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## THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID:

A Sermon, by Rev. H. E. Taliaferro, Talladega, Alabama.

"*Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*"—Is. lx: 5.

Mankind regard nothing more solemn and binding than a covenant. The rude barbarian, the unletttered savage, and the man of polished civilization, have united in all ages in investing covenants with the sacred importance of an oath, and have ever visited the sins of covenant and truce breakers with a terrible energy. When men of character and moral worth enter into covenant, public opinion is satisfied that every stipulation will be complied with to the letter. In view of the sacred obligations which a covenant imposes, and in view of the moral character and perfections of God, Paul has given the church of Christ a full and perfect assurance of her final salvation, based upon the promise and oath of God. "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—*Heb.* ix; 16, 17, 18. The "two immutable things" are the promise and oath of Jehovah, made to give believers "strong consolation" when overwhelmed with a sense of their depravity and unworthiness, before a holy law and a

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holy God. Those, then, who "have fled for refuge" to Jesus of Nazareth, need no higher authority nor greater assurance of their final salvation, than an appeal of Jehovah to himself. It is final and decisive.

Not only is this true of those who have "made a covenant with Him in sacrifice," but he invites all men to embrace the stipulations of the covenant of redemption and enjoy its saving benefits. Jehovah graciously proposes to ratify it with them by the bestowment of "the sure mercies of David." He will as certainly secure to all penitent believers the provisions of heaven's constitution of grace, as the *mercies* promised to David in covenant were made sure to him by the oath of God. To ascertain, then, something of the nature, extent and preciousness of the promise, and the certainty of its being fulfilled, let us enquire,

I. *What are the sure mercies of David?*

II. *How they are made sure to believers?*

Mercies promised by an immutable God may be regarded as *sure* mercies, and which will be bestowed in due time and in his own way. Unlimited confidence cannot be placed in men nor in angels; for all men and some angels have sinned and are fallen beings; but in a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, the soul may, without reserve, trust and hang on his word its everlasting hopes. Then, as certain mercies are promised to those who come to Christ which were promised to the king of Israel, it becomes us to enquire,

*What are the sure mercies of David?* They were covenant mercies, promised him in favor of his kingly person and believing soul, and in behalf of his royal family. These mercies were secured to David and his family by the oath and faithfulness of God. "I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David, my servant, thy seed will I establish forever and build up thy throne to all generations."—*Ps.* 89: 3, 4. These are the terms of the oath and covenant of God, making sure the mercies promised to the royal seed. It was a great and a sovereign mercy that David was taken from the sheepcotes of Ephratah and anointed king over all Israel; and it was a great condescension for Jehovah to make a covenant with a man selected from "the fields of the woods." It was for no good foreseen in the shepherd boy, but he was selected sovereignly from the many well-favored sons of the good Bethlehemite.

THE FLOWERS COLLECTION



"I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him," is the language of the Lord God of Israel to all enquirers into the reasons of David's exaltation. He probably expressed his choice by anointing him with his "holy oil," saying, by that significant act, to all the tribes, "Behold your king, and the father of a race of kings, who are to reign over the house of Jacob forever." He further proclaimed by that act, "I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep before him evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed, also, will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven."—*Ps.* 89: 23, 27, 28, 29. This may be termed a covenant of royalty, settling the disputed regal authority in the family of David. Thus Jehovah decided the controversy between the house of Saul and the house of David, by a covenant confirmed with an oath. In the wilderness, he had settled the mooted question as to the pontifical honors of the priesthood, by the budding of an almond rod in favor of the family of Aaron; but, in settling the regal controversy, an appeal to the throne and to the immutability of Jehovah fixes the sure mercies of David.

But he who looks no further into the "sure mercies of David" than the settlement of the regal question, sees but little of the spiritual beauty and glory of the subject. A fleshly eye can discern fleshly things, and can easily see the literal meaning of a Bible subject; but a spiritual eye alone can scan its extent and spirituality. The Bible student will easily perceive, that "the sure mercies" promised to king David had a double meaning and a double fulfilment. David's Son and David's Lord is the distinguished personage to whom *the sure mercies* had special reference. There are mercies promised to David, and God's truth and faithfulness are pledged for their performance, which never could receive their accomplishment in David as a man, nor as a king. It is stipulated, that "he shall be higher than the kings of the earth;" but who is so ignorant of the history of that age as not to know that there were many kings superior to David in political, armamental and naval strength. Again, it is solemnly pledged, that "his seed shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before me." But where are the literal

descendants of David? Where are his kingly *throne*, his family and his empire? Sun, moon and stars continue to light up the heavens, but David's throne is not on earth, nor does a royal descendant of his wear an earthly crown, nor shake the sceptre over any tribe or nation under the sun. But when it is remembered that the prophets often put the name of David for that of Christ, all obscurity is removed, the rough places are made smooth and the crooked places straight. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David, their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." "But they shall fear the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." It is is evident when Jeremiah and Hosea uttered these predictions, king David was gathered to his fathers and had seen corruption; nevertheless, the children of Israel were to "fear the Lord and serve David their king in the latter days." As Israel was, by the divine prediction and purpose of God, to "serve David their king," and as it would be idolatry to worship the son of Jesse, who had seen corruption, "David's Son and David's Lord" must unquestionably be intended by the prophets.

It will strengthen the position that to Christ the *sure mercies* were more particularly promised, when it is remembered, that, in many respects, David was a typical person. David was a descendant of Abraham, and of the tribe of Judah; so was Messiah. God chose David and anointed him king; so did he choose Christ and "anoint him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." David was born in Bethlehem, Judea; so was Christ. David was a shepherd; so is Christ "chief shepherd and bishop of souls." David was a prophet; so is Christ the great prophet of his church. David was persecuted; so was Christ. David was a warrior, and subdued all the territory given by Jehovah in covenant to Abraham and his seed; so will Christ make "the heathen his possession and the uttermost parts of the earth his inheritance." A fruitful imagination could write a volume on the analogy between David and Jesus Messiah, but let the above suffice as the most striking and natural. We will, therefore, for a time, lose sight of the distinguished shepherd, musician, prophet and warrior-king, and become, if possible, wholly absorbed in contemplating his Lord, Messiah. David was great, but behold a greater, who figures greatly in the covenant mercies of God

Then, in view of the prospective developments of creation, and particularly in view of the creation and fall of man, God made a covenant with his Son. That such a covenant existed, is clear from the following: "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."—*Mat.* 3: 1. It is clear that "the Lord" in the above was David's Lord, and as "messenger of the covenant," he was his representative. With what propriety could it be said that Christ came as the messenger of a covenant that did not exist? It plainly proves the existence of a covenant, which was entered into by the Father and the Son, and the Lord Christ was to come and make known its doctrine and ratify it with his blood for the salvation of sinners. The scheme of recovering mercy was decided upon in eternity by the Godhead, and it was necessary that their merciful deliberations should be made known to mankind. Hence Jesus Christ came as the messenger of that holy constitution,* to make known its requirements and to bestow its "sure mercies" upon all who would embrace its provisions. How willingly he came; for, said he, "I delight to do thy will, oh God." Says Paul, "It was spoken unto us first by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."

Jesus Christ was given for a covenant to the people. "I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people; for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.—*Isa.* 42: 6, 7. Here we have Jehovah's covenant with Messiah and the commission which he gave him. How full of gracious assurances is that covenant and commission to fallen man. He was given for his salvation, and his advent was proof to all of the existence of a covenant of grace. When the people saw Christ, they had every assurance that a constitution existed, and that he was sent to make known its saving provis-

*I use the term *constitution* for the sake of variety. It conveys the same idea as the word *covenant*, and sometimes gives a clearer idea of heaven's merciful arrangement. The covenant of which Christ was messenger was evidently the New Testament, and it is the constitution of the kingdom of heaven.

ions, which would bring them "out of darkness" and from the "prison house" of sin.

No well arranged kingdom exists without a constitution; it is inefficient and powerless without it. All must admit that the kingdom of God is efficient and powerful; and it is evident that its strength lies in its constitution. God proposed to save sinners, and determined to do it constitutionally, and, after the gracious counsel of his own will, proposed and tendered the constitution of his kingdom to his beloved Son. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." He who was to be "ruler in Israel," his "goings forth were of old, from everlasting." "In the beginning was the Word." He created all worlds by him who was the "brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person."

These, and many other passages which the hearer will surely remember, clearly prove that there was an agreement and a stipulated understanding between the Father and the Son in regard to creation and redemption. No intelligent human agent acts without purpose and design, and it certainly detracts from the honor and glory of God to assume that he acts without a fixed and determined plan of action, as old as himself. And to send his Son on a mission to this world, about which he knew nothing, not being consulted, would have been unwise, unreasonable and arbitrary. Further, to inflict the sufferings of the cross upon him without his consent and without his knowing the reasons of such severity, would have been unjust, cruel and tyranical. Now, no one will ascribe such inconsistent and unjust measures to Jehovah. Allow, then, the Father and the Son to be eternal, infinite in wisdom, seeing the end from the beginning, providing against exigencies and failures by an eternally fixed and permanent constitutional arrangement, and the proceedings of the Godhead* are easily understood so far as they are developed in the scriptures.

*I believe with Dr. Gill and others, that the Holy Spirit was equally a party with the Father and the Son in the formation of the covenant of redemption, and that the holy Three in One are equal in all their councils and actions. The entire Godhead wrought in creation, perfected redemption and now works harmoniously in the salvation of sinners.

To develope the principles of this covenant of redemption which was agreed upon in eternity, "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." All the words of this life were "first spoken unto us by the Lord, and were confirmed unto us by them that heard him." It was the will of Jehovah that the "counsel of peace which was between them both" should be offered to rebels, and, therefore, responds the Son, "In sacrifice and burnt offering for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." "I come to do the will of him that sent me." "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

It is clear from the foregoing passages, that the Father and Son acted understandingly and in concert in redemption.*

A reward was promised to the Son in the covenant, in view of his cheerful obedience to the will of the Father.

