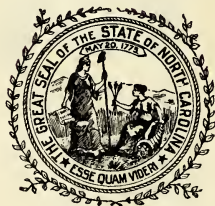




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# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## SPIRITUAL DECLENSION:

A Sermon, by REV. T. C. TEASDALE, of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

*“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.—REV. II: 4.*

Brethren and friends—My text is the language of complaint. The faithful and true witness, who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, declares unto the angel of the church of Ephesus, “I have somewhat against thee.” But what was the difficulty with the church of Ephesus? Was she indifferent to the encroachments of error and unrighteousness? Did she repose in inglorious ease amid the attempts of her enemies to tarnish her glory, and to corrupt her from the simplicity of the gospel? Were her zeal for the truth, and her outward regard for the glory of God, essentially defective? Let the Saviour’s own eulogy upon many excellent characteristics, answer these enquiries: “I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.” In all these respects the church of Ephesus was above reproach. But still there was something wrong with this church, or the Saviour would not have uttered such a complaint against her. What then was the difficulty? It is all explained in this: She was defective in true spirituality. She was lacking in ardent, devoted attachment to the Saviour. It was this alone that rendered her condition at once so alarming

Vol. V.—1.

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and so guilty. It was this that called forth the Saviour's reproof in the language of the text: "I have somewhat against thee, *because thou hast left thy first love.*"

Freedom from open irregularities, does not render it certain that the condition of a church is in all respects such as is required of it. Nor is the possession of various excellent characteristics, to be received as proof positive that it is exempt from all religious defection. Indeed all observation tends to convince us, that while there may be much in a church to call forth the admiration of christians, and the approbation of the Redeemer, there may be, at the same time, such radical deficiency in other important particulars, as to render it the proper object both of pity and reproof. A church, for instance, may be strictly orthodox in its theological tenets, and yet by its indolence and stupidity, it may render the truth in which it glories, inert and powerless; frustrate the salutary effects it was designed to accomplish; and, from being a healthful fountain, sending forth through the channels of christian activity, a refreshing and sanctifying influence, may become a stagnant pool, rotting in its motionless repose, polluting the air with its noxious exhalations, and converting into a desolate morass the region it should fertilize and bless. A church may be very tenacious in its observance of the external forms of public devotion, and yet be as destitute of the spirit of true worshipers as mere automatons, which may be made to march up the aisles of the church at the appointed time; rise and sit as the services proceed; and perform with remarkable accuracy every outward act of religious devotion.

In like manner, a church may be characterized by great union and harmony among its members, and yet these interesting characteristics may result alone from the want of vitality in the body politic. Its peace may be like that of the frozen lake, which no fury of the tempest can agitate, and which no commotion of the elements can disturb. It is the quiet of a spiritual death; the union of frozen and conglomerated sensibilities.

And again, a church may be very consistent in its outward deportment—and as to common morality, blameless; and yet, in all this, it may but resemble the whited sepulchre, which is beautiful and attractive without, but full of corruption and loathsomeness within. Indeed, whatever

excellencies may attach to the character of a church, if it be defective in true spirituality, it cannot enjoy the approbation of Jesus, nor reasonably hope for ultimate prosperity. For this is a deficiency which so directly affects the vitals of the system, that it is impossible it should long exist with impunity in any church. Be this, then, my morning theme—

THE CAUSES, EVILS AND REMEDIES OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSION.

Of the importance of my theme, and its applicability to the times, no one who has reflected upon the subject, can entertain a doubt. And if the Saviour was so much displeased with the lack of spirituality in the church of Ephesus, possessing, as she did, so many excellent traits of christian character, what must be his feelings towards the churches of this land at the present time? What must be his feelings towards us, beloved? How greatly should we suffer in comparison with the primitive disciples. How faint our attachment to Christ, when compared with that of our own first love. O, “how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!” Let us proceed, then, to consider with prayerful deliberation,

I. SOME OF THE CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSION.

Some there are who may be disposed to content themselves with calling spiritual declension, one of the mysteries of Providence; and without attempting to resolve it, may refer it to the sovereign pleasure of God. But, my brethren, I cannot regard it as thus incapable of solution. It is true that God is a sovereign, and manages the affairs of his vast universe after the counsel of his own will. But, then, the divine sovereignty, does not, and by the present constituted order of things, cannot impair human agency. God is a sovereign—but he is not a tyrant. Man is dependent—but he is not a machine. The truth is, God acts not without sufficient reason. If, therefore, one church enjoys his gracious visits rather than another—or if the same church is more largely blessed at one time than at another, there must be some reason for this difference, other than the mere sovereignty of the Deity. To suppose otherwise, would be to make the ways of the Lord unequal, and to charge the Most High with consummate partiality. But God is not fickle—neither is he partial. He *always* waits to be gracious; and whenever he can, consistently with his own

wise plans, and with the best interests of the universe at large, bestow his needed favors upon any of his dependent creatures, he will most assuredly do it. But he will never depart from his wise design of doing the greatest good to the greatest number, in order to confer his needed benefits upon any given portion of his subjects. The causes, then, of spiritual declension have their origin with us—and are very properly matters of earnest concernment to the church of God.

Let us, this morning, carefully consider some of the most obvious of these causes.

1. The first which I shall mention, is, *the manner in which we attend to the duty of prayer*. It is here taken for granted, that every christian is in the habit of daily prayer. Indeed, inasmuch “as prayer is one of the ordinary means of our communion with God, much of the religious life must necessarily consist in the exercise of it, either in public or in private—either vocal or mental.” But the point, which in this connection, more particularly deserves attention, is the manner in which this duty should be performed. For “it may well be supposed, that our spiritual prosperity will bear some proportion to the degree of fervor and constancy with which this duty is attended to. All our spiritual life is derived from Christ, as that of the branch is derived from the vine; and prayer is that by which we receive of his fullness, grace for grace. If, therefore, this duty is either restrained before God, or performed in a careless, carnal manner, our souls must of course lose their spirituality.”

2. Another cause of spiritual declension, is, *the want of a proper regard to the word of God*. God has placed a very high estimate upon his holy word; and whenever christians are under the influence of a right spirit, *they* will, also, highly appreciate the word of God. It is not only a principal means of consolation and support to the child of God, during his earthly pilgrimage, but it is also the great instrument of his sanctification. In it, “we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.” It is a just remark of the venerable Fuller, that “in almost all the remarkable declensions in the church of God, a neglect of the scriptures has been at the root.”



3. Another cause of unfruitfulness is found in the fact, that *sin is allowed to lie on the conscience unlamented*. It certainly cannot require an elaborate argument to prove that sin, unlamented, is the bane of religious enjoyment, and of religious prosperity. It is, as one has justly observed, "like poison in the bones." Do you inquire how you may detect the indulgence of sin in the soul? I answer, when you find yourselves inclined to *persist* in known evil, you may rest assured that the errors of your course have not been sufficiently lamented. True repentance is always attended with a loathing of the wrongs committed; and confession of sin, to prove itself sincere and ingenuous, must always be accompanied with a forsaking of our evil ways. This remark is intended to apply, not merely to a *practical compliance* with the dictates of sin; but also to the very *bias* of the heart to evil. "If it be the mere dread of consequences, that restrains us from sin—such, I mean, as our reputation, or worldly interest, or fear of hell—and not the fear and love of God," we may be sure that our heart is not right in the sight of God; that we are, indeed, in circumstances of imminent peril on this very point. "That man," says Dr. Owen, "who opposes nothing to the seduction of evil in his own heart, but fear of shame among men, or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do that evil, if there were no punishment attending it—which, in what it differs from living in the practice of sin, I know not."

I cannot now stop to speak of all the evils which result from indulging sin in the heart. It weakens our christian graces—cuts off communion with God—impairs our influence and usefulness—and in many respects gives satan the advantage over us. Happy for us, if we shall utterly crucify all love of sin in our souls.

4. Another cause of declension in spirituality, is, *the irregularity of church members in their attendance upon the public means of grace*. There is nothing redundant or unnecessary in that system of operations which God has instituted for the edification of his church, and the perfecting of the saints. All the appointments of Jehovah are wise and important; and among these, the duty of assembling ourselves together for public worship and mutual improvement, occupies a very prominent place. It is made the solemn duty of the preacher to instruct his people; to

feed them with knowledge and with understanding; to warn, rebuke, exhort and entreat with all long-suffering and doctrine, that he may present every man perfect in Christ; and thus be enabled to give up his account at last, with joy and not with grief. But how are the people to be benefited by all this labor, and patience, and faithfulness on the part of the minister, unless they attend regularly upon his ministrations. He may break the bread of life most abundantly, and supply full measures of "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby"—and yet on every hand he may hear the doleful exclamation, "O, my leanness! my leanness!" The richest provision for our spiritual wants will avail us nothing, unless we come and partake of it.

This inconstancy on the part of christian professors, in their attendance upon the public means of grace, exerts also, an unhappy influence upon the mind of the minister himself. It not only produces the chilling effect which vacant seats necessarily occasion, but it cripples all his energies in the preparation of his discourses. He discovers that a particular kind of truth is necessary for certain classes of his hearers, and he addresses himself assiduously to the task of furnishing the required aliment for his famishing flock; and after much labor, and prayer, and study, he consoles himself with the hope that he has at length, by the divine blessing, succeeded in adapting truth to the exigencies of his people. But judge of his disappointment and regret, when he comes to open the storehouse of knowledge, and pour out the fullness of the treasures of truth, to find that the very persons for whom this preparation was especially designed, and who above all others most deeply need it, are not present to enjoy it. With such difficulties in his way, how can the man of God prosecute his preparations for the pulpit with any degree of interest or energy? How can he know but that his best endeavors will be rendered unavailing by this instability of his people? The deplorable result of repeated failures of this kind, is, that the preacher is led to adopt a sort of generalization in the arrangement of his discourses, which very rarely fails to render his performance, in the end, prosy and unprofitable. And as each cannot in this way receive his portion of meat in due season, the most obvious leanness and barrenness will inevitably follow.

5. Another cause of unfruitfulness, is, *the incorrect*

notion which somehow so generally obtains, that spiritual declensions are unavoidable. How common it is to see professors of religion, after a season of delightful refreshing, yielding to a spirit of chilling despondency, and indulging the delusive impression that they must submit to a kind of resistless necessity, and sink down again into spiritual supineness. Thus they fold their hands in comparative inactivity, and seem patiently to wait till another heavenly breeze shall sweep over the plain, and fan into life and action their dormant energies. They look upon revival seasons as designed to be enjoyed only at long intervals, and then speedily to pass away, as though God were not *always* gracious, or were unwilling to hold *continual communion* with his friends. A most unhappy influence is thus, also, exerted upon the minds of newly converted souls. How often is the young convert taught to believe that the ecstasies of his first love, are necessarily short-lived—and that the buoyancy of his new born hopes will soon disappear. He is taught to expect that his present all-absorbing regard for the glory of God, and his ardent compassion for the souls of his fellow men, will soon quietly abate, and that he cannot reasonably expect the uninterrupted favor of the Lord, or look for continual feasts of religious enjoyment. Now all this is calculated to quench the flame of christian engagedness, discourage religious effort, and lead to spiritual declension. But, my brethren, allow me to enquire, what is there in the word of God—what is there in the experience of the faithful christian, to justify the conclusion, that constant religious enjoyment is impracticable? Is there any thing wanting in the character and perfections of Christ—in the influence of the Holy Spirit—in the operations of divine grace—in the faithfulness and love of the Father, to ensure the belief that constant advancement in all that purifies, ennobles and assimilates to the divine likeness, is the believer's privilege? Why then talk of unavoidable declensions? Why give place for a moment to the paralyzing notion, that victory in this particular is impossible? Is it not clearly our privilege, our *duty*, to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Are we not positively assured, that "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day?" Does not the law of progress pervade alike



the kingdom of nature and of grace? Let us not then, for one moment, suppose that whatever pertains to peace and godliness in christian advancement, is interdicted to us. Let us rather imitate the example of the inspired apostle, who, forgetting the things that were behind, was constantly reaching forward to those that were before, and pressing towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

6. Another cause of declension in spirituality, is found *in the imperfect conceptions which many christians entertain of the standard of Bible holiness.* Nothing short of entire devotedness, of unreserved consecration to the service of the Redeemer, will answer the high demands of the word of God. We are taught in the scriptures that "we are not our own;" that we should be immolated to the world; that no man should live to himself, and no man should die to himself; whether living or dying we should be the Lord's; and that we should go through the world, bearing the cross, and wearing the yoke of Jesus. "Holiness to the Lord," should be inscribed on every power we possess, and impressed on every talent committed to our trust. The principle of entire consecration is forcibly expressed in these elegant lines of Watts :

"All that I am, and all I have,  
Shall be forever thine;  
What'er my duty bids me give,  
My cheerful hands resign.

Yet if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my Lord with zeal so great,  
That I should give him all."

There are many, it is to be feared, who repeat this heaven-born sentiment with their lips, whose hearts do not send back suitable responses. They sing with apparent interest and delight,

"I love my Lord with zeal so great,  
That I should give him all;"

And yet while this holy sentiment is still trembling on their lips, and sounding in your ear, if you ask them to give a

dollar to aid some benevolent object, or to perform some act of personal labor to promote the cause of truth, they will soon give you to understand that they have not a dollar to spare for the cause of benevolence, nor can they spend a day to promote the interests of Messiah's reign. The *poetry* of entire consecration with such persons, is one thing—but the *practice* of it, is quite another thing.

There is, we think, also, a prevailing tendency amongst some, to attempt to be satisfied with very meagre attainments in holiness, and to substitute the most imperfect models of christian devotedness, for the infallible standard which God has set up. They too frequently come under the apostle's rule of folly, by "comparing themselves among themselves, and measuring themselves by themselves." The consequence is, a constant depreciation in the standard of holiness, and a corresponding conformity to the spirit, and maxims, and fashions of the world. Oh! is it any wonder that so many of us possess no more of the spirit and power of our divine religion? If we would be happy and useful, we must make Christ our example, and let the measure of his devotedness be the constant rule of our lives.

7. Another cause of spiritual declension, originates *in a love of novelty, and the indulgence of a spirit of vain curiosity on the part of certain professors in our churches.* Almost every new theory in religion, which the ingenuity of impostors, or the boldness of ignorant and aspiring interpreters may happen to introduce, is swallowed by this class with avidity. And the more marvellous and incredible the dogmas of the system, the greater appears to be their interest for the time, in its success and prosperity. The Athenians of old were scarcely greater devotees to novelty, than are these superficial professors in our churches. Instead of walking in the old beaten paths of truth, and safety, and peace, they are continually looking and waiting for something new. The victims of the recent Miller fanaticism, and of the Mormon deception, are but fair exemplifications of this unfortunate propensity. Nor is a vain *curiosity* amongst christian professors, less to be dreaded. Everything that bears the semblance of mystery, or comes to us clothed with the veil of secrecy, possesses most bewitching enchantment to these *curious* spirits. It is this vain curiosity that leads many a christian from his home in the church, to a place in

an "Odd Fellows' Lodge;" and thus, ere he is aware of it, he loses the solemn interest which he has been wont to feel in the devotions of the prayer meeting, amid the more captivating hilarities of these worldly associations. What communion hath light with darkness? And what fellowship hath he that believeth with an infidel. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

8. Another cause of spiritual declension, is found in *the part which christians allow themselves to take in the party politics of the country*. We are not of the number who suppose that christians have nothing to do with the affairs of government. They have high and sacred duties to perform to the state as well as to the church. But it is impossible, in these times, not to suffer the painful impression that in what are called *politics*; in the choice of public officers, the discipline of parties, the measures and doings of public legislation; our countrymen are becoming fearfully insensible to all considerations of duty and obligation to God. In every other field of moral interest, in matters of temperance, in the religious observance of sabbaths, in the duties of humanity and public beneficence, the confidence of a general improvement is permitted us. And yet, in a remarkable contrast of degeneracy, we are made to see that politics are becoming every year more insensible to moral constraints and principles. Very little regard is had, in the nomination of candidates, to their qualifications, either in a moral or intellectual point of view, for the stations they are to occupy. The all-absorbing question is, who is the most *available* candidate? Who will best subserve the interests of the party? If good men are nominated, it is by the special industry and good fortune of friends. If bad, they will often answer as well, and sometimes better. It is the party that is voted for, with most persons, not the men. Moral considerations have little or no weight, after the candidate is named. Duty and the fear of God must yield to party allegiance. Even christian men will deposit their vote for a man notoriously wicked or incompetent, and blush as little as the ink in which it is printed. The whole trial is more generally one of mere physical force, in which the masses



are wielded as instruments of political adventure. How many of the voters, in all parties, at any of our warmly contested elections, can you reasonably suppose to be governed by a conscious sense of duty to their country and obedience to God? Many are compelled to make a martyr of their conscience, every time they go to the polls to vote. Even good men and christians, are suffering an allegiance to party rule, which effectually demolishes their personality under the claims of principle, learning quietly to approve, and passively to follow in whatsoever path their party leads. The fear of God has little influence. The impulse of political adventure bears down other and better impulses. Numbers and force are the instruments, success, the test of all public measures; and the amazing interests of our great country, if we do not retrace our steps, are soon to lie at the mercy of irresponsible will, instigated by a rapacity for office and power, which no constitutions or bonds of order can long restrain. Now, it is this blind devotion to party and party interests; this disregard of all suitable qualifications in the candidates who are proposed for our suffrage; this disposition to wink at immorality, and to separate politics from the law of God and the control of moral principle; that constitutes the wrong of christians in the part which they take in the politics of their country. They, above all men, should aim at a pure and lofty patriotism; seek to subordinate all the interests of party to the public weal; and decide all political measures on the principle of allegiance to God. Did they act thus, the part which they might be called upon to take in political affairs, could be performed with clean hands, and they thus render valuable service to their country, and still preserve "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men."

9. Another cause of spiritual declension, may be traced to *the erroneous views which are sometimes entertained respecting the office and duties of the gospel ministry.* There are, most unquestionably, two extremes into which portions of the religious community have fallen touching this important matter. The one is a disposition to make too much of this sacred office; to invest the ministry with a dignity and an authority to which it is not entitled; and to confide to its dictation and control what strictly belongs to the church as a body. This is the case emphatically with the Papacy; and

the same is true, to a very great extent, with all the forms of Episcopacy. The other extreme, and which, it must be acknowledged, is by far the more common in this country, is a disposition to depreciate this sacred office; to divest the ministry of *all* dignity, and *all* authority; and instead of regarding the preacher as a bishop in the church, invested with certain important prerogatives by the King in Zion, to degrade him to the mere condition of a speaking brother, and to regard his services as important, mainly, because he happens to possess a better gift at declamation than the rest of his brethren. But these extremes are fraught with manifold evils to the cause of true religion, and ought to be most sedulously shunned by all who desire the permanent prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. But as the latter of these extremes is alone applicable to those who deny the divine right of Episcopacy, and all the obnoxious forms of Romish hierarchy, it is with the evils of this extreme, that we, as a denomination, have more especially to do. Believe me, my brethren, the loose views which obtain in certain quarters in our own ranks, respecting the divine call to the work of the gospel ministry; the special qualifications of the Holy Ghost for this important undertaking; the dignity and authority with which the scriptures everywhere clothe this sacred office; and the permanency of the pastoral relations; are to be regarded with suspicion and alarm. What shall we do without a divinely appointed ministry? And what will the ministry be worth to us when it shall be divested of its legitimate authority, and the unrestricted exercise of its appropriate functions shall be denied to it? All scripture and all observation justify the conclusion, that the world can never be evangelized without a living, devoted ministry. "For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" But I go further, and say, that even when the greatest light of the gospel has shone for years and for ages, and when the minds of the people are best stored with truth, and their shelves best stocked with divinity, and where you may find a Bible in every house, even there, the attempt to dispense with a divinely appointed ministry would be fearfully disastrous. If you should take from the churches of this city their pastors, demolish their pulpits, and close up their sanctuaries,

the religion of Jesus Christ would die out among them in another generation. Did the time allow, I might explain the reason of such a result on philosophical principles. But it is enough for my present purpose, to know that the ministry of the word is the grand instrumentality appointed by God for consummating the stupendous designs of his militant kingdom, and subjugating an apostate race to the reign of Immanuel. Whatsoever, therefore, tends to impair ministerial influence, or to prevent the accomplishment of its scriptural designs, must be injurious to the interests of vital religion, and occasion inevitable declension in true spirituality.

But one of the principal evils in this connection, and one to which our attention should be most carefully directed, is the *too frequent changes of the pastoral relation*. The instability of the pastoral relation, has become just matter of alarm and censure among the tried and stable friends of our system of church organization generally. Much has been written, and more has been said, of late, of the manifold evils, both to the ministry and to the churches, of this disposition to change. I cannot, of course, go largely into the discussion of this particular at present. But I am unwilling to pass it without entering my protest against so much instability in this sacred relation. I do not advocate the settlement of a minister for life, in all cases, nor would I undertake to say, that the opening of a wider field of operation, may not sometimes justify the minister's removal. And we know that his health, often, or that of his family, may absolutely require a change in his location. But I sincerely question, whether settlements for life, or the minister's uniform refusal to listen to *louder calls*, or to accept invitations to *wider fields* of toil, would be fraught with half the evils of the present system of mutation. If it were understood that a minister must take a church as a man takes his wife, "for better or for worse," he would be very careful in forming this important connection. And if the church could not put away a minister as easy as Moses could give a writing of divorcement to a Hebrew wife, they would be more particular in selecting their spiritual guide. And when once a union had been formed, under such circumstances, it would be the study of both parties to make it mutually happy and beneficial. A careful comparison of the condition of



those churches where the pastoral relation is more permanent; where there is mutual affection, mutual forbearance, and mutual faithfulness, from year to year, and where neither pastor nor people are given to change; with those whose habits are different in these respects, cannot fail to satisfy every impartial enquirer of the immense importance of greater stability in this sacred relation. So long as these holy ties are of so frail and slight a character as to be sundered by almost every wind that blows, there must be a lack of that deep-seated, mutual affection, between the pastor and his people, which is indispensable to permanent prosperity. The minister, on the one hand, will, in such a case, be strongly tempted to labor for immediate effect; to cover up unwelcome truth; to neglect wholesome discipline; to increase the number of members without suitable regard to their religious qualifications; and, in various other ways, to court popular applause, at the expense of the permanent well-being of the church. And the people, on the other hand, when they do not intend that the relation of their pastor to them shall be a permanent thing, will not give him their hearty co-operation, nor sustain him as they should by their sympathies and their prayers. They will not generally be anxious to throw much influence into his hands; thus the usefulness of both pastor and people is diminished, and the most manifest injury results to the cause of evangelical religion in the community.

There are various other causes of spiritual declension which might be considered; such, for instance, as inordinate love of the world; abundant temporal prosperity; neglect of spiritual gifts; want of suitable attention to wholesome church discipline; and many others which time would fail me to enumerate. All these may contribute to a state of religious apathy; to quench the fire upon our sacred altars; to cause Bashan to mourn, and Carmel to languish; and to wither and kill every thing that is greenest and loveliest in Zion.

II. Having thus noticed some of the prominent causes of spiritual declension, let us now proceed to consider SOME OF THE EVILS WHICH ATTEND SUCH A CONDITION.

1. In the first place, I observe that *this condition is one of great personal unhappiness.* The light of God's countenance is withdrawn; the grace of the Spirit is withheld;

and the approving smiles of the Redeemer are no longer enjoyed. Listen to the doleful lamentation of such a soul as he seriously contemplates his wretched condition: "O that I were as in months past; as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head; and when by his light I walked through darkness." All his evidences of adoption into the family of God, and his consequent heirship with the Lord Jesus to the incorruptible inheritance of heaven, are now faint and cheerless. There are no animating prospects to dispel his despondency; no buoyant hopes of a glorious immortality, to mitigate the ills to which he is subject. The poet has well expressed his condition in these significant lines—

"But now I find an aching void,  
The world can never fill."

His circumstances are indeed peculiar; he has professedly renounced the world with its vanities, and he cannot longer enjoy its evanescent pleasures; he would not again return to its beggarly elements; and yet he is painfully conscious, that for the matchless charms of religion, he has no proper relish; that intimate communion with the uncreated Holy One, which, more than its enchanting scenery, the gentle murmurs of its forest trees, the soft rippling of its streams, and the sweet warbling of its feathered songsters, made the ancient Eden a very paradise, is to him now lost. He seems like a fruitless branch cast forth to be withered. How true it is, that "the backslider in heart is filled with his own ways."

2. A state of religious declension *renders every christian duty a burden*. Even secret prayer, which in former times brought him so often into communion with the skies, and gave him such ecstatic delight, is now, if observed at all, a mere heartless ceremony, attended with little pleasure and little profit. That altar which once smoked with oft repeated sacrifices, is now either shamefully neglected, or freighted only with defective offerings. How languid the affections—how cold the love of such a soul. Family religion, too, is allowed to decline. Formerly the domestic altar was faithfully surrounded morning and evening. The fond father and the affectionate mother were seen laboring with one

heart to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Now the family altar is not unfrequently neglected; no morning and evening incense is seen going up to heaven from this prayerless habitation; the duty of instructing and guiding the children and youth of the household is almost entirely omitted; and that yearning of spirit for the salvation of their kindred according to the flesh, which pre-eminently distinguishes devoted and active christians, finds here no permanent abode. The social prayer-meeting, and the church conference, are rarely attended by backslidden professors; and the idea of taking a public part in the exercises of such occasions, often fills them with unspeakable horror. But if the service is actually undertaken, there is generally apparent in the performance more of the "monotony of a moving machine, than of the buoyant elasticity of delighted life." Even the more public services of the sanctuary, possess but little interest in the estimation of such a person. How different are his views and feelings now, from what they were, when with the sweet singer of Israel he could say, "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand;" and "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." If he attends upon the exercises of the sanctuary on the Lord's day, it is rather from the force of habit, or the fear of censure, than from any real delight which he experiences in the services themselves. He is often troubled with a "Sunday-sickness;" and a moderate breeze, or a passing cloud, is quite sufficient, he thinks, to justify his absence from the house of God. He is utterly incapacitated for the duty of "converting sinners from the error of their ways." No man in such a condition can successfully engage in the work of winning souls to Christ. David was conscious of this when he prayed, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free spirit: *then* will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." In a word, every duty which the gospel enjoins upon him, becomes to such a person an unwelcome task; and all he does is performed rather as the result of conscious obligation, than of any pleasure which he takes in obeying the commandments of the Lord.

3. A state of spiritual declension *precludes the idea of a*



*persons entertaining adequate conceptions of the value of souls, or cherishing importunate desires for their eternal salvation.* How slight is the sympathy which is felt, in the estimate which God and all holy beings entertain of fallen sinners, and in their unceasing efforts to reclaim them. To a person sunk down in religious apathy, it would seem to be a matter almost of indifference, whether his fellow-sinners be saved or lost. God, the Father, may stoop from his high abode to devise a plan of human redemption, and open wide the door of hope to the guilty; Christ, the Redeemer, may lay aside his robes of royalty, and come down to suffer the ignominious "death of the cross," and "bear our sins in his own body on the tree;" the Holy Spirit may strive with the hearts of men, and woo them to be "reconciled to God;" angels may watch the emotions of their minds, and wait to bear the news of their repentance to the skies; devoted ministers may deny themselves of ease and affluence, and "count not their lives dear unto themselves, that they may testify the gospel of the grace of God;" and yet this cold-hearted professor, this guilty backslider in the church, may fold up his hands and say, "a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Death, judgment and eternity may be drawing on apace; all their wonderful and sublime realities may be looming up to the eye of active christian faith; the voice of God may be heard rolling down from the battlements of heaven, saying, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" "work while it is called to-day;" "why stand ye all the day idle?" and yet such is the apathy of this backslidden professor, that he remains unmoved amid all the calls of duty, and all the dangers which threaten to destroy his fellow-men. Nothing excites him; nothing draws him out in self-denying labors to save the souls of his fellow-men from death. O God! is this the conduct of a ransomed sinner? May a real christian become so cold? May he sink down into spiritual apathy so profound? Can he have tasted the sweets of redeeming love, and yet be so indifferent to the happiness of others? Is it possible that he can believe the Bible, credit its account of heaven, and its description of perdition, and not be more concerned? "Ye are the light of the world." . . . "Ye are the *salt* of the earth," says the Saviour. But

who is *enlightened* by such a soul? Whom does he *save*?

4. This condition *constitutes one of the principal stumbling-blocks in the way of sinners*. The christian is a spectacle to angels and to men. The eagle eye of a scrutinizing, fault-finding world, is constantly upon him; his deportment is most narrowly watched; and whatsoever imperfection attaches to his religious character, is made an occasion of stumbling to them that are without; he cannot walk abroad with the conscious dignity of a spiritual minded man; he cannot say to his impenitent neighbor, "come thou with us, and we will do thee *good*, for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel;" he has not the face to exhort and admonish others, while he is conscious of such delinquency himself; he fears the application of the ancient proverb—"physician heal thyself;" and the wicked are heard to say as they pass by him, "aha, aha, so we would have it;"—"where is *now* thy God?"

5. A person who suffers long from spiritual apathy, *is very apt to become a troublesome member in the church to which he belongs*. Being himself destitute of those holy impulses which should ever prompt a child of grace in all his performances, he is quite too ready to attribute to others the influence of sinister motives, or to suspect them of being actuated by evil designs in all that they do. Men are very apt to judge others by themselves. If an individual is conscious of being wrong himself, it is then very easy for him to persuade himself that every body else is out of the way. Jealousy, evil surmising and backbiting are no uncommon concomitants to a state of religious declension. If the individual thus affected, does not openly dishonor his profession, he is often made the mere tool of the devil, to sow the seeds of discord in the church, and make disturbance amongst the brethren. But more generally, such a person loses all apparent interest in the welfare of the church; violates his covenant obligations; forsakes the sanctuary; and not unfrequently reduces the church to the necessity of instituting a course of labor with him, which terminates eventually, perhaps, in his exclusion from the body.

6. A state of spiritual declension is productive of injury to the cause of Christ, *because it offers no effectual resistance to the propagation of various fatal errors in the com-*

*munity.* While the husbandman *slept*, the tares were sown in the wheat. So while christians are sunk down in spiritual slumber, the enemy is busily employed in sowing the seeds of error. It is then that infidelity, deism, universalism and every other false and fatal system of religion, finds greatest favor with the people. These monstrous delusions are generally swept by the board, whenever christians awake from their lethargy, and Zion arrays herself in her beautiful garments. They cannot endure the light of true spiritual life.

7. He who suffers from spiritual declension, *will be worth comparatively little to the great objects of christian benevolence which characterize the present remarkable age.* God has put it into the hearts of his people to institute various plans of benevolence, for the purpose of spreading the gospel more rapidly through the world. Thus we have our missionary societies, for the purpose of spreading the truth by means of the living ministry; our bible societies, for the general distribution of the sacred scriptures; our tract and publication societies, for diffusing religious knowledge by means of colporteurs and books; our education societies, for training the rising ministry for greater usefulness in their high vocation; and various other philanthropic institutions, whose object is to meliorate the condition of our race, and give universal prevalence to the principles of righteousness and peace. All these great christian associations of the day, should find a place in our benevolent regards. Like the various rivers that come out of Eden from a common source, none of which could be dried up without famishing some of the nations, these several institutions have their appropriate work to accomplish; and none of them can be dispensed with, without essentially impairing the symmetry and efficiency of our entire system of benevolent operations. But to sustain these societies as they should be, and to give them all the efficiency of which they are capable, great efforts are necessary, and great sacrifices must be encountered. They must have the warm sympathies, the ardent prayers, the liberal contributions, and the devoted care of the friends of Zion. But from those who are sunk down in religious apathy, no such interest in their prosperity is to be expected. Their support, to a very great extent, must depend upon the uniform regard



which is entertained for them, by those who daily pray, "thy kingdom come." And I submit whether it is not alone owing to the lack of spirituality in our churches, that our acting Board of Missions, have been compelled, more than once, to agitate the question of retrenchment in their operations, and to discuss the propriety of recalling some of the missionaries. If the graces of the Spirit were in vigorous exercise in our churches; if every christian did but realize that he is not his own, but that all he is, and all he has, are the purchase of redeeming blood, could there be any lack of support for our benevolent associations? There is no lack of *ability* to do all that is required in relation to these institutions. The only difficulty is a lack of devotedness to the cause of Christ; a want of true spirituality on the part of christian professors. Only give us enough of proper christian engagedness on the part of the members of our churches generally, and the treasuries of these respective societies would soon overflow with the willing offerings of the people, and new channels of benevolence will be required to conduct through the world the benefactions of the people.

8. And yet again. This condition lays the foundation for bitter regrets and doleful lamentation, in the hour of death. A fearful wo is denounced against those who are at ease in Zion; and sooner or later it will certainly overtake the offender. He may pass along in comparative comfort through most of his journey below; but when he comes to the Jordan of death, and is about to plunge into its dark, cold waters, it will not be strange if he should experience the sad effects of his culpable delinquency. How often do we hear the lamentations of the unfaithful in that trying scene. Instead of enjoying the sweet consciousness that their work is done, and well done, and that they are all "ready to be offered," when the time of their departure is at hand, they writhe with anguish at the thought, that so much which it was their duty to accomplish is left unperformed. A world of neglected duties and broken vows, cries to heaven against them. Their works are all "unperfected before God." Hear one of these dying professors exclaim—"O that I had better adorned my profession! O that I had lived in stricter conformity to my Lord's commands! O that I had been more entirely crucified to the

world! O that I had been more devoted and zealous in my endeavors to win my children, and my friends to the Saviour! But alas! it is now too late to redeem a mis-spent life! I am verily guilty! O God, save me or I perish!" How unlike the faithful christian does he die. The devoted christian well may sing—in rapture sing—

"O if my Lord would come and meet,  
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,  
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,  
Nor feel the terrors as she passed.

Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on his breast I lean my head,  
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

III. Having thus considered some of the prominent *causes* and *evils* of spiritual declension, it now only remains that I should point out THE REMEDIES, AND ENFORCE THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR APPLICATION.

The Saviour, in his direction to the church of Ephesus, has given us clear intimation that there are sovereign remedies for this deplorable condition. This is his prescription— "*Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.*" You perceive that the directions of Christ require an attention to three particulars.

1. "*Remember from whence thou art fallen.*" Consideration is always the first step to amendment. Think, then, of the sweetness of the time when first you felt a Saviour's pardoning blood—

"Applied to cleanse your soul from guilt,  
And bring you home to God."

Think of your delightful communion with the Father of your spirit, when, with inexpressible joy you were enabled to say, "though he was angry with me, his anger is turned away, and now he comforts me." Think of all your cheering prospects, your animating hopes, your ecstatic joys, when the candle of the Lord shone on your head. Think of your delight in religious duties, your love for the brotherhood, your anxiety for the salvation of sinners, and your ardent prayers for the universal extension of Christ's kingdom in the world. Think of all these, and then "*remem-*

*ber from whence thou art fallen."* Contemplate seriously the striking contrast between your present wretched circumstances, as a backslider, and your former happy state, when the benignant smiles of the Redeemer were so richly enjoyed; and let the painful spectacle humble you in the very dust. And, then, while thus oppressed with the gloomy perception of the sad change which has come over you, observe the next step which the Saviour has pointed out in the process of recovery. That is,

2. "*Repent.*" Exercise a godly sorrow for your sins, both of omission and commission. Open wide the flood gates of penitent regret, for all your guilty departures from the Lord, and all the insults offered to his grace and Spirit. Bring out every one of your transgressions as they are recorded on the long catalogue of human iniquities, and examine each of them in the light of the judgment day, and a boundless eternity. Nay, come with me to the cross of Calvary, and see the Son of God in tears, and agonies, and blood, terminating upon a gibbet his eventful life; and learn in every sigh that heaves his bosom, in every groan that escapes his lips, in every tear that courses down his cheeks, in every drop of his precious blood, the true desert of every transgression. How great the guilt to require such an expiation. How fearful the doom from which alone this sacred blood can deliver us. Hasten, then, to this wondrous cross, and throw yourself down beneath the droppings of this precious blood, and cry with the sinking Peter, "Lord, save or I perish," or with the penitent Publican, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." And having done this, you will be prepared for the final step in this work of reformation, which is,

3. To "*do the first works.*" Sitting at the feet of Jesus, and looking up through his streaming blood, with hope and peace, you will be ready to inquire with all the interest of a newly pardoned sinner, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And having learned your duty, you will be ready to perform it with ineffable delight. It will be more than your meat and your drink to do the will of your heavenly Father, and imitate the examples of your blessed Redeemer. Thus will you enjoy again the peace that passeth all understanding; your soul will expand with the renewed communications of the Saviour's love; your life



will be crowned with hope and happiness; your death will be serene and tranquil; and your immortality will be infinitely glorious.

Brethren and friends, the discussion is closed. In committing this whole subject to your most candid consideration, allow me to express the earnest hope which I cherish, that you will not confound the amazing importance of my theme, with the manifold imperfections which have characterized its discussion. With inexpressible emotion, permit me to inquire, if the standard of piety amongst us, my brethren, is not entirely too low? Is not the measure of our devotedness to the cause of Christ, by far too small? Is it not evident that the Lord has departed from us? Are not the heavens shut up over our heads? Which way then shall we turn? To whom shall we look? "Vain is the help of man." Shall we, then, fold our arms and say one to another, "there is no hope?" No, my brethren, this would be criminal unbelief. There is a power that can save us; that can "open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing, till there shall not be room enough to receive it." While, therefore, the unthinking multitudes inquire at every corner of the streets, "who will show us any good?" let it be the humble petition of our hearts, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known—in wrath remember mercy." "Lord spare thy people, and give not thy heritage to reproach." Let the time to favor Zion, yea the set time speedily come. "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render thee the calves of our lips." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." AMEN and AMEN.

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#### AN EXTRACT.

Ministers are not enough in the habit of presenting the gospel to the minds of their hearers, *as a cause fitted and designed to bring them to immediate repentance and submission to God.* In its nature and design, the gospel is such a cause. While it comes with the offer of pardon and life to lost men, its authoritative demand is, that they repent and accept the offer, *and that they do it now.* In this character it was uniformly presented by the apostles; and

thus urged, it wrought wonders in the hearts and lives of men. They met their hearers in the most free, unembarrassed manner, just as if they intended and expected to persuade them to become christians on the spot. In pressing home the claims of duty, they appear not to have felt the least difficulty from any doctrinal views of the atonement, or of man's dependence, or of God's sovereignty and purposes. They addressed men as free moral agents, every way capacitated to hear and obey the voice of God: they addressed them as guilty, perishing sinners, standing in infinite need of the mercy offered them in the gospel; and having made known to them the way of salvation by Christ, they urged home the duty of an immediate acceptance of him, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of lost men.

In their manner of delivering God's message, we see no protracted process of using the means of grace pointed out; no analysis of difficulties to be gotten over; no philosophical explanation of the origin and nature of sin, or of the mode of the change effected in regeneration; no allowance of any future time to repent, or of any delay of duty in the attitude of passively waiting God's time to give repentance. All was plain matter of fact,—direct summons to duty. And was it not this straight-forward, direct way of preaching the gospel, with the fixed design and earnest expectation of its being immediately and powerfully efficacious, which in primitive times produced such great and sudden results in the conviction and conversion of sinners? Repentance and faith are indeed preached at the present day, as duties of immediate obligation; but frequently, it is believed, in connection with other statements which break the force of these duties, and quiet the conscience in sin: and instead of looking for effect in accordance with such preaching, nothing, perhaps, would strike the preacher himself with greater astonishment, than to see his hearers actually repenting, as did those of Peter, while he was yet announcing to them the message of God. The most he expects, even from his best efforts, is, that possibly some of his hearers may be induced to attend to the subject; or, to use a common illustration, that the seed sown may, perchance, spring up and bear fruit at some future day. The consequence is, that the gospel is in a great measure deprived of its power, and comparatively few immediate effects are realized from its ministrations.—*Christian Spectator.*

## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—No. I.

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### CALL TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.\*

The subject of our present address . . . may be thus stated :

“ What may be considered as constituting a scriptural call to the gospel ministry. The subject thus proposed, appears to us to have an important bearing on the well-being of our churches, and the prosperity of religion ; and to require, therefore, a *proper view* and a *corresponding action*.

To form a just solution of this query, or, in other words, a correct view of this point, is indeed highly desirable ; inasmuch as, from the nature of the case, an erroneous decision must be attended with injurious consequences. An ignorant enthusiast, on the one hand, who pertinaciously adheres to *his* notion of a divine call, will endeavor to thrust himself on the church and the world—confidently intruding where angels might tremble ; while, on the other hand, an intelligent disciple, who is diffident of his call to the ministry, will shrink from the undertaking—fearful of running before he is sent. Such will be the result, on the one hand and on the other, of a mistaken view of this matter : and this consideration furnishes a strong reason for endeavoring to ascertain the truth, as to the question now before us.

The reality of a scriptural call—say, if you please, a *divine* call, to the gospel ministry, ought not to be questioned, merely because the idea may have been abused, or mistaken views formed on that point. It may be made satisfactorily to appear : nor is it necessary, nor indeed is it proper, in maintaining this point, to resort to that often misapplied passage, Heb. v : 4, “ No man taketh this honor unto himself,

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\* This article, with which we commence our regular series on the *christian ministry*, or *pastoral theology*, was prepared by the Rev. Andrew Broadus, as a Circular Letter for the Dover Association, in 1838. We believe, in publishing this excellent letter, and placing it at the head of our series of articles on the vastly important subject of the *christian ministry*, we shall be gratifying our brethren, and advancing the cause of the Redeemer. The letter is abridged, but nothing is left out that properly belongs to the subject indicated by the head of this article. EDITORS.



but he that is called of God, as was Aaron:”—a passage which, (as the connection shows,) is referable, not to the gospel ministry, but solely to the high priesthood. The fact, that there is provision made by the King of Zion, for the sure perpetuation of his church on earth, and for the continuance of the gospel ministry, goes to prove, as it necessarily involves, the reality of a *call* to this important work—in such a way as he, (the King himself,) has been pleased to adopt. What that way is, it will be our aim presently to ascertain, and lay before you. But first, notice this guarantee of which we have spoken—this security for the continuance of the church and the ministry. Brief testimony may here suffice.

Hearken then to the prophetic declaration, Dan. ii : 44, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.” And hearken to the assurance given by our Lord, in accordance with this prophecy, Matt., xvi : 18, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The purpose of grace here declared, looks forward through all time, to that glorious consummation, when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.” The continuance of the church on earth, bespeaks, of course, the continuance of the ministration of the word ; and the testimony of Paul assures us of the provision which has been made for this purpose, from first to last. Ministers, both ordinary and extraordinary, are represented by the apostle as the *gifts* of the ascended Saviour : “He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Ephes. iv : 11, 12.

Aware of the peculiarity of the apostolic office, we do not pretend to ground our view of this matter on the vocation of the first twelve, which was the personal act of Christ, in his bodily presence on earth. We do not indeed perceive that it was in any such way, that the elders of the churches were appointed to their office in the days of the apostles. That the apostles, those prime ministers of the King, were invested with authority to proclaim his word and to teach his

will *independent of church sanction*, there can be no question. They had new facts to publish—new truths to unfold, and a new economy to establish; and they were furnished with miraculous powers, to evince the truth of their mission, and to sustain their high pretensions. If, therefore, any person should now lay claim to a divine commission, *infallible and independent of all human sanction*, he will have no right to demand our credence, unless he can produce some token or evidence corresponding with that claim:—otherwise, (and we ask particular attention to this point, otherwise,) the church may be intruded on by every one who may take it into his head, that he is divinely commissioned to engage in the work of the ministry. Hitherto we have attended to it on the *negative* side only: we turn now to the *positive*, and repeat the query—“What may be considered as constituting a scriptural call to the gospel ministry?”

We here assume that the subject of this call is possessed of genuine piety—the basis of all other requisites in this case; and we remark, that if we can ascertain what are the *essential qualifications* for the christian ministry, we shall arrive at a solution of the question: for he that is possessed of *these*, may be considered (as Mr. Fuller remarks,) to be called of God to exercise them. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same,” is the divine injunction, “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Only let him take heed that “if he speak, it be according to the oracles of God.” 1 Pet. iv: 10, 11. The question then assumes this form: What are these essential qualifications, which constitute or evince a call to the gospel ministry? We conceive them to consist of two sorts: *Proper exercise of mind*, and *talents or gifts suited to the work*.

First—*proper exercises of mind*.

There ought to be a *desire* for this work. The office of a bishop includes the work of teaching, and in regard to that office, Paul mentions a *desire* as being supposed to exist on the part of the individual: 1 Tim. iii: 1. Now it follows, that an evangelist—that any person engaging in the work of the ministry, should feel a desire to be so engaged. It is very probable that this desire may be, in a great measure, quenched, in the hearts of some who ought to have been encouraged, and to have taken courage, to come forth and

to go on. But still we say, there ought to be a desire for the work. It forms a first principle in the spring of action towards this employment. And we may add, that there ought to be a *speciality* in this desire,—an earnest longing to be thus engaged in the service of “the Captain of our salvation,” if so it might be. It follows—

That this desire must be *of the right sort*. The same motives and feelings of heart which actuated an apostle, must actuate every minister of the gospel, for both engage in the common cause, and both serve the same Master. Let us then take Paul for a model. Of the nature of his feelings and motives, he himself has fully informed us, and has certified the truth of his professions by his labors and his sufferings. Let him speak: “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death:” Phil. i: 20. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ:” Gal. vi: 20. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel, is, that they might be saved:” Rom. x: 1. “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men:” 2 Cor. v: 11. “For the love of Christ constraineth us:” ver. 14. “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake:” 2 Tim. ii: 10. “Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith:” 1 Thes. iii: 10. These quotations will suffice to exhibit the principles by which this man of God was influenced;—to let us see that the glory of God—the honor of the Redeemer—the salvation of dying sinners, and the prosperity of the church, were the objects which inspired his zeal and governed his heart. Such were his principles; and to the influence of these principles it was owing, that he was enabled to say, with the prospect of “bonds and afflictions” before him—“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

(Conclusion in next No.)



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# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

VOL. V.

February, 1846.

NO. 2.

## THE FRAILITY OF HUMAN LIFE;

A Sermon, \* preached in Hampton, Va., Nov. 2, 1845, at the funeral of Miss COURTNEY BROUGH, who died Oct. 31, at the venerable age of CIV years and six months, by REV. J. R. SCOTT.

*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*—PSALMS XC: 10.

It is an extraordinary occasion, my friends, that has called us together at this time,—an occasion, which, in itself, is more instructive than any sermon it can call forth. Such an event as this is of exceedingly rare occurrence, and one which seems almost to stamp an air of falsehood on our very text. Those inspired words declare the limit of human life to be seventy years, with a bare possibility, in cases of uncommon vigor of constitution, that eighty may be reached. But we are now attending the funeral solemnities of one who was spared through the revolution of more than a century, and thus by more than twenty years exceeded the outer limit assigned by the sacred writer.

There is no necessity, I presume, for any labored attempt on my part, to reconcile this seeming discrepancy between God in his providence and God in his word. The Psalmist was not ignorant of the fact that instances do occur of per-

\* The author's apology for the publication of this discourse, is, the extraordinary event which called it forth, and the desire which has been expressed by a number of friends, that it should appear in print. He hopes it is a better feeling than vanity, which leads him to beg the indulgence of readers for a production on which circumstances admitted of his bestowing but a day's labor.

sons surviving the period of fourscore years; nor did the spirit of inspiration conceive of so futile a design as to delude men into an error in respect to the possible duration of human life. The text is descriptive of man's frailty; and what the Psalmist would be understood to say, is, that he who presumes on living beyond eighty years, presumes where the odds are all against him—where he has no ground for his expectation—where the common course of nature turns all the reasons in opposition to his presumption. So few are the cases in which persons live to a greater age than fourscore, that to speak of any age beyond, and especially of a century, would render a picture of human frailty untrue to the reality. To introduce into the description so rare an occurrence, would be doing like the artist, who, in painting a landscape, should distinctly bring out those minute and distant objects which truth to nature requires be left out of the canvas. And yet, my friends, it is one of these very occurrences, so exceedingly rare, that has brought us together this morning. We are witnesses of a scene, which many pass long lives without witnessing—the funeral of one who has survived a hundred years. Our departed friend was indeed spared to a great age—*one hundred, four and a half years!* In that time, how many, and how great events have transpired! No less than five monarchs have sat upon the throne of England, one of them for sixty years; and our own great nation has come into existence! At the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte, the deceased was within a few months as old as your speaker. In her life-time, how many thousands have fallen on a thousand battle fields! But, what is delightful to contemplate, how many great movements have been set on foot, and successfully carried out, to liberate, to elevate, and to save mankind!

Probably few, if any, in this congregation, have ever before been present on such an occasion. And what should be the effect on us? Should it be to diminish our sense of the shortness of life, seeing that the days of the deceased were so lengthened out? Should it be to increase our feeling of security, and to flatter us so with the notion that *our* lives may be long protracted, as to embolden us in putting off attention to the insuring of our souls' salvation? If such, dear hearers, is the use to which we put this occasion, we most grossly pervert it. I conceive that this event,

instead of weakening the force of those lessons so impressively taught us by our text, ought only to augment the force with which they should come home to our minds; and I pray God that what is so out of the common course in this dispensation of his providence, may only serve to imprint the more deeply in our minds both the ordinary lessons of mortality, and those particular lessons which are suggested by our text.

Let me, then, proceed at once to direct your attention to the instruction of this passage. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for they are soon cut off, and we fly away."

I. From these words we learn, in the first place, that *human life, however lengthened out, must come to an end.* Our lives as compared with the lives of others, may be long, but impartial death will come to us at length. Mortality is our common lot. There is no discharge in this war. "His days," says Job, "are determined; the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." The days of our years may be threescore years and ten; they may reach even to fourscore; nay, they may, as in the case of our departed friend, be increased even very considerably beyond that; but the shaft of the insatiate archer cannot be escaped; sooner or later, it will pierce us, and we must fall.

But he is only the messenger of another. It is God who issues the decree. It is the author of life who is the arbiter of life's close. "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return, ye children of men." It is the same Being in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind, who taketh away their breath, so that they die, and return to the dust. And *why is it* that death is thus inevitable? The reason is suggested in the connection of our text. Says the Psalmist, "we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." When we consider the goodness and the power of God in connection with the fact of our mortality, we cannot but feel that in some way our race has been subjected to his displeasure, and that this is the cause of our mortality. Such we find to be the case. It is

*Miss [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]*



because we are a corrupt and sinful race, that we are a dying race. We inherit depravity, and this has infused the poison into our veins which must issue in our dissolution. The sentence pronounced originally on our general father in Eden, was pronounced on him as the representative of his race—"dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." That sentence continues in full force against all his posterity. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so that death hath passed upon all men, because that all have sinned." It was part of the direful penalty of Adam's transgression, and probably no little aggravation of his own personal punishment, that he should transmit to the remotest generation of his descendants, a sinful, diseased and mortal constitution; that he should not merely die himself, but that all who should trace their origin to him should die.

My hearers, it is not for us to arraign our Maker, and question the equity of this arrangement. That the principle holds, not only in our relation to Adam, but in all the relations of life, is beyond dispute. It is one of the great principles of God's moral government. Our Sovereign has so ordered it that no one of us can sin, without others being more or less affected by the consequences. The child must feel the effects of his father's vicious excesses. He feels them in the diseased and debilitated body he has derived from his parent. The spendthrift head of a family not only brings penury and sorrow upon himself, but also reduces all who are dependent on him to want and woe by his prodigality. And so throughout society. We may presume to question the justice of this arrangement as much as we please, but we cannot deny that it exists. God has so constituted us, and has so constituted society, that it must be so—it cannot be otherwise. But is there nothing to counterbalance this gloomy and mysterious part of his plan? It is true that we suffer from sins and vices not our own. Is it not equally true, that we derive benefits from good deeds and virtues not our own? Does the child profit nothing from the excellencies of the parent? How many owe their fortune, and good name, and standing in society far more to others with whom they are, or have been connected, than to themselves. The jealous God who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, delights also to show mercy

unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments. What claim have these latter to the blessings which fall to them? And what claim, we demand, has the child, on the score of equity, to be freed from the inconveniences entailed on him by his father's vices, which does not prove also that he has no right to derive advantages from his father's virtues? Men do not complain of this arrangement so far as it affects them favorably; but when it involves them in misery, they hesitate not to murmur, and accuse their righteous Sovereign of injustice; and this notwithstanding the plan is so admirably adapted at once to restrain men from wickedness, and excite them to the highest moral excellence.

And has God revealed nothing in his plan, as an offset to the unhappiness of our condition in consequence of our relation to Adam? Yes, dear hearers, there is not only a first Adam, in whom we fell, but there is also a second Adam, in whom we may be restored. A glorious provision has been made for our redemption. As in Adam we have death, so in Jesus Christ we may have life, and life eternal. The original sentence must indeed be inflicted on our bodies; but if we believe in Jesus, the day is coming when both soul and body shall be gloriously wrested from the hand of the destroyer. Hear the voice of death's conqueror: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Hear an apostle: "If by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they that receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Here, my friends, you see the offset to the unhappy consequences of Adam's fall, which accrue to us. So far as original sin is concerned, the second Adam has doubtless cancelled the guilt of that, and removed from us its retribution in eternity. And so far as our own actual personal sins are concerned, he stands ready to take those upon himself,

and secure our perfect justification, if we will but believe in him, and thus accept the proffer of his grace. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Having by faith laid hold of this precious provision, we may triumphantly exclaim, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." By this arrangement, we are placed under conditions even more favorable for securing eternal life, than those under which Adam was originally placed in Eden. So, should we persist in neglecting so great salvation, just indeed will Jehovah be seen to be, not merely in rendering it impossible for us to escape the natural death, which is the lot of all, but that second death also which he has denounced against all obstinate unbelievers.

"There is a death whose pang  
Outlasts the fleeting breath;  
O, what eternal horrors hang  
Around the second death!

Lord God of truth and grace,  
Teach us that death to shun,  
Lest we be banished from thy face,  
And evermore undone."

I have thus stated, as fully and clearly as my limits allow, the facts and principles pertaining to the first lesson of our text—that our lives, however lengthened out, must come to an end. Much more might be said, but I am compelled to pass on.

II. The text teaches us, in the second place, that *human life, at longest, is very short*. When the Psalmist speaks of threescore years and ten, and fourscore, he speaks of this advanced age very differently from most men. We do not hear him exclaiming, how astonishingly long do some people live! To what a wonderful extent the lives of many are drawn out! No, no, he does not say this. He would bring up vividly before our minds how frail and transitory is that earthly sojourn which can be protracted no longer.



“It is soon cut off, and we fly away.” What a span is that existence whose longest duration is embraced within such narrow limits. The simple reading of the text is enough to show that this is the idea intended.

But it is necessary for us to observe the connection in which this passage stands, in order to understand clearly the light in which the brevity of man’s life was presented to the mind of the inspired penman. It was in contemplating the eternity of God’s existence, that man’s appeared to him so short. “Before the mountains were brought foith, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.” He was thinking of God as “the high and holy One, who inhabiteth eternity,” whose “name is from everlasting,” whose “years are throughout all generations,” in whose sight “a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” Ah! he cries, what a contrast between the existence of the infinite Jehovah, and that of the worm upon his footstool! It is thought little short of a miracle that a man should still be able to totter about under the burden of fourscore years—but what a nothing is this, when brought into comparison with the eternity of Him who has “been our dwelling place in all generations.”

This, my hearers, is the most impressive view that can possibly be taken of the shortness of human life; and when, in this light, the question is asked, “What is your life?” what other answer can be given save that which inspiration has itself returned—“it is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” In this view, even the age of Methuselah, nine hundred sixty and nine years, appears short. How much more the space within which the longest life at the present day is contracted. In how many ways might we compare our stay on earth, and it would seem short. Man’s days are few when compared with the duration of his own works even. There is hardly anything he makes which does not outlive him. But what are finite things in comparison with the infinite? *They* can all be traced back to a beginning; and as far as this world is concerned, we can set a time in futurity, and say they shall then be known no more. How different is it with God. The mind may stretch back into the dim past, before the first stone of the pyramids was laid; it may reach back to a

time when the names of Rome, and Greece, and Egypt, and Assyria, had never been uttered; nay, to that time when the earth itself "was without form and void;" but an eternity still stretches out back of all this, and the mind staggers and halts in its attempt to reach a period when God was not; and glancing forward, it finds him still, "the living God, and steadfast forever." It was this contrast that impressed the mind of the Psalmist so powerfully with a sense of the shortness and frailty of human life.

Our stay on earth being, at longest, so brief, what, my dear hearers, is the inevitable inference? Is it not, that our Maker created us for something more than earth? Is it not, that whatsoever our hand findeth to do in the accomplishment of life's great end, we should do it with all our might? How often have you been told that you were sent into this world to prepare for another. Short as life is, it is long enough for its design. If perverted—if not put to that use which God requires, a short life is too long; for every added day is only augmenting the fearful weight of that wrath which we are treasuring up against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Already, sinner, art thou involved in guilt and condemnation. The thunders of Sinai are out against you, and except you repent, you must certainly perish. I point you to Calvary!—behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world! There, there is your only refuge; hasten for your life! To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. As an ambassador for Christ, as though God did beseech you by me, I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

III. There is one lesson more suggested by the text. I accordingly remark, we are taught in the third place, that *what is added to the ordinary duration of human life, is, after all, what is little to be desired.* If, by reason of strength, our years be fourscore, "yet," says the Psalmist, "is their strength labor and sorrow." That is, what is added to life to make it of extraordinary length, embraces in it but little of enjoyment. The extending of our years beyond the period of health and vigor, so far from increasing, can only lessen the balance of our happiness. Of course, the solace of those religious comforts with which we sometimes see old age rendered serene and happy, are here to be

thrown out of the question. So far as this world goes, it is certain that extreme old age brings with it a crowd of infirmities, inconveniencies and distresses, which far overbalance all the pleasures that can attend it. How striking are the Psalmist's words: "Yet is their *strength* labor and sorrow." Even that vigor of constitution which protracts life beyond the ordinary limits, serves only to lengthen it out for the experience of weariness and pain. And is not this true? The days of life's decline are at best dying days. The vital current is fast ebbing away. The senses are blunted, if not destroyed—the channels of pleasure are dry—the body is crippled and infirm—the mental faculties have sunk into the imbecility of second childhood—the friends and associates of former years have all gone down to the grave. The subject of all this—and of how much more!—asks, "where is the world into which I was born?" He feels that he is a mere fragment cast up from the wreck of a by-gone generation—a mere dependent and burdensome thing, incapacitated alike to add to the happiness of others, or to enjoy happiness himself. If this be true, surely the fact that some, here and there one, survive to an extraordinary age, does not at all throw light over the lamentable picture of human frailty; it rather deepens and darkens the gloomy colors; but, above all, affords a still stronger argument for the importance of religion. If it is possible that before our departure from earth, we may be called to linger through a period, in which, if we have not the comforts of religion to cheer us, we shall be bereft of all solace, surely *that* period should be provided for. Be assured, my dear friends, both you who are young, and you who are in middle age, the only effectual preparation for old age is the preparation for eternity. But here I find in God's own word an exhortation so much better than any I can frame, that I choose to address that to you: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"—why? mark what follows; how direct it is to the point: "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, *I have no pleasure in them*; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened; nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the



grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened.”

This exhortation is couched in highly figurative language, but its general drift, I presume, is sufficiently obvious. The infirmities and maladies of old age are graphically depicted, and this for the purpose of showing the importance of remembering our Creator in the days of our youth. Yes, my friends, it is true that duty and interest imperatively demand that in early life we give our hearts to God. He who puts off this business to old age, or at all to the future, puts it off to a period he may never, he probably *will* never see; and he who shall reach old age will find that he has postponed the matter to a time the most unfavorable of all his life. We cannot doubt that some have cried to God in the eleventh hour, and he has heard and saved them; but such cases fall little short of miracles. So infrequent are they, as to evince the folly and presumption of drawing encouragement from them to delay preparing for eternity. Besides, how difficult it is for an aged person to arouse himself, recal his wandering, bewildered, absent powers, and bring them to bear connectedly and energetically on any subject. Who shall attempt to kindle emotion in that bosom, bound up in the frosts of so many years of worldliness and sin? Who shall attempt to turn that current, whose volume has been swollen and force augmented by the contributions of so long a period? Who shall presume to hope, after resisting so long a series of warnings and invitations, expostulations and entreaties, that, when the cup of life is drained to the dregs, Jehovah will then hear his call and be merciful to him? I do not say that it will not be so, but I do say, that it is presumption to expect it. And moreover, I declare, there is not one probability in a thousand, that under such circumstances there will be either the disposition or the energy of will to utter such a cry for mercy. Listen then now to your Maker's voice, and regard it—"I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

I have thus, my hearers, endeavored to lay before you the lessons which I conceive are taught us by our text. We have seen that our life on earth, however lengthened out, *must* come to an end; that at the longest, it is but short; and that what is added to make up extraordinary old age is, after all, an addition of little that is to be desired. I have

also endeavored, as I have proceeded, to apply and urge home on you these truths for your individual improvement. I have addressed this subject to you, because I could think of none more suitable to the occasion. I doubt not that if our aged and highly respected friend, whose decease has called forth this sermon, could return to earth, she would bear her testimony to the truth and the importance of every sentiment that has been advanced.

We trust that after so long a delay on the shores of time, our friend has been welcomed to a better world. For a very considerable time before her decease, and before the prospect of speedy departure, she was accustomed frequently and with the utmost fervor, to offer up prayer to God. Her situation has not admitted of my having many conversations with her, which, in themselves, could afford much satisfaction, although in one I was struck with the simplicity and evident sincerity with which she acknowledged the goodness of God in sparing her life, and bestowing on her so many blessings through so long a series of years. That, notwithstanding her eccentricities and the abruptness of her address, she possessed one of the kindest of hearts, all who knew her will bear witness. In the relationships of this life, I am confident not one can be found who will deny that she was an affectionate relative, an indulgent mistress, a most excellent neighbor, and an ardent friend. We leave her in the hands of the merciful God, satisfied that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and hoping, through the Redeemer's blood, to meet her one day in the bright and blissful presence of our Heavenly Father.

May all those who are left behind to mourn her loss, be comforted under this bereavement, and find their affliction sanctified to them for their spiritual and everlasting good. Especially, may our beloved *sister*, herself in the decline of life, and encompassed with the infirmities of age, be sustained and blessed in this trying season. May her last days be her best days; and when it shall please God to remove her hence, may she be gathered, like a shock of corn fully ripe in its season, into the garner of her Lord.

And may God, of his infinite mercy, enable each one of us to heed the admonitions both of his providence and of his word. May he so teach us all to number our days, that we shall apply our hearts unto wisdom. Amen.

## USEFULNESS OF MINISTERS.

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It would greatly enlarge the usefulness of ministers, were they to pay an increased attention to the preparation of their sermons. Every minister ought to take care, that his plans be lucid and judicious, and that his sermons be rich in matter and in illustration, powerful in argument, and overpowering in conviction and persuasion. It is not for us to determine, whether discourses shall be written or unwritten; but this we insist on,—they should be well prepared.

When we say, that sermons should be well prepared, we mean, that the subjects should be well chosen, the topics naturally and clearly arranged, the whole full of thought, glowing with intensesness of interest, shining with truth, and full of persuasion, which will melt and move the soul. We mean that such language should be used, as will constitute acceptable words; language far removed from the coarse, the low, or the vulgar; language which shall accord with the seriousness and majesty of the message of the gospel, and “well become the messenger of God to guilty men.” In a word, every sermon ought to be a good sermon, well adapted to compass the great end of preaching. We would by no means have a minister neglect any of the duties which belong to his office; but we would say, “these ought ye to have done, but not to leave the other undone.”

Ought not every minister to aim at all this? And might not every one who is called and qualified to preach the gospel, attain to it? But we fear there are multitudes of ministers, who do not even aim to have their sermons well prepared, nor their thoughts clothed in acceptable words. But these are not the men to hold an influence with persons of taste and learning. They may have influence for a time, and do good in some spheres, no doubt; but there are persons in every community whom the mediocrity of their sermons prevents their reaching. Sermons prepared as we have been endeavoring to urge, will cost time and labor, will cost close and continuous thinking, will cost fervent prayer and earnest wrestling with God. But what man of God, who ministers at the christian altar, can satisfy his conscience, or his desire for the approbation of God and good men, with any thing less than this?—*Christian Review.*



## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—No. II.

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### CALL TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(CONCLUDED.)

While we insist, however, on the exercise of principles such as these, we do not say that the pious and conscientious minister of Christ is exempt from feelings of quite another sort;—feelings which too often arise from his own nature, and mingle their muddy streams with the pure fountain of holy and heavenly motives. “This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation:” but it is of the prevailing principles that we have been speaking: these govern the course and stamp the character of the man. Nor do we pretend, in holding forth the apostle Paul as the model, that we can present you with a race of ministers, (or even with *one*,) who can vie with him in that ardent and unabating zeal—that noble, self-sacrificing spirit, which marked his shining career. But this we say, that the minister who is scripturally called will be found a participant of the same spirit—will aim for the same path, and will follow, though at humble distance, in his footsteps. We may mention here, what indeed has been implied in our remarks, the necessity of an ardent thirst for an increasing knowledge of holy truth—for a right understanding of the mind of the Spirit, as revealed in the volume of inspiration.

