that true religion and piety are to be advanced, if the church shall become a prepared instrument for their further advancement over an opposing world. Let us give ourselves prayerfully to the subject, under the guidance of those lights which the Holy Scripture supplies.

I.

In the first instance, then, Religion must be advanced in the church by a *thorough conviction of present deficiency and sin.*

A sense of defect is the parent of all improvement. Something is attained, but much more is not yet attained ; the past, therefore, is comparatively forgotten, and hope and effort are stretched out to the promising future. This is the great motive power through all the classes of active life. Men aspire to advance on their condition, from dissatisfaction with their present state.

But is this spring of action strong in the bosom of the church ? It is impossible to have observed carefully on her real condition, without being urged to a negative conclusion. Her temper is generally boastful and self-complacent. If this is at all qualified, it is not by the spirit of pervading piety ; its check is rather found in the intestine jealousies which disturb her own body. She looks rather at what she has, than at what she is. She is carried out of herself, but is not lifted to heaven. She flatters herself on her num-

bers, her means, her sacrifices, and her success. The little circle she occupies is to her the world; she is its centre; and all who behold her do so with admiration and confidence.

Yet is the church, for all spiritual purposes, in a miserable state of deficiency. Weak in knowledge, weak in faith, weak in charity. Faintly she sees the things which are spiritual, and faintly she feels the impulses of the world to come. She has little fellowship with the mysteries of the gospel, the hidden life of Christ, or the love of the Spirit. Her high calling has scarcely power to raise her above the clamorous vocations of earth; and her glorious destination is well nigh lost in the present glitter of worldly vanities.

Action is her boast; but if strong in action, it is mostly as action may find its succor in vicious motive. If the occasion is public and ostentatious, she has energy enough and words enough; but if it is retired and noiseless, is she as well prepared? What multitudes would fly together at the shrill call of party! How many would wait on the gentle counsel of charity! Sacrifices, yea splendid sacrifices can be made if they shall be registered and applauded; but would the Saviour be deemed a sufficient witness of such transactions? Her energies may be finely displayed on the platform; but where are they at the prayer meeting? In fact, the church is weak in proportion as she is called to act in her true character; and so dark is she that she neither apprehends her own weakness nor the strength of her adversaries.

It is needful to mark, not only the general deficiency of the church, but those particular sins which stain her beauty and leave her prostrate before her enemies.

Heresy must be regarded of this number. We refer not now to every shade of error; but to such error as is of fatal character, and is working extensively on the vital interests

of the Christian community. To confound the righteousness of Christ with the fruits of faith ; to confound the rite of baptism with the regeneration of the Spirit ; to substitute the outward forms of religion for the life and power of godliness ; to abuse the marvellous grace of the gospel to purposes of sloth and licentiousness ; are not these cardinal errors ? Do they not prevail extensively in the professing church ? Yea, do they not at this hour so prevail, as to make it fearfully evident, that within the nominal church more are lost than are saved ?

Schism is another sin of which the church must stand convicted. It is a rent ; a rent in the garment which should be entire ; a separation in the fold which should be one. Does it not prevail throughout the Protestant church, like an infectious disease, till scarcely any seem free from its spots ? Is there any end to sects and names, and divisions and animosities ? Has not almost every man his interpretation, and his phrase, and his caste, in which he would remodel to his own taste the heavenly forms of the divine truth ? Is not altar raised against altar ; chapel against chapel ; college against college ; and is not each one zealously condemnatory of all others ?

It is not for me, in this place, to determine the proportions of blame. There is sin—awful sin somewhere. If none may be quite purified, in this low state of the church, from the spirit of schism, the fact of schism must rest chiefly with those *who require more than Christ requires* ; who dare to ask for other terms of communion than he has made terms of salvation. Where, however, so much is wrong, the first impulse of the heart should be that of sincere lamentation.

Such evils imply a state of great *uncharitableness*. But religion is love ; and the church is meant to be a region of

love. Envy, strife, hatred and malice, may rage without ; but within the sacred inclosure should reign undisturbed charity and peace. The ties which bind Christian to Christian are supreme, and they should prevail against all separating influences. Is it so ? Is the love of Christian to Christian, and of one community to another predominant ? Yea, does it exist ? Are not our churches, not only in a state of separation, but of opposition ? Do they not bite and devour and crush each other ? Can they, though calling themselves brethren, communicate together ? Can they pray together ? Can they unite to honor and circulate the word of life, which they yet acknowledge as the only rule of action and the single remedy for a lost world ? Is not their want of charity, not to the alien, but amongst themselves, the standing reproach of the world, and to this day the chief cause of its infidelity ?

Formality is another evil that obtains fearfully over the church. Religion is life ; formality is death. It is death under the profession and guise of life. It is an insult to the truth and the spirituality of God. It may prevail where the forms adopted are few and scriptural, as well as where they are injuriously multiplied. Free prayer may be formal ; attendance on the living ministry may be formal ; yea, the ministry itself, though meant to quicken all other things, may be overlaid by a heavy formality. If this is so, can we doubt its prevalence ? How do even the best, continually incline from the spiritual to the material and formal ! What multitudes satisfy themselves entirely with the outward act of prayer, of communion, of honoring the Sabbath ; and through their whole profession have no sense of God and no fellowship with him ! So prevalent is it, that it gives the character to the church. It is the region of death, rather than of spiritual life. It has a name to live,

but is dead. There, where God is professedly most honored, he is in truth most grieved and offended. He abhors the sacrifice and the service from which the heart is abstracted.

Finally, *worldliness* must be noted as the sin of the church. A worldly church, it must be admitted, is a strange contradiction of terms; nevertheless, it is needful to describe the fact. Religion is purely spiritual; and the church, as her visible representative, was meant to be purely spiritual in her character, her institutions, and her influence. She was not to come into junction with the world, but to stand in opposition to it; and by the power of her heavenly character, to subdue and renew the world to herself. Instead of this, however, the church is so degenerated, that she admires the world, and covets its favor. A large portion of the church is not only in alliance with the world, but in bondage; and we have that monstrous state of things before us, in which the less is served by the greater, in which the spiritual is subordinate to the secular, in which religious appointments are made from political considerations and by political personages. It is as if the earth ruled the heavens! Never may the day come when such as are fee shall yield themselves to such ignominious bonds! Soon may the time arrive when such as wear them may loathe them, and cast them off for ever!

But the spirit of the world is of more subtle operation; and from its insinuating power what portion of the church shall claim exemption? Is it not in us as the spirit of slumber, and indifference, and covetousness? Does it not make our Sabbaths a weariness, and our days of gain our days of highest gratification? Does it not leave our graces weak, and make our devotions almost indevout? Does it not oppress us with anxious cares, and lay us open to the

ensnarements of earthly pleasures ? Does it not overlay the church as with moral paralysis, leaving it powerless, if not lifeless, for all spiritual purposes ?

II.

These partial illustrations lead the way to another remark, that the real advancement of the church must be *found in profound repentance*.

This state of defect and sin is not only to be so far admitted as to be placed beyond the reach of doubt or denial, it is to dwell in the mind, and fill the heart. Not only must it be received and confessed without reluctance, without extenuation, and without excuse ; it must be seen and felt with all its peculiar aggravations. Evil is evil anywhere ; but it acquires fearful virulence and enormity in the church. Sin in the church is sin in the presence of light, sin in the presence of holiness, sin in the presence of God. It is sin in the saints—contrary to profession, contrary to privilege, contrary to the most sacred engagements. Nowhere—neither above nor beneath—is it found in such disastrous conjunction. In no connection has it such power to dishonor God, or to crucify the Prince of Life, and put Him to public shame. It is this that prostrates the church, and renders her the scorn rather than the admiration or terror of her enemies.

Behold, then, the first great duty of the church—it is penitence for sin. She must burn with indignation at the sight of her sins ; and with zeal to cast them out for ever. Her sins—her errors, her divisions, her worldliness, her ingratitude, and her unprofitableness—must be seen in all the lights of peculiar aggravation. They must be laid to heart,

and deeply pondered. She must mourn over them with godly sorrow, and still mourn. She must behold them with a pierced and broken heart, and still lament that it is not broken. She must covet as eagerly a state of abasement and humiliation, as she once coveted the place of distinction and dignity. She must lie down in her nothingness, at the feet of her Saviour, conscious of infinite want, and infinite unworthiness. She must place herself with perfect submission in his hands ; yet with unutterable desires, that that gracious hand would in some way mould and fit her for his service and praise.

Many things may contribute to prepare the church for usefulness ; but this chiefly. She may want other things ; but this is her first want. She must pause here. Nothing else must she do till this is done. To begin amiss is to go progressively wrong. The first, second, and third thing, the church needs, is penitence—profound penitence for sin.

III.

Renewed engagement with God would be a natural expression of advancement in religion, and the means of its promotion. It would arise, whatever might be the mode of its expression, from that penitential state of mind which we have been contemplating. The attention would be fixed on God—his excellence and his claims ; on ourselves—our follies, our mercies, and our obligations. Our thoughts would be thrown on the past and the future ; and would commune with better men, and with better periods of the church. We should pant to be advanced nearer to them, nearer to God, nearer to heaven, by renewed faith in the Lord Christ. By penitence we should have given up our-

selves to Him and to his service ; and this consciousness would encourage us to take Him as our God and Saviour for ever. The freshness of His love would come over us ; we should be confirmed in assurance and obedience. God would be to us a God, and we should be to Him a people.

When such engagements have received a more formal and visible expression, they have been denominated *covenanting*. Some affecting instances of such exercises are placed on record in connection with the Jewish church. Nor have they been absent from the better dispensation. The first engagement indeed of the first disciples was of this character, although it has not fallen under this appellation. They were together in one place, with one mind, continuing in humiliation, prayer, and solemn devotedness, for ten whole days ; and the descent of the Holy Ghost crowned their meeting. Our own land, if not our own times, has supplied us with more recent, and scarcely less affecting, examples. To see thousands, yea, myriads of the saints, assembling under the power of one living intense purpose, mourning over their defection from the God of their worship, and panting to come under new engagements to himself and his service !—to see eyes unused to tears weeping freely from the sense of sin !—to see hands that never trembled, even when they grasped the sword, now tremble from a sense of frailty, as they are lifted to heaven, and seek to rest on Omnipotence !—to see men, women, and children, in the face of persecution and regal tyranny, flocking to the gravestone of their fathers, to sign the renewed covenant to God, and sometimes with the blood drawn from their veins ! What a scene were this ! How vital all !—how thrilling all ! It must compose a crisis in personal or collective life. The heart and spirit are melted down ; old sins are cast away ; the chain of habit is fused

and broken ; lights break in on the mind which usually it cannot command, and could not bear ; and character, previously good, is raised to a new and more blessed elevation—another step in its approximation to the skies.

Is it not remarkable, that the church should have become a stranger to engagements more or less of this distinctive, earnest, and renewing character ; yea, that it should have become the subject of calm inquiry, whether they are needful or desirable ? She must need them ! Not to supersede or disparage ordinary means, but to infuse fresh life into them. Can such corruptions as hers be purged away ; such inveterate habits be broken ; such painful errors be corrected, but by special grace ? And is special grace to be expected in the indolent use of ordinary means ? Special circumstances justify special means. Not to guide himself, but to guide us, God has determined to reach certain ends by certain instrumentality. He may convert the world to himself by any means ; but he will never use the church to effect this work, except as she is fully prepared for it. She may look long, and look in vain, to do any great service for Him without extraordinary humility for her sins, extraordinary prayerfulness for His help, and special and thorough devotion of heart, life, and substance, to His glory. “ This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting.”

After all, it may be gratifying to many to observe, that it is not so much the creation of other means that is needed, as that we should direct those to which we are accustomed to higher objects. Our wisdom is not in multiplying means ; so that we secure the end, the fewer the means, the greater the sagacity. Why should not the more interesting opportunities which occur to us be distinctly directed to nobler purposes ? Why should the opening of a new

house of prayer be used rather for raising money, than for reviving religion? Why should provincial associations meet to provide for the wants of their district, and not first and chiefly to provide for their own? Why should our great annual assemblies be so much the scene of bustle and of business, and so little of calm, earnest devotion, as if the advancement of religion in the world could be secured by any other means than its decided advancement in ourselves? It is a mistake—utterly a mistake. We must look higher, and we shall get more. Wealth will come when we are poor in spirit; and success, as we are prepared by a mortified spirit to bear it. The secondary will wait on the primary; but if the primary is neglected and despised, the secondary will not be available. We may go on to accumulate means on means, and agency on agency, till they are stupendous to look upon; but they shall be like Ezekiel's machine without the living eyes and spirit that moved it; great, but unmanageable and useless—the monument at once of our labor, our folly, and our unbelief!

IV.

The advancement of religion must be sought in *resolved union among the saints*.

Religion is one—essentially one. Its natural and necessary tendency, therefore, is to bring its subjects into a state of unity. The opposite of this oneness, whatever may be the gloss or guise it wears, is selfishness—the gross selfishness of our fallen nature. In both aspects of the subject, it is evident that the spirit of union is inseparable from Christian life. Without it, we are not Christians; and the church is only advancing in religion as she advances in union.

Can any thing more fully expose the real weakness of the church for all purposes of usefulness? Religion is one; but she is not one. Her enemies are one; but she is not one. She would have others unite themselves to her; meantime she is not in union with the members of her own body. She would bind the world to the car of the Redeemer, and she would do this with a cord of sand! It is this that has given chiefly such an air of ridicule and such a character of crime to most of her efforts to propagate the gospel amongst men.

At least, this may point us to a cardinal duty. He who would appropriate to himself, or receive from others, the glorious name of Christian, should greatly labor for the unity of the Spirit. He should jealously watch against all those seeds of selfishness and worldliness which have a separating influence; and he should labor for that ample measure of religion which would make a state of union not only easy, but indispensable. Christians are *essentially* one; and they should labor to be *visibly* one. Theirs should be that unity of faith which excludes heresy; that unity of heart which excludes schism; that unity of life which excludes formality; and that unity of affection which excludes uncharitableness. It should be more than this. Theirs should be the love—deep, earnest, inviolable—which should cast out the evil passions; which should raise them superior to earthly distinctions, and the accidents of time; which would make them inseparable from each other, as they are inseparable from the love of Christ.

Some think such union *impossible*. They take counsel with their own weakness, not considering the power of God. None, we believe, would plead for that unity which would annihilate the distinctions of character; and every thing short of this is promised by the word of God, and

may be expected from the nature of religion. In every instance of true conversion, the principle of union to Christ and to every disciple is established in the heart; and it is only for it to be expanded and matured, to realize all that is desirable on earth or enjoyed in heaven.

Others have ventured, with more perversity, to question whether, in present circumstances, a more complete state of union is *desirable*. They are ready to allow, that men are now greatly under the influence of mixed and corrupt motive, and that, were they left to the action of only pure principles, much of the good that is actually done would remain undone. Their inference is, therefore, that, as the church is, more of union, if practicable, would not be salutary. What is this but to tolerate evil that good may come? Is it not enough that sin is in the church; must we become its apologists? True it is, that God may overrule the workings of corrupt passion and selfish divisions; but does this render them either useful or innocent? This were indeed to reverse all our rules of righteous judgment, and to ascribe to sin the very qualities of holiness. Away with such plausibilities. Disunion is sin—only sin. It is a good thing that men should dwell together in unity; it is an evil thing that they should need the constraint of corrupt motive so to do. It is right that the minister should preach Christ, though it be of strife and envy; but his ungodly motive is still his shame and his condemnation.

Union then is the present claim on the church. Without it, she has not the mind of her Saviour, and cannot be pleasing in his sight; nor can she bring enjoyment to herself, or conviction to the world. Every one professing to be of that hallowed body—the body of Christ—should chiefly resolve to put forth his utmost effort for this blessed and promised unity. We must no longer excuse our divi-

sion and jealousy, as incident to this low estate of the church, but denounce and abhor them. We must not wait hopelessly for more agreement, in order to more union; but must seek for union as the path to a better understanding. One half the differences between one portion of the church and another would die away, like the mist, as we approach them; and the remainder would take a right and diminished position.

If, for the present, we cannot realize what we wish, let us have what we may. Especially let us look well to it, that there is no impediment in us—that we are in full readiness to come at once into a state of union. Let animosities and contentions prevail as they may, this is our individual and instant duty. Not for the world, my brethren, would I hold a pulpit which I could not throw open to any man of any name, of whom I believed that he truly uttered the gospel of Christ. Not for the world would I stand in fellowship with a particular church, which excludes any other believer from its fellowship. Let all the saints determine to receive all whom Christ has received; to love all whom Christ loves; and to commune with all who dwell in the communion of the Holy Spirit; and we shall soon get rid of our differences; as soon shall we dispose of the revived but worn-out pretensions of apostolicity; and, what is more, we shall have inflicted a fatal wound on that carnality and selfishness of our nature which yields them nourishment.

V.

Religion may be advanced in the church by *thorough sympathy with the ministry of the word.*

We have already dwelt on the ministry itself as a means to this end. Although the very chief, it can do little alone. The success of its operations is meant at every step to bring around it an accumulated power, by which it is to act on the world for its salvation. This power lies in the church. If we would have the ministry to be successful, we must identify ourselves with it. We should be one with it in *design*. We must not be content, as many are, to wait on it, to criticise, to admire, or to condemn. It is not the institution of man, at which we may, at our pleasure, seek either our instruction or amusement ; it is an appointment of God for the salvation of men ; and we must cultivate a living fellowship with its commission, under the full persuasion that the world will never be converted without its agency.

We should be one with the ministry in *prayer*. Prayer makes one. It should be the great bond of attachment and union between the minister and the people. A rightly disposed ministry would be not merely sustained—it would be inspired by it. Nothing can exceed the solitude of the man who stands before an indifferent or curious assembly ; nor can any thing exceed the bliss of him who is conscious, that every sentence he utters is borne to the conscience and the heart, by the concurrent prayers of a whole people.

Yet do not misapprehend the subject. It is not for his personal happiness and private welfare that the prayers of the church are thus sought. It is for him as the servant of God, and holding a ministry, which is charged with life or death to all whom it addresses, that he seeks, and that he needs your prayers. And judge not of his need of your sympathy and prayers, by what you know of his studies and of his labors for your good, however arduous and continuous these may be. It is not these chiefly that break his

rest, exhaust his spirits, and not unfrequently bring him down in early life with gray hairs to the grave. No: it is his intense anxiety for your welfare; it is his trembling fear lest he should say any thing amiss, or not say enough in uttering the great message; it is that sense of responsibility to God which often chokes his utterance in prayer, and quivers through his flesh in ministration; it is that inexpressible anguish, when the fear comes over him, that after all he can do and say, some of you will be cast out, and cast down to darkness, death, and eternal despair!

The church should *co-operate* with the ministry. There are manifold ways in which this may be done. We should be careful to preserve right impressions amongst ourselves. If conversation is to be maintained after worship, it should be kept to the subject on which we had meditated, and should have a tendency to preserve the same character of impression. It is not enough that we should avoid levity of speech and worldly gossip. I have seen the entire effect of a most solemn public exercise dissipated in five minutes, by such intercourse as might still be regarded as both innocent and friendly. Especially if the mind is conscious of having been particularly interested, there should be the fixed determination to cherish the impression, and by retirement if possible. From the want of this, many do always resist the Holy Spirit, and harden their hearts, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

We should have a similar regard to the profit of others. The present service may not have brought any marked good to ourselves, but it may have greatly affected others around us—perhaps the young, our children, or our domestics. To discover at such a time little interest ourselves, would tend fearfully to diminish their interest; and at a moment, perhaps, when their salvation was trembling in

the balance. How important to give it the right inclination ! It is thus that in the hands of the parent or the friend, the faithful servant has, in a thousand instances, either lost or found its proper issue !

Over such as we know and may influence, we must watch with tenderness and solicitude. We should be quick to mark attention ; pray for just impression ; put ourselves in a state of common feeling with them ; and give them every facility to cultivate and nourish the seed which has been sown. Especially they should be encouraged to retire. It has long been the understood rule of a family, under my observation, that on returning from the evening service of the Sabbath-day half an hour shall be allowed to every member for retirement. All the family, with one exception, have made full profession of religion. This single regulation, simple as it is, would do more for the ministry than we are prepared to think.

Generally, there should be mutual and affectionate oversight prevailing in the church. *Oversight* is, indeed, the duty of the ministry ; but not exclusively. In a more private circle, we are to sustain the spirit and the intentions of the ministry. The church is one body, and each member has a vital interest in the health and welfare of the whole. We are to watch over each other for good : to warn, rebuke, comfort, and edify one another, even as we do, and much more abundantly, that we all may be presented a glorious body to Christ.

What might not be expected from the ministry, if it were thus supported ? Little, however, of good will come even from a faithful ministration if it is allowed to stand alone, without sympathy and co-action. The ministry, in fact, not only gives, it takes a character from the people. Hence, it becomes the feeble, worldly, showy, unprofitable

thing we sometimes find it—any thing but the ordinance of God for the conviction and salvation of men !

VI.

The advancement of religion in the church is to be regarded with *enlarged expectation*.

Hope is the genius of religion. Religion is one grand promise of the restoration of all good to him, who has lost and forfeited all by sin. That promise is of infinite import, and it is more certain than the ordinances of heaven. As time rolls away, its accomplishment approaches. What but hope—expanding hope—is adapted to the position of the church, or the revelation and promise of heavenly mercy ?

Yet, to many, the time to which they are come is full of fear. They have received the spirit of bondage again to fear. They are full of apprehension for the church, and all the great interests of liberty, truth and righteousness. They cannot see when good cometh ; but the dread of evil is near to them. While contemplating changes which they admit as needful to the regeneration of the world, they fear lest they should suffer some private inconvenience, some temporal loss ! Oh, fear is base, is worldly, is selfish ! Fear nothing for the church : the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Fear for yourselves, brethren, lest a promise being given of the coming kingdom of heaven, you should fail to enter through unbelief !

Was ever the church in such circumstances of outward weakness and fear, as in the infancy of her time ? Was she ever animated, as then, with ardent and enlarged expectation ? And was not every hope surpassed unspeak-

ably by the manifestations of the might and majesty of God?

And shall the church know no other Pentecost? Yes, she shall. Her career is one of perpetual progression. Brighter and yet brighter days await her. The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold. Scripture teems with the blessed assurance; nature is moving in grandeur to its accomplishment; Providence, with its significant finger, is indicating its approach. The whole creation groaneth, waiting—expecting—the manifestation of the sons of God, and the glory of their inheritance.