1. *A resurrection from the dead.* Said Jehovah, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." We are to understand this of his being begotten in and born from the grave. The Father had proclaimed him his Son at his baptism and at the moment of transfiguration, and demonstrated more clearly his Messiahship. It shocks common sense to argue from this passage that Christ was only then begotten; for "his goings forth were of old, from everlasting." The meaning seems to be this: "This day have I made it appear that I have begotten thee, and that thou art no impostor." It may be remarked, that the eternal Word has been born three times: When he became incarnate, he was born of a virgin; when he entered upon his public ministry, he was born of water, and, at his resurrection, he was born of the grave. These births were necessary to constitute him a "leader and a commander of the people."

*I have no fellowship nor patience with that system of theology which makes God astonished at anything that occurs, and that finds him unprovided against any and every possible exigency. Any theory which has the least tendency to reduce Jehovah to a level with man, must be wrong and dishonorable to the "holy one of Israel." "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

But the "sure mercies of David" were promised him in a peculiar sense. "And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." *Acts* xiii: 34. From this it appears that the Father had agreed in covenant to raise him from the dead, so that he should not see corruption. The pledges made by the persons in the Godhead were as binding as an oath, and to accommodate the solemnity of the transactions in the covenant to our capacity, they are represented as taking an oath of fidelity to each other. Then the Father had sworn to his Son to raise him from the dead as solemnly as he had sworn to David to "build up his throne to all generations" and establish his seed in regal authority, and that he would as certainly perform the one as the other.

This accounts for the unwavering confidence of the Son of God: "I know that my father always heareth me." And why was he so well assured of that fact? Because a covenant existed, and each person in the Godhead was sworn to comply with its stipulations. With what confidence, then, did Jesus give up his life and resign his body to the tomb, it having been promised in eternity that the Father would raise it up the third day. "Because (of the covenant) thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." God was faithful to his oath, and made his oath as *sure* to his Son as he did the covenant mercies promised to David. Upon any other hypothesis the confidence of Christ cannot be rationally accounted for.

2. *He rewarded him with a numerous seed to praise and glorify him.* Jesus was not to labor in vain and spend his strength for naught. He was not to "travel in the greatness of his strength" and stain his garments with hallowed blood, without a successful campaign. The eternal Trinity made no uncertain issues in the constitution of the kingdom of heaven; were jealous of their own honor before an intelligent universe, and, therefore, provided against a failure in submitting the plan of salvation to a rebel world. It was, therefore, stipulated that "a seed should be given him," and that "a remnant according to the election of grace" should be saved. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," said the covenant-keeping Jehovah.

Being assured that he should not spend his strength for naught, and that his visit to earth would be attended with consequences momentous to heaven and earth, Messiah came willingly; and for the joy set before him in seeing a redeemed company, which no man could number, rise up and bless and praise him in this revolted commonwealth, he endured the cross, despised the shame and is set down at the right hand of God, expecting the fulfilment of all things promised by his immutable Father.

If the doctrine of a covenant of grace is denied, certain portions of the oracles of God are unintelligible. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Such passages are very numerous, and can be easily explained by referring them to a covenant of grace. They prove that God eternally proposed to adopt, sanctify and glorify those whom he gave his Son. Not that their *actual* adoption and salvation took place in eternity, but God's purpose to do so *in time* was as eternal as himself. Jehovah cannot have a forethought nor an afterthought; his whole arrangement in the divine economy is as immutable and eternal as the Godhead. He is now developing in his kingdom *sure mercies* to his people which were eternally arranged with his Son. His people are not saved by accident, but by a settled and fixed arrangement as ancient as the Deity, but proclaimed to the world by his Son and his holy apostles.

3. *He was rewarded in heaven at his coronation.* Never did the disciples spend ten days of greater anxiety, than those from the ascension on Olivet to the day of Pentecost. When Jesus came into the world they had but imperfect conceptions of him. His crucifixion made them stumble and had blighted their prospects; his resurrection had filled them with wonder and hope, and his ascension was a trial of their faith, and they trembled for the result. They felt reproved for their former lack of faith and understanding, and now they knew not fully the divine intention. They knew that heaven was big with events, but as to what they were their views were imperfect. They were simply told to go and tarry in an upper chamber and await the promise of the Father.

What a singular period this in the history of redemption? All lips were hermetically sealed, and no aggressions were made upon the powers of darkness. Jesus had taught, was crucified, had risen from the dead and had ascended on high, and his heralds were waiting an indefinite time for his orders, to break silence and open the campaign upon "the prince of the power of the air." In nature, a calm precedes a storm; in politics, silence portends revolutions, and in redemption, a suspension, a pause, shadows forth deep design and settled policy, which, when developed, are fraught with consequences most disastrous to Satan's kingdom. But the pause was short. The "silence in heaven was but for the space of half an hour." The apostles of the Lamb were soon joyfully relieved by tidings from heaven of Messiah's coronation. In ten days after they entered the private chamber, Pentecost came, and with it the Holy Spirit, as a rushing mighty wind. He was dispatched as a messenger from heaven, to inform them that Jesus was glorified and crowned "king on his holy hill of Zion." Upon the reception of this information, Peter proclaimed to the wondering multitude, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." With him agrees Paul, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Human nature had dishonored God, and human nature must honor him and be glorified by him. Hence we behold Christ entering this world in that nature, obeying the law in that nature, dying in that nature, rising in that nature, justified and glorified in that nature. In that nature he presides over heaven, earth and hell, receives the homage of angels, the gratitude, praise and worship of saints celestial and terrestrial, and in that nature will inflict on fallen angels and the finally impenitent the thunderbolts of his wrath.

With such assurances of the fate of Messiah which the Holy Spirit gave them, the apostles attacked with great energy the throne of darkness. They had heard David sing, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." They were satisfied

Jehovah had given him *the sure mercies* of his father David, and that "his horn was exalted." To bring into the everlasting covenant "the travail of his soul," he sent "the rod of his strength out of Zion" by the mouth of his ministers. They were assured that the children of the covenant would be "willing in the day of his power" to obey him, so that they preached the word in full expectation that God would bless their labors and make sure the promise to all the seed. They feared not the rulers of the darkness of this world, for it was said, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings" to reach his chosen ones and save them. They knew they had free access to God through the high priesthood of Jesus, for it was written, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." Faith in these divine arrangements and promises, made the apostles bold to preach the word; for without them they would have no hope of success.

An immutable God has given his Son and the church over which he presides as bishop of souls, sufficient proof of his faithfulness to satisfy all parties as to his future action. "I am the Lord; I change not." With "the Father of lights there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." I tremble not for "the ark of his strength." His covenanted word is pledged to set it safely "on his holy hill of Zion." He will not give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids till he builds his temple and places the cap-stone upon it. The heathen may rage, the kingdoms may move; he will utter his voice, and the earth will melt. Satan may rage, hell may move, and unite with depraved earth in opposition; but his voice will be heard among the contending elements, "Be still, and know that I am God." The church, when the voice of her covenant-keeping God is thus heard, breaks forth in praise on the right and left, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge," and then heaven responds, "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the tops of the mountains."

II. *Believers are embraced in the provisions of the everlasting covenant, so as to secure to them its sure mercies.* It is—

1. *Sure in proposal.* Jehovah has been sincere in all his offers of grace to mankind. His foreseeing the final rejection of his gracious propositions by unbelievers, argues noth-

ing against his sincerity. It is of the veriest grace that he ever offered rebels a chance to turn and live. And, surely, after such thoughts of mercy to sinners, he does not intend to tantalize them by inviting them to the fountain of life. Hence, when he says: "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth;" and when he remonstrates thus: "Why will ye die?" he is sincere, and will make the mercies promised *sure* to them, upon the condition of their repentance, faith, and obedience to his commandments.

None can doubt the sincerity of Jesus, after reading his life and hearing his heavenly invitations to perishing sinners. We are difficulted in making a selection as a sample. His prayers, tears, sermons, conduct, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, are a series of admonitions and invitations to a lost world to seek the Lord while he may be found. Added to this, the organization of the church, as the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and the institution of the ministry of reconciliation, are proof sufficient of his sincerity and willingness to save the fallen sons of Adam.

And the Holy Spirit is equally sincere in his conduct to mankind. He reproves, rebukes and admonishes them with much long suffering and kindness. He knocks at the door of their hearts day and night, portraying the things of Christ to their minds; points them to death and the coming judgment, and a never-ending eternity. He is untiring in his efforts to lead souls to Christ; and when he gives the hardened rebel over, his case is hopeless. Thus an undivided Trinity is concerned for man. In arranging the covenant of redemption for his salvation, they were united, and in their efforts to reclaim, under the reign of grace, they are not divided.

But not to be disappointed in their gracious invitations, they were determined to *save some* out of the general mass of rebels who merited hell. None, it was foreseen, would come at the common proclamation of the gospel, however sincere the Trinity was in the offer; it was therefore determined that the Holy Spirit should give some the will and the power to come to Christ; and to that portion of mankind the *sure mercies of David* are given. Hence,

2. *It is sure in its application.* The mercies of the covenant will be assuredly applied to those who seek them. And

those who seek them have been constrained to do so by the everlasting love of God. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Jesus Christ has engaged for and provided that his "purchased possession" shall seek him. They were "given him out of the world," and he has the power and the will to bring them out of darkness into the marvelous light. That love which brought him from heaven, will influence him to open their eyes, ears, and hearts, to receive his truth in the love of it, and come to him as their surety and advocate.

He has provided also that they shall seek him aright. They are not to seek in vain. If left to themselves, they never would seek him; and if such a thing were possible, such is their darkness and ignorance, that they never could come to the cross of Christ. But it is written: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish." That *shall come* is a sweet phrase and a sure mercy, implying that none of his children, "though ready to perish," should be lost. Jehovah says: "I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The Sinaitic covenant was written upon tables of stone, by the finger of God; but the new and everlasting covenant is written upon the hearts of its children. The sins of the people under the old covenant were remembered daily in their sacrifices, and their ceremonies always burthened with their recollection; but under the new covenant, "for by one offering he (Christ) hath perfected forever them that are sanctified;" and "their sins and iniquities are remembered no more."