But this desire to be personally engaged in the work of the ministry, and characterized, though it may be, by right principles, is subject, as we have before remarked, to be checked, where it ought to have free exercise and be put into operation. Such an effect may arise from an apprehension of difficulties to be encountered and work to be performed, to which there may be a distressing sense of insufficiency. In such a case it is no wonder that there should be a shrinking from the task, even where there is an earnest zeal of the right character, and an earnest wish to lend a helping hand in carrying on the work of the Lord. Now, in counteraction to this shrinking disposition, a strong *impression* may take place, which ought not to be slighted;

an impression consisting in a persuasion of *duty*, duty to go forward, through all difficulties, in the public service of the great Master. This impression then—this conflict between an apprehension of insurmountable difficulties on the one hand, and a sense of duty on the other, may constitute another element in a scriptural call to the work of the ministry.

We have now, brethren, presented to your notice what we consider to be *one species* of qualifications, appertaining to a call to the gospel ministry. They regard, as we have seen, *the exercises of the mind*. But these exercises, be it observed, are not to be considered as sufficient, *of themselves*, to constitute the *call* of which we are speaking. They may exist in the absence of other qualifications necessary to the work of the ministry. And this brings us to notice—

The second species of qualifications requisite in this case, namely, the *talents adapted to the work*.

The possession of such talents is obviously implied in the apostolic requisition—"apt to teach:" 1 Tim. iii: 2; and 2 Tim. ii: 24. Talents are of two sorts—*natural* and *acquired*. In order to this "aptness" of which the apostle speaks, there must be some considerable stock of *natural* talent;—a mind capable of invention, or of forming original ideas, and a faculty to communicate these ideas to others. Pious persons, possessed of but small gifts, may employ them usefully in admonition and exhortation; but to *sermonize*—to exhibit the gospel in its various bearings, and to explain and illustrate its sacred truths—this is another matter, and requires that talent of a different order be brought into action.

Now, while the individual himself is the judge of his own desires and motives—of all his own exercises of mind, others must judge of the fitness of his talents for the work: and the proper persons for this judgment are those with whom he stands immediately connected, together with any others who, by them, may be called on to aid in such a case. For, as the minister is to be considered in the capacity of *servant of the church*, it is perfectly fit and proper that his qualifications should be submitted to be thus judged of. From such evidence as the sacred records furnish, we may conclude that this mode of procedure is in accordance with the usage of the New Testament churches. Under the

superintendence of the apostles, and their deputies, the evangelists, the churches appear to have formed their own judgment, and made their selection of their own officers. This judgment of the church may indeed be sometimes erroneous; but fallibility, in the present state of things, is not to be urged as an argument against the course here presented. It appears to commend itself to us as the proper course and the best; and we have no idea that we should be benefitted by referring the matter to his *Holiness* of Rome, though he clothes himself with the mantle of infallibility.

With respect to *acquired* talents, a small stock may suffice to mark out the person as the subject of a gospel call; but we would not say that a small stock is sufficient to qualify him as a minister of the gospel. There is a distinction to be made between a *divine call* to the work of the ministry, and a *preparation* for the work; and an individual, (we conceive,) may be so far qualified as to give satisfactory evidence, or to induce the persuasion, that he is designated to that work, while as yet he is almost entirely unqualified for its performance. The buds of promise may be discerned in the natural talents of the person, through the medium of a small share of acquired ability; and after a while he may receive the sanction of the church as a probationer, with a view to his improvement in knowledge, particularly in the knowledge of holy truth, by all the means which may be afforded for that purpose.

A man so far qualified,—experiencing the exercises of mind which we have stated, and possessed of the talents which shall be judged suitable for the work, may, in our estimation, be considered as the subject of a scriptural call to the gospel ministry; to be fully invested with the office when it shall appear to be expedient.

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#### AN EXTRACT.

A person may possess a measure of fitness for the ministry, without eminence; he may possess some desirable qualities, but not all. Not that we are disposed to speak harshly of men of inferior attainments. We have all of us too many imperfections, to permit us to be censorious of the least eminent of our brethren; and there is too much reason to bless God for the usefulness he affords to all, to allow us to represent the meanest instrument as useless. But emi-



nence in ministerial qualifications is nevertheless desirable. An ardent longing for it breathes in the language of the apostle, and there are reasons of no small weight, which should inspire us with a kindred feeling. \* \* \* \* \* With any impressive view of these things, the thought of entering unqualified on such a work is most awful. Who would profess to guide his wretched fellow-creatures to everlasting joy, without *some* fitness for the task? Who would pretend to conduct them to deliverance from impending woes, without *some* knowledge of the way of escape? Who would exhibit himself as the representative of the Divine Majesty, without understanding the attitude he assumes, and in *some* measure imbibing the spirit of his ways? What calamity, nay, what crime, is not to be preferred, to that of assuming the office of God's representative, only to betray the interests of his kingdom; and that of man's guide to happiness, only to beguile him into endless perdition?

But if these are powerful reasons why no man should engage in the ministry wholly unqualified, they urge us with equal force in the pursuit of qualifications eminent and complete. If he, who is altogether unfit for the work, cannot rightly discharge any of its duties, he that is incompletely furnished can discharge them but imperfectly. There ought to be no duty, in the performance of which, imperfection is tolerated by us; but least of all should those of the christian ministry be of that number. O, how much may depend on every breath, when we speak for God! How will the heart need to be inspired with the highest wisdom, and to be animated by the holiest dispositions, which is employed in connection with such awful issues! Or with what degree of incorrectness are we willing to represent the Most High to mankind? By how far defective results are we content that our embassy should be followed? With what measure of inefficacy do we wish to occupy the post of instrumental benefactors of our kind? Whom do we wish to sink into hell beneath our care, or to fall short of heaven? If none, then why are we negligent of any qualification for our ministry? Why content with ordinary or moderate attainments? Why in peace with our known deficiencies, or employing otherwise than with the most fervent diligence, our opportunities of improvement?

*John Howard Hinton.*

# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH;

OR, THE CHURCH ORGANIZED AT JERUSALEM BY THE  
APOSTLES, A MODEL FOR ALL SUCCEEDING AGES.

A Sermon, preached at the opening of the new meeting-house at Newnan, Ga., the fourth Lord's day in November, 1845, by REV. ROBERT FLEMING.

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*“ Then Peter said unto them, ‘ Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.’—ACTS II: 38—42.*

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Every revelation which God has made to man, proclaims that he is LOVE. The sacrifices and ceremonies enjoined under the law regulating the old dispensation, were a shadow of good things to come. The gospel brought life and immortality to light; and those sacrifices which were offered, “ year by year continually,” and which could never “ make the comers thereunto perfect,” were removed by the brightness of Emmanuel’s coming. “ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the

Vol. V—6.

Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. 'The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.' Isa. ix. 6, 7.

When Jesus Christ was born, Matthew declares that it was the fulfilment of what the prophet had said, "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel: which being interpreted is, God with us."

GOD WITH US! Yea, verily, the Mighty God. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. John iii. 16, 17. He who was without sin, became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,—was touched with the feeling of our infirmities,—bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. He who spake as man has never spoken, and who taught as one having authority, declares of himself: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." These words were given to the apostles as a summary of the doctrines they were to teach as ambassadors for Christ. They constitute what is now commonly called "the *commission*." Having received these instructions, the apostles returned from mount Olivet to Jerusalem. Jesus had told them that "*repentance and remission of sins*," should be preached in his name among all nations, "*beginning at Jerusalem*." Our text is a part of the account which Luke (the writer of the Acts of the Apostles,) gives of the result of their preaching on the day of Pentecost. The text presents a variety of topics for our consideration; but as we design delivering a series of sermons from it, we shall, for the present, confine ourselves to the discussion of the following theme, viz:



THE CHURCH WHICH THE APOSTLES FORMED AT JERUSALEM, IS A MODEL OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION FOR ALL SUCCEEDING AGES.

The commission given by Christ to his apostles, defined their position as ministers of the gospel. They were to go and teach all nations—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. No minister should go beyond the commission; and every one should feel a holy desire, and make a laudable effort, to come up to its demands. None should add to it nor take from it. The doctrines taught by Christ, and expounded and carried out by his apostles, are to be our rule of faith and practice. “*The apostles’ doctrine,*” mentioned in our text, is no new doctrine, but the doctrine of Christ. The first church of Christ was organized at Jerusalem, within ten days after the ascension, and immediately before the day of Pentecost. We will enquire,

I. *Of whom was this church constituted or organized?* We are informed in the first chapter of Acts, that when the apostles returned from mount Olivet to Jerusalem, they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” “The number of the names together was about an hundred and twenty.” But the honest inquirer after truth may, with propriety, ask,

*Who, besides the eleven above named disciples, and women, were included in the one hundred and twenty?* In answer to this, it may be stated with certainty, that the seventy other disciples which our Lord had appointed, (as stated in Luke, chapter x,) were included. This seventy added to the eleven, would make eighty-one, which, taken from the one hundred and twenty, leaves thirty-nine others. These thirty-nine, might be the women mentioned above, and the brethren of Jesus. (Matthew, xiii. 55.) We see, then, most clearly, that the church organized at Jerusalem consisted of believing men and women. That the seventy other disciples were included in this newly organized church, is plain from the move which Peter made in it, when one

was to be chosen to fill the place from which Judas had fallen. Peter's move reads thus: "Wherefore, of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning [to count] from the baptism of John, [counting] unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Acts i: 21, 22, 23. To choose one in the place of Judas, was the first regular church act performed by the disciples.\* Peter's move restricted the action of this little church, to the men who had companied with the apostles and Christ, all the time he went in and out among them, counting from the baptism of John unto the day Christ ascended. It is obvious that it could not be said of any but the seventy, that they had companied with Christ and the apostles "*all the time.*" In the 13th verse, the eleven apostles are named—in the 14th, it is said that these (the eleven named,) all continued with one accord (voluntarily and heartily,) in prayer and supplication, with the women, (it is not said how many,) and the mother of Jesus, with his brethren. In the 15th verse is mentioned the whole number of the disciples, (men and women together,) about one hundred and twenty. "These all continued with one accord in prayer," &c.,—plainly shewing, that in uniting with the church of God, the individual's own consent is required. Religion is a personal matter, and the conscience must not be fettered by the acts of others. No infants are mentioned in this organization. But it may be honestly asked by the inquirer,

2. *Had all the one hundred and twenty been baptized previously?* It is a fact worthy of notice, that previously to the organization of the church at Jerusalem, there is no mention, *by name*, of the baptism of any individual, except our Lord Jesus Christ. That none of them were baptized after entering into this church organization, is admitted on all hands. That they had been previously baptized, is clear from the scripture facts. In the seventh chapter of the gospel by Luke, Jesus thus testifies of John the Baptist: "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers, rejected the counsel of God against themselves,

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\* See Coleman's Prim. Church, page 55.

being not baptized of him." Luke vii : 29, 30, 35. "But wisdom is justified of all her children." Here we see, that all the people who heard John, justified God.\* Even the publicans, those wicked men who had been abandoned and profligate sinners, were so wrought upon by the power and grace of God, through John's preaching, that they justified God by "being baptized with the baptism of John." "Wisdom is justified of all her children." But the disobedient, self-righteous pharisees, and the proud, self-wise lawyers, rejected the baptism of John, ("the counsel of God,") against themselves. Now can we suppose that the *eleven*, the *seventy*, and the *thirty-nine* men and women, which composed this church, were not the children of wisdom, were not willing to justify God, and were rejectors of his counsel? It is impossible for any one capable of reasoning, to suppose any such thing.

But we have positive proof that "two of John's disciples" followed Jesus. One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Dr. Gill thinks the name of the other might be John the Evangelist, who for modesty's sake does not give his name. Jno. i : 35 to 40. As these two were the disciples of John the Baptist, they undoubtedly had been baptized by him.\* We have no account of their having ever been re-baptized. The baptism of all these individuals, having been previous to Christ's ascension, and consequently previous to the organization of this church, is recognized as valid—IS GOSPEL BAPTISM. Wisdom is justified of ALL her children, and as all the hundred and twenty were the children of wisdom, they had all been baptized, as well as the two above named. This is a fair, inevitable conclusion.

"*The apostles' doctrine*" in our text is, that individuals should first repent, and then be baptized, not be baptized and then repent. This doctrine is in perfect agreement with the commission they had received: "Go ye, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them," &c.,—first teach, and then baptize. The church, God's high-school, requires individual preparation, before it can be entered by the applicant. The apostles' doctrine, throughout all the Acts of the Apostles is,

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\* "Those who had formed the resolution of correcting their evil dispositions, and amending their lives, were initiated into the kingdom of the Redeemer, by the ceremony of immersion or baptism."—Mosheim, vol. 1, page 25. Mat., iii : 6; Jno., i : 22.



that faith and repentance are pre-requisite to baptism, and that baptism is pre-requisite to church membership. Our text informs us, that those who gladly received Peter's word were baptized. By gladly receiving his word, we are certainly to understand that they had repented, as he had commanded them. And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Thus three thousand penitent, baptized believers, were added to this newly organized church. But there is an account of another great addition of believers. "And of the rest, durst no man join himself to them.—And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and women." Acts v: 13, 14. In the 8th chapter of Acts it is stated, "they were baptized, both men and women." No where in the scriptures is it said, the apostles, or any one else, baptized children.\* Modern organizations baptize multitudes of children; and now and then a believer. But the apostles' doctrine and practice are, to baptize multitudes of men and women, and no infants. If infant baptism is an apostolic doctrine, why have they given us no command—why have they shown us no example?

As a church of Christ in this town, we hope to worship God "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." Then, dear brethren, let us come together in this house, WITH ONE ACCORD,—let us take for our model the church organization at Jerusalem, from which it is evident, "*a church of Jesus Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, who have voluntarily united together to maintain the doctrines, ordinances and discipline of the gospel, having no union with the kingdoms of this world.*" But the unprejudiced, open hearted, pains taking seeker for truth, has heard it asserted, with as much positiveness as if it were so, that the baptism of John was not christian baptism, and therefore, the baptism of the hundred and twenty who entered into this visible church organization, is not christian baptism. For the benefit of all such, we would state—

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\* "It is certain Christ did not ordain infant baptism,—we cannot prove that the apostles ordained infant baptism."—Neander's Ch. Hist., page 198.

"Commands, or plain and certain examples in the New Testament, relative to it, I do not find; nor with my view of it, do I need them."—Prof. Stuart on baptism, page 354. See also, Ripley's Exam., page 141. Indeed, among all truly learned men it is given up.

3. *John's baptism was not rejected by the Apostles.* Jesus Christ declares of John, "this is he of whom it is written—behold, I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee." Luke vii: 27. Higher testimony than this cannot be had on this subject. We should fear to testify contrary to the testimony of him who spake as man never spake. If John did not prepare the way of the Lord, then the testimony of Christ is not true—is not equal to that of some modern teachers. But Matthew agrees with Christ, (and so ought we,) and says: "This is he which was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The word "*straight*" in this verse, does not mean difficult, but in a direct line, without any crooks, angles or offsets. It is absurd to suppose that a man sent from God to baptize, and to prepare the way of the Lord, should be incompetent, should do nothing more than attend to the old Jewish ceremonies. If such a thing as Jewish proselyte baptism had existed before John's day, the regular priests, and not John, would have administered it; and there would have been no need of a new and extraordinary appointment from heaven to give being to an old established custom.\* "That the Jews baptized proselytes before the time of John, can never be proven." (See Robinson's History of Baptism, page 56.) But the learned Dr. Benson states four difficulties on this subject with a view to excite further inquiry. They are as follows:

1. The Doctor had "not found any instance of one person's washing another, by way of consecration, purification, or sanctification; except that of Moses' washing Aaron and his sons, when he set them apart to the office of the priests. Levit. viii: 6."

2. The Doctor says: "I cannot find that the Jews do at present practice any such thing as that of baptizing the proselytes that go over to them, though they are said to make them wash themselves."

3. He asks: "Where is there any intimation of such a practice among the Jews, *before* the coming of our Lord?"

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\* If John was keeping up old Jewish customs, why did the Jews send a deputation to him to inquire who he was?—Jno. i: 22. Why arose a question among the Jews and John's disciples about purifying?—Jno. iii: 25.

If any one could produce any clear testimony of that kind from the *Old Testament*, the *Apocrypha*, *Josephus*, or *Philo*, that would be of great moment."

4. He adds: In former times, proselytes, coming over from heathenism to the Jewish religion, used to *wash themselves*; which is a very different thing from baptism, or one person's being washed by another. Thugh I must own, (says he,) I cannot see how infants could wash themselves."

But suppose the Jews did have such a custom as the baptism of proselytes, it is clear that God never commanded it. In Exodus xii: 48, 49, God has given the law for the reception of proselytes: "*One law shall be to him that is home-born and unto the stranger.*" That law is: "*Let all his males be circumcised; and then let him come near.*" Where, now, is the divine command for baptizing a proselyte, or for his washing *himself* all over in water?

But what use can its advocates make of this subject? The answer is, none; for a law to *dip*, is not a law to *sprinkle*; a law for a man to *dip himself*, is not an authority for *another* man to dip him; a law to dip *instructed* proselytes, is not a law to baptize *infants*.

But we hasten to state New Testament facts. John says: "HE THAT SENT ME TO BAPTIZE." His baptism was from HEAVEN, and not from Jewish traditions, or from unauthorized customs. He preached like a true gospel minister. He commanded the Jews to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. He preached the doctrine of *faith in Christ*, as the only way of salvation. As the prophet of the Highest, he cried in the wilderness, "HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT THE SON, SHALL NOT SEE LIFE; BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDETH ON HIM."\*

JESUS CHRIST, sanctioned the above doctrine: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

PETER AND THE 120 recognized the baptism of John as christian baptism, and chose one from under John's dispensation to fill the place of Judas. Acts i: 21, 22. Had they rejected John's baptism, as not being christian baptism,

\* Jno. iii: 36.



it would have been a rejection of that which Christ and they themselves had received.

PAUL acknowledges the validity of John's baptism. Indeed, it would seem the Holy Spirit foresaw that men, after Christ's ascension, as well as before it, might still be so wicked as to reject the counsel of God by continuing to reject the baptism of John; hence this commendation of it by Paul, is given to settle forever its validity. Paul came to Ephesus and found certain disciples, and asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed. They told him they had not so much as heard whether there be "any Holy Ghost:" meaning, no doubt, that they had not heard whether there were any miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit above and beyond what believers generally experience or know—for they were "disciples," "believers." It will readily occur to the mind of the intelligent reader of the gospel, that "*John did no miracle.*" But Paul now, by divine authority, intends that they shall experience, (not a new baptism,) but the miraculous displays of the power of the Holy Ghost. He says nothing against John's baptism; but commends it. He asked them unto what they had been baptized; they said, "*unto John's Baptism.*" Paul hearing this, states how John preached, how the people heard, and how they were baptized, as follows: "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul did not re-baptize these disciples. He only recites what took place as a common occurrence, under John's preaching. But now he lays his hands on these twelve men, and as a matter of uncommon occurrence, "*the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*" See Acts xix. Peter and John went down to Samaria and laid their hands on some of Philip's believing disciples at that place, "*and they received the Holy Ghost.*" See Acts viii: 17. Thus God miraculously bestowed the gifts of the Holy Spirit on John's disciples at Ephesus, as well as on Philip's at Samaria. The question was not about the validity of their baptism, as some would strangely seem to suggest, but it was simply, *have ye received the Holy Ghost*, (meaning undoubtedly,) the miraculous gifts.

Doctor Gill, who understood more than twenty languages, has written an able exposition of the Bible in nine quarto volumes; and his opinions, as a scholar and biblical critic, are undoubtedly worthy the attention of such as desire to know the meaning of the sacred scriptures. We give his exposition of the whole passage, Acts xix: 1—6.

“And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized. And they said unto John’s baptism.”

*And he said unto them unto what then were ye baptized.* The apostle takes it for granted they were baptized, since they were not only believers, but disciples; such as not only believed with the heart, but had made a profession of their faith; and were followers of Christ; but asks, unto what they were baptized, &c. “*They said unto John’s baptism.*” The apostle affirms (in reply to this,) in the following words: “Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” “*When said Paul,*” in reply to their answer, understanding them that they were baptized by John, he takes it up and gives an account of John’s baptism; showing how agreeable it was, and that it was the same baptism with that of Christ, being administered in his name. “*Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance,*” which required repentance antecedent to it, and was a fruit and effect, and so an evidence of it. “*Saying unto the people*”—John saying unto the people of the Jews, the common people, the multitude that attended on his ministry, “*that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.*” So that he (John,) preached faith in Christ, as well as repentance towards God, and made the one as well as the other, a pre-requisite to baptism; which shows that his baptism and christian baptism are the same.

“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

“*When they heard this*”—that is, the people to whom John preached, his hearers; when they heard of the Messiah, and that Jesus was he, and that it became them to believe in him, “*they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*”—not the disciples that Paul found at Ephesus, but the hearers of John; for these are the words of the apostle Paul, giving an account of John’s baptism, and of the success of his ministry, showing that his baptism was

administered in the name of the Lord Jesus; and not the words of Luke the evangelist recording what followed upon his (Paul's) account of John's baptism; for then he would have made mention of Paul's name, as he does in the next verse, and would have said, *when they heard this account they were baptized by Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Luke reports two things; *first*, what Paul *said*, which lies in verses 4th and 5th; *secondly*, what Paul *did*, which lies in verse 6th, where he repeats Paul's name as was necessary; and that he laid his hands upon them, which was all that was necessary to their receiving the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, having been already baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. This sense is the more confirmed by the particles *men* and *de*, which answer to one another in verses 4th and 5th, and show the words to be a continuation of the apostle's speech, and not the words of the historian, which begin in the next verse."

The above is Dr. Gill's exposition, which is in exact accordance with our own views. Then it may be remarked (as we did on a former occasion,) that the word "*this*," in verse 5th, is not in the original; and the sense of the verse is properly conveyed by reading it as we did then, viz: "when they heard John, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

May we not, brethren, feel fully authorized to say and believe with Mark, that John's baptism was, "*the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*" If John's baptism was not christian baptism, why did Christ commend it by word, and by submitting to it himself? Why were not the 120 re-baptized? Why was not Matthias? Why was not Apollos? They knew "only the baptism of John."

IV. *If the commission given by Christ to his apostles is to be their rule, and the rule of all succeeding ministers, does it authorize the organization of a Church.* "The apostles' doctrine" is nothing more nor less than the doctrine of Christ. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, says, "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." To the Philippians, he says, "those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." But the question is, *did Jesus Christ authorize the separation of his believing children from the unbelieving world, and require*



*them to embody themselves together as a separate and distinct people?* He did. "My kingdom is not of this world," said he. The apostles taught this doctrine.\* Paul says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2. Cor. vi. This doctrine is one of the "ALL THINGS" which Christ commanded to be taught. Peter, who preached in our text, that men should repent before they could be baptized, writes in his general epistle, "ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Unconverted persons, whether men, women or children, cannot offer up spiritual sacrifices—cannot be called lively stones in this spiritual house. (See Neander, page 103.)

"The Jews," says Milman in his history of Christianity, "were a civil as well as a religious community; but the christian church-state is purely religious. The apostles' doctrine on this point, is—"ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Pet. ii: 9. The children of Jews were entitled, by birth and blood, to the privileges of the Jewish kingdom. Repentance and faith were not required as qualifications for admittance into its privileges. John the Baptist, so understood this, and lest the Jews might form wrong notions respecting the gospel kingdom, he says to them distinctly, "think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Mat. iii: 9. Paul so understood this, and says to the Galatians, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have

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\* See Coleman's Primitive Church, pages 228—9.

been baptized into Jesus Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." An unconverted person, though he may have his name enrolled in the church-book, is nevertheless an alien and foreigner; he is not a fellow-citizen with the saints: he is a bastard and not a son. He has no authority nor power to cry, Abba, Father.

From what we have said, it is evident that Christ did authorize his disciples to congregate in a church capacity; and the apostles proceeded at Jerusalem in obedience to the instructions of their ascended Lord. Those who repented and were baptized, were added to the church. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Let us as a church, in this house, continue steadfastly in the "apostles' doctrine."

As we have seen, this MODEL CHURCH at Jerusalem, was a voluntary body of baptized believers, who were "with one accord in one place." We then are authorized to state

V. *That a church is an independent congregation, having no union with the kingdoms of this world.* The Jewish polity was both civil and religious. It seemed difficult for Jews to conceive of a purely religious, spiritual organization. Jesus told them his kingdom was not of this world, and directed them to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God, the things that are God's. Thus teaching that the church is not to legislate for the kingdoms of this world, nor civil governments to enact laws for the regulation of the worship of God. "There is one law-giver," who is head over all things, to the church, and with him the wisdom of this world is foolishness. The civil arm is not that by which the kingdom of our God is to be planted, supported and extended in the earth; for it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. It is a remarkable fact, apparent in the history of nations, that where the principles recognized in the apostolic church have prevailed, religion has never been established by the civil power, and in these countries civil and religious liberty are best understood.

VI. *The apostles established no superior orders among ministers.* Christ had most explicitly forbidden it. "Be

not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father who is in heaven." Mat. xxiii: 8, 9. This delightful expression, *all ye are brethren*, should never be forgotten among ministers of the gospel. The high-sounding, new-coined sense which is now attached to the word "*bishop*," grates on the ear of the meek and lowly minister. Mosheim, in his church history, (Vol 1 Balt. edit. pages 38, 39,) says—"there reigned among the members of the christian church, however distinguished they were by worldly rank and titles, not only an amiable harmony, but also a perfect equality. This appeared in the feast of charity in which all were indiscriminately assembled; by the names of *brethren* and *sisters* with which they saluted each other; and by several circumstances of a like nature. A bishop during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one christian assembly, which at that time was generally speaking small enough to be convened in a private house." These views are held, and have ever been held by the Baptists, and agree with the apostles' doctrine. These doctrines we expect, by the grace of God, to teach in this house. We expect continually to follow the model given us by the apostles at Jerusalem. (See Coleman's Apos. Ch., page 36.)

VII. *The New Testament churches are not only congregational, and have no superior orders among the ministers, but in their form of government, they are separate, independent, religious republics.* The word of God is clear on this point. When Peter rose up in this little church and made a move to appoint a man to take the place from which Judas had fallen, they gave forth their lots (or votes,) and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. To decide by the vote of the whole church, was purely republican. But again, in this church, when seven deacons were afterwards to be appointed, "the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Acts vi. "And the saying pleased the WHOLE MULTITUDE, and they chose Stephen," &c. The twelve would not dare to appoint these deacons, and thus take from the members of this church



their liberties. They did not consider the church incapable of self-government—incompetent to manage church affairs, and that they should therefore manage for them. God has nowhere in his word authorized one man to surrender the keeping of his conscience to another; he has not authorized one man to delegate to another the inalienable rights which he possesses as a church member; in other words, to surrender the management of the affairs of the church to others, not even to elders. “If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.” 1 Cor. vi: 4. What a reproof this, to all modern organizations. In the 15th of Acts, we have another instance in which this religious republic was called together to consider an important question. There had arisen a difficulty in the church at Antioch, about circumcision, and the church determined to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to get the advice of this church, whose organization we are now considering, and when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the CHURCH and the apostles and elders. “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send,” &c. “And they wrote letters by them after this manner: The apostles and elders, and brethren, send greeting,” &c. So when Paul and Barnabas were dismissed by the church at Jerusalem to go back to the church at Antioch, they, coming to Antioch, gathered the MULTITUDE together, (not elders,) and delivered the epistle. See verse 30. This was not a presbyterial assemblage of elders, but the convocation of the whole church, and not a council of churches. It is a remarkable fact that when the apostles went up to Jerusalem on the above question, it is said they were received of the church first—the church is first mentioned. The truth is, the church is first in power; all ecclesiastical power is vested by Christ, in the church. A minister gets all his authority, so far as human agency is concerned, from the church, and not from a convention of bishops and elders. Human wisdom has boldly and presumptuously stepped beyond “the perfect law of liberty,” (the gospel plan,) and reared her “standards of discipline,” and established her “rules of faith and order,” as if the book of God were dark and insufficient on these subjects. Some times we hear the epithet, “*most excellent discipline, or standard,*” applied to such books.

May the BIBLE be viewed by those who worship God in this house, as the most excellent standard, the ONLY STANDARD of faith and practice.

How beautiful! how simple! how explicit! are the instructions of Christ in the 18th of Matthew! "*Tell it to the church*"—"But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." That is, if he shall neglect to attend to the case when it is laid before the church; or, if he shall, when the case is investigated, refuse to abide by the decision of the CHURCH, there is no appeal from the decision of the church, up to a higher ecclesiastical court. The gospel knows nothing of appeals from the decision of the church. All appeals to presbyteries, synods or conferences of bishops and elders, are of human origin.\* Mosheim says, "it was therefore the assembly of the people, (meaning the whole of the church members,)—which chose rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the church; restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges; passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons, and in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are vested with sovereign power." (Vol. 1, page 37.)

Again Mosheim say—"Nothing is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there appear in the first century the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin." (Vol. 1., p. 39.) "During a great part of the second century, the churches were independent with respect to each other; nor were they joined by association, confederacy, or any other bonds than those of charity; each christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were enacted, or at least appointed by the society." † (Vol. 1, page 60.)

This is the apostles' doctrine. This church holds this

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\* See Coleman's Church without a Bishop, page 49. † See Dr. Barrow and Dr. Burton, as quoted by Coleman, page 50.

doctrine in common with all other regular Baptist churches. We are bound by no bond of union but charity; have no formulary of discipline but the BIBLE.

“But in process of time,” (says Mosheim, vol 1, p. 60,) “all the christian churches (meaning congregations,) of a province were formed into a large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at stated times in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks, (mark it, among the Greeks,) with whom nothing was more common than this confederacy of independent states. To these assemblies, in which the deputies or commissioners of the several churches assembled together, the name of *synods* was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of *councils*, by the Latins; and the laws that were enacted in these general meetings, were called canons, that is, *rules*. These councils, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, (second,) changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. Another effect of these councils was the gradual abolition of that perfect equality which reigned among the bishops in the primitive times.” (Vol. 1, p. 60.) It will be remembered by the reader, that the word bishop in the above quotation, means a pastor of a church, simply one church.\*

By the above historical record, we see how the church lost its simplicity of organization; its primitive beauty; how the apostles' doctrine was departed from; how *synods* and *councils* originated, and how their canons became authoritative, and seated “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” in all her power at Rome.

At this day, there are many who would attempt to improve upon the apostolic plan, by changing the form of church organization from a congregational republic to an episcopal oligarchy, or to a synodical aristocracy. Mosheim has said as much at page 37: “If, however, it be true, that the apostles acted by divine inspiration, and in conformity with the commands of their blessed master, (and this no christian can call in question,) it follows that the form of

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\* See Coleman's Church without a Bishop.  
Vol. V—8.



government which the primitive churches borrowed from that of Jerusalem, the first christian assembly established by the apostles themselves, must be esteemed as of divine institution." "But, (continues he,) from this it would be wrong to conclude that such a form is immutable, and ought to be invariably observed." This is strange language to come from one of Mosheim's reputation. But Mosheim was in favor of synods and councils; was episcopal in his notions of church polity, and therefore we can readily account for his desiring to depart from this apostolic plan, though he says, *IT MUST BE ESTEEMED AS OF DIVINE INSTITUTION.* We as a church of Christ here, do most assuredly hold that the apostles' doctrine on this subject should be continued in steadfastly; should be preserved inviolate; should be the model through all ages, and under all circumstances. We hold the apostolic council in the "UPPER ROOM" at Jerusalem, of higher authority than the council at Nice or at Westminster. We view episcopal and presbyterial organizations and forms of government, as departures from the apostles' doctrine. The plain precepts of the gospel, the writings of the apostles, and the testimony of the most popular ecclesiastical historians, as well as Mosheim, support our views.

John, in the isle of Patmos, wrote to the seven churches of Asia—to the church at Ephesus, at Smyrna, at Pergamos, at Thyatira, at Sardis, at Philadelphia, and at Laodicea. Each of these churches is addressed in its individual capacity; and although they were in the same part of the world, they were not united in an episcopal, nor synodical organization. They were separate, distinct, independent, republican bodies. By reading the second chapter of the Revelation of John, the inquirer after truth on this subject, will readily see, that this apostolic doctrine was adhered to, and recognized at the close of the New Testament scriptures. Why christian men should not continue in the apostles' doctrine now, we cannot conceive. Are men in these modern times wiser than the inspired apostles? Or do they think the apostolic form so old and so out of fashion, that it will not do to work by it in this age of modern refinement? Let us be careful, brethren, how we tamper with the precepts and examples left us by those holy men, who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

VIII. *The church is to maintain the doctrines of the gospel.* By the EXAMPLE of the church at Jerusalem, all departures from the apostles' doctrine are discountenanced and forbidden. Apostolic example is as authoritative as their command; and therefore when we have their precept, or their example, it is full authority for the performance of any duty. Paul says to the Philippians—"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an example." Phil. iii: 17. In the commission which the apostles had received, and which was now to extend to "*all the world*," they are required to teach all things whatsoever Christ had commanded; and although it does not appear anywhere in the New Testament, that Christ commanded the baptism of children, or of untaught persons, yet if we had apostolic example for it, we should feel ourselves bound to practice and maintain it. But as it is, we are not furnished with precept nor example from Christ nor from his holy apostles. Paul congratulates the Roman brethren, for their hearty reception of the truth and obedience to it. But ye have obeyed from the heart the FORM OF DOCTRINE which was delivered you." Rom. vi: 7. In the last chapter of his epistle to them, he exhorts them to continue firm, and to discountenance all innovations of, and departures from, this doctrine. "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." He tells Titus to show uncorruptness in doctrine, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in ALL THINGS. "The law of the Lord is perfect." The marginal reading is, "the doctrine of the Lord is perfect." Ps. xix. Then every alteration must be for the worse; for a perfect thing cannot be made better.

It is remarkable, that innovators almost always plead that the word of God has not settled the point, and therefore they are left at liberty to act at their own discretion and convenience. Others again consider the silence of God's word as authoritative as God's command. But God's silence is not God's revelation; his withholding commandment is not giving commandment. That trite saying, "silence gives consent," is not applicable to the proceedings of HIM who inhabiteth eternity. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished

unto all good works. So then, we are furnished from what God has given, and not from what he has not given. The silence of the scriptures may be construed by a Roman Catholic into authority for baptizing his church bell; but that a Protestant should construe the same silence into authority for the baptism of babes is strange work.

As a church of Jesus Christ at this place, we hope, by the help of the Lord, ever to make the word of God our "sure word of prophesy." "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but these things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deut. xxix: 29. To the law and to the testimony, shall be our course, in all matters pertaining to God's service. Whenever we go beyond the limits of revelation, we shall be in a region of darkness, without a lamp to our feet, or a light to our path—

"Where blind conjecture, rampant, runs astray."

IX. *The church is not only to maintain the apostles' doctrine, but she is to extend it to others.* The church of the living God is called by Paul, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Christ says of his people—"Ye are the light of the world." The light of God's grace shining into the hearts of men, prepares them to reflect it out again upon the world; and instrumentally they become the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. It is the intent of God to make known, BY THE CHURCH, his manifold wisdom.\* This is the doctrine of the apostles, as well as of the prophets: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not—lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Through the instrumentality of the church, the minister of God goes out; and though he is under the influence of the spirit of the Lord, yet he can accomplish nothing without the presence of the Lord to bless the word preached. "It is the spirit

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\* Ephesians iii: 10.



that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing." Jno. vi : 63. Peter preached this doctrine on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out. He met the scoffers by an immediate quotation from the prophet—"For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel : And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh."

Dear fellow sinner, Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God only giveth the increase. Such is our depravity, our blindness, our deafness, our unfeelingness, our death in sin, that without the Spirit's power we shall never repent, never gladly receive the word, never come to Christ, never be saved. It is not only the work of the Spirit to open the eyes of the understanding, but the grace of perseverance in the divine life is also the work of the Spirit. When Paul prayed that the Roman brethren might be filled with all joy and peace in believing, he prayed that all this might be accomplished by "*the power*" (not agency) of the Holy Ghost. It is remarkable that the word "agency," is not in the Bible, and consequently is not used by the apostle, when speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. The reason is plain. The Holy Ghost is, GOD, THE HOLY GHOST, and not an agent ; for an agent is an inferior. The apostle's language on this subject is truly sublime : "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him ; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." The treasure of gospel truth is put in earthen vessels ; the excellency of the power is of God. The weapons of the minister's warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. We preach not ourselves, says the apostle, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves

your servants for Jesus' sake. Ministers, then, are the servants of the churches, and are required to give themselves wholly to the work ; to study to show themselves approved unto God. The church is bound by the apostles' doctrine to support her minister. " Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Cor. ix : 14.

X. *The unity of the people of God is an apostolic doctrine.* In our text it is asserted that they all continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. " All that believed were together, and had all things common." Acts i : 44. Jesus Christ had prayed that all who should believe on him through their word, (the apostles' word,) might be one. Jno. xvii : 20, 21. God never designed that his people should be separated ; but he requires that they should be laborers TOGETHER with him ; striving TOGETHER for the faith of the gospel. Phil. i : 27. It is painful to the pious heart to witness the divisions, the envying, the strife, and contention which disturb the christian world. It is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that the people of God are torn into parties ; that the members of Christ do not see eye to eye ; that although the watchmen lift up the voice, "*with the voice together,*" they do not sing as they should. O ! for that happy, that delightful, that glorious period, when the people of the Lord shall come together, and when one church-house shall be for the use of all the saints, and when one minister shall preach God's truth, there shall be none to oppose, none to hurt, none to work the work of destruction in all God's holy mountain. O ! for the fulfilment of the prayer of the interceding Saviour, that those who shall believe on him through the word of his ministers—" **THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.**"

#### AN EXTRACT.

When a people settle a pastor, they ought to calculate to continue to love the man of their choice, and to make the most of him as their minister ; and not think of exchanging him, after a few months, or a year or two, for some other man, equally frail and imperfect, or perhaps more so, or for utter and long-continued destitution. And the settled pastor, on the other hand, ought to be content with the people who

have chosen him, and with whom he has found it his duty to consent to be united, and to make the most of them and the community around them, over whom, perhaps, he may have some influence. There are, doubtless, exceptions to this rule, but they are not so numerous as to take the place of the rule.

For the situation of ministers to be more permanent would doubtless increase their happiness, improve their circumstances, and add much to the weight of the character of the ministry. When the ties of the pastoral relation are of so frail and slight a character as to be sundered by almost every wind which blows, the affection between pastor and people cannot often be very strong. It will not, generally, have time to become well cemented, before it is sundered. Their mutual confidence must be weak and wavering. And they will find it difficult, for any length of time, cordially to cooperate together for the advancement of the interest of religion. If a people do not intend, that the relation of their pastor to them shall be a permanent thing, they will not generally be anxious to throw much influence into his hands.

Those churches and societies flourish best, in general, where the pastoral relation is most permanent, where there is mutual affection, mutual forbearance, and mutual faithfulness, from year to year, and where neither minister nor people are given to change. We love that people, who, after years of acquaintance with him, prefer to hear their own minister to any stranger who may temporarily occupy his place. We could, were it not invidious, name a considerable number of examples, which clearly show the advantages which evidently result from permanency in the pastoral relation; and, on the other hand, of the disastrous consequences of frequent change.

The idea of a minister being employed merely by the year is not only objectionable, but revolting. The Bible gives us no intimation of any such arrangement in the days of primitive christianity. And it seems to us, that a people who so regard the relation of their pastor to them, are not prepared to realize any permanent benefit from his labors. He may wear himself out in their service, in a few months; but their very arrangement in employing him must almost certainly prevent his acquiring an extensive influence among



them. And how much good can he do, with his influence thus circumscribed, and his energies cramped? Such a people and such a pastor will be strongly tempted to treat each other as most men would treat a farm, which they had rented for a single year, and which they expected to leave at the close of the contract, making the most of it for themselves, to be sure, but to the essential diminution of its value. It will take more than one year, for a minister to become well acquainted with his people, especially if they are numerous; more than one year, to establish among them an unquestioned, extensive, and salutary influence. And yet, such an influence as this is indispensable to his success.

We are not advocates for the plan of settling a pastor for life; but we are advocates for having some degree of permanency given to this sacred relation. When a people are looking for one to break to them the bread of life, it is no trifling blessing which they seek. Their selection ought to be made prayerfully, deliberately, and judiciously. The selection of a pastor is now a matter of too much taste,—too precipitately made,—a transaction of a week or two, whereas months, perhaps, ought ordinarily to pass, before the matter is decided. The pastoral relation, once formed, ought to be regarded as having a sacred character attached to it, and not be dissolved hastily or for trivial causes. It ought to be a permanent thing, not subject to the changes of the moon, or to the vicissitudes of the year. It should be understood, that there are mutual duties on the part of pastor and people, and that the imperfections which attach to each must put in requisition continued and mutual forbearance.

How much more good might pastors do, in most cases, if, having found fields of labor adapted to their talents and habits, they were studiously and faithfully to cultivate them for a long series of years, like a Stillman, a Smith, or a Baldwin. One of the most flourishing churches in New England, though it has existed about two hundred years, it is said, never dismissed a pastor; but the bodies of all the predecessors of the present pastor are entombed in one graveyard, near the spot where they held their testimony while living. In that church, there has been a succession of mighty men of God, to stand in defence of the gospel.

*Christian Review.*

# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## PROVIDENCE:

A Sermon, by REV. A. M. POINDEXTER, preached at Antioch, Charlotte County, Va., at the funeral of REV. C. F. BURNLEY.

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“The Lord reigneth.”—PSALM XCVII.  
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The belief of providence is common among men. Amidst all the darkness of paganism, it leads them to ascribe good or ill fortune to the intervention of their gods. It originated many of the theories of the wisest philosophers of Greece and of Rome. To this source may be traced the doctrine of Plato—that there is a being, created by God, from mind and matter, animating and presiding over the universe; and of the Stoics—that God is the soul of the universe.

Freed from all absurdity, the scriptures teach the doctrine of providence. Our text, asserting (as it does,) the sovereignty of Jehovah, has respect to the kingdom of providence, as that over which he reigns. It teaches the *sovereignty of God in providence*. In the discussion of this subject, we propose,

FIRST. *To state the doctrine of the divine providence.*

SECOND. *To exhibit some of its proofs.*

THIRD. *To point out some abuses to which the doctrine is liable; and some of the benefits resulting from a right belief of it.*

I. *We are to state the doctrine of the divine providence.*

The providence of God is the supervision and direction which he exercises over the universe. All creation is under the government of God, not only as of right subject to him, but as being the object of his constant care and control.

The remarks which it is proposed to make upon this subject will, however, relate chiefly to our own world. All parts of this world, animate and inanimate, physical and intellectual, are swayed by the providence of God. Under his control, the heavenly bodies continue to occupy the position assigned to them by the great Architect of the universe. At his will, nations rise and fall, kings reign and are dethroned; the complex machinery of human society is regulated, and propelled to its great end; and, at the same time, he guides the course of the falling leaf, and marks out the path of the wandering sparrow.

The providence of God is not only universal, taking in the entire range of created beings, but it is also *individual in its regards, and constant in its operations*. Not one atom of matter, not one species of animate or inanimate being, not one individual of any species, is overlooked, or suffered to break loose from his guiding hand. And with wakeful vigilance and untiring care, is this government unceasingly exercised. We are under its control from the cradle to the tomb.

II. Let us attend to *some of the proofs of this doctrine*.

1. It may be established by the consideration of the Divine character. God is a being of infinite intelligence. He proposed, by creation, to effect some purpose worthy of himself. Can it be thought that he will permit his design to be frustrated? That he will not secure the accomplishment of his purpose? Whatever the object proposed in creation may be, he can have no difficulty in securing it. He is everywhere present beholding the evil and the good; and he is possessed of infinite wisdom and power to originate and direct influences to this end—will he not do it? God is infinitely good. It is conformable to our ideas of goodness, that it will exert itself to promote good. Will not God, then, so order and control the system which he has brought into being, as to make all its parts, though in themselves discordant, harmonize in the production of good, of his own glory, connected with the virtue and happiness of his creatures?

The idea that the Supreme Being, having created the world, sits in solitary unconcern, contemplating the course of events, without the will to direct them to any specific termination; or that he has so bound in the chains of fate the destiny of all things, that even his own omnipotence cannot



alter that destiny ; is alike abhorrent from all our conceptions of the divine character, and repulsive to all the better and nobler feelings of the human heart. No, God is our Father. He watches with paternal care over the children of his power. And his providence will, eventually, render eternity blessed in the happiness of his creatures, and heaven resplendent with his own glory.

To this it may be objected, that the existing state of things is inconsistent with the doctrine advanced. Can we suppose that a Being of infinite goodness, justice and power, governs a world in which disorder so abounds? In which the wicked prosper and the good suffer?

The introduction of sin into the universe, its continued and increasing prevalence, are subjects of a deep and mysterious nature. *The origin of evil* has elicited much investigation. But such enquiries are fruitless and vain. The human mind cannot explain how it consists with the holiness of God, to permit the *beginning* of sin ; why an infinitely benevolent Being should permit the cause of so much misery to be introduced. But facts cannot be denied. God created the world, and sin, with all its bitter fruits, exists. Now it is evidently not more difficult to reconcile this condition of things with providential government, than with creation. Indeed, there is less of difficulty in the former than the latter. When guided by the light of revelation, we look into the future, and perceive "evil overruled for good" —sin occasioning a brighter manifestation of the divine glory—and in its destruction, a higher and a happier destiny prepared for man, we at once feel that the government of providence harmonizes with the character of God. The doctrine of a future state, destroys, too, all objections to a providence, drawn from the prosperity of vice, and the sufferings of virtue in this world. Asaph was perplexed with this difficulty. But when he "went into the sanctuary of God," then were his fears removed. Then understood he the end of the wicked. Then, with devout and humble gratitude, his faith could lay hold of "the joy set before" the suffering child of God. Then could he feel that the "right hand" of paternal love upheld and guided afflicted saints to a glorious rest. And then he could but exclaim, in the fulness of his profoundly penitent and confiding heart, "thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward

receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

2. The Bible uniformly teaches this doctrine. It would be impracticable, and it is unnecessary, on this occasion, to repeat all the passages of scripture relating to this subject. It may, however, be remarked, that events both ordinary and extraordinary, are in the word of God ascribed to divine providence.

The sun rises and sets in accordance with what are called the laws of nature; but it is God who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Both life and death occur in the common course of things, yet God says, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal." "In him we live, and move, and have our being." The rise and fall of empires can generally be traced to the necessities, the passions, and the vices of mankind. Their rise and their decline are ordered by Jehovah. The history of Egypt, and of the Jews, and neighboring nations, illustrates the truth of this remark. To God are kings indebted for their thrones, and by his hand are they thrust down. "He putteth down one and setteth up another." The teaching of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as recorded in the 6th chapter of Matthew, is full and explicit upon this point, and nothing more is needed, than to refer to it, to sustain the position that *ordinary* events are, in the Bible, ascribed to the providence of God. To *extraordinary* events is assigned the same origin. The narrative of the wanderings of the patriarchs; the preservation of the Jews in Egypt, their deliverance from their oppressors, settlement in Canaan, indeed, the whole history of this remarkable people, is but a record of the wonderful works of the God of providence. Miracles are manifestations of divine power, under the same all-wise direction. It is unnecessary in this connection, to descend to particular cases. But events, *ordinary* and *extraordinary*, include the whole of the transactions of our world; and if both be under the control of providence, then is the doctrine which we have advanced true.

3. Prophecy, in its utterance and fulfilment sustains the same doctrine. When events were predicted, the fulfilment of the prophecy must have depended upon, either a special interposition of divine power, or such a supervision of the

course of events as to secure the predicted result. But in either case the hand of providence would be manifest. In most prophecies, however, the events predicted are *essentially* dependent upon a long line of causes and effects strictly ordinary. They could not have been produced by an immediate exertion of divine power. Take, for illustration, the captivity of the Jews, and their liberation by Cyrus. Their captivity depended upon their own decline in piety and virtue, and the gradually increased strength and ambition of Assyria. Their liberation upon the natural decline and corruption of this latter monarchy, and the enlarged power and extended conquests of another dynasty. What innumerable influences, many of them too minute to be noticed even at the time, were here concerned? What could secure the co-operation and due effect of all these causes, and thus anticipate the result long before they transpired? What, but the providence of God? And it is not unimportant to remark, that a series of prophecies is found in the Bible, commencing immediately after the fall of man, and extending to the end of time, embracing many of the leading events which have occurred, and which are to occur in the destiny of this world. Were not God the God of providence, these prophecies could not have been given. Were not his hand upon all the springs of action, they could not be fulfilled.

4. The doctrine is proved by the duty of prayer. We are taught to pray. We are commanded and encouraged to pray. In prayer we ask for blessings, and for deliverance from evils, temporal and spiritual. Now every act of prayer supposes a divine providence. It is under the conviction that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers," that "we bow our knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We seek for blessings, for health, peace, daily food. Why should we, if God do not control all the elements necessary to the bestowment of these blessings? We ask for spiritual mercies; why, unless God govern in the spiritual world? Why beseech God to guard us from evil, unless he orders what shall be?

The providence of God, it is sometimes said, is general, respecting only great events and distinguished persons. It is thought beneath the great God to notice trivial matters.



To this, in the language of a heathen philosopher, we might reply, "great things cannot be taken care of without taking care of small, and, in all cases, the greater any artist is, the more his skill and care appear in little as well as in great things." Let us not then conceive of God as worse than even mortal artists.

This objection to a *particular providence*, originates in low and contracted views of the divine character. It implies, that providential government requires an *effort* of attention. It supposes a defect of knowledge in the Omniscient. It presumes, that to God, some beings and events are more important than others, a supposition entirely inapplicable to him to whom all things are infinitely important. It is as great condescension in God to notice an archangel, as the mote that floats upon the breeze of summer. He "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth." And after all, what events are unimportant? Who does not know that the greatest revolutions have arisen from causes, seemingly; the most trivial? How often, in ancient times, did the appearance of the entrails of a beast decide the march of armies, and the fate of empires? The life of Mahomet was preserved by a spider's web. By preventing Oliver Cromwell, then an obscure individual, from embarking, an exile from his native land, for America, Charles the 1st lost his crown and his head. And to the same act may be traced that mighty revolution, which placed the Protector upon the throne of England, and affected the condition of the whole civilized world. There is, perhaps, nothing unimportant; nothing, but is concerned, remotely or immediately in the production of every thing important. And were the smallest link in the great chain of cause and effect taken away, or in the slightest degree altered, it may be, that consequences would follow, at which all intelligent creatures would be struck with horror. Each being in this vast world, is the centre of an influence ramifying throughout the whole range of connected being. *He* is what he is through the influence of others, and to those yet to come he shall be the medium of union with all that is past. Any man who will reflect, must be convinced, that whatever he may now be, his character and condition have been materially shaped by those of his progenitors and others with whom he has been connected.

A difference in them would have made a difference in him. Nor is this obvious connection the only one of which we have plain indications. To what christian has not the history of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, been an incentive to faith, to prayer, to steadfast integrity? To the end of time, and forever, many a heart will glow with pious emotion over the simple annals of the poor. Angels are interested in the concerns of earth. The conversion of a sinner imparts new melody to the harps of heaven. To use the language of a distinguished writer, "the same law of interminable connection, a law of moral gravitation, stretches far beyond the limits of the human family, and actually holds in unison the great community of intelligent beings." Now this universality of influence makes it indispensable that there be a *particular providence*, shaping the course of each individual with a view to the whole. Let us illustrate by a single case. The greatest event which ever transpired in this world, the manifestation of the Christ, depended upon the marriage of Boaz to Ruth! Upon the determination, so beautifully expressed by the affectionate Moabitess, "whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy God, my God," depended the salvation of the world! and this again, upon the education of Ruth.

Every argument adduced, sustains the doctrine of a *particular providence*. The character of God establishes it. We can conceive of no reason why he should exercise a providence, that does not equally involve its extension to all things. An imperfect government is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature; but a partial government, one that overlooked some things and excluded others, would be imperfect. The constant representations of scripture, prophecy, prayer, each of these requires a particular providence.

An observation of the course of events may strengthen our conviction of the truth of this doctrine. "A man's heart deviseth his ways, but the Lord directeth his steps." Who is in just the condition he would choose? How many are constantly struggling in vain against what they deem adverse fortune. How often too, have we known instances of preservation in danger, and deliverance from peril, where all hope of escape had fled. There is not, perhaps, a reflecting person but has exclaimed,

“There is a *Providence* that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

Instances, too, are not wanting, in which somewhat of retributive justice is manifest in the course of human affairs. We speak not now of such punishment of crime, nor rewarding of virtue as is common. These are under the divine supervision, but they occur as matters of course. This, we know, is not the state of retribution. But there are instances in which the greatly wicked have been stricken down in the height of their daring impiety, like the oak scathed and blasted by heaven's bolt, and we have felt, “the Lord hath done it.” There are cases in which distinguished piety has been specially rewarded in such a manner as to show the hand of God. As an example of the former, may be mentioned, the horrible death of Herod; of the latter, the preservation of Paul amidst all the dangers of his perilous voyage.

III. We are now to consider *some of the abuses to which this doctrine is liable, and some of the benefits resulting from a right belief of it.*

There is no truth that is not liable to abuse. The mind and heart of depraved man, may, like the stomach of the dyspeptic, convert into poison the most wholesome nutriment. All the doctrines which relate to the sovereignty of God, if improperly believed, or erroneously construed, must prove injurious. Yet, to say the least, it is questionable whether more injury has resulted from the abuse of such doctrines, than from that of those relating to the agency and accountability of man. Divine truth, as exhibited in the scriptures, is a seal, having piety in perfect proportions engraved thereon. Impressed upon the soul, it leaves a lovely image. Whenever men attempt to improve this seal, they destroy the beauty of the impression.

The doctrine of providence may be perverted to nourish a blind enthusiasm, and also, a spirit of antinomian impiety.

1. The doctrine may be used to nourish a spirit of enthusiasm. The events of life consist of those which follow in the ordinary course of things, and of such as are fortuitous. The words chance, fortune, accident, are really inapplicable to any events. Those which are so designated, equally with those that result from obvious arrangement, are



ordered by the providence of God. To us they are fortuitous; to God they are certain. A man believing this, and supposing himself a peculiar favorite of heaven, may come to expect, and to rely upon unanticipated turns of providence, to the neglect of prudent forecast, and just attention to ordinary duties. Such reliance will be considered, by the subject of it, as the result of great faith in God; and in order to give free scope for its exercise, duties will be neglected, enterprises undertaken without due reflection and preparation, and all the ordinary means of usefulness overlooked. Every passage of the Bible which promises the protection and blessing of God to those who trust in him, will be appealed to, to justify the infatuation; every instance of remarkable interposition, will be relied upon to strengthen the delusion. That such a course must enfeeble the mind and pervert the heart, cannot be doubted. Success, instead of inspiring humble gratitude, will produce spiritual pride; and when, as must generally be the case, disappointment ensues, instead of pious resignation, fretful repining will result. Eventually, the man who is under the guidance of this spirit, must sink into a morbid melancholy, destructive both to happiness and to usefulness. The course of providence is so uniform, as to ensure disappointment to him who does not well consider his ends and his means. Fortuitous occurrences are sufficiently frequent, to teach us that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." By the one class of events, we are taught to exercise our reason in the direction of our life; by the other, we are forcibly reminded of our dependence upon God.

2. The doctrine of providence may be perverted to nourish an antinomian spirit. "What is to be, will be," is the aphorism of the antinomian. It is not often the case that this spirit is indulged, in reference to the affairs of the present life. In these its advocates feel too eager an interest, to trust to *their doctrine* of divine providence. They labor as assiduously, and watch as anxiously for their temporal interests, as if they believed their fortune to be in their own hands. Should not this fact convince them, that they *pervert* the doctrine as they apply it to spiritual concerns? But alas! here is an apathy that cannot be roused; a heartlessness that cannot be affected! Reason pleads, conscience remonstrates, the venomous fang of remorse fastens upon

the heart, and for a time, they writhe and groan! But they have only to reflect, "what is to be, will be," and reason is silenced, conscience seared as with a hot iron, recoils, and they fall again into the death-like stupor of sin! With such persons it is, perhaps, needless to reason. But we beg them to reflect. How does Jehovah exercise his sovereignty in providence? Is it with us, or without us? Is it through us, or upon us? No man can, for a moment, attend to the instructions of the word of God, or reflect upon what is every day passing within and around him, without feeling convinced that men are materially concerned in producing the good or ill fortune, both of themselves and of others, not only for time, but also for eternity.

It is the part of intelligence to adopt means to ends. This is done by the supreme intelligence, in the government of providence. Physical laws control the material, and moral laws the spiritual part of this empire. To secure any object contemplated, in either department, you are required to exert, in conformity with these laws, your powers to that intent. In either department, if you do your duty, you will be blessed, if you neglect it you will be injured. If you till the earth you will make a crop. If you are idle, and neglect to do so, you will not. If you repent and believe the gospel, you will be saved. If you remain impenitent, you will be lost.

Nothing is clearer, than that the sovereignty of God does not conflict with freedom of thought and action in man. Every man is conscious of possessing such freedom. The word of God declares it to belong to man. We may speculate upon this subject until we are lost in the mazes of our own minds. But two facts meet us at every turn. *God is a sovereign, and man a dependent voluntary agent.* How the divine causation is exerted, either in the growth of a spire of grass, the revolutions of planets, or the action of intelligent beings, we are utterly unable to comprehend. Many fruitless attempts have been made to explain the *manner* of this influence. But why should men seek to fathom unsearchable depths? Why attempt to "find out God." The fact that God does overrule and control all things, both reason and the scriptures fully establish; and that in this control no violence is done to the nature of any being, is equally evident. We have to do only with these

facts, and the duties resulting from them. Let us then, while we reverently confide in divine providence, diligently discharge every duty.

2. Let us attend to some of the benefits of this doctrine.

1. It is well suited to enhance our conceptions of the character of God. What infinite wisdom is displayed in the government of the universe! What order and harmony in the material world! Think for one moment of the myriads of conflicting and antagonist elements of which it is composed, controlled by the wisdom and power of God, so as to secure the order, harmony and beauty of this vast empire. And human society, how apparently chaotic and turbulent! But amidst all this confusion and violence, all is order and concord in the divine administration. Do nations heave with dread commotion? He "stilleth the tumult of the people." Do men attempt to thwart his purposes? Even "the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain." "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" And when we reflect upon the effect of providence in the conservation of the happiness of the world, can we but adore the goodness of the Lord? How soon would the unhallowed passions of man obliterate every vestige of peace and quietness from earth; how soon would the raging elements of destruction, sweep with the besom of desolation over the universe; did not God say, "hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther." "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

2. The doctrine is full of comfort to the christian, especially in the hour of affliction. What is better suited to retain the mind in calm tranquility, than the reflection, that all things are under the direction of our heavenly Father? We know not what shall be; but we know him who hath said, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Why, then, should we fear? Why should we be troubled for the future? Whether life or death, whether prosperity or adversity, whether days of pleasantness or nights of affliction await us, all is arranged by infinite wisdom and goodness, all is under the guidance of a father's love.

And when affliction comes, how well calculated is this



reflection to support and console the child of God. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Sin has made our world a *Bochim*. Christians, like others, are liable to suffer; and the refining and elevating influence of the gospel, as it strengthens all the better feelings of the heart, renders them more susceptible of anguish from various calamities, than those yet under the dominion of sin. But in confidence in the God of providence, they have an antidote to the pains of the heart. Sure of his kindness, they can confide in his wisdom. And while the big tear is upon their cheek, and the bosom is heaving with strong emotion, they can say, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

We, my brethren, are in a condition to realize the value of this truth. We are an afflicted people. Our brother, "with whom we have taken secret counsel and gone to the house of God," is no more! His unaffected piety, his amiable kindness, his uniform devotion had endeared him to our hearts, and the broken voice of grieved affection cries out, "we are an afflicted people!" How strong, how interesting the ties that have been severed! Especially, how must you, brethren, the members of the churches to which he ministered, feel this bereavement! It could not be, but that he was high in your confidence and love. Much had his lovely piety and consistent and amiable deportment engaged your hearts. Prospects, for him of increasing usefulness, and for you, of enlarged enjoyment and profit, were spread out before you. But alas, they are blighted! Fell disease has palsied the hand that was raised to guide, has hushed the voice that was wont to instruct and to cheer! **BURNLY** is dead! Your gushing tears, your heaving bosoms tell that you are an afflicted people! And you, my sister, to whom our brother was united by earth's strongest ties, it needs not to look at those weeds of mourning, it needs not to hear that moan of suppressed anguish, it needs not to cast an eye to the trembling hand that encircles with convulsive feeling, the little fatherless ones at your side, to know that you are afflicted, deeply afflicted! Your husband is gone! Your children are fatherless! Yourself a widow! No, my sister—your children are not fatherless—you are not a widow. God is their father! He is your husband! "I," he says, "am the father of the fatherless, and the husband of the

widow." He has taken your husband, but he has given you himself; and you may feel assured that he is with you. He who has said, "leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them, and let thy widows trust in me," will fulfill his promise. Confide in him. Commit yourself, your children, your all into his hands, and all will be well.

3. This doctrine leads us to seek instruction from the events which are passing around us. So limited is our knowledge, so contracted the reach of our minds, that we are, not unfrequently, perplexed with what we call a mysterious providence. Why, we ask, is it thus? Why are hopes so cherished, blighted just as they begin to be realized? Why are men of richest promise laid aside, just as unfolding usefulness has learned us how to estimate their worth? Few instances occur in which these inquiries more naturally arise, than in the present case. In brother Burnley were combined intellectual and moral qualities, fitting him to occupy a sphere of great and extended usefulness. He had adopted, and pursued with persevering diligence, a course of mental training, already developing its fruits in the influence which he exerted, and promising for the future a rich harvest of good. Arrangements had been made, by which he would have been enabled to devote his whole energies to the ministry. But at this time, so full of hope, he was cut down! Truly we may exclaim, "clouds and darkness are round about" the Lord!

But what is the mystery in this case? Is it that a man has died? Is it that a christian, ripe for heaven, has been taken home? Is it that a faithful laborer, whose work is done, has heard his master say, "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

We err whenever we attempt to penetrate into the ultimate reasons of the divine government. There, all to us is mysterious. We can never tell why one is taken and another left. All that is here permitted to us, is, with that confiding acquiescence which Jesus exemplified to say, "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But there is another point in reference to which we may profitably inquire—the light which providence throws upon our duty. Allow us to specify some of the instructions to be derived from the event which has called us together.

1. We are taught our dependence upon God. We know

not, brethren, whether you had special need of this lesson. But the event, in a solemn and impressive manner, illustrates the little dependence that can be placed in human instruments to advance and sustain the cause of God. And it may be for the very purpose of continually keeping before the mind of the church her dependence upon himself, that divine Being so frequently takes from her those who seem as "oaks of Bashan," in the very strength of their prime. "What is man, whose breath is in his nostrils?" God, while he chooses to work through us, keeps us in this world; but he is not dependent upon our aid, and can lay us aside whenever it pleaseth him.

A firm and practical sense of our dependence upon God, is of great importance to us, both as individuals and as churches. It is necessary to humble us. Vain man is disposed to be proud, and, like ancient Israel, to forget the hand that nourishes, the God that sustains him. How little such a state of feeling becomes our condition, we need not be told. "God resisteth the proud, while he giveth grace to the humble;" and to prepare his people for this grace, he, in his providence, takes from them that wherein they trust; shows them the insufficiency of all other objects of reliance, that they may take himself for their refuge and their rock. Such a sense of dependence upon God, is no less necessary to encourage than to humble. Here we have an unfailing support. Ministers may die, but Jesus lives. Friends may forsake, but "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Obstacles insuperable to human aid may oppose, but "if God be for us who can be against us." Calamities numerous and severe, may assail us; our sky may be overcast with darkness and tempest; but, confiding in God, we can still adopt the language of Habakkuk, "although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

2. We are taught the importance of faithfulness and diligence in our christian profession. God condescends to use us as instruments for the accomplishing of his purposes. He will use us whether we consent to it or not. But if we are unfaithful and slothful, the use which he will make of



us, will be, though to his glory, to our disgrace and ruin. On the contrary, if we be willing and obedient co-workers with him, he will honor and bless us. How long we shall be permitted to labor in this world, we cannot tell. Our brother was younger than many who are here assembled. O let us improve the present moment "Watch, for ye know not the hour when the Son of Man cometh." Is it not desirable to be prepared for his coming? Is it not desirable in the dread hour of death to feel, that

"Jesus can make a dying bed,  
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

You know, brethren, how calmly, and how full of hope our brother died. Death found him not unprepared. Laborious, humble, confiding, devout in life, in death he was not dismayed. He gloried not in what he had done. He trusted not in his own righteousness. No! Jesus was his trust. He said to him who now addresses you, but a day or two before his death, "that same gospel which I have preached to others, is my only hope; and I feel that I want no other." But, had duty neglected, opportunities wasted, influence perverted, then risen up in his mind in dark array, would they not have obscured the vision of faith, and chilled the confidence of hope?