Hope, then, becomes the church. In the midst of darkening skies, and clashing opinions, and even of partial disaster, let her clothe herself with hope as with an invulnerable garment. Indulge great hope. Expect for yourself a measure of light, and holiness, and joy, which you have not known. Expect for your family, that they shall be all born of God, and be enrolled amongst the living in Jerusalem. Expect that the church shall become one in faith, in heart, and in action, a purified and spiritual body, filled with all the fulness of God. Expect that the dark forms of evil, which abound in the world, shall cower away before the risen glories of the Sun of righteousness—that a second time the Creator and Redeemer shall say, Let there be light, and there shall be light.

Oh, there is renovation in hope! We become the things we hope to be. To abound in hope, is to abound in service, and in suffering, and in joy. It not only sustains us as we are, it inspires us with additional and celestial life. It bears the martyr to the stake, the hero to victory, the Christian to heaven! Have hope, great hope! “Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

VII.

It is evident that the state of mind of which we are discoursing, would necessarily develope itself in corresponding *prayerfulness*.

Prayer is necessarily and happily connected with every view we can take of the advancing power of religion. But we are in danger, when caring much for the act of prayer, of neglecting its quality. It is not always enough that it be true prayer. In looking to special results, prayer should have a special character. The prayer which respects steadily the advancing spirituality and devotedness of the church should at least have two properties.

It should be emphatically the prayer of *faith*—that prayer which sees God, which recognises his promises, and which can entirely rest on their unchangeable truth. It must be that believing prayer which abandons and abhors every other trust, that it may honor God by a complete and implicit confidence. Such a mind will get near to God. All means and instruments will become as nothing in His presence. After all that the minister has pleaded, with tears it may be, the suppliant is satisfied that it is utterly in vain without God. After all that the church has done or can do, he is convinced that not one step of real progress can be made without God. He is shut up to the mercy and truth of God. His life is there, the life of the church and of the world is there. He waits only on God, but with infinite desire and satisfaction.

Such prayer would disclose another quality. It would be *persevering*. Faith cannot relinquish its grasp. It must have what it seeks. It continues, therefore, to ask till it obtains. This is what is meant by perseverance in prayer.

This is necessary, but it is rare. Many are fitful in prayer; many tire in prayer; many continue for a time, and then cease to pray, or cease to have life in prayer, for the objects of desire. This is not perseverance. Perseverance in prayer yields to no difficulty, no discouragement, no diversion. What it asks, God only can give; it is of unutterable importance; it must ask it till it is possessed. This is the prayer which moves the hand of Omnipotence,—to which nothing is denied.

This is the prayer, then, that we need in the church. All her circumstances are special, and the spirit of grace and supplication in her must be special. After all that has been urged on this vital subject, and with occasional earnestness by many, how little does the prayer of the church take this character! How few Christians devote an hour specially to any great object of prayer, and maintain it before them till prayer is answered! You desire the salvation of a beloved child; but have you thus prayed for it? You desire the success of the ministry; but do you retire from it to the closet, and in agony of spirit wrestle for the blessing? You long for union amongst the disciples of the same Lord; but do you seek it in special, persevering, tearful prayer? You labor for the salvation of men; but is zealous action sustained by prayer equally zealous? Yet this is the way which God hath chosen.

God will honor them that acknowledge him, and confound such as neglect him. A poor but pious woman, in her last painful affliction, received kind attention from a young person. She was the more touched by her continued kindness, because, while acting a Christian part, she was opposed to religion. She asked herself, what she could best do to show her gratitude. She would seek her salvation. She set herself to pray for it day and night,

and that she might see it before she departed. She just lived to witness her conversion to Christ, and admission to the church.

In one instance, true religion was kept alive in an important congregation for many years, while suffering from an heterodox ministry, and the prevalence of worldliness and formality, by the concerted prayerfulness of five female members, who agreed to meet together especially to pray for the recovery of the church. They lived to see an orthodox ministry restored, and the church recovered to her first love and first works.

It was once asked of a leading agent in the formation of one of our earliest Misssionary Societies, how it began. The reply was, "In prayer, sir." "And how has it been sustained?" "With prayer, sir." "And what has most contributed to its prosperity?" "Prayer, sir."

Many things avail; but fervent, spiritual, persevering prayer excelleth them all.

I have thus endeavored to bring together, without encumbering the subject with numerous observations, such particulars as are essentially comprehended in a revived state of the church. Could there be such conviction of defect and sin; such penitential humiliation on its account; such solemn and renewed engagements with God; such determined union amongst the saints; such sympathy with the living ministry; and such believing prayer for the presence and glory of God; apart from an advanced state of religious life and enjoyment?

Such a church would at once be most blessed in herself, and the prepared instrument of blessedness to others. All the sources of weakness and sorrow should be dried up; and all the graces of the Spirit should find their richest

manifestation. Heavenly light, cordial piety, and devoted action, should equally prepare her for Divine fellowship and benevolent service. Every excellence would be there; and, as the parts of one body, each should fulfil its separate and united function, under the impulse of one principle of vigorous life. The church should sit as a queen; her eye knowledge, her voice melody, her hand charity, and her bosom the dwelling-place of purity and love. Her rule should be righteousness; her subjects innumerable; truth, mercy, and peace should wait at her feet; and her praise should be in the gates. Many should come to gaze on her beauty, and glory, and riches; and, bowing down in her presence, should confess that the half had not been told. The Lord of heaven, for her sake, should once more revisit our world; and saints and angels should unite in the one acclamation, "The tabernacle of God is with men on the earth, and He will dwell with them!"

Oh, that the day—the day on which all things wait—were come!

LECTURE VII.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION

BY THE CHURCH.



LECTURE VII.

ITS ADVANCEMENT BY THE CHURCH.

“Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”

IN the last Lecture, our remarks were limited to the advancement of religion *in* the church ; we are now to consider its extension by the church. While treated separately, I trust you will at once see their connection. It is indispensable. The church is commanded to arise and shine, because her light is come. The obligation springs from the privilege. A dark church cannot shine on others ; a barren church cannot fertilize others ; she cannot give what she has not. The possession and enjoyment is the first great claim.

On the other hand, what she has received she is bound to bestow, and she is to expect that it will be even multiplied by distribution. Supposing, then—we fear, in many cases, it must still be a supposition—supposing that religion is in a happy and advancing state within a church, that church, in the same measure, is qualified to advance it elsewhere, and is solemnly bound to engage itself to this end. Let us, then, proceed to ascertain *how the instrumentality of the church may generally be best employed in this service.*

I.

Then we remark, that religion may be advanced by *the full exhibition of Christian character.*

Character is composed from a man's usual principles, habits, and conduct. It has great power, whether for good or evil. We are always feeling it; and are insensibly resisting or yielding to the influence which it throws around us. Place a youth of good education in society with the worldly or the wicked, and he is in a state of strong temptation. Let him yield himself to confiding and familiar intercourse with such society, and it is almost certain that he will become as themselves. In every time, thousands have been thus ruined; and it has been proverbial to remark, that "evil communications corrupt good manners."

Christian character, also, has power. It is peculiar and elevated; and when clear and consistent in its expression, must awaken either opposition or admiration. It is meant to be a means of grace to the world of the highest order.

What is the Christian? He is a spiritual man; his mind is enlightened to apprehend the most sublime truths, and his heart is sanctified to the love of heavenly things. He is habitually superior to the worldliness and selfishness by which he is surrounded. He is redeemed to a spiritual life by the most marvellous exercises of mercy; and he yields up his life a willing sacrifice to his gracious Redeemer. His is truth without change; humility without seeming to be humble; and charity without limit or ostentation. He cannot condemn others, for he is the chief of sinners; he cannot be vain of himself, for he is the least of all saints. His benevolence melts into tenderness over all human suffering; and his integrity binds him to act in the solitude of the counting-house as though a thousand eyes glared on his transactions. He commits his way in life, and the burden of his cares, to Providence. Light are his sorrows, for they shall soon cease; great are his joys, for they are just begun, and shall abide for ever. He, and *he*

alone, is "patient in hope, rejoicing in tribulation, enduring in temptation, as seeing him who is invisible." The invisible life daily brightens on his sight, and nourishes his expectations. In death, he loses nothing—he gains every thing. Earth was his place of toil; his rest, his home, his heaven, are with God.

Is this a slight outline of Christian character and conversation? Could it be seen without impression? Is there any thing like it in the world? Would not the force of contrast, equally with the power of character, awaken attention, and fasten conviction on the observer? Two worldly men were recently referring to such a person, all of them being engaged in a line of business peculiarly exposing them to temptation. The one made a passing appeal to his conduct. "Oh," exclaimed the other, slightly, "he is a Methodist." "I don't know," was the reply, "what religion he is of; but this I know, that he is a *right good man*, and there are very few like him!" Ah! that was a fine testimony against the world, and for the Christian, and by a worldly witness.

Now, supposing the Christian character, in its integrity, benevolence, and spirituality, were distinctly put forth, not by one, but by thousands—supposing it prevailed so fully throughout the church, as to give it, if not a perfect, a predominant expression—what would be its amount of influence?

Character has not only power—it is most powerful; and it is by this moral power chiefly, that the world is to be subdued to Christ. Could it only find a clear and combined expression in the church, we should not have to ask for other means of conquest. She would be as a "living epistle, known and read of all men." Yea, she would stand before the world and her enemies as an army which

hath banners; terrible from her unity of purpose, accumulated numbers, and exact movements.

Many a battle has been lost or won before a blow was struck! One army has carefully observed another; and the evident array of its numbers, the perfection of its discipline, the strength of its position, and the abundance of its means, have at once carried despair to the heart of the enemy. It was then, when the spirit quailed, that the battle was decided. So shall the church conquer! The strength of her enemies is found in her own weakness. When once she shall appear before them in her spiritual excellence, her united power, and harmony of action, hope shall die away within them. She shall be "as the face of God," and none shall abide her coming!

II.

A *devoted observance* of Christian *institutions*, would contribute to the advancement of religion.

We refer to the sacraments and the Sabbath, to the preaching of the word and to prayer. These give a visible existence to the church before the world; and they are brought under the eye of the world for its conviction and salvation. Every saint should feel himself bound by this single consideration to be present with the church, as often as the opportunity is granted to him; and, when present, to give expression to the sentiments which should animate the entire body. Public worship is to be regarded, not merely as a means of grace to ourselves, but as a means of profession before the ungodly. In this relation, it is of unspeakable importance; but its value depends on its character. Let but the worldling account for all he sees on

any principles of action, with which he is already familiar, and the effect is lost. Indifference, formality, the mere entertainment of the sensual or intellectual man, are fatal to just impression.

A stranger enters a society of Christians, professedly engaged in the highest service from the highest motives. He comes from a cold dark world of which he is half weary ; and he expects, at least, to find something different, even though it should fail to please him. But every thing is as cold and heartless as the world he has left. The people cold—the pulpit cold—the very worship cold. He leaves with the confirmed and dangerous conviction, that with all their pretensions to religion, they are neither better nor happier than himself. Such a congregation is responsible for that impression.

Suppose a different state of things,—that of a body of Christians flowing together with evident earnestness and zeal. Nothing is common in their temper of mind, or the service to which they are committing themselves. They are mingling in spiritual worship, and are concerned to observe it with spiritual recognition and enjoyment. They are deeply engaged—engaged with God ; engaged with the truth in which their salvation stands ; and engaged with affectionate regard to each other. They would not but be where they are. It is the home of the soul. Love is evidently the seat of action ; and joy—calm, raised, benignant—visibly dwells on the assembly.

A stranger enters such a society. It is a new world. The moment he crosses the threshold of the place, he feels that he has passed the line separating the visible from the invisible, the temporal from the eternal. Every thing of which he is accustomed to think is positively forgotten. All is spiritual ; thought, prayer, aspect—all spiritual. The minister is

as if he came from a spiritual world to speak of spiritual things. The people, as if they had for the time risen above a bodily existence, are intent on the spiritual life, and are conscious of the presence of the invisible God. See them ! bowed down before the superincumbent glory of present Deity. See how they gather round the footstool of his throne ! See how they hang on the words of his lips, as able to save the soul, and to purify it for his fellowship and kingdom ! See how they offer the living sacrifices of prayer, of thanksgiving, yea of themselves for gracious acceptance ! Is the observer unaffected ? No ; he may resist conviction, but he cannot avoid it ; he is judged of all he sees. " Verily," he says, " there is a God, though I have not acknowledged him ; there is truth in religion, though I have doubted ; there is joy on earth which I have not tasted. These people are happy ; but for me, what a wretched being am I !"

Such a spirit prevailing over our churches would instantly change our position in relation to the world. To be efficacious, however, it must be uniform, and have respect to *every exercise* by which God is to be honored and worshipped amongst men. The truly pious have not been sufficiently affected by this consideration. They would not profane the Sabbath to worldly uses ; yet they are not careful to redeem time from the world, to discover their love of spiritual services and of the people of God. They have despised their own institutions, and then wondered that the world despises them. They have preferred the claims of the drawing-room and the domestic circle, to the house of God and the prayer-meeting. Even the minister has been heard incautiously to say, as his reason for absence, " It is *only* a prayer-meeting." There was death in those words to those who received them !

I cannot forbear to connect with the subject an instance of more pleasing character. A lady, and a Christian, was invited by another lady of her acquaintance, to a drawing-room party. It was an interesting occasion, and many of her relatives and friends were to be there. But it happened to be on the evening of the prayer-meeting, when a few (alas, too few!) of the church, with their pastor, met together for humble worship. She could not hesitate. She wrote to decline the invitation; and, with the candor and courage of a Christian, assigned the true reason. It was the night of the prayer-meeting, and she could not therefore possibly come. "A prayer-meeting!" exclaimed her worldly friend; "what can there be in this prayer-meeting to induce her to prefer it to obliging me, and spending an evening so agreeably?" The anticipated evening passed away to both, but the effect remained. "A prayer-meeting!" she still exclaimed; "what can there be in these prayer-meetings to outweigh in her mind the most innocent enjoyments of life?" She resolved to go and see. The spirit of prayer and of love fell on her; and she now walks with her friend to the house of God in company.

III.

The advancement of religion is to be sought *in supreme regard to the interests of the church universal.*

This interest must be *supreme*. We must be one with the church. Its estate must be our estate. Yea, her sorrow must be more to us than our private sorrow; and we must prefer her prosperity above our chief joy. She must be regarded, like the ark floating over the dark and troubled waters, as charged with all precious things for the reno-

vation and hope of a lost world. What power would dwell in such a spirit ! When her sons mourned over her dust, could she be long in sorrow ? When they took pleasure in her stones, could she remain in a state of dilapidation ? What could she then want which wealth, or talent, or combination, or prayer could secure ? Would not the time, yea, the decreed time to favor her, have come ?

This regard should be *universal*. Evidently it is not so now. Often it is confined to our *country*. But religion is of no country ; and as disciples of it, our affections should suffer no limitations. Our common faith and hope should make the most distant near, and the most foreign friends and brethren. The first church on the borders of China, recently formed of seven members, and celebrating for the first time the Redeemer's love, should, by sympathy and fellowship, be essentially one with the whole church of the redeemed.

Still oftener our affections are confined to our *party*. The spirit of party is the bane of charity. Where it is strong and exclusive, it is not religious, and is scarcely consistent with religious character. It is not enlightened by religious truth, nor animated by religious motive. Its effects, too, are any thing rather than happy and religious. It is capable, indeed, of putting forth great energy, but it wants the meekness of wisdom, and fails to commend itself to the consciences of men. It does too much and too little for the occasion. How many towns have we with five or six orthodox places of worship, where one, or at most two, would have been adequate ; while the larger towns and cities, demanding additional places of our own denomination, have been neglected. I have seen in one street of a small town four places of worship ; all of them small ; all of them badly supplied ; all of them badly attended. There

they stood, not the emblems of strength, but of weakness—not of union, but of division. The attendants, if not at enmity, were as distant and strange as though they were. Each little society was catering for its own little party; and yet, by their own admissions, there were no essential grounds of difference between them! What a spectacle to the world! What a perplexity to the serious inquirer pausing at the threshold of profession! What true and enlightened sense could these Christians have of the mission of Christ, and of the grace, liberty and spirituality of his kingdom? One place would have comprehended them all; they would then have secured an edifying ministry; and they would have presented to the world an aspect of strength, union and inviting benevolence.

Sometimes our regards are limited even to *ourselves*. The small inclosures of party are too large for the sympathies of some persons. They are limited to their own walls, and to their single society. If they prosper, they are self-satisfied; if they do not, the prosperous estate of others brings them no consolation. Yea, their prosperity may spring from the divisions and decay of surrounding interests, and they may be content to have it so. It is a fearful consideration for such persons, that such a course as this may be sustained by a principle of refined selfishness alone. The love of our place, or of our party, may be as void of religion, as the love of one's family. We must do more, if we would have and give better evidence of religious life.

An effort was made recently to raise a chapel in a village, which all admitted was exceedingly dark and destitute. It was considerable, and expensive, and difficult, and chiefly made by persons at a distance. At length the work was done; and the place opened under very cheering circumstances. There was, within a mile and a half of this vil-

lage, a well-established church and congregation, with more than the usual measure of wealth. Neither the minister nor, I believe, any of the church or congregation were present on the occasion to express unity and pleasure; nor was there any sympathy shown in the effort, from the beginning to the close. If this is to be independent, the sooner such independency is repudiated the better!

The evil principle which we would condemn has, in our time, taken to itself *another form* yet more remarkable. We have not only abounding separation to mourn over; we have separation of the most false and outrageous character. We have parties in the visible church who are *united* with *essential differences*, and who are *separated* while holding *essential truth*. There are, for instance, at this day, thousands and myriads of Christians, in the endowed church, who are separated from the body of Dissenters with which they have essential agreement; and they are professedly and practically united with a still larger body, with which they have essential differences! This evidently touches at once the question of sincerity; and one must have a large measure of charity, and a large acquaintance with the subtleties of the human heart, to connect it with conscientious conviction, and not with merely worldly considerations.

What a mass of evil is indicated by these allusions! How, in the nature of things, can any good come to the world by the church, while they are cherished or overlooked! They must be seen, and abhorred, and rejected. Christians must look on the church in her spiritual attributes and excellences; they must recognise every spiritual member, of whatever sect, or place, or country, with the name and the heart of a brother in Christ. They must renounce those worldly alliances and distinctions which corrupt her

faith, and prevent her advancement. They must merge their particular good in the general prosperity of the church ; and must live and die for its extension and glory ! Can Christ and Belial become one ? Can Christian and Christian be separated ? Is Beelzebub against Beelzebub ?

IV.

The advancement of religion is to be promoted by *combined and resolved effort for the expansion of the church.*

This is the one point to which we have been looking ; and all the preparation within the church is of importance as it finds this issue. Religion, indeed, from its very nature, secures this. Only let it be found in a high and and vigorous state, and the result is, spontaneous expansion. Religion is life ; and all life is expansive. The period at which it ceases to advance is the period at which it begins to decay. It is so with the vegetable ; it is so with the animal ; it is yet more emphatically true with the Christian. Life in the saints is immortal ; pause and decline are a violence to its nature. Progression—continuous progression—is its characteristic. Let it reign in them unchecked, and they will be as the trees of a garden, full of life, beauty and efflorescence, continually giving and receiving life. “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.”

1. If such life predominated in the church, it would necessarily lead to *aggressive movement* on the world. We should not rest within ourselves ; we should not wait till men came to us ; but we should go to them ; and compel them, by the force of living persuasion and love, to come in amongst us. The principle of the great conflict would

be that of offence, not of defence. A little war is a costly and a dangerous thing. Our faith is to overcome the world ; not to beat it off, but to beat it down, to overcome it. To take such an attitude, and not from corrupt considerations, the temper of the church must be manly, assured, and devoted in the highest degree. As yet it is absent. It is the adversary that is assured, daring, and aggressive—the Christian who is timid, silent, retiring, and desponding ! Did ever such a spirit lead to victory ? Is it not unjust and disgraceful in such a cause, with such a leader ? Ours must be, not the spirit of fear which hath bondage, and which antedates its own downfall ; but the spirit of liberty, of power, and of God !

Particularly, by an aggressive movement on the world, we mean that the whole arrangements of the church should have more decided respect to the world in its *unconverted state*. It should be habitually contemplated as at enmity with God ; and the great concern should be its conversion. Not to proselyte, but to save. Not to propagate your notions of baptism, or mine on episcopacy. These may have their place, and their time ; but they are secondary. They are no part of the line which separates the living church from the world dead in sin ; and are not to be named at the moment in which men are to be turned to Christ, and souls rescued from hell ! To this one great service, the ministry, the sympathies, the prayers, and the efforts of the church, should receive a more marked and biassed determination.

I must pause here to remark, that great error prevails on this subject, and in two great divisions of the church. The errors are diverse, but they are working with the same disastrous effect. The one lies with the nonconforming churches. They sprang up in the presence of bitter hatred

and persecution. Every where they were proscribed ; and they lived rather by connivance than by the sanction of law. It was natural for them, in such circumstances, to retire from public observation into secluded courts and by-ways ; thankful if they might still, unknowing and unknown, be faithful to their conscience, and in peace worship their Saviour. They had little opportunity for aggressive movement ; and too readily the mind took a character from their circumstances.

The chief evil is, that, with changed circumstances, the unfavorable and depressing habits to a great extent remain. It is now indispensable that they be cast away. The corresponding sections of the church in America have a nobler bearing, more freedom of thought and action, and greater confidence before the common enemy, because they have never worn our fetters. Those fetters are gone, and the freedom of life must be ours. We must come forth from our hiding-places ; we must lift up our voice in the streets and the market-places ; we must challenge to stand on equal terms with the highest and the best. We must utter our opinions in the light of day. We must insist on their truth and importance, and court inquiry and discussion, with the confidence of an assured faith and a triumphant cause.

The other error rests almost exclusively with the endowed church. To preserve her national character, both here and in Scotland, she has fearfully compromised with the world. She stands on the supposition, that all born in these islands are, by that occurrence, of her fellowship. That this is expressed in baptism, advanced in confirmation, and completed in death ; that, as of that communion, they live and die Christians. This prevailing and destructive delusion is noticed here, from its withering effect on the church and

the ministry. Where all are Christians by birth and baptism, there is nothing for the church to do; and the ministry may receive any character, but it can never become the power of God unto salvation. Regeneration, as it is seated in an act of intelligent volition, cannot be even a doctrine of such a church; and deep compassion for the spiritual misery of men, and a keen apprehension of their exposure to eternal death, are not to be expected. Till this original and monstrous error of the papacy be utterly cast out, that church can have no power with the world, except one demon could be supposed to expel another demon.