The Spirit of God, which enters their hearts as their guide, is "the spirit of grace and supplication," and influences them to ask those things which they need; teaches them their depravity; exposes all their righteousness as filthy rags; causes them to abhor themselves, repent in sackcloth and ashes, and cry in bitterness of soul, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In this condition, the Holy Spirit encourages thus: "I will bring the blind by a way which they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and will

not forsake them." And again: "This is the way, walk ye in it." The Holy Spirit being a person in the Trinity, knows therefore the mind of the Godhead, and creates no desire which will not be granted; shows no disease for which there is not a remedy in the covenant; exposes no unrighteousness for which it supplies not a perfect righteousness in Christ; and kills not, dead to sin, without producing a love to holiness. Covenant mercies, then,

3. *Are sure in possession.* This will appear when it is remembered that the mercies promised to believers were guaranteed to them by an everlasting covenant. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."—*Jer.* xxxii: 40. 'Tis the work of the Holy Spirit to dispose those for whom the covenant was specially made to embrace its provisions, which is done by faith in Christ. "In whom, also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."—*Eph.* i: 13, 14. The laws of the covenant not existing in the hearts of the "purchased possession," naturally they must be written there—"not with ink, upon tables of stone," but by the Spirit "upon fleshly tables of the heart." The Holy Spirit guaranteed to see the laws of the everlasting constitution engraven upon the minds of those whom the Father gave the Son, and for whom the Son travailed in pain expressly. What a gracious arrangement! How sure the possession! The Father, the gracious giver; the Son, the blessed surety; and the Holy Spirit, the successful writer. Well may such a society of persons say to believers: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;" and when such unlimited resources, and such infinite power are brought to bear upon a soul, well may it say: "When thou saidst unto me, seek ye my face, then said I, thy face, Lord, will I seek."

The scriptures teach that the *contrivance* of the covenant was everlasting; and of course its *continuance* must be commensurate with the contrivance. Then, in contrivance and duration, it is as God himself, eternal. And as it has infinite duration, it must have also infinite wisdom, power, and faithfulness—infinite resources of every kind—all that is needed

to carry it to completion. It requires the same attributes to defend, enforce, and apply the covenant to depraved and stubborn man, that it did to arrange and develope it to the world. It cannot continue everlasting without all the resources and the continued energy of the Godhead. The opposition which it has met and still meets from Satan and depraved and rebellious man, is sufficient proof of this. To speak of the sinner choosing God; of his possessing the self-determining power of the will to choose life or death, is to be ignorant of the depths of human depravity, the perverseness of the will, and the settled and determined alienation of heart "from the life of God," which exists in the minds of sinners of mankind. Such have certainly never read the settlement of that question by Christ himself: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."—"No man can come to me, except the Father, which have sent me, draw him." The truth is, the Holy Spirit must operate upon the sinner's heart, with all the infinite resources of divine grace, to influence his will, and sweetly and powerfully draw him to Christ. The controversy is reduced to this: the sinner either chooses God, or God chooses the sinner. If the sinner choose God, then he may glory in himself on earth and in heaven; but if God choose the sinner, then "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life;" and then the mercies of the covenant are made sure in possession. And further, if God chooses the sinner, he does not choose all, therefore there must be an election. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

*When things look worst, they are not hopeless.* God's children, in the history of redemption, have seen dark hours, days, months, and years. They were oppressed in Egypt, environed in the wilderness, often oppressed in Canaan, in captivity seventy years in Babylon, and in great danger of being exterminated in Persia by Hamon, the Amalekite. But hope fled not from their hearts; they pleaded the "covenant of salt,"* and the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jehovah remembered and "repented of the evil which he thought to do unto them." The Lord God of Israel *could not* depart from the stipulations of that covenant.

But to the eye of flesh and sense, the darkest hour the world ever saw was at the crucifixion of Christ—Justice

* Num. 18; 19.

frowned, Mercy wept, men exulted, hell triumphed, angels were astonished, and the church was appalled. But how soon did the wonder-working covenant exhibit its power and turn that darkness into the dawn of a new creation! The Holy Spirit, at the resurrection of Christ, proclaimed to an interested universe, "Behold, I make all things new;" and the sun shone bright in the heavens. The disciples were begotten again to a lively hope, and life and immortality were brought to light. That was the greatest triumph the covenant of grace ever gained over its enemies. Satan's empire fell, the inheritance was secured to believers, and the mercies made sure. True, "the prince of the power of the air still works in the children of disobedience," and continues to skirmish with Immanuel and his foes; but the infinite resources which belong to the covenant, must secure salvation to those "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world."

The salvation of the church is not to be effected at the expense of Jehovah's moral government. Law must be maintained, justice satisfied, and the throne of God fully indemnified, or man must perish. Jesus Christ threw himself into the breach as Mediator, and engaged to see both parties indemnified and safe. On the one part, being God, he could engage for God; and being man also, he could engage for man, "so making peace as a blessed daysman." 'Tis thus, also, that the "counsel of peace is between them both," the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ. A guilty world needed a Godman Mediator; stern justice and a holy law required it, and the divine throne could not have been honorably indemnified without such an intervention. He was above law, but came under law; was innocent of the "great transgression," but satisfied the demands of justice, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which the guilty can be, in law, declared innocent, while the pure intelligences in heaven adore, admire and praise.

The result of an arrangement, thus divine and efficient, the gospel reaches the hearts of fallen man with great energy and power. It is preached by the words of Christ, "which are spirit and life," and by the "Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. On this account, the language of the covenant has always been, "I will," and "they shall," to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Such powerful resources as are

in the covenant, provide against every possible contingency. Are men unbelievers? The testimony of God, applied by the Holy Spirit, removes unbelief. Are they hardhearted? Grace turns hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. Have they enmity to God? The cross slays all enmity. Are they afar off? The blood of Christ brings nigh. Are they ignorant? "The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple." In short, there is everything in this heavenly economy to meet the wants of those for whom it was intended.

*The covenant of redemption owes not its existence to man.* He never conceived it, nor asked for its preparation. It was made *for* man, but independent *of* him. Its formation was prospective, and irrespective of anything good foreseen in him. None of its promises have any reference to merit in him.* Its gracious encouragements always suppose him miserable, poor, blind, naked, ruined.

Neither do the perpetuity and completion of the covenant depend upon man. True, he will make instruments of men to perpetuate and complete it; but he will work in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure, and to the accomplishment of his eternal purposes. God has so far managed his affairs most prosperously; and he will not, at this late hour, give his covenant into the hands of men or angels to perpetuate and complete. His honor is engaged to execute its provisions; and being jealous of his honor and glory, he will put the cap-stone upon the building of mercy himself, and only allow his children the privilege of "shouting grace unto it." His own bright arm brought salvation down, and he will not give his glory to another.

* To speak or write about good acts foreseen in man, influencing God to convert the sinner, is to deny total depravity; and assumes that Jehovah, in salvation, is wholly moved by contingencies. There is nothing morally good in man by nature; and the good acts in him, which are said to influence God to convert him, are the work of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. Man, in nature, has merit, or he has not; if he has, he is not totally depraved, and therefore the gospel cannot reach him. But if he has not, the covenant is the thing for his case, he being destitute of any foreseen merit or good action to move God to bestow his grace upon him. Nothing influenced God to save sinners but his everlasting love for them in their lost condition. As to merit, man has never merited anything but damnation. Oh that men would give Jehovah the glory which is his due!

*The honor of Christ makes all sure.* He has undertaken for the result, as *shepherd*, *advocate* and *surety*. As shepherd, he calls his sheep; they know his voice and follow him into the fold, and "he gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands." He leads them into rich pastures, and they sing, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." He oversees and protects them from all their enemies, and allows no weapon, formed against them, to prosper.

*As advocate*, he pleads their cause in the most holy place on high; is "touched with every feeling of their infirmity, and knows how to succor them that are tempted." He is faithful, "who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." He has the power of a God to forgive, and the sympathy of one that sticketh closer than a brother, as an advocate. He said, while on earth, "I know that my Father always heareth me;" and will not his Father still hear him on high, since he has brought such a revenue of glory and honor to his throne, by his obedience unto death? There is no charge brought against the "elect" but what he assumes. He places the believer on the mount of God, and challenges the whole universe thus: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If any man on earth, or devil in hell, is bold enough to prefer a charge, the answer is at hand, "It is God that justifieth." This answer stops all mouths, for if God justifies a sinner, through faith in his Son's blood, there is no court, above God's, to condemn him. This is as every poor sinner, who has seen his guilt and sin before God, would have it.

*As surety*, justice may say, "The sinner has been guilty;" Christ replies, "I have suffered the penalty for him." Holiness charges him with "having a wicked, corrupt heart;" but "I will give him a new heart," is the prompt reply. "He is inclined to wander"—"On me be his wanderings. I will not turn from after him to do him good, and he shall not turn away from me." It is like the engagement of Judah in regard to Benjamin: "If I bring him not again to

thee, then let me bear the blame of my father forever." And see how he acted, when it was necessary for him to act upon that suretyship. When Joseph was about to bind Benjamin, Judah put forth his hands to the fetters, "Let me remain a bondman in the house of my lord, and let the lad go up to his father." So Christ undertakes for his people, and will assuredly present them to his Father, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," and they will remain "without fault before the throne of God."

Children of the covenant, allow me to congratulate you on your promotion. You were once like your father Jacob, "in a waste, howling wilderness;" but everlasting love "found you, and led you about and instructed you" into the principles of the covenant of redemption; and a covenant-keeping God keeps you as the "apple of his eye," and will allow no enemy to have dominion over you. What unspeakable grace was that which took you "out of the hole of the pit from whence ye were digged," and "set your feet upon a rock, and put a new song in your mouth, even praise to God?" What discriminating, electing love, which selected you from other sinners of mankind, and made you to differ from them; that plucked you as a brand from the burning flame, and poured upon your soul the streams of salvation? What a condescension on the part of the Surety to make an everlasting covenant with you, and give you the *sure mercies of David,* and to ratify that covenant with you by the blood of Christ, "which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel!" Such promotion cometh not from man.

You are no longer aliens and strangers, but fellow-citizens of the kingdom of the Holy Jesus. A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. The chief shepherd and bishop of souls presides over you; your advocate pleads in heaven unceasingly; and your Trinity has engaged his word to take you to heaven. Then, "fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Amen!