Brethren, you are warned by this solemn event to awake to your responsibilities and privileges. How soon you may die! How awful to be unprepared when called! Now is your time for preparation. To-morrow you may be in eternity. Paul appears to have had his eye ever fixed upon the end of his course. He wanted to be always ready to die. He lived every day with his end before him. Hence, when about to depart, he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." How much a kindred spirit animated our departed brother, you well know. And now, from on high, pointing to the dazzling crown that encircles his brow, he calls upon you, "forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth to those that are before, to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

3. Unconverted friends, this providence has a voice for

you. It says, you too must die! And as from the tomb of your departed pastor, it warns you of your danger. No more will he address you. Never again will that soft eye melt with tears of compassion over you. Never will that mild voice, eloquent with deep sympathy for your souls, again warn, and expostulate, and invite. No, no more! He is gone! You are hastening to follow! At the judgment seat of Christ you will meet him! Ah! shall he then be forced to say, "there is one that I warned and invited in vain!" No, my friends! improve this solemn event! Heed this awakening call! Seize the passing opportunity! repent and live!

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### PROVIDENCE—AN EXTRACT.

There are *multitudes* of other and of similar arguments, abundantly confirming this doctrine. The formation and adjustment of our physical frame; the surprising and unexpected turns often given to the revolutions and changes of states and empires, which are frequently such as to astonish, and confound, and baffle, the wisest statesmen; the strange and unexpected discoveries of long hidden crimes; the visible judgments of heaven sometimes overtaking the guilty even in this world; the whole history of discoveries and inventions; the numberless and striking fulfillments of prophecy in every age; and the private experience of many an individual: these are but a few of the many sources of argument for a particular providence,—but a few of the many things in which we may discern the presence of an almighty, and uncreated, and unseen hand. They all furnish, in a greater or less degree, evidence of the reality and the nature of the ceaseless and universal providence of God. That providence is concerned with all the affairs of the universe, and is ever conversant with all their changes. From the tremblings of the earthquake that ingulfs kingdoms, to the tremblings of the leaf which is fanned by the breeze; from the falling of a world to the falling of a sparrow; from the flight of an angel to the creeping of an insect; in *all* things its power is ever present, upholding all by its sustaining influence, and guiding all to the best and most glorious final results. Such is the doctrine of scripture, and of enlightened reason,—its truth being entirely confirmed by history, and by the otherwise inexplicable incidents of common life.—*Christian Spectator.*

## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—No. III.

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### THE OFFICE AND WORK OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

The christian ministry is an institution of Jesus Christ. This will be denied by none who seek instruction on this subject from the New Testament.

It has been shown, in the first number of this series of articles on the christian ministry, that Christ calls some of his servants to the work of the gospel ministry: that he moves the minds of some pious men to engage in the holy employment of preaching his gospel. It now becomes us to turn to the sacred pages, where the lamp of inspiration sheds the brightness of perfect day, and there learn to what particular *office*, to what important *work* Christ calls the gospel minister.

The office to which Christ calls his ministers is that of *teachers of his religion, as revealed in the Bible, to a world of sinners, that they might believe and be saved.*

*Teaching* is their appropriate business. Their work is to explain and enforce revealed truth, so that the meaning which God intends we should receive through the medium of revelation should be clearly understood. The manner of inculcating revealed truth is not always the same. It may be done in the Sabbath School lessons, in the family, or in the pulpit. A minister may be an evangelist, or a pastor of a church; but wherever he is he is a TEACHER. Such were the apostles and primitive ministers. Acts v: 21. "They entered into the temple early in the morning and taught." Acts xi: 25. "Paul and Barnabas taught much people." Acts xx: 20. "I have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house." 1 Tim. ii: 7. "I am a teacher of the gentiles." Eph. iv: 11. "He gave some . . . . . pastors and teachers." 1 Tim. iii: 2. "A bishop must be . . . . *apt to teach.*" 2 Tim. ii: 2. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be *able to teach* others also." There are other duties besides *teaching*, that devolve upon pastors or bishops of churches, such as *ruling*; (Heb. xiii: 7, 17, 24,) *taking*



*care of the flock*, (Acts xx : 28 ; 1 Peter v : 2, 3 ;) *watching for souls* ; (Heb. xiii : 17 ;) *feeding the flock* ; (1 Pet. v : 2 ;) *and being an example to the flock* of Christ ; (1 Tim. iv : 12 ;) but from none of these duties is teaching excluded, but rather implied.

He who enters the christian ministry without a capacity to teach, without such information as is necessary to qualify him to teach, and without an intention to teach, has never deeply pondered the responsible office which he presumes to occupy. Who would undertake to practice medicine who never studied the healing art ? Who would plead law who never studied law ? Who would proffer his aid to conduct a benighted stranger through a road about which he had no distinct idea, and no light to throw upon the darkness ? None, certainly, but the presumptuous. And shall a professed preacher of Christ's gospel presume to be a teacher before he has been taught himself ? Surely this ought not to be.

The *subject* of a gospel minister's teaching must be the *word* of God. "Preach **THE WORD**," is God's command to his ministers. 2 Tim. iv : 2.

The Bible, which is, or ought to be, the text book of every preacher, is made up of *laws, doctrines, exhortations, promises, threatenings, ordinances, prophesies and history*. Every part of this holy volume of instruction, must be so explained and illustrated that its truths shall be clearly understood ; and so enforced by appeals to the heart and conscience of the hearer, that it shall accomplish the end for which God has blessed the world with his revealed will. Neither human reason, nor human philosophy, nor human tradition can be substituted for Bible truth. Revealed truth must not be corrupted. All who preach the gospel should so discharge the duties of their office as to be able to say with the apostle Paul, "we are not as many who corrupt the word." 2 Cor. ii : 17. The word of God may be, and often has been corrupted "by attempting to attach a philosophical explanation to the facts of revelation, and making the *theory* as important as the *facts* : by attempting to explain away the offensive points of revelation by the aid of philosophy : by attempting to make the facts of scripture accord with the prevalent notions of philosophy ; and by applying a mode of interpretation to the Bible which would fritter away its meaning and make it mean any thing or nothing at pleasure."

“Those who enlist as ambassadors in the service of Christ, are under indispensable obligations to preach it, without addition or dimunition, without adulteration or alloy. If they would be pure, at least, from the blood of all men, they must not shun to declare *all the counsel of God*. Acts xx: 27. Of course, they must receive and hold it *all*. They must be characterized by a *steadfast orthodoxy*; an unflinching, unwavering *soundness in the faith*.

The final salvation of sinners is or ought to be the *object* of every minister of Christ. He should set out to *win souls*. Prov. xvii: 30. He should desire and pray to God that sinners might be saved; (Rom x: 1,) and should so preach, that should they believe and obey the truth which he preaches they would be saved. There are subordinate ends to be accomplished in preaching, such as the conviction of the mind, awakening concern, instructing and edifying the pious; but the final salvation of soul and body in heaven is the ultimate end of all the labor of the minister of Christ.

Of all the employments to which Christ calls his disciples, there is none so *dignified, important and responsible* as that to which he calls the ministers of the everlasting gospel.

“The divine original of the christian ministry, has already opened a view of its *dignity* far above any earthly honor or elevation. The institution that was introduced into the world, and confirmed to the church, with such solemn preparation—that is conversant with the interests and entrusted with the charge of immortal souls—that is ordained as the main instrument for the renovation of the world, and the building up of the church, cannot be of inferior eminence. The office of *fellow-worker with God*, (1 Cor. iii: 9; 2 Cor. vi: 1,) would have been no mean honor to have conferred upon the angel nearest the everlasting throne. The dignity, however, of the sacred office belongs to a kingdom that cometh not with observation—“a kingdom not of this world.” Luke xvii 20; John xviii: 36. It is distinguished therefore, not by the glitter of outward show, but by results connected with eternity, and productive in their present influence of happiness, far more solid and permanent than lies within the grasp of men to obtain or to communicate.”

That work must be dignified, that employs a redeemed rebel in the high and holy enterprize of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom.

Who can help from recoiling from so exalted an office—

from handling such high and holy things? "Wo is me," said one of old, in contrasting this honor with his personal meanness, "for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips." Isa. vi: 5. "Unto me," said Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph. iii: 8.

The work of the gospel minister is the most *important* in which either men or angels could be engaged. It is God's established method to bring lost sinners to Christ and heaven. "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." 1 Cor. i: 21. We know of no salvation where there is no knowledge of God's word, of Christ's salvation. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. x: 14. The ministry of the word is "the first link of means in the chain of salvation, so that without it there would be no hearing of the word—no faith in the only Saviour—no calling upon his name—no salvation." The labors, the sacrifices and the sufferings of the apostles, furnish a most striking proof of the importance which they attached to the gospel ministry. Shall we value it of less importance than they did? Let our respect for God's institution influence us to answer no.

The *responsibility* of the gospel minister's vocation is of crushing weight. The minister is entrusted with the word of God, and charged to *preach it*. 2 Tim. iv: 2. If he handle it deceitfully, or corrupt it, or neglect to preach it, he must answer it to God in the day of final retribution! He is commanded to watch for souls: if he blindly lead the blind, they must both fall into the ditch. What grief must such an account give the unfaithful minister! Heb. xiii: 17. "Unless the grace of God make an uncommon stretch to save "an unfaithful minister, his condition must be desperate! His hope of heaven the most groundless."

How many thousands take upon themselves this load of responsibility, without ever having thought of that fearful moment when they must meet God, and Christ, and his word, and their hearers, at the tribunal of their final Judge.



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NO. 5.

THE KNOWLEDGE AND DEFENCE OF ZION :

A discourse by the REV. WM. SOUTHWOOD, delivered at Sharon, King William, Va., on the occasion of the new Meeting-house being opened for divine worship, March 30th, 1845. Published by request.

“ A visible church without the Holy Spirit, may be compared to a human body without a soul ; it is a mere lifeless corpse ; and a member of a Christian church, who is destitute of that Spirit, without which no man can call Jesus, Lord, (1 cor. xii : 3,) is only as a withered branch in the vine, or as a dead member which serves no useful purpose, but rather to the detriment of the body.”—*William Jones.*

*Walk about Zion, go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever : he will be our guide even unto death.*  
PSALM XLVIII : 13-14.

God hath always had a people in the world to whom he hath *given exceeding great and precious promises* ; (2 Pet. i : 4,) and upon whom he hath bestowed the most remarkable institutions. He hath sent to them servants the most faithful, and competent to instruct them. The most signal deliverances have been vouchsafed to them ; and miracles the most wonderful have been wrought in their behalf. He hath chastised them with the righteousness of a judge, and with the tenderness of a father : yet they rebelled more and more ; and when under just condemnation, and ready to perish, being *without strength*, (Rom. v : 6,) he exhibited his love in the most conspicuous light, by giving his only begotten son, and *in due time Christ died for the ungodly* ;

(ibid,) thus opening to them infinite sources of happiness here, and eternal life in heaven.

The scriptures, throughout, exhibit the love of God to his church, in the most glowing terms. Zion, where the Jewish temple stood, the type of the church of Christ, is *beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.* (v: 2.) *The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout for joy.* Ps. cxxxii: 13, 14, 16. *Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.* Is. lxii: 3. Hear also what the apostle says: *Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.* Epistles v: 2. And that name, SHARON, by which you choose to be known as a congregation, a term proverbial among the Jews for expressing a place of extraordinary beauty and fertility, is made use of by the Holy Spirit to represent the safe and prosperous condition of the church. *And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks.* Is. lxxv: 10. And that nothing should be wanting in fragrance or beauty, where Jesus feeds and protects his flocks; he says, *I am the rose of Sharon.* Song of Sol. ii: 1. Or if, as some say, the rose of Sharon signifies the bride, and not the bridegroom, the fragrance and beauty of that lovely flower well becomes that church which is *washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi: 11.

While the prophet is extolling Mount Zion in a strain so beautiful as in this Psalm, we must, from many parts of it, see that the Holy Spirit means, chiefly, to draw attention to the gospel Zion,—the Zion of Jesus. For although *David found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob: and Solomon built him a house; howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands,* (Acts vii,) however magnificent, *but lively stones built up a spiritual house* (1 Pet. ii: 5,) *upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,* (Ephes. ii: 20,) *constitutes his temple to dwell in.* The apostle addressing such, says:

*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?* 1 Cor. iii: 16. In the eyes of every Jew, the temple at Jerusalem surpassed every other object for beauty and glory; and when they associated the splendid structure, with the solemn service performed in it, and the interesting relics it contained, it is by no means surprising that feelings of reverence and awe should have been excited. But it is the reflection of his own image that attracts the *divine* regard. The image of holiness drawn upon the heart renewed by grace, humbled on account of remaining corruption, emptied of all confidence in self, and dilating with love to Christ. *For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him ALSO, that is of a contrite and humble spirit. I will lead him also and restore comforts unto him.* Is. lxii. Compared with the glory of truth and the beauty of holiness, the most attractive or splendid objects of the world become gloomy and deformed. The man possessing these shines brighter and brighter, and by the Holy Spirit *is changed from glory to glory*; (2 Cor. iii: 18,) while these are like *the flower of the grass which falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth.* James i: 10, 11.

The church is not only the residence of God, and that which reflects the rays of his own holiness, and thus becomes *the light of the world*—and as *a city set on a hill*; (Mat. v: 14,) but it has preserved the world from falling into destruction under the influence of that moral putrefaction which has taken possession of it. It is *the salt of the earth*, (13 v.) Nor is this all. It is likewise an instrument intended for the discomfiture of satan, and the bringing of the whole family of man under the banner and discipline of Jesus Christ, as king in Zion. *Fight the good fight of faith.* 1 Tim. vi: 12.

From the words of the text, I beg your attention while I speak of some of the important duties which are inseparably annexed to the privileges of a christian church, so far as they may be considered, without any manifest impropriety, from what is here written.

*Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that he may tell it to the generation following.*



*For this God is our God for ever and ever—he will be our guide even unto death.* The whole christian church is to be engaged understandingly, watchfully, courageously, vigorously and benevolently, in defending and preserving the citadel of God and truth, according to its ancient form. Its plan is not to be enlarged. Its palaces are not to be increased. Its towers and bulwarks are to be preserved in their original and divine grandeur. To be counted, and noted, *not* amended and improved.

Without going into an allegory on each of these terms, permit me to remark, that they may all be resolved into the doctrines, duties and privileges of a christian church. These doctrines are to be regarded as jewels of infinite value, and are therefore to be watched with the most unremitting vigilance, as well as taught with unwearied diligence. But in the propagation and the defence of truth, *understanding* is necessary; for how can one teach or defend any truth, or guard against error, and oppose it, without understanding that truth, and having some knowledge of error? And how shall we win souls over to us, and bring them into the impregnable Zion, without an unconquerable courage; without an untiring vigor; without the benevolence which is taught by Christ and his apostles; or without wisdom? We may bring the exterior man within the walls, by a thousand cunning stratagems, but wisdom is required to win the soul. These towers and bulwarks of Zion, as the doctrines of grace may be termed, have been much interfered with, and unhallowed hands have tried to modernise and remove some of the antiquated prominences, and reduce the whole to modern taste, and “just proportions;” while men, called ministers of Christ, have been made princes, and the pretended followers of *Him who had not where to lay his head*, (Mat. viii: 20,) have had palaces erected for their dwellings; and Right Reverend, and Father in God, and Excellency, and Vicar of God upon earth, have been assumed by those who profess to teach that very word which forbids *receiving honor one of another*. John v: 44; Tim. iii: 15.) The Zion of christianity, *the pillar and ground of the truth*, is the residence of its great King, who hath bound himself never to leave it. Lo, I am with you always. Mat. xxviii: 20.

In taking notice of some of those truths which the citizens

of Zion are called upon to *tell*; to *mark*; to *consider*; we shall mention that which refers to the person of Christ. Nothing can be more proper than that we should enquire into the character of him, who presents himself to our notice as a Saviour; and who calls upon us to commit to his hands, not merely our temporal interests, but our never dying souls also. And his servants who went before him, and those who followed after him, all agree in teaching us that he is worthy of divine honors; that our unlimited confidence, our highest praises, and our fervent prayers, are due to him; that he is God!—*the mighty God*, (Is. ix: 6,) says the prophet. *He is over all, God blessed forever*, (Rom. ix: 5,) says the apostle. He says himself, *all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father*. John v: 23. If he is not the true God, then the whole system of revealed religion, as we term it, must be a gross imposition, a *cunningly devised fable*, (2 Pet. i: 16,) and we must be guilty of the hainous sin of idolatry. On the other hand, if we do not inform ourselves upon this subject, with all the means we have of information, and neglect to pay that homage to him which he claims, we cut ourselves off from the benefits of his power and mercy; we willfully cast from us all the advantages of his atonement and intercession. We should not gaze upon this bulwark of Zion with a mental vacuity, or approach it with indifference, but *mark it well!* Tell it, as you count over the glories of our Zion, as the *strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe*. Prov. xviii: 10. The doctrine of the true and proper divinity of Christ, should neither be neglected in this place, nor treated as an unprofitable speculation. But He should be made *known, in the palaces of Zion, for a refuge*.

Christ is God's unspeakable gift, and he must be received just as he is given, which is, truly and properly, man, as the son of Mary—as truly as any other man which was ever born,—and then he is as truly God, as the Father himself is God. There is a greatness, and a glory in this gift of the Father, which infinitely surpasseth all understanding. Here, in this house, this sublime, this wonderful feature of the gospel, this foundation upon which every tower and every bulwark of Zion rests, must not only be clearly, constantly and faithfully portrayed by those who preach here, but you *all* to whom God in his providence has committed this house, (for

committed to you, as a church, it is,) must examine it by the light of the bible, *mark it well*, and *if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.* 3 John 10, 11.

Then there is another gift—another *unspeakable gift*—the gift of the Father and of the Son, which must be kept perpetually in view by the citizens of Zion. This is the gift of the Holy Spirit—the abiding gift—the gift which Christ promised *to send from the Father*:—the comforter—the spirit of truth, (John x: iv,) who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; “who, with the Father and the Son together, is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.” (Creed in the office of communion in the P. E. C.) The personality, the deity, and operations of the Holy Spirit, are no less fundamental parts of our holy religion, than the union of the deity and the manhood, in the constitution of our glorious Christ. The person and offices of each, is taught with equal plainness in the scriptures.

Never was there such a discovery made of the benignity of heaven, as in the gospel of Jesus. There we are represented as sunk beneath the possibility of effecting our own recovery; and there too we discover the arm which alone can reach and rescue us. The Son proceeds from the bosom of the Father, to redeem us by the sacrifice of himself; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, to strike off the fetters from satan’s captives—to *take the prey from the mighty*, (Is. xlix. 25,) and sanctify the ungodly; removing all pollution from the souls of believers, and fitting them for heaven, that they may appear there with the spotless purity, and shine with the refulgent brightness of seraphs and angels before the throne of the Almighty. One might reasonably have expected, that a plan so benevolent as the gospel opens, and presented with such grace and condescension, would have been received with open arms, wherever it was made known; and that transports of joy would have filled every heart when such tidings struck the ear as *God so loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, (John iii: 16;) and *Christ Jesus is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption*, (1 Cor. i: 30.) But instead of this intel-



ligence being gratefully and joyfully received, sinners have forged *another gospel*, (Gal. i: 6,) blotting out grace and proclaiming works! Thus they would rend or cast away the righteousness of Christ, and substitute their own. They would despise the Spirit's work, as the Spirit of truth, which alone can guide unto all truth, and stretch out an arm of flesh in contempt of his omnipotent power. While rebellion continues in this province of Jehovah, every soldier of the cross must be roused, and *put on the whole armor of God*, (Ephes. vi: 11,) tell the towers and mark well the bulwarks of Zion. The doctrines of the gospel should be examined and guarded with a care and vigilance, in proportion to their value and importance.

God hath erected his towers in Zion, and established bulwarks round about her, and if we would glorify him, and become instrumental in saving sinners, *with an everlasting salvation*, (Is. xlv: 17,) we must do it in his way. Not by calling in human eloquence to fascinate the imagination, already prostituted to fine words; nor proud reason to inform us as to the *expediency* and *wisdom* of the plan of that salvation which comes from the very fountain of all wisdom; *lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*. What a striking contrast do the labors of St. Paul present to us, when compared with the course adopted by many who are called "ministers of the gospel," in this day of expediency and worldly conformity. *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*, too evidently shewing that their ruling motive is not the praise of the Father, but of the world. 1 John ii: 16. While he who *determined not to know any thing*, among the people, *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*, could also say, *my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. 1 Cor. ii: 2, 4, 5. Christ crucified; risen from the dead; and entered into heaven for us:—the power of God—the Spirit, shining upon the sinner's heart, to give him a saving knowledge of Christ, and to fit him for heaven, are the most prominent, and the most essential features of the gospel; and stated with the greatest plainness, simplicity and power, they serve for example and encouragement!

Christ hath suffered, and entered into the holy place, not

made with hands, (Heb. ix :) to advocate the merits of his own sacrifice in our behalf. And his intercession before the throne of the Father, is inseparably connected with the intercession of the Spirit, in its sanctifying and saving benefits upon sinners; for without the work of the Spirit, the work of Christ will never be received by any one. The value of Christ's redemption; and the design of the Father and the Son, respecting it; and the application of it for our benefit, are distinct things. The office of the Holy Spirit, in the scheme of salvation, is to take of the merits of Christ and show them to us. *He shall glorify me*, said our blessed Lord, *for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew unto you.* John xvi: 14, 15. Thus, while Christ is negotiating for us before the Father, the Holy Spirit is negotiating for Christ with us. *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities—maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.* Rom. viii: 26, 27.

To disregard the Holy Spirit and his work, is as destructive to the best interests of the church, and as fatal to the soul, as it is to be indifferent to the person and work of Christ. Nor should it ever be forgotten, that the restlessness of error never suffers itself to slumber upon its delusive couch, nor to be satisfied within its own specious tents. It is ever awake and active, doing more, however, by an insidious diplomacy than by an open aggressive warfare. It cannot now be said with the same force, as it has been said in many past periods, that it is *a day of rebuke and blasphemy*. It is rather a day of peace; but then it is a peace resembling that which the crafty Gibeonites effected with the credulous and careless Israelites, and which was followed, be it remembered, by severe judgments. Compare Joshua ix with 2 Sam. xxi.

If the towers and bulwarks of Zion now suffer, it is not by the battering rams of infidelity, or by the heavy ordnance of popery, but by the sappers and miners of another enemy. And through ignorance of the devices of the prince of darkness, many of the friends of Zion are furnishing gabions and fascines for the cunning foe.\* It is time to blow the trumpet

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\* When besiegers approach a citadel, and the firing of the besieged becomes dangerous, the besiegers dig a sap, or trench, and the *gabions* are

of alarm, and a loud blast should be blown, for the deity and work of the Spirit, that beautiful tower, that strong bulwark of Zion, is much neglected. Permit me to say, that neither the person and work of Christ, nor of the Holy Spirit, may be classed amongst unnecessary and unprofitable speculations; they form the essential basis of christianity, and the whole evangelical system rests upon them. Our present character as christians, and our eternal condition, depend upon our knowledge of, and our behavior towards, Christ and the Holy Spirit. There are a great variety of points on which good men may differ, without affecting their happiness or usefulness, or endangering their future eternal condition. But where the gospel is preached, and this basis is not understood and confided in, there is neither safety nor evangelical goodness or happiness.

There are other doctrines, besides those of which we have spoken, demanding our attention; and while we may say that they are of lesser magnitude, and of inferior glory in

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wicker baskets, which are filled with earth; and the *fascines* are faggots of sticks, tied in the middle, and at each end. By these, with the earth which is dug out, the parapets of trenches are made, to screen the men. Now there are not a few of the professed friends of Zion, who, though they would not be seen to discharge a single gun against her, even to wound a traitor, or to alarm and rouse a sleeper, within the walls, lest it might be esteemed discourteous; will run to the sappers, who are advancing trenches against her, and supply them with gabions and fascines to screen the foe from the well pointed gun directed against him, and then retire unobserved; or will obtain the character of a kind, and amiable, and liberal minded person, too generous to wound an enemy, and too much of a gentleman and a christian to wish the downfall even of the devil! But who can become the apologist of error, or screen the propagator of it, in his active and sleepless efforts, without being an enemy to truth? It would be treason against the gospel, to afford some men opportunities to proclaim their pernicious doctrines, in houses over which we have any control. And I know not how to characterize the practice of protestants patronizing the schools of the papists! David, writing as the Spirit guided him, says: "Do not I hate them, O LORD! that hate thee? And am not I grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." Ps. cxxxix: 21, 22. Certainly some persons hate popery, when its purposes are fully developed, and she comes with the thunder of her artillery, and her instruments of cruelty, and the Pope's flag boldly thrown open to the breeze! But popery in the trenches is no less dangerous! And whether protestant or papal ANTICHRIST, it is equally subversive of christianity, and should be opposed by all the true followers of Jesus Christ.

Ignorance and ambition are the parents of popery; let us teach the people the difference between truth and error, between the pride of party and gospel obedience; let us teach *all* the members of our churches, the value of truth, and popery will be exterminated.



their very nature; still they demand our veneration, and call upon us to throw them open to the view of all, by removing every intervening object which would hide them from the sight of any, or cast them into the shade. In a city where the most beautiful specimens of architecture exist in the public edifices, but mercenary hands have obscured or hid them, by erecting other buildings for their own private emolument and gratification; lest those monuments of toil and strength, of wealth and benevolence, should become unknown and their uses unfelt, the citizens should throw open these edifices for the public benefit, and to the view of all. And it is the duty of all good men to watch with unwearied attention, and to put forth their utmost vigor in guarding and defending the towers and bulwarks of Zion, that their beauty may be seen, and their blessings felt.

I can now only *mention* a few of these doctrines, rather than make them topics of discourse. The method of God's justifying grace—what it is—and how obtained—should be well considered. There is also the doctrine of sanctification, or personal holiness, which must never be slumbered over, but cultivated with great care, and regarded as that *without which no man shall see the Lord*. Heb. xii: 14. Intimately connected with these, is faith, and the right use of the word of God. I will only detain you here, while I remark, that faith is an instrument, and an instrument only, by which blessings are received. That faith by which a sinner is justified, and obtains *peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, (Rom. v: 1,) is divine in its origin, (but it is only an instrument,) and always rests upon the word of God, to which it is adapted in the divine economy, and the word to it. It is connected retrospectively with the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, and prospectively with his sanctifying grace. It is most delightful to trace up all these, and glory too, to the love of a covenant God and Father. The "operation of the Spirit of God" upon the depraved heart of man, is free, being moved to it by nothing but love. When the Holy Spirit removes the film from the eye of the understanding, and turns it inward upon a corrupt heart, and upward to a crucified Jesus; and while he unfolds the pages of inspiration, and shines upon them, the most humbling views of self, and the most exalted apprehensions of the great Redeemer, are received by the soul. Then philosophy is

nothing; human reasoning is nothing; works do not weigh a feather; all *imagination*s are cast down, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. x: 5.

You who have erected this house, and who compose the church which is to worship in it, will not only have to guard against its being opened for the diffusion of errors, fatal to the soul, and prejudicial to the spread of evangelical truth, but you will also have to act as sentinels, to *walk about Zion*,—you must be active and useful in the church—and, as in a regiment, every soldier bears his part in the duty, so it must be here. *Walking* implies activity, and walking about Zion, seems to imply, that he who is thus employed is not ashamed of being seen while so engaged. If this direction should be literally applied, we cannot suppose that the duty would have been discharged by the Jews, if they occasionally went to the temple, and did no more! And if applied to the gospel Zion, we do not come up to what is required of us, as the followers of Jesus, if we meet each other, on the important interests of religion, in the place of public worship only. There are cases, occurring constantly in the church, which require the watchfulness, the instruction, the counsel, the sympathy and the prayers, of one member for another. And while engaged in these offices, we may gather encouragement from the thought that our blessed Lord *went about doing good*. Acts x: 38. You may find much employment among each other, in offices of piety; employment in which you cannot engage, without deriving spiritual benefit yourselves, as well as doing good to others.

It is painful, however, to see so many slumbering in Zion, instead of walking about here; and not a few appear to be fast asleep; and painful indeed it is to see the multitude upon whom the denunciation of the prophet must fall. *Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.* Amos vi: 1.

It is to be lamented that many give their assent to what they hear often repeated, and from various causes are impressed, to a certain degree, with what they see and hear, till they are induced to “profess religion,” that they may associate themselves with their friends and companions already in the church, or about to enter it, rather than from

any examination of the truths upon which the true church is built, and a love of Jesus Christ.

But whatever are the causes which operate in bringing persons into the church, it is the duty of every christian to weigh well what belongs to his character, as a believer, and to understand clearly and correctly the truths which are at once the strength and the beauty of the Zion of Jesus. This is implied in *telling, marking well, and considering*. Ample means are afforded us to prosecute the labor to which we are called, in the use of those figures, with the best hope of success. The holy scriptures contain all necessary knowledge to guide us in every duty which we owe to God, to ourselves, or to our neighbor. There the doctrines, precepts and promises are exhibited in the most perfect order, and the most delightful harmony. By their light the good man will count over, consider and mark well the vital principles of divine truth; without which there can be no salvation for any man; and he will distinguish *them* from the more subordinate truths, which, though not essential to our safety, are nevertheless important to our peace and our present enjoyments; and also our consistency and usefulness in the church and in the world. And the holy scriptures are so well adapted by our heavenly Father, to our condition, that no *obedient* child will be at a loss to *know*, any more than backward to *do* his duty. He will understand their various structure and uses, and will delight in telling the towers, and marking well the bulwarks, and considering the palaces of Zion.

As you have been permitted, under the good hand of God, to erect this neat, this well proportioned edifice, think of the united materials, the foundation upon which all rests, the windows which convey light within; let these speak to you! Let what you have here done, admonish you to continue a compact, enlightened, spiritual edifice!

You should zealously co-operate in every enterprize of christian benevolence, and if you are *living stones* you should not be *loose stones*, but cemented together by love, and you will prove a strong and a beautiful temple, in which Christ will delight to dwell, to give joy to your souls, and efficiency to your labors of love. And here will you suffer a word of exhortation? When you meet in a social way, never separate without reading the word of God, and prayer.



And let those be special seasons of prayer for each other, and for the prosperity of your church, and blessings upon your pastor. And when a friend or a stranger rests under your roof for a night, suffer him not to retire to rest, or to partake of the provisions of your table in the morning, without letting him see and feel that you read the bible and pray in your family!

May I detain you for a moment on the words, *tell it to the generation following?* It is said of the faith of Abel, of the sacrifice which he offered, and the death which he suffered, *he being dead yet speaketh.* Heb. xi: 4. And the daily sermons which some have *lived*, have been *known and read of men* (2 Cor. iii: 2,) from generation to generation. May you all be such preachers! But the religious education of children may be enforced from these few words. When the Lord gave his law to Israel, he said: *I command thee and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life, therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates, that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, &c., &c.* See Deut. vi. and xi. But the Jews forgetting the spirit and design of these words the forms only were attended to, and which soon became matters of superstition and bigotry, instead of leading to knowledge and piety. And it is much to be feared that many zealous advocates of that excellent institution, "the Sunday School," are influenced rather by fashion, or a superstitious attachment to the form of the institution, than by an enlightened and pious desire that its original design should be accomplished. Otherwise, how has it become so common, that persons should make such sacrifices to teach that command of the decalogue which gives sanctity to the Sabbath, in the morning of the Lord's day, in the Sabbath School, and in the afternoon encourage their own children in turning the time, which the Lord commands to be kept holy, into visiting, frivolous and dissipating practices, and all the various amusements in which they

can engage, which childhood and youth enjoy and seek, where parental restraint does not interpose in behalf of a christian education. For that cannot be said to be a christian education, where the sacred character of the Lord's day is not taught and enforced.

May the Sunday School here in this place become a blessing to the neighborhood; and may the heads of families who engage in it, with zeal and perseverance, never expose themselves to the charge of hypocrisy, or to the upbraidings of their own consciences as one is represented, saying: *They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.* Cant. i: 6.

Our responsibilities are great! The gospel is committed to us. We must understand it; and defend it; and teach it; and exhibit it in our lives as pictures, for many persons will look at those pictures, who will neither read the bible, nor listen to a discourse from the pulpit. We must open to the rising generation the great principles which lie hid, to the thoughtless, in the volume of inspiration. We must, by the application of this wonderful instrument, lift the heathen world from the corruption and darkness of idolatry into the light and holiness of evangelical truth. The obligations of the apostles to proclaim the gospel, now devolve upon the church; and we ought to feel the same responsibility and solicitude for the extension of Christ's kingdom as Paul felt when he said: *A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me;—necessity is laid upon me;—yea woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.* 1 Cor. ix: 16, 17. I will close with the words of Bishop Hall; from his sermon entitled "Divine Light and Reflections."

"Christian hearers—think not that this light may be put off to public and eminent persons only. Each of you must shine too. If they be as cities upon a hill, the meanest of you must be as cottages in a valley; though not high built, yet wind-tight and water-tight. If they be beacons, you must be lanterns. Every one must both have a light of his own, and impart it to others. It is not a charge appropriated to public teachers, that the apostle gives to the Hebrews. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Heb. iii: 13. Even the privatest person may shine forth in good counsel. He that is most obscure, may and must do good

works in his place, and improve his graces to other's good. These, my beloved, are the light which we must both have and give. Not to have, were to have no fellowship with God: to have and not to give it, were to engross and monopolize grace; which God cannot abide. Hath any of you knowledge? Let him communicate it, and light other's candle at his. Hath any man worldly riches?—*To do good and distribute, forget not.* Hath any man zeal? Zeal, I say, not fury, not frenzy: let him not glow only, but shine. Has any man true piety and devotion? let him, like a flaming brand, enkindle the next. Thus, thus shall we approve ourselves the sons of that infinite and communicative light. Thus shall we have fellowship with God, who is light; that, shining like him and from him here in grace, we may shine with him hereafter above in everlasting glory—which the same God grant to us, for the sake of the Son of his love, Jesus Christ the righteous: To whom, with thee, O God, the Father, and blessed Spirit, one infinite and incomprehensible Lord, be given all praise, honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen."

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY:

Annual Sermon before the Education Society of Kentucky, by REV. W. F. NELSON, A. M., of Covington, Ky.

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"*I magnify mine office.*"—ROM. xi: 13.

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The *Christian Ministry*, whether we regard the high source from which it emanates,—the awful responsibilities it assumes,—or the glorious rewards with which its ultimate success is crowned, justly deserves our highest veneration; and we hesitate not to say, that the man who does not entertain exalted, and at times, almost overwhelming views of its responsibilities, gives conclusive evidence that *he*, at least, is not a suitable person to bear the vessels of the sanctuary.

If clean hands and a pure heart, were indispensable qualifications for an assistant in the old and shadowy temple worship, how much more reasonably do we look for the highest



endowments in one who is to bear the vessels of this spiritual temple, of which Jesus himself is the great high priest.

We honor the man, therefore, who is an enthusiast in so noble, so glorious a cause, and who, like that great model of a christian minister, the author of our text, *magnifies his office.*

It will therefore be our purpose, in the examination of this subject, to enquire how this result can be obtained; or, in other words, *how the influence and dignity of the christian ministry can be maintained and advanced?* And we remark—

I. This can be effected, by cherishing correct and adequate views of the real dignity and importance of the sacred office.\*

1. *Look at its source.* What does the proudest of earth's titled dignitaries, who sports his stars, his crosses and ribbons with such pomp and circumstance; what does he, by that very display, but acknowledge supremacy and do homage to a superior, even among his own race, in the person of the monarch,—the *man* who has made him the thing of *air* he seems. But the christian minister accepts no earthly, perishable title. He aspires not to the deceitful and meretricious distinctions which the instructions of his great Teacher have taught him to despise, and like him, therefore, he receives not honor from men. And although, to do them good, he cheerfully condescends to the lowest—the meanest of his fallen race; yet, when his authority is impugned, or his prerogative invaded, then, by the power of a living faith, that bears him aloft above their malice and their might, he can meet the fierce array of their terrors with unblanching cheek and unaverted eye; and even when summoning the might of their majesty, they attempt to bend or bind his free spirit to their dictates, he confidently appeals from their decision to the high court of heaven's chancery, and produces his commission, bearing the broad seal of Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There he stands among, yet above the monarchs of earth, an "*ambassador of Christ,*" a *legatee of the skies!!*

2. But look again, at the *design* of the ministry. This

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\* It was a quaint, but true remark of the excellent Whitfield, that a faithful, though obscure minister of the gospel, fighting the devil in his own parish, was a greater man than Julius Cæsar, at the head of his legions.

is nothing less than the deliverance of the whole race of man, from endless and intolerable woe, and their exaltation to joy, endless, unspeakable and full of glory—the utter discomfiture of all the arts of satan's malice, and the perfect accomplishment of all the grand and glorious designs of divine benevolence—the banishment of sin from the world, and the re-establishment of Jehovah upon the throne of universal dominion.

A Talleyrand or a Metternich, placed in authority by his monarch, and yet, by the power of intellect alone, swaying the mind that elevated him, and by that influence, controlling the destinies of nations,—is a spectacle justly claiming our admiration.

A Demosthenes, thundering in the Acropolis, now rousing to frenzy, and now soothing to peace, the susceptible minds of his countrymen, and by the power of his own unaided genius, swaying at will the tumultuous passions of the Grecian State, is, whether we regard the man or his motives, his means or his aim, an object of deep, *thrilling, sublime interest.*

An Alexander or a Buonaparte, by the terror of his name, and by the might of his embattled host, overturning and trampling under foot nations and empires; throwing all the discordant elements of society into chaos, and then, by their own matchless skill, pouring the oil of peace and submission upon the troubled waves of anarchy and misrule; is a scene, the contemplation of which,—while it may fill us with loathing of the unhallowed passions of the great master magician of the pageant—at the same time compels our admiration, and exalts our conceptions of the powers and capabilities of a single human mind, in collision with others.

Turn now, and contemplate for a moment, the influence of mind upon matter. What more subtle and unstable than air? Yet mind can grasp that shadow,—aye, and hold it fast, and bind it to obedience, now crouching passive and harmless at the foot of man, and now darting away with lightning wing, subjugated and chained to his ponderous engines. Yes, mind can make it, at pleasue, the instrument of life or death; now devouring a needle or a nail, and now feeding the fires of the burning city. See that beam of light as it darts through yonder casement,—mind has given to each individual ray, as it glances from that speaking counte-

nance, a life,—an instinct and power, which shall transmit to the polished metal the impress of that touch, and thus, with a pencil faithful and unerring as truth, multiply and perpetuate the images of those loved and gone.

Such is the varied and mighty power of that spirit which the inspiration, the *in-breathing of the Almighty*, hath given to man. The agent,—the possession of which exalts him so far above brute and inert matter, and gives him in the scale of being, a rank but little lower than the angels,—those bright and blessed spirits who throng eternally around the *great white throne of God*. And yet, let us ever remember, (and for this purpose have we alluded to it,) that same power perverted, abased and depraved, has cast him down from his glorious pre-eminence, and made him a fit companion for fiends and “archangels ruined.” Nor is this a *possible* result merely, for the eye of the christian as it glances abroad over this sin devastated province of God’s empire, finds not here and there a solitary case, but *every mind, depraved* and ruined by the awful ravages of sin, and doomed to writhe in *intolerable, inextricable* and *eternal* woe.

Now, to this once glorious but doomed race, comes the herald of the cross,—the minister of reconciliation, to proclaim deliverance to the captive grinding satan’s prison house,—to break from his neck the iron bondage, and reinstate him in the favor of God; pointing him through the blood of atonement, to a seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He beholds man, steeped in crime, led a willing captive by the devil at his will, and rushing madly on from present calamities to a fate still more dreadful,—to endless misery,—to eternal death. Moved with compassion, like his master, he comes to a race that has defied the mercy and wisdom of its creator; that has abused his goodness; has cast off, cast down and trampled under foot the authority and solemn sanctions of his law, and in its madness impugned the justice, imprecated the vengeance and defied the fierceness of the indignation and wrath of Almighty God. The glorious gospel of the blessed God takes its stand in the dreadful breach, and stooping to the lowest depths of the abyss of human guilt and woe, it lays hold of the poor infatuated wretch, madly rushing on to irretrievable ruin, and rending the veil in which sin has enshrouded his understanding, reveals to him the full extent of his wretchedness; then, when



his fainting heart is just ready to sink under the crushing burden of its guilt and misery, it turns his despairing eye to calvary,—shews him there his incarnate creator, *bleeding, GROANING, DYING for his rescue.* And while thus, all wrapped in amazement at the stupendous scene, the still small voice of God whispers in his ear, that peace speaking, life giving sentiment, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;* and as his soul drinks in the joyful sound, which like angel music thrills through his inmost soul, love, joy and peace spring up like a fountain of life in his heart. The spell of sin is broken,—the sting of death is taken away, and from that glad moment begins the “life of God in the soul of man.” Christ is formed in him the hope of glory. Life and bliss eternal are his, and from strength to strength he goes onward in his heavenly career. He learns, even while a pilgrim on earth, to cheer his heart by the prelude to that song—“Unto him that loved us and washed us in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.”

Such is the exalted aim of the gospel minister; to deliver the objects of his solicitude from a subjugation more galling and oppressive than the yoke of any human tyrant, and a doom more dreadful than the sentence of any earthly judge, and place him not merely among the honored ones of his fellows on earth, but to shine as the stars of the firmament, forever and ever. Not simply to emancipate immortal mind from the shackles of stupidity and superstition; but to launch it forth on that eternal career of improvement and investigation, for which the great creator intended it; to vie with angels and seraphs in its ennobling study of the wonders and glories of its Almighty Creator, while with those bright spirits for its fellow students, the universe for their text book, Jesus Messiah their great teacher, and eternity their term of study, they press onward, and still onward, toward the wisdom of the eternal.

Such is the design and general scope of the minister's labors, bringing him into contact with every variety of taste and condition, of feeling and disposition, which constitute the great mass of human kind.

3. These duties, however, dividing themselves into those

of the preacher, or evangelist, and pastor, deserve now a more particular notice. To be successful in the former of these offices, he must, from the store-house of a well furnished mind, bring forth things new and old, in such variety and so arranged, as to inform the understanding, convince the judgment, move the passions, awaken the conscience, and win the heart; and this course, moreover, is to be steadily pursued from week to week, throughout his whole life.

To accomplish such important and varied ends therefore, it is not enough that his sermons be coldly, critically correct in doctrine and sentiment, they must also be richly fraught with important thought, clear and chaste in diction, pertinent and pointed in application; in a word, his must be the "beaten oil of the sanctuary." And how, I ask, can this be accomplished, without *intense, continued, patient* toil; without the labor, the "sweat of the soul?" That diamond that glitters upon the finger of beauty, or sparkles in the diadem of royalty, would be valueless for all purposes of ornament, but for the long and laborious polishing of the lapidary, which at length, by the incessant attrition of nothing less than its own adamant, calls out from the dull and unsightly mass, those dazzling beauties which are the admiration of every eye.

But his labors as a preacher constitute but a small portion of his duties. It is rather by *pastoral* labor—by preaching the gospel daily, and from house to house,—that the seed of his Sabbath ministrations is to be watered and made productive. This seems to be implied in the terms used to designate the office, such as *shepherd, overseer, watchman, steward*, devoting not a mere general superintendence, but an intimate acquaintance with their individual habits, character, state of heart, modes of thought and reasoning, and requiring a corresponding distribution to the necessities of each, and affording to the Sabbath ministrations directness, plainness, and adaptedness to the peculiarities of our hearers. Thus, the truth will be not only heard, but felt and *followed*, and they themselves shielded from the ravages of heresy and schism. If, on the contrary, the flock be fed,—and it may be but scantily,—on the Sabbath only, and left alone during the week, what marvel if grievous wolves enter in among them, not sparing the flock. The pastoral work has been well defined as "the application of the pulpit ministry to

the proper individualities of our own people." And how, let me ask, can this be accomplished, except by an intimate acquaintance with the tastes and tendencies of each.

As a watchman, he must see that the purity of the church be not marred by unchristian tempers and practices, such as are found in every church, and which cannot be fully met from the pulpit, in their minute and diversified peculiarities, but require the affectionate private expostulations of the pastor. Searching out and reclaiming the sheep is noted by the Good Shepherd, our great model pastor, as the grand distinction between himself and the hireling who neglects the pastoral care. Such was also the ministry of the apostles; of a Paul at Ephesus, who, during the three years of his labor among them, ceased not to warn every one of them day and night with tears, and the approving testimony of his conscience; on this point was his chief solace, while bending under the overwhelming weight of pastoral responsibility.

Cares of affliction, also form no inconsiderable part of a faithful pastor's labor, requiring a combination of qualities no where else to be found—blending the tenderness of the parent with the severe faithfulness of the judge. Admitted, perhaps for the first, and it may be too the only time, within the hallowed influence of a family circle, which, had their sky remained cloudless, would have spurned his presence, he comes at the favored hour, when the fallow ground of the heart has been broken up by the ploughshare of divine visitation. Here, then, if the propitious moment be vigilantly and discreetly improved, the seeds of true piety may be scattered in a genial soil, which watered by "blest tears of soul-felt penitence," may produce "peaceable fruits of righteousness," in richest abundance.

There is still, however, another class of important duties connected with the pastoral work. In almost every church there is a diversity of gifts to be elicited and fostered—gifts, which, by proper encouragement and careful training, may become highly useful in the cause, but which, if neglected, will wither and die in oblivion. Such must be sought out and led forth to a preparation for the work to which God by his providence has called them. Thus shall we, besides praying the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest, perform our part of the work of supplying with laborers the moral vineyard of the Lord.



Real worth is modest and retiring,—while zeal without knowledge is bold, noisy and obtrusive. The one waits in silence for the “word of the Lord” to come unto him,—the other cries with boasting Jehu, come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts. A man properly impressed with the responsibilities of the sacred office, would naturally shrink from observation, and like Saul will often be found “hid among the stuff” of worldly employments,—while one who, like Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, would run before his tidings were ready, will thrust himself upon us crying, “put me I pray thee into one of the priests’ offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.” Let such, then, be but faithfully conversed with, and we shall generally find that a strong desire for this work has at sometime been felt, though now perhaps nearly smothered. Meet, then, his objections fairly, and answer them conclusively, as you generally may, for you will probably find them begin and end with his own unworthiness and incompetency to discharge such high and holy duties. Such objections furnish their own best answer, by pointing to the duty of *commencing immediately* a course of intellectual and moral training for the work.

Such then, in brief, are the duties of that christian minister who would make full proof of his ministry, both as evangelist and pastor. The *unbelieving* are to be convinced of the reality of those things whereof we affirm. The *hardened*, stubborn sinner must be made to quail before the terrors of God’s holy law. The *careless* aroused to a consciousness of the perils of that slippery place, on which he is so confidently sporting. The *pharisaic moralist* shaken from his sandy foundation of human sufficiency. The *amiable* sinner persuaded to view his real hideousness, in the mirror of gospel truth. The *serious* inquirer instructed relative to his duty and his destiny. The *anxious* soul urged to the great duty of immediate submission to Christ, and faith in his name. The *perplexed* extricated out of satan’s toils. The *despairing* persuaded still to trust, even though clouds and darkness are round about the throne. The *confident* warned, by a Peter’s example, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. The *diffident* encouraged by the willingness and ability of the Saviour, still to come unto him. The *faithful* cheered onward in his work, by the prospect of the joy that is set before him. The *poor* comforted by

contemplating his condition, who for our sakes became poor. The *backsliding* reclaimed and led back to the fold of the good shepherd. The *schismatic* reprovved and admonished to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. The *errorist* rebuked and restored to the old paths. The *innovator* checked by exhibiting the simplicity of the gospel scheme.

Thus, in a word, he must be every man's friend—a general guide and counsellor—in *all things, always and every where*, watching for souls as he that must give account.

If, however, his responsibilities are thus overwhelming, his rewards are none the less glorious. For, besides sharing the glory of the great Captain of his salvation, he is assured that they which turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament, forever and ever.

Let us, then, contemplate the *reward* promised. As the work is most responsible and most ennobling, so the reward promised is priceless and glorious. The gigantic efforts sometimes put forth to reach the bright goal of earthly ambition, have already been noticed. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. Our reward, my brethren, is not merely a transient meteor blaze of earthly renown—not the riches of an earthly inheritance—but eternal pre-eminence in that state of bliss to which it has been his steady aim to raise his fallen fellow-man;—a seat of honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high—a partnership in Messiah's throne. Rev. iii: 21. In a word, the *highest gift in the power of the infinite God to bestow* on those whom he delights to honor, transcending the utmost power of human language to describe, or the human heart to conceive.

II. *Seek suitable qualifications* for his work. Let him never rest satisfied with meagre, or even moderate attainments, but aim to become a "scribe well instructed," shewing himself "approved unto God,"—not merely a workman who IS NOT ASHAMED, of which class we have, alas, but too many who *ought to be ashamed*,—but "a workman that *needeth not to be ashamed*, always aiming at perfection, both in human and divine knowledge. Let him also never lose sight, for a moment, of the great truth, that this knowledge is progressive. Instead, therefore, of obstructing, let him aim to accelerate its march—to advance the standard of truth and excellence, ever pressing onward and upward, toward the

bright goal of perfection. Let his *eye*, his *ear* and his *heart*, be ever open to instruction, and let him search for it as for hid treasure. Let him study nature in all her varied and simple beauty, unsophisticated by the rules of art. Let him take the lamp of science, and entering her secret laboratories, mark the wondrous process by which the various elements are prepared for future combination into the countless beautiful forms of animal, mineral and vegetable existence. Let him, moreover, read attentively that ever new and instructive volume of living, acting human nature. In a word, every discovery in science,—every improvement of art,—every development in the great store-house of truth,—should be his, not to hoard, but to mould and use for God and his glory. Such views and efforts will induce, also,

III. *A corresponding deportment.* A demeanor which, while it seeks by all practicable methods to conciliate, to become all things to all men, that we may by all means gain some, will, on the other hand, beget a seriousness which will seem to say to all, "I am about a great work; I cannot come down." With the paltry arts and intrigues sometimes so highly commended by wordly men, the *ambassador of heaven* has nothing to do. With an emphasis of meaning, he may say, with an ancient poet, I labor for immortality. Oh, were we but duly impressed with a just view of the tremendous consequences, for weal or woe, of even the minutest act of our lives, we should need no other consideration to induce us to *magnify our office.*

IV. Finally: Let us endeavor to possess more fully, and exhibit more clearly, the character of our divine Master; cultivating more sedulously holiness of heart—simple faith in the promises of the gospel, and fervent aspirations after the full enjoyment of the influences of the Holy Spirit—the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Let the exhibition of a glorious Christ to the *view*, to the *love*, to the admiration of all, be the grand intention of our lives.—Christ, as a self-denying, laborious servant—Christ, as a meek and patient sufferer—Christ, as a mild, firm and faithful reprover—Christ, as a sympathizing and affectionate friend—Christ, as a firm and undaunted witness for truth, be kept constantly in the bright foreground of the canvass, for the admiration and imitation of all;—and thus we shall be enabled, by his grace, most successfully to *magnify our office.*



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JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED:

A Sermon, by REV. EDWIN T. WINKLER, of Columbus, Georgia.

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*“And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom; declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.—1 COR. II: 1, 2.*

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To hold up the image of a dying Saviour to the world, is the great design of the christian ministry. Men have learned to expect it, and to wonder, and to censure, when objects of a less exalted character occupy the attention and the labors of an ambassador from God. But at the time when our text was written, the good tidings which it contains, must have excited as much of derision in the people to whom it was addressed as would be excited, were one at the present day to attempt to substitute in the place of the doctrines or ordinances of christianity, the worship of Brahma, or the hideous rites of African idolatry.

Our text was originally addressed to the people of Corinth, the wealthiest and most beautiful city of Greece. It is not to our purpose to expatiate upon the extent of that commerce, which constituted Corinth a great treasure-house of nations, and made her merchants kings; or upon that culture which gave generals to head the armies of the republics of Greece, or on that refinement which filled her streets and palaces with the choicest and most beautiful productions of art; but we would speak of her religion. It was the religion of their fathers, and therefore venerable; it was the religion of art, and therefore beautiful. The imagina-

tion regarding it, became entranced and lost in its exceeding loveliness. The reason, nicely scrutinizing it, on a sudden shrinks back, appalled from the presence, and by the fear of those awful beings, the objects of a people's admiration. For century after century, it had been interweaving the threads of its mythology among the fibres of the national heart. It was the theme of those popular ballads, that, more efficiently than laws, mould and determine public character. It had inspired those loftier poetic strains, which, requiring centuries for their production, never die, and never lose their influence. To a people, passionately fond of beauty, it had given streets adorned with colossal monuments, and religious emblems; and had thrown open temples, in which the architect, and the painter, and the sculptor had combined to exhibit the beauty of classic taste, and upon which the merchant had lavished the treasures of commercial opulence.

And when we remember that the Corinthians sung the poems which Homer sung; and admired the works which Phidias and Protogones wrought; that the sculptured majesty of Jupiter, hurling the thunder-bolt, and the Apollo touching his marble harp, towered from their temple pavements, and the pencilled loveliness of the sea-born Venus smiled on them from the temple walls; that every grove, and spring, and mountain had its genius; that the stars were ruled by awful spirits, and the caves of the ocean inhabited by lovely shapes; and when we remember too, that all these forms of beauty and of awe were the offspring of their religion, we can readily imagine how it must have interwoven itself into the hopes and fears, the admiration and love, of this classic people. We can readily imagine with what a mixture of horror and disgust they saw the apostle attacking, beneath the very shadows of their gods, the religion of their fathers. A foreigner (*a barbarian*, as the Greeks termed him,) standing in the midst of the splendors of paganism, assaulted the religion of poetry, and beauty, and art!

The inimitable productions of the Grecian masters were all around him, but he passed them coldly by. The pompous processions, and the Isthmean games, and the imposing ceremonies of paganism, would naturally have attracted the curiosity of a stranger, but they had no charms for him.

The sophist reasoned in the groves and porticos, upon the principles of nature and philosophy, but the apostle paused neither to dispute with the sophist, nor to gain instruction from the lips of the philosopher. St. Paul was a man of refinement, and versed in Hebrew, and to a considerable extent, in Grecian literature, but he looked upon the refinements of Corinth as vanities, and all that was imposing to the Grecian idolator, was to him but as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal. Pervaded by one great idea, animated by one astonishing fact, he said nothing, heard nothing, cared for nothing, but what pertained to the great object of his mission and apostolic labors. For "I, brethren, when I came unto you," he says, "came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom; declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

It is utterly impossible for language to express the claims of christianity, more forcibly and fully than they were expressed under these circumstances by these words. It is as if the apostle had said: the religion of Jesus comprehends facts, and involves duties, compared with which, human enterprise and human thought, the accumulated wealth of centuries, and the grand intellectual and moral progress and works of a nation, sink into insignificance. I see the wings of your commerce, whitening the Mediterranean; I behold the labors of the husbandman, adorning your fields with nodding harvests; I see the immortal works of art, that beautify the streets and temples of your city; but they are to me as if they were not. Another subject, better and nobler, occupies my thoughts and inspires my actions; it is the religion, that, turning away from the marble and the canvass, from the altar and the temple, takes up its abode in the heart, even of the humblest of men, and makes it the temple of the living God. It is the worship of a *spiritual* deity. It is the doctrine, that taking its place at the feet, looks upward ever to the countenance of Jesus, that surrounds with glory the cross on which they have crucified my Lord. And this religion is the one thing needful; this is the all in all.

It is our design to present a hasty sketch of those prominent excellencies of christianity, that warrant the use of such language, and the exercise of so intense and lofty an



enthusiasm. We would remark, by way of division, that christianity is surpassingly excellent, as a doctrinal and as a practical system—excellent in itself, and exhibiting its excellence in the results which it has accomplished. It is equally worthy of admiration, whether we regard it as it rose at first in lofty beauty from the hands of its divine original, or as in its progress, it spreads the rays of its celestial light down the long lapse of time. And

I. Let us look at the excellency of christianity in itself.

Christianity, as it reveals itself to us in its glory and its humiliation on the cross, exhibits more clearly and fully the character of God. The nature and attributes of the Deity, had been already revealed in the Old Testament. But there was ever a cloud around them—a cloud, which was dispelled only by the work and the doctrine of Jesus.

In the Old Testament, God's love to his creatures is displayed. The Psalmist celebrates his loving kindness and tender mercy, and that ineffable goodness which supports and cherishes the varied forms of life inhabiting our globe. The writings of the prophets are not devoid of tender expostulations and melting entreaties. But the great attribute of God, which is prominently displayed in the whole Mosaic economy, the dispensation of the prophets, and the entire Jewish history, is his terrible majesty. The earliest chronicles of the human race bear its impress. A fearful curse descended upon the first man and woman, and rested like a blight and a mildew upon the beautiful world which had just been brought into being. Sinai with its lightnings and its thunders took up the solemn theme; and the Jew, as he looked back to the time when the law was given, and the institutions of his people were established, beheld, rising like a pillar in the midst of the affrighted hosts, the fire and the blackness that enveloped the awful presence of Jehovah. The Psalms exhibit God in his fearfulness; while the people to whom they were addressed, saw in the calamities that overwhelmed the hosts of their enemies, and learned by bitter experience, how fearful it was to excite the divine indignation.

It was left to the New Testament to reveal in its fullness that attribute of God, which forms the closest and sweetest bond of union between the creator and his creatures. In the birth and death of Jesus, we behold its brightest exhibi-

tions. From his lips and in his actions, we hear expressed and re-expressed, a thousand and a thousand times, God is LOVE.

The other attributes of God render him an object of fear to us. God is holy, and we are sinful; God is just, and we are transgressors; God is omnipotent, he can destroy us; God is omniscient, our secret sins are bare before him; God is omnipresent, we cannot escape him: *but God is LOVE, and we are his children!* Transporting, rapturous thought! Had the religion of Jesus done no more for man, than make distinct to him this one great idea, it would have been entitled to our lasting admiration and regard. But it has done more than this.

The New Testament has thrown light upon the destiny and the duty of man. It has taught us *clearly*, that we are immortal. Among the early institutions of the Jews, this doctrine lay concealed beneath cloudy allegories and symbols. It became more distinct, as the time approached for the birth of the Messiah. But it was left to christianity to exhibit this truth fully and distinctly: it was left to Jesus to illustrate it by an ascension to heaven, after a resurrection from the dead. Four centuries before the coming of Christ, Plato had announced to the nations of paganism the immortality of the soul; but his opinions were enforced by such arguments, as were beyond the reach of the mass of mankind; and this truth was rather the object of hope than of expectation. But Christ in his own person broke the bonds of death in sunder, and rose from the grave, leading captivity captive. And now, to the soul secure in the favor of its God, death has lost its sting, and the grave its victory. Dreadful fears of annihilation, or of a doubtful hereafter, no longer dismay the spirit conscious of its immortality. Our Saviour has thrown the arch of promise across the dark stream of death; and hope stands beaming on his sepulchre, and pointing to his ascending Lord.

Again, christianity has revealed to us the way of salvation. And we may here remark, (and the fact, however simple and obvious, is one that we are prone to forget,) that the light which we possess on this subject, was not possessed before the coming of Christ. It is easy for the christian student to find among the instructions and forms of the old dispensation, the statement, or at least the traces of those

doctrines and facts which are the characteristics of the new. And the reason is obvious. In the person of Jesus Christ and him crucified, the mystery of godliness has been made manifest; and what was before ambiguous or entirely unknown, has been rendered distinct by the light of the glorious gospel of God's blessed son. And therefore, it is easy for us to see in both dispensations, "the parts of one stupendous whole," and in the cross of the dying Redeemer, the great central figure in the system of revealed truth.

But it was otherwise to the Jew. Even Abraham, the man so highly distinguished by the divine favor, believed in *God*; and it was counted to him for righteousness. Even the disciples of the Saviour were so entirely unacquainted with the spiritual nature of the kingdom which he came to establish, and of the way of salvation which he came to open by the sacrifice of himself, that we find them disputing for pre-eminence in his earthly kingdom.

It was the design of Christ in his coming and his work, to secure the possibility of man's salvation. For this, being rich, he became poor. For this, being the Lord of angels, he became the despised and the rejected of men. For this, publicans and sinners were not too low to be his companions. For this, the pharisees and spiritual lords of God's heritage were not too high nor too powerful to escape his rebukes. For this he labored and suffered. In the prosecution of this holy work, Jerusalem saw his tears, and the trees of Gethsemane bent over his midnight agony. For the accomplishment of this sublime design, the manger of Bethlehem sustained his helpless infancy, and the accursed tree upheld the torture and the shame of his expiring manhood.

The way of salvation has now been opened. God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The poor of this world may become rich with an immortal inheritance. The afflicted mourner may be upheld by an everlasting arm. The heart which is full of depravity and corruptions, may become the temple of the Holy Spirit. He who despairs of earthly joy, may take to his bosom that hope which is as an anchor to the soul. He who trembles at the prospect of the grave, may follow the footsteps of Jesus, and go on exulting, to meet his Lord.

The blessing is not only great, but it is broad and free. It was designed to be carried into all the world and offered



to every creature. Wherever a single human heart is beating, however low and degraded it may be, the gospel invitations are addressed to it. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and *whosoever will*, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely."

What a boon is this! How immense—how surprising! What a world of priceless blessings surrounds the cross of Christ! In comparison with this, earthly honors are but baubles; earthly pleasures are but vanities; all other subjects of human thought—all other objects of human effort are truly insignificant. We wonder not that the apostle Paul, in the city of science and literature, in the circles of refinement and the schools of philosophy, determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Again, we may withdraw our attention from christianity as a gospel, and regard it as it is related to law. As a law, its requirements demand nothing less than perfect moral rectitude. They condemn alike the bold blasphemer and the insidious hypocrite. They spare neither the open sin, that startles society, or sweeps over it like a pestilence; nor the secret sin, that festers in the heart, and is wrought out in silence and solitude. No unkind or unworthy action is allowed to those who would embrace this holy faith. A dedication of self to God, it claims no less than the devotion of a life-time—than the surrender of every desire and thought, every passion and energy, to the will and the service of him whose cause it has espoused. And what a service! It is the beautiful homage of a grateful heart. It is willing obedience to a just and gracious monarch. It is childlike confidence in a father. It is reverence for the source of all wisdom and excellence.

These noble precepts christianity shares in common with Judaism. It also inculcates the duty of universal love. It teaches men, that as inheriting a common destiny, bound to the same heaven or the same hell, the creatures of the same creator, the recipients of the same bounty, and alike the heirs of immortality, they should love one another. But christianity has advanced even beyond this point. Centuries before Christ taught, a Grecian philosopher declared, that men ought not to revenge an insult; that they might be like the gods. This was the height of the religion of nature,

But when Christ came, *he* taught—"love your enemies: do good to them that hate you, and despitefully use you, and persecute you;" and he himself, through a life of contumely and woe, caused by human hatred, has given us the most beautiful example of forgiveness of enemies that the world has ever witnessed.

The arrangements made for securing human obedience also attract our admiration. The man who has enlisted in the service of God—who is truly born again, has entered into the sphere of the widest and most perfect liberty. Obedience is the offspring of love. He who loves, obeys spontaneously; and in the christian's heart love to God is the supreme emotion. Not only the great aim of his life, but the ruling desire of his heart is to glorify God, and his aim *must* be exhibited in his actions. We do not say that the christian does not sin, nor that he does not sometimes feel the law of God to be hard; but this we do affirm, that whenever he sins, and whenever he feels the law of God to be a restriction, it is not because the love of God is in his heart, but because he still clings to something that is opposed to this sublimest of sentiments. But let the love be perfect, and it will exhibit the fruits of spontaneous and perfect obedience.

We might enlarge upon this portion of our subject. We might appropriately consider here the inimitable and perfect character of Christ, or the symmetry of the christian graces, or those great doctrines which are the foundations of the christian's hope. But we are compelled to forbear. Like the philosopher, we have gathered a few pebbles on the sea-shore, while the great ocean of truth lies unexplored before us.

II. We remark in the second place, that christianity has demonstrated itself to be surpassingly excellent, by the results which it has accomplished.

The gospel was committed by the Saviour to the hands which seemed least able to sustain the precious charge. Gathered from the boats of the fisherman, and the stalls of the publican,—cherishing in their hearts, and heralding abroad a religion, diametrically opposed to the opinions and inclinations, and actions of the world, their labors seemed to be hopeless in the extreme. Armed only in the panoply of the Spirit, single-handed and alone, they went forth to engage in a contest with the universe. Shall we trace the

progress of their cause from the planting of the seed in the cities of the East and West, until a mighty tree arose, bearing its thousand fruits, and stretching far and wide its sheltering branches? They are the topics of history, with which we all are familiar. We know how men received the word, and how thickly converted souls gathered around the apostles, as the gems in the crown of their rejoicing. We know how the persecutions that threatened it, transformed the blood of the martyrs into the seed of the church. We have read, how vainly the potentates of the earth opposed it. We know how it passed from heart to heart, from house to house, from city to city, until it reached the hearts of kings, and became the religion of nations. It spread from Rome to her provinces. Barbarian hordes received it, and civilization, and the blessings of social life, followed in its train. Britain received it, and Britain became the mistress of the seas. It crossed the ocean, and entered the howling wildernesses of America, and America became a mighty nation.