2. This expansive life should permeate through *all existing means*. This is a matter of first necessity. In this day much anxiety is shown for new and additional machinery in the service of religion. But what we chiefly want is, a new spirit of grace infused into the means we have.

Of the *ministry* we have spoken separately. It is first in order and usefulness. Nothing can advance but as it advances. It has mostly led the way to defection and error; and it, by the baptism of repentance and the Spirit, must lead to high and noble achievement. The education for the ministry must receive a consideration which has not yet been awarded to it. Particularly general and professional studies must be more distinct; and those which are strictly professional must claim to have a larger measure of attention. Our students must not feel, that they are thrust on public life with the knowledge of every thing, except the work they have to do, and the world by which they are surrounded. The college must stand in closer connection with the church. The lower class of motive relied on in secular studies—emulation and vanity—must be denounced as vicious. Every thing must be subordinate to the forma-

tion of a *spiritual ministry*; and, by whatever means secured, there must be a better acquaintance with pastoral duties, prior to assuming the pastoral office.

Our *schools* for the instruction of the young stand next to the ministry. They are the nurseries of the church, and they will be the church of the next age. They should be eminently of a scriptural and religious character. They should comprehend all who need education, and can be brought under its influence—the infant, the child, the youth, the adult. Such schools as are taught on the Sabbath should receive, as much as possible, the character of Bible classes. The secular elements of learning—writing, reading and figures—should be entirely excluded, except a case of positive necessity could be established. The greatest care should be taken, that the scholar may distinguish between his daily instructions, and the more sacred exercises of the Sabbath.

In the Sabbath schools the teachers should all be pious and voluntary. The classes should be small, so as to allow the mind of the teacher to operate forcibly on the mind of the taught. The object should be throughout the salvation of the pupil, and this, not to be realized in years to come, but now. The great means to this end should be the distinct presentation of the wonderful facts of our redemption, clothed in the earnest solicitude of the teacher. The task-like method is death to these exercises. Every thing is to be hoped from the sympathy between the child and the teacher, and nothing without it. If the teacher trifles, the child will trifle still.

Particular provision should be made to draw off such children as have arrived at fifteen or sixteen years of age, into separate biblical classes of higher character. It is at this period mostly that they become shy of their classes, and break away from their school; and it is at this period

especially we should seek to retain them; for just then it is they most need a guiding hand and a judicious friend, and we lose all if we lose them at this time. These classes should not be considered children's classes, and none beneath a given age should on any account have access to them. The instructor should, of course, be more competent, and the mode and spirit of instruction more free and confidential. If no decision of character has been reached, "all diligence"—double effort—should be directed to this end. It is a fearful thing for the young mind to become familiar with Divine truth, without any corresponding impression; and the considerate teacher will tremble lest his labor should terminate thus. He should be in the habit of marking the state of mind; and whenever it is encouraging, he should retire with the party for conversation and prayer. In these classes much good is to be sought by separate exercises with the pupils. In this way their faults should always be named; in this way their state of mind should become the subject of prayer; and in this way the pious instructor would acquire such a place in the affections of the scholar, as would itself become a means of salvation.

It would be out of place in this Lecture to supply a treatise on Sabbath schools. These passing suggestions, however, if always before the mind, and fully practised, would work not the less powerfully, because they are simple and apparent. And ought not the effect to be greater and more happy than it is? Far are we from depreciating the usefulness of the Sabbath school; but surely when we look at the size of the field, and the greatness of the labor, we must all lament, that with so much culture there has been so little fruit. We might have reasonably expected, that had the work been generally done in the right spirit,

earlier conversions would have abounded, and large and triumphant accessions would have been made to the church.

The *free circulation of religious tracts* and of the *Holy Scriptures* is another means now in general use. This is sought to be effected, by a number of pious persons in a church banding themselves together, for the benevolent purpose of enlightening the neighborhood in which they meet for worship. They visit the inhabitants from house to house, lend them tracts, and induce them to subscribe for the Bible ; and seize the occasions thus created for profitable conversation.

This is a simple, cheap and admirable method of usefulness. It, however, requires care in the administration. The persons thus engaged, should be generally approved for their standing, discretion, conciliatory manners, and benevolent piety. Above all things, they must be deeply in earnest, or their manner will make difficulties, and difficulty will overwhelm them.

They must on no account be contented with becoming lenders of tracts, and vendors of Scripture ; these transactions must merely open the door to usefulness. They must secure conversation ; conversation must be carried out, at least where there is any encouragement, into sustained intercourse ; and having got so far, they must not, if possible, leave the house till they have brought to it salvation. Circulating, rather than stationary, prayer meetings should be introduced to the courts and streets where most encouragement is given. At the more eligible and needy parts of the district, rooms should be secured for a Sabbath school, and occasional exhortation and prayer ; and where real good is done, it should be carefully protected by communion with a well-established Christian society.

It is impossible to conceive of such a method being

rightly and extensively worked, without remarkable results. It would restore the broken links between the lower and superior classes ; it would rouse the indifferent from their apathy, and oblige them to meet the call of religion with a negative or an affirmative ; it would satisfy thousands of desolate spirits that there were some who cared for their souls ; it would fill our schools and chapels, and contribute to restore us, by primitive means, to a more primitive state of the church.

Our Anniversaries, County Association and Missionary Meetings, are of frequent occurrence and of extraordinary character.

Our *Anniversaries* are, over the whole country, very numerous ; and they bring many Christians and ministers together. They should be occasions of spiritual advancement, but they have little of this tendency. The day is used by our people very much as one of animal enjoyment, and they have feeble desires for any thing beyond it. At best, they meet with a benevolent desire to aid a weak cause ; and are pleased with themselves for having done it. There is no set purpose to make the day contribute, as it might, to a more decided expression of Christian life. While these opportunities are so numerous and even so important, and while many of our ministers find it their duty to give to them so large a portion of their time, how few conversions can we connect with them ! Is not this chiefly because neither ministers nor people meet, at such a time, with the serious expectation, that God will visit them with a remarkable manifestation of his grace ? And yet the occasion is exhilarating ; when it occurs in a village or small town it excites great attention ; it supplies an opportunity for conference and prayer, and for an appeal to many who do not usually wait on the Gospel ; and it ought to bear

other and richer fruits than those of temporary pleasure, or a seasonable money contribution.

The *County or District Association* is an occasion of far greater importance. It exists for the advancement of religion ; and, undoubtedly, it has worked beneficially to this end. But the question is, has it accomplished what might fairly be expected from it ? We think not. We have frequently looked with admiration on these assemblies of saints and pastors, and have silently said, What power is here ! while they perhaps have seemed nearly unconscious of its presence. The meeting is sustained on too limited a principle. If there shall be a considerable muster of persons ; if there shall be a hearty exchange of friendly and hospitable sentiment ; if a fair contribution shall be reported to the funds of the Association ; general satisfaction prevails. This is a good meeting.

It may even happen, as I have known it, that they meet in a town and in a place where religion is exceedingly low, and division and discord prevail. No attempt is made there and then for the revival of religion. Their duties lie in some distant villages ; and the fruit is to be found at some distant day. It does not seem to occur to them, that a representation of the religion of the county, being made to bear directly and powerfully on the place where they are met, might accomplish more for religion in two or three days, than they would otherwise realize in as many years.

The result is, that our associations are feeble ; feeble for the very purpose to which they are looking—that of raising means to support dependent interests. The amount thus raised, with few exceptions, is too insignificant to be named without shame. Would it be so if the system were changed ? If it were felt that these meetings were of

great moment? If expectation were awakened to the present revival of true religion on the occasion? If they were connected with pastoral conference and confession, general humiliation and prayer, and stirring appeals to the ungodly of the place,—would they be so? Our conviction is, that while they secured a much higher end than is usually sought, they would increase the means for the support of the gospel elsewhere fivefold!

The *Meetings* which have been found necessary to uphold the *great missionary cause* have much power; and they have been attended with very beneficial effects over the country. It would be too much to say that they are not open to improvement; and in proportion to our conviction of their power should we desiderate all the improvement of which they are capable. There is too much hurry and bustle, and hasty transition from person to person and place to place, for deep and lasting impression. The spirit of the platform is too often worldly and vicious. Better feelings are too often overlooked in the inordinate desire of money: the spirit of mammon may reign in our religious societies as effectually as in the world—but more disastrously.

The great assemblies of our people have their attention turned too much on the state of the world, too little on the preparation of the church. They come together with more of the holiday sentiment, than with a gathering sense of their responsibility to God and man. There is no prevailing profound sense of the Divine presence; no such humiliation before its revealed glory, as makes a vast congregation feel itself nothing before it; no living conviction on the mind that the good they have come to seek is to be found only with God, and that it is their duty to seek it by united and extraordinary prayer. Scarcely ever is there

such a state of mind, as would constrain an assembly to break off from every other exercise, and ask for prayer, as the only means of expressing inward humility, and the intense desire which would burst the heart if it had not some escape. Oh, that there were! We rejoice in what we have; but we pant for something more and higher. We should then not want for means to do the work committed to us, nor for consolation in the hope of outliving its difficulties.

In fact, our associations, and the meetings of our public religious societies, seem to have been supplied by Providence for an end beyond what we have usually contemplated—the *advancement of religion in ourselves*. We are to learn, that if they are to work efficiently on others, they must first operate by reviving the power of religion in ourselves. It should appear, that they might well take the place which was held by the “Four day Sacrament,” and with advantages which it had not. Over Scotland and America, notwithstanding the counteraction of worldly patronage in the one case, it has worked with surprising power. We need some such more special and comprehensive arrangements. Our existing societies might seem well fitted to supply all we need. If they shall begin at home; if they shall regard the advancement of personal religion; if they shall bring the churches into renewed fellowship and covenant with God; and if they, as they circulate, shall be made to tell more fully on the careless and ungodly; they may fulfil our best desires for the church, while they renew their strength for the conquest of the world.

At all events, we must have meetings not merely to circulate the Bible, to promote missionary objects, and to raise money; but distinctly and directly to *revive religion*. Till the churches have due and primary respect to *this*, they are not to be trusted with any thing beyond it.

3. Means which have been *neglected*, or perhaps *not recognised*, must be employed, and accommodated to circumstances. For instance, the church must be imbued with the spirit of *colonization*. The accommodated use of this term has been adopted in America; and it may fairly express the object before us. A church regards the neighborhood by which she is surrounded but neglected, as dark and estranged; and she proposes to send off a portion of her own body to enlighten and reclaim it. This is a service demanding frequently great sacrifices; and, if it is fulfilled not from party considerations, an eminent state of piety. We have had but few examples of it in our land; and such as have been given have not mostly been for our honor. The incumbent of the parish resisted the multiplication of churches and chapels in his domain, and of his own order, as long as he could; and the Nonconformist pastor and congregation regarded an offset from themselves, as the loss of so much blood and treasure. Up to this hour the extension of the church, both within and without the pale of the Establishment, has been effected rather from party than pious motives; more from the spirit of division than of love. If pure motive has been left to work alone, it has commonly been too weak for the occasion. When this method was once explained to a worthy pastor, his candid reply was, "Then I must confess I have not faith enough to make the sacrifice."

This is just the truth. The service requires faith and self-denial; but these bring with them an unexpected reward. Indeed, when wisely done, the benefit is in proportion to the sacrifice; according to the word of our Lord—there is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and he that will lose his life shall find it. I am acquainted with no instance of loss, but with many of real and abiding profit. I have

known a church during one pastorate make five offsets and dismiss above one hundred members on this principle, and it has been renovated by the very act. I have known a church separate by one act, in a great emergency, sixty of her number to form another church, and not feel her loss. I have known six young men, humble of heart, but strong in faith, devote themselves, with the sanction and prayers of the church, to establish another fellowship, in a most destitute station. The parent church has been revived ; another church has been formed of equal importance ; and the band of men who gave themselves to the work became eminent—two of them ministers of the gospel.

Examples on the other side, alas ! are abundant ; and they are not without profit. One instance may be sufficient. I know a town with a population of not less than sixty thousand persons, in which there is only one congregational church. Thirty years ago it commanded nearly all the religious attention and influence of the place. Accommodation was sought in it, year after year, by a large number of persons and families in vain. The minister and church, had they availed themselves suitably of the occasion, might have multiplied themselves fourfold. It did not seem to occur to them, and the opportunity is now gone for ever. Others have done the work they should have done, and they are the poorer. There is still but one place, and seats may now be had at pleasure.

It were painfully easy to name a score of our principal towns, in which similar neglect has been shown, with similar consequences. Is not enough stated to awaken attention ? Nothing demands it more. This is not merely the day for action, but for magnanimous action. He that will save his life shall lose it. It is not life to live to ourselves ; the church that so lives must die. We must come out of

ourselves, and live for others. We must do for Christ what we would do for ourselves; we must do from love and good will, what we have done from strife and envy.

Above all, till our faith is stronger, we may learn that our very interests are bound up in this course. In every case, in which it is rightly pursued, there is the direct good of forming an additional Christian community; and, besides this, there is the benefit of the example to others, and the benefit of the reaction on ourselves. A church fulfilling such duty is giving healthful exercise to her own principles; is placed in affecting circumstances; is training herself to heroic deeds; and has the blessed consciousness of usefulness. She is renovated in grace and in life! Happy are the people who are in such a case!

4. Both *higher and lower agency* are necessary for the expansion of the church. We need a *lower agency*. The Endowed Church is sustained chiefly by the aristocracy; Non-conformity by the mediate classes; Methodism alone touches on the poorer community. Meantime our institutions are professedly for the people; and their efficacy is to be tested by their power over the common mind. Up to this moment, the common mind has but little sympathy with our worship or our doctrine. Nor will they till we come nearer to them.

For this, we need an order of ministration subordinate to the regular ministry. It should be taken very much from the classes which it is to benefit. Men of similar habits, of thought, and modes of speech; men of superior sense and earnest piety; men answering very much to the local preacher and city missionary, only that they should be carefully trained for their specific duty, and should be in full communication with the regular ministry. A good use of

their mother tongue, a just knowledge of theology, and an acquaintance with the world, should be deemed usual qualifications ; much beyond this would place them too far before those they have to teach. They should have assigned districts, and should penetrate and cultivate the whole of them. Scripture reading and exposition, conversation, exhortation and prayer, should be their instruments ; and in their solitary and self-denying services, they should be sustained by the sympathy and cognizance of the congregation with which they are connected. We have yet to learn what benefit would arise to the church from an exact and general accomplishment of such a plan.

We equally need a *higher agency*. We employ not this phrase in any sense which would affect the essential parity of the Christian ministry. We seek only to make such references as the following. The church, and the families which compose it, should habitually think it their greatest honor to yield up the choicest talent and character within them to the service of the sanctuary. The course of preparation should be such as may render them efficient ministers of the New Testament—able to present the great mysteries of our redemption in such form and power, as may bring reverence, conviction, and salvation to the world. Some in the ministry should be set free from local claims, that they may fulfil a more general vocation. Their services might be invaluable for settling little differences, securing better provision for the pastor, reviving the state of religion, and carrying out the regards of the people beyond themselves in general usefulness.

Many a worthy pastor is oppressed with poverty, while delicacy prevents him opening his lips on this subject, though faithful to every other. A third person would have

no difficulty in calling up the attention of his people, and in alleviating his burden.

As many are secluded at a small station, year after year, without relief or change; and it would require peculiar character, as well as peculiar grace, to bear up against the influence of formality and heartlessness in such circumstances. How refreshing would visitation, and sympathy, and help, from a distance, be in such case? Religion, perhaps, is fallen, at a particular station, into a low and impoverished condition. The minister sees it, mourns over it, and is sinking under it, without power to correct it. But the arrival of a stranger and a brother would cheer him, and awaken the attention of the church and the town, and a new life might begin.

But illustrations were endless. A minister recently invited to partake in opening a chapel, received also, on its being known, five other applications from ministers and churches in the vicinity, to fulfil just such a class of services as we have noticed. Can any thing more fully indicate the necessity of some such arrangements? We boast of independency, and we do well; but let us carefully remember, that independent and united action must be present in the spiritual, as in the human body, if we would pretend either to strength or life.

5. There should be concerted and determined effort to secure more of *public attention to the claims of religion*. Here we have great deficiency. Religion is, for the most part, exhibited to the religious; and we have shown little care or sagacity in bringing it before the world of mankind. We must make haste to correct these errors of conduct.

Public discussion may influence public opinion. The

platform is certainly not the best place for disposing of difficult questions, and eliciting truth ; nevertheless, it is invaluable for awakening attention, and making impression. We must not decline means because we think them less perfect than others. If the taste of the people, as at present, shall incline them to prefer public discussion to secluded inquiry, they must be met on their own ground. Truth has nothing to fear ; and the advocates must be careful to show, that they are prepared to plead for it in every place, and under any circumstances. Many subjects related to religion, are well fitted to be chiefly sustained by this means. What do not the causes of temperance, of the Sabbath, and of liberty, owe to it ? Public discussion has clothed intemperance, profanity, and oppression with public odium ; and this, beyond ten thousand pledges, has given a wholesome character to public opinion.

The *press* is the great organ of opinion, and therefore of great power. It is mostly with the world. Science has done little for religion ; literature has often been hostile, and, when not hostile, neutral. The daily and weekly press, the chief organ of politics, with few exceptions, has been with the world, and in opposition to vital religion. Of all other instrumentality it is the most powerful, not only from the numbers it addresses, but chiefly from the power of *iteration* it possesses, which of itself is sufficient, with half the community, to give to error the place and authority of truth.

It must be redeemed and dedicated to Religion. She cannot prevail alone. She can only prevail by imparting her own nature to science, to letters, to civil polity, to all the interests of mankind, till they become only so many phases of her own bright and heavenly form. All must be redeemed. The pulpit, the press, and the platform, must

all be consecrated. Men must be fed with knowledge ; all that knowledge must be impregnated with religion ; till every wave of the great ocean of knowledge, which now kisses every shore, be saturated with the salt of the kingdom and of life !

6. Finally, let me observe, *That special means may be necessary under special circumstances.* They are, however, never to be magnified, as of more value than stated means of grace. They are of the nature of a remedy, and are not to be regarded as daily food. As a remedy they may be invaluable. A church may have fallen into a sinful state of inattention and unbelief ; or great apathy may rest on a surrounding neighborhood which nothing ordinary can disturb. Some special movement may then be the only appropriate means to excite attention and recover from sin. Who shall say that in such and similar instances, special and protracted engagement is not necessary, in the order of means, to the proposed issue ? In our opinion it is as much the dictate of true philosophy as of true religion.

Care, however, should be had in the use of such means. They should be employed under special circumstances ; for a special end ; and laid aside when this end is realized. On no account must they be used till they are worn out.

Nor must they be mystified. Many, under the notion of reviving religion amongst a people, have indulged in human inventions, or adopted a machinery of their own. They have trusted in these, and expected them to work as a charm. They have appealed, through methods of their own, to the senses and the nerves, rather than to the understanding and the heart. Such a course is to be condemned. It springs from vanity, and it will end in vanity and confusion.

Special effort for the revival and advancement of religion does not consist in the invention of new means to the end ; but in the more earnest and protracted use of such as the New Testament supplies to us. There we find the economy of means to be most simple, and yet capable of endless application. It is this that composes at once their beauty and their power.

These means are, essentially, *preaching* and *prayer* ; and all that has passed before us in this exercise may generally be resolved into them. Preaching, in the larger sense, is the living presentation of Divine truth to man by man ; and prayer is the devout mind sensibly resting on God for his promised benediction. What more do we require ? Give us *apostolic preaching* and *apostolic prayer*, and we ask no other machinery for the salvation of the world !

7. But the success of means depends on their use ; and without committing ourselves to any nice or subtle questions between clergy and laity, we hesitate not in asserting, *that it is the incumbent duty of every Christian to use them.* We wish the variety of observation to be concentrated in this. It is vital to the subject. When once all Christians shall be brought deliberately to admit and feel the obligation, and to employ the assigned means as they have the ability and opportunity, all that prayer could ask for the church would be already granted.

This has been, and is, our chief defect and weakness. It is a great achievement to bring one-third of a congregation of professed Christians to feel and to act aright on this subject ; while the remaining two-thirds hang on their efforts as a heavy weight and discouragement. The one thing we want, then, as means to an end, is that each

Christian should so act in this service, as though its happy issue depended on himself. Let him consider his talent, find his place, and hold it till death. Some can prophesy, some can teach, some can write, and some can give. All can act, and pray, and suffer, and die for the kingdom. Let no one do nothing. Let his hand forget its accustomed operation, and his tongue cleave to his mouth, rather than he should forget Jerusalem which is from above! Then, when the whole sacramental host of the redeemed and elect shall stand forth as a great army—animated with one mind, fighting as with one arm—then shall they be invincible, going from conquest to conquer!

And where are we to look for help for the world, but in the bosom of the church? Whatever may benefit mankind is there, and there only. If light is anywhere, it is there; if purity is anywhere, it is there; if peace is anywhere, it is there. All precious things are there. Liberty is there; the truth is there; the saints are there; the living temple of the redeemed is there; and there is the Mediator; and God himself is there, dwelling with man on earth. All—all are within the church, for the salvation of the world. What a vocation is hers!

And yet never but once has she been fully sensible of it, and fully prepared to obey it. And when was this? Not in the Reformation of Luther, great as it was! Not in the more recent awakening under Wesley and Whitefield! No! It was in the pentecostal period of the church. Then she was few in numbers and poor in circumstance; but she was entirely separated from the world, and entirely united in herself. She stood as a little phalanx in the midst of surrounding hosts; presenting a face to every foe; sustaining a single banner; and animated by one living soul inspired from heaven; and not until she

was false to herself, did she fail in the presence of her enemies.

Oh! when again shall that day of union, of faith, of triumph appear? Was it ever so much needed as now? Was it ever to be so much expected as now? Is not this the dispensation of the Spirit? Is it not the sin of the church not to know the day of her visitation? What calamities have come on her—have come on the world—through her deficiencies and sins! Is it not a time to return, and to repent, and to do her first works; as when the Spirit of God wrought mightily in her, so that her adversaries could stand neither before the glory of her face nor the thunder of her power!