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## THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO PRAY FOR THEIR MINISTERS:

By Rev. J. R. Scott, late Chaplain of the University of Virginia, recently appointed on a mission to France.

*Brethren, pray for us.*—1 Thes., v: 25.

It is the duty of every Christian to pray for every Christian. This can, however, be done only in a very general way. In doing it we have before us a great mass, made up indeed of individuals, but still presenting no one individual, singly and definitely, to the mind's eye. Of course petitions so general and indefinite cannot be very fervent. It accordingly becomes our duty to narrow down our supplications to much smaller spheres, and more especially to remember before God those bodies and individuals for which it is to be presumed, from our personal connection with them and interest in them, that we shall feel a peculiarly lively concern. Hence it is our duty to give a special place in our prayers to the particular church in which Providence has cast our membership, and still more specifically to such individuals in this church as are brought by relationship or intimacy, or neighborhood, more particularly within the circle of our regards. On the same principle, when it is our duty to intercede in behalf of all the families of the earth, it is not only lawful, but binding on us, to present our own households with special frequency and special earnestness before our Father in heaven. And so we are under obligation to remember in our prayers all the ministers of Christ, and to maintain such an interest in the prosperity of the cause of Christ at large as shall make us sincere and fervent in our supplications for them. But it is not to be expected that our feelings will be

enlisted for all ministers, as a body, as they will be for the individuals with whom and with whose fields of labor we are familiarly acquainted, and, most of all, for him whom the Lord has set over us as our own pastor.

It will not probably be questioned, that if there is one individual in a church for whom, more than for any other, all the members are bound to pray, that individual is the pastor. His position and common relation to all entitle him to this remembrance by all. And undoubtedly, in most churches, he *is* the one who is remembered more generally than any other in the prayers of the body. And yet he may not be remembered so generally, or so frequently, or so importunately, as a right view of the importance of such intercession for him would dictate. It may be, that, after all, the mention that is made of him is rather a matter of imitation and habit, than the offspring of those sentiments which should be entertained and cherished among professors of religion towards him who ministers to them in holy things. I therefore propose, my brethren, to lay before you in this discourse THE CHIEF REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD PRAY FOR THEIR MINISTER; and these reasons will, I trust, commend themselves to you as good to prove, not only that the minister should have a place in the supplications of all his brethren, but that he should have a large place and a warm place.

My text is the language of Paul, an inspired apostle. In behalf of himself and of Silas and Timothy, from whom, with him, the letter purports to come, he says, "Pray for us." And this is not a solitary instance of his making such a request in writing to churches. In his 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians he writes: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Hear him to the Collossians also: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal pray also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak." Let these citations suffice as a specimen. The thought which these exhortations have more particularly impressed me with is this: if an inspired apostle needed the prayers of his church, how much more must an ordinary minister. If a minister who had been converted by a miracle and was endowed with miraculous gifts, and with the power

of imparting the like to others, so felt his need of the intercessions of his brethren as to beg an interest in their prayers, with how much more reason may we, who preach the gospel in this age, beseech our brethren to implore of God for us whatever is needful to our ministerial success. But to the reasons :

1. The first I bring forward is, *The nature of the minister's position and duties.* The minister's position is the most prominent in the church. The King of Zion has devolved on him the duty of preaching the word, and thus, to a great extent, of determining the opinions and the practice of the people in regard to the most important of all their concernments. He is, in general, to preside over the interests and affairs of the body, and to see that all such arrangements for accomplishing the objects of church-constitution as may be most advisable, are duly set on foot and so prosecuted as shall best promise success. Through his teachings and labors it is chiefly that the efficiency of the church, as an instrument for converting sinners and perfecting believers in holiness, is to be secured. On his fidelity and fitness must it largely depend, whether the church shall be a bright light to the community in which it is located ; whether it shall send out influences to elevate and bless and save the people, or shall stand but as a false light, luring them to fatal shoals of error and spiritual indifference.

Now, I do not forget that the minister has no efficiency in himself ; that though a Paul plant and an Apollos water, it is God, God alone, who must give the increase. And yet there must be planting and there must be watering, and this by human instrumentality ; and it is not indifferent how these operations be performed. The fact that God alone can make the seed sprout and the plant grow and bear fruit, does not prove it indifferent whether wheat or tares be sown, or whether the soil be mold or gravel. God works by means, and it is just as true that he works by means suitable to the end. Whatever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap. And so it is of a minister's labors. If he sows error, he cannot reap truth. The crop must be error, with all the mischiefs that follow in the train of that error. And there is such a thing as the true seeds losing the germinating property. It may have been deprived by insects, or by some process through which it has passed, of the power of sprouting. So

truth may be preached, but not the whole truth, and that which is wanting may be just what is indispensable to its taking effect in the hearts of men. And, further, the farmer may sow good seed, but may mingle with it something else which shall prevent a harvest ever being realized. In like manner, the preacher may utter much of truth, but along with this he may promulgate sentiments that shall entirely neutralize the truth, and he may even, by this very mixture of truth with error, impart to error a capability of doing its fatal work, such as by itself it could never possess. The Spirit takes of the things of God, not of the Devil, and shows them unto men in order to renew and save them. If all this were not so, what differences would it make whether the minister were a Paul or a Judas Iscariot; whether he preached the everlasting gospel, or sang obscene songs in the pulpit? God would be as likely to set home the one as the other for the conversion of sinners and the building up of his church. But, no. As some one has said, it is by "the foolishness of preaching," not *foolish preaching*, that God has ordained to save them that believe. The truth must be proclaimed; the truth as it is in Jesus; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The more nearly this standard is reached, the more fully will the Author of truth make the word preached accomplish its end. The priest's lips must keep knowledge, and, if he is wise, this is what he will teach the people: He will seek to find out acceptable words, but always words of uprightness and truth. He will expect that only such would be "as goads and as nails fastened by the master of assemblies." He will look for the divine blessing to make effectual his ministrations, only as he renounces the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of truth, commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It is the word thus preached that the Spirit accompanies with its power and demonstrations, and that does not return void.

It is still further to be admitted, that there may sometimes be found among the private members of churches, individuals superior in point of intelligence and piety to their ministers. Perhaps they ought to be ministers themselves, though that does not follow. But this fact is not in accordance with the scriptural theory of the ministerial relation. Such cases, ac-

cording to that theory, must be exceptions to the general rule. The presumption always is, that those whom God has counted worthy of being put into the ministry, are men distinguished from the main body of the church by their greater knowledge of the scriptures and aptness to teach, and by the habitual enjoyment of a more than ordinary measure of the divine influence. This, I am compelled to say, though I ought not to say it without a blush. But the truth must be told in this matter, however heavily it may bear on him who tells it. The minister's position and duties require him to be emphatically A MAN OF GOD—one who is competent to *go before* the flock—one who knows where the green pastures and still waters are, and can so far command the confidence and affections of his charge, that they may reasonably be expected to follow him as he attempts to lead them thither. He who does not feel that he is called upon to make himself, by a diligent improvement of every means within his reach, mighty in the scriptures and an example to the flock in all the graces of a holy character, gives fearful proof, that in choosing the sacred calling of a minister he ran before he was sent, and is in danger, after having preached to others, or being himself a castaway.

The position of the minister of the gospel is truly a solemn and responsible one. It is for him, like "the priests, the ministers of the Lord" in the ancient temple, to "weep between the porch and the altar," and cry, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." It is for him to stand as Aaron did, when the plague had begun among the people, "between the dead and the living," that the plague might be stayed. It is for him, like Moses during the conflict between Israel and Amelek, to lift up his hands before the Highest, in ardent supplication that the host of God's elect may prevail and triumph. Under no less weighty a sanction does he discharge his office than did Ezekiel his: "Thou, O Son of Man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shall hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shall surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall surely die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." As he would stand approved before "the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the

dead at his appearing and his kingdom," he is to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." He is never to forget, that to every one who hears him he is either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Well may he exclaim with the apostle, "who is sufficient for these things?"

Such, my dear brethren, being the position of the minister, and such the nature of the duties devolved on him, may he not well beg an interest in the prayers of those to whom he ministers? How, without divine aid, shall he rightly apprehend the dignity and solemnity of his station, and maintain that mindfulness of his responsibilities essential to their right discharge? Intimately as your own spiritual prosperity is connected with his administration of the means of grace, determining, as his teaching and example must, to no small extent, the views and practice of the whole church—doing more than any other one individual to decide the destinies of a congregation, made up of your children and relatives and neighbors, as well as yourselves, for eternity—how, O how, can you help praying for him? How is it possible that you should fail to bear him on your hearts to the throne of grace, earnestly imploring that he may himself be taught of God; that he may be enabled faithfully to declare the whole counsel of God, and that he may know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

2. A second reason why Christians should paay for their ministers is found in *the peculiar dangers of the ministry.* I cannot even touch on all these, but I will just notice a few of them.

From what we have already seen of the nature of his duties, it is manifest that he can discharge them successfully only as he is endowed with a large measure of piety. His faithfulness will be commensurate with his love to God and man. Now, I do not mean to say, that he will not go on with the routine of ministerial duty in some way, even though he have not a spark of grace in his soul. He may preach his two or three sermons a week, and deliver his two or three exhortations in the lesser meetings, and make himself very busy and very agreeable among the people at their homes, and there may be little to object to in the sentiments he inculcates, and yet he may be as wanting in true ministe-

rial fidelity, as if he never entered a pulpit or a house in the capacity of a minister. He may be a mere self-seeker. He may do what he does merely *professionally*. He has somehow got into the ministry, and he must somehow do what is expected of a minister. His subsistance depends on it. His position in society depends on it. O, the danger is not small, of other considerations besides the glory of God and the good of souls, being the motives that shall actuate the minister. One might suppose that the very nature of his duties keep him right; that reading and studying so much on religious themes, and preaching so frequently to the people on such grave topics, and mingling with them so largely in their seasons of calamity and death, he would always be kept solemnly impressed with the truth and reality of religion and in a condition of lively sympathy with all that pertains to the special interests of his flock. But this is by no means necessarily the fact. Indeed, without any deliberate practice of hypocrisy, he may be misled by the very circumstance that he is so much engaged about the spiritual interests of others. In ministering to others he may fail to minister to himself. He may be so intent on applying the truths of the Bible to the cases of others, that he may forget to ask how they bear on his own case. A keeper of the vineyards of others, his own vineyard he may neglect to keep. Having his eye attracted outward in so many directions, he may too seldom cast a look inward, to perceive the state of his own spiritual health, and a look upward, to draw thence the supplies needful for his own progress in holiness. I presume the best ministers are the most sensible of this danger, and not unfrequently are painfully conscious of a want of heart in going through the round of their accustomed labors. How often, even, in their private devotions, do they, in reading rather for texts than for their own personal growth in the knowledge of Christ, and, in praying, think how a peculiar turn of expression or sentiment would tell in the public devotions of the sanctuary. How liable are they, in having so many cases as a pastor must have to carry before God, to become confused among them, and to give so little consideration to each separately, that their supplications fall far short of an earnest, effectual wrestling with God. The minister surely ought to have the holiest and the largest and the warmest heart in the church, but the danger is not small of

his being sadly deficient in this requisite to the highest success in his calling.