The sceptic may sneer at this proof, but it is no less true, and no less convincing. It is a startling, although universally received fact, that where the christian religion is, there refinement and happiness are; and where the christian religion is not, the people are enveloped in the grossest barbarity. And those nations which are the highest in point of intelligence, which have made the greatest progress in the arts and sciences, and in literature, which are the most powerful, the most wealthy and the most happy, are those in which christianity is preserved in its greatest purity.

The religion of Jesus has affected nations by affecting men. Entering as a fire in the midst of the corruptions of the human heart, it has purified and dissipated them. It has given man purer thoughts. It has excited more sublime desires. It has offered a realization to his loftiest hopes. It has afforded him an object of thought suited to the capacities of an immortal being. It has therefore encouraged and accelerated the advance of his mind, and thus has indirectly, yet efficiently, surrounded his home with comforts, and blessed his country with refinement, and law, and liberty. It has made man noble, while it has made him happier. It has moulded the most excellent characters that the world has ever seen. It has inspired the greatest self-denial, and the most generous acts. It has given freedom to the bur-



dened captive of sin; and has wakened the dead in iniquity, to life, and light, and immortality.

Friends and brethren, if the doctrine of the cross contains such sublimities and conveys such blessings, what claims has it upon our attention and our regard? In the decision of this question, we challenge the exercise of the most nicely discriminating judgment, and of the most frozen heart. Let the value of christianity be regarded as a matter of rigid calculation, let it be computed and compared with the value of all earthly systems, and of all other objects of human thought; and let men act with regard to it only as rational beings, and there is not a voice on earth but would unite with that of the apostle, "Yea, yes, hereafter we determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified!"

Brethren, *you* have learned by experience the value of this great lesson—the sweetness of this solemn truth. You have felt what a world of joy and peace, of hope and consolation, exists in the words, "Jesus Christ and him crucified." Oh, may the impression that it has made, never be effaced from your minds. If ever earthly considerations would come between us and our God, let us remember the claims which the gospel has upon us. Let us remember that its claims are the greatest and most imperative of all claims, and that it comes to us recommended by the noblest of all motives. Let us remember that all things are as nothing in comparison with this. We may lose honors and sources of pleasure, we may lose friends, and possessions, and home, but if we possess the christian's hope, and are fellow-heirs of the Redeemer's kingdom, we are rich in our poverty. This world may surround us with its adulations and its prosperity, and all the sources of pleasure that wealth can command, may be at our disposal, but without a heavenly inheritance, we are poor indeed. Then let us banish from our hearts every object and desire that may come into competition with this sacred claim. Let us regard no pleasure as too exquisite to be sacrificed; no sacrifice as too great to be made, which is demanded by the holy cause which we have espoused. Let us labor to overcome every passion, to sanctify every thought. Let our desires aim at no less glorious an object than the confident persuasion that neither life, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any

other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Sinner, a parting word to you. You have listened to an imperfect representation of the excellency of the gospel. With its broad, free provisions, it is offered to your acceptance. We beseech you to pause and consider. We beseech you to act in this matter with the consciousness that you are deciding upon the most important interest of your life. Oh, let not this offer pass by unheeded! You must confess that the great claims of the gospel upon you are just. You cannot refuse it the admiration of your understanding, even while you deny its admission into your heart. Oh, now in the presence of the Almighty, throw open the portals of your heart and admit the blessed visitant. If you refuse, we are compelled in sorrow to warn you of the fearful consequences. We warn you that if you reject it, it will but add to your condemnation, that the claims of God's glorious gospel have been exhibited to you to-day. Oh, when this gospel is so exceedingly rich and precious, so excellent and noble, how can you *hope* to escape if you neglect so great salvation!

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### THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

A Sermon preached before the Rappahannock Association, in 1845, by  
REV. R. H. CHRISTIAN.

*“Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.—Phil. iii : 8.*

The epistle to the Philippians was written by the apostle Paul, while a prisoner at Rome. It was in reply to a communication which he had received from the church at Philippi, by Epaphroditus, their messenger, and was designed, mainly, to comfort the disciples, and caution them against the influence of false teachers.

The Philippian brethren had, no doubt, felt and expressed much concern for the cause of their master, from the circumstance that their spiritual father had been arrested, and was then in bonds on account of his religion. In the 1st chapter, the apostle evidently alludes to this, and endeavors to administer comfort, by assuring them that the things

which they feared, so far from endangering the gospel, had actually turned out to its furtherance. That by means of his confinement at Rome, "his bonds in Christ Jesus, had been manifold in all the palace and in all other places;" that many of the brethren in the Lord had waxed confident in consequence of his bonds; whilst others had been induced to preach Christ out of envy and strife. He also refers them to the fact that it was God who had commenced a good work in them, and that, as it was his cause, they need not fear.

After having thus administered to them that comfort which they so much needed, and instructed them in relation to many other things, he commences the chapter from which our text is taken, with a most solemn warning against false teachers, especially those of the circumcision; who, it seems, every where followed upon the very heels of the first heralds of the cross, endeavoring to mix up with the christian system, the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish law. His brethren are informed, that they are of the "true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." He also adverts to the fact, that if any of these teachers could boast of themselves, or trust in the flesh, he might also; he had been circumcised as well as they; he was of the stock of Israel; he was of the tribe of Benjamin; he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law, a pharisee; and none had been more zealous than he had been, in persecuting the church of Christ. But all these advantages availed him nothing; for he was willing to count them all but loss for Christ; and in this connection he uses the emphatic words of our text: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Such, my hearers, is a brief history of the text. We shall now proceed to its discussion. Our theme will be the *nature* and *excellency* of a saving *knowledge* of Christ Jesus the Lord. We shall notice

- I. What is implied in a saving knowledge of Christ.
  - II. The excellency of this knowledge. And
  - III. The estimate which the author of our text placed upon it.
- I. What is implied in a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord?



I would remark in the first place, that it embraces something more than a mere historical acquaintance with the Lord Jesus: This, although quite essential to the existence of that knowledge of which we speak, and must always precede it, may, and I think does, very often exist, and that in a high degree, without ever producing that impression upon the heart, which will enable its possessor properly to estimate its excellency. This kind of knowledge looks only to the person and character of Christ, and to the prominent events of his life, embracing his miracles, death and resurrection, without ever taking cognizance of his office, character, and the intimate relationship existing between him and ourselves.

We cannot doubt for a moment, that the apostle himself possessed, long before his conversion, such a knowledge of Jesus as we here refer to. It were impossible for him to have been brought up at Jerusalem, the principal theatre of our Lord's mighty works, without having learned every thing in relation to his history. He must have been well acquainted with his miracles, as well as the authority with which he taught. It would seem, from a remark made by one of the disciples, as he journeyed to Emmaus, on the morning of the resurrection, that even a stranger in Jerusalem was expected to be acquainted with the facts in relation to our Lord's history. And yet, with all this knowledge, he was a mad persecutor of Jesus and his disciples. This historical acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, differs in no respect whatever from that which we form in relation to any other character, whose life has been recorded upon the page of history, and produces in us just about the same effect. I may become well acquainted, from what has been written, with the character of Alexander, Cæsar or Bonaparte; I may admire the splendid talents and great achievements of these men, whose names have filled so large a space in the annals of the world; but all ends in mere admiration. I have no personal interest whatever in Alexander, Cæsar or Bonaparte, they are gone, and I am not in the least benefitted by all their deeds of noble daring. So with many in relation to Christ. They profess to regard him as a divine personage, believe in his miracles, admire that system of morals, as they call it, which he has given to the world, and all the time feel not the smallest interest in him personally. To them

he is, as he was to the Jews, "a root out of dry ground, with no form or comeliness that they should desire him." But perhaps I can better illustrate the idea I am endeavoring to enforce. From the testimony of others, I have been made acquaint'ed with the fact that there is such a personage as Victoria, queen of the realm of Great Britain; I think it probable that I have formed a tolerably correct knowledge of this individual, of her person, of her character, her mental abilities, and the nature of that government over which she presides. Yet, I do not regard this knowledge as very excellent, simply, because I am in no way, or at least very little, interested in her or her government; and therefore, but little concerned in what she does. But suppose my situation were different; suppose that I had been a rebellious subject of the late king, and for my rebellion my property had been confiscated, and I banished the realm, and compelled to labor the remainder of my days, in Botany Bay, or elsewhere, amidst many privations and cruelties. Now, whilst there I am made acquainted with the fact that this young queen has succeeded to the throne; that she is disposed to regard with favor, those who had been banished; and had actually issued her proclamation, inviting all of them to return to their allegiance, and the enjoyment of their former privileges, in which proclamation, the ways and means had been devised to enable them to do so. How very different should I regard the history of these events? How excellent should I esteem this knowledge? With what joy should I receive this truth? How should I love it, and how soon should I begin to act? Every means in my power would be resorted to, that I might be restored to my wonted privileges and possessions.

2. I remark, that this knowledge consists of something more than a mere speculative acquaintance with Christ and his gospel. I use the term, speculative acquaintance, for want of a better; by it I mean an acquaintance with the doctrines of the gospel, embracing the plan of salvation. We cannot doubt that many, very many, are well versed in these, yea, who have been engaged in teaching them, who have never known the power and influence of religion in the heart; and who are consequently not prepared to acknowledge its superior excellency. Of such our Lord speaks when he informs us, that there will be some in that day,

that is in the judgment day, "who will say Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works," to whom it shall be said, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you." Some of the best biblical scholars have manifested by their fruits, that they were not prepared to acknowledge any superior excellency in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. We are reminded by such individuals as these, of a poor consumptive physician, who imagined that he had discovered a remedy for the terrible malady under which he labored, and whilst he was ever recommending his remedy to others, and commending its virtues, never used any portion of it himself, because he had never yet discovered that he was himself laboring under the disease. Or to revert to our former figure, like the poor prisoner at Botany Bay, whilst he is well aware of the means devised for the restoration of all rebels, knows all about the proclamation, is ever recommending it to others, yet remains inactive himself. Under some strange delusion, he has yet to learn that he is personally interested; he is no rebel, therefore not concerned. Thus it is with very many in relation to Christ. Although very conversant with the scriptures, well versed in all the doctrines of the cross, they have not been brought to see and feel any personal connection with these doctrines or their author. This brings me to remark—

3. That a saving knowledge of Christ implies an acquaintance with ourselves, as helpless, dependent sinners. We never can be made to see the excellency of a knowledge of Christ Jesus, and his exact suitableness to our case as a Saviour, until we have been made to see and feel our lost and ruined condition, as rebels against the most high God. When Paul, the author of our text, was arrested on the highway, and in the light which shone around him, was made to see the exceeding sinfulness of his own heart, the great criminality of his course; how very different were the feelings which then agitated his bosom, from any which he had before experienced. Hear that cry of humility, as it bursts from his heart, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." In like manner, when the Philippian jailor saw the mighty power of God, and the influence of religion on his prisoners, and was made to see the guilt and malignity of his own heart; what an entire change is brought about in



his feelings? He who a little before had thrust God's servants into the inner prison, and bound them fast in the stocks, and who but a moment ago would have committed suicide, now falls before the disciples, Paul and Silas, and cries in the anguish of his soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Now he sees and feels that he is lost, and now sees his need of a Saviour; and when Jesus is preached to him, in connection with his lost and ruined condition as a sinner, how he rejoices, and how excellent does he esteem this knowledge! He had in all probability heard this same Jesus preached the day before, but then he felt no personal connection with him, and joined in the persecution. Now he is prepared to act; and at that same hour, even at midnight, he submits to his authority in baptism. He had seen his wretched condition as a sinner, and he is prepared to lay hold on the great physician, who presented a cure for his malady. This subject is most forcibly illustrated by our Lord, in his discourse to the pharisees, when he tells them, that "the whole need not a physician, but they that are *sick*;" that he came not "to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance." To my mind, the great difficulty in the way of the reception of the gospel, proceeds from the fact, that we do not believe that part of it which reveals to us our corrupt and sinful condition, and the odious nature of sin. Being in our own estimation whole, we need not the physician, and will not come unto Christ that we might have life.

4. A saving knowledge of Christ implies confidence in his ability and willingness to save us. The sick man, although convinced of his diseased condition, would never be prepared to acknowledge the excellency of the physician's skill in curing disease, nor would he ever apply for his remedies, unless he had confidence both in his willingness to undertake his case, and his ability to cure him. Neither shall we ever be prepared to acknowledge the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, although convinced that we are sinners, until, like Thomas, we can say, "my Lord and my God," and like Paul, with full confidence surrender ourselves into his hands, crying "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." You see, my hearers, from these remarks, that a saving knowledge of Christ embraces the doctrine of repentance and faith. And we shall never find any one prepared to adopt the language of our text, until he has ex-

exercised repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. We proceed to notice the excellency of this knowledge.

And here, my hearers, I am somewhat at a loss where to commence, a field so boundless opens before me. Shall I refer you to its sublimity! Shall I call up to your minds those great doctrines which the gospel reveals to us, the *immortality* of the *soul*, the *resurrection* of the *dead*, the joys of heaven! Doctrines which philosophy, with all its lofty claims, could never make intelligible to man. Or shall I present before you some of the wonderful effects of this knowledge? In either point of view, how surpassingly excellent does it appear? We can but admire that wisdom which penetrates the hidden mysteries of nature, traces up her operations, and develops her grand and mysterious laws. But how far, in true sublimity and excellency, does such knowledge as this sink below that which reaches beyond all created things, and makes us acquainted with their origin and author: which, at the same time, reveals to us our own origin and destiny, and unfolds before the astonished mind, an eternity of happiness or misery, in another state of existence;—whilst it assures us of the means by which we may escape the one and attain the other. Well might the apostle in view of this, be willing to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. But, my hearers, it will profit us more, if we consider this knowledge as exhibited in its effects. And here, too, we are somewhat at a loss where to begin; for whether we look to the excellent effects of the gospel of Christ upon nations, communities, neighborhoods, families, or individuals, we cannot fail to admire it. Let us look for a moment at the condition of our world. Bring before your minds the map of the globe. Examine it in relation to the moral condition of the teeming millions which people its surface. Why, I would ask, those bright spots which we see designated thereon, intended to mark the progress of civilization? What has produced this result? The answer is at home. “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.” The gospel, with its benign influence, has beamed upon those lands. The sun of righteousness has risen upon them, with healing in his wings, and mental and moral darkness have fled

away before his genial rays. The great author of our text, and others, with hearts burning under the influence of divine love, have preached Jesus in those countries. Look again—turn your eyes to the dark spots, look at China, at Burmah, at Hindostan, at Africa, at some of the isles of the sea. What a thick cloud rests upon these benighted regions? Many of them embracing the fairest portions of our globe, where,

“In vain with lavish kindness,  
The gifts of God are strewn ;  
The heathen, in his blindness,  
Bows down to wood and stone.”

And where it may be truly said :

“Every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile.”

How degraded indeed is their wretched inhabitants, and how little of true excellence is to be found amongst them. The picture which the apostle has given of Rome, in his day, is now, and ever will be, a faithful portraiture of heathen nations. Now, my hearers, when you have examined these dark corners of the earth, look again to christian Europe, and to our own happy land, where the standard of the cross has been erected, and where the gospel has shed its glorious influence; and then say how excellent is this knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. How it refines and elevates our spheres, and what a lustre does it shed around the character of man.

But we may come nearer home, we may bring in contrast before our minds a community or neighborhood, where the blessings of the gospel are felt and acknowledged, and one where its peaceful influence is unknown. How very different the moral picture, as presented in various places in our own country, in neighborhoods, in families. It will always be found that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that beautifies and adorns a community, State, neighborhood, and family circle, and just in proportion as *its* influence is extended, will be the brightness of the picture.

But it is to its influence on individual character more particularly, that we are to look for the surpassing excellency of this knowledge. It is here alone we shall find its genuine effects. Christian nations, as they are called, are



composed of comparatively few, who have attained to a saving knowledge of Christ. In religious neighborhoods and families, and even in christian churches, many will be found who have not received the truth in the love of it, and whose conduct does not exhibit the excellency of the gospel. So, in all these places, although much illuminated by its refulgent light, there is still much to obscure, and to detract from its influence. We must then look to its transforming control over individual character, to its exalting effect on the humble pious man of God, who has been changed by divine grace from a love of sin to a love of holiness, in order that we may be prepared fully to appreciate its excellency. And where, my hearers, if we were to look over the whole world, could we find a nobler, a brighter example of the transforming and exalting influence of this knowledge, than is presented in the person of the author of our text.

We have only to look at Saul, of Tarsus, and compare him with Paul, the christian, to see a most beautiful and striking illustration of the excellency of the gospel. Contemplate for a moment the character of the persecuting Saul. He is a young man of no ordinary intellect, highly cultivated in the best schools, learned in the Jewish law, and accustomed to the most refined society, yet such is the ferocity of his unrenewed nature, such the malignity of his heart; that he can sit quietly and encourage an infuriated mob, whilst engaged in stoning to death a poor, meek, unresisting disciple, whose only fault is, that he worships the God of his fathers, according to the dictate of his own conscience, and who, whilst the work of death is going on, is actually engaged in prayer for his murderers. Nor is this all. We presently find him, under the influence of the same vile passion, engaged in binding, and delivering into bonds and prisons, all whom he found worshipping in this way, and such is the ferocity of his disposition, that even the helpless female does not escape his wrath: "Both men and women are bound and delivered unto prison." Neither is he content with pursuing his victories in his own country, but persecutes them even unto strange cities. Now when we have pictured in our minds this mad persecutor, let us turn and contemplate the same individual, in the person of the meek, but manly Paul, as he winds his way through the earth, testifying to small and great, repentance towards

God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Himself now the object of the cruelest persecution, we behold him flying for life, from city to city, the Holy Ghost testifying to him, that everywhere bonds and afflictions await him. Yet amidst all this, how patient, how meek, how unresisting, and yet how determined in his object! How little of self in all he does! How regardless of suffering, how faithful! It matters not what may befall him, so Christ is preached. In this he will rejoice, although it may add to his afflictions. Look! he is at Thessalonica—he preaches Christ to that people—the Jews are stirred up against him—he flies for life to Berea; but lo! at Berea he preaches this same Jesus, for whom he had been persecuted at Thessalonica. Again at Berea, his life is in danger, he flies to Athens, and even in that learned city, before the great of the earth, he still lifts up his voice in behalf of the despised Nazarene. Now who can contemplate this great change, without being convinced of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus, the means by which it had been accomplished.

But there is still another view of this subject. However exalting and excellent this knowledge may be in its influence on our character and happiness, during life and health, it sheds a peculiar lustre around the bed of affliction and death. Here, with the brightness of a noonday sun, it shines upon our pathway, throwing its bright rays across the dark valley of the shadow of death, bringing life and immortality to our view. "For this is life eternal, to know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Dispelling the dark cloud which hovers over the grave, it presents to the peaceful soul mansions of eternal glory prepared for him in heaven; at the same time animating his poor perishing body with the sure hope of a glorious resurrection. Under the influence of this knowledge, the great author of our text, at the end of his journey, could cry out: "I have fought a good fight,—I have finished my course,—I have kept the faith, and henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me." And under the same blessed influence, thousands of those who have preceded and succeeded him, have been enabled to triumph over death and the grave.

"Jesus can make a dying bed  
 Feel soft as downy pillows are;  
 Whilst on his breast I lean my head,  
 And breathe my life out sweetly there."

III. Next we proceed to notice the estimate placed on this knowledge by the Apostle.

We have already anticipated much that might be said on this branch of our subject. We have seen the influence which an acquaintance with Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, had upon Paul. We have seen the lion converted into the lamb; the mad persecutor of Jesus and his disciples, so changed as to be everywhere preaching that same Jesus, and enduring the severest trials, and most arduous labours, to spread that religion which he had endeavored to pull down, and we are prepared to hear of the great sacrifices which he was willing to make, and did make, for the cause of truth. These, if we look a little further into his history, were great indeed. From the fact that he had received so liberal an education, and that too in a distant city, and at the feet of one of the most learned teachers of his day; we may fairly infer that he possessed no inconsiderable share of this world's goods. He was, as he tells us, a pharisee, a sect, in his day, highly honored amongst the Jews; and doubtless might have attained to great distinction among that people. Besides, as a Jew, he enjoyed many privileges, which we all know were not a little esteemed by them. He was a man of profound learning, and added to all this, he belonged to the honored tribe of Benjamin, a tribe which had never revolted against the house of David. No one can doubt, that with all these advantages, had he sought after earthly good and earthly distinction, he might easily have attained them. Wealth, influence, ease, honors, friends, might have been his. But he counted them all loss that he might win Christ. Yea, he regards them all as filth in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and willingly endures the loss of all things. Not only so, but he can glory in tribulation also, rejoicing always when Christ is preached, though it may be the means of adding to his bonds. So high is the estimate which he places upon this knowledge, that although oft, like his master, he has to give his back to the smiters, having five times received forty stripes save one; "although often in perils by land and by sea, in the city and in the wilderness, from robbers, from the heathen, from his own countrymen, from false brethren;" still none of these things move him. The one great object of his life is



to glorify God, and to testify the gospel of his grace. Like Moses, he had respect to the recompense of the reward; a reward not of this world. And like him he could esteem the reproach of Christ, greater riches than this world's treasures.

Here, my audience, I might close this discussion; but before I do so, permit me to address to you a few words by way of application. We have seen something of the nature of a saving knowledge of Christ, we have seen its excellency, and we have seen the estimate which the apostle put upon it. We have seen him passing by earthly honors, friends, influence, ease and wealth, and with a heart burning with divine love, travelling the earth amidst dangers and persecutions, which were calculated to appal the stoutest heart. We have seen him impelled by one motive, and one only, in all he does, the glory of God. Now, brethren, let me enquire, what estimate do you put upon this knowledge? How has it operated on you? What sacrifices have you made? What losses have you sustained? And what perils have you encountered? Remember, that the way to heaven is still a narrow way; the gate is still a strait gate, and the great law of the kingdom still is, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Must I be carried to the skies,  
On flowry beds of ease,  
Whilst others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas."

Brethren, the knowledge of Jesus Christ is just as excellent, just as precious now, as in the days of Paul, and must be made manifest in the same way. The great commission is still in force: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and the same cheering promise still stands annexed to it, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And still, brethren, a large portion of the globe is enveloped in a cloud of mental and moral darkness; millions of our race are still bowing down to dumb idols, the workmanship of their own hands; and thousands are swept annually down the current of time, into an awful eternity, without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, whilst the language of our master is sounding in our ears,

“This is life eternal, to know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Not only in heathen lands, is a call made upon us for men, for money, and for prayers, but our own country still exhibits a sad state of desolation. Zion seems to be clad in mourning; from every quarter of our field the cry is, coldness! coldness! Iniquity abounds, the love of many is waxing cold, and sinners are perishing in our midst. Let each one of us then, brethren, buckle on the armor, and fight the battles of our Lord. Brethren in the ministry, “say not there is still four months to the harvest, lift up your eyes and behold the fields already white unto harvest;” see the teeming millions of immortal souls, posting their way down to hell; let their perilous condition beckon us on to their rescue; let us go forth to them with the spirit of a Paul, determining to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Scatter, broad-cast, the word of life; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort; go leaning upon Immanuel for support, and success must crown your efforts. True, you may have often to sow in tears, but you shall reap in joy. Go forth, then, bearing precious seed, and by and by you shall return bringing your sheaves with you. Brethren all, every one of us has something to do. The great work of evangelizing the world, God has committed to his people, and each one must labor for that object. Let us not forget that most important declaration of holy writ, “Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “How can they call upon him in whom they have not believed, and how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard; how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach except they be sent.” Brethren, if our hearts are right we will be engaged; if we esteem this knowledge as we ought, we shall be using our efforts to extend its precious influence to others. Now, what we have to do, we should do with all our might. We must work whilst it is called to-day, the night of death will soon come, when no man can work. Soon the time allotted for our work will end. Ministers and people will soon, very soon, be called upon to give an account of their stewardship. Their privileges and opportunities for doing good, as well as their sacrifices, will in a very short time meet them in the judgment.

In conclusion, permit me to remind all who hear me, of

the great importance of this subject. Nothing less than an eternity of happiness or misery depends on our being in possession, or not, of this knowledge. How stands the case with you to-day? Do you possess an experimental acquaintance with Christ Jesus or not? Have you been made to know yourselves as sinners, and the exact suitability of Jesus as a Saviour to your cases? Have you confided your all into his hands, and have you recognized his authority as Lord of all; and is the great object for which you live, and for which you labor, to glorify him? If so, happy are you. I would say, go on,—a few more days of trial, and your fight of affliction will be over—a few more of the revolutions of time, and a never fading crown of glory will be yours. But on the other hand, if you have not fled to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel, if you have not an experimental knowledge of Jesus, your situation is one of awful peril. A few more days may land you in interminable misery,—a few more of the fleeting revolutions of time may banish your never dying souls with everlasting destruction from the presence of God and the glory of his power. Oh! be wise to-day. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace. Remember the value of the soul. “What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Amen.



87  
73

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## THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS;

Introductory Sermon, preached before the Southern Baptist Convention, at its first triennial session, held in the city of Richmond, June 10, 1846, by  
REV. RICHARD FULLER, D. D., of South Carolina.

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“AND THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME.”—*Haggai* II: 7.

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Congratulating myself, fathers and brethren, that I am permitted again to see your faces and share your counsels, I proceed at once to the duty assigned me, and direct your meditations to the remarkable prediction just read.

The limits of these exercises always require of your preachers imperfect compositions; otherwise, I would gladly advert to the context. There, what an argument with our brethren the Jews! For, if in nothing of architectural or ritual splendor could the second temple compare with the first, and if the presence of Messiah was to invest “the latter house with a glory greater than that of the former,” then, out of all question, this august Personage has long since appeared.

And, so too, in this shaking of all nations—these convulsions and revolutions to *precede* the coming of Christ, and the universal peace which held the earth in mute attention at his approach,—in all this, what a fine illustration of the truth that God is ever still when he blesses, and loud only when he crushes; and that not in the storm, nor earthquake, nor fire, but in the gentle, soft voice, doth Eternal Love draw nigh to seek and to save that which is lost.

It would, however, crave too much time to pursue these observations. I therefore sacrifice them, and confine myself

to the text, offering you some simple reflections on the appellation and advent there announced. Let us enter into the matter;—first addressing our supplication to Him who is all our hope and confidence and desire, and saying, O Saviour Jesus, “be merciful to us and bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, oh God, let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

Now, my brethren, that the being here spoken of was no mere man, no created intelligence, I think is evident from the very words before us. The expression “shall come,” refers, of course, to a person, and implies pre-existence. And though this does not prove him to be divine, yet to whom but Deity could the language of the text be applied? Angels have often visited this planet, but of which of the angels could it ever be said that he is “the Desire of all nations?” To be the satisfying portion of a single soul, is the sublime prerogative of God alone. How absurd, then, to suppose that any lower object can fill the hearts, and minds, and desires of all the teeming population of the earth.

The text, therefore, foretold an amazing phenomenon. It declared that the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, would be seen among sinful men; that He who from everlasting had dwelt in light unapproachable, would assume some form and make his entrance upon this globe; that the invisible and ever glorious, whom no man had seen, nor could see—the Eternal, forever concealed behind stars and suns, would veil his effulgence, and push aside those stars and suns, and come into the world. Such is the prophecy; and if this wonderful event, dimly anticipated, could agitate and transport the inmost spirit of patriarch and prophet, what should be our emotions now—now when He has come; when we have seen “the brightness of the Father’s glory,” “come forth from the Father and come into the world;” when He who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, has “made himself of no reputation and taken upon him the form of a servant, and been made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, has humbled himself and become obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross;" when we can say, "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory;" and with adoring confidence, each of us can exclaim, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

But of this mission, and its intrinsic and mysterious glories, I may not stop now to say more. Well have men done, to commence from it a new era in the biography of our race. Amidst the wrecks of past ages, that transaction stands alone by itself, in unique and solitary grandeur; and stand it forever shall, the great epoch in the cycles of eternity, the master-piece of infinite power, and wisdom, and love, to absorb our expanding souls long after this world shall have been purged by fire, and when all its records and annals shall have been forgotten. I say it is not my design to dwell on this "new thing which God has made in the earth." I wish simply to speak of the title here applied to the Redeemer, regarding the term "Desire" as referring to the *expectation*, and the *wants*, and the *happiness*, of the whole human family.

I. First, then, it is a fact deserving more attention than has, I think, been bestowed upon it, *that among the nations there has ever existed a wide spread, if not universal expectation of a glorious person, to be the renovator of mankind, and to impress a new character on the spirit habits and morals of the earth.* A truth this, wholly inexplicable to the infidel, but quite incontestible for all that, and to every christian admitting of an easy solution.

Why, my brethren, such a catastrophe as the Fall,—who will believe that it could ever be obliterated from the memory of man? And we do discover, among almost all people, legends and traditions reverting, more or less distinctly, to that sad calamity. But if our ruin, much more surely would the promise of our redemption be transmitted,—a promise which in so peculiar a manner assured the guilty that "the *seed of the woman* should bruise the serpent's head," and which was performed when "the fulness of time being come God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman*, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."



It is a famous question, which I shall not disturb, whether the benefits of the atonement by Jesus extend to other beings besides man. The Bible conveys clear intimations, that among intelligences peopling other portions of God's empire the knowledge was dispersed, both of the degeneracy of our race and of some wonderful expedient for our rescue. And if in distant provinces of creation, the advent of a Saviour into the world was matter for adoring study,—away with the thought that God would leave the posterity of Adam in ignorance of a transaction so deeply affecting their destiny, and of which this earth was to be the theatre. Accordingly, we find that such a revelation was not only given, but perpetuated. And those of you who are acquainted with antiquity know, that in all ages, and among nations most distant from each other, the expectation of a deliverer has been cherished, and cherished every where as an express communication from heaven.

The truth is, that scarcely had the fall occurred, when God began to announce a retriever from the ruins of that fall; and in antediluvian ages we see him so busied with this great promise, that, studied by the light of faith, the history of the world even then will appear only as the first act in the grand drama of Redemption.

It is a touching proof of God's compassion, that before the sentence was uttered against our guilty parents, the gospel was preached to them, and its golden notes mingled tenderly with those accents of wrath which otherwise might have driven them to despair. Directly after this, sacrifices seem to have commenced—an institution by which an innocent victim was to be immolated for the sins of man; a thing so entirely above the dictates of reason, that we at once recognize in it the appointment of heaven, and a type of the Messiah. The offering of Cain was as choice as that of Abel; the latter, however, was an expiatory sacrifice, and the conduct of God to the two worshippers was a proclamation never to be forgotten, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; hence, "by *faith* Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." In short, brief—to me most affectingly brief—as is the record of those who lived before the flood, their cares, and passions, and pleasures, and pains, all summed up in a few pages,—yet the Spirit has supplied one important fact; it is, that there were preachers in those days,

whose theme was the same Jesus we preach—Enoch especially foretelling his coming, and preparing the world for his reception.

From the flood to the call of Abraham, we see God still occupied in consoling the earth with the promise of its great restorer. The Scriptures, indeed, declare, that the very manner of Noah's escape was emblematical of salvation by Christ. "The like figure whereunto," says Peter, "even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." No sooner is that patriarch landed, than this second father of mankind, by sacrifices of blood, inculcates on his family, then the whole population of the earth, the faith of the grand atonement. And, in fine, upon all of Jehovah's dispensations at this period we discern the plain shining signatures of this illustrious doctrine.

In process of time we find God adopting a singular measure. He separates one nation from all the nations, choosing them, not because they were more in number than any people, but for this peculiar purpose, that they might be the depositories of the "faithful saying;" and might shew from afar the magnificent redemption to be one day wrought out for man. Hence, if patriarchs rejoiced, it was in anticipation of that event—Abraham desiring to see Christ's day, and glorying in the sight, and Jacob exulting over death, as he leaned upon the top of his staff, and turned his eye to the triumphant Shiloh. If prophets were inspired, it was to confirm the faithful in their aspirations for the Messiah; so much so, "that the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy,"—"the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Amid the pomp of royalty, if monarchs pined with a longing for the gratification of which they would have bartered their crowns, it was to see Him who was all their desire and all their salvation. "Many kings," said the Saviour, "have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Types, altars, oblations, and all the gorgeous machinery of the temple, were but shadows of the promised Mercy. In short, wherever among the Hebrews "righteous men" were found, the consummation of all

their desires would have been to witness the ingress of the Prince of Peace; and in every Hebrew woman's bosom, concealed but glowing, there was such an ambition of the honor afterwards conferred upon Mary, that the prophet calls the Saviour "*the desire of women*,"—the fondest, highest, holiest dreams of the sex, terminating in the bliss of becoming mother to that Son whom a virgin was to bear, whose name would "be called Immanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and of whose government and peace there should be no end."

Up to this point then, in all ages preceding the birth of Christ, you see how that wonderful epiphany was the engrossing theme of piety and inspiration. And here let me repeat two important remarks which have been already made, and which we should always take with us when perusing the books of the Old Testament. The first is, that during this period the expectation of a wonderful personage to change and mould the destiny of the world, was not confined to the Jews, but was diffused through the earth. It was impersonated in Melchisedec; it sustained the sufferer of Idumea—who, when all was desolation around and within, exclaimed, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;" it fired the lips of Balaam; it was scattered over Asia, Africa, Sicily, and the Islands of the Archipelago, and from thence was conveyed to Rome, and treasured among those Sibylline oracles, which even the wisest men revered as sacred; and it prevailed, as Tacitus and Suetonius inform us, most anciently, all over the East.

This is one striking fact, and the other is, the existence every where of sacrifices, and the faith of appeasing the Deity by blood, by the substitution of the innocent for the guilty. Unite now these two truths, and how incontestible is the assertion, that from the fall to the advent of Jesus Christ, there was a general expectation of the mighty victim of Calvary, which justifies the application to him of this title "*the Desire of all nations*."

We come now to the great advent, and as the nativity, and afterwards the public manifestation, of the Saviour approach, the truth I am urging becomes confirmed on all hands, and the earth is agitated by premonitions and prognostications exciting most intense concern.



In the West, at Rome, the metropolis of the earth, and only a few years before the appearance of Christ, Julius Cæsar seeks to subvert the liberties of his country, aspiring to a throne; and by what argument is his claim supported? His friends appeal to an oracle in the temple, predicting a king to arise at that time whose reign should be without bounds and whose government should secure the happiness of mankind. And in a work almost contemporaneous with the birth at Bethlehem, the most celebrated of the Latin poets rehearses this oracle, declaring it now about to be accomplished, and employing as to the wonderful offspring, almost the very images and language of Isaiah himself.

In the East, the light to enlighten the gentiles is not only seen from afar, but shines so clearly that the sages leave their homes and studies and repair to the birth-place, doing homage to the kingly Star of Jacob.

Above all, in Judea, and at the scene of this amazing mystery, how is every thing in commotion, and from every quarter what notes of preparation. Does the Hebrew enter the temple or walk the streets of Jerusalem? he sees the most devout and venerable of his nation bending with years, yet rejoicing that even their fading eyes should behold the Consolation of Israel. Does he leave the city? among the hills, and buried in cells upon the mountains, he finds those holy hermits of whom Josephus speaks, absorbed with the immediate coming of Messiah, waiting to form his escort, and vindicating their sublime hope by prophecies not to be mistaken. From out the dreary depths of the wilderness and along the verdant banks of the Jordan, resounds perpetually the voice of a most extraordinary man, an austere herald who has drawn all eyes upon him as a prophet," with the spirit and power of Elias," and who still utters the startling cry, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." In fine, my brethren, so eager and universal was the expectation of a great deliverer, that as soon as John appeared, multitudes flocked and crowded about him; and the enquiry, Art thou he? Art thou he? a question never before proposed to any of the prophets—now breaks from their impatient lips; and if they surrender their convictions, it is most reluctantly, and only when the Baptist "confesses and denies not, but confesses that he is not the Christ," but merely his harbinger, and

not worthy to perform even the most menial office, such as unloosing his sandals, for that exalted personage.

Nor, my brethren, (though it is out of place to make the remark here,) was the sensation felt by the inhabitants of this earth alone. Other and very different orders of intelligences were moved at the astonishing phenomenon. On the night when the Saviour was born, Hell, I make no doubt, stood aghast and marshalled all its forces and commenced in Herod and the massacre of the children, that infernal conspiracy which pursued the Redeemer through his life and seemed to triumph—but was most gloriously discomfited—at the cross. And all heaven, we are expressly informed, was filled with a sympathy most thrilling and ecstatic. Man, those glorious beings had known in Eden, and loved with the love of a brother for a younger sister. The dismal hour of man's fall they had witnessed, nor can any tell their emotions when amidst the bowers of Paradise, there rang that shriek, death, death, is in the world! And now when the Brightness of the Father's glory stoops to that world, and on such an errand, what wonder and rapture seize their adoring thoughts. All along their radiant, countless files, roll anthems of high exultation, and then, wheeling down, they pour upon the listening ear of Palestine the music of the skies.

Yes, my brethren, not only on this scene of his love and grief, but in other and distant places were felt the communications of unutterable interest when the Day-spring from on high visited us. And if when he came the world knew him not, and honored him not, he was not without honor, such as no mere creature can receive. True, no star formed by mortal hands would ever glitter upon his breast, for he was to be despised and rejected of men; but a star made by eternal hands moves along the heavens, and stopping in reverence, showers its lustre upon his cradle. No illuminated capital or palace hails his approach, for he comes at midnight and in an humble village, but "the glory of the Lord shines around," and beams from the Shekinah irradiate the earth. No troops of admiring courtiers welcome the incarnate God—oh no! low lies his head in a manger and amongst the herds of the stall—but a retinue of strong and immortal cherubim and seraphim adore the Lord of glory, and shake the night-air of Galilee with praises for that birth

which would give "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

The *Expectation* of all nations shall come! You now perceive, my brethren, with what propriety in this view the Saviour is called "the Desire of all nations." As in those regions where the sun is hid for months, all console themselves with anticipations of his light and turn instinctively to the point where he will appear, and, when the dawn approaches, abandon their pursuits, and dress themselves in their richest garments, and climb the highest hills to greet his first rays, so was it with the Sun of righteousness. The expectation of a deliverer cheered the earth in its gloomiest darkness. As the fulness of time drew near, the gaze of all settled upon that quarter where the Luminary was to arise, and the pious and the wise secluded themselves from all their avocations, and in the sublimest faith and loftiest contemplations, watched for that morning which was to know no night but forever give light to them who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and guide the wretched in the way of peace.

But it is time to pass to our second article, and to consider this title of the Saviour in another view and with reference to the *wants* of mankind; for as regards these also, he is emphatically "the Desire of all nations."

II. The words rendered "the Desire of all nations," mean, in fact, the want, the good needed, the grand desideratum of all the people of the earth. Nor, were this the place, would it be difficult to vindicate the text thus considered, both politically and socially, and to prove that those nations upon whom the gospel shines, occupy summits gilded and gladdened by the orb of day, while all others are still in the deep valleys, not yet penetrated by his rays. Why, my brethren, look abroad upon the governments of the earth. Who need be told that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that whatever be the form of civil polity, it will prove a blessing or a scourge, just as rulers obey or violate the precepts of the gospel? And so, too, as to the arts and sciences, as to liberty and order, as to every virtue which adorns a people (and wo above all lands to this republic, when such virtues come to be worn only with a loose and disheveled decency,) in all these respects while it is true that each age and nation hath its peculiar character, how



unequivocal is the testimony of history that the characters of all depend upon the infusion or rejection of the principles of the gospel.

I am not, however, a politician or a philosopher, but a preacher. It is not my design to speak of political or ethical defects, but of wants far more profound and pressing, the wants of the soul, the necessities of the immortal spirit, exigencies which no earthly scheme of polity or philosophy or even religion has ever recognized, but which the gospel both reaches and abundantly satisfies. The entire system of the Bible, indeed, and every provision of the gospel has this great peculiarity, it addresses man as carrying within him the consciousness of wants overlooked by all other teachers except Jesus Christ, wants which make him poor and blind and naked and miserable, while he pretends to be rich and increased in goods. Christianity takes for granted a guilt and ruin, such as no human expedient could meet. And it is precisely on this account, it is because of its exact adaptation to all the dreadful emergencies of our condition, that the great salvation has triumphed and must triumph; that Jesus must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; that Christ lifted up will draw all men unto him; that all nations shall call him blessed, and that unto him shall the gathering of the people be. And if you do not already feel all the force of this truth, suffer me to explain it to you.

In the first place, then, my hearers, wherever a human being is found, there will be found a conscience, however stupified, yet troubled and agitated with guilt. "This is the curse which goeth forth over the face of the whole earth," and secretly appals the proudest, and flashes in upon the hardest, through all their steel and adamant, convictions that shake the soul with terror; nor from this pressure of unpardoned sin has man ever found, nor will man ever find deliverance but by the blood of Christ. Let men affect to despise the gospel and seek to persecute its ministers and stifle its light; that gospel has in their bosoms a ministry they cannot resist, a radiance they cannot extinguish; and even while his hands are reeking with persecution, the jailor exclaims, what must I do to be saved. Let men plunge into excesses, and seek in vice and revelry to drown the forebodings within, the "fearful looking for of judgment;" though they dig into hell, saith the Lord, there will I search them,

though they dive into the sea, there will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them; and amidst all his delirious carousals Belshazzar's countenance changes, and the joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against another at a hand-writing *which he cannot read.*

In a word, let men seek by mere repentance to atone for guilt, it is in vain. Everywhere the imploring cry is heard, "wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God; shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old; will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil; shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul." And blood, blood, flowing in every land, altars groaning with victims, hecatombs smoking with gore, lacerating hooks and torturing pilgrimages, the reddened axles of Juggernaut, and the wail of anguished woman on the Ganges, proclaim the inefficacy of repentance to give peace to the conscience. No, my brethren, the great want of a guilty world is the atonement of Calvary. It is the Lamb of God alone who taketh away the sin of the world. To him, John, *the great preacher of repentance*, pointed; in him there is a redundancy of merit for the vilest; from his cross there floats down a voice, saying, "Look unto me and be saved all ye ends of the earth!" And in this view how truly is the Saviour, "the Desire of all nations" bringing "peace to them that are nigh and to them that are afar off."

Guilt! To the want produced by guilt, add now that created by the corruption which sin hath shed through our nature, blinding the mind, perverting the will, and not only casing the heart in obduracy, but filling it with enmity to God. A corruption so entire and universal and self-propagating, that the Bible employs in portraying it the most frightful image, and pronounces all men, not only without life but dead, meaning by death, not merely the *absence*, but the *opposite* of life. "All," say the scriptures, "are dead in trespasses and sins." Such is the natural condition of the whole world; and were men left to themselves, this corruption would forever increase and forever feed the deathless worm and the quenchless fire. And as most gloriously "the Life of the world," as he who "has come that we may have life, and have it more abundantly" than by the first birth—that

the Spirit may quicken, and purify, and renovate; in this view, how truly is Jesus "the Desire of all nations."

In fine, take but one thought more—the just anger of God—that wrath which hangs in unmitigated blackness over a guilty world, and from which there is no refuge but at the cross of Christ. The wrath of God, my hearers, is a calamity which none can comprehend, and even the possibility of incurring it, must fill a reflecting mind with unspeakable concern and alarm. In heaven it once burnt a little, and instantly rebel angels, though formerly most glorious, withered into devils, and sank all flaming into hell. And now not only are all the children of Adam, "children of wrath," but all feel the premonition, all hear that cry—"Flee from the wrath to come." All know that consciousness of guilt, is the prophecy of vengeance; and until sheltered in Jesus, all stand helpless and hopeless, exposed to that lurid cloud which is only suspended for a while—only waits till it shall have been charged and burdened with storms and fires and every deadly material, when it will break and beat forever on their heads, and pour a deluge of eternal wrath upon their souls. And in this view, is not Christ—that Jesus who "hath delivered us from the wrath to come"—oh! is he not "the Desire of all nations."

It would be easy, to multiply details on this article, but I must not. It were easy to shew, that in reference to the most profound and pressing necessities of man, the gospel is the great desideratum—literally the one thing needful. The spiritual wants of every age, and clime, and class, declare how worthy of all acceptance is the faithful saying; and the assertion would not be at all extravagant, should I use the image of the apostle, and say, that where Christ is not known, the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for his manifestation, and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together for a deliverance He alone can bestow. Justice pursues—vengeance thunders—conscience shoots its clear and ghastly flashes—Satan sways his baleful sceptre—Death "reigns over all," trampling the nations under the hoofs of that terrible pale horse—and after death, "Hell follows." Such is the state of man, nor is there any hope for him but in the Redeemer. Until that Sun of eternity arise, a canopy of perdition and despair envelopes him, "clouds and ever during dark surround him," and he turns on every side



Eyes that roll in vain,  
To find the piercing ray, and find no dawn.

III. Our last article requires scarcely a word from me. Here I had proposed to consider the epithet, "desire," as synonymous with happiness, and it cannot be necessary to prove that the happiness of all must be found in Christ. Not that all feel this, for men, alas! ignorant on all subjects, are most ignorant as to what constitutes their true felicity, and thus call that good which they love, and reject and hate the gospel which condemns their sins. Yet it is not less true, that only Jesus can confer true happiness; he alone can say, "come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Happiness, because the mind of man can only rejoice in truth, and Christ is "the truth." Without him, we grope darkling in mazes of error, and are perplexed and wretched amid doubts and speculations as to all it most concerns us to know.

Happiness, because the heart of man can be satisfied only with objects worthy of it, and Christ alone proposes those objects—objects which fix the heart, but without which the passions wander, in unrest and pining, through creation, fretting themselves with things gross and sensual, whose possession only stings us into a consciousness of our immortality, and whose best gifts are only a pleasing degradation.

Happiness, lastly, because God is the life of the soul, and Christ alone reveals this Being, and reinstates us in his favor and love. To be without Christ, say the scriptures, is to be without God, and to be without God, is to be severed from the supreme good, to be cut off from the source of all joy, to have our souls cursed and blasted now, and dying thus to become forever most desolate and wretched—the orphans of the universe, the outcasts of eternity. But as I said, a word here will suffice.

#### APPLICATION.

The subject, my brethren, on which you have been addressed, is one very dear to me, not only for its interest, but as the common joy and glory of all christians. It is because the disciples of Jesus wander from the cross that they are separated, and walk over hidden fires forever flaming up in controversy. As they gather around this sacred altar,

one heart glows in every breast, and all the elements of strife are melted and fused into one monopolizing love for God and for each other.

And now, in applying this discourse, what shall I say? Why my hearers, the very entrance of such a Being into this world, and the mission of which this earth was the theatre, how astonishing and absorbing. There are times in the lives of all men, when we feel that we are not all matter; when our thoughts wander far away from the finite and mutable, and become familiar with eternity; when our souls are agitated with the mystery of that eternal Spirit by which they are encompassed—are athirst for God—and ascending to the perfect and ever-glorious, exclaim, in the language of Philip, “Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us.”

My brethren, that God, that eternal Spirit, has rent the veil and shewn himself in our midst. The Word which in the beginning was with God, and was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” “Christ Jesus has come into the world,” and “he that hath seen me,” he says, “hath seen the Father.” And now what movements should stir our minds? In Christ, “God was manifest in the flesh.” He is “the image of the invisible God,” “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and express image of his person.” In his temper the character of the Deity was impersonated; in his life the attributes of the Deity were embodied; in his cross the very *heart* of the Deity is disclosed to our love. What a Being! Search creation through—no such object can be found for the admiring and adoring contemplations of the universe.

Having gazed upon this wonderful Being, think next of the enterprise on which he came, and the cost at which that enterprise was achieved. The enterprise! think of that; it was the salvation of man. The devils saw him and exclaimed “*what have we to do with thee?*” as if they had said ‘thou hast not come to save us.’ No, they had nothing to do with him; but we have every thing to do with him; since he came for us men and our salvation.

The enterprise—and, then, the cost—those sufferings which destroyed his life, though they could not destroy his love,—think of these, and how are you affected? “Christ,” says Peter, “hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust;” but in that *once*, what sufferings were not concentrated.

Ah! miserable sinner, from eternity had the only begotten reposed in the bosom of the Father, and now see him leaving that bosom and taking the form of a servant for you. From eternity had the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely been rich in the glories and hosannas of the skies, and now see him becoming poor for you;—so poor, that living he had not where to lay his head, and dying he would, but for charity, have been buried like a common malefactor, by the high-way side. Follow the adorable Jesus from scene to scene of ever deepening insult and sorrow. Trace his footsteps, marked by his own blood. Behold his sacred face swollen with tears and stripes. And, last of all, ascend mount Calvary and view there the amazing spectacle; earth and hell gloating on the gashed form of the Lord of glory; men and devils glutting their malice in the agony of the Prince of life; and all the scattered rays of vengeance which would have consumed our guilty race, converging and beating in focal intensity upon him of whom the Eternal twice proclaimed, in a voice from heaven, “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” After this, what are our emotions? Can we ever be cold or faithless? No, my brethren, it is impossible, unless we forget this Saviour, and lose sight of that cross on which he poured out his soul for us.

That is an affecting passage in Roman history, which records the death of Manlius. At night, and on the Capitol, fighting hand to hand, had he repelled the Gauls and saved the city when all seemed lost. Afterwards he was accused; but the Capitol towered in sight of the forum where he was tried, and as he was about to be condemned, he stretched out his hands and pointed weeping to that arena of his triumph. At this the people burst into tears, and the judges could not pronounce sentence. Again the trial proceeded, but was again defeated; nor could he be convicted until they had removed him to a low spot, from which the Capitol was invisible. And behold, my brethren, what I am saying. While the cross is in view, vainly will earth and sin seek to shake the christian’s loyalty and devotion;—one look at that purple monument of a love which alone, and when all was dark and lost, interposed for our rescue, and their efforts will be baffled. Low must we sink, and blotted from our hearts must be the memory of that deed, before we can become



faithless to the Redeemer's cause, and perfidious to his glory.

But this thought has carried me beyond all bounds. I return, and with a single reflection more I finish. That reflection regards our duties, and the solemn responsibilities which the subject charges home upon us all.

My impenitent hearer, how loudly does the text speak to you; and I cannot sit down without asking, what think you of Christ? How are you treating him who came and who seeks to save you? You have heard that he is the desire of all nations; tell me is he your desire or aversion—will you receive and obey him, or are you resolved still to say, “not this man, but Barabbas?” Recollect, without him you can have no peace now,—your deepest, strongest wants must be unsatisfied,—the whole creation cannot make you happy. Recollect, you will soon have nothing to do but to die; then “the desire of the wicked shall perish,” and what will become of you? Soon the Saviour will come again, and very differently. “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” And then, when you call upon mountains to cover you, and abysses to shelter you, how will your present conduct appear? And what a wail will be yours when, shattering the air, and shattering your soul, that sentence shall be pronounced, “depart accursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

It is, however, to us christians that the application of the text especially belongs at this time, and in our bosoms how many thoughts ought it to awaken. True, (oh blessed be God for this,) Jesus Christ is all our desire and all our salvation. We know him as such, and our souls do magnify the Lord. But, with the possession of this blessing, what responsibilities devolve upon us!

My very dear brethren, *is Christ the Desire of all nations?* Then why are there so many nations still ignorant of Christ? The angel declared that the tidings should be to all people,—why then have so many not heard those tidings? The Saviour's command is, “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,”—why then have not the heralds of the gospel traversed the earth? The answer to these questions I blush to give; it is, (shame on our covetousness,—the reproach of our country and of our

churches,) that christians have not done and will not do their duty.

Ah! my brethren, my brethren, just now as I surveyed the cross, I pronounced it almost impossible for us to be faithless to Christ; but alas, when I turn from the cross to the conduct of christians, I have most painfully to confess my mistake. Where is the Spirit of Christ amongst us? Upon whom has his mantle fallen, all wet with tears for the perishing? "When he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd;" how few are affected with such a sight now. "Five hundred millions of souls," exclaimed a missionary, "are represented as being unenlightened. I cannot, if I would, give up the idea of being a missionary, while I reflect upon this vast number of my fellow-sinners who are perishing for lack of knowledge. Five hundred millions! intrudes itself upon my mind wherever I go, and however I am employed. When I go to bed it is the last thing that occurs to my memory; if I awake in the night, it is to meditate on it alone, and in the morning it is generally the first thing that occupies my thoughts." Nor is it only the heathen at a distance; among ourselves how many thousands of the sons of Ethiopia are stretching out their hands, and how have they been neglected. My brethren let us awake to our responsibility ere the wrath of God wake us to sleep no more, and the cry which goeth up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth attract his righteous indignation.

*Is Christ the Desire of all nations?* Then, my brethren, let us preach Christ; and let our missionaries preach Christ. We do not want philosophers, nor metaphysicians, nor even theologians, but preachers of Christ and him crucified. Nor let us fear that God will not open a great and effectual door for us, if we are willing to be co-workers with him. What am I saying? my brethren, how wide a door is already open; and if, instead of indolently crying, "there are yet four months and then cometh harvest," we would only "lift up our eyes and look on the fields," upon every side we would see them "white and ready to harvest."

Lastly, *is Christ the Desire of all nations?* Then how sure is our success. True, we must expect difficulties, and it is not improbable that before the gospel conquers

the earth there will be many conflicts and convulsions. But when we consider what God hath promised and done, how intent and busy is the whole Trinity in the grand scheme of salvation, what difficulty can move us? Who can doubt that all events shall conspire to secure Emmanuel's triumph, and even the passions of the world become ministers in its conversion to God? Many of us deprecated and deplored the disruption which lately divided our churches, but the man has blind eyes who sees not already the hand of God in this; and he, amongst us, has a cold heart who has not felt a glow at the noble conduct of our brethren at the North, and is not fired with holy emulation. And thus shall it ever be, the truth shall yet bind kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron; the wheels of the Redeemer's chariot move not back, but shall roll on until "the Desire" shall become the delight of all nations, and shall reign over them in righteousness. All the resources of the universe are in the hands of the ascended Jesus; to him the Father hath said, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" and the hour hastens on, when the whole earth shall become a temple, and that temple be filled with the glory of the Lord, and echo with the praises of

"An assembly such as earth  
Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see."

Welcome the glorious consummation! Oh months, and seasons, and years, speed your tardy flight, and usher in the blissful period, that day when from every hill and valley shall ascend clouds of incense, to return in sparkling showers of mercy; when from every human heart shall swell the angelic hymn, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men; when the pealing chorus of a renovated world shall answer back the thundering acclamations of the skies, and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them shall say, Allelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; Worthy is the Lamb that was slain; Blessing and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen!



# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF BAPTISTS:

An Introductory Sermon, delivered before the Columbus Baptist Association, Miss., at its Session, Sept. 13th, 1845, by Rev. W. CAREY CRANE, of Columbus, Miss. Published in accordance with a resolution of said Association.

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*“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.”—Malachi iii: 16.*  
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There is a book of remembrance, and a recording angel, ever in the presence of God. The book contains the history of our fallen race. It is now unfinished, but is progressing to its completion, on the last great day. Of such as “fear God and speak often one to another,” it is said a “book of remembrance is written” before God. The historian of eternity is God. His angels perform but the subordinate part of gathering the tokens of his grace. If the history of eternity shall engage the thoughts and affections of the paradisiac world, surely, the less important and incomplete history of time must command the high consideration of man in his imperfect state. The history of God’s people is but a detail of their trials and conquests over sin, and their spiritual foes. It is always a grateful task to gather the evidences of the faithful labors of our departed ancestry. From their self-denying exertions in the glorious cause of our heavenly master; from their successes in winning souls to Christ; from their undying adherence to the principles of sound, eternal truth, we may gather rich lessons of instruction. It is an old maxim, that “history is philosophy teaching by example.” It is no less true, that christian experience is grace bringing forth its luscious fruit. In the spirit of these sentiments, it is our present intention to demonstrate that the history of Baptist principles, is a detail of lives consecrated

to their truth, and furnishing illustrious examples of their force and influence. We are the sect every where spoken against. Perhaps no people since the dawn of the christian era, have had more of obloquy and contempt cast upon them than the Baptists. Now the object of persecution by Romanists; and anon, contemned as criminals and malefactors by Puritans; never the favorites of power, and always the scorn of kings and princes; held together by simple principles, we have maintained an existence despite of all opposition. The marvel now is, not that there are so many Baptists, but that there are any at all. Were it not for God and his word, there would not be one to contend for the "faith once delivered unto the saints." "*Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.*" "Great is truth, and it shall prevail." The blood of the martyrs has indeed been the seed of the church. Romanism, Unitarianism, Universalism, Pædobaptism, Paganism, Deism and Infidelity, have all been arrayed against us. Long since must we have ceased to exist, had it not been that the Lord was on our side, and was stronger than all our foes. Tauntingly we have been often asked, who are the Baptists? What are the principles for which they are contending? Briefly let me on this occasion, endeavor to answer these questions, and plainly set forth our principles.

I. WHO ARE THE BAPTISTS? In answering this question, I shall 1, speak of their name, origin and continuance; 2, of their existence in the four quarters of the globe; 3, of their persecutions; 4, of their eminent men, who have distinguished themselves as scholars, orators, philanthropists, and men of genius.

1. *Their name, origin and continuance.* It is not pretended that always there have been a people, called Baptists. The name is nothing; we only maintain, that always have there been people who have cherished and practised Baptist principles. The Welch churches claim an unbroken continuity since the days of the apostles. It has been asserted, "that the Baptists originated in Germany, in the year 1522, at the beginning of the reformation." It is true, that no denomination of Protestants can trace the origin of its present name further back than about the time of the reformation; and most of them have originated since that period. And it appears to be true, that the name of Baptists, by which this people have since been known, was then first assumed, pro-

bably in opposition to that of Ana-baptists, with which their enemies were constantly reproaching them. It is not the history of a name, but the prevalence of principles, which is the just object of attention with the student of ecclesiastical history. "Their object," (the Baptists,) says Benedict, "is not to show what is not true respecting others, but what is true concerning themselves. They do not deny that Episcopalians can find bishops, the Presbyterians elders or presbyters, the Methodists and the Quakers inward light, among the primitive christians; neither do they doubt that the Congregationalists or Independents have good grounds for thinking that the apostolic churches were of their belief respecting church government. They only ask that terms should be explained. With most denominations, they find something with which they can agree, and their hearts cleave in love to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ." We are Episcopalians, as we hold that every church should have a bishop; but we differ with them upon the origin and jurisdiction of ecclesiastical power. We vest all power in the assembly of the believers, and they originate officers. We hold to apostolic succession, but it is an apostolic succession of principles, practices and adherants to the commands of the Saviour and his apostles. Episcopalians have three orders in the ministry, bishops, presbyters or elders, and deacons. We hold to one order in the ministry, a bishop, combining in himself the other characteristics of elder and pastor. The deacon with us, is an officer in charge of ecclesiastical temporalities, not of spiritualities. We are Presbyterians also, as we hold to the doctrine, that ruling and teaching elders are one and the same. We are Methodists, as we believe all good christians should be, zealously affected in a good work. We are Quakers too, as we cherish the hope that we have an inward light. Without reserve we hold also, that the following principles have always been maintained by a portion of christians: "1, that baptism commenced with the christian dispensation, and was peculiar, bearing no analogy to any previous institution, such as circumcision, nor in any sense derived from previous enactments, but revealed as a positive law of the kingdom of God; 2, that baptism is only scriptural as administered by immersion of the whole body in water; 3, that it cannot scripturally be administered to any, but on a profession of faith in Jesus Christ; 4, that as a



command of the New Testament, it is obligatory on all who profess faith in Christ, and is intended to form a great line of separation between the church and the world." These propositions have appeared in prominent view, upon all the investigations of ecclesiastical history. Our principles originated with Christ; as he was baptized, so are we baptized. Were the first christians now living, the world, as at present disposed, would call them Baptists; and were the apostles now preaching, they would be regarded as Baptist preachers. Our name, Baptist, is not signifiatory of all we profess. Our generic name is christian, our specific name is Baptist. Our first book of church history is an antiquated narrative, called the "Acts of the Apostles," and sets forth, as say the Magdeburg Centuriatory, "that the apostles baptized only the adult and aged, whether Jews or Gentiles, whereof there are instances in Acts ii, viii, x, xvi, xix, but as to the baptizing of infants we have no example." The manner of baptizing was by dipping or plunging into water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, according to Romans ii, and Colossians ii. The Encyclopædia Americana says, that "the Baptists are a protestant sect, who maintain the necessity of immersion, from the signification of the word *Baptizo*, to dip, used by the sacred writers; from the performance of the rite in rivers in the primitive ages, and from the phraseology used in describing the ceremony." "There is that scattereth, yet increaseth." How true was this maxim, is manifest from the general diffusion of gospel principles, immediately succeeding the persecutions which commenced in the apostolic age. Clemens Alexandrinus, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr, who were cotemporaries of, or immediately succeeded the apostles, testify, that through the apostolic age, and a greater part of the second century, immersion only was known and practised. The investigations of modern times, among English and German theologians, confirm the declarations of the fathers. *Neander* affirms, "that it cannot possibly be proved that infant baptism was practised in the apostolic age." *Prof. Lange*, on infant baptism, remarks, "that it is totally opposed to the spirit of the apostolic age." *Grotius*, in his annotations on Matt. xix: 14, states, that "in the councils of the ancients, we shall find no earlier mention of pedo-baptism, than in the council of Carthage." *Brets-*

*chneider* observes, "that all the earlier traces of infant baptism, are very doubtful; on the contrary, Tertullian is the first who refers to it, and he censures it; Origen and Cyprian defend it." It was in the third century that the most grievous errors originated. Infant baptism was the first of these heresies, and was chiefly confined to Africa. It originated in a misconception of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. On that discourse the strange dogma was constructed, that baptism could remove original sin and qualify for heaven. This change of views only respected the *subjects*, not the *mode*, of baptism. Out of it originated the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, a doctrine always popular with the minions of the papacy in succeeding ages. That this change only respected the subjects, and not the mode, is sustained by the testimony of the learned Dr. Whitby, of the Church of England, in his commentary on Romans vi: 4. "Immersion was religiously observed by all christians for thirteen centuries, and was changed into sprinkling without authority from the author of this institution. It were to be wished, that this custom were again of general use." During succeeding centuries, protests were made against these innovations. In the fourth century, especially, Gregory Nazianzen earnestly opposed himself to the unwarrantable use made of sacred ordinances. That the mode of baptism was still immersion, and was held in high repute in the fourth century, is sustained by the fact, that five of the Emperors of Rome were immersed: Constantine, Constantius, Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I; also, nine distinguished men in the Greek and Latin churches: Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Nectarius, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustin, Alypius and Adeodatus. From the fifth century until our time, infant baptism has been common among some who should have professed and practised a more primitive faith. This change has been a work of gradual progression. In the ancient days of christianity, men were modest in the expression of their views of apostolic practice. But as the world recedes in point of time from the era of Christ, the "*savans*" of pedo-baptist christianity have become more bold and courageous in the expression of their sentiments. Says that theologial gladiator, Rev. Nathan L. Rice, "my decided conviction is, that I have clearly proved, that baptism should always be performed by pouring or sprinkling."

2. *The existence of Baptists in the four quarters of the globe.* The first churches were established in the east, of which accounts are found in our first book of church history, the Acts of the Apostles, and in Jones, Mosheim, Eusebius and Gieseler's works on Ecclesiastical History. In *Africa*, the baptism of believers, and of such only, was a prominent and cardinal doctrine for a long time. Upon that foundation these churches continued to rest, until spiritual Egyptian darkness spread over nearly all Africa,—the consequence of the apostacy of Rome. In Europe, persecution drove christian fugitives into an asylum among the "Waldenses," a people occupying the beautiful valleys of Piedmont, at the foot of the Alps, who, together with the Albigenses, in the south of France, received the gospel in the early part of the second century, a practice they never fully abandoned. What connexion there is between these ancient people and the adherents of primitive christianity now, is shewn by the testimony of Limborch, Professor of Divinity in the University of Amsterdam, and Mosheim, the author of the history, as quoted by Jones. The former says, "to speak candidly what I think, of all modern sects of christians, the Dutch Baptists most resemble both the Albigenses and Waldenses." The latter, notwithstanding the flimsy, confused, and, in many instances, the erroneous account which he has given of the Waldenses, yet has expressly owned, that "before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists." England received the gospel in the days of the apostles. From its ecclesiastical history, we learn that thousands were baptized according to the primitive mode. Wales, the Gibraltar of the Baptist faith, always unconquered and unconquerable, received the gospel about the same time; and from her historians we ascertain, that from the introduction of the gospel, A. D. 63, until A. D. 600, the Welch people knew no other baptism but immersion, and no other subject but an avowed believer. When Austin, the emissary of Pope Gregory the Great, visited this country, (Wales,) about A. D. 600, he found a society of christians at Bangor, consisting of 2,100 persons, who were afterwards destroyed because they refused to baptize infants at the command of the Pope. Evans traces the remnant of the ancient faith, through the darkness



of popery, to the year 1000, and Peter Williams, down to the year 1115. From the visit of the early English Baptist Reformers, it is clearly proved, that in the vales of Carleon and Olchon, Baptist churches were formed in these almost inaccessible fastnesses of mountains, which had existed from time immemorial. There is little doubt, therefore, that unbroken continuity has existed from the time of the apostles. During the reign of William the Conqueror, a considerable number of Baptists from France, Germany and Holland, came over to the British Isles, and so greatly prevailed, that Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote a book against them. "In the twelfth century, the Baptists put forth a confession of faith, asserting, 'in the beginning of christianity, there was no baptizing of children; our forefathers practised no such thing. We do, from our hearts, acknowledge that baptism is a washing which is performed with water, and doth hold out the washing of the soul from sin.'" Peter Bruis, at that time a pastor among the Waldenses, publicly vindicated Baptism, and multitudes attached themselves to him, who were called Petrobrussians. Menno Simon, after whom the Dutch Baptists are called Mennonites, flourished about the year 1530. It is remarked by Thompson, (a British Baptist minister, in his *Historical Sketch of the Baptist denomination*, to which we are indebted for much herein contained,) "The christian fortitude of a Baptist named Snyder, who was beheaded at Lewarden, led Menno to examine the doctrine of baptism, and finally adopt it. Several persecuted Baptists soon rallied around him, whom he formed into a church; and, being a man of great genius and commanding eloquence, he succeeded in spreading his peculiar views through Holland, Guelderland, Brabant, Westphalia; through the German provinces that skirt the Baltic, and on to Livonia. He was hunted by his enemies at one period, a large reward having been offered for his life, but he survived all his dangers and died peaceably, after a course of great usefulness, A. D. 1561."