O Zion, awake, awake, arise from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments! O Zion, awake, awake, and know the day of thy visitation, lest it be hidden from thine eyes! O Zion, the chosen of God, and the redeemed of thy Lord; who art the ordained minister of life and bliss to a ruined world—who art destined to universal empire and imperishable glory,—“*Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen on thee!*”

LECTURE VIII.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
IN THE NATION.

LECTURE VIII.

ITS ADVANCEMENT IN THE NATION.

“Happy is that people that is in such a case : yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

WE have now to discourse of our beloved country. None need, however, fear that our remarks will receive a political complexion. Not that we would be thought indifferent to any subject that even remotely affects the prosperity of our people ; but that our design and the occasion raise us above it. We seek to treat at once of higher considerations, which control and involve those that are less.

Whatever differences of opinion may otherwise exist in relation to our country, all are agreed in believing, that she is passing through a great crisis ; and all are afflicted more or less with apprehensions on her account. It is not possible for the truly patriotic mind to be thus apprehensive for the commonwealth, without anxiously looking round for some sources of relief ; and these are, in fact, almost as numerous as the characters of the persons who seek them. Some rest their hope on continued peace, and others on extended knowledge ; some recur to freedom, and some to political economy ; many make a vague reference to what they regard as the inexhaustible resources of the country ; and others ask for state grants, and the expansion of the endowed church, as the means of our salvation. We also have hope for our country ; but it is not in the efficacy of

these remedies. Our single hope is in *religion*—vital, active, universal religion. We are passing through a crisis which has been fatal to every other nation, and which can only become salutary to us by the alterative power of true religion.

Peace is an invaluable blessing ; but it cannot bring to us all the good we require. It has happily been ours for a quarter of a century ; and has it not, through counteracting causes, disappointed the expectations of all ? Besides, a breath may break it. Hitherto we have had to struggle for its existence ; and it would certainly have perished amidst the jarring interests of nations, had it not been supported by the influence of religion.

Knowledge is a ground of hope ; but it alone is not to be trusted. Always knowledge is better than ignorance ; and we would therefore say, under all circumstances, Educate, by all means educate. Yet the lover of his country should remember, that knowledge must ally itself with principles ; and that if allowed to unite itself with evil principles, it has accumulated an awful power to destroy. It is indeed delightfully true, that Knowledge has a natural affinity to truth ; but it is not to be forgotten, that she is exposed to a strong bias from our fallen nature.

Freedom is the boast of many, and they do well to glorify it. It is the birthright of man ; and without it, it were not good to live. But in our imperfect state, is it not evident that mere liberty inclines to anarchy and licentiousness ? Has not all history shown, and especially in our own time, that a people, to enjoy liberty, must be prepared for it ? Can any thing less than religion be an adequate preparation ? In proportion as man is in possession of personal and social liberty, does he not require, for his own

safety, that he should come under the control of a law which is spiritual, supreme, and eternal ?

Political economy is the favorite hope of many. Undoubtedly much is to be expected from the meliorating influence of advancing science on our institutions. But politics are the morals of nations ; and that would be a strange morality which should seek to make its standing good in the world, independently of religion ! If the experiment might be favorably tried anywhere, it might be here. But has it been successful ? This science boasts of two schools, each of considerable pretensions and power. The one is utilitarian, the other transcendental ; the one dwells in mysticism, the other in matter of fact. Both are committed to fatal error at the very threshold. They treat of man ; and they misapprehend man's very nature. With the one, man is a machine ; with the other, an angel : with one, he has no body, with the other, no soul. Now he is the creature of circumstances, moulded by society, and without principles or character ; and now he is possessed of all the seeds of excellence and perfectibility, and requires only to be relieved of social incumbrances to develope them in luxuriance to perfection ! And these are amongst the last lights of philosophy, in the neglect of revelation and common sense !

Others recur to the *resources* of the *country*, as sufficient to recover us to a state of prosperity, and repose on this hope as a remedy for all evil. Are we safe in such a conclusion ? Supposing the spring tide of prosperity set in on our country, have we no cause for apprehension ? Is not prosperity itself one of the severest trials to which individuals or states can be submitted ? Have not most people found their ruin in it ? Amongst ourselves, has not the prosperity with which we have been indulged enfeebled our

virtues, and given virulence to our vices? Has it not already given birth to that luxury, dissipation, venality, and selfishness, which are the forerunners of the state's decay? And is not, at this hour, a superior influence needful to arrest us in our downward career?

Others there are, who, with more serious views, turn from every vain hope to religion; but, weakly trembling for the ark of God, they clamor for *state patronage* and *increased endowment*. We are one with this class of persons in their end; we differ from them entirely as to the means. It may be well for them, possibly, yet to pause, and candidly inquire, whether the idolized means are the best to lead to the avowed end. Does a church grow in spirituality and efficiency, as she accumulates wealth and power? Can a church become the seat of honor and opulence, and yet preserve herself, if she would, from the worldly and ambitious aspirant? Are a people likely to become religious by being taxed for religion? The state establishment of religion has been tried over all Christendom—yes, and all Pagandom likewise. Has it succeeded? Is it not, then, wise to ask for a more excellent way? The wisdom of man is foolishness with God.

It is readily admitted of all these methods of cure, they are specious, and that they are not void of good to a people. What we maintain is, that they are not equal to our necessities; and that, in the measure in which they are efficient, they are dependent on religion for their efficacy. Religion alone penetrates to the sources of evil, and purifies the springs of action. She not only supplies the just rule, but the right and living motive. She alone teaches the lessons of patriotism, and, by subduing alike pride and selfishness, exalts the mind to noble deeds. Religion would pass over our land like an angel of mercy, healing the bitter waters

of strife, renewing the soul of the people, and preparing them, like the eagle, for higher flights in knowledge, virtue, and all excellence. *Religion is our single, but our sufficient hope.*

I.

The important question then arises, *How may true religion be the best advanced throughout the nation?*

If a reply were offered to this question in forgetfulness of the former exercises, it would lead to a repetition of much that has been already advanced. It is hoped, however, that the substance of all that has been stated on the advancement of religion in ourselves, and by the church, is preserved in mind; and the present purpose will be, to give a degree of completeness to the reply, without enlarging on statements which have been distinctly before us.

1. Then we would remark, that religion should be presented to the attention of the people *as it is*. It is not religion and something else for which we are to claim notice, but religion alone. It is not our sect, our party, or our peculiarity, that we are to inculcate; it is vital religion, as the promise of this life, and that which is to come. The moment we descend from what is common to the faith and life of all Christians, to what is peculiar to ourselves, we give occasion to the world to suspect us of personal and selfish ends. Unhappily, we have been deeply defective here. Most Christians have urged with more zeal the article which distinguishes them from other Christians, than the articles in which they are united to them; and few, very few, have wisely satisfied themselves with presenting to the ungodly the elements of our common salva-

tion. The world needed not this inducement to misconstrue our motives; there is nothing to which it is more generally predisposed. Assist them to this conclusion, and it is fatal to our success. It closes the avenues to the conscience. They may listen to us with respect, not with conviction. Whatever our present reception with the world, we should labor in every case to force on the mind this conclusion,—“He means only my good.” Such a conviction would land us half way to our object.

Again, religion must be presented *as it is, not as it was*. We must follow the directions of the New Testament rather than of the Old Testament, which as a formulary has vanished away. It must appear before the world in its own spiritual simplicity; not shrouded in forms, and encumbered with rites, which are now meaningless, and which both obscure its beauty and impede its progress. Simple in its doctrine, simple in its institutions, and simple in its worship, it must be open to the apprehension and acceptance of all; superior to place, to time, and to external circumstance, it must go where we go, and dwell where we dwell, a constant spring of happiness and joy.

How strange that men, once tasting of liberty, should incline again to bondage! Yet the church has given painful example of this retrograde movement in religion. She has been introduced to a region of light; but she has shrunk away into the darkness of a dispensation which was fading, before the glories of the Sun of righteousness. Almost throughout Christendom, to this day, religion is a veiled thing, hidden in meretricious ornaments, and oppressed with lifeless forms. What is chiefly to be regarded with surprise and lamentation is, that Protestant churches should incline to superstitious folly and carnal reliances. If this corrupting of what is most holy and heavenly should serve

the purpose of some, still, what can any Protestant church have to gain by it? If ceremonial is to be her confidence, there is a more splendid ceremonial than hers. If she is to rely on painting, on sculpture, on music—on lofty architecture, finished rites, and picturesque procession—she is already excelled by one it will be hopeless to rival. She will be regarded as but a poor imitator; and the false tastes she has awakened will seek their final gratification in the more perfect original.

Our strength lies in an opposite course. If forms are used, it should be felt that they are a concession to our infirmities, not a characteristic of our religion. Religion should be unshrouded, and presented in all her heavenly qualities to men. She should be heard in her own voice, and seen in her own aspects; she would then speak of human want and human woe, as one that divineth the secrets of the heart. Every Christian should be but a reflection of herself—her truth, her charity, her grace; a living and legible epistle, known and read of all men. And every society of the saints should be so redolent with life and love, that, like the glowing lights of our sanctuaries on a winter's night, it might stream forth with cheering and quickening power on the world of darkness around.

2. Religion should be preserved in a *state of perfect separation from the world*. Nothing is more clear than that the world, and all that is in the world—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—are hostile to genuine religion. Religion, therefore, can only hope to act with power, as she keeps herself unspotted from the world.

This principle should regulate *personal intercourse*. Too often the intercourse of Christians with the world is

conducted on the principle of compromise ; and in these arrangements the world is always the gainer. Much is given up in hope of getting a little, and that little usually fails us. In this way Christians are often committed to pursuits and pleasures which are eminently worldly ; or, if these are not introduced, they are made to feel that it is in compliment to them ; and thus they are bound over to avoid their own peculiarities. Little are they disposed to transgress the understood rules of worldly intercourse ; the first act of compliance had betrayed conscience and paralyzed speech. A stranger might mingle freely with a party thus composed through a long evening ; and he might be unable to distinguish between the religious and the worldly ; yea, he might be utterly unable to say whether any one of the whole professed to be a Christian.

Can religion be expected to advance under such circumstances ? Christian character, from its very nature, should be prominent. It should be incapable of compromise or concealment. If we mingle with the world, it should be not for our pleasure, but their profit. Without pretension we should be really superior to their distinctive pleasures, whether approved or doubtful, and should seek to raise them to our elevation. It should be felt that we are too rich and too happy in our choice to hanker after theirs. We ought not to be able to believe what we believe without speaking of it ; or to enjoy what we profess to enjoy without seeking to impart the joy to others. The world will give us no credit for possessing such a religion as ours, if it does not discover itself in elevated tastes, sanctified affections, and joyous utterance ; but let the world see, not so much from an effort of duty as from the spontaneity of life within, that religion makes us the better, the happier, and the more amiable persons, and self-conviction and true conversion

will prevail. "Since I have believed in Christ," exclaimed a distinguished Christian, in the fulness of her heart, "since I believed in Christ, I have been as happy as an angel!" There was life in those words. They sank into one desolate heart, wearied of the world's emptiness, and it also became as happy as an angel!

Our *instrumentality* should be *religious*. Religious objects should be promoted by religious agency; since it only can duly sympathize with the work to be done, and the methods of doing it. Those who are not with us are against us; and they hinder while they seem to help. Thus as our ostensible numbers grew, our power for usefulness might decline. What disaster has come to the church and the world already from this cause!

We must needs go out of the world, if we would be wholly free from its influence. But there should be as little mixture as possible. The general bearing of Christians should be such as to carry the conviction to worldly minds, that they are not qualified for so high a service; that there is a prior claim standing against them; that till they have come out from the world, and submitted themselves to Christ, in the spirit of regeneration, they can do nothing for the renovation of mankind.

Our *religious institutions* should be separated from the world. This remark bears on a kindred subject, but on a more enlarged scale. It may chiefly be comprehended in what is commonly understood by *worldly patronage*. Next to the error which confounds spiritual regeneration with an outward rite, it is working most destructively on the interests of religion. Myriads of our people are puzzled by it. They have little profit either by reflection or education; and their religious services are rendered rather as they are the custom of their fathers, and the law of the land, than

from any more intelligent reason. They offer homage to Cesar, rather than to Christ; and their very religious observances are without religious principle.

The more acute mind, without religious convictions, takes ready advantage, from finding religion in such circumstances, to establish himself in indifference and infidelity. To his eye, religion appears only as a creature of the state—a subtle instrument meant to keep himself and others in a state of political subserviency.

Generally, and everywhere, worldly patronage is working like a leaven to corrupt the institutions of religion. It must necessarily do so; and it matters nothing whether religion so circumstanced shall take the form of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, or Independency. With a secular head of authority—with the highest appointments in the hands of statesmen, who use them chiefly for political purposes—with most of the gifts of the church in the hands of an aristocracy, who treat them mostly as personal property; to expect a pious and unworldly clergy, and a spiritual and devoted people, would be to look for grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles.

What, then, is urgently wanted for the advancement of religion in our land, is, *that she should be set free*—that she should be allowed to stand alone, and plead her own cause. If the poor man is to mark distinctly what he owes to his Saviour, and what to his sovereign—if the disbeliever is to be deprived of his first objections to a serious consideration of the claims of Christianity—if religion is to be renovated in spiritual life and beauty, that she may renovate the country—she must be emancipated from the control of the State, and purified from the corrupting influences of the world.

God, indeed, is no respecter of persons; and those who

fear Him and work righteousness shall be graciously acknowledged of Him, even in more objectionable circumstances. It is matter of unfeigned gratitude, that even in those portions of the church in our empire, beneath these worldly influences, there are many, very many, though not a majority, who are the subjects of spiritual life, and who are laboring to promote it in others. Oh! if they should receive the spirit of better days, the spirit of heroic faith—if they should arise and protest against worldly patronage in spiritual interests, and should demand for themselves liberty—for the church liberty—the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free; this alone would do more for the extension of religion over the land than otherwise we might realize in a century of time!

3. Religion may be advanced by seizing on every occasion to show *that it is identified with our common welfare as a people.*

We have much to learn and to effect on this subject. Multitudes of those who are truly religious have given their attention and benevolence almost exclusively to religion. They have, perhaps, thought this the safer course, if they would avoid censure. More frequently they have felt, necessarily, that their means of good were limited; and they naturally went to the conclusion, that they would prefer religious to all other claims. They were slow to perceive, that such a resolution strictly carried out would, by separating religion from other interests of the people, have an *irreligious* tendency.

It were well if the evil had terminated here. But it must be admitted, that many in the land—the affluent and the great—professing a zeal for religion, have too often shown themselves in opposition to the dearest interests of

the classes below them in station. We have seen repeatedly the strange and disastrous conjunction of religion with bigotry, religion with oppression, religion with ignorance, religion with indifference to the present and social welfare of the masses. Our noble and wealthy, our rulers and legislators, have had many precious gifts to impart; but of all they had to bestow they would give nothing with a liberal hand except religion, and that only on special conditions. They would give religion, but not science; religion, but not education; religion, but not liberty; religion, but not bread! Is it wonderful that the people should think it less valuable than the things so jealously withheld? or that, if sincerely offered to them, it must be with some sinister design? Throughout Europe, with only slight exceptions, to this day, religion has thus been felt by the people rather as a burden than as a blessing; and would it be remarkable if they should arise in their might and cast it from them for ever?

All who truly value religion and love their country must awake to prevent such a catastrophe. They must do their utmost to separate her from her worldly and corrupt alliances; and to attach her to the great interests of the community. Let her but appear in her own native goodness, and the common people will be the first to welcome her to their homes and to hear her voice with gladness.

The friends of religion must show themselves interested in the *social comfort* of the people. There have been many opportunities for this; but they have not been improved. The religious have, by benevolent visitation, become best acquainted with the privations of the industrious poor; yet they have not raised their voice for their removal. Even when valuable measures have been originated in the senate

for their personal and domestic benefit, the religious portion of the community have discovered no special interest in them. Can religion thrive in dwellings without light, without ventilation, without the necessary means of cleanliness? Can morals exist, can even the decencies of life be preserved, when six or eight persons of different sex and age are crowded together day and night in a single room, whether cellar or garret? Why should all the open spaces and parks of our populous towns be ever found about the habitations of the rich, while they are withheld from the poor? Is not the sweet air as vital to the poor man, and the blessed light of heaven as cheering, as to the rich man? Yea, from the nature of his employment, and the limited accommodations of his home, are they not of greater necessity? If we neglect his comfort, is he likely to accept our religion?

The friends of religion should show themselves interested in upholding *the independence of the people*. There is an immense difference between having a poor population and a pauper population; the one is consistent with a thriving state, the other is destructive of its very foundations. Much evil has come, and is still coming, from our poor laws; and every thing should be done at least to mitigate the mischief. The cherished independence of the industrious classes usually breaks down under those casualties of life to which all are exposed, but for which they are, and must be, the least prepared. Bodily sickness, fearful accident, domestic bereavement, and physical privation, not only bring affliction to the poor, but take away all the means he had of sustaining it, and place before him, in his sorrow, the horror of his life—a workhouse!

* In a recent visit to some of our manufacturing towns, I found whole streets without the least supply of water, and with no means of drainage.

If no other hand should do it, the hand of religion should be near for his relief. The means that are *preventive*, such as the savings' bank, the benefit society, and the arranged method for granting small annuities; and the means that are *remedial*—the sick society, the hospital, the asylum, where the foundlings of Providence may be nursed with a mother's care,—should be supplied freely for his use. Let his sense of independence be crushed by adversity, and you have but little hope of inspiring him with the noble and generous sentiments of religion.

The friends of religion should show themselves interested in the *intellectual and moral improvement* of the people. There has been not merely neglect here, but much weak fear. Fear, however, produces what it imagines. It is altogether out of place here. Knowledge is the food of the mind; and he who would monopolize it, the people shall curse him. We have no surer hold on the gratitude or the convictions of a people than by securing their spiritual growth. We want, in the fair sense of the term, national education. We want schools for all, without offending the conscience of any. The school, the college, the chair, should be equally accessible to all; and the reason why all do not attain the highest honors should be, that they pause in the course, and not that they are fenced off by others from an approach.

We want a practical, every-day, common-sense education—not a formal deposit of unappreciated truth in unawakened faculties. We need schools for the mechanic, and schools for the agriculturist—schools for the young, and schools for the adult. The lecture-room, the library, the rural and mechanics' institute, should complete the work so early begun; and our museums, our galleries, and our public buildings should supply at once recreation and improve-

ment to the quickened mind. Is it necessary to remark, that religious men would betray the interests of religion, if they were not the devoted advocates of this advancement, not as the members of a sect, but as the disciples of the New Testament? Must not every one see, that they could not render such service to the people, without disposing them to admire a religion which abounded in such pleasant and wholesome fruits?

Finally, the friends of religion should show themselves to be the devoted *guardians of civil and social liberty*. This is not the occasion to determine on the claims of comparative and absolute right, and to settle how much a man relinquishes by the act of coming into society. Enough it is to say, that all have rights which none may take away; and that the poorest may claim the utmost measure of liberty which is consistent with the safety and welfare of the whole community.

Happily, it will be said, all this is secured by the Genius of the constitution. But we require that this imaginative personage should have something more of a practical, and something less of a sentimental, existence. The poor man should be as sure of justice as the rich, and it should be as accessible. The poor man should feel that he was as safe from disturbance in his mud-walled cottage as the baron in his castle; and not as liable to be swept away, with the brushwood around him, to improve the domain. In some form or other the act of the will should be coextensive with the act of taxation, or taxation becomes tyranny. Shall religious men, accepting a religion which comes from Him "who is no respecter of persons," and which proceeds, from beginning to end, on the great principle of the essential equality of all men, be indifferent to the interests of true liberty? To be careless of the liberty of a brother,

is to be incapable of liberty ourselves. Let but the nations know, that the religion of Christ assures us of the highest freedom, and bestows on us the highest preparation to enjoy it, and the kingdom of heaven will soon prevail over the kingdoms of earth !

And what is all that we are thus asking but the natural effect of religion, unbound by the hand of man ? Light is hers ; peace is hers ; liberty is hers. The graces are hers ; and the muses hers. Society and civilization are hers. Already, by her partial influence, she has raised Britain to an eminence which Tyre and Egypt, Greece and Rome, never knew ; and if religion shall permeate all her life and all her institutions, then shall it be as if the New Jerusalem descended from above, to bless and glorify the habitations of men.

4. Religion may be advanced *by a more direct movement of the church on the masses of the people.*

For this purpose, our religious *machinery* must be improved. We have few and simple means to effect great objects, but they are capable of endless variety in application ; and as in trade, the machinery that was good seven years since is obsolete now, so the means in our possession require constantly to be adjusted to the circumstances in which they are found. To be as we were is to be left behind.

The ministry needs revision. It should be pliant, free, elastic as the fulness of life can make it ; prepared alike for the highest and the lowest service. Every church should have its evangelists or missionaries ; and these should be sustained by the select of the religious society. Associated churches should set free, more or less from local engagement, such men as, by their success and experience,

are marked for general usefulness. There is no time when there is not an orbit of service such as Whitefield, Latimer, and Wycliffe described; and if the church saw the necessity, Providence would supply the men.

The young should be especially regarded. The individual, the parent, the teacher, should look to this as a leading claim; and they should educate themselves, that they may teach others. Everywhere the effort should be to secure religious teachers; not for the purpose of enforcing a creed or a catechism, but of breathing the pure and benign spirit of religion into secular instruction. The schools of the Sabbath should be eminently pious; if not so, they are injurious and profane. They should always be regarded as a preparation for communion with the church; and every Christian who has the care of youth should not consider his charge fulfilled, till they are presented to the church. The great battle which we are called to fight with darkness, error and superstition, is to be fought in our schools.

Our arrangements for general usefulness in the land, should be revised and remodelled on a more Christian principle. We are in extreme need, both for economy and efficiency, of more decided union amongst those who have one predominant end in view. We have now frequently two schools in a given district, when one would be better, and when the adjoining district has none. We have chapel and church, or chapel and chapel, in one locality; and neither chapel nor church in another equally necessitous. Why this exhaustion of our resources, if not for low sectarian purposes? How long shall we sacrifice the greater to the less? How long shall the common foe laugh at our folly, and flatter himself on his own sagacity?