Again. There is no inconsiderable danger of the minister's being injured by pride or vanity. His position is a prominent one. He is invested by his profession with a sacred character. He is clothed with a measure of authority. He is made conspicuous on many and frequent occasions before the community. He is consulted on many matters of public interest. How natural that he should feel himself to be a person of consequence! And the weaker he is, the more he will feel this. How imminent the danger to his humility! Now let him take on airs; let him bear himself with arrogance; let him feel himself above taking the advice of his brethren; let him attempt to lord it over God's heritage, and need any one predict what are the terms on which he will speedily come to be with his people? and need any one say, that, so far from his leading souls to the meek and lowly Saviour, he will only confirm them in their obstinate rejection of the Saviour's claims?

And then suppose him to be eloquent, or to be flattered by an admiring clique, into the notion that he is. He hardly preaches a sermon without somebody's considering it the greatest sermon ever preached. He never exchanges, without hearing, in the course of the week, numberless hints about how disappointed somebody was that *he* did not preach; he is assured how glad some other church would be to secure his invaluable services; happy the benevolent enterprise that can have *his* persuasive tongue to plead its claims! As he walks the streets, he overhears his name coupled with laudations of his recent effort; he takes up the newspaper, and the first thing his eye falls on is an eulogium on his late entrancing discourse. Now he is a man; and though he may be a good man, and not a weak one, he cannot be altogether unaffected by these things *as* a man. He certainly would not be if left to himself. With so much wind in his sails, he needs no little ballast to keep him upright and steady.

> "O, popular applause! what heart of man
> Is proof against thy sweet, seducing charms?
> The wisest and the best feel urgent need
> Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
> But swell'd into a gust—who then, alas!
> With all his canvass set, and inexpert,
> And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?"

O here, my brethren, is a peril to spirituality and Christian usefulness—not to say ministerial—the like of which, few, in the more private walks of the church, have to encounter. How many ministers have thus come to be filled with self-sufficiency; to lose sympathy with the poor and feeble of their flocks; to feel that their fortune was made; and fancying themselves independent of the particular church over which Providence had set them, to fail of maintaining that conciliatory bearing, and of doing the every-day drudgery of their office, so essential to the substantial, permanent prosperity of the body. The grace of God alone, that comes in answer to prayer, can keep a man in such circumstances, just where he ought to be, and where he *must* be, in order to serve God the most effectively.

But I must pass to another danger. I refer to timidity. A wicked prophet once said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more." To such a necessity should every minister of the gospel feel himself shut up. He stands up before the people to speak in God's name. He is an ambassador for Christ. How unworthy that he should tremble before man!—should fear to declare the will of his Master to those to whom he is sent! But, that danger exists at this point, is obvious enough. He cannot be faithful without holding forth unwelcome truths. He must tell men that they are sinners; that they were born in sin; and that they have ever been acting out the dictates of a depraved heart. He must declare this to many who are ready to give him the lie when he makes such statements. He must warn men to escape the damnation of hell, who, he knows, are promising themselves a very different destination, and will, at least, in their hearts, resent any such exhibition of the truth, as says to them, "Thou art the man!" They are persons of importance and influence, it may be. How can he run the risk of offending them? Would it not be wrong in him to express himself in such a way as may possibly drive from the congregation individuals whose standing gives character to it, and whose liberality is of so much account in a time of need; and drive them off, it may be, to places where they will hear no gospel at all? How can he hazard to be regarded as an enthusiast? How can he allow himself to be considered as dealing in cant? How can he bring his popularity

into such peril? Ah! how many a representation of scriptural truth has he modified through apprehensions like these? How feebly is the bow-string sometimes drawn, lest the arrow should actually reach its appropriate mark! Not until the fear of God has so taken possession of the heart of this timid servant of Christ, as to banish the fear of man, will he be extricated from the snare. Well may he pray for himself and beseech all who have access to the throne of grace to pray for him, that he may be enabled to open his mouth boldly, and speak as a commissioned messenger of the Most High ought to speak.

I will bring forward but one danger more, and that is the danger of discouragement. It is natural that one should estimate his own qualifications for the ministerial office, by the degree of his apparent success. This is certainly a very fallacious standard, since apparent success may be by no means the measure of real success. The most powerful influences, and the most beneficent, in nature, are by no means obvious; nor by any means the most speedy in developing themselves. And something analogous to this is doubtless true in the moral world. Still it must ever be a just ground of concern to the gospel minister, that he can trace no results, or but few, of his labor, in the form of revivals and the conversion of sinners. The fault may not be his, and yet he feels his position to be such, that the blame must rest mainly on his shoulders. He finds it difficult to take to himself the exhortation, "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." He fears it would be presumption in him to appropriate to himself the assurance, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Need I say, that in proportion as he gives way to such feelings of despondency, will he be disqualified for a vigorous prosecution of his labors? How much better that he should simply assure himself that he is faithfully doing what he can for the honor of God and the advancement of his cause, and then leave the results in the hand of the Lord. His prospect of achieving conquests for God is certainly much brighter, when, with the elastic step of hope, he goes to his work, cheered by the precious promise, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." But this hope is a fruit of the

Spirit, and one of those blessings for which God will be inquired of to grant it.

In view of the dangers we have thus noticed, and of how many more that lie in the way of the ministry, may not the heralds of the cross well solicit the intercessions of their brethren in their behalf; and must not every private Christian, who has the welfare of Zion at heart, implore daily, and with the utmost earnestness, that they whose office gives them so much power for good or for evil in the church, and in the world, may have divine protection and guidance amid the perils that lie around them?

3. The last reason that I shall bring forward in urging the duty we are considering, is *the peculiar trials of the minister*.

There is no class of society exempt from trials, and every class has its own peculiar trials; as, indeed, every heart knoweth its own bitterness. I have no intention, my hearers, of whining before you over the hard lot of ministers; but I would remind you that there are some things connected with their experience, as a class, that well entitle them to a remembrance in your prayers.

I speak not of bereavement, nor of sickness, nor of domestic troubles, nor of pecuniary straits—for, in such respects, ministers do but take their share with others. I refer only to that kind of experience which the minister shares with no other class in the community. I contemplate the case of a man who is settled amongst a people, not to make himself rich, or to secure to himself any of those objects which the world so eagerly pursue; but to do the people good; to seek not theirs, but them; to toil for the salvation of souls. He lays out his work, and endeavors faithfully to prosecute it. He bears his congregation on his heart; but many and many an individual case comes to fill him with solicitude. For them he studies; for them he preaches; for them he exhorts; for them he goes from house to house; for them he seeks to enlist the sympathies and prayers and active exertions of the people of God. Still, to all appearance, his labor is in vain. His hands at length drop, and he groans forth, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the word of the Lord revealed?" How often is he encouraged in regard to the cases of individuals, and fondly believes them not far from the kingdom of God, whom afterwards he is left to lament,

as deeper than ever immersed in the vanities of the world, and more resolutely than ever set against every influence and effort that can be put forth for their salvation. How many, over whom he has rejoiced as converted from their evil ways and become children of God, does he see turn again to folly, and give evidence that they are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. And then as regards the church at large, how often does he feel that God is waiting to be gracious, and would pour out a rich blessing were the church only prepared to receive it; but he cannot persuade his brethren to come up to the help of the Lord. Occasionally he is encouraged by the increased attendance on the prayer meetings, and the seeming increase of interest, to hope that his appeals have had their desired effect; but next week all is as cold and dead as ever; and perchance he finds that some on whom, till of late, he has felt that he could always rely, are no longer by his side. Singularly favored is he if he has not among his brethren some busy controverter of his teachings, or some uncomfortable Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence. What, O what will become of the church, if things continue to go on in this way? How frequently is this inquiry wrung from his heart.

And then the minister is public property, and there are so many unreasonable expectations in regard to him. If he is a faithful man, his own standard of labor and self-sacrifice is doubtless far higher than he finds it practicable to attain, and not a little of the time he is oppressed by the feeling that he is not meeting the *reasonable* expectations of his charge. He is mortified and distressed to think how meagre and feeble his discourses are, and does not wonder that some have lost the interest they once professed in his preaching. And then there are so many who are complaining that the minister never comes to see them. He never goes into his study without feeling that he is expected elsewhere; and he never goes out among the people without feeling that he ought to be in his study. And sometimes surmises and whisperings, and unkind remarks, reach his ear, leading him to apprehend that he has no such hold on the confidence and love of the people, as is needful to his doing them good. I say nothing of the petty annoyances he sometimes meets with from those who would never feel that their pastor was up to the mark, as regards frequent and familiar intercourse with them;

though he were to devote himself to this business, to the exclusion of all reading and study, with no domestic duties, and no calls on him at his house, and no sickness, and no foul weather, and no necessary absences from home, and no detentions, and no consumption of time in going from place to place, and no periods of needful repose, to share his hours with them, and though he may have rung at their door a half-dozen times without gaining admission. Neither will I detain you to consider how ungraciously delinquent professors, when questioned in regard to their violation or neglect of church obligations, will sometimes shelter themselves under insinuations, bearing hard, to say the least, on the spiritual guide.