The first regular Baptist church in London, was formed in 1607, under the auspices of a Mr. Smyth, formerly of the Establishment, upon general Baptist principles. In 1633, a particular Baptist church was formed. In 1650, associations were established and epistolary correspondence opened, including English, Scotch, Irish and Welch churches. In 1689,

the particular Baptists held an assembly and put forth the "Confession of Faith." By some it is supposed, that the first Baptist church in Scotland was formed by a Mr. McLean, in 1765. Others think that this is a mistake, as a church was formed in 1763, out of portions of Cromwell's army, having epistolary correspondence between English and Irish churches. The history of the fortunes and successes of the English Baptists, is well delineated by the faithful Ivimey. The rise and progress of the denomination in America, are truly wonderful. Backus, Benedict and Semple have done us invaluable service, in their contributions to our historical literature. At a future day, some other mind will gather the fruits of all the labors of our fathers, and show forth in bold relief, our true origin and history. But the advocates and opponents of apostolic succession, equally agree in charging it upon us, that we have all descended from Roger Williams.

The persecutions of Puritans against Quakers and Baptists, drove Roger Williams and his few friends to Providence, R. I. They contended for liberty, civil and religious, and contending for this liberty, they formed, says Backus, *the first Baptist church in America*. "Mr. Williams had been accused before of embracing principles which tended to Ana-baptism; and in March, 1639, he was baptized by one of his brethren, and then he baptized about ten more." We sustain his course, in thus proceeding to establish a church, by the unanswerable argument of Archbishop Whately, in his "Kingdom of Christ Delineated." "Suppose, for instance, a number of emigrants bound for some colony, to be shipwrecked on a desert island, such as afforded them means of subsistence, but precluded all reasonable hope of their quitting it; or suppose them to have taken refuge there as fugitives from intolerable oppression, or from a conquering enemy, (no uncommon case in ancient times,) or to be the sole survivors of a pestilence or earthquake which had destroyed the rest of the nation; no one would maintain that these shipwrecked emigrants or fugitives, were bound or permitted, to remain—their posterity—in a state of anarchy, on the ground of there being no one among them who could claim hereditary or other right to govern them. It would clearly be right, and wise, and necessary, that they should regard themselves as constituted, by the very circumstances of their position, a civil community,

and should assemble to enact such laws and appoint such magistrates, as they might judge most suitable to their circumstances. And obedience to these laws and governors, as soon as the constitution was settled, would become a moral duty. \* \* \* A similar rule will apply to ecclesiastical communities. \* \* \* It really does seem, not only absurd, but even impious, to represent it as the Lord's will, that persons who are believers in his gospel should, in consequence of the circumstances in which Providence has placed them, condemn themselves and their posterity to live as heathens, instead of conforming as closely as those circumstances will allow, to the institutions and directions of Christ and his apostles, by combining themselves into a christian society, regulated and conducted in the best way they can, on gospel principles. And if such a society does enjoy the divine blessing and favor, it follows that its proceedings, its enactments, its officers, are legitimate and apostolical, as long as they are conformable to the principles which the apostles have laid down and recorded for our use." It thus manifestly appears that, according to the argument of an Episcopal author of eminence, apostolic succession was not necessary to constitute the first Baptist church in Providence a legitimate successor to the primitive churches. Apostolic practice was all that was required. Roger Williams being himself an Episcopalian, and having ordination from mitred heads and holy Episcopal hands, was, according to High Church argument, also fully empowered to administer baptism according to the provisions of the ancient copies of the Rubric. But it is sometimes contended, that because the Providence church was the first Baptist church, therefore all other Baptist churches in the United States originated from that church. If it could be proved that that was the only Baptist congregation which had a direct succession from British Baptists, the case would be clearly made out, if the discarded doctrine of succession were of any avail. It appears, however, that Mr. John Myles, a minister and member of the Baptist church in Swansea in Wales, in 1662, was turned out of his place, as "the chief leader" of that ancient body, by a cruel act of Parliament, which turned two thousand teachers out of their places in one day, for refusing fully to conform to the Church of England. He then came over, with the book of church records which he had kept there, and it



remains in our Swansea to this day. Thus writes Backus. "And at the house of John Butterworth, in Rehoboth, in 1663, John Myles, elder, James Brown and others, solemnly covenanted together as a church of Christ, to obey him in all his ordinances and commandments. Because, however, a Congregational church existed in the same town, Mr. Myles and his church were complained of, and a fine imposed upon them for it. But, in 1667, the court granted them the town of Swansea, where the church has continued by succession ever since, and is the fourth Baptist church in America." All the circumstances attendant upon the formation of that other church in Massachusetts, which emanated from the preaching of President Dunstar, of Cambridge, against infant baptism, attest that that church likewise originated, from a somewhat different source, from that formed at Providence. The church at Welshtract also, then under the government of Pennsylvania, but now under the State of Delaware, was formed chiefly of persons who came over from Wales, in 1701. The first Baptist church in the State of New York, was formed at Oyster Bay on Long Island, about the year 1741. The first Baptist church in the city of New York, was formed in 1762, under the ministry of John Gano. The first Baptist church in Virginia, was formed in Prince George county in 1714, by Robert Norden, who then came from England, and was their pastor till he died, in 1725. It can, therefore, be shewn that a very large proportion of the Baptist churches in this country, were originally formed of emigrants from England, Ireland, Wales, or Holland;—by persons who had already belonged to communities of our faith and order, in their mother country. From these humble beginnings, what hath not been wrought? Our numbers have doubled in a quarter of a century, and now, if our statistics were complete, we have over 800,000 communicants, over five thousand ministers, ten or twelve colleges, five theological seminaries, and a variety of periodicals and papers, besides efficient organizations for the diffusion of gospel truth, by means of oral preaching and the press. Here we raise our Ebenezer. Hitherto hath the Lord blessed us.

3. *Persecutions of the Baptists.* In 402, the Milevitan council ordained that they be anathematized who deny that children are saved by baptism. In 413, Honorius and

Theodosius ordained that whoever was baptized, as well as the administrator, should be put to death. About the year 1049, Beringarius, a bold and faithful preacher of the gospel, was accused of denying baptism to little ones, and hundreds of his adherents were massacred, "for opposing infant baptism," and "for being baptized." In the Bishopric of Tryers, in Flanders and Germany, persecution was carried on with unmitigated severity against the Baptists, and one hundred and fifty thousand were cruelly put to death. Amid all these persecutions, Baptists did live; their preachers could travel through the whole German empire, and lodge every night at the houses of their friends. They were burnt, beheaded and drowned; "yet," says Moshem, "there were, in 1160, 800,000 who professed this faith." "In 1022, fourteen persons of eminence were burnt at Orleans, in France, for professing Baptist sentiments; others were martyred on similar grounds, in Lower Saxony, under Henry III, the Emperor at Rome, in 1147; at Barenza and Parma; in the Bishopric of Toulouse, nineteen were burnt in 1232; at Marseilles, under Pope John XXII; at Crema, in Austria, in 1315; at Aubiton, in Flanders, in 1373; at Montpelier, in France, in 1417; at Augsburg, in Germany, 1517; at Zurich, in 1527; and in the same year, Leonard Skooner, a Baptist minister, and seventy of his friends, were put to death at Rottenburgh, in Germany; finally, John Wouteriz was burnt at Dort, for being baptized, in 1572." Peter Bruis was put to death in 1130, for vindicating baptism. It was in the 600th year after Christ, that the monk Austin, the Pope's legate, met the Welsh Baptists on the borders of Herefordshire, when he made them three propositions, one of which was, that they should receive infant baptism. But it was promptly met by the reply, that "they would keep this ordinance, as well as all other things, as they had received them from the apostolic age." This prompt and decisive refusal so enraged him, that he exclaimed: "Sins ye wol not receive peace of your brethren, ye of other shall have werre and wretche." And setting the Saxons upon them, they murdered one thousand and two hundred of the ministers and delegates then present." In England, 1536, "the national clergy met in convocation, and declared the sentiments of the Baptists to be detestable heresies, utterly to be condemned." In 1538, a commission was given to Arch-

bishop Crammer, of Canterbury, and others, to proceed against the Baptists, and burn their books; and on the 16th of Nov'r, of the same year, a royal proclamation and instructions were issued to the justices throughout England, directing them to see that the laws against the Baptists were duly executed. Brandt, in "History of Reformation," says, "thirty-one Baptists, who fled from England to Delft, in Holland, were put to death; the men were beheaded, and the women drowned." Bishop Latimer, in a sermon preached before Edward VI, speaks of the events which transpired during the reign of Henry VIII, and observes, that "Baptists were burned in different parts of the kingdom, and went to death with good integrity." Under the reign of Edward VI, an act of pardon for Papists and others was issued, excluding the Baptists; and in 1547, a fresh commission was decreed to search for all Baptists, under which Joan of Kent was burnt, on 2d of May, 1549. The reign of the Bloody Mary was signalized by its numerous acts of atrocity. David George, a Dutchman, was disinterred in St. Lawrence's church, three years after his death, and his body was burnt, because it was discovered he had been a Baptist. These persecutions extended into the reign of Elizabeth. A royal proclamation ordained, that Baptists should leave the land, and in the 17th year of that queen's administration, a congregation of them was found without Aldgate, London, of whom "some were banished, twenty-seven were imprisoned, and two were burnt to death in Smithfield." A churchman of distinction, Dr. Some, two years after this event, wrote a book against the Puritans, in which he inveighs against the Baptists; and complains, "that they had several conventicles in London and other places; that some of their ministers had been educated at the Universities, and that they held heretical opinions." As with the primitive christians, so with the persecuted Baptists, the intolerant opposition with which they contended; the intolerance of the overwhelming power of potentates and priests; served only to gain them strength and accelerate the progress of their principles. Thus we find, that in the reign of James I, they had acquired sufficient boldness, notwithstanding persecutions, to publish a treatise, justifying their principles of dissent; to petition the king for relief, and in 1618, to re-print a book translated from the Dutch, on baptism, "the first that was published on that subject, in the English language." The last martyr to Bap-



tist principles burnt in England, was Edward Wightman, of Burton-upon-Trent. He was condemned by the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, and was burnt at Lichfield, April 11th, 1612. In the British empire, since the days of fiery persecution, Baptists have been permitted to live unmolested, and though subject to all the disabilities of dissenters, they have increased rapidly, and now exert a salutary influence.

The whole history of the "mad fanatics of Munster," is one of intolerance, viewing the extravagancies of that deluded section of Anti-pædo-baptists, in whatever light we may. An impartial historian informs us, that the "insurrection of those times in Germany, (1533,) ought not to be attributed to religious opinions, but to civil dissensions respecting government, and national and personal liberty." It is evident also, that of the 100,000 persons who fell by the sword, all were not Baptists, which is further proof, that this insurrection was not so much against religious, as against civil polity. But it is beautifully remarked, by a gifted minister of our faith, who has no superior in our own ranks, "thousands of educated christians even, are to this day fully persuaded that we derive our origin from the mad fanatics of Munster. The increase of intelligence and candor is altering, indeed, the tone of the higher class of historians on this theme. For the excesses of the body who converted Munster into a den of ravening beasts, our churches are no more responsible, than are the Huguenots of France for all the extravagancies and impostures of the Camisards and the French prophets,—than is the established church of Scotland for all the ravings of Irvingism, or that of England for the delusions of the many of her communion, who believed in Joanna Southcate,—than are the Methodists of England for the Anna Lee, who sprung up and gathered her first proselytes in one of the Methodist societies. The fifth monarchy men of London, who rose for 'King Jesus,' and threw the metropolis of England into consternation, were, in all other matters, regular and orthodox Pædo-baptists; but as Baptists we have never imputed to the body of Pædo-baptists, the obnoxious tenets and the fanatical conduct of this handful of incendiaries. Yet, unjust and cruel as is the prejudice which would fasten upon our denomination the burden of the Munster fanatics, it is a prejudice still widely spread and deeply rooted; one of those vulgar errors, which it often costs science and truth centuries of toil to eradicate."

Our own country has not been altogether free from fierce bigotry and unrelenting persecution. Our New England ancestors of Plymouth rock memory, condemned at one and the same time, innocent men and women, convicted of the impossible crime of witchcraft; poor Baptists and simple minded Quakers, who had fled from Holland and England to the new world, as unto an asylum for the oppressed. Whether English Puritans or French Huguenots, it was all the same, banishment was by them decreed against all non-conformists. Liberty of conscience was construed into licentiousness of life and debauchery of manners. Roger Williams, the modern apostle of civil and religious liberty, was "decried, thwarted, misrepresented and exiled from the colony of Massachusetts." He had "broached and divulged divers new and dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates, as also writ letters of defamation both of the magistrates and churches." The head and front of his offending was his belief and the publication of such belief, that the civil magistrate should not restrain or limit the conscience of man, in religious matters. The colonial history of Virginia, too, abounds with incidents of the most reckless persecution. Could a Harris, an Ireland, a Weatherford, a Lunsford, a Bledsoe and a Craig arise from their graves, they would speak in tones of inconceivable horror of a pampered, godless priesthood; the cock-fighting, gaming gentry of the mother country, sent over because their fathers had no estates to bestow upon them at home, to enlighten his majesty's subjects of the "ancient dominion;" they would tell us of cruel persecutions, of prison walls, of harangues to eager multitudes, from grated windows, and of lawless force to crush the "Plebian sect." That history is incorporated in "Semple's Virginia Baptists," and the "Lives of Virginia Baptist Ministers," and interwoven with all the revolutionary recollections of our ancestors.

Of Lewis Craig, it is said, that he was arrested, with others, by the sheriff of Spottsylvania, and brought before "three magistrates, in the yard of the meeting-house, who bound him and others, in the penalty of two thousand pounds, to appear at court two days after." The prosecuting attorney said of them, "may it please your worship, they cannot meet a man upon the road but they must ram a text of scripture down his throat." For refusing to give se-

curity that he would preach no more in the county for twelve months, he was sentenced to close confinement in the jail. As he and his companions passed on to prison, through the streets of Fredericksburg, they united in singing the lines—

“Broad is the road that leads to death.”

He remained in confinement one month, and then visited Williamsburg in behalf of his persecuted brethren. The following extract from a letter written by the deputy governor, John Blair, will show in what light he regarded these Baptists: “I am told they administer the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, near the manner we do, and differ in nothing from our church, but in that of baptism, and their renewing the ancient discipline, by which they have reformed some sinners, and brought them up to be truly penitent; nay, if a man of their’s is idle, and neglects to labor and provide for his family as he ought, he incurs their censures, which have had good effects. If this be their behaviour, it were to be wished we had some of it among us.” There is on record, a memorable speech made on behalf of Lewis Craig and others, by Patrick Henry, on or about the 4th of June, 1768. It was on the occasion above cited, when the prosecuting attorney made the charge of their zeal in quoting Scripture. That speech thus closes:—“May it please your worships: There are periods in the history of man, when corruption and depravity have so long debased the human character, that man sinks under the weight of the oppressor’s hand, and becomes his servile, his abject slave; he licks the hand that smites him; he bows in passive obedience to the mandate of the despot, and in this state of servility, he receives his fetters of perpetual bondage:—But, may it please your worships, such a day has passed away! From that period, when our fathers left the land of their nativity for settlement in these American wilds,—for *liberty*,—for civil and religious liberty,—for liberty of conscience,—to worship his Creator according to his conceptions of heaven’s revealed will; from the moment he placed his foot on the American continent, and in the deeply imbedded forests sought an asylum from persecution and tyranny,—from that moment, despotism was crushed; her fetters of darkness were broken, and heaven decreed that man should be free,—free to worship God according to the Bible. \* \* \* \* But may it please your



worships, permit me to enquire once more, for what are these men to be tried? This paper says, 'for preaching the gospel of the Son of God.' *Great God!* For preaching the gospel of the Saviour to Adam's fallen race." And in tones of thunder he exclaimed, "What law have they violated?" The scene, now grown so intensely exciting, was closed by a mandate from the presiding justice,—“Sheriff! discharge those men.”

Of Samuel Harris it is said, “that having served his country as a valiant soldier, he was even more valiant as a soldier of Jesus Christ.” In court, a Captain Williams vehemently accused him as a vagabond, a heretic, and a mover of sedition every where. Mr. Harris made his defence. But he was ordered not to preach again in the county for twelve months, or be committed to prison. He was dismissed upon his representation, that he would not probably trouble them again in a year. But a short time afterwards, while “certain young men were preaching, the word of God began to burn in his heart.” When the young men had finished, he addressed the congregation as follows: “I partly promised the devil, a few days past, at the courthouse, that I would not preach in this county again in the term of a year; but the devil is a perfidious wretch, and covenants with him are not to be kept; and therefore, I will preach.” He was not disturbed again by the court. On another occasion, in Orange county, he was pulled down as he was preaching, and dragged about by the hair of the head, and sometimes by the leg.

James Ireland, was imprisoned for twelve months and a day, in the county jail of Culpeper, for the “crime of preaching the gospel of Christ.” He was accompanied to prison amid the abuses of his persecutors, and while incarcerated in his cell, not only suffered by the extreme inclemency of the weather, but by the personal maltreatment of his foes. They attempted to blow him up with gunpowder, but the quantity obtained was only sufficient to force up some of the flooring of his prison.

Lewis Lunsford was distinguished beyond most men of God, of his times. “He was a man of enlarged views and feelings. He corresponded with Isaac Backus, of New England and D. Rippon, of London. With the Presbyterian ministers of his neighborhood he maintained the most intimate and friendly intercourse.” Yet, such a man did not

escape persecution. "A clergyman appointed a day to preach against the Ana-baptists. Crowds attended to hear him. He told stories about Jack of Leyden, and Cromwell's round heads; but he could not by such tales stop the gospel current, now swelling to a torrent. When Mr. L. preached again in those parts, they attacked him again by more weighty arguments." One constable empowered to arrest him, refused because of his fascinating powers. Another tremblingly served the warrant. He was held in a recognizance to appear at court. The court found him guilty of a breach of good behavior, and he gave security not to preach again in the county, under the expectation of obtaining a license to preach. This was not obtained; and he often, thereafter, regretted that he did not go to prison. This occurred in Richmond county, Va.

Of John Weatherford, who was imprisoned through the instrumentality of the rulers of the established church, in Chesterfield co., in 1773, it is said, that he preached from the door of the prison, as long as he was allowed the privilege, and when refused that poor boon, "he preached through the grates of the window."

Those dark ages of persecution have passed away, and with them, that civil and religious despotism which, prior to, and during our revolutionary era, brooded over this fair land. But even now, from Protestant, Lutheran, Sweden and Denmark, innocent people are imprisoned for preaching and practising Baptist sentiments. If persecution in the primitive days of christianity attested its truth, then surely, it must be a good argument in favor of "the faith once delivered unto the saints," at this time.

4. *The eminent men who have been Baptists.* In citing distinguished names, we only imitate our friends of different principles. It is our cardinal principle, that the gospel must be preached to men, without distinction of color or condition in society. With this principle we have been blessed by God. It is the remark of Macaulay, in his *Miscellanies*, that "though there were many clever men in England, during the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were only two great creative minds; one of these minds produced the "Paradise Lost," and the other, the "Pilgrim's Progress." Says Dr. Williams, "we would append to this magnificent eulogy on Milton and Bunyan, the remark, that the one was a Baptist preacher, and the other a full convert to our views

of the christian church and its ordinances." Milton, while Latin secretary to Cromwell, distinguished himself by writing letters in behalf of the persecuted Waldenses, who, as Jones, in his Church History, well declares, "brought up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, but they neither sprinkled nor immersed them, under the notion of administering christian baptism,—they were, in a word, so many distinct churches of *Anti-pædo-baptists*." The most beautiful of the many memoirs of English history, was written by a Baptist,—“the *Memoirs of Col. Hutchinson*, one of the judges of Charles I, is the work of his widow, the pure, the devout and high-souled Lucy Hutchinson.” It is the character of a Baptist minister, whom Pope had in his mind, when he penned the lines—

“Let modest Foster, if he will, excel  
Ten metropolitans in preaching well.”

Even Dryden, who bitterly satirized the poor Ana-Baptists, while himself engaged in prostituting his genius to lust, in the shameless courts of Charles II, sprung, it is supposed, from a Baptist family. Sir Henry Vane, at one time governor at Boston, and known in the history of the Pequot war, was a member of Parliament when Roger Williams made an application for a charter for Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and being himself a member of a Baptist church, he exerted himself in procuring the charter. General Harrison, who, with Vane, was living and active in the scenes of Cromwell's Protectorate, was also a Baptist. About the same time lived Thomas De Lanne and Benjamin Keach, “immortal names, illustrious men.” In later times, that prince of good men, great John Howard, the philanthropist, is supposed to have been a Baptist in principle, if not in practice. Of pulpit orators, have we not reason for gratulation when we call to mind Robert Hall, the favorite of Sir James MacIntosh, and the object of Lord Brougham's admiration: who, like “Bishop Taylor, had the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint;” Christmas Evans, whose untutored genius kindled anew the holy enthusiasm of the Welch Baptists; Jonathan Maxcey, the accomplished and eloquent President, successively, of Brown University, R. I., Union College, N. Y., and South Carolina Collegé; William Staughton, the discriminating



and classic editor of Virgil's *Æneid*, and the first President of Columbian College, D. C.; Samuel Stillman, the gifted pastor of the first Baptist church in the "Athens" of America, and Robert B. Semple, Jesse Spencer, Stephen Gano, Henry Holcombe, William T. Brantley, Jeremiah Chaplin and Stephen Chapin, all of whom equally deserve the proud distinction of being devoted to the first principles of Christ's kingdom; all true Baptists. Of theologians, too, are there not some names worthy of a place on the enduring tablet of undying history? Andrew Fuller, whose works "have profited the evangelical church of our country, and of every other where the English language is spoken;" Abraham Booth, Abraham Carson, John Foster, Joseph Ivimey and John Ryland. Among missionaries and translators of the scriptures, "the name of William Carey, at least, will not be easily eclipsed by any later luminaries. His was the name of one of those men whose doings go to make history, if they do not write it." The future historian will find no difficulty, from our present times, in selecting such names, lay and clerical, as now adorn our ranks, whose talents would be an honor to any assembly of believers in christendom. We come now to a brief statement of

## II. WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES FOR WHICH WE ARE CONTENDING?

1. *Sound doctrine.* The pure dialect of the gospel is an element of all real truth. It is not for phrases we contend. But it is for the truth of scriptural phrases. Baptists in England are divided into general and particular. Here there is no such distinction, except in isolated cases. We are generally agreed to meet and labor upon a common platform, whatever may be our interpretations as to the nature and extent of the atonement; all agreeing in the capability and sufficiency of the atonement, "to cleanse from all sin." The pivot of our faith is sovereign grace, manifested through the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ. Whatever views of truth which do not derogate from this pivot, nor deny the trinity and a future state of rewards and punishments, are allowed, though not always encouraged or sustained.

2. *Pure practices.* We maintain, that history, sacred and profane, philosophy, sacred and classical, logic and reason, all teach that Christ was immersed, and that the only correct rendering of *Baptizo* is to immerse. We simply contend,

that that practice which Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Chalmers, Bloomfield and Macknight, Doddridge and Campbell, say was the primitive practice, should now be followed strictly, in obedience to divine command. If baptism be a qualification for communion, and baptism be only administered by dipping the whole body under water, then it is no less true, that only those who are baptized can commune together, which scripture principles and the law of self-preservation demand.

3. *The voluntary discharge of duty.* Always, and every where, have Baptists defended the doctrine, that no human force should compel them to bow the knee in prayer: to attend upon an established service: or to support a pensioned ministry. That reason and revelation alone should decide man's duty; that man should be amenable to God and his word, and is punishable only after a fair hearing before his peers, for any infraction of scripture requirements.

4. *Religious toleration.* Never having had power, Baptists were never intolerant; always the subjects of persecution, they have ever hated and dreaded its exercise. *Liberty of conscience* has been their watchword. Though designated as a plebian sect, by the historian and statesman Bancroft, we have always maintained the maxim, and practised its teaching, of "the greatest good of the greatest number." In the only colony or territory over which our ancestors have ever had control, we have scorned persecution for opinion's sake, and have permitted Catholic, Jew, Quaker, Mohametan and Infidel, to worship or not to worship, as conscience dictated. How different was the treatment exhibited towards us by the Reformer Zuinglius. "When the magistrates of Zurich consulted him on the fate of some poor Baptists, 'drown the dippers,'" said the Reformer. "Our churches, in a mass, were at one time known and denounced in Great Britain, as the advocates of religious toleration,—a claim once denied by the wisest statesmen and the most distinguished divines, as an impracticable delusion and a most pestilent heresy. Even in that period of their history which has been most exposed to misrepresentation, the share which, with other and Pædo-baptist sects, they took in the Peasant war of Germany, it was from their love of freedom that they erred, if an error it were, when they rose against the grinding exactions of the privileged classes. And so much was the love of liberty an element in that movement, that Ma-

dame de Stael pronounces the Ana-Baptists in that war, rather a political than religious sect. Voltaire declares, that the manifesto in which the hard-handed peasants told their grievances, was one that a Lycurgus might have signed, such was its justice. Luther's own mind seems to have felt the force and truth of many of their complaints against their rulers; and that acute and learned investigator, Nabuhr, the historian of Rome, lately deceased, declared that 'the right in the beginning was undoubtedly with them.' To have toiled and suffered thus in the cause of civil and religious freedom, might well entitle our community to a more liberal and just award than they have yet received at the hands of the popular literature in their own and our times."

5. *A republican form of government.* Independent and congregational is our present form of church government. We desire to perpetuate this form, as nearest resembling the ancient model. The officers are few in number, and their duties simple. In all matters of discipline, the assembly of believers is the final appeal; and associations and conventions are regarded merely as advisory councils or executive committees. The word of God describes the qualifications of officers, and the proper mode of settling all disciplinary cases. Our form of government has been called "democratic republican." If this title be correct, it is not borrowed from the political world, for it is the current opinion that Thomas Jefferson derived his first conceptions of our present form of civil government, from the mode of transacting ecclesiastical business in a Baptist church. For such a government, civil and religious, we have always contended.

Such is a plain statement of the prominent points in our history and principles. It will, therefore, plainly appear, that we are not followers, either of Martin Luther, of Germany, or of John Calvin, of Geneva, or of John Wesley, of England, or of Gregory XVI, of Rome. We were never Reformers, and are not now protestants, as that term primarily was used. For the "writers of the established church of Holland, allow the remote antiquity of our sentiments in that country, as running down to an earlier date, by far, than that of the Reformation." And Sir James MacIntosh, in his "Cabinet History of England," speaks of the Baptists as being composed of a "variety of sects,—some of ancient, though unascertained origin, and who have been *confounded* with the Munster Ana-Baptists." We disclaim the title of



protestants, not "because we have any fellowship with the errors of the church of Rome,—against which different national religious establishments protested,—but because we claim to be the representatives of the primitive churches, and never have been in any other relation to the great Apostacy since its rise, than that of martyrs."

In the constitution of a Baptist church, conversion is essential to membership. No child can be born a Baptist, and no adult can be admitted to commune until the christian character is formed. Membership, therefore, is matter of choice. This unfettered freedom of judgment and will exists in the appointment of officers, and in the modes and seasons of public worship. With these no external power can interfere,—no general standard is recognized. So that a wide difference is seen between the churches of Rome and of England, and the Baptist church. Against all laws and formularies, courts of inquisition, and acts of uniformity, the Baptists have always protested; and the Lord grant, that they may ever contend for their ancient faith. Whether among the rocks of Piedmont, or hidden in the valleys of Wales; whether in the death waves of "fair Zurich's waters," or in a cold and cheerless Virginia prison; whether hunted down and burnt at the stake by monks or archbishops, or governing the free and tolerant colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations; whether cursed, hated and anathematized by popes and kings, or favored only by the independent and magnanimous great men of the world, it has mattered not. Our banner has been unfurled to every breeze, in every region, where an advocate of our principles could be found. On the one side has been inscribed, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," and, on the other, "God and Liberty." Amen!

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NOTE.—Free use has been made, in writing out this discourse, of whatever Baptist books or treatises, on ecclesiastical history, were in the speaker's possession, and he has taken pains to place the proper marks of quotation. He may say, however, that the following works have been consulted: Jones' Ch. History, Gieseler, Backus, Hinton, Taylor's Lives of Virginia Bapt. Ministers, Bancroft's History of U. S., Macaulay's Miscellanies, Baptist Library, Baptist Triennial Register, 1836, Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge, Americana Encyclopædia, and others.

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## PRIVATE OFFENCES:

OR THREE STEPS IN THE SETTLEMENT OF PRIVATE DIFFICULTIES—REBUKE, REPENTANCE AND REMISSION.

A Sermon by Rev. A. W. CHAMBLISS, of Alabama.

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*“Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”—Luke xvii: 3.*

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My brethren:—You are all familiar with the history of Moses, and with the circumstances under which he was commissioned to enter the court of Pharaoh. What must have been the feelings of the man of God, setting forth upon an embassy, at once humane, reasonable and divine, when he was told by him “who seeth the end from the beginning;” “I am sure the king of Egypt will not let you go; no, not by a mighty hand.” With what thoughts of astonishment and pain must he have received this intelligence! Astonishment, that worms of the dust—that creatures of an hour, should presume to withstand the orders of their God! and pain, that he must still press a duty, which the pride and selfishness of man would assuredly disregard!

Happy were it for the world, however, if this were the only instance of manifest rebellion against the divine mandates. The day of eternity will attest concerning full many a minister of the gospel, that which was said to the prophet Ezekiel: “Thou son of man, the children of thy people were still talking about thee, by the walls and in the doors of the houses; and spake one to another,—every one with his brother; saying, come I pray thee, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord! And they came unto thee as the people cometh, and they sat before thee as my people, and they heard thy words, but they would not do them. Lo! thou wast unto them as a very lovely song, of

one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they heard thy words, but they did them not." Yes, the people come in crowds to the sanctuary,—they sit in breathless silence in the house of God,—a living interest beams forth in every countenance,—they are wrapped in admiration of the words and sentiments of the divine messenger; one would conclude that they delighted to know the law,—that it is an holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. But alas! alas! of what multitudes is it true; "they hear thy words, but they will not do them."

Reflections similar to these have obtruded themselves upon our thoughts, whilst contemplating that divine law, which we propose for your consideration in the present discourse. "To err is human," and to resent an injury is also human. Yes, it is the first dictate of fallen, corrupt, human nature, to revenge a wrong. Its language is, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." "I will do so to the man as he hath done to me." Christianity is the very opposite of this. Its golden maxim is, "love that suffereth long and is kind." (1 Cor. xiii: 4.) It teaches, "be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. xii: 21.) "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him." Men hear these capitals of love,—they admire the divine characters,—they laud the god-like sentiments: but alas! "they do them not."

May heaven grant, my brethren, that we have been mistaken in the fears we have this day indulged. Happy for me,—thrice happy shall it be for you—for this whole community, if our gloomy apprehensions are without foundation. Unspeakably happy shall it be for the church of the living God, if, when "thy brother shall trespass against thee, thou shalt rebuke him; if he repent, thou shalt forgive him."

In the elucidation of the text before us, we propose an examination of three questions: *First*. What is the first duty of the aggrieved? *Secondly*. What is the duty of the aggressor? *Thirdly*. What is the second and last duty of the aggrieved? These three questions involve the whole divine law in the settlement of private difficulties: rebuke, repentance and remission. Let us consider

I. *The first duty of the aggrieved.*—"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him."

And here permit us to call your special attention to the



character of the offence to which allusion is had in the text. In strict propriety, men commit three kinds of offences: those which are public; those which are both public and private; and those which are strictly private. To the first class belong drunkenness, profanity, Sabbath-breaking, idolatry and such like; because, they are not so much against any other individual particularly, as against the whole community equally. Of the second description, we mean such as at the same time violate public good, and infringe private rights, as slander, murder, and all injury *publicly inflicted* upon the feelings, person or reputation of another. Deception, fraud, *private abuse*, and every species of crime perpetrated on the part of one individual toward another in their *private intercourse*, which is unknown to any besides themselves individually, and which could affect none others, if settled between themselves,—these properly belong to the third class. Nevertheless, since it behooves society to take cognizance of every offence that comes under its observation, the ordinary distinction, which is sufficient for all ordinary purposes, is simply between public and private offences.

The rule in our text has allusion only to the latter description of trespasses. Public offences, in so far as they are public, come not under our private jurisdiction. That authority alone, of whose laws they are a violation, has the right to dispose of them. It is only in the case of private wrongs, that as individuals, we have the right to administer rebuke. It is only of such, that as individuals, we can demand repentance. It is only to such, that as individuals, we can extend forgiveness. “If thy brother trespass against thee, (in thy private and individual capacity,) even seventy times seven in a day, and turn saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” (Matt. xviii: 21, 22; Luke xvii: 4.)\* No private person has the power, in his individual capacity, to

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\* Can this expression, by any possibility, refer to public offences? We have known none, even the most lenient in church discipline, who were willing, or even considered it to be their duty, to retain such frequent and habitual violaters of the laws of christianity and the church, within their communion, notwithstanding their repentance. If such were the case, the consequences would be fatal to religion. By the consent of universal practice this text is therefore shewn to refer not to public, but to private offences. Upon what authority then, do we censure a brother for not rebuking a public offender? And upon what authority does the church retain a *public* offender in her communion, even though he should repent? The language of our Lord does not relate to public but to private wrongs.

forgive drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, profanity, &c. ; and therefore, he can neither demand, nor accept of repentance as its satisfaction. The law of Jesus Christ is, "if thy brother trespass against *thee* rebuke him."

Let it also be remarked, the text supposes that one brother may offend against another. In the present state of human imperfection,—where our education, habits and interests are so widely dissimilar, and often so pointedly conflicting, it seems morally "impossible, but that offences should come:" (Luke xvii: 1,) and that which often renders them the more painful, is the reflection, that he who is pledged to us by a thousand tender considerations, with his own hand inflicted the wound. The betrayal of fraternal confidence,—the disappointment of fondly cherished expectations,—the blasting of highest hopes,—the withering of sweetest love; and all these evils produced by a brother's hand. Ah! it is this that renders the blow insupportable: "It was not mine enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." (Ps. lv: 12–14.) Here is the most painful fact in the history of the case. "It was my brother that defamed me,—that defrauded me in business transactions,—that deceived my expectations,—that insulted my feelings, by flat contradictions, by unjust insinuations, or by unholy suggestions,—yes, it was my *brother*, from whom I had the right to look for better things, who "hath lifted up his heel against me." The affliction is deep. The grief is incalculable. What shall I do? To this question, the words of our Lord are given as the answer: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him."

*The law of the text is opposed to retaliation.* Retaliation is the devil's theology. It has nothing good,—nothing holy in it. The merest dog would bite, if one were to strike him. To man, and to man alone,—holy and refined—of all the beings of this world, it belongs to observe the principles of the sacred volume: "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will reward the man according to his works." "Recompense to no man evil for evil." "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto

wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." (Prov. xxiv: 29; Rom. xii: 17-19.)

*The text is equally opposed to retailing the wrong through the community.* Alas! alas! for this world, that men are so much apter to whisper the faults of their neighbors to any body else, than they are to tell them to the offender himself. An irascible temper, with a secret, unbridled tongue, makes a dangerous friend and a deadly enemy. A tattler is a mortal gangrene upon the vitals of society, for whom no odium is a sufficient punishment. Had men the moral courage of an infant,—had they the independence and boldness of innocence itself, they would sooner suffer decapitation than breathe to the prejudice of a brother. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." "Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself, and discover not the secret to another, lest he that hear thee put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away." "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Lev. xix: 16; Prov. xxv: 9, 10; Math. xviii: 15.)

*Nor yet may we treasure up the injury in our own hearts.* To conceal the offence in our own bosom, until it festers in the blood and poisons all the fountains of life, is not less at variance with scriptural authority, than is back-biting and retaliation. O! what a bane to human happiness, is an evil cherished in the soul. It bewilders the imagination—it embitters the affections—it corrupts the heart—it perverts the tongue—it palsies the hand—it stifles animation in the birth—it spreads blighting and mildew over the fairest prospects of the community. It is an universal injury. It an injury to the aggrieved—it is an injury to the aggressor—it is an injury to the whole society. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." "Therefore, take heed to thyself, if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him: if he repent, forgive him." (Lev. xvii: 17; Luke xvii: 3.)

But what are we to understand by rebuke, in this place? Does it mean to "chastise" the offender? No. Does it mean a harsh and bitter censure? No. Does it mean a severe and unkind accusation,—“rendering railing for railing, and reviling for reviling”? No. It means a mild, a



gentle, an earnest, and an affectionate expostulation: adapted to show the offender his fault, in its reality, its enormity, and its sinfulness.

The *manner of reproof*, is as clearly defined in the scriptures, as is the duty of it; and men are equally bound to observe the one, as to perform the other. "We may not do evil that good may come." If we are commanded to "*rebuke with all authority*," (Tit. ii: 5,) we are also to "*reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine*," (2 Tim. iv: 2,) and a violation of the latter rule is not less sinful, than is a neglect of the former. "The work of heaven may not be done by a tongue set on fire of hell. Has Christ need of mad men? or shall we talk deceitfully and passionately for him? As a potion given too hot scalds the patient and does more harm than good; so, many a reproof, good for the matter of it, has been spoiled by its irregular management." The divine law is, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such an one *in the spirit of meekness*: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." (Gal. vi: 1; Prov. xv: 1.)

What object do we seek in reproofing a brother? The answer to this question will suggest the rule by which it should be done. Do we aim to convince him of his fault? Do we desire to lead him to repentance? Do we seek to recover him from his error, and to restore him to that place in our confidence and affection, from which, by transgression, he fell? In vain may we attempt the accomplishment of these objects by railing and acrimony. "Bitterness and wrath" are not the instruments with which to perform the works of religion. As latent heat occasions more pain than light, so a violent and sour temper aggravates the wound, rather than mollifies it. A *look* of tenderness and pity, from him who said, "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," broke the spirit of an erring Peter, and "he went out and wept bitterly," (Luke xxii: 61-2;) whereas, the haughtiness of Jephtha involved the tribes in civil war, in which not less than "two and forty thousand" Ephraimites perished. (Judg. xii: 1-6.) St. Paul states a good rule in all cases of offence, viz: to "instruct" the offender "with meekness"—that is, without anger; and he positively commands that "the servant of the Lord must not strive,"—must not

bring a bad spirit to the reclaiming a sinner from the error of his way. (2 Tim. ii: 24.) "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James i: 20.) If we would do God's work, we must do it in God's way; and that way is, to "*reprove with long suffering,*" and to "*restore with meekness.*"

The apostle refers this question back to ourselves, that from thence also, we may be admonished of our duty to an erring brother, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." He has fallen to-day; thou mayest fall to-morrow. What, if thou thyself wert the offender? Wouldst thou, that he should suffer sin upon thee to thy injury? Wouldst thou, that he should indulge the recollection of it—brooding over it, till he could see nothing good in thee, think nothing good of thee, nor speak any thing good concerning thee? Wouldst thou, that he should emblazon it abroad, upon the wings of the wind, that all the world might read thy weakness, and hate thee therefor? Wouldst thou, that he should approach thee with an air of superiority and vaunting, as though he rejoiced in thy downfall? or yet with railing and bitterness, with harshness and severity? In the honesty and candor of your own judgment, were not all this decidedly wrong? Then, be reminded of what is due to him who hath trespassed against thee. "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Math. vii: 21.)

There is yet an additional consideration, that may aid us to understand our duty towards an offender. It rarely fails, in private difficulties, especially if they have been of any considerable standing, that both parties are more or less involved in the blame. Perhaps, our deportment was at *first* more careless than strict propriety would justify. Perhaps, we ourselves threw some temptation, a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," in the way of the transgressor. Perhaps, we were over sensitive, and received an offence where it was not intended. Perhaps, we indulged a needless suspicion, and expressed an unjustifiable doubt of his character and motives. Perhaps, we exhibited undue and untimely censoriousness and resentment, by one or all of which, he was provoked to wrath. Thus, in a thousand ways, we may have been, unintentionally, accessory to the identical offence of which we now complain. And should

not this remind us not to be too rigid and uncompromising? Should it not teach us the utmost forbearance and tenderness? Does it not lay a proper foundation, upon which to approach him,—not with harshness and severity,—but with our own concessions and acknowledgments? Does it not prepare us to be satisfied with the first and slightest marks of genuine repentance? As, on the one hand, there can be no more effectual and felicitous method of exciting feelings of ingenuous sorrow in the heart of the offender, than by approaching him with tenderness and pity,—conceding and regretting, that we ourselves may have been the unfortunate occasion of his sin; so, on the contrary, nothing seems more unreasonably severe, unjust and oppressive, than harshness and bitterness towards him, whom our own misdemeanor may really have led into transgression. Reason, religion and common justice enter their claims, and urge us to rebuke with mildness, gentleness and long suffering.\*

Say not, my brethren, that “the offence is one of peculiar aggravation, and that it will be forever impossible to receive adequate reparation.” This may all be true: but surely it can be no reason why the offender should be denied the best satisfaction in his power. Especially, it can be no reason why we should neglect the positive duty of the text. The magnitude of his crime, is no excuse for our sin. His trespass against us, is no apology for our trespass against God. Least of all, may we cherish malice and ill-will in our hearts, merely because the full amount of our dues cannot be paid us. We are responsible to God for the performance of his commandments, and for their performance in the prescribed manner. Our Lord seemed to anticipate, that partly from

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\* St. Paul commanded Titus to “rebuke sharply.” (Tit. i: 13.) Let us not, however, understand him to mean *angrily*. Indeed, this expression has no allusion to private offences. (1) It was addressed to Titus in his public and ministerial character. (2) It referred to the scandals for which the Cretians were generally notorious. (v. 12.)

Nevertheless, there *may be* instances where even private offences should be rebuked more sharply. (1) Where the same offence has been repeated frequently. (2) Where the offender was *evidently* instigated, prompted and supported by others, and “sins as with a cart-rope.” (3) Where it was *manifestly* perpetrated with premeditation and design. (4) Where no other form of reproof will induce repentance. After all, however, let us not confound sternness, earnestness, and pointedness, with anger, resentment and ill-will. The latter, the scriptures wholly disallow; the former, they permit. The former is the sense of the apostle, in Tit. i: 13.



this cause, and partly from other considerations, men would be prone to defer the great duty of the text, and therefore, rising in all the majesty of his divine nature, and investing himself with all the authority of the Godhead, he enforced it with peculiar emphasis and caution, "*take heed to yourselves, if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him.*"

Nor is the question now, as to whose duty it is to make the first approach,—whether his who committed, or his who received the injury. Whatever reason there may be in the ordinary language of men, that "it is the duty of the offender to make the first approach and confess his fault," sure we are, that nothing of this can be found in the sacred scriptures. Throughout, they proceed upon the supposition, that he who hath trespassed against his brother, would not hesitate to sin against his God: and hence their general tenor agrees with the text, and says to the *aggrieved*, "if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him,"—"go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone."

Grant that "the offender may already know that he has done wrong." Did he learn this from us, in a direct and friendly effort to bring him to repentance? If he did not, our duty is still unperformed. The object of reproof is not alone to convince the transgressor of sin. It includes in it every reasonable and religious endeavor to lead him to a full and hearty confession of his fault, and an honest and final restoration to that place in our love and confidence, from which he has fallen by reason of transgression. Nor do men act upon the principle involved in this objection, in any of the transactions of life. Our debtor owes us a large amount, and he already knows it. Nevertheless, if he do not promptly and punctually meet his engagements, we avail ourselves of every lawful measure to bring him to do so. All men know that they are sinners against God, but no christian considers this a reason why he should not use every possible exertion to lead them with tears and contrition to humble themselves before him, and yield him a faithful service. Thus, notwithstanding thy offending brother may already have a knowledge of his trespass against thee, thou art bound by the law of the text to use every exertion to bring him to repentance. "If he trespass against thee, rebuke him."

Is the disposition of the offender refractory? So much

the better reason why we should go to him at once, and why we should observe the greater caution and prudence in our approach. The most adverse spirit may be softened and won by mildness and affection. The meekness and gentleness of Christ,—the long suffering and patience of the gospel,—these are powerful instruments, with which to subdue and tame the ferocious tempers of madmen. He that goes forth from his closet weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him. “*If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*” Is not this at once a sufficient motive, and a sufficient encouragement, to the most patient and vigorous effort? If, after all, he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, *prudent and pious brethren*, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. If still he refuse to harken to their piety and counsel, tell it to the church. If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (Math. xviii: 15–17.) Here is the last act, after which alone thou art exonerated. Not until every other expedient has failed, may we bring it to the church. “Every effort that ingenuity can invent, affection prompt, or patience conduct, must be made before it is brought to be investigated by the brethren at large.” Nor, until their combined piety, wisdom and counsel have failed to induce his repentance, may we set him at naught, and regard him “as an heathen man and a publican.”

My brethren, with what arguments shall we impress this duty upon your minds? You have heard the fame of “faith,” by which the ancients subdued kingdoms—wrought righteousness—obtained promises—stopped the mouths of lions—quenched the violence of fire—escaped the edge of the sword—out of weakness were made strong—waxed valiant in fight—turned to flight the armies of the aliens. You have tasted the sweetness of “hope,”—immortal hope—hope that comes to all, irradiates the darkness of the tempestuous firmament, and whispers peace to the troubled soul, amid the storms and commotions of life’s dangerous voyage. But greater far, and sweeter, is “charity,”—that charity that suffereth long, and yet is kind—charity that beareth all things—charity that believeth all things—charity that hopeth all things—charity that endureth all things—charity that cover-

eth a multitude of sins. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity: and the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor. xiii: 13.) And yet we will show you what is better than charity itself, *if it only lies concealed in the heart*. "Open rebuke is better than secret love." (Prov. xxvii: 5.) Here is the climax formed and completed. Faith, hope, charity, open rebuke—these four, and the last is first. Magnify faith as we may,—above it exalt hope,—above hope extol charity,—and yet, "open rebuke is better than secret love." Would you be a faithful christian? Would you perform the best office to an erring brother? Would you do the best act in the recognition of the christian religion? Would you promote the glory of God, and the interest of his cause? "Then take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent forgive him."\* But

II. *The imperative duty of the aggressor, demands our attention.* "If he repent," &c.

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, go thy way, *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and *then* come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary *quickly*, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." (Math. v: 23-26.)

Such is the language of the divine law, with regard to the offender: and by it we are forcibly reminded, that God looks with displacency upon all the quarrels and contentions—upon all the bickerings and animosities of men, especially of christian men; nay, that he regards them with the most implacable and sovereign abhorrence. They are a species of wickedness upon which he looks, only with the most irreconcilable hatred. What, though men may praise thy bravery and stout-heartedness—thy manhood and dexterity in all the bloody transactions of street pugillism, or the more cool and deliberate

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\*"The Jews have a saying, that one of the causes of the ruin of their nation was, 'no man reproved another.'"—*A. Clark, on Math. xviii: 17.*

The Rev. Mr. Wesley said, "I have never heard or read of any considerable revival of religion, which was not attended with a spirit of reproof. I believe it cannot be otherwise."—*Ser. lxx.*



crime of duelling? In the estimation of the deity, "he that hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Wherefore, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and all evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." (1 John iii: 15; Eph. iv: 31.)

From hence, it is also apparent, that God takes greater delight in the peace of his children, than in all their sacrifices. "God is love," by way of distinction; and he demands love, as an indispensable desideratum in his creatures. Besides this, all gifts and graces—all attainments and qualifications—all deeds and sacrifices, are less than nothing and vanity. What, though we spake in all the tongues of men, and were eloquent in the dialects of angels? What, though we looked through the dark vista of future ages, and comprehended the sublime mysteries of providence and grace, as the simple elements of the nursery? What, though we possessed faith that could dislodge mountains from their solid base, and plunge them headlong to the boiling deep? What, though all our stores were impoverished to feed the poor, and our bodies offered a burning sacrifice upon the martyr's consecrated altar? If destitute of love, we were poor—we were base in the sight of God. "To love our neighbor as ourselves, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." "Behold how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity. There the Lord commands the blessing, even life forever more." (1 Cor. xiii: 1-3; Mark xii: 33; Ps. cxxxiii: 1-3.)

Yet again, the divine rule before us, makes it the imperative duty of the transgressor to seek the speediest possible reconciliation with his aggrieved brother. Love is reflective, and binds equally upon him who is to be loved, as upon him who should love. If we are bound to love our neighbor, he is not less bound so to act that we can love him. As the eye is organized to admire beauty, and to loath its opposite; so, the soul, which is competent to love that which is amiable and excellent, is utterly incapable of loving that which is perverse and hateful. The whole responsibility of enmity and strife with an innocent man, is, therefore, thrown upon the guilty. With whatever displeasure the divine being beholds the breach, it rests alone upon the transgressor: and increases with every fruitless effort to bring him to repent-

ance. He is held amenable for all the evil consequences of the alienation. If sinners are hardened in their sins—if languishment in religion—if dishonor to the name of God, ensue from hence, it is all charged to his account: and will form a part of the fearful reckoning to which he will be summoned in the last day. This was evidently the sentiment of the Psalmist. "If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me, let the enemy persecute my soul and take it: yea, let him tread down my life in the earth, and lay mine honor in the dust." (Ps. vii: 4-5.) Thus also, "whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house." (Prov. xvii: 13.) Here is the reason of that fearful sentence, "Wo to the world because of offences. It must needs be that offences come: but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh." (Math. xviii: 7.) It is this view of the subject that invests with such alarming emphasis the words of our Lord, "agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, Jesus Christ, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, death, and thou be cast into the prison of hell. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,"—till the *last particle* of the damage thou hast occasioned has been fully restored. It is the awful responsibility thus devolved upon the transgressor, that clothes with eternal sacredness and authority, the command, "let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Eph. iv: 26.)

The rule laid down for offenders is, "*first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift:*" and it binds alike upon all, without respect to place, to age, to rank, to condition, to color, or to any other accident of life. No man dare pray, nor any man dare sleep in the face of this law. It stands like flaming sword of the cherubim between us and our pillow, and between us and the altar of grace. He that goes to the place of prayer with an unrepented sin, invites satan to his communion; and he that carries it to his pillow, invites a fiend to his chamber. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, the white man and the black, are equally placed under its restrictions. It is as stringent upon the master, towards his humblest slave, as upon any part of the creation of God. Yes, we repeat it, if the master give unjustifiable offence to

the person, feelings, or character of his veriest menial, he is as imperatively bound to render him suitable satisfaction, as he would be to offer it to the President of these United States. Nay, farther, "it were better for him, that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were plunged into the bottomless deep, than that he should offend one of these little ones, that believe in Jesus, and yet refuse him satisfaction." (Math. xviii: 6.) Tell us not of the distinctions of this world. We know they exist; and we know also, that they are worldly, and will perish with the world. In eternity, when men stand in the presence of Him, with whom there is no respect of persons, if will avail nothing to speak of worldly relations and distinctions. The only question that will concern us in that hour, will be, "how far did you give to every man that which was just and equal?" If the divine law shall have been the directory to our feet, happy! unspeakably happy! shall it be for us. If not, alas! alas!

The scriptural condition of reconciliation with an aggrieved brother, is repentance: and it has the sanction of reason and common justice. In pecuniary transactions, the courts of equity provide an indemnity for the sufferer. Thus the universal sense of mankind determines what is right in our mutual intercourse, and decrees in favor of the injured person. But does not the principle apply equally to moral, as to pecuniary injuries? Is the law of righteousness less provident of the person, feelings, or reputation of the aggrieved, than it is of his paltry and perishable gold? Surely not.

Let us transfer the case to ourselves. Let us suppose that we ourselves are the scandalized. What would we that the offender should do? Had we suffered the wrong at his hands, would not our sense of right demand ample satisfaction? It is thus, that heaven has placed within *our own breast*, a monitor that pleads the cause of him whom our waywardness has injured: and ere we can refuse repentance for the wrong we have committed, violence must be done to our own moral sense. Nor yet is this all.

The universal excuse, "that it is the duty of the offender to make the first approach, and confess his fault," is evidence that justice demands an equivalent for the transgression we have committed. This plea is urged by all men. We ourselves make it, when pressed to a speedy settlement of our



disputes. It is the voice of reason: and so distinct are its whispers, that multitudes almost fancy it is written with God's own hand, in golden capitals on the pages of the sacred volume. No, sirs, it is the voice of reason, speaking from the fleshy tables of the heart, to every transgressor, saying, "go to thy offended brother, saying, I repent."

You will, however, understand something more by repentance, than a simple asking of pardon. We doubt not, that pardon may be sought in the true spirit, and with all the accompaniments of ingenuous repentance. But what we intend is, that this is not always the case. There is such a thing as asking pardon out of mere compliment; and more to save our character for good breeding, than to regain the friendship which has been rudely forfeited. It may be done where no sin is recognized—no evil is felt—no crime is deplored: where there is an evident unconcern, if not a fiendish gratification, at the throes and throbbings of an injured heart. Who has not witnessed an instance of it, with a preface after this style: "Truly, my brother, you and I are a good deal alike—weak brethren. I had not thought that a man of your pretensions would have noticed such little things—that such trifles would have occasioned you so great pain. But since it is so, I ask your pardon." Is there in all this, the first emotion of true repentance? Does it contain a particle of that noble generosity which disdains to tread upon a worm, and which "honoreth them that fear the Lord?" Do we sincerely lament an injury, which we can intentionally aggravate, with the very petition of pardon? Suppose he is a weak brother. Is that a reason why we may insult him with the epithet of "Raca?" Suppose the offence was a trifle. So much the better reason why a magnanimous christian should not have committed it: and why, if he has done so, he should repent of it. The truth is, no act is unimportant—no act can be considered a trifle, which may fray the silken cord that binds christian hearts in one. Nothing is a small matter, which tends to alienate the affections of a brother; nor do we envy that man his sentiments of love, who can sport with the wounds he has inflicted on the humblest child of God. Love is a delicately sensitive plant, and indigenous only to warm climates. It chills to the root under the cold north wind's breath. Pining, disease and death, are its inevitable fate, under the pale and sickly influ-

ence of carelessness, taunting and contempt. The rudeness of the wild boar of the woods crushes all its fondly twining branches in the dust. Insulted love modestly bows assent of pardon to him who asks it with a jeer, and retires alone to its cloister to weep. "O my God, draw me not away with the wicked, nor with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts." "They speak vanity, every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and a double heart do they speak." (Ps. xxviii: 3; ib. xii: 2.)

*Ingenious repentance implies a meek reception of reproof.* To rebuke with all long suffering and authority, is a divine command. Nor is the manner of receiving reproof, less definitely described. "He that hateth reproof is brutish." (Prov. xii: 1.) "He that hateth reproof sinneth." (Prov. x: 17.) Shall we do wrong, and then refuse to be told of it? Shall we fly into a rage, and fret against him whom God sends to us for our good. Grant that all the mildness and gentleness that could be desired, may not be employed. Grant, too, that we are not to blame, to the full extent with which we are charged. Full many a year of hard and cruel servitude was entailed upon the refractory Jew, who replied to the friendly rebuke of Moses, "who made thee a judge and ruler over us?" When the timely admonition of Abigail threw a check upon David's passion, he blest God that sent her—he blest her counsel—and he blest her person. (1 Sam. xxv: 32-3.) "Let the righteous smite me," said the Psalmist, "it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." (Ps. cxli: 5.)\*

Confession of fault enters into all true notions of repentance: and by this we mean, *a full, free and hearty acknowledgment of our sins.* Who does not know that there is such a thing as confession after the manner of some men

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\*The marginal rendering of this verse is, "Let the righteous smite me kindly, and let him reprove me: let not the precious oil break my head," and refers to either the *manner of reproving, or of receiving reproof.* In the former sense, it requires us to rebuke with mildness and affection; in the latter, to receive reproof with meekness and love. *Reproof is an excellent oil, which may be neither abused nor despised.* "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." (Prov. xxv: 12.) It confers a double honor—honor upon him who gives it, and honor upon him who receives it.

paying their debts? parleying and postponing as long as possible—then reducing the amount—and finally surrendering the balance with grudging and reluctant hands. A thousand imaginary and probable offsets must be investigated—a thousand accessory grievances must be supposed and weighed—a thousand concessions and promises must be extorted: and at length the whole affair is wound up, involved in more inextricable difficulties than when the adjustment was first commenced! Here is one of the fatal causes of that lamentable destitution of brotherly confidence and affection, which at present so universally afflicts the christian world. We are cursed with a spirit of moral and religious dishonesty in the churches. Under the pretence of confession, men actually cover their sins! Men disown their debts under the show of paying them! Under the pretence of giving to every man that which is just and equal, they in reality defraud them out of half their dues! Can there be in such conduct, the first sentiment of true repentance? Is it possible that honest pretence can comport with such religious smuggling? “Whoso covereth his sin shall not prosper. (Prov. xxviii: 13.)

In pecuniary transactions, the principle of balancing accounts may be correct; because, there the indebtedness of every man is determined in view of the amount of dues and offsets in his favor. This, however, is not true in morals and religion. Here the action, and the whole of every action, must be considered separately, distinctly, and independently of every other. There is no such thing as compounding and abstracting, as adding and dividing, in moral conduct. There is no such thing as half crime, or the fourth of a fault. The line has either been crossed, or it has not—the mark has been missed, or it has not. If it has not, it is nothing. If it has, it is transgression—it is sin. Nor can it be made more or less, by similar conduct in another. There may be circumstantial differences *in us*, affecting the enormity of crime: but no train of circumstances can render sin any thing less than sin. Completeness enters into its very existence. The fault—the entire fault—without concealment—without dissembling—without disguising—without excusing—without balancing, must be freely and frankly acknowledged. If there have been mutual faults, each must confess—each must repent—each must be forgiven. “Confess your faults



one to another, and pray one for another." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy." (James v: 16; Prov. xxviii: 13.)

*Another leading and indispensable feature of genuine repentance, is restitution.* Every sin involves two things, *first*, the *act*, and *secondly*, the *evils of the act*: and repentance is a sorrowful recognition of the *act*, to such an extent, and in such a degree, as that we shall be disinclined to repeat it, on the one hand, and on the other, we shall be disposed, *as far as possible*, to repair the damage of the past. In scripture style, it is to "cease to do evil, and learn to do well,"—to "break off from thy sins by righteousness,"—to "*turn*, saying, I repent." This definition is equally true of our sins against a fellow-man, as of those which refer directly to the deity. The private offence of one consists in chicanery, extortion, fraudulent over-reaching, or the unjust retention of the honest dues of another: whereby he suffers great pecuniary detriment. A second has injured the reputation of his brother, by opprobrious epithets, calumnious charges, or defamatory insinuation. A third has inflicted a personal wound upon his fellow-man. In all such cases, repentance is to deplore the *act*, and, as far as lies in us, to indemnify the sufferer for the injury we have occasioned; and we firmly incline to the opinion, that nothing short of this can be considered, or ought to be received, as repentance. What does it avail, to say to him whom our fraudulency has impoverished, or our prevarication, falsehood, or passion, has more than impoverished, "we are sorry," while we refuse to touch the burden under which he groans with the tip of the finger? It may be justly replied, "how much are you sorry? Are you sorry the whole amount of the damage? If so, repair it, and remove the cause of sorrow."

The maxim has already become universal, that "the retainer of stolen goods, knowing them to be stolen, is equally guilty with the thief:" and we beg you to consider, whether the principle does not apply to every thing which has been unjustly taken away, and is still retained. It is not the article, nor the person of the retainer, that constitutes the crime. It is the act of retention. Nor is it material to the argument in morals, whether the goods were stolen, or obtained by other dishonest means. If the original act of attainment was morally dishonest and wrong, no length of time in

which they are held, nor any plea upon which we hold them, can sanctify it and make it honest wealth. The same is true also of defamation. If the good name of another, which to him is above the price of rubies, has been rudely and unjustly taken away, the enormity of the crime rises with every successive moment of its retention; nor can there be any repentance for the act, which is thus virtually repeated and persisted in, so long as we refuse to repair the damage which he has suffered at our hands. Sure we are, that such was not the repentance of Zaccheus. "And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and *if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold.*" (Luke xix: 8.) Nor was it the repentance of even the despicable Judas. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood; and he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself." (Math. xxvii: 3-5.)\*

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\*The learned and pious Dr. Scott, remarking upon Numb. v: 7, 8, says: "This law conclusively shows the absolute necessity of restitution, in one form or other, where actual poverty does not hinder; *either to the injured person, to his relations, to the poor, or to pious uses.*"

Says Dr. Clark, "No man should expect mercy at the hands of God, who refuses, when he has it in his power, to make restitution. Were he to weep tears of blood, both the justice and mercy of God would shut out his prayer, if he made not his neighbor amends for the injury he may have done him. The mercy of God, through the blood of the cross, can alone pardon his guilt: but no dishonest man can expect this,—and he is a dishonest man who illegally holds the property or the reputation of another in his hands."—*Append. Gen. xlii: in fine.*

"The fact that *restitution*, which under the old dispensation was so frequently mentioned, and so strenuously insisted upon, is not more directly inculcated in the New Testament, is owing to the circumstance, that it was considered a duty so generally known, and so freely admitted, as to require no farther mention."—*Jahn, Arch. §252.*

Finally, should any doubt the compatibility of restitution with the idea of free forgiveness, we have only to refer such to what was before remarked, as to the *act* and the *evils* of transgression—a distinction so obvious as not to require explanation. Restitution concerns only the latter: whereas the former can be reached only by forgiveness. A striking illustration of the harmony of these two points, is afforded us in the atonement, by which complete satisfaction is made to God for all the sins of believers, and yet in such a sense, as not in the least to preclude the necessity of the divine forgiveness.

But, not to detain you with farther specifications, especially, since in what we have stated every thing is included that can be demanded, in order to the forgiveness of private offences, allow us, by way of recapitulation, to impress upon your minds the principles we have here illustrated. What have we said? We have shown that God looks with the most profound and sovereign displeasure upon all the quarrels and contentions of men—that he estimates the peace of his children more highly than he does their most splendid and magnificent sacrifices—that he holds the aggressor amenable for all the evils of enmity and disfellowship with an innocent man—that reason, religion and common justice demand of him repentance as the *first act* of his hands—that in this duty is especially included, a meek reception of reproof, a full and frank confession of fault, and an honest reparation of the damages occasioned, as far as possible. And now, before God, and before the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, I charge every one of you who hath trespassed against his brother, that ye arise at once, and go to him, saying, “I repent.” Let not your petulancy and ill-nature refuse the rebukes of affection. Let not your pride and obstinacy decline a full and hearty acknowledgment. Let not your perverseness and avarice withhold a suitable satisfaction for all the damages he hath suffered at your hands. By the terrors of the divine vengeance—by the inexorable wrath of the offended Lamb of God—by the value of the deathless spirit—by the unquenchable flames of hell—by the writhings of the pit—by the horrors of everlasting banishment from hope, from peace, from pardon and from God, we charge you to repent of that wrong, and put a speedy end to these disputes. Sleep not upon this sin, lest thou die and be damned. Go not with it to the throne of grace, lest the fire of consuming wrath burst forth and envelop thee. “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath *ought* against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, go thy way, *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Let not the sun go down upon this feud. Tarry not a moment. “Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou



shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." But

III. *The second and last duty of the offended remains to be considered. "If he repent, forgive him."*

And what shall we say? Where shall we begin to press this duty? Can any argument be necessary to induce the forgiveness of a repenting brother? One who has deeply felt and deplored his offence? One who has humbly acknowledged his fault? Who has offered every satisfaction in the power of his hands? From this moment, the *onus of responsibility* is removed from his shoulders to thine own, and devolves upon thee with all its fearful weight. Every principle sacred to christianity demands his release and absolution—every principle of religion forbids us to longer regard him as an alien. It is not optionary with us, whether we will or will not receive him as a brother. Our own forgiveness and acceptance with God, the fellowship of the Spirit, and the consolation of religion, the hope of heaven, and the bliss of immortality, all hang suspended on this point. Withhold the one, and we forfeit the rest.