The same evil is wasting our strength in our *public societies*. We have now several societies where we should

have one ; and we have none where perhaps we should have several. Why should we have two Societies for Ireland ? two Anti-slavery Societies ? and four Associations for the Protection of Civil and Religious Liberty ? Why should we have the City Mission, the Christian Instruction and the Pastoral-Aid Societies, all moving on the same ground, and essentially to the same end ? Why should there be several Tract Societies, four Bible Societies, and four Missionary Societies ? We distract public attention ; make great objects appear little by endless division ; waste our resources on numerous establishments ; and not seldom, alas ! quarrel with ourselves, instead of presenting an invincible face to our enemies !

The evil prevails even at the very *fountains of knowledge* and strength. Our great universities are as closely sealed against one half the religious community, as though they were adverse to the interests of truth and religion. On the other hand, our Nonconforming bodies have carried their lesser distinctions into these arrangements ; and each is drinking at its little rill, when it should be satiating large desires at the living fountain. Had they recognised a common principle of union, their small colleges, which have been mostly renovated within the last thirty years, might have been brought together, and have composed one or two considerable universities. They would then have taken a fair standing before the country ; they would have secured the most eminent teachers ; they would have distinguished more readily between general and professional education ; they would have advanced the dominion of knowledge and of charity ; and would have done the highest service at a reduced expenditure. We are poor ; but poor as we are, we are paying two hundred per cent. more for the education of our ministry than we need. We com-

plain of our resources ; but Providence will hardly trust us with more, till we have wisdom to use them better.*

A *committee* should exist to watch over *general questions* and *important movements* of the *public mind*, and to impart to them as much as possible a religious direction. They should provide lectures and lecturers on popular and fashionable topics, and give them a religious bearing. They should correspond with literary men, and suggest works that appear to be eminently needed. They should secure attention from the daily and weekly press, with the design of improving its character. They should mark points of ephemeral controversy, and not allow error to have the last word. They should encourage, through the bookseller, the republication of valuable works that affect present opinions ; and they should awaken the attention of the religious world to every subject in parliament, and resolve to be heard there, on whatever may bear directly or remotely on the interests of religion.

The church, either by an association for that purpose, or other means, should be prepared to put out *special power* for the *revival of religion*, wherever it is gone into decay, or is specially neglected. From the want of this, a low and formal state of religion has become the fixed state of some places, while many others have passed into heterodoxy or desuetude ; and spots that were dark have accumulated darkness age after age. Ordinary means require to be applied with extraordinary power in such cases ; and we have long wanted disposable forces for such service. That would be an unwise disposition of an army, however strong,

* Some good might yet be secured to these separate colleges, if they would come to a common understanding on the methods of education ; and if they were united in an Education Society, which should obtain for them their due share of public attention and support.

which should leave it no reserved power to act with special vigor on a point of great emergency.

These observations, and others which are relative, all resolve themselves into *individual effort*. Each Christian must feel—deeply feel—that he has a part to bear, a work to perform, for the kingdom of Christ; and the whole church must go forth from the walls that have confined her to save the country. The mechanic at his art; the tradesman at his counter; the merchant at his desk, must say, first and chiefly, I am a Christian; and first and chiefly, therefore, I am bound to serve my Lord and Saviour. He who tarries at business must pursue it for the Lord; and he who retires from it must close his days, not where he may find most ease and gratification, but where he may most advance the good cause. He who has one talent must use it as freely as he who has ten; and he who has ten must not be content with the faithful use of nine. Labor must be pleasure; tribulation, joy; and loss, gain. Supposing that only *one tenth* of our people have any due sense or observance of religion; yet if *each one* resolved within a twelvemonth to communicate directly with *nine others* for their spiritual welfare, all would be then addressed. But who shall say, what the effect would be on our beloved country?

One can scarcely bring these statements to a close without observing, that they imply a right spirit obtaining in the church, such as we have already enlarged on; and that it would express itself through all service and sacrifice by *resting on heaven*. This is essential alike to action and success. We are under a spiritual dispensation, and God will honor a spiritual agency, while he will confound the vain and the proud in the midst of religious avocation. The church, in proportion to her activity and progress, must be humble, prayerful, dependent. She must lean not on the

world—not on herself—not on the gospel she utters—but on God only. Then, when her breath is prayer, she shall breathe freely ; then, when her hand rests on heaven, she shall move the earth to her will.

III.

Let us finally glance at the *considerations* which constrain us to this service.

1. *Look at the state of the country.* It is not for me to feed bad passions by a degrading exhibition of my country ; but if we are to apply a remedy, the evil must in some measure be present to the mind. Its religious state is most fearful. Let us say that the population is twenty-five millions ; then say, to allow the fullest numbers, that eight millions attend on public worship ; and that four millions of these are suitably affected by the religion they profess. What have we then ? We have seventeen millions of our people who know no Sabbath, who worship no God, who are practical Atheists. Conceive, if you can, of the ignorance, the pride, the enmity, the sensuality, the debauchery, and the penal crime which must prevail over such a mass of ungodliness ! And this is England !

Apart from this, our state is universally allowed to be critical. We are strong, and yet weak ; exalted, but tremble lest we fall. We have burdens to bear which all would have thought intolerable ; and yet we have leisure and mind to tear and devour each other. Party has taken the place of patriotism ; and each in turn makes the other vile in the eyes of the people. Public good is absorbed in a consuming selfishness ; and places of the highest and most

sacred trust, in the senate and the church, are bought and sold in open market almost without scandal.* The feudal distinction of two classes seems to be reviving itself in the land—the rich and the poor. The poor are alienated from the rich, and the rich have oppressed the poor; and a bitter conflict is begun, in which the middle classes can hardly become an efficient mediator. Wrong might yet be forgotten, if right were sincerely adopted; but of this there seems to be little hope. The governing and the governed have different interests, and those who govern are strong. Meantime the poor are increasing in numbers and strength fearfully, and unparalleled distress is quickening their convictions of injustice. Peacefully, and by millions, they have sent up their prayer to the senate and the throne; and if it shall be refused, and if there go up to heaven the cry of famishing myriads, for the justice denied them on earth—then the doom of England is fixed!

Her doom fixed!—the doom of England fixed! And must she die? One thing alone can save her. Her remedy is in religion!

2. Then consider the *benefits* which have been conferred on our country. Least among the nations, and farthest from the springs of civilization, the light of Divine truth early visited her shores, and tarried on them long. Cradled in storms, and overrun by fierce adversaries, she nevertheless acquired strength under every calamity, till the floods of war and bloodshed which broke on her strand, rolled back with accumulated fury to overwhelm her enemies. A thousand times, every thing dear to a nation, was pnt in

* The recent exposition in the senate, on the subject of bribery and corruption at our elections, is a frightful instance of this, and has greatly shaken public confidence.

peril—a thousand times an unseen hand wrought her salvation. Providence and religion were still with her; and, in most forbidding circumstances, wrought out for her a good which came not to other nations. Whose homes are so sweet as hers? whose vallies so fair? what people so happy? Where has liberty a firmer throne? or justice a better tribunal, or peace a more secure habitation? Where, if not here, shall we find the mind beaming with intelligence, the soul rising to heroism, the heart melting with charity? The hand which has supplied her with every element of good, has also made her great. At first, least among the nations, and an outcast from civilized life, she is now the greatest of them all. The sun, travel where he may, looks not on that portion of our world which bears not the impress of her name and her power!

And shall the right hand of the Lord, which hath labored through ages to honor and to bless us, be disowned and despised? Shall sin prevail to cast us down from an eminence of power and happiness which none have ever attained? Oh! then were we indeed an imperishable monument of nameless ingratitude and Divine indignation! Religion is our only hope!

3. Look, again, on the *responsibility* of the nation. The good which has come so freely to her, she is to improve for herself, and to bestow on others. She has unexampled power for this work of benevolence. What power in wealth! what power in diplomacy! what power in commerce! what power in colonies! what power in local establishments over the globe! what power in an invincible navy! Where the people so distant she could not reach! where the people so barbarous she could not civilize! where the people so enslaved she could not liberate! where

the people so unhappy that she could not felicitate by the knowledge of the living God, and a true worship! Oh, I tremble and rejoice for my country! I rejoice that she has the power, as with a hundred hands, to distribute the favors of Providence; and to utter, as with a hundred voices, the words of eternal life! I tremble—yes, I tremble—lest she should fail to know her calling, and to fulfil her trust! God has one ruling purpose in the government of the world and of nations—the establishment of his kingdom. If she shall harmonize with this purpose, then all that she doth shall prosper; if she shall cross the line of this purpose—then—she must perish, and deserve to perish! Religion alone can save her!

4. Look not alone on the fearful aspects of the great subject; there are some *indications* which may *encourage* us to seek the advancement of religion amongst us.

True it is, that we have enjoyed and abused more blessings than any people; and the clouds are gathered thick around us; and the waters are swelling and moaning at our feet; and at any moment the lightnings might flare, and the thunderbolt fall. Still the distressed and groaning vessel of the state has discharged some of her burdens, and something has been done to prepare her for the storm. It is something, notwithstanding aggravated offence and provocation, that she is still spared. It is something that, if evil principles have worked with power, the antagonist principles have put out unwonted energy. Unquestionably our institutions have been improved; and one class has been constrained to respect the claims of other classes. Knowledge has shed her mild lights over the land, and popular ignorance is fast disappearing. Religion has made decided advances on formality and impiety; and the word

of the Lord is uttered in simplicity and power to far larger numbers of our population. Men have tried their own devices, and are wearying of them; and are looking abroad for a good which religion alone can impart. God and his providence are certainly regarded with more reverence in our public transactions. The truly religious have not only labored for the good of their country, they have with considerable resources sought to become the messengers of life to all other nations. Especially, we have thrown from ourselves for ever one perilous burden of guilt, in the abolition of slavery; and have done it by the noblest sacrifice ever recorded of any people.

All the happy circumstances to which we thus refer have been secured by the silent, but advancing power of religion. Especially that incalculable good—the annihilation of slavery—was effected by the combined struggles of the religious. It was not only good in itself—it taught the religious members of the community, limited as they are, their power. Religion may perfect the work she has begun. The hand that broke the fetters of the slave, may tie up the dogs of war, and bring peace, righteousness and charity to our land; and the dark penal clouds, which overcast the state, might break away, till she stood forth in her glory, surrounded by her own bright waters, and dwelling in the blessed lights of heaven!

5. Finally, Remember it is *your country* for which this good is sought. *Your country*! Is there no charm in that word? The land of your fathers! Your land! The land of your birth; where you first breathed the vital air, and saw the pleasant light; where you first heard a mother's voice, and were welcomed into life by a parent's smiles! The land where you first thought of God; first bowed the

knee in prayer ; and started in your pilgrimage to heaven ! The land of your best associations and dearest loves ; which has often brightened to your smile, and been wetted with your tears ! The land of your privileges and your hopes ; where is the book of knowledge, the covenant of promise, and the glorious tabernacle of the Most High ! The land of great and hallowed deeds—where sages have prophesied, heroes have fought, martyrs bled, and saints passed to heaven ; where piety has found a refuge, liberty a throne, and slavery a grave ! The beacon land of the world—whose lights beam on every nation, to guard them from surprising evil, and to guide them to the haven of all human hope ! Oh ! could you look on, a careless spectator in the crisis of her fate, and see ruin fall on such a land—your country, and your home ? a sight which would fill earth with astonishment and heaven with tears !

That crisis is come ! Oh, will you not fly to save her ! Your life were cheap in sacrifice for her redemption ! She may yet be saved ! Religion may save her !—prayer may save her !—the united and resolved labors of the good and holy may save her ! But, if they will not arise and unite for her salvation—then shall England sink down amidst her own waters, before the indignant face of heaven, and under the burden of unparalleled, unrepented, unforgiven sin ; and the mariner, as he marks his course across our channels, shall point to the spot and say,—THERE ONCE STOOD IN HER GLORY THE GREATEST AND THE GUILTIEST OF NATIONS.

LECTURE IX.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION
IN THE WORLD.

LECTURE IX.

ITS ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORLD.

“Preach the gospel to every creature.”

WE are now approaching the close of these exercises. We have passed from the personal to the social, the social to the public, the public to the national ; and have yet to pass from the national to the universal. We should not have a less, but rather an accumulated interest in the subject.

The religion of our Saviour subordinates the good that is private to the good that is public ; to communicate grace to others is a means of grace to ourselves. We are to seek our personal comfort in the growing display of his glory ; and the advancement of his kingdom within us by its advancement in the world. There is, indeed, a sense in which we are to wait for richer qualifications for this service ; but it is not to be found in doing nothing. We are to do our utmost now, and in a careful regard to the spirit in which it is done ; while in the very act, we wait on God, in the expectancy of prayer, for more spiritual qualification. “If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine.”

It may be desirable to give distinctness to the subject, by marking, in the first place, the *sphere of operation* presented to us ; and then to inquire *how we may best operate on it* for the advancement of religion.

I.

The sphere of action is *the world*. Not the physical, but the moral world. Not the pagan or the Mohammedan world, but the whole world—"every creature." All are fallen—all are accountable—all need the provisions of the gospel—and to all it is graciously sent as the message from heaven.

If we are to refer to any limitation, it is only to be found in the line which separates such as have already received the gospel from such as have not ; and those who have freely received it are bound to press it on the acceptance of all the rest. Missionary service is often spoken of as though it required to be fulfilled at a distance, and in lands of gross idolatry ; but, in fact, it is open to no geographical or moral distinctions beyond what we have named. All who have not believed the testimony of the gospel are its proper objects, whether near or afar off—whether civilized or barbarous. All who, in spirit and action, are seeking to advance the empire of Christ, whether at home or abroad, are accomplishing one vocation ; and every spot of this wilderness, wherever found, which is not actually recovered to the garden of the Lord, is part of the one field for missionary labor. We are debtors alike to the Jew and the Gentile—the bond and the free ; and must not be satisfied with paying a part of the debt, when justice claims the whole.

Unhappily, the single limitation of which the subject admits, has but little power to diminish the sphere of action. If we take the inhabitants of the world at eight hundred millions ; and if we suppose that fifty millions of that number have truly accepted the gospel, there are still seven

hundred and fifty millions—in fact, the world—remaining to be converted. Such figures have, perhaps, become familiar to us; and the mind requires to pause upon them to feel their solemn import. You speak readily of millions of persons; but who has an adequate conception of them? You have never seen the stupendous sight of a million of persons. No one present, perhaps, has ever realized the vast amount to himself by counting a million. Do you know that it would take nearly a month to count a million; and that it would consume nearly fifty years to enumerate the seven hundred and fifty millions of whom we are now treating, and to whom we seek to make known the salvation of God!

My brethren, what an object of interest, and of grandeur is thus placed before us! The mind is formed to delight itself in great objects. The mountain produces an emotion which the hillock cannot. You have looked from the little bark that bore you into the deep, the fathomless and boundless ocean, and have trembled with admiration and delight. You have raised your face on the dark blue heavens above you—calm, profound, illimitable; and resplendent with worlds of light for multitude and magnitude inconceivable; and with what emotion! But what is this compared with a world of men—a world of souls—every soul of greater value than a world, and born to live when every star which adorns the heavens shall have gone out in eternal darkness. Oh! could earth or heaven present us with a service so sublime, so glorious, as that of conferring happiness on hundreds of millions of rational, responsible, imperishable beings!

The world in which we are interested is to be contemplated as a *lost world*. In making this remark, we have no intention to commit ourselves to the subtilties of contro-

versy. It may, however, be proper to observe that we certainly do not use it to express our belief, that all who are without the gospel necessarily perish. On the contrary, we cheerfully admit, that the Divine Spirit may impart gracious dispositions to man in circumstances of the greatest privation and ignorance ; and that, wherever there is such a disposition of mind as would thankfully receive the gospel if it were presented, there is essentially a state of salvation. Some there are that we should at once comprehend within this exception ; and many there may be who are known only to the Father of spirits ; but, alas ! they are unquestionably so limited in number, as to be insignificant on the general question.

The question, indeed, is one of fact rather than of theory ; and, if thus treated, we shall be conducted it may be to a melancholy, but not to a difficult conclusion. Who, that knows the actual state of the world, can regard it otherwise than as a lost world ? If we look on those who enjoy a Protestant and evangelical faith, what multitudes are there still dead in trespasses and sin ! If we look on the widespread Greek and Latin churches, what have we but an unrenewed people trusting in vain rites and gross superstitions ; and religion slain by her friends, and then laid in state and surrounded by the silent pomp of death ?

There remains to us Mohammedism and Paganism. These dwell in the finest portions of the earth, and comprise six hundred millions of its inhabitants. As systems, is there life or hope in them ? Do they not, though by different paths, lead direct to the chambers of eternal death ? Will any now venture to talk, as awhile since they did, of the “innocent superstitions” and the “beautiful mythology” of paganism ? Innocent practices ! and beautiful mythology ! Why, under any other circumstances, if a man sin,

he, at least, sins against his religion and his conscience ; but here conscience is perverted, and his religion becomes the patron of his crimes ! Cruelty and lust, theft and murder, have their patron deities ; and not a passion that stirs in the human breast, nor a vice that stains human conduct, but finds its corresponding divinity in heaven ! Innocent superstitions ! By which the widow is immolated, the sick are exposed and abandoned, the weak are robbed, the poor are oppressed, and man is brutalized !—by which social life is made impossible, and every man distrusts and hates his brother !—by which vice itself takes the name and the rank of virtue, and the living and true God is mocked, insulted, and denied in every attribute proper to Deity !

What an object, then, is the world we are contemplating for deep compassion and strenuous effort ! A world in ruin !—a world of souls without God, without hope, and perishing in sin !—a world of which, whether the guilt or the misery were the greater, no tongue can tell—both are infinite, and both threaten to be eternal ! If one lost soul, falling away from light and heaven into outer darkness, were too sad a sight to look on, what, then, hundreds—myriads—millions !

This dreadful process of stupendous destruction is constantly going on around us. Do we realize it ? This year, twenty millions of souls will be wrecked in life and hope, and cast naked and desolate on the strand of eternity ! Oh ! some are perishing now—will you not thrust forth a hand, and, with a death grasp, strive to save them ! Xerxes, from an eminence, once looked down on some millions of his people, and wept to think that in thirty years they would be no more. Alas ! one might weep tears of blood to think, that, except as the faith of the gospel prevents the tre

mendous issue, in twelve short months twenty millions of souls will be—in hell!

II.

But our chief concern in this exercise is to inquire, *How the great object before us—the salvation of the world—may be accomplished.*

There are some difficulties to be met here ; but they arise mostly from those persons who have attempted to deal with this subject in the spirit of unbelief. It has been said, for instance, that the expectation is *preposterous*, and the *work impossible*. The expectation, it is true, may become preposterous if not sustained by proportionate action, but the work is not impossible. No ! They greatly err who so speak, not knowing the power and truth of God. There was no impossibility in man's apostasy, under the influence of evil but finite influences ; and there can be no impossibility in man's restoration, by the hand of infinite power and mercy.

Then, it is thought to be impossible without the *aid of miracle*. This is the opinion not of professed infidelity, but of the children of the faith. It has been prevalent in the church in our time ; and it still exerts a silent influence on multitudes. Again we say, No ! Miracle has answered its end ; it is not to be expected ; it is not needed ; and if granted, it could not alone fulfil the work which we have to do. Ours is the age of *means*, and not of miracles.

“ But what means ? ” it has been asked. “ Are we not to wait for other and better means than those we already possess ? ” No ! We are to wait for nothing ! The

church needs no other means than she now possesses ; and she is to expect none other. She is to use them now ; and when they shall be used and trusted as they deserve, by a believing and devoted church, the world shall be won to Christ. Let us look at this :—

1. There is the *truth*—the *word of God*.

This is the one great instrument by which we are to operate. Without it we can do nothing, and with it every thing. It is able to make wise unto salvation.

The truth is frequently comprehended in the general appellation of the *gospel*. It is a gracious message from heaven to earth, suited to the fallen condition of man. It reveals God to us, and us to ourselves. It propounds a grand method of reconciliation, by which God can be just, and yet justify the ungodly ; and by which man may be recovered from a state of rebellion to pardon and peace. The opposing claims of righteousness and mercy are balanced ; and the deepest humility, with the liveliest confidence, are awakened in the heart of man. The dispensation of grace is complete ; it is authoritative ; it bears on its face the broad seal of heaven, and the corresponding seal of conscience.

The gospel is sent to *all*—to every creature ; and it is adapted to all. It was at first limited to a nation, until the great purposes of infinite mercy were fully developed in the life and work of the Mediator ; and then the veil was rent asunder, and all its glory disclosed to all the world. The gospel knows no caste ; allows of no temporal distinctions. It is superior to time, circumstance, and place. Its provisions may be observed—its blessings enjoyed—its doctrines appreciated, equally under either pole, and by any people, whether refined or barbarous. This adaptation carries

with it the evidence of its divinity. Uninspired mind, in its highest flights, could not attain such an elevation above earthly influences. The Jewish ritual is conventional ; the Koran is conventional ; the Shaster is conventional ; and down to the present time, all the devices by which men have sought to tamper with the gospel have worn the same character—they have tended to make that which was meant to be universal, national or sectarian. The gospel is from heaven ; and, like the light of heaven and the breath of heaven, sheds its own blessed influences unrestricted on all who are near and all who are afar off.

2. There is *human agency*.

Man is evidently made for society. His character cannot be developed in solitude. He has scarcely confidence in his own opinions, till he finds them to be the opinions of some second person ; and life is without enjoyment if he is to live alone. His heart is remarkably open to social influences, whether for good or evil. He fell by them. And it was to be expected, that a religion from heaven should be adapted to these sympathies of his nature. This expectation is fully realized in the provisions of the New Testament.

There is the standing and ostensible agency of the *living ministry*, which is to continue till the end of time. It is not enough, although the volume of revealed truth is now completed and placed on permanent record, that it should be multiplied, translated, and freely circulated ; it is a grand part of the Divine economy that it should be made known still by the living voice. The translation of the Scriptures is an admirable and indispensable auxiliary to the ministry ; but recent as well as more remote experience has shown, that it was never meant to supersede it. It is mostly a dead

letter and a neglected record where the minister and the evangelist are not. Religion would die out of our land in seven years if the living ministry were taken away; and religion will never be enthroned amongst the nations, but as it is expounded and enforced by the living voice. The gospel is to be *preached*—proclaimed—to all nations. The message of mercy to man is to be uttered by man.