After all, however, the minister finds the most serious of his trials in his own heart. How little of God and Christ! How much of self and the world in him! How often do the exhortations and warnings he addresses to others, rebound against himself! How often does he seek to impart comfort and encouragement to others, when his heart, no less than theirs, is about to break! What a contrast does he see between his actual attainments in goodness, and the demands of his solemn position. Not seldom has he to lament a levity far enough from compatible, with the view of men as candidates for eternity—an eternity for which so many of them are totally unprepared. What reason has he to tremble when he thinks that he is to give account of the manner in which he has watched for souls! What ground to fear, that after having preached to others, he shall himself be a castaway! And if the light that is in *him* be darkness, how great is that darkness? If he be condemned, how awful that condemnation! Surely, in view of his peculiar trials, the minister makes no unreasonable request of his people, when he asks them to pray for him.

Three classes of reasons have thus been presented before you, my hearers, for the purpose of impressing on you the duty of Christians to give a large and ardent place to their ministers in their supplications. They pertain to the duties, the dangers, and the trials of the public servant of God. May I not hope that these reasons, so inadequately exhibited, will still have weight with all in this congregation, who are accustomed to visit the throne of grace, leading them to a suitable remembrance of their minister before God? Pray

for him in your closets and in your families; and as he ministers to you in the sanctuary, let your fervent aspirations ascend, that the Spirit of the Most High may rest on him, and clothe him with might in dealing with the souls of his fellow-mortals.

My brethren, I ask your prayers for me on *my own account*. I must stand at the bar of God, and I must stand there not as a private Christian, but as one who was set for the defence of the gospel, and had vows of peculiar solemnity resting on him. Pray for me, that I may realize what it will be to give up the account of an ambassador for Christ to my judge. Pray for me that I may so discharge the responsibilities laid on me, as to secure the plaudit of "well done, good and faithful servant!"

But I think not of myself only, in proffering this request. You, too, my dear hearers, must appear in that day; and I wish my brethren to pray for me, that I may so do my duty to you that God shall make me the instrument of your sanctification and salvation. God forbid that any one of this dear flock should go down to eternal death. God grant to *me* the honor of turning your feet into the way of life! Justly may I wish you well, for you have been a pleasant people to me. I have not drawn my picture of a minister's trials altogether from my experience in this city. Indeed, throughout the ten years of my ministry, I have enjoyed a singular exemption from the *peculiar* troubles and perplexities of ministerial life. How often have I wondered that God should deal so lightly with me, and so heavily with many of my brethren far more worthy. I know not what he has in reserve for me, but this I know, my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved; and, if it can consistently work his will, that *I* may be the honored instrument of your salvation; and in this service gladly will I lay out my powers, and husband my powers, that they may be the longer and the more vigorously devoted to your welfare.

My brethren, pray for your minister. You are, by virtue of vows resting on you, laborers together with him, as we ought *all* to be laborers together with God. Pray for him, and that will be your best protection against the dangers that imperil the harmony and the utility, and the permanency of the pastoral relation. Pray for him, and that will lead you to sympathize with him, and duly consider him wherein he

is entitled to your charitable regards. Pray for him, and that will be the best security for your zealous co-operation with him in doing good. Pray for him, and that will make you to him what Aaron and Hurr were to Moses when Israel was fighting against Amalek. Pray for him, and that will the most effectually keep you mindful that he is but an earthen vessel, and that the excellency of the power is of God.

Pray for him—pray for him every day—wrestle with God in his behalf, and faint not in your entreaties for him. Then may it be hoped that the hearer of prayer will make him, though an earthen vessel, a vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use; and that out of the good treasure of his heart, he shall bring forth good things—things that shall make many, many rich unto everlasting life. Then may it be hoped that the church, under his labors, shall be in truth a nursery for heaven; and that many shall be trained here in the ways of piety and usefulness, who shall be his glory and joy in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming. O what can be looked for in that church, in which the pastor is not borne up before the throne of grace on the prayers of his people? Brethren, pray for us.

THE

# BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS:

By Rev. W. Carey Crane, of Mississippi.

"*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*"—1 Thes., v: 22.

The apostle Paul, who was ever fearless in denouncing iniquity, both in high and low places, is completing the instructions he had given the Thessalonian church in his first epistle. His principal design being finished, he cautions these brethren against those errors and irregularities which Timothy had informed him still prevailed among them. He besought them to be obedient to those who labored among them in the ministry, and whose duty it was to admonish and to rebuke them for their faults. "Now, we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and who preside over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly for their work's sake." With affection were they to support the weak and to be patient to all, and to take care that none of their flock rendered evil for evil. Then, in his practical address to pastors and people conjointly, he exhorts them, "Abstain from all appearance of evil;" implying that not only were they to avoid known and palpable sins, but also those about which there was any doubt, and which among men presented the appearance of evil and tended to produce evil action. Viewing the text in this light, it cannot fail to be perceived that the subject announced for this evening's discourse is not as broad as the text, though to abstain from every appearance of evil is to exert ourselves to the very *extreme limit* of our ability. While, therefore, I declare to all Christians, "Abstain from

all appearance of evil," I do not mean to imply censure or denunciation upon any class of men, or to preach aught except by general principles. The Christian religion makes pretensions which no other scheme of morals, intellectual or civil government, ever presumed to make. It does not confine its influence merely to the eternal welfare of mankind, nor does it exclude from its supervision the temporal condition of men. While Christianity is jealous of all civil *interference*, inasmuch as its hopes of success are based upon weapons, arguments and means of a spiritual and superhuman character, still it aims to influence the action of government as well as the conduct of individuals. This influence it desires to exert by ruling the spirits of those who constitute the governing power of a nation. Conscious of its power over the heart, and relying upon the well ascertained principle that man is a religious being by nature, it seeks to govern the entire man. Is man anxious to obtain a high place on "the unmouldering pillar of fame," by intellectual strifes, religion offers him its assistance. Is he desirous of securing renown as the ruler of a nation, it points out to him the only path which leads to honorable success. Is man in danger of rushing to ruin, by involving himself in practices which fix his feet in the meshes of an eternal demon, religion, as the star of hope and the guardian angel of man's immortal part, checks him in his reckless career, warns him of the raging storm which threatens him with destruction, and points to the light of divinity, beckoning him by its captivating glare of perpetual illumination, to a region of unsullied purity and undisturbed bliss. In one short sentence the whole object of religion may be comprehended, which is to render man happy in every relation and condition of his extended existence, in temporal life and in an eternal state beyond mortal being. To accomplish this grand object, it operates both directly and indirectly. Directly, by describing the happiness of the believer's state, the necessity for regeneration, the importance of faith, the duty of repentance, the joys of heaven, and by imparting to the Christian the blissful hope of the ultimate approbation of God. This is its direct and spiritual influence. Indirectly, religion seeks to render man happy by describing the misery of sin, the unhappiness of the sinner, the fearfulness of death, the certainty of future judgment and the awful doom of the finally impenitent.

Both in its direct and indirect influence it seeks to control and govern the morals of men. It cannot be necessary, at this time, even for a moment, to dwell upon the importance of morality. None will doubt that public and private morals are intimately connected and have a reflex influence, the one on the other. That morality is that which chiefly exalts a community, no one will deny. And equally undeniable is the position, that only have those nations and communities prospered which have preserved for any length of time public and private morality. Were religion basely untrue, without foundation in fact, unsupported by reason and negatived by every principle of human probability, its establishment and success in every well regulated community must be hailed as the chief omen of the purity of the morals and of the intelligence of the minds of that community. But, to speak of a well regulated community without religion, is to suppose not only an *anomaly*, but an impossibility. From that hour when man commenced his improvements and refinements upon the good creatures with which God has furnished us, vice, in various forms, has sought a place in the affections of mortals, and, to attain its object, it has never been overscrupulous of means. Vice is opposed to the continued existence of any well regulated community ; its tendency is to excess, and excess is the precursor of destruction. Vice can be refined ; it may be dressed up in beautiful garments and counterfeit virtue, but without doubt it is the opponent of religion. Let us start, therefore, with the broad proposition that everything which is opposed to religion is immoral and vicious, and tends to undermine public government by destroying private virtue. The definition which we give to virtue should here be understood. It is that course of action on the part of man which harmonizes with the relations subsisting between us and the Supreme Being. Everything which is opposed to religion is immoral and vicious. Without stopping to specify other things, we at once pronounce *theatrical exhibitions*, as now presented, as antagonistical to the Christian religion. This will be made to appear by showing that the objects had in view by each are diametrically opposite and conflicting. More effectually to accomplish this purpose, the THEATRE will be considered, I, as a school of morals ; II, as a school of religion; III, as a school of knowledge and liberty.

I. *As a school of morals.* What is morality? Is it not that certain, definite temper of mind and heart which would loathe all degradation of one's species and lead us to cherish virtue for its own sake. Morality is taught by representation, by reading, by example and by direct instruction. Is morality inculcated by the representation of the "School for Scandal," even though hypocrisy may be the theme of denunciation; or of the "Reformed Rake," where debauchery may be the theme of scorn. It was not long since announced, that the "Reformed Rake" would be exhibited, and a lady take a part. What real emotion of the sublime would such a representation be calculated to produce? To present the vile and abandoned as chivalrous, true knight-errants of a feudal age, is that morality? Who will learn exalted virtue from it? Is it refining the feelings of man or ennobling the heart of a lady, to represent all the shifts and turns and "white lies" of the confirmed coquette? Peruse the history of the drama, and gather the sentiments of the great and noble since its origin, and what have we but a tissue of public expressions all aimed at the morality of the drama. It is said, plays originated in Greece, at the festivals held in honor of the heathen deity Bacchus, several hundred years before the Saviour's birth; and though the lofty, grave tragedians Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides may deserve the praise of Milton, as

"High actions and high praises best describing;"

Yet the theatre in Greece, and afterwards in Rome, became an intolerable nuisance. Solon, the Athenian people, the Spartans, under Lycurgus, Plato, Socrates and Plutarch, have all borne decided testimony to the immoral tendency of the theatre. Seneca, Quinctilian, Cicero, Ovid, Tacitus, Livy and Tertullian speak of its immoral tendency with boldness and decision. The Papal church, in its earliest history, declared against it, and has left on her records, for the perusal of all men, the evidences of her decided disapprobation. From Rome it passed to England, where, at first, so strong was the public conviction of its immoral tendencies, it could only find footing in private families. From England the theatre emigrated to the new world, not, however, with the pilgrim fathers; and, not long after the "Declaration of Independence," the American Congress passed the following resolution *unanimously:*

*Resolved*, That it be and is hereby recommended to the several States, to take the most effective measures for the encouragement thereof (i. e. religion and morality) and for the suppression *of the theatrical entertainments, horse racing, gaming*, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness and dissipation, and general depravity of principles and manners."