*The spirit of forgiveness enters into all the essential elements of christianity, and forms an indispensable part of it.* That is a false notion of religion, which fancies one's self forgiven, irrespective of the sentiments and principles which he may still cherish in his heart. Behold, how the apostle sums up the virtues of the christian character, and in the bonds of indissoluble union connects them together: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. iii: 12, 13.) Remark the entire chain, and the absolute dependence of link upon link. How beautiful the cluster! and how inseparably close the connection! Every ornament to religion—every principle vital to godliness, is here interarticulated, like the joints and members of the human frame, from which no one can be taken away without defacing and deforming the whole symmetry. Who would suppose a beautiful mansion proportioned and completed, with only one of its walls erected? With no less impropriety do we regard our christianity perfect, while malice and rancor are indulged in the soul. An implacable chris-

tian! It is a contradiction in terms. Bigots there may be, and have been, in all denominations: but an implacable, irreconcilable, unforgiving christian, is of the same figure of speech, as a godly adulterer, a religious drunkard, or a devout murderer. Who can possess "bowels of mercies," with an inexorable hatred burning in his heart? Who can perform acts of christian kindness, while malevolence and ill-will rankle in his bosom? Who can indulge "humbleness of mind," when his indomitable haughtiness and pride will not so much as pardon a fault? Can he be clothed upon with meekness, whose spirit heaves with anger, like the sides of a burning volcano? Where is the long suffering of that man, whom the most paltry offence kindles into an inextinguishable rage and madness? Where are his forbearance and pity—his tender heartedness and compassion, whom no tears of repentance—no ingenuousness of sorrow—no frankness of confession—no reparation of damage, can appease or excite to deeds of forgiveness? "If he repent, thou shalt forgive him."

The exercise of forgiveness is an indispensable prerequisite and qualification for acceptable prayer—the *first christian duty*. No christian, we dare say, can live satisfied without prayer. It is his native element—"it is vital breath." Prayer is the soul's best channel of intercommunication with heaven. The benefits of the atonement—the constant supplies of grace, both for trials and duties—the felicitous superintendence of the divine providence—these are sought and vouchsafed through this channel: and sufficiently endear the heaven-appointed exercise to every pious heart. Nevertheless, prayer to meet the divine favor, must needs be offered in the spirit of universal love. No petition that ascends from the burning elements of strife and bitterness, can reach the ear of divine grace and goodness. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," said the Psalmist, "thou wilt not hear me." (Ps. lxxvi: 18.) Why went the pharisee down from the place of prayer unjustified and unblest? The answer is given in this short phrase, "he thought he was righteous, but despised others." (Luke xviii: 9.) A malignant and contentious spirit awoke the displeasure of God against the most solemn and sacred assemblages of the Jewish nation. "Ye fast for strife and debate, and to fight with the fist of wickedness." (Is. lv: 4.) If men are commanded to pray every

where, they are also to "lift up holy hands, *without wrath,*" *first,* and then "without doubting." (1 Tim. ii: 8.)

In that beautiful formulary of prayer, given by our blessed Redeemer, we are taught to say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;" (Math. vi: 12;) or, as it is expressed by another evangelist, "Forgive us our sins, FOR we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." (Luke xi: 4.) In the latter of these forms, the christian is required to say, when he prays in the presence of the heart-searching God, that he has forgiven every one who hath trespassed against him; and in the former, to ask the divine mercy, only in the measure that he shows mercy to his fellow-man. Perhaps we have frequently uttered this petition: but have we duly pondered its import? Dare we assert to God that we have forgiven those who have wronged us, while we still cherish a latent malice towards them? Or dare we ask the mercy of God, *as* we show mercy to another, to whom, in reality, we show no mercy? What is the import of such a petition? It is that all the bowels of the divine compassion may be forever closed against us—that instead of smiles, his frowns may rest upon us—instead of blessing, he may consume us with interminable sorrows and wretchedness. Dare we make this prayer in the presence of the Most High? "He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy." "Therefore, when ye stand praying, forgive, that your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive your trespasses; but if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is heaven forgive your trespasses." (James ii: 13; Mark xi: 25, 26.)

The duty of forgiveness is farther enforced in the scriptures, from the consideration of that mercy which we have already received. This is our Lord's argument, in a parable representing the kingdom of heaven, "I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" (Math. xviii: 32, 33.) Who can think of his own sins, and of the wrath to which they exposed him—who can think of the condescension and mercy of God in their forgiveness, and not feel the kindlings of holy pity move towards an erring brother? How multitudinous were they! How they rose over our head, as dark and portentous clouds, whose aggregated particles are without number!



Every breath was polluted with guilt, and every word was contaminated with crime. Through the eye and through the ear its deadly venom was imparted to the soul. We turned not away the eye from seeing, nor the ear from hearing, vanity and lies. Their image was drawn upon the spirit in dark and fearful outlines. Depravity entered into the essential elements of our nature. It beat in the pulse and flowed in the veins. It burnt in lurid glimmerings on the brain, and in flames of consuming wrath upon the heart: "The whole head was sick, and the whole heart was faint." Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil, and that continually. What is the sin of a brother, compared with the innumerable transgressions which we have committed against God? And has the divine mercy abounded to their pardon? "He forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst him: shouldst not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-man, even as the Lord had pity on thee?"

Further, if our sins were actually without number, they were also heinous to the last degree. Their enormity rose with the law of which they were a violation—with the obligations of which they were a contempt—with the person of whom they were an abhorrence—and with the motives which they despised. Beheld, in the light of these reflections, how do the most aggravated offences of a brother sink into the mere frailties and sinless infirmities of helpless human nature! What principles subsisting between man and man can be compared with the authoritative law of which our sins were an infraction? What obligations can be imposed by the relations of earth, so solemnly imperative as those devolved upon us as the creatures and beneficiaries of God? What human virtue can claim such inalienable fidelity and love, as that which we have despised in the ineffable purity and beneficence of the deity? Have we trampled all these beneath our feet? and has the boundless compassion of the Father of mercies extended to us a divine pardon? Tell me, thou pardoned spirit—raised to a princely station from the demerited flames of the hottest hell—tell me whether thou canst refuse forgiveness to a brother, whose sins scarce deserve mention beside thine own? If God forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst him, shouldst not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-man, even as the Lord had

pity on thee?"\* "Therefore, be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. iv : 32.)

"As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you!" Here is the rule and measure—the spirit of acceptable forgiveness. *It must be real and entire.* Forgiveness is not a form of words alone. It is not a mere reprieve—a suspension of the feud—a temporary abatement of the animosity. It is more. It is an act—an important act—the act of absolution and release. It is the relinquishment of present claims—the abolishment of present liabilities—a "blotting out of the hand-writing" of charges against the offender. It is placing in his hands "*novæ tabulæ*," and commencing with him "*de novo*." Nor is this a partial act. It extends to the whole debt—both the principal and the interest. The last letter of the offence must be erased. Not an *iota* can remain. "I forgave thee *all that debt*," said the Son of God: and thus must we say. However heinous may have been the crime—however aggravated the circumstances of its commission—however possible that it may be repeated, the moment it is forgiven, that moment it is buried, and completely buried. Nothing short of this is pardon. He that pretends to forgiveness, while a private rancor—a secret jealousy—a

\*For the satisfaction of those who find a difficulty in harmonizing the Calvinistic doctrine of the "final perseverance of the saints," with the parable from which we have here quoted, and for the additional purpose of farther illustrating the necessity of forgiveness, we beg leave to append the following note from the Rev. A. Fuller:

"It is common with our Lord, to address men upon their own principles—not according to what they were in fact; but according to what they were in profession and expectation. And thus, in the parable under consideration, (Math. xviii: 23-35,) he solemnly warns all the members of his visible kingdom, who profess to be his people, and who had their expectation of being forgiven of him, that, without determining whether their professions were sincere or not, if they forgave not men their trespasses, neither would his heavenly Father forgive their trespasses. Whether they were sincere or not, made no difference to the argument. If a person lays his account with being forgiven of God, and is unforgiving to his brother, his conduct is inconsistent and wicked: for, being under the power of a self-delusion, his motive is the same as if it had been otherwise."—*Works*, vol. 2, p. 143.

The whole amount of the matter is this. If a man has not the *principle of forgiveness* abiding in his heart, he is not really a christian: if he has, he will exercise it towards those who have trespassed against him. If, therefore, he does not forgive, he will be "cast to the tormentors," as an unconverted man; the evidence of which is, notwithstanding all his professions, the destitution of a forgiving spirit in his heart.

latent coldness and reserve, are cherished in his heart, more than was wont before the offence was committed—needs to farther investigate his character, and perform his work anew. It is not thus that God for Christ's sake forgives sin, nor is it thus that we must forgive. "If ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother his trespasses, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Math. xviii: 35.)

*Forgiveness must be final.* Thus, "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." They are cast into the deep sea; nor will they ever be called up to remembrance to our detriment. Like the moment, which is past to return no more; so, the sins which are blotted out, are never to be recalled. No subsequent offence can revive those which were once pardoned. With equal propriety may the liquidated debts of past years come into the settlement of present accounts, as that crimes once forgiven should be brought into the adjustment of future difficulties. Grant that his repentance was insincere, and that it was only a pretext to another and more nefarious offence—grant that his subsequent conduct may require his expulsion from the church of God, and from the society of the faithful. That is his own fault, and let him bear the responsibility. His repentance—real or pretended—was accepted, and in consideration thereof, we forgave, and must forgive. This forever puts a terminus to that difficulty; nor may we ever revive it. We may not mention the past to his detriment, nor permit it to influence any part of our conduct towards him. It may not so much as give credibility to reports that may thereafter circulate to his prejudice. His character, as a good or bad man, must stand or fall alone upon the subsequent acts of his life. What else is that forgiveness which consists in "*restoring*" the transgressor to that place from which by transgression he fell? What else is that forgiveness which "God for Christ's sake hath extended to us?" Nor yet is this all.

*Forgiveness must be cheerful.* Thus, "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." God does nothing with hesitancy and reluctance: and least of all, does he extend pardon with grudging hands. The smiles which accompany the divine mercy, give to it a principal sweetness. The virtue of con-



descension and pity, is heightened by the pleasure which is manifested in the deed. Compassion is a priceless jewel, in willing and delighted hands: but a fulsome and obnoxious thing, when accompanied with complaints and apparent pain. "Show mercy with cheerfulness," is a divine requisition, (Rom. xii: 8,) and without cheerfulness, there is no beauty in it, that one should desire it. To forgive an offence is magnanimous; and the magnanimity of the deed is increased by the greatness of the crime, and the sovereign readiness and pleasure with which we pass it by. It is God-like to meet a "prodigal son"—a reckless adversary—a malignant enemy—a foul asperser—a wily chicaner—with open arms, and extend to him a prompt and hearty forgiveness. Thus we "return good for evil,"—thus we "suffer long and are kind."—thus we "heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." (Rom. xxv: 22.) "If he repent, thou shalt forgive him."

"As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you!" Here is the rule and spirit of acceptable *conduct* towards a *repenting* brother. We oppose it to those who profess to forgive, but are nevertheless unwilling, for the present, to fellowship the offender. *He must be restored to our fellowship.* "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican,"—when? After he shall have turned, saying, "I repent?" After he shall have deplored his offence—confessed his fault—and rendered every satisfaction in the power of his hands? No, verily. Had he refused to hear thee—and refused to hear them whom thou broughtest with thee—and refused to hear the church—*then* he should have been to thee as "an heathen man and a publican." But what now remains in the power of his hand, whereby to regain thy favor? What beside his offence intercepted thy fellowship? That was the only bar to thy communion—the middle wall of partition between thee. Hast thou forgiven it? That act was the extinguishment of the debt—the removal of the impediment. If it was any thing less than this, it was nothing—then forgiveness is no more forgiveness. What if the church of God were to act upon this principle, and still refuse to fellowship those whom she might forgive the violation of any of her rules and measures? What if the divine mercy were to refuse fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, to those whom it nevertheless pardoned? Where were

the advantages of mercy, that one should desire it? Say not that thou hast forgiven him whom thou wilt not restore to thy fellowship.

“As God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you!” Here is the rule and spirit of acceptable *conduct* towards a *repenting* brother. We oppose it, again, to those who profess to forgive, but are nevertheless unwilling, for the present, to confide in the offender. *He must be restored to our confidence.* “Him that is weak receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation,” is a maxim that applies with peculiar emphasis to the present case. His offence was the only bar to thy confidence—the middle wall of partition between thee? Hast thou forgiven it? That act was the obliteration of the difficulty—the annihilation of the obstacle. If it was any thing less than this, it was nothing—then forgiveness is no more forgiveness. What if thy brethren—the church of the living God—were to pardon thy offences, but still regard thee with jealousy and dread? What if the divine mercy were to pardon thy sins, but still hold thee in suspicion and doubt? Where were the desirableness of mercy, that one should seek it? Say not thou hast forgiven him whom still thou beholdest with distrust and jealousy.

“As God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you!” Here is the rule and spirit of acceptable *conduct* towards a *repenting* brother. We oppose it, finally, to those who profess to forgive, but are nevertheless unwilling to replace their love upon the offender. *He must be restored to our love.* “I beseech you,” said St. Paul, in the case of a notorious offence lamented and forgiven, “I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love toward him.” (2 Cor. ii: 8.) What remains to prevent it? His crime was the only bar to thy love—the middle wall of partition between thee. Hast thou forgiven it? That act was the extinction of the barrier—the everlasting destruction of the hindrance. If it was any thing less than this, it was nothing—then forgiveness is no more forgiveness. What if thy brethren—the church of the living God—were to pardon thy faults, but still withhold their affections from thee? What if the divine mercy were to forgive thy trespasses, and yet shut up the fountains of his love and goodness from thee? Where were the great excellencies of mercy, that one should desire it? Say not thou hast forgiven him whom thou dost not and wilt not love. These

two, forgiveness and love, stand inseparable in the argument of the apostle. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger; and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor." "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual *restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Eph. iv: 31, 32; ib. v: 1, 2; Gal. vi: 1.)

My brethren, "be at peace among yourselves." By the consolations of christianity—by the unity of the faith—by the valedictory prayer of the Son of God, that "you should be one, even as he and his Father are one,"—we pray you, "be at peace among yourselves." What is there in the turbid waters of strife and confusion—of bickering and animosity—of babblings and contention—that we should prefer to the placid streams of harmony and love? "I protest before God, my conscience also bearing me witness, that I stand in jeopardy of you every hour." "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and division, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Cor. iii: 3.) What worse than this could be anticipated of men of the world, who have never heard of Jesus?—men of the world, who make no pretensions to the peaceful religion of Christ?—men of the world, who are led captive in the chains of satan, and yield a willing and submissive servitude to the lusts that war in their members? What worse than this could be anticipated from those who have nothing in common, save a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? But all ye are brethren, called unto peace—ye are brethren, redeemed with the blood of peace—ye are brethren, quickened and renewed by the spirit of peace—ye are brethren, the servants of the prince of peace—all ye are brethren, journeying to the abode of everlasting peace. By all these considerations, we pray you "*be at peace among yourselves.*" "If there be any consolation in Christ—if any comfort of love—if any fellowship of the spirit—if any bowels and mercies—fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.



Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory: but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." (1 Thess. v: 13; Phil. ii: 1-3.)

"Let the brother of high degree condescend to those of low estate." (Rom. xii: 16.) Who hath made thee to differ from thy brother? Hath the divine providence given thee prosperity and power to crush the bruised reed, or extinguish the smoking flax? Shall the head say to the foot, "I have no need of thee?" Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon. "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." (Math. xx: 25-28; Luke xxii: 25, 26.)

Let the rich condescend to the poor. Who hath made thee to differ from thy brother? Hath the divine providence given thee prosperity and power, that thou shouldst break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax? Shall the hand say to the foot, "I have no need of thee?" Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man, in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place: and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my foot-stool; are ye not partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Harken my beloved brethren: hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin." (James ii: 1-6, 9.)

Let no one look with an evil eye of envy and jealousy, upon the manners or good fortune of another. What, if in every house there are vessels of honor, and some vessels to dishonor? What, if in the distribution of its bounty, the divine wisdom has given to one ten talents, to another two, and to another but one? Shall the foot say to the head, "I

have no need of thee?" Shall we fret against him whom the divine providence hath buidened with the most fearful responsibilities? Envy, like the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and wasteth at noonday, spreads devastation and ruin whithersoever it goes. "Who can stand before envy?" Not one. It is a moral "*Simoon*," that prostrates the world before it. "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." "Charity envieth not."

Above all, my brethren, let not a tale-bearer find an habitation among you. "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out: so, where no tale-bearer is, the strife ceaseth." (Prov. xxvi: 20.) Under whatever guise he may approach you—with whatever show of friendship and love—with whatever "good words and fair speeches,"—avoid him as you would a viper. "These six things doth the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look—a lying tongue—and hands that shed innocent blood—an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations—feet that are swift in running to mischief—a false witness, that speaketh lies—and he that soweth discord among brethren." (Prov. vi: 16–19.) Play with the jaws of a raving and roaring lion in his den—sport with the lurid glare of the cannon's mouth—dance around the crater of a burning volcano—and be safe: but he that harkens to the voice of a tale-bearer, shall feel in his heart the bitterness and pain of wormwood and death. "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight." "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea strife and reproach shall cease." (Prov. xviii: 8; Ps. ci: 5–7; Prov. xxii: 10.)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen!

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#### EXTRACT.

And the minister of the gospel, if he would make his knowledge, acquired from other sources, available for salutary purposes, must know the peculiar constitution of society, and of the individuals composing it, for whose spiritual maladies he is to administer. If he would bless the church by his skill,

he must be acquainted with the church as she is. He must vigilantly inspect her present symptoms, and ascertain her present tendencies, and thus become able himself to pronounce upon her present condition, whether hopeful or perilous,—else he will be little qualified to prescribe the wisest mode of treatment, so as effectually to counteract all morbid affections, replenish the sources of vitality, and give to the system its appropriate tone and vigor. If he would benefit the general community, he must understand its wants, its prejudices, its susceptibilities. If he would apply the proper correctives to prevailing vices, he must be acquainted with their origin, growth and strength, and be able to decide whether they are superficially or deeply rooted.

The servant of Jesus Christ may be a believer in the doctrine, as it is technically termed, of “total depravity,” and be lucid and cogent in demonstrating its truth as a naked abstraction; but he must have been an unprofited observer, if he does not understand it in the concrete, and find himself as able to prove it by fact, as by metaphysical argumentation; and as much required to believe it, and as competent to teach it, in the particular as in the general. If, therefore, he would be an efficient antagonist of sin, let him not oppose it under the universal appellation of *moral evil*, but let him study the diversified forms which it assumes, and press his controversy with each individuality, according as the demerit of each may demand. The law of God regards sin, not as an abstraction, but as something associated with a moral agent, and as developed in as many shapes and colorings, as the varieties of human feeling, motive and action. Hence the formalities of diversified enactment, recognizing classifications in human depravity, and suiting the penalty to the measure of the offence; and hence the utterance of Jehovah’s anathemas, not against moral evil as an abstract idea, but against the sinful agents guilty of specific transgressions. And christianity, with her fulness of munificence, comes to bless the world, not by subduing sin in the abstract, but by extirpating it, as a practical thing, from the hearts and lives of the depraved;—not by rendering men holy in the abstract, but by shedding abroad in their natures that love to God, and that charity to man, which produce a holy and useful life;—not by converting mankind as a mass, but by regenerating men in detail, and transferring their agency from the channels of damage to the channels of christian utility.



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## THE CARDINAL CHRISTIAN GRACES,

OR THE IMPORTANCE OF RESTRICTING EACH OF THEM TO  
ITS OWN SPHERE:

A sermon, preached before the Georgia Baptist Convention, at Macon, May 15, 1846, and published by a vote of the Convention. By REV. JOSIAH S. LAW, of Liberty county, Georgia.

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*“And now abideth faith, hope and charity; but the greatest of these is charity.”—1 COR. XIII: 13.*

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The sense of this passage may be thus expressed, “now faith, hope and love, these three together exist in the present life only; but in the future world, faith and hope will be done away, and therefore the greatest of these is love.”

The design of this discourse is, to set forth the proper objects of faith, hope and love; and also, some of the evils arising from not confining them to their proper objects. I shall endeavor then to show,

I. That the proper object of faith, is not our being interested in Christ; but the glorious gospel of the ever blessed God.

This gospel is also called the record that God gave of his Son, not to believe which, is “to make God a liar,” and to believe which, is “to set to our seal that God is true.” This record is summed up by the apostle John in few words—“that God hath given unto us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.” *That* faith in Jesus Christ which justifies from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses, is included in believing the gospel; or, as it is sometimes expressed, “believing the truth.” “The true and essential nature of faith, is confidence in God, belief in his declarations, whether this be exercised by believing in the

scripture account of the creation of the world, or as the ancient worthies exercised it in respect to specific objects, or by believing on the Messiah—it is the same disposition of mind in all cases; it is confidence in God.”

In establishing our proposition, that the proper object of faith is not our being interested in Christ, but the gospel of God, we observe,

1. That nothing is to us a proper object of faith, but what God hath revealed. The true and essential nature of faith, being confidence in God—belief in his declarations—it must necessarily be confined to what God hath seen fit to reveal to us, and to extend it to any thing beyond, is to render one’s self obnoxious to the charge of presumption and fanaticism.

God hath no where revealed to any individual, his personal interest in Christ and in the blessings of his gospel, which must be done before he can make them the objects of faith. The revelations of God respecting who are heirs of glory, and who shall enjoy the heavenly inheritance, relate entirely to character: and upon this point, his revelations in the gospel of his Son, are neither few nor meager; for he has most clearly described the characters of such as are interested in Christ and all the blessings of his salvation; he has given us ample assurance that all who believe in him, love and obey him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. It may be said, in answer to this, that the apostle Paul addressed his brethren as chosen of God from the beginning unto salvation, and that this may be regarded as a revelation to them of their personal interest in Christ, and that therefore, their interest in Christ was to them an object of faith. We reply, the apostle thus addressed them upon the supposition, that they were children of God, through Christ, and not upon revelation from God to him, that they really were such; consequently, that they were of those whom God had chosen from the beginning, unto salvation, was with him and with them a matter of hope and not of faith.

The apostle John tells us, “hereby, we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth: hereby we

know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

Here we are distinctly told, that obedience, and active, and truthful love, are essential to our knowing that we know God and are of the truth. But God reveals to no man, unless you call the motions of grace a revelation, his actual possession of this obedience and love, but leaves it for him to determine, and he can only determine the point by their being present in the heart, and of their presence, I question whether there can at present be any greater certainty than consciousness—and I believe a real, undoubted consciousness of their existence, will give the heart all that assurance before God of which the apostle speaks. Mr. Andrew Fuller says, "If any one imagine that God has revealed to him his interest in his love; and this in a special, immediate and extraordinary manner, and not by exciting in him the holy exercises of grace, and thereby begetting a consciousness of his being a subject of grace, let him beware, lest he deceive his soul. The Jews were not wanting in what some would call the faith of assurance." "We have our Father," said they, "even God," but Jesus answered them, "if God were your Father, ye would love me." Dr. Cudworth, in a sermon on the first passage quoted from John's Epistle, says, with respect to the doctrine of assurance, "We have no warrant in scripture to peep into these hidden rolls and volumes of eternity, and to make it our first thing that we do, when we come to Christ, to spell out our names in the stars, and to persuade ourselves that we are certainly elected to everlasting happiness, before we see the image of God in righteousness and true holiness shaped in our hearts. God's everlasting decree is too dazzling and bright on objects, for us at first to set our eye upon. It is a far easier and safer for us to look upon the rays of his goodness and holiness, as they are reflected in our hearts, and there to read the mild and gentle characters of God's love to us in our love to him, and our hearty compliance with his heavenly will. The best assurance any one can have of his interest in God, is, doubtless, the conformity of his soul to him. The way to obtain a good assurance, indeed, of our title to heaven, is, not to clamber up to it by a ladder of our own ungrounded persuasions, but to dig by humility and self-denial, in our own hearts." We observe,



2. The scriptures represent faith as terminating, not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ and his truths.—“Go preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Here, evidently, the gospel to be preached, is the object of faith. “These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.” Here the manifest object of faith, is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, to be received upon what is written in the scriptures, which is God’s record of his Son. Of the same import with these two passages are the following: Peter confessed, “thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.” “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” When the jailer fell down before Paul and Silas, and cried out, “what shalt I do to be saved?” The answer was, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” When the Eunuch said to Philip, “see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Philip said, “if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest:” and the answer of the Eunuch informs us in what Philip required him to believe with all his heart—“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” In what did the full and strong faith of Paul terminate? Hear him in his own language, “I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to his hands.” The all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, was the object of that faith which inspired him with so much confidence. The distressed, inquiring sinner never finds peace until he looks away from himself to Christ. The joy and consolation of the christian in life and death, are in proportion to the fixedness of his faith in Christ and his gracious truths. They who are striving to persuade themselves that they are interested in the love of God, upon the supposition that such persuasion is not only good evidence of saving faith, but an essential part of it, will always, like Peter, when they see “the winds boisterous,” become afraid and begin to sink. If, as some Antinomians have supposed, saving faith consisted in a firm persuasion of our being among the elect, and justified, then

a persuasion of personal election and justification would be the object in ourselves in which faith terminated, and consequently, the ground or cause of our justification, for the scriptures plainly teach that that is the cause of our justification in which faith terminates; so that in order to be justified we must persuade ourselves that we are justified,—that is, we must persuade ourselves that we are in a state in which we are not, in order to be in that state, which is a palpable contradiction. “A persuasion of Christ being both able and willing to save all that come unto God by him, and consequently, to save us if we so apply, is very different from a persuasion that we are the children of God, and interested in the blessings of the gospel.” The former is our duty and privilege; the latter is no where required at our hands, except as it may arise from a conformity of our souls to him. If faith, working by love, and purifying the heart, and overcoming the world, gives an individual a good assurance, then let him be assured; but let him not seek to persuade himself of his acceptance with God, under the mistaken notion that such persuasion is essential to justifying faith. Again: the exercises of faith recorded in the New Testament, as meeting the approbation of the Saviour, clearly had his *all-sufficiency* to *heal* as its *object*, and not a *self-persuasion* that they were interested in the divine favor and should succeed. Take, as our example, the case of the centurion: “Speak the word only,” says he, “and my servant shall be healed; for I am a man in authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it.” So does justifying faith have the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ to heal the soul from the malady of sin as its sole object. “Save, Lord, or I perish,” expresses not only the feeling, but the true condition of the soul when it submits and receives Jesus Christ as a Saviour. We observe,

3. Saving faith is far superior in its object, to believing ourselves in a state of salvation. Saving faith fixes upon the glory of Christ as its grand object. As a Teacher, it regards him as infallible and all-wise, and submits with child-like teachableness to his instructions; as a Physician, it regards his skill as perfect, and cheerfully trusts the life of the soul in his hands; as an Advocate, it regards him as all-prevalent, and with confidence commits the cause of the soul

to him; as a King, it beholds him King of kings and Lord of lords; as that one who hath triumphed and will continue to triumph, until all his enemies are made his footstool, it bows the soul in humble and cheerful submission to his laws.\*

If our faith has respect *only* to the benefits to accrue to us from Christ, it is certainly vain, and we are still in our sins. As that repentance which has only in view the consequences of sin to us, is denominated worldly sorrow, and is declared spurious; so *that* faith which has only in view the benefits of the gospel to us, is spurious. It sees Christ, not as he really is, clothed with dignity, glory, dominion and power; but as that one who can minister to the lower feelings of our nature—who can save us from pain—and we follow him, not because convinced of his exalted nature, but because we had eaten of the loaves and been filled.

It may be asked, "Is it wrong to believe one's self a child of God?" No, it is not only proper, but very desirable, when this belief is based upon suitable evidence. But we are not to regard this belief, which is more of hope than faith, as saving or justifying faith—as an essential quality of this faith—or as satisfactory evidence in itself of our exercising it. That it is not justifying faith I have already shewn you. That it is not an essential quality of this faith, is evident from the fact, that persons can and do exercise saving faith without it; but if it be essential to faith, this cannot be done; that it is not in itself satisfactory evidence of saving faith, appears from its not being a necessary attendant upon it, but a conclusion to which we come upon determining by the characteristics of justifying faith, that we are in the exercise of it, and this conclusion becomes more a matter of consciousness, of hope with us, than of belief. The faith that receives Christ under every character by which he has seen fit to manifest himself, acts upon the heart as a sanctifying principle, assimilating the character to Christ, and thereby begetting in the soul a consciousness of being interested in the divine love, proportionate to its assimilation to Christ. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Ro. viii: 29. Justifying

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\* See A. Fuller.



faith is not destitute of peace and comfort. It is its peculiar property to remove doubt and impart consolation. It removes doubt by endearing Christ: "Unto you that believe he is precious." It imparts consolation by giving peace: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." We proceed to show,

II. That the proper object of hope, is a personal interest in Christ and in all the blessings of his salvation.

As a personal interest in Christ and in all the blessings of his salvation; is not the proper object of saving faith, so neither is Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the proper object of hope. This is a matter of express revelation from God to us, and is to be received with the most unlimited confidence. To hope this is so, would imply some question, or ground of question, respecting its reality. So a personal interest in Christ, not being a matter of revelation, is not an object of faith, but of hope, and admits of doubt; but all the appropriate objects of faith are beyond doubt, not admitting of question, for they rest upon the veracity of God. The salvation of him that believeth, is a matter of revelation from God, it is therefore beyond doubt, and is to be received by faith; but whether one is a believer, is not a matter of revelation, but admits of doubt, and is therefore an object of hope.

Faith and hope are spoken of as distinct graces, having their appropriate objects in which to terminate. Faith, as we have seen, fixes upon Christ as its grand object. It is for hope to enter within the veil, appropriate a personal participation in that glory, and become the anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. It cheers us with the bright visions of eternal life beyond the grave, and keeps us steady and safe amid all the dangers of this tempest-tossed life. But if faith consisted in a persuasion of being saved, there would be no place for hope—for how can a thing "actually possessed, be an object of hope, which must be at an end." The apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy i: 13, calls Jesus Christ, "our hope"—but not as the object of hope in the same sense that he is spoken of as the object of faith—but as the cause of hope. In this sense, he also speaks of him in that sublime passage, Titus ii: 13—"looking for, or looking forward to the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Well may

the second coming of Christ, without sin unto salvation, as the great God and our Saviour, surrounded by all the bright intelligences of heaven, to be admired by all them that believe, and to clothe the righteous with eternal honors, be called the blessed hope—for though “now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” This will be the full fruition of hope; this is the lively hope to which he hath begotten his people; this is the hope of the righteous, that shall be gladness; this is the hope of all other hopes; it is the hope that cheers the pilgrim christian through this vale of tears.

The same apostle, in Romans viii : 24th, 25th verses, says, “we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” We are not to understand the apostle as using hope in the sense of faith, as synonymous with it, but as expressing this idea, “we have as yet attained only in hope, or attained only to a state in which hope may be indulged.” By the phrase, “hope that is seen,” is meant, “hope that is realized in fruition by the attainment of its object,” there being “an allusion to sight as the realization of faith.” The meaning is, “when the thing hoped for is actually possessed, how can it be said to be the object of hope. But if we have hope for what we see not, then should we with patience wait for it.” So that if faith had for its object our personal interest in Christ, so soon as we persuaded ourselves of it, it would, as far as practicable in this state, be realized, and consequently cease to be an object of hope. But the apostle teaches us, that “the state of hope to which we are confined, implies that we should with patience wait for the desired blessing. And as it is of the essence of hope to exclude fruition, and always to look forward to something future—so ought it to be an inducement to us to wait with patience for the blessing which is yet at a distance.”

Our hope of eternal life should be cherished on true grounds. A hope that rests not on that which is real and abiding, but on something imaginary, is called the expectation of the wicked, and shall certainly perish. But the hope of the righteous, rests upon the faithfulness of God—the love and mercy of Jesus Christ—and is inspired in the heart

by a consciousness of conformity to God, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, strengthening our faith in Jesus Christ. Such hope, being, as the apostle Paul tells us, the result of experience, "maketh not ashamed;" subjects not to the shame of disappointment, as do those hopes that rest in delusive promises—"because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us;" that is, such hope is not a fallacious one, "because we have a convincing proof of its reality, in the unbounded grace of God, diffused on us by his Holy Spirit, and given as a pledge of his love." What is better adapted to comfort and strengthen, cheer and gladden the heart of the believer while dwelling in this world of temptations and sorrow, than a lively hope of future glory. Hence, we are exhorted "to abound in hope through the Holy Ghost," and to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are also exhorted to obtain "a full assurance of hope;" "to continue to cherish a full or confident hope of salvation even unto the end of life." "For he who on true grounds, cherishes the hope, which the christian religion encourages, of future glory and reward, will hardly be tempted to abandon his religion." Encouraged by the hope of eternal glory, we shall remain steadfast, immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Oh! how few christians, though all profess to have hope, feel, live and act under the influence of that lively hope to which Christ hath begotten them. Let us consider,

### III. The proper object of love.

It has well been remarked, that love can hardly be called one of the graces, for it is the peculiar property of all of them, and bears the same relation to them that holiness does to the attributes of God. Love is holiness—"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." How beautiful and enrapturing the idea the apostle John presents here, of God and the true believer in Jesus, dwelling together in mutual love. A confession that Jesus is the Son of God, accompanied by conduct suitable to such a confession, gives us a place in God's love, and God a place in our affections.

It is the true character of God, as revealed to us in the scriptures, that is the appropriate object of love; especially his character as made known to us in the gift of his Son,



and manifested to us in the person of that Son, who is declared to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." In this exhibition, mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. No part of the integrity of his character is made to yield in order to the exercise of mercy; neither does his proclamation of peace to a rebellious world, infringe in the least upon his righteousness. A satisfaction with his character as thus exhibited in God's method of justifying, must enter into our love, or it is not the love that God accepts. We must love him, if we love him at all, for what he really is, and not for what we may imagine him to be. "We may clothe the divine Being with such attributes, and such only, as will suit our depraved tastes, and then it will be no difficult thing to fall down and worship; but this is not the love of God, but the love of an idol of our own creation." *He* acts in this way, who imagines the divine Being clothed with goodness, not as a moral excellence, but as undistinguishing beneficence, and caring not for the honor of the divine government, whether pardon be bestowed consistently with justice or not; but having a supreme regard for himself, he finds no difficulty in loving a being, who, he thinks, without any respect to his conduct or character, will be subservient to his happiness. It is not difficult to see that this is any thing but love—for it is not excited by a profound respect for the character of God as manifested in the perfect rectitude of his conduct; but by the favors he expects to receive from him, and it is very plain, that upon such an individual perceiving the true character of the divine Being, that he no otherwise ministers to our happiness but in a way consistent with justice and morality, he would hate him with all the malignity of a supremely selfish heart. For, requiring the promotion of his happiness by the divine Being, without respect to the good or evil of his character, the right or wrong of his conduct, his selfishness would not permit him to look with complacency on God's true character, nor to submit his happiness to the laws of justice and morality as enforced by a Being whose goodness is a part of his moral excellence, and is no otherwise exerted for our happiness and well-being than in the strictest accordance with the integrity of his character. "As he that hateth not *sin as sin*, has no real hatred to it; so he that loveth not *God as God*, has no real

love to him. True love to God, for the gift of his Son, and salvation through his death, does not merely respect the benefits we receive, but the holy, just and honorable way in which those benefits are conferred." We hate sin as sin, when we hate it as an evil committed against God—as heinous—as subversive of all order and peace—as violative of all holy obligations—as subjecting us to the displeasure of God—and as utterly wrong, being committed without cause; and we love God as God, when we love him for what he is, and for what he has done for us. There are some who profess to love the God of nature, but despise the God of revelation; there are others, who love the God of the moral Teacher, Jesus Christ, but who have no regard for the Father of Jesus Christ, the sacrificial Lamb, by the shedding of whose blood, there is remission of sin. How important it is that we rightly apprehend the divine character; that we acquaint ourselves with God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, lest our imagined love for God be found, in the end, to be nothing more than self-complacency or supreme selfishness.

We should be careful not to confound gratitude with love, as the former can exist in the heart without the latter; neither should we mistake that gratitude which is not "spiritual, but merely the effect of natural self-love, and in which God is no otherwise regarded, than as subservient to our happiness," which arises sometimes from a mere apprehension of sin being forgiven, and continues only so long as the apprehension remains, for that gratitude which is spiritual and which is always associated with love. Gratitude is excited by a just estimate and appreciation of benefits conferred. Love for a benefactor is excited by a correct view and approval of his character, as expressed, not only by the benefits, but by the manner of his bestowing them. If then we properly estimate and appreciate God's favors, and rightly view and approve his character, as manifested by his favors, and his mode of conferring them, the heart must and will be exercised by true gratitude and love.

Says the excellent and pious Andrew Fuller, "so much as we have of the love of God, so much we have of true religion and no more. The love that we bear to our fellow-Christians, to the law, to the gospel, and even to Christ himself, is the love of God. We see in our brethren the image

of God, and love it; in the law of God, a glorious transcript of his mind, and love it; in the gospel, a more glorious transcript of his mind, and love it more; and in the person and works of Christ, the very image of the invisible God, and our hearts are united to him. In loving each of these objects, we love God." And let me add, if we love *God as God* we shall, necessarily, love each of these objects. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." We proceed now,

II. To point out some of the evils that we suffer from not keeping the above graces exercised by their appropriate objects.

1. In not keeping faith to its proper objects, there is danger of looking short of Christ for acceptance with God. Let it be borne in mind that the essential quality of faith, is confidence in God, and that this confidence, manifested in a hearty, humble and thankful receiving of the record which God hath given us of his Son, and consequently, receiving Jesus Christ as the Lord our righteousness, is justifying faith.

That many convicted sinners regard a persuasion of personal interest in Christ, as essential to saving faith, is manifested by their strong desire for more pungent convictions than they possess; and this seeking after stronger and deeper convictions, is not that they might be brought to that state or sense of guiltiness and condemnation whereby they would be constrained to cry, "save, Lord, or I perish," but because they suppose such feelings would be a warrant to them to believe that Christ will save them. They know not that the genuineness of convictions of sin consists, not in the amount, but in the kind of feeling—and that no degree of convictions can procure pardon for them, but simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, they continue troubled and distressed—not seeking to come to Christ by faith, but striving to persuade themselves that God has pardoned their sins, and attributing *the want* of this persuasion, to their convictions not being deep enough, and yet regarding *such* persuasion as the only sufficient evidence of faith in Christ and acceptance with God. And here is the true state of the case with such individuals: they cannot receive the simple truth, he that believeth shall be saved, and therefore they want an assurance from some quarter, that their sins are forgiven, or will be forgiven, upon their believing in Christ, as



a guarantee to them that God will accept of them and save them. Here is unbelief in its most subtle form. Here is satan working in his most cunning manner, to keep the soul from Christ. The scriptural evidence of faith in Christ, and reconciliation with God, is the preciousness of Christ to the soul: "to you that believe, he is precious;" and also, a new and holy love for God, from beholding his glorious image in the person of his Son; and it is this gives peace to the sin troubled soul, for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Many, we fear, laboring under the above error, finally *persuade* themselves of the pardon of their sins, stop short of Christ, endure for a little while, and then fall away. There is danger of the religious teacher so instructing the inquirer, as to help him to this groundless persuasion after which he has been seeking, instead of leading him to see his self-ruined and loss condition, and need of a Saviour. To avoid this, let him unfold before his mind God's method of justifying; show him the necessity in himself for such a method, and the all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour. There is reason to fear, that those professing christians are looking short of Christ, who in the absence of the operations of God's grace in the heart, by which he makes known to us our gracious state, seek to persuade themselves that they are interested in Christ. And when doubts and fears disturb this comfortable persuasion, they look not to Christ, but go back to the period of their conviction, and in the bitterness of their sorrows, the brightness of their hope, and the joy of their first love, they find arguments to confirm them in their persuasion, and to put to flight all doubts and fears. It may be, they commenced with this persuasion, instead of saving faith in Christ; and instead of perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, they are spending their days in disobedience, and still comforting themselves with the persuasion, that their sins are forgiven. If the genuineness of our conversion has not been confirmed by a godly life, it is folly not to suspect that there was some material defect in it. Another evil arising from not keeping faith exercised by its proper objects, is,

2. Seeking more after comfortable frames of mind, than correct and enlarged views of Christ. How often are christians heard complaining of coldness—want of joy and feeling; but how seldom are they heard lamenting their want

of increased and increasing knowledge of Christ, and confidence in him as a Saviour, which is the true fountain of spiritual joy. They seem to take it for granted, they know Christ and have faith in him, and all they want is feeling, joy; forgetting that it is the peculiar property of faith, to impart consolation: "Believing in Christ, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and also forgetting, that that very comfortable feeling after which they are seeking, is absent, because faith which works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world, is not in exercise.

Did the apostle Paul ever take it for granted, that he knew Christ and his salvation so well, that nothing remained to him but to spend his days in seeking, so far as personal religion was concerned, after comfortable frames of mind? Hear him in his own impassioned and soul-thrilling language—"I count all things but loss, for the *excellency* of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I might *know* him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." That knowledge of Christ which is eternal life, was the grand absorbing object of the apostle's soul. To this, he bent all the energies of his great mind, and to this he consecrated all the affections of a heart in love with Jesus. They who will follow him in this, will never want for joy in the Holy Ghost; will never mourn the absence of a Saviour's love.

But why do christians desire feeling so much more than knowledge? I know not, unless it is because they are disposed to regard a *persuasion* of a *personal interest* in Christ, as *one* of the *objects* of *saving faith*, and *feeling*, as one of the best evidences of such a state, and therefore good evidence of their possessing saving faith; consequently, they desire the peace and joy of justification without keeping the faith in exercise that justifies. They want peace without believing; they want life, spiritual life, without acquiring that knowledge of Jesus Christ that imparts life; they would enjoy peace with God, but will not acquaint themselves with

him. Let me reprove such, by again referring them to the example of the apostle Paul. In continuation of my last quotation from him, he says, "not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I *follow after*, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He tells his brethren, not to understand him, from what he had said, to mean that he had reached the goal as victor—no, he did not so account himself; but this he did, unheedful of all his past attainments and services in the gospel, he pressed, in allusion to the racer, he stretched his head and hands towards the goal—thus exhibiting his earnestness and deep anxiety to reach it. Oh! what bright visions of coming glory were spread out before the apostle's mind! He stopped not to inquire after the imperfect joys of his present state, but abounding in hope through the Holy Spirit, his present joy and consolation consisted in his holy, fervent desires and self-sacrificing labors to gain the prize, eternal life. Having obtained like precious faith with him, let all our joy and comfort from religion, arise from like holy diligence and perseverance, to obtain the same blessed reward. Let faith gaze into the depths of the riches of God's grace; let it be firmly fixed upon the glory and dignity of Jesus Christ—and let hope lay hold upon all that faith sees, and the soul shall be filled with unspeakable joy in anticipation of an exceeding weight of glory.

3. From confounding the objects of faith and hope, much uneasiness of mind is caused, and progress in the divine life hindered. Many christians, regarding the absence of a persuasion of a personal interest in Christ, as a state of doubt, and doubt being the opposite of faith, charge themselves with the sin of unbelief, which they know to be very offensive to God, and thus inflict upon themselves much distress of mind. But if this personal interest in Christ be not an appropriate object of faith, but of consciousness, or hope, a sense of its absence cannot cause doubt, but fear—for we cannot properly speak of doubting that which is not a matter of belief. An individual doubts when he questions the all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, and the truth of his



instructions; and he fears, when he questions his interest in Christ—fear being the opposite of hope. It may be said, fear causes as much distress of mind as doubt. This may be—but still there is this material and important difference between them: to doubt is sinful, to fear is not. Doubt questions the veracity of God respecting the record he hath given of his Son; fear only questions the genuineness of one's love for that Son. The former strikes at the very foundation of religion; the latter only at the building we are endeavoring to rear upon it. The former threatens apostacy; the latter, if it be godly fear, causes increased watchfulness and prayer. Hence, the apostle exhorts us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; encouraging us to it by the consideration, that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. He demands of us that we should pass the time of our sojourning here, in fear. This is not that fear which perfect love casteth out. But where, in the whole word of God, are we commanded to doubt.

There is a fear which the christian may feel, and which is called, in distinction from the other, slavish fear. This, like every other carnal feeling, may be known by its effects. It worketh not in the heart like the other, in a way of penitence, confession, humility, watchfulness and prayerfulness—but in increased negligence, indifference, prayerlessness and hardness of heart—thereby working death. The fear of coming short of the promised rest, should not distress us, but excite in us increased desires after holiness, and stir us up to greater diligence in the divine life. The fear of future punishment that exists in the heart unaccompanied by even a wish for holiness, for holiness' sake, ought to cause distress—for, as the apostle John tells us, its peculiar property is torment—but, alas, it seldom does; it comes and goes, and the heart remains the same, except more hardened. Have we any fear? What is the character of it? Take care of slavish fear—closely allied to worldly sorrow it worketh death.

The manner in which a confounding of the objects of faith and hope operate to the hindering of advancement in piety, is in this way: making faith to consist, in part, in a persuasion of personal acceptance with God—the individual so doing, unable to embrace that in his faith which God

designs shall be a matter of hope with the christian during his pilgrimage, spends the time, the prayers and the efforts in fruitless efforts to believe that which he is allowed only to hope for, which should be spent in confirming his faith, and strengthening his hope, by increasing his knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence, we find some in bondage, all their life-time, to fear; depriving themselves of the peace and joy of faith, they journey through life without the cheering gladness of hope.

What grace more essential to the christian's happiness, or to the faithful prosecution of his holy enterprise, than hope? Thank God, we can hope, when we can do nothing else. Let the night be ever so dark and stormy, hope will cheer and bid us wait the coming day. We can hope on through life, and when life, like a spent taper, glimmers in the socket, hope will cheer us with a life to come. Let us now proceed to consider, briefly, only two of the evils that arise from not fixing upon the character of God, as the prime and abiding object of our love.

1 We deprive ourselves of the best test of the genuineness of our piety. Various are the motives that may induce an individual to discharge very strictly what he regards as religious duties. The fear of punishment, desire for happiness, without any relish for that which is essential to happiness, holiness of heart, or devotion to party, may secure external conformity in religious matters. The existence of either or all of these, as principles of action, is not dependent upon the heart being regenerated, for they can and do exist without any such change—and they do, in many instances, control the actions of life while the heart is filled with evil thoughts, murders, adulteries and covetousness. It has been well remarked by that excellent minister of Christ, from whom we have before quoted, “it is the *love of God* which *distinguishes true religion* from all *counterfeits*, and from the *effects of mere natural principles*. It is this which distinguishes repentance from repentance, faith from faith, fear from fear. Each of these graces has its counterfeit.” A simple glance at the scriptures, will convince us of the truth of the above remark. There is godly sorrow, and there is worldly sorrow. The essential difference between them is, the former proceeds from love to God, who has been offended; the latter, is induced by a painful apprehension of some

terrible evil to self. There is a faith which is dead, being without works; and there is a faith which works by love—love to God. There is a fear that hath torment, and is cast out by perfect love; and there is a fear which is godly, which is the beginning of wisdom, and is promoted by love. The performance of any act in the service of Christ, no matter how self-denying or productive of good, if it proceeds not from love, is destitute of that essential quality which is necessary to its acceptance.

Love, as a principle of obedience, has respect either to self or to God. If we obey from love of self, we shall have entire regard to the benefits of religion, without any concern about the manner in which they have been bestowed, whether God be just or unjust in justifying, so he justifies us. So that we shall love not the God of the Bible—but a Being of undistinguishing beneficence, conferring favors without any regard to the honor of his name, or to the rectitude of our conduct. If, on the other hand, we obey from love to God, there will not only be a holy thankfulness for the benefits of the gospel, but love for the character of God as exhibited in his righteous way of bestowing them. Just while justifying, exercising mercy, yet sustaining the rectitude of his character, proclaiming peace to a rebellious world, yet maintaining the inflexible righteousness of his government.

No act, it matters not what may be its religious cast, can be regarded as obedience to God, unless it proceeds from love. We call an outward conformity to law, whether civil or moral, obedience, because no other test is within our reach, having no means of determining certainly the motive, which being one of the secrets of the heart, is known only to God. He knows whether conformity to his law proceeds from a recognition of his authority, submission to his will and love for his character, or from other motive. When outward conformity to God's law, proceeds from love to that law—when obedience is but love in action, then the heart is under the influence of the same principle, and the service rendered is acceptable to God as true obedience. If all the law and the prophets hang upon these two commandments, thou shalt love God supremely and thy neighbor as thyself, and love be the fulfilling of the law, it is indeed vain to hope for salvation upon the ground of any attainments we may have made, or sacrifices offered in worship, if love be absent.



It is when love to God and to man reigns in our hearts, that we may hope that that for which Christ gave himself an offering for sin, has been accomplished in us, the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. The second and last evil I shall mention as arising from not fixing upon the character of God as the prime and abiding object of love, is,

2. We deprive ourselves of the strongest incentive to perseverance in the divine life. The gospel insists much upon patient suffering under afflictions, and faithful endurance, even unto the end of life, of trials and temptations. What is so well adapted to secure to us these indispensable qualities, as that principle which regards God as the chief portion of good, and Christ as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely. It is he who, receiving the word in an honest and good heart, brings forth fruit with patience; and no heart can be honest and good that is not fixed upon God as its supreme object of love. Love is the only effectual antidote to the poisonous influence which the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches exerts over the piety of the heart. Love only can move the soul in the hour of temptation and keep it steady to its allegiance in despite of all the devices of satan.

The fear of punishment may secure an external conformity to religion, so long as a dread of God rests upon the mind—and this feeling can only remain so long as some gross sin terrifies or the judgments of God threaten. But so soon as sin is quiet, creating no sad disturbance in the conscience, by reason of supposed repentance and strong resolution to do so no more, or where no pestilence walketh in darkness, nor no sickness wasteth at noon day, as the faithless eye-servant, so he who is governed by fear, neglects his duties and walks in his old ways of sin and folly. Others may begin to follow Christ from a regard to the benefits of religion—from self-interest—but they will go back and walk no more with him so soon as they are required to deny themselves and take up their cross in order to follow Christ. They are like those in the New Testament, who followed Christ, not because they had seen the miracles which he wrought, but because they had eaten of the loaves and been filled. Such persons follow Christ, not because he is the Son of God—not because he saves from sin—but because they regard him as one who will be sub-

servient to their happiness, and save them without subjecting them to the least pain or self-denial; hence, they make no sacrifices for the cause of Christ, and are conformed to this world. Both of the above motives are not only unholy, but are insufficient to secure constancy in the service of God. But love casts out fear and prompts to faithful obedience in prosperity as well as in adversity—amid the aboundings of mercies, as well as during the threatenings of judgments—when the path of duty is smooth and pleasant, as when rough and thorny. Love falters not, but follows its object through joy and through sorrow—through trials and through death; for where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. In proof of this, take the lives of the primitive christians, who forsaking father and mother, sisters and brothers, houses and lands, followed Christ through fire and through blood, to the abodes of the blessed. Take also, the true missionary of the present day, who takes his life in his hands, and goes to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the perishing heathen. What keeps him steady to his purpose, notwithstanding the many tender considerations that plead with him to forego his holy work, and the thousand dangers and hardships that would intimidate? Not duty enforced, as some would suppose, by a consideration of punishment if neglected—nor duty enforced by the consideration of reward if performed—but love for God and man; it is this which makes the work a duty to him, inasmuch as the Spirit has shown him, that in this particular way he can accomplish the most good, and best serve his Lord. And after he has reached his destination, the home of his adoption, think you he never sighs for his father-land—that there are no remembrances of “home, sweet home?” Ah! he is still but a man of like passions with ourselves; but the holy, divine principle of love, calms his heaving bosom, and converts the remembrances of childhood’s home, into anticipations of the christian’s happy home. Every christian, in every situation in life, has, as a christian, his peculiar trials and difficulties, and they are just such as love only can endure, and love only can overcome. Love is “the golden key that opes the palace of eternity.” It directs, hallows and excites to action our faith, and makes charity and martyrdom virtues. One heart, one single heart not attuned to love, would cause horrible discord in the sweet harmony of heaven, where one tie unites all hearts, and all cry worthy the Lamb.

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## THE DESIGN OF GOD IN AFFLICTING MINIS- TERS OF THE GOSPEL.

By the late Rev. STEPHEN CHAPIN, D. D.

A sermon prepared in June, 1843, on the occasion of the death of his daughter, Mrs. Sarah L. M. Sydnor, wife of the Rev. Thomas W. Sydnor, but on account of his own declining health never preached.

*Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.—2 CORINTHIANS I: 2-3.*

The word *comfort* in this passage, and generally in the New Testament, means something more than merely to soothe, to alleviate misery or distress of mind. It means to cheer, to animate, to give new life to the spirits. By it Paul meant that God imparted fresh courage to himself and Timothy to hold fast their profession, however formidable and appalling might be the evils and dangers before them. This is the kind of help and encouragement which the brethren at Corinth most needed when this letter was written; and it is the same kind of cheering and support which christians now need, and which they will ever need, till the enemies of the cross are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. For we may be certain that satan will enlist every agent at his command to dishearten and intimidate the people of God, and do all in his power to extinguish their zeal and to overthrow their



faith. True, for shame, and for policy's sake, the fires of the stake have been quenched. But the world has not become a friend to grace; nor has the arch foe given up his malignant purpose. He has changed his mode of attack, but not his spirit and aim. He now transforms himself into an angel of light, and hopes to gain more by his insidious approaches, than he ever won in open warfare. It was in view of these facts and dangers, and of the means which God had provided to keep alive the love of believers and to encourage them to persevere in the cause of Christ, even in the face of ignominy and death, that Paul wrote this epistle to the Corinthian church. The text commences with a sublime thanksgiving. The being whom the apostle thus extols and praises, is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul here, as every where else, forgets himself—says nothing about consolations as designed for his personal benefit, nor anything about his manifold tribulations to excite pity on his own behalf; but the sole reason why he designed that all should unite with him in extolling and blessing God was, because all the afflictions and consolations which he experienced in the service of Christ, were designed by his heavenly Father to make him a richer blessing to Zion, by giving him greater power to console and cheer believers while suffering in the same cause. Our text then teaches, that all the sufferings and consolation which ministers experience in the service of Christ, are designed to qualify them to promote the consolation and salvation of afflicted believers. This truth may be sustained:

I. From analogy. God in all ages has been wont to bless and to afflict leading men in the community, not to promote their personal good simply, but chiefly to fit them to advance the public welfare. What is thus true in fact is confirmed by the general spirit and language of the scriptures. They represent God as bestowing and sending trials in such a way that it shall be evident that no one is blessed and no one is afflicted for his own sake. He blessed Abraham that he might be a blessing. He blessed his posterity that in them all the nations of the earth might be blessed. He blessed the Jews, not to promote their independent national weal, but that among them the knowledge and the worship of the true God might be maintained, and through their agency be

ultimately propagated through all the other kingdoms of the world. He blessed Cyrus, though a gentile, going before him, gracing his arms with a continued triumph, giving him the treasures of darkness, and the riches of secret places, not to promote his personal glory as a conqueror; but that he might be the instrument to release his people from their captivity in Babylon, and to restore them to their ancient land. God said to him, for Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have girded thee, though thou hast not known me, that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am the Lord, and there is none else.

For the same reason he brings both good and bad men in high stations into great trials and calamities. Job was tried, to refute the charge that he served God only for gain, and to evince to the world and the powers of darkness that his religion was proof against all the assaults of hell. So, too, to illustrate the folly and sin of idolatry, and to prove that the God of the Jews is the only God in all the earth, the three worthies were cast into the burning fiery furnace, and Daniel into the den of lions. And on the other hand, Nebuchadnezzar was driven from among men, and made to eat grass like the ox, that he and all proud monarchs after him might know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Pharaoh was judicially hardened, visited with plagues and overthrown in the Red sea, that in him God's power might be shewn, and his name declared throughout all the earth. God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, making them an ensample to those that after should live ungodly. Yea, the fires of hell are kindled up to be seen forever throughout the holy empire of God, as a warning of the evils of rebelling against the throne of heaven.

II. By reasoning from the *character* of these trials and consolations. The same sort of trouble may be sent on different persons and for different ends. Retributive punishments are designed to be lasting admonitions to the guilty, and proofs of the evils of transgression: Such as the endless miseries of the incorrigible—the doom which the justice of a holy God requires to be awarded them. Another class of trials, called corrections or chastenings, God inflicts

upon his offending children not to destroy, but to re-claim them from their wanderings. If they forsake his law, break his statutes, and keep not his commandments, their heavenly Father will in faithfulness and in holy displeasure visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes: nevertheless he will not break his covenant with his anointed Son, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips, but he will restore his chastened and purified seed, and make them to endure forever as the days of heaven. There is yet another division of sufferings, called tentative, which God sends upon his chosen people, not to punish them, but to try their graces—the strength of their love, or faith, or patience. These are the afflictions to which the apostle refers in our text. He calls them the sufferings of Christ, because they are the same that he endured through all his ministry. He, himself, has given us an abridged account of them. They arose from want, from neglect, contempt, scorn and temptations of satan, and cruel persecutions of men. These are the tribulations which abounded in the life of the apostle, and of all the primitive saints. They were generally chosen, and in them they find rich consolations. Paul well knew, for the Holy Ghost assured him, that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. But none of these things moved him. He still went forward, though he was certain that in doing so he must suffer both hunger and thirst, nakedness and buffetings, and have no certain dwelling place; not counting his life dear unto him so that he might finish his course with joy. Sometimes these trials were brought about in the immediate providence of God without any direct agency on their part. But in both cases they bore them gladly. They gloried in tribulations, and counted it all joy when they fell into divers temptations, knowing that they were endured to give proof to the world of the heavenly origin of christianity, and to make them the more capable of glorifying God in building up his kingdom. These are the different kinds of afflictions, and these the different objects to be gained by them. Let us remember, my brethren, that it is of high moment for us to gain clear notions of the different purposes for which they are sent, otherwise we may rejoice when we should mourn, and exult when we should lie low in the dust. And let us, too, scrutinize with all care and solicitude the state of our minds and our course of life



at the time when our afflictions came upon us. For in this way generally, we may learn why we suffer them, and of consequence, how we should feel and behave ourselves under them. If they came upon us when we were in joy and constantly employed in our labors as ministers of Christ, when it was our meat and our drink to do his will, and we were glad to spend and be spent in winning souls to God, then we may be sure that they are borne for Christ's sake, and that his consolations will abound in us. But if we leave our first love, and become worldly and slothful, and prepare for our public services, and preach to secure applause rather than to make known the Saviour's love, and God to chasten us for this declension, and these unhallowed motives, lay us on a bed of sickness, take away our property, or remove our children or companions by death, or let us see the once full tide of our people's affection ebbing away from us, then we may be sure that these our trials are punitive, and that in them God is not arraying us with glory but clothing us with shame before the world. Our feelings then and conduct should vary at different times according to the manifest end for which we suffer. Whilst the church at Rome justly gloried in their tribulations, for they were sent upon them because they were strong and active, and to make them still stronger and more vigorous, the church at Corinth were bound to bewail their tribulations in deep humility, and contrition, because they were intended to punish them for their riotous conduct before seasons of communion, and for their vain boastings and party contentions. True, James says, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. And it is equally true that Paul said, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but rather grievous. Nor is there any contradiction between them. For they had respect to afflictions sent for different ends, and upon believers in different conditions. James referred to christians strong in faith, burning in love and active in labors, and to trials designed to bring out these graces, and thus to prove that the trial of their faith was in the sight of God more precious than that of gold, being thus found unto praise, and honor, and glory. But Paul had respect to brethren feeble and slothful in duty, and to chastenings designed to purify, to reform and strengthen. It is true, that in one aspect even these grievous chastenings afford ground of consolation; for after they have produced

the primary end for which they were sent, humility and correction, grace will make them yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

But while he suffered them he was full of joy and animation. He knew in whom he had trusted, and felt it to be all honor and privilege to be called to suffer for his sake. He knew, too, the importance of the conflict in which he was engaged, and that victory was his certain heritage. He had the testimony of the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he was a child of God. He had the sweet consolations that his sins were forgiven, that Christ loved him, and gave himself for him, that he had given him grace to preach his unsearchable riches among the gentiles, that God was always with him, causing him to triumph in Christ, and by him making manifest the savor of his name in every place, that the church he served was destined to become an eternal excellency and the joy of the whole earth. He believed that all his conflicts with the power of darkness—that his bright visions of future glory—were intended to cause him to desire more earnestly, and to prepare him to enjoy more fully the crown of righteousness laid up for him in heaven. Yes, it was his faith in his personal interest in the blood and intercession of Christ that made up the grand element in his life, and was the animating principle in his labors and triumphs. With him religion was a great matter, a concern of infinite moment. He ever cherished a deep conviction of his wretchedness and guilt while he was a vile blasphemer of heaven, and a persecutor of the Son of God. He ever remembered, too, that matchless grace which delivered him from the power of darkness, and translated him into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Hence he relates his wonderful conversion again and again, and ever with the deepest emotions of gratitude and praise. When he repeated it in his epistle to Timothy, he was so carried away with thankfulness and adoring thoughts of the transcendent mercy of God in his behalf, that as soon as he had finished it he breaks forth into this sublime doxology: Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, forever and ever, amen. Could you persuade him that Christ is not an Almighty Saviour, and eradicate from his heart his belief that his death is vicarious, and that the promised aids of the Spirit are sure, he would at once be-

come another man. Instead of remaining the champion of the cross, and sacrificing every thing earthly to sustain its glory, he would sink in despair, giving up all hope of his own salvation and that of the world.

III. By reasoning from their influence, both on ministers and on the christian community. And first from their effects on ministers in relation to tried believers. The deep experience of ministers in the christian warfare strengthens their faith, enlarges their views, brightens their hopes of heaven, makes them more pitiful towards poor lost sinners, and more anxious to save them, and greatly increases their love to the Redeemer's kingdom, and their confidence in the appointed means to build it up. Thus they find themselves put in possession of greatly increased qualifications to cheer and strengthen afflicted saints. Now will they not at once conclude that this fitness of character to serve the cause of Zion was brought about for this very end. At any rate, its possession is their warrant to employ it thus. But they do not need this logical process to convince them of their duty. No, their feelings lead them at once to fly to christians who are in any trouble. They know that whilst their tribulations are countless in number and degrees of severity, there is but one way of finding relief, and that is by faith in Christ. Paul tells us in our text, that all he suffered and enjoyed in preaching the gospel was to give him ability to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comforts wherewith he himself was comforted. And what is more natural than that the christian teacher should recommend to any afflicted member of his flock what he has ever found to be his only support in all his own tribulations. It is when his own relief is most signal, and his own cup most flowing that he is most anxious for others to share with him. The renovated patient is ever eloquent in recommending the remedies which have subdued his own pains and diseases, and brought back to him the glow of health. We all soon become strongly attached to the agent or instrument which we have long tried in every emergency, and which we have never found to fail us. There is a charm in both men and things which have brought us relief in our greatest extremities. When the battle sword of Washington, and the staff of Franklin, were recently presented as sacred relics to our national government in Congress assembled, the sight of them brought up



a vivid recollection of the glories of the revolution. For the moment party contests were forgotten, every eye was suffused, and every heart beat with a purer spirit of patriotism. When David saw the sword with which he slew Goliath, he said, "there is none like it, give it me." And he went on with renewed confidence of victory in his own wars with the Philistines.

These trials and consolations of the apostles would greatly cheer and strengthen the brethren. For they were joyfully endured in a cause which they prized above all others; and in building it up, the heralds of the cross were daily waxing valiant in fight, and gaining more and more skill and power in wielding the weapons of their warfare, and paganism with all its abominations was fast retiring before them. Think you that the saints of Paul's day were dispirited and made ready to abandon their efforts to make the Saviour known to the world, and to win over to him fresh converts, by reading Paul's thrilling history of his sufferings, his victories, and his miraculous deliverances from enemies. "Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. - Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness? Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? But thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." How could it have been otherwise than that these facts should greatly animate the disciples with an assured hope of their own salvation, and with confidence that in the same way the gospel was to be propagated in all nations, to bring them under its saving power. We are ever the most animated and most confident when the cause that lies nearest our hearts is supported by the ablest men, and

men, too, who have the same motives to sustain it that we have. When were the puritan wives and mothers more sanguine that the struggle of the Revolution would result in gaining for them liberty and independence, than when they heard of the burning of Charlestown, and of the slaughter of the British troops in the battle of Bunker Hill, where many of their husbands and sons had poured out their blood like water in defending their country. That memorable day was never forgotten by either army, and had a mighty influence through the whole conflict, making the one the more cautious, and the other the more brave.

These trials and consolations will also awaken the affectionate sympathy of the churches. How natural for us to love those who patiently suffer and toil for the sake of promoting our good. What men were ever loved more intensely and by more hearts, than Paul, and Luther, and Whitefield, and Carey, and Swartz. Their success was the joy of all, and the death of each caused a deep pang of grief throughout christendom. This spirit of sympathy is the quick conductor both of emotions and of opinions. We are ever most inclined to imbibe the sentiments and belief of those whom we most love, and to whom we feel the strongest obligations. How then can it be otherwise than that what excited love and enthusiasm in the breasts of the apostles, must have been felt in all its strength by the churches which they had gathered, whatever might have been their outward troubles.