Besides this agency, which is professional, there is the *agency* of the *entire church*. There never was a practical error of more destructive power than that of transferring to a priesthood the functions of praying to God, and uttering the word of God, to our fellow-men. There is a line, distinct and important, which the public ministry is to describe; but it must not obliterate the no less distinct line, which every disciple of the cross is to fulfil. The great law of the kingdom is, *that he who has received the gospel is to impart it to others*. This cannot be done by proxy; from it none can give us absolution. The only limit to the obligation is the limit of redemption. If I am not redeemed, I cannot commend this redemption to other men; if I have received the great salvation, I am qualified and pledged, by the very act, to make it known to such as still need it. It were a happy day in which this simple principle should be fully recognised and employed! The tendency of all human devices, as grafted even on true religion, has been the other way—to the monopoly of knowledge and privilege; but the institutions of the New Testament shall put them to shame, and shall finally develope their supreme efficacy in the simple fact—that the man who knows the Lord shall say unto his neighbor, “Know the Lord!”

The question arises here, How far the existing agency, that is, the entire agency of the church, whether clerical or lay, may be regarded as adequate to the wants of the

world? Numerically, the number of the converted, as compared with the unconverted, is exceedingly small. Yet the chief deficiency is not in numbers. If the existing numbers could receive a right direction, and be permeated with a right spirit, instantly a wonderful effect would be produced on the world. Suggestions of the kind following might contribute to regulate our present forces, so as to give them tenfold power.

(1.) The labors of the ministry should be more *equalized* to the claims of the world. There is a strange forgetfulness of the great command in the preparation for the ministry. The field is the world; but we prepare for the service as though it were restricted to our country, our province, perhaps our town. Many of our colleges even deny an education to the minister, except he will engage to reap the fruits of it at home. At home! The distinction between foreign and home service is prejudicial and unsound. The true minister of Jesus Christ, as he is of no class, so he is of no country. Like the soldier, he holds not a conditional or divided allegiance; he is cheerfully to serve where his services are most needed. He has no right to prepare for home; he is to prepare for the world, and to stay or go as he is bidden. Certainly, all are not to go; but all are to be ready to go; and if they do not go, the reason should not be found in themselves, but in the will of their Saviour.

Let us mark, how this single circumstance would contribute to the advancement of religion. It will be sufficient for our purpose if we confine the illustration to England and America; and general figures will be all that we need. If we take the ministry in America at eleven thousand, and that of Great Britain at twenty thousand, the proportion

may then be said to stand at one minister to about fourteen hundred persons in America ; one to one thousand in England ; and one to about eight hundred in Scotland. While, for the world at large, we have about one missionary to one million ! All this happens when Britain has no more claim to the ministry than Africa ; nor America than China. Without demanding a better adjustment, I believe the United States could spare one thousand men, and England two thousand, for foreign duty. What a host would this be for the missionary field ! But they would be lost to home ! No ! By going they would do more good at home, in awakening the conscience of the world and the graces of the church, than if they stayed ; and abroad, the stimulation and confidence of the common example would lift them to a new order of action and of character.

If the same views were taken by the entire church, the results would be still more remarkable and auspicious. And the very principle which rules for the official member, rules equally for the private member of the church. Every disciple yields himself up to Christ. Whether he live or die, he is the Lord's. He has a spiritual calling as well as a temporal one ; and the spiritual is the superior. If he can better serve the cause of his Saviour by fulfilling his secular calling in China, Australia, or Siberia, than in London or New-York, then he is bound to act on his convictions. And if this were done, is it possible for Imagination herself to embrace the issue ? Would the missionary, then, think you, go forth as a poor despised solitary and outcast ? No ! He would be surrounded and sustained by holy and happy bands ! Prophecy should find her blessed accomplishment—instead of one, there should be a thousand ; and instead of the little one, a strong nation.

(2.) As much as possible, the work of converting the world should be *effected by the church*. Those who seek to do it aright, must of necessity be of the church; but this is not enough. The work is the work of the church. She exists in her present militant state for the sake of it; and every member of the true church must, directly or by representation, have a voice and bear a part in the great undertaking.

At present, the arrangements are imperfect and arbitrary. Some are represented, and many are not. The principle of representation, where it is found, exists rather by accident or by implication than otherwise. The chief tie is that of money contribution; not of counsel, of prayer, of co-operation. The evils of such defective arrangement have come on us; but they have not generally been referred to their legitimate causes. It has been thought that the churches could do no more than they have done. Happily, this is not the fact. They may have reached their maximum under the present means, yet by improved means a much higher result may be secured.

If in existing circumstances there must be, as I deliberately think there must, separate institutions for missionary service, they must acquire additional power, by a closer connection with the churches from which they emanate. If there is union, there must be union by explicit consent; if there is centralization, there must be representation likewise. If all the churches are to assist according to their ability, all must be fully interested by knowledge, option, and fellowship. They must not only have confidence in the proceedings, (which, however, is of unspeakable importance,) they must have identification with them—they must be *their* proceedings. Great use should be made of the local association of churches for this purpose. They should

be informed of the more important movements ; regular channels should exist for the conveyance of a distinct opinion ; and through these associations, every church, however small, should be brought into living communion with the Society, either by agency of its own, or supplied from the central power. All who go forth to the missionary field should be as fully expected to keep up a correspondence with the particular church which sent them, as with the central board ; and every board should be forward to see that the artificial connection with itself does not interfere with the primitive connection they held to the organized and visible church. Nothing could produce a more healthful influence on the missionary, or supply a better motive of devoted action to the churches. In this, as in similar cases, the vigorous and right action of the general body springs from the salutary action of the parts.

Unhappily, we may not at present hope, that all the churches, partially interested in the conversion of the world, shall unite in one common centre of action ; still there should be secured to us sufficient combination to allow of a *community of counsel*, and a *division of labor*. From the want of this, we have had clashing interests even abroad, as if the world were not wide enough. Our missionaries have appeared as rivals when they should have been regarded as apostles ; some spots have had undue attention, while others have been neglected ; valuable missions have been suffered to die out without successors, and our scanty means have been made less by misapplication. Why should the Episcopalian go to the South Seas ? Why should the Congregationalist go to Jamaica ? Why should the Baptist go to the Straits of Malacca ? Why should the type of every sect and name, by which we are known and dishonored at home, be found in Calcutta, Canton, and Paris ? Could

not one Society work for Europe, another for Africa, and others for the distinct portions of Asia? And might not the allotment take place by common consent, and with respect to the peculiar fitness of each Society to act on the foreign field of service? Might not the whole be subject to a concurrent report to the churches? Who shall say, that these are light considerations, if they effected no greater good than to hide the shame of our domestic divisions, and to prevent, to an indefinite extent, perplexity and infidelity in an inquiring world?

This division of labor, while it left us in full sympathy with the whole world, would prepare each Society to act on each portion with concentrated attention and power. This is a circumstance of much practical importance. We have sometimes seen one Society run in the wake of another, not because it needed help, but because it had been successful, and there was a desire to share in the spoil. We have frequently witnessed a Society struggling to be doing something all over the world, however little, till its slender resources were almost dissipated; and new stations were attempted, when faithful missionaries were breaking down at existing and valuable stations from want of succor. A vain desire to report many stations may have led to this; and not unfrequently an undue anxiety to provide a *bon bon* for the next annual meeting, has been the temptation. "Really, Sir," said a leading voice in one of these Societies, as an ultimate reason for beginning a new station,— "our annual meeting is near, and it is necessary that we should have something fresh to report to the public." This remark was not unnatural in the present state of things; but ought there to be occasion for it? "When I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

(3.) As necessary to this and other ends, a *regular* and *general correspondence* should be maintained with all other and kindred Societies and churches. It is now by accident, and at uncertain intervals, that we know any thing of what is done by the cognate Societies in France, Switzerland, Germany, or America ; although the disquisitions and narrations of the American Associations in particular are of first-rate consideration. This deficiency ought to be met, by making the records of all the Societies easily accessible ; and by expecting, that he who sits on the board of one Association should prepare himself for deliberating on its proceedings, by a general acquaintance with what is done by affiliated Societies. The written correspondence should, of course, be of the most friendly and confidential character ; it should relate as much to the future as the past ; and should be uniformly sustained by the zealous effort of each to give the utmost efficiency to the plans of all.

(4.) The resources of the church should be made to bear chiefly on the *masses* of the world's population. Where other considerations do not interfere to affect the balance, the principle is, that two are to be preferred to one ; the town to the village, and the city to the town. In this particular there is a remarkable contrast between primitive and modern missions. The apostles and their companions began at Jerusalem, and preached the gospel from town to town, from city to city, evidently preferring the denser population as the field of greater promise ; while our modern missions have put forth their first efforts in Greenland, in Tahiti, and in the wilderness of America, where men were less numerous and more shy of human intercourse than the deer of their hunting grounds.

None may withhold from the men, and the fruits of their

indestructible zeal, the utmost admiration ; but we cannot commend so readily the wisdom which selected the field of service. We cannot sympathize with a prevailing and often repeated opinion, that if all the expenditure of our societies has secured the salvation only of a single soul, it is well expended. There is a great fallacy, as well as a great truth involved in this sentiment. We are not to be satisfied with any good, effected at any price. It may be bought too dear. We are to look for the greatest amount of good possible to the measure of means employed ; and must not be contented with a solitary conversion if it might have been tripled or quadrupled. To seek the world's conversion by beginning at its extremities, would be to find our time gone before our work was done. We must act at once on the seat of life. We must strike at the city—act on the million—and if there be a preference, it must be where “Satan's seat is.” We seek no comparison between such names as Eliot and Brainerd, Xavier and Swartz ; but who does not regret that the American missionaries had possessed similar fields of action with their brethren ? and who that doubts in that case, that they would have secured proportionate triumphs ?

(5.) Should not *the church* herself endeavor to act *in masses*, on the greater masses of the world ? This would seem to follow the former position. If the masses are to be acted on successfully, it should be with increased power. What is one amongst a million ? What would twenty pious persons be in Great Britain ? Could we expect them able, for a day, to stem that current of corruption which would set in to bear us back to barbarism and night ?

But what is to be done ? The question, it is said, is a

practical one ; and we have applied all the means which can be raised. What can we do more ? We think and hope that something more may be done. We think there is a remedy. We are sure one is needed, for little as is done, our Societies are exhausted by the effort, and they are not now able to supply the wastes arising from death and superannuation.

First of all, the forces already on the field should be brought *nearer* to each other, and in many cases *consolidated*. No missionary should be allowed to stand alone ; for man to be alone is to languish and die. Strength should not be exhausted on isolated points, and insignificant numbers ; but power should be accumulated on great centres of action, and important outposts. This alone would give confidence to our agents, and awaken expectancy and enthusiasm, as all would have not only a present but a prospective interest in his station.

Then, and especially, the church should be brought to *correct her opinions* on missionary labor. Whether designedly or not, our operations have given, almost universally, a wrong impression on this great subject. In the general mind the missionary and the minister are identified ; so that no one turns his thought to the missionary field, till he has first disposed of the question, Am I fit to be a minister of the gospel ? Mostly, to the honest mind, this question brings a negative, and henceforth he satisfies himself, that he owes *no personal duty* to the heathen. What is this but to inoculate our modern institutions, which are for the life of the world, with the worst vice of the papacy ?

This error requires to be met not by opposing to it the literal truth ; it chiefly needs that we should oppose to it instant *practice*. Say what we may, while, in fact, we are sending out only the ordained minister, the effect will

be, that the church will rest at her ease, more than content, if she assists us to fulfil a professional duty.

We require some decided movement to break up this paralyzing error. Some of our more important stations should receive the character of colonies. Our laity should be inclined to look on them with favor. Their claims should be pressed on the conscience in the most sacred forms of duty. Persons of learning and property, and families still pursuing a secular calling, but deeply pious, should be encouraged and urged to go forth, and settle with the minister and teacher, and chiefly to advance the kingdom of heaven. The whole truth, in its whole power, might take some time to work with full effect; but who questions its efficacy? Have we less of the higher forms of piety in self-denial and zealous devotedness in our churches, than in our ministry? We believe not. Could such a movement be made on foreign shores in vain? For our colonies it is precisely what we want; and for every other field it would be charged with good yet undeveloped. We learn more by the eye than the ear. Is there not a sermon in the life of a Christian? and needs it wait for a translation? Would not the order, the worship, the habits, the elevation of a few Christian families, fully mixing with the world, yet utterly distinct, resting continuously under the eye of the degraded pagan, act like a leaven, silently but irresistibly, on the masses around them? We must colonize if we would convert.

Are we sufficiently aware of the *facilities* which Divine Providence is throwing in our path, to act on this larger scale? It so happens, that at this very time we have on an average about a hundred thousand persons annually quitting our country for the very purpose of colonization. How is it, then, that these elements of usefulness, prepared to our hand, have been so entirely overlooked? All who

thus go are placed in a condition to make counsel most desirable. All of them would be more or less grateful to be attended by a teacher and a schoolmaster. Most of them would be disposed to settle under the advice of disinterested friends in whom they could confide. Our Government have felt such an interest in their destination, as to appoint agents to guide them in their departure and location ; but Christians have done nothing—positively nothing—to secure a power of such magnitude for the civilization and salvation of the world ! Meantime, men who have a landed and monied interest in foreign countries, have banded themselves into societies, and have put themselves to vast charges, to bias them to their own purposes, and frequently, with reckless contempt of the interests of the emigrating party. Verily, “ the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light ! ”

Besides, at the lowest computation, it may be assumed that of the hundred thousand persons emigrating yearly, five thousand are truly pious. If taken in time, their location might be mostly determined, as it frequently is in America, by the prospect of a good minister, and a good school. Is it not passing strange, that no effort has been made to elevate their thoughts to missionary objects or to secure their establishment where they may best serve the common cause ? Is it possible that any agency, any expenditure, could be better applied than that which sought to incline a moving power, so great for good or evil, to an expected and blessed end ?

There is still another circumstance worthy of attention. The fact, that so many thousands are annually leaving us for foreign location, leads us to the certain conclusion, that the ties which hold *as many more* to the country, are loosened. There can be no doubt, that multitudes of pious persons

thus circumstanced, if it could be shown to them, that while their temporal interests did not suffer, they might essentially serve the kingdom of Christ, would be willing to make a settlement abroad. It only requires to be connected with a wise and vigorous system; and then impressed on the mind and heart by earnest representation, to ensure a successful issue. We should then have fewer going forth from the constraint of circumstances, and far more from the constraining love of Christ; and a new era in missionary labor and prospects would be begun.

To convert, we must colonize; and if we do not go forth willingly to the help of the Lord against the mighty, fiery trial may come, as it did on the saints in Jerusalem, to force compliance with his great command. But where is the honor or the joy of a compulsory service?

Our *mercantile marine power*, has not been sufficiently regarded, as an important agency in the missionary field. It is great; in England alone it amounts to about two hundred and fifty thousand. Those who form it are in the habit of visiting every port in the world; and everywhere, now, they are creating the strongest prejudices to our work, or demolishing it where it is begun. If a ship, which has too generally deserved the prevailing appellation, "a floating hell," could come to be commonly regarded as a floating church, what facilities would at once be given to the Christian cause! Why should not our merchants be appealed to on this ground? Why should not our captains be addressed, and enrolled in this service? Might not the sailor himself be elevated to respect this object; and might not the effort be sustained by a marked preference of such as did respect it? It is dreadful now to think, that the vessel which bears out the missionary, as a solitary witness to the truth and grace of our religion, bears also some

twenty or thirty witnesses against it, if conduct is to determine the question !

(6.) The employment of *native agency* must become general. It may seem late in the history of missions to refer to this subject ; yet it is not too late, since it has been strangely neglected. It might have been thought, that the first thing occurring to the mind of a missionary would be, that those he taught should be prepared to teach others. But it was not so. It seems not to have formed any regular part of their plans, yea, scarcely to have entered the mind of some of our earliest and best missionaries. The professional prejudices in which they had been educated might have led to this. Many, too—such is our frailty—may have cherished, unallowed to themselves, a reluctance to raise their converts to the sanctities of their order. Besides, the societies from which they have emanated may have naturally inclined to European agency, as most readily managed, and most certain to preserve the native churches in union with themselves. Most unquestionable it is, that through no brief period some causes have worked powerfully, though unseen, to prevent the growth and use of native agency ; and thus to deprive us of some of the fairest fruits of the gospel, as well as the most efficient means for its propagation.

“ If the iron is blunt, there must be the more strength.” What we have been slow to learn, Providence has been at pains to teach. The great expense of preparing European agency for distant stations ; the lamentable waste of valuable life ; the difficulty of acquiring foreign language at mature age, and the impossibility of using it as the mother tongue ; and the stunted condition of our native churches, while kept down to one dead level ; have forced on us the

reluctant conclusion, that native agency is the most *efficient* agency.

Now, that we have arrived at this conviction, it will require much magnanimity to embody it in cordial and earnest action. The missionary must have the magnanimity to think nothing of his order or himself, that Christ may be magnified amongst the heathen; and the Society he represents must have the magnanimity to sacrifice the love of power and of centralization, and to rejoice in the independent action of their converts, so soon as they can safely stand alone.

It is not proper to this exercise to consider fully how this should be effected. Yet it may be open to the intimation, that we must not be contented to rely entirely on existing and ordinary arrangements; it must be sought by special attention, and frequently by independent agency, if we would find it in sufficient quantity or maturity. The great thing, however, is to *fix* the mind on it. Native agency is efficient agency. It is of the first necessity, if we are to advance on our present position. No missionary station, however, cheering, has the promise of permanency and growth without it.*

(7.) Those who are to give themselves exclusively to missionary service, should have a *more exact and decided*

* Happily we are already furnished with evidence on this subject. Missionary labor at this moment is most successful just where native agency has been earliest and most fully brought into action---the South Seas and the West Indies. Polynesia now demands nothing more than what is necessary to a careful superintendence; and the West Indies should at once be made a seed-bed for the cultivation of the deserts of Africa. In like manner, an effort should be made to restore and resuscitate those Christian communities which spot the face of the earth, that from a hinderance they may become auxiliaries. This will particularly apply to those regions possessed by the followers of Mohammed.

preparation. It is well, that the distinction between the home and missionary college should be abolished; but then if men are to prepare in our colleges for foreign service, they must be supplied with some courses adapted to their prospects; or what is needful beyond a general education must be sought through some other channel. Whenever the general studies are closed, the field of action should be determined, not as vacancies happen to turn up, but on ascertained adaptation; and the studies peculiarly necessary to the prospective engagements of the individual should begin. It would be absurd in the highest degree to give the same training to the man who is destined for India as to the man who is to labor in Africa; and it would be unjust to leave both only to their general preparations.

While there is the same fixed adherence to principle, there should be much greater *flexibility* in the application. In this respect we must become all things to all men. Many countries that have been closed to us under our present modes of action, would be open to us with better arrangements. Madagascar might at this moment be safely and usefully occupied by pious artists; Turkey might be possessed by skilful physicians; and great way might have been made in China and its dependencies through the medium of the sciences, and of medicine especially. Shall we allow a name, a habit, or personal dignity to prevent our access to nations, when our professed object is the salvation of myriads of men? Is this our philosophy? Give me rather the philosophy of the single-hearted Moravian, who sold himself for a slave when he found he had no other means of proclaiming to slaves the freedom of the gospel!

All that the case requires is, that we should be sincere in our professions; and he who establishes himself amongst a people by handicraft, by medicine, by general science, or

general education, still with the predominant purpose of advancing religion in the world, is as fully a missionary of the cross as the laying on of any hands could make him; and, in many instances, will command the finest opportunities of usefulness. Romanism has sought to work by these means, by uniting them in her clergy, and this has often led to collusion; we have only to advance another step to secure the good and avoid the temptation—let us seek for them in union with deep-toned earnest piety, and trust for the rest.

Our missionaries (I must use it as a distinctive term till we shall have corrected our vocabularies) usually go out married from our several Societies; and mostly, I am sorry to state, their *wives* go out *unprepared*. Certificates are produced of their health and piety; and this, generally, is all that is known of them. They are the wives of missionaries, but they themselves are not missionaries. The consequences may be readily foreseen. Some have nobly risen above all their difficulties; and have educated themselves at their stations; I speak not of them, but of the system. Many have gone forth entirely misconceiving the nature of the work to be done, and the life to be led; and utterly unprepared by discipline and knowledge to bear a useful part in them. They have soon hankered after the comforts, and perhaps the little elegancies of home; cheerful sympathy has died away from the dwelling of the missionary; and who can wonder, if either his health or his enthusiasm have failed him in the midst of his career?

None shall be able to say, how much of evil has sprung from this single source; a source of evil that ought never to have existed. The question whether the missionary should go forth single or married may admit of debate; but it cannot be a question, whether, if he be married, his

wife should be prepared or not. Are not the expenses and the responsibilities doubled by the connection? Is not woman, pious woman, equally fitted in her own sphere, to act a beneficial part at a missionary station? and do we not deprive ourselves of one half of our strength, if we decline the help she may render?

America, I am happy to say, is an exception to these remarks. Later in the field, she has earlier corrected the prevailing error. The consort of the missionary is not only an educated woman—she is carefully educated as a missionary; is recognised and treated as such by those who send her forth; and knows, as distinctly as the person to whom she is united, what is her duty and what her responsibility. We are indebted to this prudential course of conduct for the knowledge and love we have of Harriet Newell, Mrs. Judson, and Mrs. Lowrie. Our women must be not merely wives—they must be missionaries.

Education should be regarded as an integral part of missionary labor. A prejudice lay against this at the beginning; and every man who went forth, however slender his qualifications, was expected to go not as a teacher, but as a minister. One would hope the prejudice has expired before advancing knowledge; but certainly the effects remain with us. Recently a most respectable missionary chose the sphere of education as his most useful mode of action; but even amid the deserts of Africa the prejudice against the teacher, and in favor of the preacher, was so strong, that he was driven to seek ordination that he might act efficiently as a schoolmaster. At no more remote period of time, out of thirteen persons embarked for missionary service, and chiefly in barbarous lands, eleven of the number had not seen an infant school.

Most heartily we believe, that it is by the earnest utter-

ance of the Gospel, that we are to look for the conversion of the world to God. But what is preaching but one mode of education? a mode adapted to adult life? Are we, however, to labor for the adult, and neglect the young? Education, in the hands of pious men, is the appropriate method of making known the gospel to youthful life. Everywhere there may well be a distinction preserved, fainter or broader, between the engagements of the teacher and the pastor; but it were strange policy to put them in a state of conflict, or even of separation. Rome has shown consummate skill in the fact, that while she is unfriendly to popular knowledge within her own peaceful domain, when she has to deal with a determined adversary, she relies chiefly on education—and the education of the young—for her success.