Such was the resolution of a deliberative assembly, of which John Hancock was President and Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams distinguished members. Inasmuch as it is sometimes said, that the prejudice existing against the theatres originated with the early fathers, it would, however, be difficult to ascertain how much influence the *fathers* had upon Socrates, Solon, Livy, Quinctilian, the states of Greece and Rome and the American Congress. It was regarded by the citizens of Rome, before the Papal hierarchy, as injurious, and therefore was put under a vigilant censorship and obtained only an occasional toleration until the time of Pompey the Great, who, by his immense power, succeeded in establishing a permanent theatre. The theatre continued, however, to prevail, both in in Rome and Greece, until the time of Constantine, when it was exiled from Christendom. It did not appear again until Christianity lost her simplicity and moral strength. Dark as were those times, and small as was the moral strength of the age, the theatre was promptly and distinctly condemned. Severe laws were enacted against it, and, besides other mulcts, the actors were denied all the public honors of state. Such, in brief, is the history of theatrical exhibitions ; and it may not be uninteresting now to add a few opinions concerning the immoral tendency of theatrical representations :

*Hannah More*, who in early life wrote plays, but became afterwards decidedly opposed to them, thus speaks : " Honor is the religion of the tragedy ; fear and shame are the capital crimes in her code. Injured honor can only be vindicated at the point of the sword ; the stains of injured reputation can only be washed out in blood."

*Dr. Campbell* declares : " The stage with us, without any hyperbole, may be defined the school of gallantry and intrigue ; in other words, the school of dissoluteness. Here the youth of both sexes may learn to get rid of that troublesome companion *modesty*, intended by Providence as a guard to virtue and a check to licentiousness."

*Lord Kaimes* remarks : " The licentious court of Charles

II., among its many disorders, engendered a pest the virulence of which subsists to this day. The English comedy, copying the manners of the court, became abominably licentious, and continues so, with very little softening. It is there an established rule to deck out the chief characters with every vice, however gross. How odious ought writers to be who thus employ the talents they have from their Maker most traitorously against himself, by endeavoring to corrupt and disfigure his creatures."

*Wayland,* in his Elements of Moral Science, says: "It would be interesting to learn on what principles of morals a virtuous woman would justify her attendance upon an amusement, in which she beholds before her a once lovely female uttering covert obscenity in the presence of thousands, and where she is surrounded by hundreds of women, also once lovely, whose ruin has been consummated by this very means, and who assemble in this place with the more certain assurance of thus being able more successfully to effect the ruin of others."

*Sir Walter Scott* gravely states, in his Essay on the Drama, that "Unless in the case of strong attraction upon the stage, prostitutes and their admirers form the principal part of the audience." And it is so.

*Pollock* descants of the theatre thus:

> "The theatre was, from the very first,
> The favorite haunt of sin, though honest men,
> Some very honest, wise and worthy men,
> Maintained it might be turned to good account;
> And so, perhaps, it might, but never was.
> From first to last, *it was an evil place.*"

And take the best plays, Virginius, The Wife, Richelieu, Fazio, the Honey Moon, Ion and the Athenian Captive, and is there one principle of moral science eliminated, not well known before or better enforced in another method, and which history, which is philosophy teaching by example, does not more amply teach. But it is not our design to argue that some plays do not inculcate morality, and from others deep and profound views of human depravity may not be learned. And yet, with all the noble traits of Shakspeare's inimitable productions, who could read certain passages in the language which Desdemona uses, in "Othello, or the Moore of Venice," without causing the blush of modesty to

arise on a maiden's cheek were such passages recited in her hearing. And can any one peruse a similar passage which Juliet utters in the play of Romeo and Juliet, without similar emotions. Instance upon instance, and passage after passage might be adduced, with which the very object we have in view to-night would conflict, were I to repeat them. But the lewd and obscene passages, which too many plays furnish, are not the evidences on which we would base an argument against the theatre. The bad passions of men are aroused, by witnessing performances in which ladies take parts to counterfeit other natures. No moralist nor philosopher will deny, that the imagination is the fruitful source of much, if not most, of the crime now committed. There may not be overt indecency in the assumption, by females, of parts which belong properly to males, still there may be enough to excite the imagination. What lover of poetry, who has perused the undying effusions of the lofty genius of Byron, does not know that the delicate allusions of Don Juan are much more calculated to excite the passions than the coarse and foul allusions of Pope, in his January and May. And the costumes of the followers of Thespis, in too many cases, are calculated to excite the dark passions of the human soul. Could any one witness the dancing of Madame Celeste and not feel the force of the caustic language of a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, who witnessed an exhibition of her able theatrical powers, "that such a performance might do in Richmond, but it would not do in Pendleton." Not only is the imagination vitiated, but the attendant circumstances of the theatre are *evil*, and only *evil*. In nearly every theatre there is a punch room, a hot-bed of iniquity too dreadful to describe, if that were possible. Shall I describe drunken blasphemies, ribald oaths of those who are driving out their senses, as they are drinking in of the intoxicating bowl? I will not thus appal your hearts. And when the conscience is thus stilled and reason for the brief period of the dreadful hallucination deserts her throne, then the vile prostitute advances with her worse than Bacchanalian blandishments, and with a voice more pestiferous than the syren's, to complete the work of moral death. How many a weeping mother has mourned over the untimely fate of her son, who has been enticed merely to go and witness a performance, then is seduced into the punch-room, from

thence goes to some establishment, where he can drown his sensibilities, and thence, like a lamb led to the slaughter, he proceeds to the brothel. Is this an over-wrought picture? Is it exaggerated? Many a young man, now no more, could such rise from the tomb, would tell us stories more horrid to relate, than is here very feebly and faintly described. A school of morals indeed! What code is taught? The code of the duellist, the tenets of the gambler, the sycophancy and servility of the king's courtiers. And what nations are they which most encourage scenic representations? Spain, poor, down-trodden Spain, and she degraded in the eye of humanity, is resting in the filth of her own deep ignominy; Italy, a land of lazaroni, is the land of the opera; and France, enlightened and refined France, suffers theatrical exhibitions on the Sabbath of the blessed Jesus. And are we to look to these nations for lessons and examples of morality? Well may morality hide a diminished head, when such are its friends and advocates.

II. *As a school of religion.* Is the Supreme God honored? Is it the object of the actors to venerate, adore, and exalt him? Is it not rather to encourage man with a higher opinion of his own virtue, and to exclude all idea of human responsibility from men's minds? How often do men, who are frantic with despair, occasioned by misfortunes, rush to the theatre to divert their minds from dreadful thoughts of temporal ruin, and yet how many more hurry to the theatre for the purpose of driving from their minds the thought that they are sinners, and in danger of the awful fulfillment of God's threatening denunciation, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Whoever thought of offering a prayer in the theatre? Does not the very associations of the ideas of prayer and a play, cause a shuddering of the nerve? The religion of the theatre is the religion of human depravity. It makes all enjoyment rest in sensual gratification. It centres all man's affections, hopes and desires in himself. Supreme selfishness, a principle which wars against God, which wars against the race, which wars against universal happiness, is the god of the theatre. Love, crosses in love, disasters in love, the successes and dangers of lovers, are the all absorbing theme. Instead of aiming to exalt man's moral affections, and refine his feelings, there is a miserable pandering

to the most horrid passions, which too often *storm and wreck* the human soul. Well has the poet said of the theatre—

> "For now, such things are acted there, as make
> The devils blush; and from the neighborhood,
> Angels and holy men, trembling, retire."

Religion, holy, pure, and peerless, above earth's proudest professions of virtue, asks no such assistance as the theatre would afford her. It soars above the world, and draws its pleasures from another region. Not so with the followers and admirers of Thespis—their pleasures are drawn from earth. Our great mother is invoked to bestow on men happiness, and men are willing to believe that she can afford it. Religion frowns upon scenic representations, because they are opposed to its own mild and gentle spirit. Whoever was made better by *attendance* on the theatre? Echo answers *who?* Who is there, on the broad surface of society, would feel resigned to death on the stage? The living and the dead answer from earth's tumult, and from the silent tomb, *None!*

III. *As a school of knowledge and liberty.* The drama, as sustained by tragedy and comedy, it is said, has done much to improve the "belles-lettres" of our language, and indeed constitutes a very large proportion of the fine writing of the language. Far be it, therefore, from our purpose to oppose the pure literature of the legitimate drama. It would be a desecration to genius to revile the productions of the immortal "Bard of Avon's stilly water." It would manifest unpardonable ignorance to assert, that knowledge may not be gained by the study of the literature of the drama. No man, indeed, can aspire to the character of general intelligence, who has not acquainted himself with the prose and poetry of the Grecian, Roman, and British drama. Genius has sought, successfully, followers in the Sheridans and Garricks of a past age, and the Knowleses and Talfourds of the present time. The author of that much admired poem, "The Night Thoughts," Dr. Young, who has discoursed in such terrific language, of death, hell, and future judgment, was also the author of the tragedy, entitled "Revenge." But because a Moore and a Young, a Sheridan and a Garrick, a Milman and a Talfourd wrote good plays, such worthy men would not countenance such a scenic representation

of bad plays as would vitiate public taste and deprave private morals. Against the attendant immoralities consequent upon the theatre; against pimps, prostitutes, brothels, faro-banks, and the hotelries of the Bacchanalian orgies—to whom and to which the theatre opens a clear way of access—in the vast majority of instances, we would place the whole force of the *Christian church.* The whole power of Christian example, wherever there are sentiments conducive to the diffusion of knowledge and liberty, give the drama all the credit; but *the world has yet to be informed of one grand civic, martial, intellectual, or moral achievement, which originated with or owes its success to the dramatic representations of our present or of past times.* But it may be said, that if the theatre has not added to the moral worth of communities; if it has not aided the power of religion; if it has not directly increased the sum of human knowledge, or kindled the fires on the altars of civil liberty, it has at least purified and elevated taste. Wherein? Does the history of the rise and downfall of Greece and Rome foster that allegation? Does the present effeminite condition of the nations of Southern Europe support that assertion? What! place the control of public taste, and of the holy glow of glorious patriotism in the hands of men, without any other moral or intellectual education, except such as is too often only obtained after they have deserted their home and friends? Place morality and religion, and knowledge, in the teaching of men who have seldom had that virtuous training which a doting mother bestows upon her offspring? It would be treason to humanity.