This principle of quick and strong sympathy, is the most important medium of good or of evil which exists in the human mind. By it heroes and orators have wrought their wonders. By it Alexander breathed his own soul into the armies of Macedon, and conquered the world. By it Peter the hermit loosened all the kingdoms of Europe from their ancient bed, and led them on against the Turks to redeem Jerusalem and the Holy Land. And by it Mirabeau infused the spirit of infidelity into the mobs of France, and kindled up a flame of war which for fifty years laid waste the fairest portion of the globe.

In support of our doctrine we will reason from the less to the greater—from the fact that the afflictions and consolations of ministers have been owned as means in the conversion and salvation of sinners. In proof of this we appeal to the his-

tory of the church in the first three centuries. It was then she was most successful in persuading men to renounce the world, and to embrace Christ as their only Saviour. Nor is this strange; for it was then that christians were the most severely tried, and manifested in the strongest light the pure spirit of the gospel, and its power to sustain them whilst suffering every thing that men and devils could inflict. But what thus gave them this unconquerable fortitude, and what made their love to Christ so invincible, were questions which would naturally come over the minds of their persecutors. For they knew that their founder was in their own estimation, a low born and despised Galilean; that his first ministers were illiterate, taken from the common walks of life, having no worldly greatness to arm them with power. They knew too, that the doctrines which these teachers inculcated shocked the hoary and religious prejudices of the Jews and Gentiles, and waged uncompromising war upon all the interests and pursuits which the lovers of this world most highly value. They, moreover, saw that for the sake of publishing this new religion they turned their backs on the world, and sacrificed every thing most dear to man—property, connections, ease, fame, and life itself—that they held on their way unshaken by all the terrors of persecution, and that when they were burned at the stake, or nailed to the cross, or torn on the rack, they spent their last moments in praising God for the honors of martyrdom, and in prayer for the pardon and salvation of their cruelest enemies. Now they could not account for all this without admitting that Jesus was the Son of God, and the only Saviour of lost men; and that the gospel which wrought such wonders was of heavenly origin. In this way hundreds and millions were convinced of the truth and excellency of christianity, and therefore, as persecution thinned the ranks of the saints, new converts continued to fill them up till the Roman empire gave up idolatry and embraced the christian faith as her established religion. And thus it early became a proverb, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. No wonder, then, that this cord of sympathy so efficient in behalf of sinners, should convey into the hearts of tried and suffering professors the joy, and the courage, and the triumphs of their public teachers.

If the trials and temptations of ministers are intended to



make them the more useful, then we may infer that corrections or chastenings for their defects of character or delinquency in duty are intended for the same purpose. In this class of sufferings, as well as in the former, we may be certain that God designs to make them not simply better men, but chiefly better ministers. The best of them are far from being perfect. Their evil propensities are not wholly subdued. Vanity, or pride, or sloth, or worldliness, or love of fame or power, may greatly hinder their growth in ministerial gifts and abounding in public labors, if not lead them far astray in secular matters. When a minister once eminently successful in his appointed work gradually declines, and by and by becomes a zealous politician, or a thrifty farmer, or a celebrated author in mere classical literature or science, the churches will be ready to say, well he is preparing himself for severe sufferings, and for a bitter cup of grief; for we once thought him to be a minister of Christ, and we hope so still, and therefore believe that God will not let him off in this way, but that he will visit his transgression with the rod, and his iniquity with stripes, and make him return to Zion with weeping and supplication. Peter as an apostle, had noble traits of character, but yet he had his faults. He was hasty and self-sufficient. When Christ warned him that he would be left to deny him, he vehemently said, if I should die with thee I will not offend thee in any wise. But he did not then know how dangerous it was to trust in his own strength. He was therefore left in the hands of Satan, to sift him as wheat, and permitted to deny his Lord even in profane language. This was suffered not for the good of Peter only, but more for the benefit of the church. Hence Christ said to him, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Go tell them when tempted, to look solely to me for succor and support, and relate to them your own experience as a warning to them not to be vainly confident that they are proof against temptation. Peter, no doubt, was a much more humble and watchful christian, and a much more useful preacher after his fall than he was before. Paul too was sometimes chastened to keep down the risings of the lingering remains of pride and vanity in his heart. He could but know his superior genius, and his vast resources of knowledge. He knew too, that he was endowed above his fellows with apostolic gifts and miraculous powers. He had

been allowed the peculiar favor of seeing the Saviour's face, and of hearing his voice after his ascension to glory; and had besides been caught up to the third heavens to the paradise of God, and heard unspeakable words—music and language which nothing earthly could reach. Now was there not danger that he, possessing as he did, a heart by nature proud and ambitious, would be tempted to exult in these extraordinary endowments and revelations. Hence there was given him a thorn in the flesh—the buffetings of Satan. For this thing he besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him. But Christ did not grant his prayer; but said: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." He knew that it would be safest for Paul, and most for the good of the church that it should remain with him, reminding him daily of the reason why it was given him,—to prevent him from being puffed up with spiritual pride, and to make him confiding in the power of Christ. And in this Paul acquiesced and said, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Christ says, "I am the vine, and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit." Though it is a good branch, yet he sees that it has some twigs and foliage that check its fruitfulness. He therefore prunes them off; and though the branch may bleed under the knife, still he knows that in this way it will be made more healthy and more fruitful.

Are trials designed to make manifest for the public good the strength of the graces of believers? Then they should be joyfully endured. It is not enough that we bear them in silent patience, but we should be thankful and rejoice that we are called to suffer them. So did ancient saints. The apostles, after receiving a public scourging before a Jewish counsel, departed from their presence rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. They gloried in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, in imprisonments, and in the spoiling of their goods, deeming it a privilege thus to suffer in honor of their master, and knowing that it was given unto them in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, and for his body's sake, which is the church. Nor is this strange, for in this way they best honor God, by re-

fluctuating his wisdom and power and truth and holiness in thus sustaining them whilst suffering in his cause. Besides, he most honored them also; for he thus shewed his confidence in their character, in their attachment to him and to his kingdom, and in their fortitude to endure any tortures that their enemies could inflict upon them. Those soldiers are the most honored who are sent on the most important and most perilous expeditions. Their general herein shews that he confides in their loyalty, and in their superior skill and courage. The scriptures say, "if ye be reproached for Christ's sake, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. Men by their slanders intend to dishonor you; but God for your joyful endurance of them, intends that his own Spirit and glory shall rest upon you.

In view of this subject, we see how important it is that ministers should guard against fainting in the day of trial. This would be inconsistent with their profession, and expose them to just reproach. "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee and thou art troubled." But what is much worse, if in times of tribulation, they betray any lack of fortitude, or any fear of being overcome, they will not only defeat the design of their trials, but they will also, and that too much more than any other class of men, dishearten the church of God. It would be as when a standard bearer fainteth in the crisis of battle. Nothing animates soldiers more than to see their colors floating; and if the bearers of them fall or faint, they will be panic struck, and break and flee before the enemy. Every commander knows that his success depends upon the confidence his troops have in his skill and bravery. Henry the IV., king of France, as he was about to commence the battle of Ivry, addressed his army and said, "Children, if you lose sight of your colors, rally to my white plume—you will always find it in the path to honor and glory." Let us then, my afflicted brethren in the ministry, guard against a course so sinful, so dishonorable and so disastrous.



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## PROSPERITY IN THE CHURCHES :

A Sermon by Rev. STEPHEN P. HILL.

*“ Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified : and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”—ACTS IX : 31.*

This rest was a relief from persecution, occasioned in all probability by the engrossing interest which the Jews at this time felt, in averting a terrible calamity which was threatened against them by Caius Caligula, the then emperor of Rome. He had announced his purpose of sending an army to Jerusalem, to place his statue in the temple, with the name of Jupiter upon it; and had given orders to slay all those who should oppose this determination, and make the rest slaves. In the midst of so great a public terror, it was not likely that the Jews would have either leisure or inclination to persecute the defenceless christians; and Caligula, being soon after assassinated in his own palace, there was a general suspension of hostilities against the churches. They had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified. The manner of expression in this passage, evidently implies that the edification and increase experienced by the churches at this time, was the result of their walking together in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost; and hence, when a church thus walks, it has every reason to expect to be both edified and multiplied. I propose in this discourse to describe the means of prosperity in the churches, and to consider in what their true glory consists. There are many dangerous and fatal mistakes made on those points, and it is important that the subject should be better understood. Many appear to look at a church much in the same light in which they regard some worldly concern, that must depend on certain external aids and ad-

vantages, to give it respectability and success in the eyes of men. Even the settlement or displacement of a minister, has come with many to be received in the light of a commercial transaction. The spirit of worldliness, the rage for popular effect, the principle of sordid calculation, mingle, it must be, confessed, to a very great extent, in some of the church's purest elements, and fall like a blighting curse upon all its spiritual condition. How much reason have all who are conscious of such motives existing among them, to fear the indignant frown of Him who hath said: "Except thou repent, I will come quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of its place."

Guided then only by the light of eternal and immutable truth, let us proceed prayerfully to enquire:

I. IN WHAT THE TRUE GLORY OF A CHURCH DOES NOT CONSIST.

It does not consist *in its amount of wealth*. In the eyes of God, it must readily be conceived, that glitter of gold, or the certificates of bank stocks can have no beauty, and can afford no ground of admiration. He, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, during his sojourn in our world was a poor man. He had not even where to lay his head. And we read of those, of whom the world was not worthy, who wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth. Perhaps the christian church never exhibited so beautiful a moral spectacle, or was so truly prosperous, as when so many possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet; or when afterwards, that persecuted flock of Christ took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and an enduring substance.

A religious society may have worldly wealth, and grandeur, and power, and yet be in the eyes of the Saviour, poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked. It was so with the Laodiceans, and it is so with many a church in the present day, rich in worldly goods, but poor in the graces of the Spirit. Yet let us not be misunderstood. Wealth is a great blessing when consecrated to Christ. It is a part of that beautiful prophecy relating to the glory of the church in the latter days, that its "sons shall be brought from far, *their silver*

*and their gold with them.*" The danger is in the abuse. "Lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou say in thine heart, *my* power and the might of *mine* hand, hath gotten me this wealth." It is the *love* of money which proves so great a curse. Not *money*, as a means of usefulness.

Let us be thankful that amidst the many instances of a covetous spirit, there are some to whom God has given wealth from whom he has not taken the disposition to do good; but who are giving animating proofs of genuine christian benevolence, in the bestowment of private charities; and in the consecration of their abundance to the cause and kingdom of Christ. Such are ornaments, as well as pillars, in the church, and to such as upright stewards, the Lord will say, in the time of reckoning: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into my joy." But they who possess and hoard riches, merely to leave them to their heirs, will leave no blessing with them here, nor secure by them any heavenly friendship hereafter.

Nor do the glory and prosperity of the church consist *in its amount of talent*. True greatness of intellect and eminence of attainment, if accompanied with grace in the heart, and attended with genuine modesty and humility, are certainly of great value. Whatever church possesses such sanctified gifts, possesses ornaments, which it is perfectly proper and pious to covet. But there is a knowledge that puffeth up, and superior ability is not always attended with proportionate humility or honesty. They are not the wisest who talk the most. A superficial pretension to talent often makes its possessor conceited and arrogant. There are those like Diotrefes, who love to have the pre-eminence, and base their claims upon some supposed superiority of this kind.

Now this is a spirit which the whole tenor of the bible most pointedly condemns. "*Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*" "*If any man among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise.*" Nothing is so truly beautiful as the childlike spirit of christianity, or so impressive as the manner in which the Saviour inculcated it. "*At that time came the disciples to Jesus, saying who is the greatest in the kingdom of hea-*



ven? *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Nor does the glory of a church consist *in its numbers*. Additions to the church, if they are of such as shall be saved, are certainly most gratifying evidences of prosperity. But there has been of late a great propensity to swell the list of names, without sufficient regard to the qualifications of candidates. We have no right to reject any from our fellowship whom Jesus Christ has received. But that is the question. Has he received them? Are they truly his? Now on these points sufficient stress is not laid. Sufficient time to decide them satisfactorily, is not given. The anxiety to make a great show of numbers too often prevails over a wise and careful prudence, and the result proves in the long run exceedingly disastrous to the interests of true religion.

The one hundred and twenty disciples who were collected together in an upper room in Jerusalem, and there continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, had more power with God, and were qualified to exert a greater moral influence on the world, than the thousands who composed the Jewish church. It is not the multitude of beings that constitutes prosperity, it is the holy and harmonious spirit that pervades them. "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, better than the vintage of Abiezer?" Is there not more beauty, more strength, in a well chosen, well united, well disciplined band, than in armies, brought together without suitable qualification, without proper views of duty, without harmony among themselves, or fidelity to their standard? It was Gideon, and his three hundred men, that put the hosts of Midian to flight,—and how soon would the church baffle the powers of darkness, and the hosts of hell, were all her professed adherents "called, chosen and faithful." But alas! how many there are who weaken her strength by the mere profession without the reality of godliness! How many that are ready to follow her standard in form, but desert it in principle! How many that profess adherence to Christ in words, who, when called to the performance of some self-denying duty, or to the sacrifice of some favorite sin, turn back and walk no more with Him! Hence, it is not what a church is for six months, but what

it is for six years, that proves its true glory and prosperity.

Nor, once more, do these consist *in mere occasional religious excitements.*

On this point, I desire to be explicit. Revivals of religion are God's work. When correctly understood, and when truly what they profess to be, revivals of vital religion, produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit, are the greatest blessings that the churches can crave. By a revival of religion, we understand that divine work of grace, which promotes an increase of holiness in the hearts and lives of christians, and the conversion and salvation of the impenitent world. But how important it is that we should distinguish here, between the mere movements of animal passion and the genuine operations of the Holy Ghost! You must readily perceive, that much that passes under the name of revival may be spurious, and that such abuses of it may some times take place, as must cause the pious heart the greatest grief. By such abuses, too many churches are led to suppose, that instead of pursuing a steady, calm, persevering course of piety, they must regard religion as a periodical thing, and make up for all deficiencies and errors, after a dark and dreary interval of declension, by the effervescence of their long sleeping zeal. Such a religion, instead of being recommended by a consistent, uniform example, and adorned by the daily beauty of the life, will be very apt to be marked by, at best, fitful endeavours, and equivocal evidences, if not stained by acts of open and glaring inconsistency. It will scarcely be the religion of patient continuance in well-doing. Another bad effect of these spurious kinds of excitements is, that they create a morbid appetite for something novel, amusing and exciting; and leading the mind away from the calm contemplation of God, from the silent study of his word, and from the sweet scenes of family and closet religion, give it an unnatural craving for something, it hardly knows what; and create in it a fastidiousness, that at length is satisfied with nothing at all. In addition also to what has already been remarked, it may be here again stated, that there is danger at such times of gathering in all the subjects of a prevailing religious excitement, as soon as they can be persuaded to make a public profession of religion. Nay, they are oftentimes urged to this course without seeing their own duty clear; while others, more

forward, are frequently received without sufficient attention to their previous moral habits, or present religious character. Now all experience proves this course to be perilous. Multitudes, it is to be feared, are thus hurried into the churches, who prove, after sufficient time has elapsed, that they never had the root of the matter in them. According to a beautiful comparison of Edwards, there will be during the blossoming and budding of a revival, many fair flowers that will bring forth no fruit to perfection, or none but bad fruit. Shall then no time be allowed to test the truth of these promises? Does not every dictate of prudence, and every principle of benevolence teach us wait a while, till we and they may see whether their hope is rooted and grounded, or whether they are only stony-ground hearers? If it be said that the apostles received their converts without any delay, the answer is that the present times will bear no comparison with those times when martyrdom looked the individual who dared to profess himself a christian, full in the face. Our only basis of judging ourselves and others in these times, is the patient continuance in well-doing. Our only test is that which the Saviour has laid down in these words, "by their fruits ye shall know them," and why should there not be reasonable opportunity allowed to observe those fruits? Evidence of a work of grace should be sought and demanded of every candidate who would seek a union with the mystical body of Christ. Otherwise he is not likely to adorn his doctrine, or to be comfortable and happy in the situation in which he will be placed. He will be very likely ere long to be dissatisfied with the self-denying duties of religion and to give trouble to those with whom he is associated. And he may indeed, for a while, be attentive to the form of godliness, display great zeal, and seem to evince sincerity, but when tribulations, or persecutions arise because of the word, he will be offended and fall away. Such persons mistake the nature of true and acceptable religion, and having not sufficient depth of principle, the first scorching heat withers it away. Their hearts are not radically changed; and it cannot be for the honor and happiness of a church to have within its bosom those who never having been truly converted will either require excommunication from the body, or remaining as component parts of it, will eventually subvert its spirituality and work its destruction.



## II. WHAT THEN DOES CONSTITUTE PROSPERITY IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH ?

A church is a company of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have voluntarily associated themselves together for mutual edification, and for the enjoyment of those divinely appointed means which their great Head has left to be observed, and by which he designs that they shall be sanctified. A church is a society with this peculiarity, that its frame and constitution are of divine appointment, and its gradations of station are arranged by God himself. It is a society of persons called to be saints, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit, and chosen to shew forth the praise and promote the glory of the Father. The model of such a society may be seen in the first christian church at Jerusalem, the description of which is contained in the 2d chapter of the Acts of the apostles, from the 41st to the 47th verses inclusive. Except as varied by some unimportant circumstances, this description will apply to the christian church every where and in every age. Their having possessed at this time all things in common, was merely the result of their peculiar circumstances,—their exposure to every form of violence which the strong arm of a persecuting power could employ. In other respects, the character and constitution of the church in every age is the same. How beautiful was the spectacle thus exhibited ! It was not necessary that such a church should be enclosed with the magnificence of external accommodations. They needed no splendid and imposing ritual. The gorgeous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish temple service, were insignificant in comparison with the glory of that worship which ascended from purified and sanctified hearts ; and all outward grandeur were as nothing in comparison with that internal peace and prosperity which He affordeth, whose residence is the humble and contrite spirit. Here was the associated strength of goodness, of gentleness, of faith, of joy, of love. Here was the budding of that communion and companionship, which leaving the sorrows of earth, is destined to unfold and expand into the full-blown glories of immortality. Here was the great design which God had in the organization of such a society, realized by the increase of holiness in the souls of believers and the conversion of sinners to the knowledge and obedience of the truth. Now where these great

ends are attained, a church is in a prosperous condition. If collectively and individually, it is growing in grace, advancing in the knowledge of God, and made useful to the world, then its prosperity is certain. It will be both edified and multiplied. Let me specify a few particulars.

1. The prosperity of a christian church consists *in the character of its members*. I have said before not in their wealth, or their talents, or their numbers. I now say in their *character*. What is a true christian character? We need not be long in answering this question. The genius of christianity is peculiar. It differs from any thing recognized by the world, and yet it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The character of the christian is the character of Christ; the lowliest, yet the sublimest of all character. Now if we would learn what the character of Christ is, we must study it in the four Evangelists, and in the Epistles of the New Testament. Go and make it your constant study, and stop not at admiration, but imitate and live. "*Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*" Transcribe on your own character the meekness, the benevolence, the humility, the love, the goodness, the gentleness of Christ, and aim to exhibit in dazzling lustre and attractive beauty, from your own life, those graces of the Spirit which alone can constitute the evidence of your filial relation to God.

"Thus shall we best proclaim abroad,  
The honor of our Saviour God,  
When his salvation reigns within,  
And grace subdues the power of sin."

Then, whether we be many or few, whether rich or poor, in this world's goods, we must of necessity, exert a powerful influence in the community where we reside, and ultimately on the world at large. We shall be like a city set upon a hill, whose light cannot be hid. In our individual, and also in our associated character, we shall shine as light-houses in the world, holding forth the lamp of life. We shall be living and beautiful exemplifications of the truth and power of the gospel, standing out to the eye of the community as a holy and distinctive people; and the effect will be great indeed, in giving efficacy to the means of grace, and aiding the ministry in the great work of saving souls. Every mem-

ber would thus be an epistle known and read of all men, and would win by his lovely deportment all who came within the sphere of his influence to the Saviour and to heaven. Many would say, we will go with you for we are persuaded that God is with you. Yea, nations would go and say, come let us go up to the house of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob, for he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

2. The prosperity of a church depends in a very great degree, upon *the mutual respect and confidence between the pastor and the people*. The limits of a single discourse, especially of a single topic, will not admit of the mutual duties of this relation being explained as they deserve to be. Much depends upon the character of the minister, and much depends upon what his people make him, and upon the manner in which they uphold his hands, and support his labors. Popular and attractive qualities, fine speaking, eloquent sentences, and brilliant images, have never appeared to us the most desirable qualifications to be sought, or at which to aim in a christian pastor.

“ I seek divine simplicity in him  
Who handles things divine.”

A minister should aim, in our opinion, rather to be useful, and that in the long run, than showy and popular for a season. If we have not wholly misapprehended the nature and design of the ministry, its object is best promoted by laboring diligently and perseveringly in a plain and serious manner, as under the eye and approbation of God, and doing from the heart the Saviour's work in his own way. The minister should, indeed, be possessed of gifts. He should have, if possible, the advantages of learning. He should be especially, mighty in the scriptures, and he may be an eloquent man. But above all, he should be pre-eminently a man of piety and prayer. Luther's remark was, that three things made a divine, prayer, meditation and temptation: and it is related of the celebrated Austin of Hippo, that being asked what was the first thing in the ministry, he said, “*humility*.” When asked what was the second, he answered, “*humility*,”—and what was the third, he still returned the same answer, “*humility*.”



Now, in order to render a pious and devoted minister's labors useful and efficient, there must be on the part of the people, a spirit of sympathy, and of kind co-operation. He is but a man, a weak and imperfect man at best; a man of like passions with others. Take these things into consideration. Where you can make allowance for him, put, if possible, the best construction upon his conduct, and try to uphold and guard his reputation. If this is taken away, the right arm of his influence is broken, the moral sinews of his strength are paralyzed. He must have a good report of them that are without, and his good name is infinitely more precious to him than the costliest ointment. Do not take it away from him. Do not watch for his halting. Do not wrest his words. Do not misrepresent his actions. Do not exaggerate his faults. Do not seek to pick flaws in his character. Do not make or listen to insinuations against his motives. Do not conspire against his peace. All this is unworthy of those who bear the christian name, and directly contrary to the express commands of the word of God. Your minister, whoever he may be, is a man. Your kindness to him may make him a better and more useful man, but his faults; as I have some where lately seen it said, increase like snow-balls by being rolled about, and when you once have spoken against him you feel compelled, right or wrong, to substantiate it. Try, therefore, to deal kindly and candidly with him. Encourage him. Come with your families, like Israel's tribes, to the house of God, and animate his heart, and your own, by the sublime spectacle of a thronged sanctuary. Go out and invite guests to come in, and throw open your doors with cordiality to the stranger. Fix the eye, and open the ear, enjoin silence, and, above all, seek for the preparation of the heart which is from the Lord, and your minister will be animated. But coldly enter, and carelessly sleep in the house of God, or lock up the heart in the gloomy and frozen cells of indifference and worldliness, and what zeal, though it be the zeal of a seraph, could survive in the midst of such discouragement? With an aching and broken heart, he would utter the mournful lamentation of the prophet: "I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for nought." Unless a people sustain a man therefore by their sympathies, by their prayers, by their exertions, by their good lives, his ministry will not be efficient, the

church will not be in a prosperous condition. No preaching on earth could be rendered effectual under such circumstances. And though an angel from heaven should preach the gospel, which the imperfect man must now preach through much weakness of the flesh, still the effect would be the same. It is no difficult thing, and I fear no uncommon thing, for the members of a church to defeat entirely the great ends of the ministry in this way. The beloved John felt this, and therefore exhorted in his day: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things that we have wrought among you, but that we receive a full reward." The apostle Paul felt this, and therefore cast himself on the prayers of the brethren, and besought the fellowship of their sympathy, so that the word of God might have free course and run and be glorified. The Lord Jesus himself refers to this when he exhorts the church of Sardis.—Rev. iii : 2-3.

3. The prosperity of a church depends upon the harmony and wise administration of its *government*. This is a matter certainly of some importance. I have given much attention to this subject, and I am not aware that any particular mode of government is in the New Testament clearly and unequivocally laid down. Without, therefore, speaking dogmatically upon the subject, I may say, with my present light, I believe that the independent form was the primitive one, and is the preferable one. The independent form, however, like all others, it must be admitted, is liable to abuse, and, except in a church, every individual member knows his duty and his place, and is disposed to respect the stations which God himself has arranged, and to regard the authority which God himself delegated; if these stations are to be usurped, and this authority to be despised; if secret extraneous influences are permitted to work in under-currents against this very independence, and individuals of artful policy may be found, from any motives, to presume to dictate where they have no right to dictate; the independence of such a body exists only in name. Give me a government for protection, not for destruction, for comfort and security, not for annoyance, for the maintenance of my just rights, not for throwing my rights, and feelings, and character, to the winds. No, if a church professes to be independent let it be independent. Let it not submit to dictation in any form, but let it respect that official character which God

himself has vested with authority for the good of the whole, and without which all government is but an unsubstantial shadow. It is a want of a proper understanding of these things, that makes mischief in churches. The government of a church is not sufficiently understood; above all, the bible is not sufficiently studied with a view to the relative duties of members. If these relative duties were better understood, the churches would be in a better condition. There would be fewer contentions. Every one would be better likely to know his place, and the beautiful harmony of the whole would be preserved. The church would then be like an imposing temple, built of living stones, each in its appropriate station, and all according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, would make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Good men would look on and joy to behold your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. Angels would smile with satisfaction, and even the world would exclaim: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

4. But I must close with this remark, that the prosperity of a church depends, above all, upon the crowning influences of the Holy Spirit. "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." The comfort of the Holy Ghost! What an expression, and how much it conveys. Do you see a church walking in these? It must of course be a lovely, a happy, and prosperous church. Do you see a church destitute of these? Surely you then see a state of spiritual decay and fruitlessness, and death. Without the influence of the Holy Spirit, all other means are of no use. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase, and where the increase of God is not given, there is no spiritual prosperity. A congregation may deem itself strong in wealth, in numbers, in union, and the possession of all outward accommodations, and abundance of means, ordinary and extraordinary. But without the presence of God it will be smitten with spiritual decay and sink into stupor and death. It is the presence of God in his sanctuary, that constitutes its real glory and prosperity, and makes it the gate of heaven to those who worship there. It is his Spirit attending the ministration of his word and ordinances that renders them



profitable to the people, and builds them up in faith and love. And the first prayer that should be breathed from a back-sliding heart, or from a declining congregation, should be that of the Psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. *Restore* unto me the joy of thy salvation. Uphold me with thy Holy Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Yes, *then* shall sinners be converted unto God. *Then*, when Zion puts on her beautiful garments, shall she look forth fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible to her enemies, &c. *Then*, when God is merciful to us, and blesses us, and causes his face to shine upon us, shall his way be known upon the earth, his saving health among all nations; what convincing reality and power would such a spectacle of individual holiness and collected grace carry to the world! What an object of mingled delight and awe would it be! How would God be pleased to bestow upon us greater blessings as our faith, and love, and holiness should increase, and how should we be enriched with all spiritual knowledge and grace, with the assurance of understanding, faith and hope! Then might we arise and shine, our light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon us! Then should our light break forth as the morning, and our health should spring forth speedily, and our righteousness should go before us, and the glory of the Lord should be our reward. Then should we call, and the Lord would answer, we should cry, and he would say, "*Here I am.*" O Lord be here with us! O Lord forgive! O Lord hearken and defer not for thine own sake! O my God, for thy city, and thy people that are called by thy *name*. Hear now I beseech thee O Lord. O Lord I beseech thee send now prosperity. Amen.

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## INDEX FOR 1847.

JAN.—The Conversion of Paul the Apostle, by Rev. David Shaver, Richmond, Va.....	1
Editorial Address.....	15
FEB.—The Christian Theory of Social Happiness, by Rev. John N. Brown, Lexington Va.....	17
The Pulpit, incidentally, by the Editor.....	35
MARCH.—The Perfection of Revealed Truth, &c., by Rev. J. J. James, of North Carolina.....	37
The Criticism of Sermons, by the Editor,.....	51
APRIL.—Christ Crucified, by Rev. A. D. Gillette, Philadelphia.....	53
MAY.—Eminent piety in the Church essential to the successful prose- cution of the Missionary Enterprise, by Rev. John Teas- dale, of New Jersey.....	65
"Ye are bought with a price," a short sermon, by Rev. Robt. B. C. Howell, D. D., of Tennessee.....	83
JUNE.—The Divine Rectitude, by Rev. J. L. Reynolds, of Va.....	85
The Efficacy of Prayer, by the Editor,.....	94
Support of the Ministry, an extract from a sermon of Prof. S. G. Hillyer, of Ga.....	97
JULY.—The Mammon of Unrighteousness, by Rev. J. R. Scott, of Virginia.....	102
Moral Culture, especially in youth, by Rev. David Shaver of Virginia.....	114
Editorial Note.....	125
AUG.—Ministerial Ordination, by Rev. R. B. C. Howell, D. D. of Tennessee.....	127
Note by the Editor.....	144
SEPT.—The Universal Dominion of Christ, by Rev. A. T. Holmes, of Georgia.....	147
Impediments to the Progress of the Gospel—an extract....	166
OCT.—The faithful Minister's Course, by Rev. Jas. C. Clopton of Lynchburg Va.....	167
Meditation—an extract,.....	180
NOV.—The Certainty and the Justice of the Destruction of the Sin- ner, in his Rejection of the Gospel, by Rev. Wm. Hill Jordan, of N. C.....	183
DEC.—Ministerial Education, by Rev. John N. Brown, of Va.....	199



# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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January, 1847.

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## THE CONVERSION OF PAUL THE APOSTLE:

A sermon preached by REV. DAVID SHAVER, pastor of Grace Street Baptist Church, Richmond, Va., before the Strawberry Association, at Hunting Creek meeting-house, Bedford county, Va., May 10, 1846. Published by request of the Association.

*And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.—ACTS IX: 6.*

The gospel is a system of lofty claims, and of mighty achievements to comport with them.—It asserts a title to the whole earth, now burdened and crushed beneath the misgovernment of Satan. Every development gives forth indication of a power, which can neither subside into inactivity nor crumble into decay, competent, when the fullness of time shall arrive, to reduce the vast, the disputed, the pre-occupied inheritance to possession.—It declares that its visits and its bounty have been ordained for all people, nations and languages. Though veiled and shrouded in mist by the errors of its advocates, we behold it this day, with strong elastic step, marching rapidly along the path to acquaintance with universal human nature and triumph over her. Glorious are the conquests which abide thee, oh! word and counsel of Almighty God!

When the events of this world are arrested in their course,—when Jehovah shall look over the immense page of moral character corrected from its errors, and stereotype it for eternity,—when the spirits of just men made perfect shall, then, set themselves down to trace christianity through all its influences, a pure diffusive leaven to the mass of mankind, it will be found that the primitive age of the church, its mere infancy, its dayspring, vies with every subsequent era in the splendor, if not in the number, of its monuments to divine



grace. The entire sacramental host admitted into the holy Jerusalem, thronging the streets which though of gold are even as transparent glass,—the personage mentioned in the text shall stand second to none, in illustration of the power, and wisdom, and mercy, which, through the second Adam, have brought life everlasting to the defiled posterity of the first. His writings and his history shed mutual light upon each other. Alike by his pen and by his experience is he announced to us as “a pattern of *all* long-suffering in Jesus Christ,”—an irresistible demonstration that the covenant and the promise throw their embrace around “the *chief* of sinners.” For his recovery from the bondage of the evil heart, it was necessary that the arm of the Lord should be revealed, breaking through the moulding influence of early education, the inveteracy of more mature prejudice, the solicitations of interest, the intoxicating hope of distinction, the intense and terrible excitement of successful persecution, and that strongest chain of captivity to the devil, the pride of self-righteousness. What joy should pervade the bosom when we remember that the same agency, without coldness in its love, or check in its omnipotence, or change in its faithfulness, attempts the arduous work of salvation for our infirmity, and goes forth into the bosom of society, under its present lowering aspects, breasting and rolling back the floods of iniquity. If this salutary lesson may engrave itself more deeply upon a nature, even after its renewal, prone to timidity, we shall be amply rewarded for a patient and particular examination of the text. To this let us now address ourselves, with humble prayer for the instruction of the Holy Ghost, the light of earth’s darkness, the vision of man’s blindness.

I. First, then, consider HEROIC PAUL—TREMBLING.

Here and there, in the annals of our race, noble spirits appear, pregnant with enterprise, intrepidity, valor and fortitude,—the suns of successive generations, kindling a halo of glory around their names, their countries and their times. They have “looked on tempests and were never shaken.” They have been firm to hold the helm of the laboring vessel and to guide it safely over the troubled sea, or to sink when it has been engulfed, with a lip that would not pale and a heart that would not fear. They have been animated by the sublime sentiment, “that the best buckler is a breast which does not dread to show itself uncovered to the enemy.”

When all the elements of society around them have been spurred into fury,—when desperation has maddened the spirits of men, and the thirst for blood has flashed its lightning from the eye, they have stood, collected and serene, communing with their own high thoughts, which could neither be trammelled nor convulsed,—as the mountain summits take no share in the unrest of the clouds driven about by violent winds.

In this rank Paul finds his proper level. Confident, without vanity—daring, but not reckless—knowing his own strength, yet unwilling to despise the weakness of others—combining a philanthropy that wept over the sorrows of humanity, with a magnanimity that confronted fearlessly its wrath,—his career in the ministry, if marked by all the forms of opposition, was no less distinctly characterized with the features of a tranquil superiority to them. He was afflicted with stripes above measure; he was often thrust into prison; once was he stoned; thrice suffered he shipwreck; but these things did not move him: could not. His soul renewed the flame of its energies and made strong the bands of its perseverance, though he was encompassed with perils by his own countrymen, with perils by the heathen, with perils in the city, with perils in the wilderness, with perils of robbers, with perils among false brethren. No fear sent its unmanly chill shivering across his breast, or relaxed his grasp for a moment from the sword of the Spirit, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings, in cold and nakedness, in deaths. This true nobility of nature, when troubled on every side forbade that he should be distressed; when perplexed, interposed its shield against despair; when persecuted, assured him that he was not forsaken; when cast down, whispered in his ear, with tones which aroused to unconquerable ardor, thou shalt not be destroyed.

And yet it is this man, the dauntless, the lion-hearted, who stands before our view in the text "*trembling!*" Why should the agitation and affright which he never knew *before*, or *after*, take hold upon him now? Why? The veil which conceals God from mortal eye had been rolled aside, and the divine presence shed its awe upon him. Why? The robes of his own righteousness had been torn away, and he appeared in the nakedness and deformity of guilt, before the inquisition of his Judge. Why? The arrows of the Most High

were sticking fast in him, and holy anger, like an immeasurable ocean, heaved to and fro its waves of liquid fire, threatening to submerge the persecutor of Christ.

This deep and harrowing emotion of Paul need not surprise us. The expectation of wrath is natural to man. The conviction of wrong and of retribution, in the highest degree, wears the color of certainty about it. The conclusions of reason how luminous soever, the visions of imagination in all their grandeur, the ardor of affection kindled to its most eager intensity, have no such power to enchain us—to cast upon us a spell which we may not dissolve—to stare us in the face fixedly with a gaze from which we would but cannot turn—as the moral faculty, with still small voice denouncing our unrighteousness. The most keen and exquisite sense of inward torture impressed upon human nature, is that which the displeasure of God inspires in its holiness and severity. There is nothing under which we may not support ourselves better. It has thus been wisely ordered, that depraved intelligence should everywhere writhe beneath the scourge of its own guilt. Luther wrote to Staupitz, “Oh! my sins! my sins! my sins!” What shall blunt and turn the edge of that sword which the jealous Avenger of sin thrusts oft and deep into the heart which hates him!

The fierceness of the vengeance of God (not to dwell upon the more comprehensive points of the doctrine,) appears from the fact, that for man’s sake he has dealt by the material creation as if at enmity with it. The ground was cursed, it brought forth thorns and thistles, because of the transgression of Adam. The rivers of Egypt were turned into blood to rebuke the pride of Pharaoh. The harvests of Canaan were checked and blighted, and eaten up by famine, the valleys which were sown were not eared, that the eyes of Israel might be opened upon his wickedness. In every clime nature, by its convulsions, “seems to toll the death bell of its own decease.” When this indignation comes to deal with the soul nakedly, how much more awful must its stroke be!

There is language of David, which, I have sometimes thought, presents God in a more terrific attitude than when he is said to spring upon his adversaries roaring as a lion and tearing in pieces. It is so expressive of his dignity, even when he fills the office of destruction; it so strikingly exhibits the composure of the divine nature as unruffled by the



storms which drown a corrupt world in despair. "He shall speak unto them in his wrath,"—only speak unto them,—and they shall consume away.

Now, from the apprehensions stirred within us by these things, those who will not renounce their sins can take no shelter in Christ. To him, indeed, the nations have been given. Not for purposes of mercy alone, however, but for purposes of wrath,—of wrath so terrible that even kings and judges perish from the way when it is kindled but a little. The impenitent are like a potter's vessel. The power of the Lamb of God, who is also seated as a king upon the holy hill of Zion, is a rod of iron. He will break them with it, dashed and shattered hopelessly.

II. Secondly, consider PHILOSOPHIC PAUL—ASTONISHED.

The most potent instrumentality which can be brought to act upon man is mind. The tongue of Cicero "preserves Rome's greatness yet;" more mighty far than all who led her to conquest, bringing us into captivity with thought! A "peasant's son" immured in the castle of Wurtenburg, with his pen moves the world, and reforms it. One whom kings called an "ignorant tinker," in Bedford jail, tracing the progress of the pilgrim to the skies, sets the seal of his genius and piety upon all future ages. Mind, by the ordination of God, is the lever of illumination and purity to our race. Hence, at intervals regulated by his own designs, when it has become necessary to change the countenance of former systems and to send them away,—or when the gathering, swelling currents of intellect have threatened society with destructive inundations, if a wider and a deeper channel were not opened for them, he has raised up men of capacious powers, fitted, according to the crisis *in* which and *for* which they lived, to pluck up or to plant, to pull down or to build. To them it has been given of Providence to serve as pioneers in the march of virtue and intelligence; for others more than for themselves to "ascend the brightest heaven of invention;" to fire the world with an insatiable thirst after a new and better order of things; to cradle in their own bosoms the feeble germs of future improvement and elevation to empires; to loose the cords of ignorance and superstition from the eagle wings of truth, that, unrestrained in her flight, she may speed with full-spread pinion to the uttermost parts of the earth. When our species have stood, weary and panting, before a

steep ascent on the mount of gradual progress toward perfection, these "myriad minded," men have been called to plant the foot firmly upon the rocky heights above, and to reach down a mighty hand, lifting up to their side the multitudes of more humble endowment.

In this gifted class, we must place the great apostle to the gentiles. The peculiarities of mental character in the penmen of holy writ, received maturity from the spirit that gave them utterance. The epistles of Paul prove that he was enriched with that rare combination of brilliancy and depth, of boldness and accuracy, which always distinguishes the higher order of genius. He saw things, not only as they are seen by the common eye, in development; but he saw "the seeds of things;" and his productions are full of them. He walked indeed beside the waters of truth in all their diverse meanderings; but he also went up to the fountain head, and standing there took in at a single comprehensive glance their entire course, as they flowed glittering on in the light of heaven. Under his hand, the mysteries of the gospel assume their most definite and tangible shape. Men are brought nearer to them by him, than by all "the choir of the prophets, and the company of the apostles."

But when Christ was revealed to him, he was "*astonished*." He was filled with perplexity and wonder. His philosophy was put to shame. His opinions underwent a total revolution. To him was made foolish the wisdom of this world. The stumbling block became power unto salvation. He learned now that the cause which he opposed was the cause of God; of that God in whose name he opposed it. For the first time, he caught a glimpse of that amazing economy, which links the Old and the New Testaments as distinct but harmonious members in the same system of divine moral government. No subject, perhaps, more forcibly displays human blindness. Give your thought to it a moment.

When it has been resolved to throw a bridge across a river, piers are erected; masses of solid stone work are upreared. Let one ignorant of the design visit the work in this stage. He might ask, what possible connection is there between the huge piles which you are building up? How shall men pass from one to the other, separated as they are by the dashing waters? Self-fancied superiority of wisdom might exclaim, oh mad expenditure and wastefulness of labor and

means! Urge forward the enterprise to its completion. Place the bridge upon these foundation pillars, span by span. It will be seen that, though apparently isolated, that which was to come after them, and to rest above them, answers as a bond of union, enabling them all to effect what none of them could effect alone. In like manner has God carried himself toward mankind, to bring them over the wide and dangerous stream of ignorance and guilt to the land of life. To this end, at one point he raised slowly the patriarchal pier, sprinkled with blood. After a space, the Mosaic pier lifted its majestic but unique proportions aloft, wreathed with a cloud of incense. And again, the pier of prophecy, with its column overwritten in mystic characters, juttied up toward the sky, gleaming with strange rays of splendor, while the sun which shone upon it could not be seen. There they stood, masses of the solid stone work of truth, defying all the vehemence of the angry, turbid, raging floods. Yet unbelief

"Blind from the birth,  
And dark in things divine,"

pressed the inquiry, what are these the one to the other? How shall our frail feet make their way upon them? But when Christ came out into open manifestation in the flesh, his doctrines and his righteousness were built upon these several dispensations, giving humility a path from the region of the shadow of death, to the delectable mountains of grace and hope. Then was it seen, that these things though standing apart, were all constructed upon the same plan; were fashioned upon a common line and model; were designed each in its own place, to support the scheme of mercy which has been provided as an inheritance for the world, as its patrimony from the Father of lights.

When this, the brightest page in the records of the universe, was spread before the eye of Paul, it was meet that he should be "astonished." This feeling was heightened, I am sure, by the discovery that the author of the religion which he had rejected and despised, did not in turn despise and reject him. The circumstances under which he perceived that the gospel emanated from God, brought into peculiar prominence its most striking feature: the exceeding riches of divine grace even toward the enemies of the cross.



Christianity was intended to secure the highest end by the highest means. With its dignity, however, it has condescension, confessing no equal in either. It contemns no one, not the lowest. It hates no one, not the most malignant. It forsakes no one, not the most abandoned. It asks for every one; calls upon every one; pursues, and importunes, and prays, and besieges every one; it turned not away its face from its most inveterate opponent; its "enriching moisture drops on all things;" even the barren rocks which will know no fruitfulness.

III. Thirdly, consider PERSECUTING PAUL—SUBDUED.

Bigotry has no ear for the voice of reason. As well in religion as in philosophy, those over whom it reigns are generally least open to conviction. It brings heat to the bosom without light—the heat of inflammation. It marries the creed, in a union seldom terminated by divorce, to the most malign and uncompromising passions, bred by "religious spite and pious spleen." Paul, prior to his conversion, was a bigot. He was taught according to the most perfect manner of the law of the fathers. After the strictest sect of the Jews, he lived a Pharisee. He was zealous toward God with that zeal, the offspring of tradition and self-righteousness, which dotes about questions and strifes of words, with envy, evil surmises and gallings one of another; which developed this tendency to the full in his generation, and must, in some measure, have taken the same direction in him.

When this spirit, in connection with power, seeks to bind the belief and to coerce conscience, it becomes seven-fold a fouler thing. Why should it not be the more intractable when it exchanges solicitation for the sword, enforces doctrine with the gloom of dungeons, and preaches faith by fire and fagot? Oh, if the hands be dyed with the gore of a fellow-mortal—if murder, with her troop of blood-hounds kennel in the heart—if, while the eye knew no pity, we have violated and tortured the body which God has thrown within our grasp, to obtain tyrannical supremacy over the soul which he has reserved unto himself, how hardly shall the angel of truth find access to a nature thus lawless and infuriate against her! Were there but one exception to the sentiment of Swedenborg, that few men are so decidedly wicked, as upon death to merit immediate confinement in hell, we must seek this exception in the persecutor. Such

was Paul. The witnesses who stoned the first martyr, Stephen, laid down their clothes at his feet—he, also, consenting to the death of that holy man. He made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women to prison. When they were robbed of life, he gave his voice against them. At Jerusalem he punished them oft in the synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme. Nay, being exceedingly mad against them, he pursued them with his malice even unto strange cities. The incident recorded in the text, occurred while he was on the way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, with authority and commission from the high priests to light there the torch of violence and destruction.

The blind and delusive persuasion of the justice of persecution, above all things, aggravates its bitterness, guards it against compunction, and freezes it into adamant. Let Satan but palm his sophistries upon men as the counsels of God,—let them mistake wrath for righteousness,—let them flatter themselves that the eye which inspects the universe marks with complacency their track of cruelty and oppression—rather than fail of their prey, they would draw blood from their own veins to sign the death-warrant of the righteous—the righteous, honored of heaven, yet despised in their sight as a carcass trodden under foot. This chain, also, was upon Paul. He verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He warred against the gospel with incredible activity; but he did it in “good conscience.” If he was “injurious” to the church, it was “ignorantly, in unbelief.”

So entirely was the poison of Jewish prejudice spread throughout his bosom,—so profound was the darkness in which his misguided spirit groped, that before he would believe, it was necessary recourse should be had to miracle. It was necessary that he should be stricken down at noon-day, in weakness and terror. It was necessary that he should be surrounded and dazzled by a light above the brightness of the sun when he shineth in his strength. It was necessary that Christ, appearing to him as to one born out of due time, should say to him with astounding emphasis, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” When his eyes were thus opened upon himself, in departure from all the preferences and probabilities of his former life, casting

himself down from the heights of presumption and obstinacy, he enquired of Him whom he had ever hated in his heart of hearts, with the voice of humility and the spirit of obedience, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" Sublime triumph of divine mercy! The fiercest of the fire-brands was quenched in the blood of Christ.

That was a day of excitement and storm, of rumor and doubtfulness, and sorrow and rage, which brought Jerusalem tidings of Paul's defection. It has seemed to me that I could look into the scowling eye, could catch the hasty, bitter tones of the Pharisees, as they grouped together at the corners of the streets,—not to pray as their wont was,—but to speak of interest—of mercenary motives—of delusion—of changelings, and hypocrites and renegades. This was their folly. Let heaven's own curse rest on apostacy from truth. But stay, stay thy hand, thou worm of fallibility and passion! lest haply thou shouldst smite with the rod those, who in renouncing thy creed, have but followed the guidance of celestial wisdom. Wouldst thou "be found even to fight against God?"

The conversion of Paul sheds impressive illustration upon the design of our holy religion, and upon its efficiency in the consummation of that design. An ancient writer affirmed, that from the philosophy then in vogue, "men learned not to live, but to dispute." The Bible, however, teaches us not to *dispute*, but TO LIVE! It appears before the world, in the grand and awful sublimity of its divine origin, for no trivial purpose. Re-echoing the thunders of Jehovah, it portrays in frightful colors the horrible guiltiness of the human heart. All melodious with the tones of mercy in Christ, it proffers to throw over the dark picture, the snow-white robe of a pure and spotless righteousness. These influences are of such character as to set the spirit in motion; so to arouse its slumbering energies to some "high or humble enterprise of good," that they shall never relapse into supineness nor corrupt into iniquity; to purify the imagination, to chasten the affections, to illumine the understanding, to restore to conscience its scale and rod,—and when they have taken their chiefest perfection, to lay them, a living sacrifice, upon His altar who has purchased us with blood, even his own. Ye who have never *obeyed* this volume! I charge you this day with having opposed and defeated it, in the benevolent mission upon which it has been sent forth to you.



Those who are led by the gospel will observe the will of God, as the Israelites in the wilderness were guided by the cloud which covered the tabernacle. While that cloud rested, whether for a week or a year, whether in scenery decked with nature's loveliness, or on the sterile bosom of the leafless desert, they abode in their tents. When that cloud was taken up, whether by day or by night, whether in the bridal or the burial hour, whether during the bright and blushing spring, or amidst the storms of frigid winter, they set forth again. Thus will the sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd, and walk in his steps. "Christ is the image of God, and every believer is the image of Christ." Said Gregory Nazianzen, of his mother, "her principle of action was, to make every thing subservient to religion." Cotton Mather writes, "I will relish all my enjoyments, even to my very meat and drink, chiefly, and if I can merely, under the notion of my being assisted by them in the knowledge or the service of God."

IV. Fourthly, consider EDUCATED PAUL—INSTRUCTED.

Minds of the nobler type are eager to "seize upon truth wherever it is found." *Can they neglect it?*

"You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps  
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,  
And tell me it is safe."

Tarsus, the birth place of the apostle, was, in his age, a seat of learning, the co-rival of Athens and Alexandria in schools of philosophy and the polite arts. We may not question, therefore, his proficiency in that richest of all ancient literature—the Grecian.—This city was also the capital of the surrounding province. The mighty machinery of Roman law was there laid bare to inspection. Nor would an enquiring and talented youth forego an opportunity to penetrate the genius of the most perfect system of national government ever constructed by man, without the light of holy scripture.—Beyond this. Studious of the true religion, Paul went up to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Gamaliel, the most eminent teacher of his times, had in reputation among all the people. There he profited in Judaism above many his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers. Into what glowing

emotions must his ardent spirit have kindled,—how comprehensive views must have expanded and oppressed his intellect,—as he gazed, with eye intent and rapt, upon the revelation of God vouchsafed to his flock “at sundry times and in divers manners,” while all that Moses recorded, or David sang, or the prophets foretold, passed in its glory before him! However, in the great question of salvation, these literary, political and theological acquirements availed him nothing. The scholar, the pharisee, was ignorant. He had not learned the lesson of obedience to the one Lawgiver. It remained yet to be told him what he should do to inherit eternal life.

Yea, verily, God has not deposited the treasure of heavenly wisdom with the wisdom of this world. It is not nourished at the breast of antiquity. The lips of science do not proclaim it. These are not its interpreters. It does not stand before their mirrors. They have employed every engine to scale its mount; and employed them fruitlessly. I would not undervalue these things; it were better I should suffer a hundred deaths; but they attained their maturity without having known “truth, the daughter of the skies.” They may be engrafted upon her, I allow:—would God they were!—they cannot bear her. While they have stood in the palaces of kings, and in their own palaces, robed in the gorgeous apparel of pride, she, in the tattered garb of poverty and reproach, has been driven for shelter to “holes and clefts of the rock.” She has been beaten with the staff upon which they have leaned for support,—they have beaten her.

Only God can bring man to himself. If we see light, it must be in his light; no other. We are wise through the illumination of his wisdom.

The example before us involves another principle. Why did not Christ then respond to the enquiry of Paul, and declare to the trembling one, the astonished one, the subdued one, his duty? Why was he required to arise and go into the city, to learn from the lips of a man that which God refused to teach him from his own lips? In the case of Cornelius also. Why was the angel that came in unto him forbidden to unfold the secret of the Lord? Why was he directed to send for Peter, a worm of the dust like himself, and to receive at his hands the word of eternal life? The answer is obvious. Instruction in the things of the Spirit

must be sought through its constituted channels. The period of supernatural visions and trances has passed away; and the period of audible voices, and emblematical appearances, and angelic manifestations from the sky; and the period of secret impressions, breaking off the train of mental exercise within, and shedding over the judgment, without intermedium, a flood of celestial lights. Laying aside these elements of miraculous communication with mankind, the divine Teacher, whose purposes they subserved for a season in the times of ignorance, now proclaims the gospel through the written word and the living ministry. The temple of truth completed, the mere scaffolding, though worthy of a heavenly architect, has been stricken away. Are doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness requisite that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works? For these things the scriptures have been given by inspiration. Did Christ seek to edify his body, till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a man of full stature and strength? With this design he appointed, with apostles and prophets for the first age, evangelists, pastors and teachers for all ages. These two points are presented elsewhere in a single passage. "Faith cometh by hearing." Let all men, therefore, give earnest heed to the heralds of the gospel. "Hearing cometh by the word of God." Let the heralds of the gospel, therefore, restrict themselves to its accredited and sanctifying truths. It is as the depository of these things that the church is styled "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all;"—since the counsels of God are published to the world, not by his own voice, but by the voice of his servants; and to their care as "stewards of manifold mercies," as well as to divine supervision, is entrusted the law which enlightens the eyes and makes wise the simple.

If this view be correct, we must hold that the Holy Ghost is in the christian ministry, enlightening and converting men. The Spirit testifies to us of Christ, and we bear witness unto the world. Peter announced our distinguishing excellence when he spoke of us as those who "preach the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Christians are the flock returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers among them. This sacred power will infuse itself into our words of weakness.



If this view be correct, it argues the invariable presence of the Holy Ghost with the Bible. The author of a book lives in it. It is—himself:—thinking, speaking, pleading. But in a sense in which it may not be affirmed of any other book, the author of the Bible is with it everywhere. The Holy Ghost, in his real presence, as truly draws nigh to the minds which peruse it, as erst he drew nigh to the minds which penned it. Here it graces a centre-table, finding a position so prominent for the sake of the external elegance with which it glitters. The Holy Ghost is with it here! There it lies upon the corner of an old shelf, half buried under dust and cobwebs. The Holy Ghost is with it there! Look, then, at your copy of the Bible, and reflect, the Holy Ghost is in that book. We come into a clear and profitable acquaintance with the doctrines of the gospel, only through that Spirit which gives to the word an evidence above all the evidence of argument, however logical, and a power above all the power of truth, however unadulterated and pure.

In conclusion.—My brethren in the ministry! and my fathers! I am not called to set forth before your emulation the example of Paul. He has long been your model of sacrifice and labor. Continue to be followers of him, even as he also was of Christ. Catch yet more and more of his spirit, and communicate it to me, ye men of God!

But will those who have hitherto “thrown their inch of time away,” suffer a warning and a plea of christian affection? My hearer, all who hope to rejoice with Paul, must first *tremble* with him. How numerous are the considerations which “speak thunder” in your ears! Recall the magnitude and enormity of your transgressions. The righteous judgment of the day of wrath, when the heavens shall be bowed with the burden of divine majesty, and the heart of the wicked with the more fearful burden of divine vengeance, shall “render to every man according to his works.” While, therefore, unbelief is the ground of condemnation to the impenitent, while it must bind them in chains under darkness forever, the intensity of the fire which shall kindle upon them will be aggravated by *all* their unrighteousness. Every sin—of thought, of word and of action, shall find its own retribution; shall add bitterness to the cup of sorrow; shall introduce another arrow into the quiver of holy anger; shall open a lower depth before the fall of the shrinking

spirit, which reaches forth after hope and grasps the stings of despair; shall increase the wretchedness which even without it is untold, immeasurable and fathomless. Your iniquities have increased over your head, and your trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Can you look upon the reckoning which awaits you and feel no dread? You feel no dread? Tremble, then, that you do not tremble! It is no task of difficulty to preserve this composure of mind, until it shall have destroyed you. Scarron, the poet, who spent his life in merriment, resolved to be gay upon his death bed. Almost with his latest breath he said, "I never thought it was so EASY a matter to *laugh at the approach of death.*" So EASY a matter! In this or another state of being, the sinner shall employ similar language. I never thought it was so easy a matter to make my heart hard against all fear. I never thought it was so easy a matter to brave the terrors of the Lord what time they come nigh to us. I never thought it was so easy a matter to step into hell with smiles. I never thought it was so easy a matter to be damned before we are alarmed. I never thought!—If I had, I would not now be found in this condemnation. I NEVER THOUGHT! Oh ye dying souls,—dying, yet laughing,—THINK! THINK!! Subdued, as Paul was, cry this day, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And may He who has saved the chief of sinners save all ye!

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#### EDITORIAL ADDRESS.

In appearing again before the patrons and readers of this paper, as its sole Editor and Proprietor, we beg leave to submit a few remarks, respecting, *first*, the conditions of the publication, and *secondly*, its subject-matter and prospects.

1. *Its conditions.* The present number commences the sixth volume. In this series the volumes will not be numbered; and thus each volume will be as totally independent of the rest, as if it were another work. The price is so low as to place it within the reach of every family, minister, deacon or Sunday school teacher;—of almost every individual. It conflicts with no cotemporary work in the denomination, but is in fact a co-adjutor of all. The Editor hopes that the present year will secure a large accession

to his list of subscribers; and, if there were need of it, he would mention the grounds of his hopes: but this he deems unnecessary. This is a favorable period of the year for subscribing,—the beginning of a volume:—and the easiest method for doing it is, either that individuals send their names with the money, per mail, at the risk of the Editor, in gold, or notes of any specie paying bank; or that parties of individuals, say of six, or twelve, or more or less, enclose their names and payments together. This will secure every fifth copy free to any one of the party so remitting. Every minister of the gospel may be thus supplied with the work, at no other expense, than a little trouble. Thus, indeed, he may be supplied with all the religious, denominational periodicals of the day; without the least departure from the sphere of his ministerial vocation, and of course, of his official standing. Nay, he is thus conferring a great favor upon those whose co-operation he solicits, and is promoting to an untold extent, the various schemes of benevolence and usefulness, which are, after all, the noblest feature in the physiognomy of this wonderful age. In dismissing this part of this hasty notice, the Editor returns his sincere thanks to the individuals who have so kindly acted as voluntary agents in procuring readers and remitting funds, and requests a continuance of their favors: favors which evince the value of the enterprise in their estimation, and without which it could not have been undertaken, or if undertaken, must soon have fallen into ruin.

2. *Its subject-matter and prospects.* The Preacher is, what it aims to be, and what its name imports; it preaches, and it is essentially, not a sectarian, but a denominational work. Its sermons, in the main, considered in their literary character alone,—as mere compositions,—have been declared by competent and disinterested judges, equal to any pronounced or written in any age or country. This is as high a reputation as we could have expected; and we intend to improve. In its religious character, its doctrines are those that have been handed down from the apostolic days—and its discipline, on which several invaluable discourses have appeared, has been that of the great family of Baptists from time immemorial. On this latter subject alone, there were two sermons in the last two years, by brother Chambliss of Alabama, which, in our judgment, ought to be in the possession of every Baptist family in the United States. Either of these sermons is worth the whole year's subscription. And the first five back volumes are now offered at half the subscription price: thus making them free of postage to the subscriber. But it is important to remark, that hereafter, the editions will be only commensurate with the subscription list.

H. KEELING.



# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

New Series.

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## THE CHRISTIAN THEORY OF SOCIAL HAPPINESS:

A sermon preached before the Valley Association, at their session in May, 1846, by Rev. J. NEWTON BROWN, of Lexington, Va.; and published by a vote of the Association.

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*Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said : It is more blessed to give, than to receive.—ACTS xx : 35.*

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The rarity and publicity, the solemn and joyful character of this occasion, combine to awaken some unusual expectation in the minds of the assembly. A stranger as I am to most of you, brethren, did I appear here only to court your applause, the consciousness of the increased demand on your part, would only increase the difficulty and embarrassment on mine. But this house of God is not a theatre for display. You have come here for another purpose, and so have I. You have come to hear something appropriate to the hallowed design of this christian assemblage,—something that will do you good,—something that you will be glad to remember when this meeting of our happy family of churches is over, and you are returning to the ordinary business and trials of life. On this ground, brethren, I meet you to-day. On this ground I have something to say to you, and I can speak it with the cheerfulness and freedom becoming a minister of Christ. I know that without him we can do nothing ; yet I bless him for this opportunity. I wish to set before you, as a body associated for his service and glory, a fundamental principle inculcated by him,—a principle that cannot be too often repeated, nor too strongly enforced, if we would see his cause flourish and prosper throughout the churches, and to the utmost bounds of the inhabited world. If this be, as I trust it is, the supreme desire of your hearts,—for ye are the messengers of the

churches, and the glory of Christ—I have only to request you to turn with me to Acts xx: 35, and *remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

If we were to judge from the conduct of mankind generally, we should say, either that they had never heard these words, or that they did not believe them. If we select from the mass of mankind even the professed followers of Christ, and judge from their ordinary conduct, the best we could think of them, *as a body*, would be, that though they might have heard or read of this great maxim of their Master, they had either been strangely blinded to its meaning, or had as strangely forgotten to make it the rule of their own conduct. Brilliant exceptions, in modern times, as well as in the primitive ages of christianity, there doubtless are, not only in the higher, but also in the humbler walks of life. But these exceptions, by their very brightness, only serve to throw the great mass of professed christians into the deeper shade.

I need not, I am sure, detain you a moment in any critical observations on the text. It is a matter of no consequence to inquire when and where these words of the Lord Jesus were uttered, and why they are not expressly recorded by the four Evangelists, in their brief memoirs of our Saviour. It is enough for us that they are here recorded. It is enough for us that they were well known, and proverbial among the primitive christians,—insomuch that the apostle Paul, in his touching farewell at Miletus, only deemed it necessary solemnly to call them to the remembrance of his brethren. It is enough to perceive that the vital spirit of the words, the great and paramount principle which they inculcate, breathes in every page of our Saviour's history, and warmed every pulse of his affectionate heart.

That principle it seems impossible for any one who reads the words to mistake. It is clear that our Lord meant to be understood as laying down this great and comprehensive maxim,—that social happiness consists rather in *doing*, than in *receiving* good; that our own happiness is best secured by endeavoring to promote the happiness of others; in other words, that christian benevolence, as opposed to selfishness, is the only true foundation of both public and private felicity. This is the great principle which I propose to illustrate.

Yet I confess, my brethren, I feel as if it were almost wrong for me, who am so poor a proficient in this lesson of our Lord, to attempt to explain or enforce it upon you. Though, for more than twenty-five years past, I have sought to make it the basis of my social life, yet I feel to-day, before God I deeply feel, that much of my own conduct lays me open to the keen rebuke: Physician heal thyself. But when I reflect how much our ignorance of the vast extent of the principle of the text, combines with our natural sloth and selfishness, to obstruct the progress of the cause of Christ, I feel like the blind and indignant Son of Manoah, when his hands grasped the pillars of Dagon's temple, and he said: Let me die with the Philistines. And when again I reflect what mighty consequences under God, have flowed from rousing the attention of the community to some great principle of social improvement, revealed in the Scriptures, but generally overlooked, I am ready to adopt the prayer of Sampson on that memorable occasion, when he bound himself with all his might, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes,—rather let me say of my own sloth and selfishness, for the blindness which they have brought upon my soul. And did my intellectual bear any proportion to his physical strength, gladly would I put it all forth, at any sacrifice, to make you comprehend and feel the truth, the extent, and the personal application of the words of the Lord Jesus, *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

I affirm then, on the authority of these memorable words, that christian benevolence, as opposed to selfishness, is the only true foundation of public and private happiness. I say christian benevolence, because no other can be found in our fallen nature, sufficiently comprehensive in its aim, pure in its motive, powerful in its practice, or persevering in pursuit of its ends. The benevolence of mere constitutional impulse, however amiable, is partial, unsteady, unconnected, and inefficient. The benevolence of infidel theorists, however plausible on paper, is practically still inferior, being in fact but a disguised and calculating selfishness; as indeed was confessed by Lord Bolingbroke and Jeremy Bentham themselves, the great leaders of the Utilitarian school. But



genuine christian benevolence is utterly opposed to selfishness,—by which last term I wish to be understood, not as intending a subordinate, innocent self-love, but self-love in its unholy excess, usurping the throne of the soul in the place of conscience and of God, and in that proud position, directly opposed to christian benevolence, and to both public and private happiness.

I. Since all things are most vividly and strongly illustrated by contrast, I shall endeavor by that means to make you comprehend, in the clearest manner, the distinction and opposition between these two great principles of action. I know not how I can more forcibly impress you with the wisdom of our Lord, in laying down his great maxim of christian benevolence, than by asking you first to look for a moment at the consequences which flow, not from *adopting*, (for alas, it is too congenial to our fallen nature to need adoption,) but from *acting* upon the opposite principle.

These consequences are all around us. They are within us. Alas, the world is full of them! Sin is but selfishness in its ten thousand forms; and every selfish spirit acts upon a latent maxim the very reverse of that inculcated by the Lord Jesus. This maxim, brought out from its disguises, and put into words, would be: It is more blessed to *receive*, than to *give*; or, as the modern phrase is, “keep all you get, and get all you can.”

Now for the application of this principle in practice. “Keep all you get;” that is to say, let no one be the better for your strength, talents, or learning,—for your labor, skill, or experience,—for your prayers, property, or influence. Happiness is your being’s end, and happiness consists in the free gratification of your favorite desires. If your taste be for good eating and drinking, for fine clothes, houses, furniture or equipage, indulge yourselves, without regard to others, except to see that you lose nothing by them. Waste nothing upon the wants of the improvident poor, who are only idle, impudent and ungrateful. If your taste be for books, gratify yourself alone. Shut yourself up in your library. Never lend a book, for it will be sure to be injured or lost; never communicate your knowledge, for people always hate to be told the truth. If you care for none of these things, and love nothing but money, secure your drawers and chests; see that your securities are good, and your stocks safe; com-

fort yourself with looking over your notes and bonds, your deeds and mortgages, your houses and lands, your silver and gold. Never think of any good your money might do to others,—how many destitute sufferers it might relieve,—how many schools it might establish,—how many tracts and other useful books it might procure for the benefit of thousands,—how many evangelists and colporteurs it might send out in our neglected settlements,—how many missionaries it might support among the heathen,—how many Bibles it might translate, print and circulate in the languages of the perishing people, to make them wise unto salvation. No, these are all visionary schemes with which no prudent man will trouble his head. Keep all you get for yourself; and when you must leave it in the course of nature, leave it all to your children, or family connexions,—whether they need it or not,—whether it will be likely to benefit or ruin them. In a word, you may be a glutton, you may be a book-worm, you may be a miser, only keep all you get.