The remarks on education may be extended to *civilization*. We are certainly not to wait till a people shall be civilized, that they may be qualified to accept the gospel; we are rather to look for their civilization in their evangelization. Yet this only affects the order of the blessing; and if the gospel carries with it a civilizing power, then our missionaries ought unquestionably to be prepared to guide and establish their converts in the arts of civilized life. These, with the natural sciences, often, as in the case of Williams, take the place of miracle; and if they are withheld, the multitude of professed converts are likely to fall back into apathy and irreligion.

These hints, from their very nature, may seem to want some connecting parts; but the order which we would have them substantially to take is—preach—teach—civilize!

(8.) Finally, our efforts to convert the world should be brought more fully under the *observation of the world*, that

they may take knowledge of them. This may be done by our missionaries. They are pledged to make periodical reports to their constituents; but they are limited to the subject of religion, and are read therefore only by religious people. They should be of a more attractive and general character. The missionary in most of our settlements has such an opportunity of reporting what is new, or strange, or beneficial to the common interests of society, that he may force the public attention. Our lamented Williams has shown in some measure what may be done in this way.

The missionary station should be a centre of light; and should be felt to be friendly to all the interests of science and civilized life. There should be kept a daily register of the variations in the barometer, thermometer, and hygrometer. Thence should be reported all the characteristics of the great human family; and all the peculiarities of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. Particularly the world should look to them for the more important discoveries yet to be made. Chiefly, if we are wise, they are to be made by missionaries. Where others have failed, they may succeed. At this time Moffat may do what all other men attempting have perished. His station should be provided for, and he should be encouraged to reap the fruit of twenty years' service, by penetrating to the heart of Africa. It is safe to him, and only to him. Apart from the direct missionary objects to be promoted, is it of no importance that the world should see that the missionary, with the Bible in his hand, is safe where the merchant, the soldier, and the traveller have fallen, and that he can become a bond to the broken and scattered fragments of society?

The order of communication to which we refer would insure notice from the *periodical press*, and this would have its weight on public opinion.

The same object might be sought at home by the religious community taking a marked and leading part in all *correlative interests*. The world should feel that the Christian was not only a patriot but a philanthropist; that whatever was important to the present or future welfare of man was important to him. Every Christian should make haste, as the occasion offered, to show himself on the side of order, liberty, peace, temperance, justice, and charity and knowledge. If the Christian communities of England and America demanded peace, there could scarcely be war; if they raised a temperate but firm voice against intemperance, drunkenness would go staggering out of life; if they put themselves steadily on the side of freedom in thought and worship, in action and commerce, monopoly and usurpation would die out of society.

On great questions and of common interest to the whole human family, they should make themselves heard not only by public meetings, but by *general councils* and solemn protestations in the face of the whole world. The questions of peace—temperance—freedom to our fellow man—union amongst Christians—and the universal establishment of the religion of Christ—are manifestly of this order. The mere fact of such movements, if well timed and well sustained, would work mightily on the world for its redemption. And who should not sustain them? No man should be happy while his fellow-man is miserable; no Christian should be happy till man, who is his brother, is also a Christian!

3. There is *Divine agency* provided, as a means to our object.

The Holy Spirit is the great promise of this dispensation. He was first given, on the ascension of the Redeemer, for the

extension of religion over the world, and his power is to be revealed in accumulating glory, as the great purpose of redemption hastens to its consummation. His agency is special and common ; particular and universal.

His *special* and *particular* agency is within the church. There he operates, not to supersede human agency ; but to prepare it for the work to be done, and to render it efficient in doing it. The truth is mighty “to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan ;” but it is mighty “through the Spirit.” The hand of man is made indispensable to the triumphs of the gospel ; but “it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” The agency of the church is, therefore, a conscious, voluntary, and spiritual agency ; the first fruits of the Spirit ; and as it is more exactly prepared by his hand for the conversion of the world, it is marked—

By the spirit of penitence. Penitence is the religion of a sinner ; a fallen creature cannot be in his right mind, or in his right place, but as he is habitually prostrate in penitence before his Father in heaven. The church cannot be prepared for any service, least of all for that which we are now contemplating, except as this heavenly temper prevails. Her eye cannot rightly glance on the condition of the world without a deep conviction of her sin. For eighteen centuries she has received the command to bestow the gospel on all nations, and the promise of the Spirit in seeking to fulfil it ; and for eighteen centuries she has neglected her plain duty, and despised her high vocation. Meantime her fault has nourished the world in infidelity to the truth, and opposition to the Saviour ; and age after age, year after year, millions of the children of men have perished in their sins. Blood is on her—the blood of souls—the blood of centuries !

How shall she recover from this state of unparalleled guilt, and spiritual indolence? Not by high resolve, but by profound repentance. If she would do her first works, she must repent. If she would commence a new life, she must repent. She must see distinctly her state of sin and unfitness; she must mourn, mourn over it as a mother over her first-born; she must sink down abased in conscious nothingness, at the feet of her Saviour, and find in him her hope and renovation. It must be not so much an act, as a habit rooted in the mind—a penitence so full, so abiding, as to keep the soul under a living persuasion of utter unworthiness and unpreparedness.

To the mind of the world, this would be disqualification; to the mind of the Spirit, there is no qualification without it. By the law of the kingdom which we serve, it is ordained—that the sense of weakness is strength, the sense of folly wisdom, the sense of unworthiness and guilt, preparedness—“the things that are not are to bring to nought the things that are.” Where this penitential abasement becomes a predominant temper, there is an end to pride, querulousness, carnal confidence, and criminal dissension; and there are the elements of peace, power, union, and devotedness. Show me a church—not boastful of her numbers, reposing on her means, anxious for her resources, or even rejoicing in her success—show me a church awakened to an apprehension of the Infinite Glory, mourning in unutterable abasement before its presence, and conscious of utter unfitness for every work by which an adored Saviour may be glorified;—and I will show you a church filled with the Spirit, and in the highest state of preparation “to rebuild the waste places, and to repair the desolations of many generations.”

The presence of the Holy Spirit in human agency

would be discovered, by the *spirit of piety*. Piety is right sentiment towards God. We refer to it now not merely as present, but as exercised in elevated forms. The piety which sees God, which adopts his interests as its own, and which is zealously affected to his glory ; the piety which has deep fellowship with the truth, which lives in the light of heaven, and in oblivion of the world's best pleasures ; the piety which not only submits to self-denial and self-sacrifice, but finds pleasure in them while they may please and serve the Redeemer ; the piety which parts with all and has all, which loses itself, and is possessed of Deity ; is the piety which we are contemplating. Such piety is the highest preparation for service ; it is the richest fruit of the Spirit ; it amounts to an entire consecration : where it is, there is the temple of the Holy Ghost, in which he dwells, is worshipped, and glorified.

This piety is necessary to the renovation of the world. Were it possessed in such measure, we should not then question its existence in ourselves ; nor would it be that poor feeble thing scarcely deserving, and scarcely bearing exportation to a foreign land. We should not then languish for want of means, nor for want of men—and the men would be all heroes. Christians would not then labor to increase their wealth, that they might increase their establishment ; but that they might have the noble satisfaction of advancing the kingdom of heaven. Missionaries would not then be asking for the post of ease, of honor, or of safety, but for that of assault and hazard ; nor would they be failing under discouragement in the midst of life, for a living piety would be to them the elixir of life, and they should prolong their days in the land which the Lord their God giveth them. The earth would not then be scandalized by disunion and contention between followers

of the same Lord ; for they should see with one eye, speak with one tongue, and live and love as brethren. What was difficult should become easy, and what was impossible practicable, to more elevated faith and unconquerable love. The church would feel that she was intrusted with two great interests—the salvation of men, and the glory of Christ—and superior to obstruction, she would go forth to fulfil her commission with the singleness of purpose, and exact fidelity, proper to an angel from heaven.

The Divine agency of which we are speaking, will also be marked by the *spirit of prayer*. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of humility and of dependence. It carries the creature out of himself to rest on his Creator and Saviour. It is precisely that temper which sensibly *connects* the Divine agency with the human agency, in the conversion of the world ; and as the human agency is nothing of itself, and the Divine agency every thing to it, nothing is to be expected without it. It is the law of this service, that it shall be discharged in the utter renunciation of ourselves, and a complete dependence on God. In prayer it must be begun ; in prayer it must be sustained ; and if the nobler achievements are ours, they must be secured by the prayer which hath agony and perseverance.

These remarks have equal force, whether they apply to qualification or success. He who has not the spirit of prayer has no qualification for this service ; for none is sanctified but by the word of God and prayer. He that is full hath nothing ; he that is wise knoweth nothing ; and he that is strong can do nothing ; but he that rests by believing prayer, and enlarged desire, on the fulness of God, appropriates to himself something of the Divine wisdom, might, and grace.

All success in labor is united with the same capital cir-

cumstance. The instruments of eminent usefulness in his kingdom are to be preferred, as were the primitive disciples, by mortification and abandonment of themselves. Such men God delighteth to honor ; but he will confound, at every step, the man who flatters himself that his wisdom or his might is requisite to sustain the ark of his glory, or to bear it onward in majesty, triumphant before the face of his enemies.

The ancient church may supply us with a beautiful and striking exemplification. Israel was to fight against her enemies ; and Israel at the same time, through her great prophet, was to pray without ceasing, to express that her help was in God. The moment in which the hand of prayer failed, the adversary prevailed ; and the moment in which prayer was revived, was the moment in which Israel was triumphant. Always a praying church is a triumphant church. Behold, also, the recognised connection between the twofold agency. So to have trusted in Divine agency, as not to have used human agency, would have been to abuse it ; and so to have used human agency, as not to have relied wholly on Divine power, would have been to use it in vain.

Apart from this select operation within the church, there is the *general* and *universal* influence of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened ; he operates where he will, and on whom he will. All life is from him, and is regulated by him—the physical and the spiritual, the sentient and the rational. All worlds are at his control—above, below—visible and invisible ; he ruleth in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. He employs the inferior orders of being to subserve the superior ; and all to perfect the body of Christ. For this, stars revolve in their courses ; seasons come and go ; na-

tions rise and fall ; and Change and Time and Death fulfil their commissions. He maketh the wrath of man to praise him ; and he turneth the hearts of the children of men, even as water is turned. There is nothing beyond his reach, nothing above his power. His influence pervading the church, should make her to revive as the corn, to grow as the vine, and to emit fragrance like Lebanon ; and his influence pervading the world, should convert the waste howling wilderness into a field and a garden which the Lord had blessed.

It might seem superfluous to remark of an agency which resolves itself into Divine influence, that it is sufficient for the work to be executed. It may be of more importance to observe, that it is, in its utmost power, *necessary*. It is a remarkable circumstance, and one of the many proofs of its divinity, that the religion of Christ proceeds on the principle of the entire renovation of our fallen nature. No false religion has ever ventured to occupy this ground ; and it would of necessity be fatal to any that was not sustained by that Divine influence to which it appealed. It were possible and plausible, under the name of religion, to dispose man to overcome one portion of his nature by another portion ; but it were manifestly absurd for any religion to demand nothing less than his entire regeneration, except it came from heaven. It follows that a religion which stands on these high pretensions is required to put forth the fulness of this power, not occasionally, but always. It cannot advance a step without it. The Divine energy is indispensable, if a single mind is to be renewed and saved ; and the influence which is necessary for one is available with equal facility for a million.

If it is proper to place this emphasis on Divine influence, it is yet material that we should not sever it from human

agency. The one, as compared with the other, it is unquestionably insignificant in itself; nevertheless, by a wise and gracious economy, it is made to stand in inseparable connection with the displays of Divine power. It might have been dispensed with wholly, but it is made indispensable; so that whether the Holy Spirit is destroying the old and consolidated forms of despotism and idolatry in the world, or whether he is moulding the church to a more exact expression of himself, he will still operate through human agency. As the end is elevated, he demands a proportionate elevation in the temper of the instrumentality; and on this single law of co-operation, the church can only be regarded, as a fit instrument for the conversion of the world, as she stands in close fellowship with the wisdom, grace, and majesty of his purposes.

The great practical question arises here, Is the church in this position? Is she a fit and prepared agent for his service? by humility, by faith, by holy desire waiting as a mere vehicle to receive him, and to obey his plastic hand at his pleasure? Certainly not. And do we not find here the cause of all our weakness, perplexity, and disappointment? Instead of soliciting with an earnest and yearning heart the descent of the Holy Spirit, we have grieved and offended him! By our disunion he is grieved; by our formality he is grieved; by our worldliness he is grieved; and by our hypocrisy he is grieved. A thousand times we have professed that we were his, and a thousand times we have resumed what we had given. The Spirit of God is not with the church; and the church does not mourn his absence, or repent of the sins which have occasioned it. The Spirit is ready to be gracious; all things are ready; and the world is open before us; but the church is not ready. Her iniquities have separated between her and her

God ; and separate and alone, she is not so much an unfit instrument, as she is a guilty impediment, to the accession of the heavenly kingdom !

The one thing, then, wanted for the salvation of the world is, the *preparation of the church*. She must awake to a sense of her position and her responsibility. She must appreciate the work to be accomplished, and the part which she is to bear in it. She must sympathize with the will of the Saviour, and burn with desire to see it fulfilled on earth as in heaven.

We must address ourselves to the service with the bitter tears of repentance, and the renunciation of accustomed sins. Worldly patronage and worldly conformity ; lifeless formalities and corrupt superstitions ; selfish indifference and angry dissensions ; must be the subjects of inward, public, and universal lamentation : and all the redeemed must be resolved to come into a state of visible union, and fraternal fellowship and co-operation ; and must yield themselves to God, that he may graciously mould them to this issue by the Spirit of love.

There must be the unreserved and cordial surrender of ourselves, and of all that we possess, to the proposed end. The work is great—inconceivably great—and it demands all that we can offer. Our talents, time, life, and person must all be devoted ; it must live through all our occupations, and breathe through all our desires !

As all of individual life must be given, so all of the whole church is to be presented. The act of consecration is to be as extensive as the act of redemption. None—not the least—is to be exempted from the duty, or deprived of the privilege. Youth is to come with its enthusiasm, and maturity with its sagacity. Babes and sucklings are to find their hosannas, and the hoary head is to find its

crown of glory, in this service. The poor is to present his mite, and the rich to pour forth their treasures. The learned must yield their talent ; the noble their distinctions ; and kings their authority. On every volume, on every ship, on every sanctuary, and on every habitation, and on every heart of the redeemed, must be the one living inscription, "Holiness to the Lord !" And the whole church, as the sacramental host of God's elect, must arise in her strength and beauty, placing her feet on the weapons of earthly warfare, and lifting her hands to heaven ; and the ONE CRY must go up like the sound of many waters, and reverberating on every shore, The world for Christ—the world for Christ !

O Church of the living God, awake, awake ! Is not the time actually come, which we were anticipating ? When wilt thou awake, if not now ? Is it not enough, that thou hast slumbered long already, while thy Saviour has been waiting for thee, and millions have perished without thine aid ? Is it not enough, that by negligence, strife, and carnal indulgence, thou hast been long the scorn, and not the terror, of thine adversaries ? Is it not enough, that thou hast wandered long, miserable and disconsolate, in the homeless wilderness ? Lift up thine eyes ! The land of rest, and peace, and promise is before thee ! Providence calls thee ; occasion waits on thee ; the wide world solicits thee ! Old dynasties and old idolatries, which bathed their heads in heaven, are mouldering at thy feet ; and all things invite thee to universal empire and supernal glory !

O Spirit of the living God ! wait not for a dilatory Church ; but graciously now prepare her for supplementary and consummate grace. Awaken her to a conception of thy mind and sympathy with thy designs. Give her the

heart of penitential love and perfect devotedness. Heal all her strifes by the waters of the sanctuary, and pervade all her members as one life—all-seeing, all-mighty, and all-glorious. Show her her vocation, and gird her for its accomplishment. Give the mighty heart and perfect faith, to which conflict is easy, and victory certain. And when the last victory is won, and the last enemy conquered, and the world presented to the Saviour, let no hand be seen, no mercy adored—but THINE !

LECTURE X.

THE CERTAINTY AND GLORY OF
THE CONSUMMATION.

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CERTAINTY AND GLORY OF THE CONSUMMATION.

“ The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”

RESPECT THE END, is an excellent maxim of conduct. It is fatal to every worldly pursuit as ultimate in the life of man. It is propitious in the highest degree to every claim of religion. The early steps of the Christian may be taken in doubt, in darkness, and in trembling ; but he shall gather strength as he advances, and his end shall be peace. “ He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

Throughout these exercises we have dwelt on the prevalence of true religion. We have contemplated its advancement in the individual, in the family, in the church, and in the world. At every step we have felt increasingly that its progress and prevalence amongst men was most desirable—was, indeed, the one thing needful. And could we have expatiated on the great theme with more distinctness and enlargement, it would only have been to receive a more intense conviction of its unutterable importance.

Still, to a thoughtful mind, and in proportion to the good promised, the question may arise, Can these things be ? Can such a dark and sinful world, as ours has long been, be so restored and so blessed ? Have we any security of

the fact? or must we at most surround it with our fondest hopes, rather than rest on it a firm and unalterable confidence?

Our reply is, that these things can be—that *they shall be*—and that they shall be revealed to the universe in *consummate glory*. This will suggest to us the course of this meditation. Let us desire, that it may be prayerful and elevated, that it may be in keeping with the subject to be illustrated.

I.

We are to regard the *certainty* of this anticipated consummation.

It will not agree with our design to bring together all the particulars which bear on this point, and which, by an accumulating process, might establish our position. We shall content ourselves with two or three observations.

1. First of all, the evidence may spring from the *nature* of religion. It is the truth, and as such is the direct opposite of error. Error is various, heterogeneous, divided against itself; and though, in our world, it lives long and dies hard, it cannot stand. It has no unity, no concord, but carries in itself the principle of self-destruction. It is indebted for a temporary and precarious existence to our depraved nature. It is the darkness of the human mind, and the perversity of the human will, which allows it to impose on our judgment, and hold the place of truth. After all its plausibilities and subtleties, its convictions do not satisfy the claims of the understanding, nor its promises the aspirations of the heart.;

But the truth is one, homogeneous, simple, and indestructible. It is a pure and incorruptible seed, and it bears fruit unto immortal life. Besides this the truth is exactly suited to the necessities of man. It speaks of God,—and man needs his Creator. It speaks of the apostasy,—and man has the consciousness of sin. It speaks of one atonement for sin,—and man needs an equivalent for sin, both before God and his conscience. It speaks of redemption,—and man groans under the burden of iniquity and death. It speaks of immortality,—and man yearns after a life to come.

Still we are merely pleading for the principle of adaptation. The truth is of immortal and unchangeable excellence, it is therefore prepared in its own nature to recover man to a perfect and enduring felicity. It might so have been, that this dark world should never be enlightened by its rays, nor fallen man blessed by its influence. But if man is to be restored from his state of ruin, and if he is to be preserved in that redeemed condition, then the truth, and the truth alone, is the prepared instrument for the work. It has in itself an adaptation to the end.

An illustration may be derived from ourselves. We are composed of body and spirit. The body is corruptible; it labors to live; it has no fitness for immortality. It must die to live; and must be not only changed, but so changed, as of a corruptible, to become a spiritual body. But the spirit in man is life. It might be the pleasure of its Maker that it should die; but then violence must be done to its nature. Its life is immortal, and it is made to find its immortal happiness in the bosom of its Creator.

So is the truth, unlike to error, immortal; and it is prepared, in its very nature, to confer on the children of men an abiding and eternal blessedness.

2. The *advanced position* of religion may encourage us to look to the expected issue with certainty. Religion not only exists in the world, it advances. It has advanced, it is advancing; and the conclusion is, that it shall advance unto the perfect day.

It is no objection, that this advance is *slow*. Infidelity has hastened to employ this repeatedly as an objection; but he that believeth shall not make haste. It is slow to our impatience; slow to our brief life—to our limited survey. We measure it by ourselves, and not by God, whose work it is. To Him, a thousand years are as one day; to us, one day is as a thousand years. God is eternal, and he can afford to wait.

All the works of God are progressive: it was to be expected that the redemption should be so. All his works are slow in their progress to maturity in proportion to their magnitude and importance; it was therefore to be expected that the greatest—our redemption—should be slow in its development. The promise of Messiah was given immediately on the fall; and our first parents looked for its accomplishment in their own seed; but ages on ages were to roll away before Messiah appeared. Messiah, on his ascension, was foretold to come again in spiritual glory for the world's renovation. Instantly weak and dying men exclaim, Where is the promise of His coming? Yet, though they see it not, does He come in calm and solemn majesty according to his word. Be silent before Him—for He cometh.

It is no objection that the advance of religion has often been sensibly *checked*. Here, again, we must have recourse to analogy. It was to be expected, that similar principles should be found operating in the various works of God. But in all other of his works we meet with antagonist prin-

ciples, so that final good is wrought out by previous and continued conflict. Had religion been an exception, the exception might have created the doubt. In fact, the doubt does exist against every false religion. It could not wait ; could not patiently endure the fiery trial ; but has cast itself for protection on constraint and the sword.

Again, while we are to look for the establishment of true religion through an exercise of the Divine power, we are not to expect that such power, though triumphant, should be irresistible. This would be to forget the nature of man ; to treat him as a machine ; and to leave him not only without choice, but without guilt—without responsibility. Man shall be free to act, and yet brought to obey ; the purpose of God shall stand, and yet those who promote it be held accountable ; there shall be place for the operation of motive as well as power ; and thus the wisdom of God shall be illustrated equally with his might ; and this greater work of his hand shall work in harmony with those which are subordinate. In nature, the earth has her seasons, and the very stars their perturbations ; in providence, one event is made to wait on another, and ages are taken to realize it ; and in religion, it was to be expected that we should witness at once, and on the same field, the resistance of depravity, and the fluctuating but final triumphs of Divine grace.