As I am confining myself to the theatre, perhaps it will not be expected that I speak of the *Opera,* and other amusements. I shall, however, admit, with regard to the opera, that if it is apparently a harmless amusement, by itself considered, and if it designed to develope the full power of scientific music, it may be made the instrument of intellectual good; but it is still liable to the same abuse with other scenic representations.

As for the *circus,* I cannot regard it as an appropriate place for *ladies* or Christians. Neither refinement nor virtue reside there.

With regard to exhibitions of living wild animals, and museums and concerts, I am of the decided opinion that they are useful, unless God has required us to turn our backs upon

his own creatures, and deafen our ears to the harmonies of music, which he has established. In these there is neither the shadow nor appearance of evil; but wherein these or aught else of man's inventions are evil, and opposed to vital godliness, let them be avoided, as bordering upon the awful pit of destruction.

But the possibility of reforming the theatre has been suggested. The vigorous mind and facile pen of the late *Dr. Channing* have defended a plan for its reformation ; and an able and pious editor in North Carolina, Rev. *Thomas Meredith*, of the "Biblical Recorder," has suggested an expurgation of all existing plays, so as to accord with the strictest morality, and to represent them with all the attractions which statuary, painting, and fully organized orchestras could bring forth. If such could take place, the religious portion of the community would cease their hostility. Human depravity, and the tendency to evil, renders this hope delusive. Improve the race, and then, and not until then, will the reformed drama, the moral theatre, and the pure opera, be divested of all evil and all tendencies to mischief. As *scholars*, then, we admire the drama, and would blot out its dark spots and foul blemishes. As *moralists*, we would oppose its scenic representation, as calculated to foster and promote vice. As *philosophers*, we oppose the theatre, as calculated to degrade the human intellect. As *political economists*, we defend theatrical exhibitions, as only calculated to produce idleness, poverty, and distress. As *Christians*, we oppose it and seek its abolition, because we believe it to be a fruitful source of licentiousness, and calculated to destroy the spirit of humble piety, and counteract holiness of heart. And lastly, we demand that Christians should avoid it, because—

1. It is of immoral tendency in its appurtenances and scenic representations.

2. It exhibits vice in the garb of virtue.

3. It makes fiction assume the place of truth.

4. It fosters in its train the vices of gambling, drunkenness, profane swearing, and licentiousness.

5. It takes from the community a class of citizens, otherwise calculated to benefit themselves and the country at large, and employs them in that which neither increases the productive capital of the country, nor refines its morals.

6. It causes a useless waste of time and money, which could be better employed in improving the mind and in cherishing the nobler virtues of the human heart.

*In conclusion*, it is calculated to drive out of our minds all thoughts of God, future happiness, and eternal judgment. Therefore, let us be careful to abstain from all appearance of evil, "for God will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good or evil."

## REV. ELI BALL.

The Christian brother, whose name heads this article, was at one time associate editor, and then partial proprietor of this paper. This consideration alone would justify departure from our usual course, in the publication of a short obituary. But its contents will show that we are governed by a loftier motive, found in the abundant labors of an eminent servant of God. An intimate acquaintance of thirty years, enables us to speak advisedly in what we say. Our pulpit was among the first occupied by him on his first arrival in Virginia, when he entered the service of the Female Mission Society of Richmond, and we always found in him, to the day of his death, a friend who sympathized in our sorrows, and defended us when wronged, whether by avowed enemies or pretended friends.

Elder Ball, although a native of New England, was by adoption, a thorough Virginian. The last several years of his life were spent in Georgia, on important missionary agencies, and a voyage to Africa as a mission inspector and adviser; but Virginia was the great theatre of his varied and multiplied toils. Especially in his connexion with the Deep Run and Chickahominy churches, and their neighborhoods in Henrico, Hanover, and Goochland, was it that the grace of God was magnified in him. Unencumbered by family, for although married twice, he had no children; an expert driver, with his light sulky and strong agile horse, he flew like a bird over all Eastern Virginia, which for many years seemed to us to be his parish. Courteous in manners—de-

voted to his work—determined not to leave undone, or to be done by others or by miracle, whatever he could do—his whole life appeared to be one great, generous, constant effort to serve others and promote the cause of Christ.

Elder Ball was born in Marlboro', Vermont, November, 1786—converted and baptized in 1805—entered the ministry in 1807, preaching his first sermon in Boston, Massachusetts—migrated to Virginia in 1823, and died at his own house in this city, July 21, 1853.

In his Diary of 1851, he says: "In prosecuting my agency during this year, I have traveled 10,847 miles, and preached 141 sermons."—"During my whole ministry, I have preached 5,891 sermons. Since 1831, I have traveled, while prosecuting my public labors as a minister, 84,873 miles, more than three times the circumference of the globe." In 1849, he says: "I have baptized 914 persons."

Not only in Lynchburg and Hampton, but at Rehoboth, Bruington, Deep Run, and every church in Virginia—on the seaboard—in the valley—beyond the mountains—in every vale and on every hill top—has been heard the voice of brother Ball, encouraging believers in Christ, and exhorting sinners to repentance.

Although at his death, on the better side of his meridian, for he was in his 67th year, he was in the full tide of his ministerial career. On his death-bed, before it was disclosed to him that he would die, he was looking to future labors, and considered his recall of his appointments in the lower country a merely temporary thing. Indeed his call at home seems to have been a remarkably providential occurrence, for the very purpose of his being permitted to die in the embraces of his family. A few more weeks, and he would have been on another voyage to Africa, and must have found his grave in the mighty deep.

Throughout all his labors, and in their midst, he was a diligent student, an agreeable companion, a confiding and trustworthy friend, a courteous gentleman, and a devout Christian. All this was incidental and subsidiary to the great object of his life, devotedness to the Christian ministry.

Do not suppose that in his ministerial career, Elder Ball found no discouragements—met no hindrances disputing his progress, or always enjoyed the confidence and co-operation of those on whom he was entitled to rely. Far from it.

Sometimes discouragements came in from every quarter—foes disputed his passage at every step, and he seemed to stand almost unsupported and alone. These remarks find illustration in his entrance into Virginia, and in the approach of the close of his labors on earth.

Any ordinary man would have been daunted by appearances, when he resolved to make Virginia his home. No position, such as now seems commanding, arrested his labors; even subsistence appeared doubtful. We went with him, personally, at our own expense, on a visit to a destitute church, in a neighboring city, almost begging permission to labor there for a year gratis; but no door seemed to be open. All was destitution and dearth. No predecessor at that point had ever been equal to him; but they had all found favor, and had failed, while he could not even be admitted to trial. Nor are we aware that at the period of his appointment on his Georgia mission, which he fulfilled with great success and usefulness, there was any field soliciting his labors in Virginia, destitute as Virginia is at many important stations. Bro. Ball was too much of a gentleman, even though he had not been a Christian, to condescend to those tricks and manœuvres, by which men sometimes either work themselves or are worked by their friends, into places of distinction, for the duties of which they are not qualified. And from many a place for which he was eminently qualified, he was kept back by his unassuming modesty. We have known him defamed and libeled, but he went right on as though nothing had happened; and if the people showed signs of listlessness at one place, he moved off to another. Had he, however, been encumbered with the cares of a family, he might not have been able to do this. In some other way, nevertheless, he would no doubt have met the emergency, and advanced in the service of his Master.

Now, his battles are ended—his course is finished—his stewardship is closed—and our young men will find in his life much that is worthy of emulation, little against which they should guard, and strong motives to diligence and self-denial in a cause in which no laborer ever was, or ever will be unrewarded.—Editor.

## Apologetic Notice.

☞ Sickness, absence, financial embarrassment, and other causes beyond our control, have produced in the issue of the present Nos. delay, unprecedented in the history of this paper, and not likely again to occur. It affords us pleasure, nevertheless, to state that in the interim the increase of our subscribers has been greater than at the same season, in any former year, while orders for discontinuance have not been one a month.

## A Pressing Dun.

☞ Those of our patrons who owe us for this year or more, are earnestly solicited to wait for no agent, collector, or bill, but to remit us immediately by mail, at our risk, what they owe, or at least one dollar each. They will see on the next month's cover for what year they thus pay. The remainder will be still due. Those who have paid, will of course not take this dun as made to them.

It is utterly impossible for periodical, religious literature to prosper, unless subscriptions are paid annually in advance. The prices are too low to admit of clerkships and hired agencies. Some of our best friends, rolling in wealth, too, have not paid in a cent in three or four years. How do they suppose we pay the printer and support ourselves?

☞ A few, very few, more sets of the Preacher on hand—10 volumes bound in 5, for $7 50. Also, partial sets, viz: Old Virginia Baptist Preacher, 4 vols. in 2; and new series, 4 vols. in 2, at same rate. They go in safety by mail or express, and very low.

☞ In answer to several letters on the subject of a former notice, offering a premium for new subscribers, we repeat what we intended to say at first, that for every dollar sent us, at our risk, per mail, for a new subscriber, within sixty days, we will send to the person himself, or his order, not only all the Nos. of the present volume, but in addition all those of 1852, of which Dr. Hooper's sermon alone, on the Power of Habit, is worth a dollar. But the person remitting, must inform us of his wish, otherwise we shall not know that he is willing to accept of the volume for 1852.

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