Religion, then, notwithstanding all the resistance with which she has met, exists—that is something. It has been in the world since the fall. It has stood alone in the world, with nothing like itself, amidst the most hostile and malignant influences. It has appeared in various forms, and under different circumstances ; but always it has been detected, proscribed, condemned. Wealth, learning, and power, have conspired for its destruction. At a thousand

altars the oath of blood has been taken ; a thousand fires have been kindled to consume it ; and a thousand nations have arisen to pursue it to the death. But it lives ! like the bush in the flame, unconsumed. And is it too much to say that it shall live for ever ?

Religion not only lives ; it has advanced in power and glory. It was revealed in weakness, but increased like the light of day. It has been submitted to every form of trial ; and it has come forth with the lustre of gold, seven times purified. It was confined to a people ; and when they perished for their sins, it survived, and spread itself through the world. Egypt and Babylon, Greece and Rome, resisted it unto blood ; and it left its name recorded on their ruins, and passed on to the habitable parts of the 'earth. Two hundred millions of people now acknowledge its authority, and do it willing homage. Chiefly it has established its throne, and bestowed its blessings, on Britain and America ; and these, by liberty, commerce, and elevated character, control the whole world. Her blessed proclamation of peace and life to men is now uttered through a hundred languages, and to all nations ; and she is now advancing to her final conflicts, and her final triumphs. Behind her rests the bow of promise, on the retiring darkness ; and before her lie the streaming lights of opening and inconceivable glory !

And shall we despair of religion now ? When her warfare is well nigh accomplished, her enemies all confounded, her rivals all perished ; and she herself has become the single hope of the world ! When commerce is hers, wealth is hers, science is hers, and the predominant kingdoms of the earth are hers ! When her heralds are in all lands, and her voice heard through every tongue ; and the most distant and adverse nations are coming to the bright-

ness of her rising ! Shall we despair *now* ? doubt *now* ? Oh ! doubt that light is light, that truth is truth, that man is man ; but doubt not that religion shall triumph on earth—that wherever Satan has found a slave, Christ shall find a trophy !

3. The certainty of the event rests on the *will of God*. We have no means of knowing the will of God, but by its annunciation. We are, therefore, to seek for it in the sacred volume. We have, however, no necessity to quote formally and extensively in proof of this subject ; if any thing is plain and indisputable, this is it. Revelation is evidently given to the world that its light and blessedness may prevail, till the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the great abyss. It is not required to show that this will exists, but rather to mark the *emphasis* which is given to it.

It is the *supreme* purpose of the Divine mind. All things were made for it ; all things are preserved for it ; and all things work together to secure it. It is his pleasure—his delight—that which he will accomplish at any sacrifice. The measure with which he abhors sin and death, is the measure of his delight in restored righteousness unto eternal life.

God is most solemnly *pledged* to it. His purpose were enough for security, for his purpose must stand, and he will do all his pleasure. But the great purpose has been clothed with promises ; the promises have taken the form of solemn covenant ; the covenant has been confirmed by two immutable things, the oath of God, and the blood of sacrifice. “ As surely as I live, saith the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with my glory.”—“ The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for

ever, after the order of Melchisedec.”—“He must reign, till all things are put under his feet.” Here, then, we have the promise, the covenant, the oath, and the blood; each immutable, yet all united, not to make that which is sure more sure, but to bring to us the deeper sense of assurance, that the heirs of the promise might have strong consolation.

This purpose has the force of a *passion*. We must be forgiven, if on this subject we prefer the language of Scripture to that of philosophy. By passion, we refer to that energy—that fixed and concentrated energy—which springs from the common interest of all the Divine perfections. “The *zeal* of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” The evil to be removed excites the deepest hatred; and the good to be secured is contemplated with the most intense delight. The zeal which is enkindled is nourished by every perfection in God;—his holiness, for he abhors sin; his mercy, for he loves the sinner; his truth, for his mouth hath spoken it; his justice, for he has received an equivalent; and his Son claims the inheritance he hath purchased. Every day God is grieved and offended by the crimes and miseries of a rebellious world; and every day every perfection of his nature is working to the times of “the restitution of all things.”

And is it so? Is the advancement and establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth the purpose, the ruling purpose of God? Is it made sure to us by the most solemn and ratified engagements? Does the world exist for it, Providence operate for it, and all the Divine perfections plead for it? Have the Father—the Son—the Spirit—an equal and infinite interest in it? and are they concurring to work for its accomplishment? Then what can equal it in certainty? The hills shall pass away, the mountains be re-

moved; the stars fall, like untimely figs, from their orbits; but the truth, the faithfulness, the loving-kindness of Jehovah, shall not—cannot—fail!

Can any thing less than inspiration take possession of the church? She is pledged to the highest of all services, with the strongest of all assurances. In the light of promise, she sees the end from the beginning; a cloud of witnesses on earth, and in heaven, testify to the blessed consummation. With what strength of confidence should she go forth to possess the nations! with what deep and holy enthusiasm should she raise the one universal cry, “It is the will of God!—it is the will of God!”

II.

Secure of the event, let us now contemplate the *glory* of this consummation. One instantly feels that the chief difficulty of the subject is, that it so greatly transcends our conception. Yet, if we may not comprehend it, we may possibly, by the light of Scripture, and the aid of prayer, come to apprehend it with more distinctness and power.

1. Glory is that lustre which arises from excellence. It is material, as in the sun and the stars; one star differeth from another in glory—but all are glorious. Or it is spiritual, as in man, when he was created in the Divine image; and as in God, who is glorious in holiness. The glory which is spiritual greatly excels that which is material and physical. It is of this glory—*superior in kind* to all other—that we have to speak.

Man—the soul of man—is the subject of this glory. It elevates and glorifies the body, but it is through the soul. Mind is itself the most glorious work of God. One

soul is of higher value than a material universe. It is made after the likeness of God ; it is capable of his fellowship ; it is born to immortality. It has within itself the living fountains of beauty and sublimity ; and it makes half the glory it beholds. What power of thought ; what reach of imagination ; what depth of affection ; what a world of agony, or of glory, dwell in the spirit of man !

It is on this living soul that religion operates to glorify it. It finds man lapsed into a state of unutterable misery and sin ; it commences and maintains a sanctifying process until what was sanctification issues in glorification. It is knowledge in the understanding, liberty in the will, purity in the affections, harmony to the whole soul. It recovers him from this dark and woful life to the light of heaven ; the bosom of God ; the society of the saints ; the forfeited inheritance of eternity. All his Father's designs of love are accomplished in him ; he dwells in his favor, is renewed in his own likeness, and is secured against sorrow, crime, and care, by the possession of a happiness exquisite, waveless, eternal. Oh ! can it be that that exalted spirit, radiant with light and bliss—an angel amongst angels—is the very being that once tenanted a body, dwelt on earth, lived in sorrow, and died in agony ? And if so—was there ever transformation more complete, more glorious !

2. In this consummation, there will be the *glory of numbers*. Magnitude is often a great property of the glorious. The light which flames in the sun, and that which glimmers in the taper, are precisely the same ; we always speak of the one as glorious ; of the other never. In the instance before us, nothing can exceed it in kind ; yet if the same thing were done on a larger scale, it would evidently be furnished with an additional attribute of glory. Suppose, that what was done for you, were done for your

family ; that what was done for your family, were done for a people ; that what was done for a people, were done for the world ; would not this be a circumstance of excelling glory ?

There is sublimity in numbers. This very assembly is impressive ; increase it tenfold, and what would it be ? If you could look on an assembled nation—if on a congregated world—what would be your emotion ? But this is the very scale on which this glory is to be displayed. What is to be done for you, is to be effected for myriads, millions, numbers innumerable ; the world is to be the great theatre of its exhibition. All flesh are to see it, and not in succession, but *together* ; yea, earth and heaven shall be alike accessory to the final glories of the gospel in the salvation of men.

Scripture, as you know, is exuberant in its joyful reference to this period. The causes of misery and crime are to be dried up ; and nothing is to hurt or destroy. The arts and implements of war are to be deemed accursed ; and man is to be at peace with himself, at peace with his fellow-man. The physical and national distinctions in society are to be broken down ; and the intercommunion of the human family is to be complete—there shall be “no sea there.” The voice of joy and praise shall be in the habitations of the righteous—and all shall then be righteous. Light, life and bliss, like a river flowing from the throne of Deity, shall refresh the Divine inheritance ; and God himself shall be the glory of his redeemed people. This is the hope of man—the Sabbath of the world. A period which all poetry fails to describe ; which exhausts all prayer, and perfects all praise !

3. There is the *glory of contrast*. Not unfrequently an

object depends on this circumstance for its interest and grandeur. Where would be the beauty of the rainbow if painted on a bright and cloudless sky? and where the sublimity of the mountain if it could not be contrasted with something less than itself?

Ours was a fair and beautiful world as it came fresh from the hands of its Maker, and revolved in his favor. But how soon, and how fatally was it changed! Man corrupted his way, and fell from his God. Still, as he multiplied, murder, cunning, and all wickedness prevailed. One world was destroyed by fire, and another by flood; but neither fire nor water could eradicate the sin of man from the earth. Man perished, but his iniquities survived. To what crime—and what wo—and what weeping—and what gnashing of teeth has our fallen world been witness! Mad in folly and in anguish, she has forsaken her Creator, the guide of her youth; and as she rolls beneath his indignant frown, ever and anon she is casting from her bosom millions of rebellious men from a wretched life into unfathomable perdition.

Yet is this world to be restored and regenerated. Its darkness is to be irradiated by the Sun of Righteousness. Where sin hath so awfully abounded, grace is much more to abound. Bondage is to give place to liberty, death to life, and a complicated and prevailing misery is to find its remedy in a happiness exquisite and supernal. This ruined and rebellious world is to be redeemed, reconciled, pardoned; and is to rest in the favor, and to be suffused with the glory of its Redeemer.

This restorative process is now going forward; and as it advances, what contrasts awaken our attention and fix our astonishment! Now the thick darkness, and now the breaking light of day. Now the cry of joy, and now the yell of despair. Here the voice of prayer, and there of

blasphemy. Here the sanctuary of the saints; there the orgies of revelry and mad lust. Here a heaven of love; there a den of furies. Oh, does heaven or hell contain either good or evil, which finds not its type on earth?

And as this wonderful process seeks its close in the final judgment—ah, what hope, what fear—what grace, what guilt—what terror, what triumph—what consummated misery, what consummated glory! Life there, and death there—the righteous there, and the wicked there—angels from opening heaven, and fiends from the lowest deep. Hell from beneath disemboguing its liquid and lurid fires; and the high throne of Deity shedding its splendors above, around, below, till they glow on the confines of outermost darkness. Oh, the agony, the bliss—the shame, the honor, the revelations and the glory of that day!

4. There is the *glory of conquest*. We have heard, it must be confessed, enough of conquest in its ordinary connections. The history of our world is a history of war and of blood; and the man who has been most successful in the destruction of his race, has become a hero and a divinity amongst his fellow-men. But we have now to refer to a conflict of a different character, and with different results to any which the annals of the world record.

The revolt of earth, of which we have spoken, had its origin in the treason of heaven. Satan, the first of the ways of God, renounced his allegiance and took possession of our world as his strong hold. Too soon he beguiled and seduced man to his purposes, and hastened to fulfil them almost without molestation. Deep he laid the foundations of his empire in the corruptions of human nature, and gave the guises of truth to error, of virtue to vice, and of greatness to vanity. People after people walked in his fear, and

temple after temple arose for his worship, till he became the acknowledged "god of this world."

Was, then, this paradise of the universe to be lost or recovered? From the first, there had gone forth a saying, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent—that as man had been employed to affront God, so man should be the instrument of his glory. Some there were who clung to this traditional prophecy, and looked for the coming of some Just and Holy One to save them; but they were few and feeble, and not unfrequently lost faith in their own expectations, and gave themselves to the demon-worship. At length, a strange personage appeared on earth, fulfilling an extraordinary commission with extraordinary powers. Men said, He hath a devil; but devils said, It is the Son of God; and under this conviction they conspired for his destruction. He lived in sorrow, and died in agony and ignominy; and hell exulted in the triumph.

But the powers shown in the life of the Crucified One strangely survived him. Multitudes insisted that he who was slain lived again—that he had risen in glory—that he was the antagonist of the prince of darkness—and that all men should renounce their bondage, and acknowledge him as their rightful sovereign. Onward the message went like a swelling tide, with a grace that made it vital in the spirits of men, and against which the gates of hell could not prevail. Satan now tasks himself to his utmost; but relying on his subtlety rather than his might, he worked with "all deceivableness," till he not only corrupted the men who professed this faith in Messiah, but the very faith which animated and united them.

Still the faith revived; and wherever cordially admitted, it gave a new spirit to men. For it saints pleaded and martyrs bled; and before it many an altar and many a

temple fell. Age after age the strife continued with varying advantage ; the religion of light still making gradual advances on the empire of darkness. At last, both parties became conscious that the final conflict was at hand ; and each prepared itself for the terrible occasion. All the resources of men and of demons were called into requisition ; the saints trusting in their acknowledged Leader, and Satan casting his last proud defiance to the skies. Oh, what a conflict, of which earth is to be the prize, and in which heaven and hell are to be the combatants !

But it is enough. Satan is smitten by an unseen hand. The Son of God, in the glorified humanity, appears. His adversary is cast out to suffer, as only archangels can suffer. He claims the earth as his own mediatorial inheritance. His saints who have waited for Him, radiant with his glory, triumph in the God of their salvation ; and one great acclaim rings through earth and sky, Hallelujah, hallelujah—for the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever !

5. Then there is the *glory of peace*—of peace after war. It is little prized on earth ; but its glories shall be celebrated in heaven. And what peace shall then accrue to man and to the world ! Trust which excludes fear, joy which excludes grief, and quiet which excludes care. Faith shall have found its object, hope its fruition, and love her dwelling-place. That little world in man, perturbed and convulsed with stormy passions, through every period of life, shall rest in complete and everlasting satisfaction.

The peace of one shall be the peace of all. In social life no alarm, no wrong, no strife, no disease, no suffering, no death. No conflict of opinion, of interest, or of affec-

tion ; but order, contentment, and peaceful love shall prevail. No change of circumstances or time shall interrupt the harmony, or threaten the repose. No foe shall ever enter, and no friend shall ever depart. Life shall be one happy day, cloudless, serene, and abiding.

Peace shall then reign—and what peace ? The peace which the Saviour dying bequeathed, and living maintains : “ The peace of God which passeth all understanding.” Peace within, without, above, around. Every aspect peace ; every voice peace ; the very air peace ; a world of peace ; deep, boundless, unbroken, like the ocean when it reposes beneath the peaceful majesty of the complacent heavens.

9. Then there is the glory, the manifested *glory of God*. This is an essential attribute of the period. It is evident, that all glory centres in God ; and that whatever excellence is seen in the creature, is but a reflection of his own. Another position equally plain is, that all creatures are excellent and glorious in proportion as they have a capacity to reflect the Divine glory. It is this that makes providence more glorious than nature, and redemption than both. All this glory shall be then displayed, and all flesh shall see it together. The arcana of creation shall be revealed ; and man shall admire in ecstasy the wonderful works of God. Providence shall unfold her mysteries ; all clouds and darkness shall be dispersed from before the throne ; and all shall see that righteousness, mercy and truth are its immutable foundations. Redemption shall then be disclosed ; and all that the eye had not seen, all that the ear had not heard, all that the heart of man had labored to conceive and could not, shall then be exhibited in all its glory.

This last and greatest work of the Almighty hand shall, in its consummation, especially reveal and glorify *all* the Divine perfections. We cannot assert this of other works of Deity. Nature reveals some of his perfections; but not all. It speaks of power and wisdom, but not of mercy and grace to fallen men. Providence displays the majesty of God and his goodness to all his dependent creatures; but it utters no assurance of love to the sinful, and pardon to the guilty. Everywhere, and in every thing, God is seen; but nowhere is he completely revealed except in the gospel. When the stupendous scheme of his redemption shall be perfected, then shall all the attributes of the Godhead be revealed in all their harmony. Wisdom and power, mercy and truth, holiness and grace, majesty and condescension, righteousness and love, shall then have finished their work, and shall rest in their glory.

Not only shall every perfection be revealed in that day, but all will be glorified to the *uttermost*. Our redemption is frequently spoken of as the single work of God, because it is his chief work, the work on which he suspends his name and his honor. Of other works of his hand, great and wonderful as they are, he says they shall not be remembered or referred to, because of the excelling glory of this dispensation of his grace. The very perfections which are most revealed by creation and government, are still displayed with far less lustre than in our redemption. Hence a marked difference is observed in the very style of speech in the two instances. In nature it is “power;” in redemption it is “the exceeding greatness of power;”—in nature it is “wisdom;” but in redemption it is “manifold wisdom;”—in nature it is “goodness;” but in redemption it is “the riches and tenderness of mercy,” “the exceeding riches of his grace,”—it is “the height, the depth, the

breadth, the length, of the love of God which passeth knowledge." Every perfection is revealed to the utmost. God has taken occasion of the extremity of man, and the treason of hell, to make himself known to his creatures, fallen and innocent. God is seen as He was never seen. Even now, angels descend to earth to behold more of God than heaven itself displays; and, when the one great purpose of mercy shall be consummated,—the whole work finished,—every perfection fully glorified,—the Father glorified, the Son glorified, the Spirit glorified,—the universe shall receive a new sentiment of God, and be silent before him!

7. Finally, there is the *glory of duration*. "Ah!" said a great captain, when elated by the splendors and acclamations of a triumph which Rome had awarded to him, "Ah! that it would continue!" But it did not continue. It passed away as the pageant of an hour. It is the reproach of all earthly bliss that it cannot continue. Man dies,—thrones moulder,—nations perish. Yea, this earth, and these heavens, and the stars and sun which glorify them, shall fade and perish like a garment.

There is but one thing with which we are conversant that is an exception, and this is religion. "The word of the Lord," and of our salvation, "endureth for ever." It shall live when all else expires. It shall not only survive the ruins of the world and nature; then shall be the period in which it shall culminate in perfect glory. Religion is not of earth, but from heaven. It is here as a visitant from eternity, winning the children of men to the immortality to which it leads. Here it is effecting a work of mercy amidst obscurations and uncongenial influences; it is reserving and accumulating its glories for the great day of revelation. Earth is all too narrow, the world is all too gross, and time

is all too brief, for their matured and perfect manifestation ; they demand an infinite field and an eternal day. This earth on which we dwell, these heavens by which we are surrounded, having answered their purpose, are to be dissolved as unworthy of the opening occasion ; and there are to be “ a new earth and new heavens,” which shall endure for ever. This is the home of religion. Here she is to dwell, displaying all her excellence, and dispensing all her favors. Time, change, and death for ever excluded ; her subjects eternal, herself eternal ; her dwelling, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. An eternity of bliss is bliss ; an eternity of glory is excelling glory !

If an effort were made to bring together these several attributes of glory in one conception, we should have an improved apprehension of a subject which by its own grandeur, is incomprehensible. Religion visited our world with the purpose of recovering man from misery, guilt and thralldom. Hell opposed this act of grace ; and heaven succored it. The eyes of the universe were thus turned to our earth, and archangels have contended on this field for the life of man. For a thousand ages the conflict was sustained with fluctuating success ; till at length the crisis came, and in one final contest religion prevailed, and rose in triumph over all her foes.

Ah ! the glories of that day ! A day in which man is presented in the restored and perfected likeness of his Redeemer ;—a day in which the life and bliss which were individual, are multiplied myriads of millions of the human family, and all assembled in one common presence ;—a day in which Satan, with his hosts, is adjudged, cast down, and tormented ;—a day in which nature and providence, with all their wonders, shall give place to the higher scheme of redemption, to which they have been the platform and

auxiliary ;—a day in which the Divine perfections shall be revealed in such power as shall shed renewed effulgence through the universe, and fill angels and men with deeper love, and more profound worship ;—a day in which the whole mind of God and of Christ shall be perfected ; and the peace of heaven, the torment of hell, proclaimed to be eternal. Then pain, crime, and death shall die ; and then shall begin the life of men, the rest of God, the jubilee of the universe. Oh ! the glory of that day—the day for which all other days were made !

These stupendous events are to be realized, and realized quickly. We are already walking in the shadows which they have cast before them. The whole framework of nations is heaving with final change. The hand of Providence is silently removing obstacles, and preparing a way and a highway for the ransomed of her Lord ; and the finger of prophecy is indicating the night to be far spent, and the day to be at hand. The “man of sin” is rousing himself for the last conflict ; and the spirit of all evil is putting on portentous and aggravated forms. The church is awaking to great expectation, and going forth to meet her Lord ; the world is looking out with fear and wonder at what is to happen, not knowing whether it shall be for vengeance or salvation ; and there is a voice in the conscience of all men, which, from time to time, is solemnly saying, “Behold I come quickly !”

My brethren, are these occurrences approaching ? Is “the riches of the glory of the mystery,” which was hidden from the foundation of the world, about to be revealed now in the consummation of all things ? As surely as that they

are to happen, shall *we* bear a part in them? Must our eyes look on the glory and the terrors of that great day? What then is comparable in moment to the question, How will it affect us? Shall we see it with joy, or with grief? Will it be to us the day of confusion, or the day of redemption?

These questions may be met by another, more practical and more readily resolved, How does it affect us *now*? Is it an object of desire, or of dread? Are we thirsting for the coming of the kingdom of God and of heaven? Are we uniformly proving the sincerity and power of our desires, by laboring to this glorious issue? Little evidence can we have, that we are rightly affected towards this kingdom, except as it is found in devoted and paramount concern for its advancement. And, supposing that you could be partaker of its honors, though you had not labored for its establishment, what joy could be yours?

A general, who was committed to a fearful battle with an enemy of superior numbers, sent a despatch to a subordinate officer, who commanded a considerable detachment at some distance, to join him without fail on the morning of conflict. He trifled, however, with the occasion, and did not arrive on the field till the hard fought battle was won. "There, sir," said the General, "we have fought the battle and gained the victory without you—and now you may share the honors if you please!" The reproach went to his heart—he never lifted up his head again—but pined and died.

And will you, think you, lift up your head with joy in that day—that great day of the Lord—if you shall be conscious of having done nothing to advance its triumphs? Oh, give yourself to it—wholly to it—by perfect and perse-

vering devotedness. Pray—labor—sacrifice—bleed for it. Let your prayers be full of hope, and your labor full of joy. He who gives most is the richest—he who suffers most, the happiest. The Lord is at hand ; and, if you are faithful, He shall count you worthy to share his triumphs, to sit on his throne, and to reign in his kingdom—His glorious, illimitable, and everlasting kingdom !

THE END.

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