But the one half of this miserable story is not yet told. The latter part of the maxim of selfishness infinitely exceeds the former. "Get all you can," that is to say: be the sponge of the community. Stick at nothing to get along in the world—drive your business night and day, early and late; allow yourself no pause for prayer, no parenthesis for reflection. Determine to be rich; no matter though thereby you plunge yourself into temptation and a snare, and into foolish and hurtful lusts, which, the Bible says, drown men in destruction and perdition; all this is nothing if you can only become independent,—if you can only acquire the character of an industrious, sharp and stirring man, who knows how to do his own work, and drives his own bargains. But you say you cannot dig. Never mind, then beg. Be a drone in the hive of society, and suck the honey from every one who is generous enough to feed you. Ask favors and kind offices of all, but render as few as possible in return. "Get all you can." But you say, perhaps, to beg you are ashamed. Well then, continues the lying spirit of selfishness, since you must live in some way, and cannot afford to live honestly, get over all scruples of conscience, as you have those of honor,—covet that which is your neighbor's, and get all you can. Steal, lie, cheat, swindle; be a forger, a counterfeiter, a highwayman. Or, if you despise

being a vulgar villian, be a genteel one. Get into some lucrative office, no matter what, or how; never trouble yourself about discharging its duties beyond what is unavoidable; neither be scrupulous about accounting for all that you receive,—that is the concern of your employers. If ejected at length for abuse of trust, be sure to get all you can. If that be not sufficient, resolve at least to “*die game* ;” gamble, drink, quarrel, kill your man like a hero, or be killed yourself; as to consequences, you have nothing to fear after death,—hell is all a bugbear,—heaven a dream,—death an eternal sleep,—religion superstition,—and of all superstitions, that of the Bible is the worst.

Do you say, hold! this is too horrible. I know it is, most horrible. But it is a most horrible reality. All this is but selfishness fully acted out. All this is the natural, and alas, too frequently the actual consequence of the diabolical principle: it is better to receive, than to give. How many thousands has it landed in irreligion, libertinism, atheism? All these forms and more, selfishness assumes; to all these tremendous results it necessarily tends; and, however kept under check and restraint by the benignant providence of God, still every desire, every thought, that springs from this odious principle, has essentially the same hateful and abominable character. O how can we expect the church to prosper; how can the world be made happy; how can we hope for the approbation of conscience, the esteem of virtuous beings, or the blessing of a holy God, till we from the heart abjure all the specious and glozing maxims of selfishness, and mourn in brokenness of spirit that the time past of our life has been so much under their accursed and withering dominion.

II. Let us now reverse the scene, and contemplate the operation and effects of christian benevolence, as enjoined in the words of the Lord Jesus. How bright, how pure, how exhilarating the contrast! a contrast that must forever magnify the power and riches of God’s regenerating grace. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works. This change of heart, this radical reformation of the soul, dethroning selfishness, and enthroning the love of God as the ruling disposition there, lays the true and lasting foundation of christian benevolence. He who becomes a happy *giver* on christian principles, is first a happy *re-*



ceiver. Profoundly conscious of this, his love is clothed with humility. Remembering his past condition, his present infirmities, his utter unworthiness in the sight of God, he is prepared to feel the force of the exhortation: Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Yet look at this man, who with sincere, though distant steps, is following the example of the Lord Jesus in going about doing good, and tell me if he has not caught something of the spirit of a purer and better world.

Observe his faith. He takes his position at the foot of the cross. There he beholds Him, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor; that through his poverty we might become rich. There his faith moulds his soul to pity. Observe his gratitude. Hear him saying: What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Thus his very gratitude turns into prayer. Mark his conscientiousness. I am a steward, he says, of the manifold grace of God, and it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. His faith, love, humility, gratitude, pity, prayerfulness, conscientiousness, all prepare him to be a worker together with God, in the great work of doing good. His work and his example are before him. Conscious that his opportunity is the only limit of his obligation, he lays himself out to do good unto all men, and especially to the household of faith. His heart set on this great object, and stimulated by the sweet and affecting motives of the gospel, teems spontaneously with desires and plans of christian usefulness, and his hands toil with delight in the execution of his benevolent purposes. His field of usefulness is wide as the world, and he only regrets that his means are not as extensive as its miseries. We are not without facts, my brethren, to justify this representation. You, yourselves, in your best moments, have realized what I now speak; it is the experience of some of you which I describe; far as you yet are from the glorious standard of perfection, after which you aspire and press. Let us now trace the beautiful operation of these benevolent principles upon the christian character, and then see if it is not truly, more blessed to *give*, than to *receive*.

Adopting and acting upon this great maxim of Christ, you will set a proper value upon personal *industry*. You will prize and practice productive labor, both of the body

and of the mind, as the means of multiplying the common stock of wealth, wisdom, and happiness; enabling you thus to give to him that needeth, as well as to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Your heart, head, hands, voice, pen, and influence, will be all appropriately and diligently employed. Time will be precious. The day that has been passed without doing any good to others, you will, with far more reason than the emperor Titus, account a lost day. Health will be precious; and for this end you will seek to preserve and invigorate it. Your moments of relaxation from labor, your social enjoyments, your gushes of domestic tenderness and endearment, your play of buoyant wit and brilliant fancy, your very overflowings of innocent and irrepressible mirth, will all be chastened, regulated, sanctified, by continual reference to this end.

You will practice also a wise and generous *economy*. In order to be liberal to others, you will retrench selfish superfluities. You will aim to merge private in public interest. You will study simplicity, rather than splendor. You will husband valuable resources. You will make a prudent selection of the channels in which the streams of your bounty shall flow out to bless the world. In the use of money, your principle will be, never to decline any obvious call of Providence; but as a faithful steward, to use it so as to do the greatest possible good with the limited means entrusted to your management.

With the same view you will, as much as possible, reduce all your affairs to *system*. You will study order in your business, and method in your charities. You will remember that God has made every thing beautiful in its season,—that there must be a time to *gain*, as well as a time to *give*. You will recollect that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace; and that order gives completeness, clearness, dispatch, harmony, and beauty. You will not forget that the great plans of christian benevolence make up a vast and glorious system; all the parts of which require to be regularly supported, to accomplish their ends of mercy in the salvation of a lost world. You will not forget that an order was given to the apostolic churches, to give an uniform action to their christian benevolence,—making their sweet sacrifices of love as regular as the return of the christian Sabbath, and ever increasing their amount in grateful proportion

as the Lord in his providence should prosper them. I know no finer example of this in modern times, than the late excellent Nathaniel R. Cobb, of Boston, a member of the Baptist church in Charles street, under the care of Dr. Sharp. With him, this was a matter of solemn covenant with God; and God so prospered his faithful servant, that in the short span of fifteen years' business as a merchant, conducted with the most exemplary integrity and honor, he earned and gave away (besides an ample provision for his family,) more than \$40,000, to promote the cause of Christ.

Acting upon this great christian maxim, your mind will become accustomed to *self-denial*. You cannot advance a step in your generous enterprise, without crucifying sloth and selfishness. This daily cross you will take up in the strength of Christ, that you may daily follow him. Like Paul, you will learn to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection to your great end. Even your vagrant thoughts will be arrested, and brought into sweet captivity to the work of Christ. Your meat and drink will be to do the will of him who sent you forth on your great errand of usefulness.

I need hardly add that the principles of christian *equity*, will, by force of this great maxim, strike their deep roots yet deeper in your soul. You will deeply feel, what so many seem to forget, that to do good to others, you must begin by fully conceding to them the same rights which you claim for yourself, as a man, as a citizen, and as a christian. To wrong others in the least degree, by the violation of justice or truth, in thought, word, or deed, would defeat your very object. To be generous, you must first be just. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Your mind, by following out this comprehensive maxim, will gradually form the noblest habits of *candor* and *meekness*. Habitually seeking to mitigate the miseries and multiply the happiness of all your fellow men, you will despise none below you; you will envy none above you. You will speak evil of no man; you will think evil of no man. Your clear eye, will not, through the blinding beam of prejudice, magnify motes into impassable mountains. It will be as open to virtues as to faults; rejoicing not in iniquity, but rejoicing in the truth. On every excellence of character in others you will dwell with pleasure and thankfulness;



every defect that darkens its brightness and disfigures its beauty, you will seek, by sympathizing prayer, and tender fidelity in secret, to remove. And O the rapture of the thought. *If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother!* When opposed in your benevolent designs, and even when suffering the greatest provocations of insult and injury, you will remember that charity suffereth long and is kind. You will think of him, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. You will commit your cause to God. You will be superior to the meanness and selfishness of revenge. You will nobly pity and pray for your worst enemies; and win that grandest of all victories, the conquest of evil passions in yourself and others, through the might of the Lamb of God. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

A *divine complacency, peace and joy*, will thus be shed abroad in your heart. Be it so that you cannot command success in executing the best designs. You still have consolations which are superior to all contingencies; you have the testimony of a good conscience; you have a refuge in prayer; the sweetness of kind affections is still as an oil of gladness in your heart; the Spirit of God beareth witness with your spirit that you are his child. If disappointed in your own attempts, you are yet happy in seeing and hearing of the good done by others. Let the Lord work by whom he will, you can rejoice, and you do rejoice, that the desirable good is done. But embarked, as you are, in the cause of infinite goodness, you cannot always be disappointed in your own exertions. The God of love and peace will be with you. He will bless you and make you a blessing. At his word obstacles unexpectedly give way. Even your temporary trials shall be for your good. Your very failures shall teach you caution. They shall work humility, patience, diligence, prayer. They shall thus bring you nearer to God, and his love shall breathe into your soul new ardor, confidence and hope. Every holy purpose shall be refreshed, and the wisdom profitable to direct, shall be richly bestowed at your request, by him who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.

Thus, almost of necessity, your mind will become *active* and *original*. I use these terms in the best sense. The liberality of mere impulse may not be coupled with knowledge; but it is always, and increasingly so, with the liber-

ality of principle. This latter cannot thrive without great efforts of thought, reflection, contrivance. As a great degree of selfishness will make even a fool cunning; so a great degree of benevolence will make a wise man still wiser. It will invent new methods of doing good. It led John Howard to explore, purify, and reform all the prisons of Europe. It impelled Andrew Fuller to invite and persuade the whole christian world to unite in a monthly concert of prayer for the success of the gospel; William Carey to offer himself as the first English missionary to India, and to execute translations of the Scriptures on a scale unparalleled before in the history of the church; William Fox to propose the first society for the support and universal diffusion of Sunday schools; Joseph Hughes to suggest and organize the first great society for the spread of the Bible throughout the whole world. It moved our own Judson to take that first decisive measure which aroused American christians of every denomination to the great work of evangelizing the too long neglected heathen; and to give himself the first and brightest example of American missionary self-sacrifice. The spirit of which I speak, will not be satisfied to do no more than others do. It will work not only in public, but in private; not only with others, but if need be alone and in advance. It will not only be steadfast and unmoveable, but always abounding in the work of the Lord. As the political economist contrives for the advancement of his country; as the public spirited citizen contrives for the improvement of the town; as the affectionate parent contrives for the welfare of his family; so will you, my christian brother, contrive for the advancement of the cause of Christ. As the merchant exports large quantities of his goods, to secure a richer return; as the farmer sows a portion of his grain in the spring, to reap a richer abundance in autumn; as the enterprising get subscriptions for canals, rail-roads, and factories, for the sake of gainful investments in the things that perish; so will you search out the best investments for your means of doing good. The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand.

And here permit me to observe that the disposition, which in relation to the movements of christian benevolence, is constantly suspicious of doing too much, and of going too far beyond the measure of our fathers, is a spirit of an ill

omen. Such a spirit, my brethren, instead of carrying the church of God forward into the promised brightness of the last days,—when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun, sevenfold,—would not even raise her up from her present state of darkness and declension. It is not the spirit of Elijah, or John the Baptist, or Paul, or Luther, or Menno, or Roger Williams. It is not the spirit of Christ. It is not the spirit of one who feels that it is more blessed to give, than to receive. It may attempt to hide itself behind the cover of the Bible; but its anti-mission hiss betrays the serpent fang of selfishness. It may array itself in the garb of orthodoxy; but in kicking at the cause of temperance, it reveals the cloven hoof of antinomian heresy. And yet these wretched misguided men glory in the name of “primitive Baptists.” Tell it not in Gath! My brethren, how is it possible for a true Baptist, a genuine believer in the primitive doctrine of grace, to cherish a disposition so utterly at war with its whole spirit and tendency? How is it possible, I say, when the whole plan of our redemption, from first to last, from the foundation to the topstone, is one stupendous contrivance of disinterested divine love,—without a precedent and without a parallel!

I know indeed it has sometimes been insinuated from a different quarter, that a belief in our free election of God, and its kindred truths, tends to paralyze the energies of christian benevolence. Much as we respect the love of these good brethren, we must be permitted to marvel at their logic. As if a cordial belief in the most amazing overflow of mercy in the universe, should tend to shut the heart against the sentiments of mercy! No; rather, as all facts and experience will testify, this very belief is adapted to dissolve all the frost of selfishness within us; and to rouse up every faculty of the soul to that godlike beneficence, which is the best return we can make to God for his transcendent kindness towards us. Such was the doctrine of St. Paul. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering.

Once more. The full operation of this benevolent principle, will raise you to *real greatness in the kingdom of God.*

Why does a benevolent and holy enthusiasm kindle at the



names of Howard and Hughes, of Fox and Fuller, of Carey and Judson? It is not that their talents were originally so much superior to others, but that they applied them more sacredly to beneficent purposes; that they lived not for themselves, but for the good of others and the glory of Christ. If the secret of their moral greatness were whispered from heaven in our ear, it would be this,—they remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, which you have forgotten: it is more blessed to *give*, than to *receive*.

Do I wish then to infuse ambition into the hearts of christians? Would I have them all aspire to greatness? I would. But the design, you say at once, is altogether visionary—not to say suspicious. Not at all, my brethren, if understood according to the christian definition of the term. Greatness, in the worldly sense, is doubtless out of the reach of most us, and it is happy for us that it is. Great talents, great fortunes, great intellectual attainments, are the lot of few; great stations, and great celebrity, the lot of fewer still. But is there no greatness except that which is surrounded by the blazonry of this world? Yes, my brethren, another and a nobler order is opened to us all, by the goodness of our God. It is nothing impracticable, absurd, impossible, deceptive, perishable. No; many have already attained it; many more are yet to attain it,—perhaps all in that brighter age which is just at hand. I mean that true greatness, which holy disinterested love will confer upon you in the esteem of God and all good beings. I mean that true greatness which was exemplified by the meekest and loveliest One that ever trod this earth; and by him urged upon all his followers: Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Do you say that you feel nothing of such an ambition,—that if this be all the elevation we offer you, you are content to be a christian of a less lofty standard? Craven spirit! Is it true or false humility, that is content to be little here,—that loves low degrees of excellence,—that shrinks from the bright example of the Saviour,—that would debase the standard of christian duty,—that would in effect deny an obligation expressly enjoined in the word of God, and indis-

pensible to any great advancement of his cause on earth? For what great object was ever accomplished under heaven, without great risks, sacrifices, and exertions? Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Yes; hear it christians; let unbelief, under the imposing names of philosophy or prudence, say what it will,—let corrupt nature within our own hearts, with its thousand soft and specious tongues, plead the contrary as strongly as it may,—it is still an everlasting truth, that christian love is not selfish. The character which our Bible gives of charity is, that she seeketh not her own; and if that charity reign not in our bosoms, whatever in the sight of men may be our pretensions to the christian name, in the purer eyes of him who looketh on the heart, we are nothing.

“Nor tongues, nor faith, nor fiery zeal,  
The work of love can e'er fulfill.”

Having now finished the illustration of the great principle of the text,—the principle of christian benevolence, as opposed to selfishness,—permit two or three words by way of application:

1. This subject is profitable for reproof.

The human heart is a world of passions. But if the love of doing good do not predominate over every desire of personal enjoyment, certain it is that there is something wrong within,—something very unlike Jesus Christ. For be it so, that personal enjoyment in some form or other, is the summit of desire with unregenerate men,—conceding that with such their own worldly, or possibly on self-righteous principles, their future happiness is systematically regarded as their being's end and aim,—is it, therefore, such with those who have been renewed after the image of the God of love, in whom old things have passed away, and all things have become new? How then could the apostle John (as he does) make that love which seeketh not her own, the decisive evidence of regeneration? Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

If then, brethren, the possession of this love and its prevalence within us, be the sole criterion of genuine piety,—

and if all in whom it reigns, feel it more blessed to give than to receive,—let us carefully cultivate, and habitually exercise it,—or let us cease to call ourselves christians. What does our baptism amount to, if we are not baptized into this spirit? Why should the temper of Belial reign in the church of Christ? If any man defile the temple of God, says St. Paul, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy; which temple ye are. Who will dare then to pollute it with covetousness? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

2. This subject is profitable for correction.

If the spirit of benevolence be so essential to christianity, how comes it to pass that in daily practice, we are no more under its bright and cheering influence? Evidently, in part, my brethren, because we are influenced so much by the old habit of thinking and acting like the rest of the world, who have their portion in this life. And still more, because after all that God has done for us and in us, there yet remain so many of the poisonous dregs of selfishness at the bottom of our hearts,—sometimes swelling and scorching our bosoms with pride, anger and envy,—sometimes kindling them fiercely with sensual desires,—sometimes chilling them with avarice, aversion, or fear,—sometimes petrifying them into a profound indifference to the claims, wants, and woes of our perishing fellow-men. It is but here and there, you find a christian's spirit in a healthy and vigorous state. It is but here and there, you find a christian church in a flourishing and prosperous condition. The family, the neighborhood, the nation, are not what they should be, and might be. Complaints abound in every circle; some complaining of others; some, though fewer, of themselves. All feel the disorder of society; but few seem to know the cause, and fewer still, the remedy. Almost all of us have yet to learn what that meaneth: It is more blessed to give, than to receive. This is the sole remedy, the true catholicon, the sovereign panacea.

Finally. This subject is profitable for instruction in righteousness.

Understand and remember the words of the Lord Jesus. The highest happiness you can feel as social beings, is connected with the discharge of your highest social duty;—it is inseparable from humble, voluntary, self-denying efforts to



do good. The best condition you could be in on earth, is not that of receiving, but of communicating benefits. Such is the christian theory of social happiness.

Do not imagine, my dear brethren, that it is merely a beautiful theory,—to be admired in the abstract, but as a principle of conduct more fit for angels than for men. I admit that it is fit for angels; and that in every one of those holy beings who are sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation, it is unceasingly and brightly exemplified. But I must deny that it is fit for them only. On the contrary, I affirm that it is as proper for men as for angels; and that the will of God will never be done on earth as it is in heaven, till this principle becomes the ruling principle of all human conduct. Far from being restricted in its application to the rich, it is as a practical principle specially adapted to the condition of the poor. It allows no class to live solely on the labor of others; but commands all to contribute liberally by their own labors, either of body or mind, to the common good. It is a principle binding on every christian, male and female, old and young, in every condition of life, at all times, and in all circumstances. It is a principle absolutely indispensable to the happiness of every human society; universally true; universally applicable; universally binding; for (as the apostle James testifies,) to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

I repeat it, that you may never forget it. This is the fundamental principle on which all the business of human life should be transacted. Christian benevolence, not selfishness, should rule the world. It should govern every family, every church, every community, and State, and nation. It would calm domestic discord in a moment; heal all the wounds of Zion; close the war in Mexico, and foreclose war with England. It should govern every ruler and every citizen; every master and every servant; every parent and every child; every minister and every member of the church. It should exert a controlling influence over all our reading, all our thinking, all our studies, all our conversation, all our prayers, all our deportment, all our amusements, all our employments. Not a plan ought to be contrived; not a contract made; not an article bought or sold; not a gift bestowed or received; not a cent earned, laid up, or expended; but with our Saviour's all-comprehensive maxim before our eyes,

or at least warming and guiding every pulsation of our hearts : It is more blessed to give, than to receive. On this principle every church should be constituted ; every house of worship erected ; every minister settled ; every deacon ordained ; every member admitted ; every duty discharged ;—nor should any one think of joining a church, much less of becoming a pastor, without remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, and resolving, through divine grace, to contribute all in his power to the common good, whatever be the conduct of others toward him. In this generous spirit, Paul said to the Corinthians, I will very gladly spend and be spent for you ; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

My brethren, my dear brethren, this is the generous spirit the whole church needs to day. The whole world needs it. Till it comes into exercise there is no hope. Through no other agency will God work salvation in the earth. We have tried other methods, and proved them vain. Let us now try this method of the Lord Jesus. It has in it inexhaustible energies, inexhaustible resources. It will open new views ; it will breathe fresh hopes ; it will devise and execute the most noble and liberal things. It is a common saying, that necessity is the mother of invention. My brethren, necessity is here. Look around you and see how much must be done, and ought to be done, for the temporal and eternal happiness of our fellow-men, or they must come short of the best good of both earth and heaven : and then tell me if I do not speak the truth when I say, necessity is here,—the keenest, the deepest, the most distressing, that ever touched and pierced the soul,—the everlasting, the awful necessity, which moved the Son of God from his heavenly throne, to become the Saviour of lost men. O hear in your touched hearts to-day, the speechless cry of that necessity, and let it stir up all your love ! It calls you this day to multiply your efforts, your offerings, and your prayers, to save souls from death,—souls now within your reach,—to-morrow, perhaps, in eternity,—perhaps in that place of torment, where no prayers, no tears, no efforts, can possibly avail. Listen ! listen ! Do you comprehend it now ? It is a call to save souls from death ! But it is more. It summons you forth to win for your Saviour a seed to serve him,—for yourselves, companions in your march to glory,—for

heaven, partakers of its immortal bliss,—for earth, a new race of regenerated sons, who shall build up the waste places of many generations, and make her wilderness as Eden, her desert as the garden of the Lord. O turn not away from the thrilling, glorious, pressing call! It is a call to multiply your own happiness, in seeking that of others. As the Lord is true, it will multiply it an hundred fold! Fear not to embark your all in this glorious enterprise,—when God himself goes before you, and holy angels attend you, and the good of earth will follow you, and success is certain, and the reward is sure. Fear not to devise liberal things in a cause like this, for by liberal things you shall stand. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said: It is more blessed to give, than to receive.

Messengers of the churches, ministers of Christ, beloved and honored brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. Permit me to remind you of our present privileges, in this Association. What precious opportunities of usefulness are here! Are we all properly awake to them? All may do good here; by your christian spirit and deportment; by your counsels and your prayers; by your enlarged sympathies, and devices of liberality; by your generous resolutions and contributions; by kind words fitly spoken,—like apples of gold in pictures of silver,—in the pulpit, and in the pew,—in the house, and by the way. Let every spirit rise to meet the occasion! Let every bosom swell with the vital tide of charity! Let every heart breathe forth perpetual silent prayer to heaven, for direction and aid! Let every mind be fixed to seize the winged moments of irrecoverable opportunity! Nor let the heavenly ardor be limited to age or sex. O let it be said of every individual here to-day, as it was said of the grateful Mary, when she poured the precious ointment of delicious odors on her Saviour's head: She hath done what she could! Then, in a different indeed, but still nobler sense, shall the whole atmosphere be filled with the odor of the ointment, and its sweet fragrance rise upward to refresh the spirits of the just made perfect, the innumerable company of angels, and the throne of God. May God add his blessing. Amen.



## THE PULPIT: INCIDENTALLY.

It is one of the weaknesses of our nature, in our fallen condition, that we suffer ourselves, controlled by minor motives, while we perseveringly and successfully resist the greater. To restore its health, or to save its life, the child obstinately refuses the simplest prescription of the physician offered in the name of medicine; but cheerfully submits to the most nauseous draught for the compensation of an orange or a penny.

On the same principle, for one man who goes to the house of God, *for the purpose of being converted and saved*, thousands frequent it either because others go, or at most to be instructed or innocently amused. The attractions of public worship, independently of its bearing on the moral and everlasting interests of mankind, are confessedly great. There is the excitement of the crowd by the recognition of known faces and the appearance of strange ones. In the country there are the passing and the re-passing of vehicles, and the courtesies of belles and beaux, in connection with the antique walls and pews of the old parish church, or it may be a spacious and handsome edifice of more modern style and finish. In the city there is the chiming of the bells, the chanting of the choir, and the elegantly dressed throng moving in every direction to and from the places of meeting: some absorbed in deep contemplation, some raising their devout aspirations to God, some wearing the aspect of the most fixed purpose, but the great mass in all the gayety of childhood and the buoyancy of youth.

But most of all, is the pulpit, the point to which all eyes are directed, the source from which all minds and all dispositions are to be either profited or pleased. And well may it be so. Here are concentrated, learning, knowledge, history, philosophy, taste, logic, oratory, criticism, poetry, every thing that can delight the imagination, improve the understanding, awaken the curiosity, or warm and rouse the heart. All this is repeated, once, twice or thrice every Lord's day in the year, and not unfrequently at night in the week, to which must be added the variety of genius and talents with which the pulpit is adorned in every part of our land.

To that portion of our communities not religious, in the sense in which we always use this word, we doubt not the attractions of the Lord's day, are greater, a thousand fold, than to the populace of any nation in Europe, are all their public amusements, not excepting even the theatre and the opera. We are glad that these attractions are so great, and that the affinity of the populace for them is so great; and we wish they were greater still. It is better to go to the house of God, even to be amused, than to remain at home to settle accounts, to read novels, to sleep, to be visited by friends, or to arrange business for the ensuing week. Some, among these listening multitudes, will be awakened by the thunders of Sinai; here and there a Zaccheus will be called from his elevated point of observation; many a winged arrow may find its way to the hearts of the King's enemies. When so many shots are flying and falling in every direction, it is impossible to suppose that they all will be ineffectual.

There is, however, one aspect of the case which is deeply appalling. It is that privileges so great, slighted and unimproved, must bring with them an aggravated weight of condemnation. While it is better to visit the sanctuary, even to be amused, than not to go at all, the very suggestion that souls are sporting on the road to perdition, is shocking in the highest degree.

We have room only to answer one objection to all this, and to make one practical inference. To the objector who alleges, that if the rejection of the gospel increases the condemnation of the rejecter, it is better to evade the offer, we reply, this would be to elude also every sort of advantage and privilege. It were better then not to know how to read, if one refuses to abide by the oracles of God, because such refusal must meet the corresponding penalty. If this principle were just, we might wisely and innocently deprive ourselves of the exercise of our rational faculties, and of our very senses. The organ of hearing, increases our responsibility to God,—but who argues that we hence have a right to destroy or injure it. To the christian, and especially to the christian minister, we would say, see what an instrumentality you possess for plucking brands from the everlasting fires. "Let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death."—[EDITOR.]

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## THE PERFECTION OF REVEALED TRUTH;

AND ITS ADAPTATION TO CONVERT THE SOUL:

A Sermon preached by Rev. J. J. JAMES, at the 9th Anniversary of the North Carolina (Baptist) Bible Society, met in Raleigh, Oct. 20th, 1845, simultaneously with the North Carolina Baptist State Convention.

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*“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.—PSALM XIX: 7.”*  
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The Bible contains a complete system of revealed truth. God is its author; and it makes known his will concerning us, as his creatures. It opens to us a plan of salvation; and proposes to recover in man the lost image of his Maker, and to restore that bond of union between them which has been rent by sin. Its adaptedness to do this, forms one of its most distinguishing characteristics.

The conversion or restoration of the soul to the enjoyment of God, is a subject the most important to us of any that the human mind can conceive. The want of holiness and happiness in man is universally felt. His depravity and wretchedness are equally apparent. Nature cries out and testifies to his guilt, and in consequence of it “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain.” The testimony of man’s sin and misery is universal; but a remedy for it can be found only in the Bible. Hence the value of the Bible as a system of revealed truth, designed by infinite wisdom for the conversion or restoration of the soul.

David, contrasting the comparative value of natural and revealed truth, says of the latter in the words of the text, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” That he means, by “the law of the Lord,” God’s written word, is plainly indicated in the context. We therefore proceed directly to deduce from the text and its connection the following theme, which we propose as the subject of the pre-



sent discourse: *The perfection of revealed truth; and its adaptation to convert the soul.*

In this discussion we propose to shew—

I. The superior light which revelation gives us above nature and reason.

II. The adaptation of revealed truth to the great end proposed—the soul's conversion.

In explication of this subject we remark, that nature and revelation are the two great sources of human knowledge. From these we derive all our knowledge of the past, the present and the future. They are the only volumes from which God instructs us. In comparing them together, we do not wish to be understood as depreciating the value of the one, in our endeavors to exhibit the superior excellency of the other; but rather that we constantly recognize the same Being in him whose glories "the heavens declare," and in him who reveals himself in his word, in a brighter and more perfect light. The superior light which revelation gives us above that of nature and reason, will appear if we consider—

1. The assistance which the Bible gives us in understanding, at least with some degree of satisfaction, subjects otherwise incomprehensible.

The first we select is the divine attributes. When the disciple of nature looks forth upon the creation, and beholds its order and symmetry; when he observes the admirable uniformity which appears in the regular succession of the seasons; the constant rotation of day and night; the flux and re-flux of the sea; and the exact motions of the heavenly bodies; when he surveys the regularity which seems to pervade the whole material universe; he concludes that its author is a Being of infinite *wisdom* and *power*. But when he is frightened by tempests and tornadoes, by earthquakes and pestilences; when these wild phenomena seem to threaten the stability of nature, he is puzzled, and imagines that he sees some traces of imperfection among so many proofs of creative wisdom and power.

Again, when he thinks of God's having enriched the earth with innumerable productions for the benefit of man; of his having placed him here as a sovereign in a palace; of the construction given to the various parts of creation, in adapting them to the nature of man: as air to the lungs, aliments to the different portions of the body, light to the eyes, and

sounds to the ears; and when he considers how God has connected man with his species, placing each in a state of dependence upon others, uniting them by visible ties, so as to induce among mankind one great brotherhood; when the disciple of nature meditates on these things, he concludes that the author of nature is a beneficent Being. But when he beholds the innumerable evils with which the human race are afflicted; when he observes that the very same things that contribute to sustain human life, contribute also to its extinction; that the air which is necessary for respiration, conveys diseases; that the food which nourishes the body often becomes its poison; that the animals that serve man often turn ferocious against him; and when he considers the perfidiousness of society; the mutual labors of mankind in tormenting and destroying each other; together with the numerous maladies which attack the human system from the cradle to the grave; and finally contemplates death, which bows the loftiest head, and rends asunder the strongest ties; he is led to doubt whether it be goodness or the opposite, which has inclined the author of nature to give to man his existence.

Again, when the disciple of nature sees tyrants fall from their heights of tyranny, and wicked men punished by their own wickedness; the avaricious by the objects of his avarice; the ambitious by those of his ambition; the voluptuous by those of his voluptuousness; when he perceives that virtue is so essential to public happiness, and that even individuals are more or less happy, according as they adhere more or less closely to its rules; when the disciple of nature reflects on these things, he is led to conclude that the Great Ruler of man is a *just* and *holy* Being. But when he looks again, and beholds tyranny established, and vice enthroned; humility in confusion, and pride wearing a crown; that the love of holiness in men exposes them to great and intolerable calamities; he is not able to vindicate the justice and equity of God.

Thus we see that nature fails to instruct her disciples thoroughly and satisfactorily, on the great subject of the divine attributes. She gives them light, but it is mingled with darkness. But of these grand mysteries can one be proposed that the Bible does not explain? Is there one on which the sacred scriptures do not give us some intelligible

principle, by which it can be reconciled with the perfections of the Creator? Do the disorders of the world perplex the disciple of nature? The student of the Bible can readily see how they can comport with the divine wisdom. He has only to call to mind what the sacred volume teaches him: that they are permitted because man in his sin and rebellion is now the object of the divine displeasure; and because the world is not what it was when it came from the hand of its Creator; but that when compared with its former state, it is only a heap of ruins; the truly magnificent, but actually ruinous heap of an edifice of incomparable beauty. With these teachings who can urge any just objections against the wisdom of the Creator, in permitting the disorders of the world?

Do the miseries of man, and the fatal necessity of dying, puzzle the disciple of nature in regard to the goodness of God? The disciple of revealed religion has no difficulty here: he has been taught to know, that the afflictions of good men are profitable to them, while prosperity would prove injurious; that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and that this chastening afterward yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. He is taught also, that this life is only a transitory state, which will be succeeded by one which is permanent and eternal. With these and many similar instructions from the Bible, he finds no just complaint against the goodness of God, from the miseries of human life, and the necessity of dying.

And finally: Do the prosperity of wicked men, and the adversities of good men, lead the disciple of nature to impeach the divine justice? In this, too, the disciple of revelation sees that the counsel of God is fulfilled. He has learned that the prosperity even of Pharaohs, of Herods, and of Pilates, has largely contributed to the establishment of that very religion which they meant to destroy; while the adversities of good men have been so overruled, as equally to advance the same cause, and promote their present and eternal welfare.

In regard then to the first topic, the proper understanding of the attributes of God, or the perfections of his nature, we see that revelation gives us light, which is far superior to that of nature.



Another subject, which deserves to be considered here, both from its intrinsic importance and on account of the light which is shed upon it from the Bible, is that of the soul's immortality.

Is the soul immortal? This was the great problem which agitated for ages the minds of heathen philosophers, and to establish which they exerted their utmost powers. To settle this question many of them spent the best portion of their lives in patient and laborious study. They probed into the secrets of nature with the most careful research, and drew from all her accessible sources whatever might tend to elucidate the subject. But after all their labors, the light which they received from nature and reason was still unsatisfactory. They were left somewhat in darkness and in doubt. Many pious heathen endeavored to believe in the soul's immortality, and sometimes professed to do so; as did also some of their philosophers; but some of the wisest of these often doubted their own reasonings. To be convinced of this, we have only to examine their writings; and not to do more, let us listen to the declarations of a few of their most enlightened reasoners.

Cicero, (the orator of Rome,) when treating on this subject, says, "I do not pretend to say that what I affirm is as infallible as the Pythian oracle, I speak only by conjecture." Cyrus, in his address to his children, says, "I know not how to persuade myself that the soul lives in this mortal body, and ceases to be when the body expires. I am more inclined to think, that it acquires after death more penetration and purity." We hear also the immortal Sociates, (the prince of all heathen philosophers,) when taking leave of his judges, who had wickedly condemned him to death, say, "And now we are going to part, I to suffer death, and you to enjoy life. God only knows which has the happier lot."

Thus we see, that on a subject the most intensely interesting and deeply important, which poor mortals can contemplate, nature has not satisfactorily taught her most intelligent disciples. With the strongest desires to believe in the immortality of the soul, they have been compelled, in their most honest moments, to confess the insufficiency of their reasonings. The light which nature gave them did not penetrate through the dark valley and shadow of death.

How completely does revelation dissipate all this obscurity.

It clearly teaches that the soul is immortal, and that its immortality is based upon the will of its Creator; that He who made it, made it immortal; and that nothing but the same almighty power can annihilate or destroy it. Of the numerous passages which might be quoted from the sacred scriptures, setting forth the soul's immortality, we select the following, which we think amply sufficient: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."—Eccl. xii: 7. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."—Mat. x: 28. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works."—Mat. xvi: 26–27. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."—2 Cor. v: 4, 8. "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."—Acts vii: 59. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day."—2 Tim. i: 9, 10, 12.

Another topic which deserves also to be considered here, is that which relates to the reality and nature of future rewards and punishments.

A heathen philosopher, taking for granted the existence of a future state, would probably infer from the analogy of things around him, that it would be attended with retributions. The absolute necessity in this life of punishing vice and encouraging virtue, together with the fact that vice often inflicts its own punishment, while virtue offers its own reward, would lead him to the conclusion, that in the future

state, (if there be one,) there would exist a difference between the condition of the good and the bad. But in what respects and to what extent this difference would obtain, would be to him a matter wholly of conjecture. Nature gives no certain information in regard to these important enquiries. Hence, in the religious systems of idolatrous nations, there may be found thousands of the most absurd and foolish notions, with respect to future rewards and punishments. No well defined principles of future retribution have ever been settled and agreed upon by different heathen nations; and as a consequence, there still exists among them, on this subject, the greatest diversity of opinion. Their most enlightened writers can only furnish hypotheses, founded on vague conjecture and wild invention.

What thankfulness and gratitude ought we not to feel, my hearers, to the Author of the Bible, when we turn from such statements as the above to contemplate the clear, grand and sublime truths, with which he has furnished us on this important subject. We are told in the strongest language, that there will be a general judgment; that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness;" when all the human family, from Adam to his latest generation, will be assembled together before him; that he will judge them according to the deeds done in the body; that the righteous and the wicked will then be perfectly separated; the one placed upon the right, and the other upon the left hand of the Judge; that Jesus Christ, by whom all will be judged, will say to the righteous, "come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and that with holy angels as their attendants, they will be thus welcomed to the perfect and eternal glories of heaven. Whilst he will say to the wicked "depart ye accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Thus, while the light of nature does not penetrate the darkness of the future; revelation gives us a grand and awfully sublime view of the retributions of eternity, and of the scenes on which the righteous and the wicked will respectively enter.

2. The superiority of revelation will further appear, if we consider the light which it sheds upon some of the most important subjects of human enquiry, on which nature and reason have entirely failed to instruct us.



We are aware that the truth of this proposition has been denied; and that it has been asserted in the ranks of modern infidels, that the Bible has disclosed no new truth; no truth which nature had not previously made known. Without attempting any other reply to such an assertion, we proceed directly to shew, that we are entirely indebted to the Bible for some of the most important truths which stand connected with our existence.

The first which we mention is the great and central fact of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. That this is purely a matter of revelation can be clearly shewn. Nature, indeed, discovers to man that he is a sinner, and that sin deserves to be punished. This is apparent from the confessions of heathen, and from the fear and remorse with which their consciences are often excruciated; it teaches also, that God may be induced to listen to the entreaties of his creatures, as their numerous prayers go to shew; and it may even go so far as to give some idea of the necessity of satisfying divine justice, as their various sacrifices seem to indicate; but that it teaches nothing certain as to the proper means of propitiating the Deity, is clearly proven from the great diversity in the modes of propitiation adopted by different idolatrous nations. Scarcely any two have adopted the same modes, while the same nation not unfrequently introduces changes. Were the question propounded to all the benighted nations on earth, how can God become reconciled to man? how can He maintain his justice, and justify sinners?—no two would be likely to give the same answer, and all together could not give one which would be satisfactory. By the light of nature, the sublime mystery of the cross is totally invisible; and nothing but a light, as well as a sacrifice, from heaven, can open to us the true medium of reconciliation with God. This grand discovery, which lays the foundation of all our hopes, is most clearly revealed to us in the Bible. We are told that “God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;” that “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin;” and we are invited, by faith to “behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” with the assurance, that by his death upon the cross he is become the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.

Another truth of no less importance, which is made known

to us only in the scriptures, is the divine agency of the Holy Spirit in regenerating and sanctifying the heart. That nature has not taught this truth, is evident from the fact that all heathen nations discover no knowledge of any such agency, and in their systems of religion teach nothing of the necessity of being born again. Whatever convictions they may have of the corruption of human nature, they know nothing of the agency which God has seen fit to employ for its purification; and the notion which some heathen entertain that God is a Great Spirit, bears no resemblance to the scriptural doctrine, that the divine Spirit has come into the world to convince it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and to impart to man, holiness of heart and purity of desire.

The last truth, to which we can here attend, is that which relates to the future history of the human body. What becomes of the body after death? On this question, so often propounded by the anxious enquirer, nature and reason have been consulted in vain. The light which they give, only extends to the precincts of the grave, and all beyond is utter darkness. The most profound philosophers and acute reasoners, the greatest princes and most powerful monarchs, have all, upon this subject, to stand upon an equality with the most ignorant peasant. None can answer this simple question, or solve this obvious mystery. Here the disciple of revealed religion meets with a light from heaven, which relieves at once all his anxiety. It unfolds to him the future history of his body. The Bible tells him that it shall not forever lie degraded in the dust; but shall be raised from the dead; quickened, re-animated, and re-possessed by its proper spirit; raised in power, and made a spiritual and glorious body.

We have thus far contemplated the perfection of revealed truth, as seen in the superior light which it sheds upon the manifestations of nature, and especially in the opening up of some important subjects, on which nature and reason have failed to instruct us. Before leaving this branch of the subject, there is one other element of divine truth, to which we must for a moment allude, and that is one of infinite value; we refer to its perpetuity or endless duration.

When we contemplate the instability and changing character of all sublunary things, how deeply are we impressed

with the shortness of their duration, and the constant change which is taking place among them. If we look for stability in the greatest efforts and profoundest counsels of mankind,—human laws and governments—we find that the greatest governments have within a few ages been dissolved, and that the laws which were enacted to be perpetual, have almost as quickly passed away. If we turn to the more permanent works of nature, and contemplate the laws of their physical organization, we learn that these are not to be perpetual; that even the great laws of attraction and gravitation, as well as the whole organization through which they act, must finally give way; that the earth itself, on which we live, and the great system of which it forms a part, have a time appointed for dissolution and change. When we thus look around us, and behold mutability written upon every thing sublunary; when we can see nothing destined to immortality but ourselves, and can find nothing in the material universe in which the soul can safely trust; with what joyful confidence should we listen to the declaration from heaven: “But the word of the Lord endureth forever.” What infinite value attaches to revealed truth, when we remember that it is destined to survive the ravages of time, and the revolutions of earth; that it will endure when the sun and moon and stars shall be blotted out; and that nothing but the countless rounds of eternity will give sufficient space for its eternal duration.

Having detained you so long in the discussion of the first, we proceed to consider briefly the second division of the subject:—

II. The perfection of revealed truth, as seen in its adaptation to the great work of converting the soul.

The conversion of the soul to God is a work of infinite magnitude, and of infinite difficulty. Man in his fallen condition is not only afflicted with grievous evils, but encompassed with great difficulties. He is involved in sufferings, without power to escape from them. Sin has darkened his mind, perverted his will, and corrupted all his moral affections. Hence, in his conversion to God, in order that his will may be changed, and his affections sanctified, his understanding and his reasoning faculties, as well as his moral nature, must be addressed. The adaptation of revealed truth to recover him from his fallen condition, will be apparent if



we consider the address which it makes to him as a sentient, rational and moral being. And

1. The Bible addresses him as a sentient being, or one who is capable of receiving and comprehending truth.

The human mind without truth is in a state of darkness and inaction. Truth is its only light, and as necessary to the activity of its powers, as food is to animal existence. No other agency can be brought to bear upon the faculties of the understanding. Revelation addresses itself directly to man as a sentient being. Its whole message is truth. Its first effect is to remove darkness and ignorance from the mind, by communicating light and knowledge to the understanding; as David says, "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;" "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The Bible not only makes known the truth, but it makes known all the truth, which it is requisite for us at present to know. We do not say that the holy scriptures contain all the truth of God; for this would not be true; but we do assert that they contain all the truth which it is either necessary or proper for us to have in the present state. They furnish us with all requisite knowledge of God, of ourselves, of our relations and obligations to him, and to each other, of life, of death, and of the future state; and this they do in the clearest, plainest and most simple manner, so that a way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein. Thus, we see how well revelation is suited as a volume to instruct us, in our present state of darkness and of error. Truly "it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path."

2. Its adaptation is also seen in the address which it makes to man as a rational being.

The Bible is not only suited to instruct us, but it contains propositions of mercy, which it submits to the examination of our rational faculties. No declaration is more absurd than, that revelation proposes to set aside reason. On the contrary, so far as reason can go, that and revealed religion move in the same channel. Man is called upon to exercise his reasoning powers in judging of the truth and importance of the doctrines of the scriptures. God says expressly to him, "come, let us reason together." He also invites him, with all the light of reason, to search the scriptures, as the volume which testifies of himself. In this investigation the

reasoning faculties are nurtured and strengthened, while truth commends itself to the enlightened judgment. Such is the strength of the evidence, and overpowering weight of the testimony, which establishes the truth of the Bible, that few men have ever candidly and thoroughly examined it, who have not been converted to its truth. Infidels and sceptics seldom study the Bible. Their reasonings against it are founded upon false and superficial views of its teachings; they understand not its great and convincing doctrines, or they would be made wise unto salvation.

3. The adaptation of revealed truth to the great work of converting the soul, is seen in its power to influence man as a moral being.

Moral beings are not only capable of perceiving, and judging of truth, but also of being influenced by the motives it sets forth. This forms the grand distinction between man and the brute creation. He is constantly influenced by motive. The decisions of the human will, which by some have been considered involuntary, may generally be traced to the power of motive, operating on the judgment. Indeed it has, we think, been justly doubted, whether it is possible for man to act upon any important subject without being influenced by motive. Motives, therefore, may be regarded as the great moral levers which operate on the human will. Taking this view of the subject to be correct, what transcendent power has revealed truth when brought to bear upon the human mind! The sacred volume is inscribed with the strongest, grandest and holiest motives in the universe. Almost every page is replete with an exhibition of the highest interests of man. We may be allowed here briefly to advert to a few of them. We are told that God is love, and this the Bible illustrates—

*First.* By teaching us his providential care over the human family, in bestowing temporal blessings upon them. It informs us that he gives to men the seasons of seed-time and harvest; causes the sun to shine, and the showers to descend upon the earth; makes constant provision for the temporal comfort and happiness of all: in a word, that he opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing.

*Secondly.* His love, as a motive to mankind, is especially set forth in the gift of his Son. In this we behold, at once, a boundless ocean of love, and a motive which is all power-

ful and constraining. The scriptures represent God as looking upon the fallen condition of our race, with parental solicitude and tenderness. When "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."—Gen. vi: 5-6. He is also represented as pursuing mankind in their sin and rebellion, with loving kindness and tender mercies; and when there was no other means of salvation, such was his infinite love, that he gave his only begotten and well beloved Son, to save them from eternal death! O! who can read that touching passage recorded by John, without being moved by such a motive: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii: 16.

What a motive also to soften, melt and purify the heart, is furnished in God's love as it is manifested in the person of Christ,—in the life, obedience and death of our Immanuel. Who can read without emotion the history of Christ recorded in the gospels? Follow him in his humble condition; witness his unwearied zeal and heavenly fervor; behold his acts of kindness and beneficence; observe his gentleness, meekness, fortitude and perseverance, under temptation and trial; listen to his prayer and agony in the garden; attend him in his betrayal and trial, in his mockings and scourgings; finally, follow him to the cross; witness his crucifixion; and hear him in the agonies of death, praying for his cruel murderers. Who we ask can read such accounts, and not be affected? Who can survey such love, and not be melted? Who can contemplate such purity, without feeling its holy influence? The purity of Christ's example, set forth in his life, and the strength of his love, exhibited in his death, are beyond all motives the most powerful to incline us to holiness. Christ crucified is the constraining love of God.

Another class of motives which the Bible presents, is that which bears directly upon the present and future interest of men—the awful threatenings of God's wrath against the wicked, and the promise of eternal life to the righteous. Not only the interests of this life, but those of eternity are distinctly set before us. We are told that God will render to every man according to his deeds. To the wicked, or "unto



them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," he will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile. But to the righteous, to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor and immortality, he will render eternal life. Glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God."—Rom. ii: 5, 6, 7, 8. Thus we are taught, that while it is true that the finally impenitent will be banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, all are now alike invited to the blessings of salvation, who exercise repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To such is secured, upon the immutable promises of eternal truth, a heavenly inheritance. They have the assurance of a permanent home in the skies—"a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." They are invited to the delights of the celestial city—the New Jerusalem—to join with the spirits of the just made perfect in ascribing blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, unto God and to the Lamb, forever and ever. Such are some of the motives which God has set before us in his word, to incline us to holiness.

We have thus briefly spoken of the adaptation of revealed truth to convert the soul, in the address which it makes to men as sentient, rational and moral beings. From what has been said, we do not wish to be understood as excluding the agency of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the heart. This forms an essential part of the revealed system itself. No doctrine of the Bible is more fundamental, than that which our Lord declared to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Without this divine agency the word is destitute of all its life-giving power. It is the province of the Spirit alone to accompany the word, to seal it to the heart, and make it efficacious. Then and then only it is, that "the word of God becomes quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

We have now, beloved brethren and friends, gone through

with the duty assigned us for this evening, in delivering this annual sermon before the North Carolina Bible Society. In doing which it has been our object and sincere wish, to impress your minds more deeply with the infinite value of divine truth—that truth which is able to make us wise unto salvation; and to distribute which you have formed yourselves into this Society. Need we say any thing to increase your zeal in this holy enterprise; in the grand and blessed work of giving to the poor and benighted, at home and abroad, the word of eternal life. If we should esteem it a privilege to be able to offer bread to the starving beggar, and water to the thirsty and fainting traveler; what a favor is it to be permitted to give to perishing millions the bread of life and the waters of salvation. Let us by our contributions and efforts send them this inestimable blessing, and then we can adopt the language of the prophet and say to them all: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” When we look back and behold the success which has already crowned the Bible cause, let us take courage and wax strong; and when we look forth to the great work which is yet to be performed, let us double our diligence, and increase our exertions; let us never be weary in well doing. That God may continue to smile upon our efforts, let us not forget frequently and fervently to pray; and as a suitable conclusion to the present exercise, may we not all unite with the author of the text in that comprehensive and sublime supplication: “God be merciful to us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy ways may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.” Amen.

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#### THE CRITICISM OF SERMONS.

On the question, whether sermons are lawful subjects of criticism, two widely opposite opinions are entertained: the one that their sacredness protects them from any such unhallowed touch—the other, that this very attribute invites scrutiny, affords safety, and warrants the rudest attacks. The former of these has a slight tincture of papacy; the latter, of infidelity. This is, therefore, one of those cases in which the advice of Apollo to

Phæton is worthy of attention. "In the middle path thou wilt go most safely."\* By this we do not mean to say, that it is lawful to criticise, and unlawful to criticise severely; but that criticism itself requires a due regard to the subject of the composition, and a prudent caution against misconstruction by those for whose benefit the criticism is intended. The *religion* of a sermon, no more depends upon the *style of its composition*, than does the office of the minister upon the architecture or material of his pulpit. Sound divinity is sometimes defended by very unsound logic; and falsehood may be invested with some of the loftiest and most beautiful embellishments of rhetoric and eloquence.

The object of this little article, is to recommend the above mentioned *caution*. When the parent, at the dinner table, after his return from church, is correcting the grammar of the preacher, or perhaps a historical blunder, he may, though unwittingly, be diminishing in the minds of his children, the sacred import of wholesome and momentous truth, and blunting the edges of the most sacred and powerful of all weapons, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." He may point out inaccuracies if he chooses; but let him be careful also to distinguish between what is *incidental*, and what is *essential* or *vital*. We also take this opportunity to recommend ministerial meetings, or what may be, without impropriety, called ministerial clubs. When a meeting on an extensive scale may not be practicable, it is easy for a few to convene frequently, at each other's houses, or the houses of friends, when scattered by distance in the country; and there they may affectionately and faithfully criticise one another, with great profit to themselves and their flocks.

And as an *accompaniment* if not a *substitute* for those domestic and social criticisms intended to be here guarded against, we venture to recommend a more excellent way. It is a *domestic review of every sermon we hear*. Let it be conducted by the most competent person. Ask William the text. Call upon Sarah for the exordium or introduction. Let Mary announce the main proposition discussed—the duty recommended—or the error exposed. John will perhaps remember the illustrations under the first division; and Sally those under the second. We have known several little school girls trained in this way, to recapitulate every Lord's day, the whole sermon of the morning. This is an intellectual pleasure, and a useful, moral and religious exercise. Besides, the little auditors will then cultivate the *habit* of listening to what they hear. Five sermons thus listened to, and remembered, may be of more substantial advantage than five hundred merely *heard*—heard to be forgotten between the church and the parental door.—ED.

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\*In medio tutissimus ibis.



# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

New Series.

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No. 4.

## CHRIST CRUCIFIED:

A sermon, by REV. A. D. GILLETTE, Philadelphia, preached at the ordination of Lewis Smith, at Hatborough, Pa., Nov., 1846.

*We preach Christ crucified.*—1 COR. I: 23.

An aged, eminent minister, when dying, said, "Were I to live to preach again, I would preach nothing but Christ."

If it be a question with any of you, my brethren, how this topic can be sufficiently expanded to fill all a preacher's duties, we answer by saying, the subject has glories of sufficient compass and variety to fill the anthems of eternity.

"Christ crucified" is a phrase combining all the sayings and doings of Jesus, as the author and finisher of man's faith and salvation. And hence, we preach Christ crucified—

I. In the *glories of his person*. "The brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." One with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit, in power and glory. This is to be taught and insisted upon, not in the metaphysical style of an iron age in theology, nor in the unyielding preciseness of the schools; but in the glowing and convincing language of revelation,—a revelation that speaks of Christ, the wisdom of God, and of itself as the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. Christ as the first-born among many brethren,—God manifest in the flesh,—who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and hence receives unforbidden, the honors which are due only to one who has in himself the attributes of the Almighty.

To preach Christ crucified, is to set him forth as the first to engage in the heavenly meditations, which resulted in the great scheme of man's rescue from eternal burnings; and as the last to be present in applying the means he appointed for

man's temporal and eternal well-doing. It is to preach Christ as him who knew no sin, but who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; who liveth and was dead, and is alive forevermore; who hath the keys of death and hell at his girdle; who openeth and no man shutteth, and who shutteth and no man openeth; who shines

“Fairest among a thousand fairs,  
A sun among a thousand stars.”

Concerning whom every admirer of his person, his government and grace, exclaims, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” “Thou art all my salvation and all my desire.” “My Lord and my God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable.” In short, it is giving such views of the Lamb of God as Peter had when he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go?—thou hast the words of eternal life.”

The sun in the natural heavens is the centre around which all the lesser planets revolve. So Christ, the sun of righteousness with healing in his beams, is the centre of light and of attraction to all spiritual intelligences. His grace is the fountain of influence to the great kingdom of God. In him all the lines of the old and the new dispensation meet, and from him they all radiate. Jesus says, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad; and before Abraham was, *I am*.” The blood of the sacrificial victims shadowed his approach; prophetic vision spoke of his sufferings, and consequent glory; and in the fulness of time, an unknown star directed the votaries of science and religion to the manger where he lay.

II. To preach Christ crucified, is to preach him in the fulness of his vicarious merit. This is eminently according to his own teaching; and apostolic example never failed to assure those who confided in abolished rituals, that Jesus and the resurrection was their only hope.

Jesus the Saviour, is a name that implies the infinite sufficiency of the atonement; and this was unquestionably meant, when inspired men knew nothing among Jews or gentiles—confiding in Moses or idols—but “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” My brethren, it is the prime meaning of the

Bible, that Christ Jesus, of the seed of David, was evidently set forth, crucified among men, and for men,—that all men through him might be saved. So, then, to preach Christ in the fulness of his vicarious merit, we have only to preach the truths conveyed by the Bible. To this only source should we be chained in the strong bonds of christian fidelity,—speaking only as the oracles of God. “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that in all things God may be glorified.” O! my brethren, it was the masterly conception of Christ’s merits that made his early and best apostle—abating various motives—say, “I rejoice that Christ is preached.” Present him in his real character, and the sinner will soon learn, that there is no other medium of acceptableness with God,—no other way of escape from the wrath to come. Show his merits; hold up the mirror, the reflective power of God, true to life; let infinite love and purity and greatness be seen as they truly consist in Christ crucified, and enquiring hearts will repent of sin,—will shelter themselves in his cleft side,—will adore him Lord of all.

To preach Christ’s vicarious merits, you must preach him as dying that sinners might live; that any now live only by the grace of one who died on the cross; that we are blessed only through one who was cursed for our sakes,—and justified by one whom multitudes pronounced not fit to live; that the only value of our hope is by reason of the shame, scorn and sorrow endured by one whom the world despised and rejected:—yea, that our surest, sweetest, strongest joys, take their rise from the place of skulls,—the rent rocks of Calvary, and those horrid scenes upon which the sun at mid-day frowned,—and at whose transactions inanimate nature put on shuddering animation, and from whose dreadful reality Jehovah, the father of the innocent sufferer, turned his face away.

Says Andrew Fuller, in beginning to write his *System of Theology*, “I wish to begin with the centre of christianity, the *doctrine of the cross*, and work round it; or with what may be called the *heart of christianity*, and to trace it through its principal veins, or relations, both in doctrine and practice. The whole christian system appears to be pre-supposed by it, included in it, or to arise from it.” How true! Other foundation can no man lay than is laid,—Jesus Christ the



chief corner-stone,—he is of revelation the glory and joy—of grace and truth the exhaustless fountain.

III. To preach Christ crucified, is to preach those doctrines which pertain to man, as a being amenable to God. Do we discover to the view of our hearers the doctrine of human depravity? Then we magnify Christ as its only cure. Do we examine our relations to the divine law? It unfolds the riches of Christ's merits, by whose death its claims were all met and cancelled. Do we look to the importance of maintaining good works for necessary uses? We see Christ glorified in his followers' well-ordered lives. Is repentance insisted upon and exercised? Christ is exalted as he alone who gives it. Is faith the theme? Christ is its author and finisher—cause and end. Are the works of creation, which set forth the eternal power and godhead of the Father, preached, as Paul on Mars Hill at Athens preached them? They lead us directly to the great fact of our necessity of applying to the blood of atonement; because "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, and hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Surely, whoever fails to preach Christ as the only refuge to the guilty, is himself guilty of not preaching as those early ministers did, who "counted all things but dross, in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Such could joyfully sing,

"O! the rapturous height, of that holy delight,  
Which is felt in the life-giving word;  
Of my Saviour possessed, I am perfectly blessed,  
And am filled with the fulness of God."

My brethren, on Christ crucified we build,—lay all our hopes for religion and bliss, for this world and the next. Who leans elsewhere, leans on a broken staff, that will pierce him sorely through.

"He builds too low, who builds beneath the skies."

We may differ in the use of terms by which we speak of the atonement; but all who know and teach the nature of sin and the necessity of forgiveness, must be agreed in

preaching Christ's death, as making provision in infinite mercy suited to the sorrows and necessities of the guilty; and that no other name is given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. When no helper was nigh, he saved poor, sinking Peter, who cried, "Lord save or I perish;" he spoke comfort and hope to the congealing heart of the thief on the cross, even when his own heart was being wrung with infinitely more than mortal anguish.

To do all this,—so to preach as to shew Christ the dying sinner's only hope,—only rescue from despair, and his safe convoy through nature's last dissolving struggle, man's final hour,—is not only to repeat the ancient promises, or describe the bleeding victim,—not merely to paint the dark crimson of that cloud that rose between Jesus on the cross and Jehovah on the throne,—not to mimic the rumbling earthquake or thunder trumpet of Sinai. No:—it is to go even to Bethlehem and stop at the place over which the star stood still, and enter the stall, and behold there a virgin mother and her holy child Jesus,—to be filled with faith in him as your Saviour, and so fired with zeal and love to him and the souls of men, as to go out into the world annointed with fresh courage, preaching "Jesus seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory," where he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, living to intercede for us, whence also he will come to judge the world at the last day.

IV. To preach Christ crucified, is to preach him as man's example in moral excellence: one whom man is bound to imitate in all his imitable perfections; to preach him as the embodiment and exemplifier of zeal for his Father's honor, and the honor of his Father's law; as the true model of devotion to others' good; hostile resistance to the flatteries, temptations and frowns of censurable pleasure; unwavering directness in duty, despite the terrors of persecution, or rigorous exactions of unrighteousness; in short, as at all times doing not his own will, but the will of him that sent him; and though fearful danger threaten, abating nothing—so that he might finish his work. O, his was an unwasting ardor, a self-denying consecration of his all, for the redemption and establishment of his church,—the salvation of souls,—the universal victories of a religion pure and undefiled.

It is when Christ is thus preached and believed on, that

he becomes the all in all of every doctrine, and of every duty,—the trust entire, in every emergency. Are you “in poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth?” suffering physical or mental infirmities, loss of property, friends, or blighted hopes? In all these straits Christ is yours, and among you, “as one that comforteth the mourner.” On him cast all your care, for he careth for you. He is your high tower, your rock of defence. If temptation or persecution rage, you may invoke the might and majesty of his name. If the whirl of earthly delusions threaten to engulf you, hope casts her anchor on his scarred bosom, and finds safe soundings. To those whose hearts contain only the shreds of tattered, torn and bleeding affections, Christ is preached as courting your love. Yes, he bled from his very heart’s sincerest central fountains, that just such hearts as sorrowing sinners mourn, might be given to him. Are adversity’s winds blowing fiercely upon the weak, trying their faith? Christ is held forth as their unchanging friend; confiding all in his love they can sing,

“My lifted eye without a tear,  
The gathering storm shall see;  
My steadfast heart shall know no fear,  
That heart shall rest on thee.”

Does the grave open and threaten to enclose you? Or is it rapidly enclosing the forms of beauty and loveliness, that have long and closely clung to your hearts? Christ crucified invests the dying with the immortality of the patriarchs; wraps them in the imperishable folds of his own righteousness, and they walk through the valley and shadow of death fearing no evil:—his imitable example having moulded them into his moral image, they resign this mortal to the dust of the ground, in the triumphant assurance that he will “raise it up again and fashion it like unto his own most glorious body.”

V. To preach Christ crucified, we must preach his moral precepts. Apostolic example is equivalent to divine command: and both are given that men may repent of sin and believe on Christ, in order to be saved. Christ crucified must, then, be preached as the subject of faith; belief in whom must be insisted on in all gospel sermons.



Christ's requirements, from the least to the greatest, must be plainly taught and practiced, both by them who preach and them who hear. Believing in Christ crucified ourselves, and pointing to him in our ministry, others must with the heart believe on him unto righteousness, and with the mouth confess him unto salvation; must profess him by being buried with him in baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; must imitate the lamb-like, peace-pursuing, peace-loving example of Christ, who will heal all your moral maladies, direct your purposes in their proper channels, and, as it is his prerogative, justly but mildly reprove your vagrancies; and when you come to stand before God in judgment, he will stand near you and say to justice, "Put up thy sword,—I have found a ransom,—I have redeemed this soul by my blood,—he is mine to place among my jewels,—to sparkle in my crown as a trophy of my war upon sin,"—for

"Sinners may live, since their Saviour has died."

Well may we exclaim, "O! the depths both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!"—how immeasurable his grace appears in the richness of redeeming love. Of all the schemes that have been tried to assure the soul of life and forgiveness, Christ crucified alone is satisfying. This harmonizes all the heavenly attributes,—charms the celestial hierarchy,—renders human hopes sublime and sure,—fills our opening desires after immortality,—gives a relish for holy duties here, which are a foretaste and preparation for joys hereafter. When the heart, like a bird that has wandered from its nest and knows not where to light, having tried the world, comes back to Christ crucified, it rests its weary wing, and finds solid ground—enjoys sure repose. And O what visions does he reveal to us across death's narrow isthmus, in that futurity which borders on it! It is the path Christ crucified walked and marked with glory,—once to us dark and dreary,—but it brightens as he approaches, and benignantly shines as he passes over it; faith follows him to the summit of the everlasting hills; there are endless varieties of loveliness and beauty, over which the ravished soul roams with not a cloud to dim, or a limit to obstruct its sight. In the centre of this scene, rendered luminous by the glory which

covers it, the city, the palace, the throne of Jehovah appears; trees of life surround it; rivers of salvation issue from its threshold; before it angels tune their harps of living melody, and saints in sweet response hymn out their grateful songs. Well has Milton said—

“Thrice happy these, the sons of men  
Whom God hath thus advanced,  
Created in his own image, there to dwell  
And worship him.—So sung they,  
And the Empyrean rang with hallelujahs.”

For the purposes of application, we remark—

1. Gospel example and experience shew us how and in what manner to preach “Christ crucified.”

“Not with enticing words that man’s wisdom teacheth, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power.” Our hopes of success should not rest upon the form of words, or the style of speech,—these are important in their places, and vastly more so than many suppose,—yet we are to expect success, if we have the appliances, only because we use Christ’s means,—means which he has promised to accompany by his almighty Spirit, our only surety.

The apostles were taught personally by Jesus, the great teacher, three years, and hence were *well* taught. Inspired, they were fitted for their peculiar work; and in doing it, we find them truly eloquent, using poetic imagery. They moved amid splendors of a lofty, simple style, rich in heart convincing and life purifying truths,—conveyed in a diction that never tires,—so pure in taste, so noble in fact, and in a sacred sense so truly classic, that carping criticism is disarmed, and turned to wonder, admiration and praise. Yet all these appliances were used only as the key by which the casket was unlocked, or as the rich drapery in which the vastly richer jewel was wrapped. They may be compared to the sunshine, cloud, and shade, and darkness, which nature hung around the cross—adding to its attractions—while the gemmed sparkling glory there was “Christ crucified.” This is the king sentence in inspiration, and is the key note in every heavenly song.

In preaching, Christ’s apostles laid their inspired tongues on all creation, and it wheeled into line direct, in the cam-

paign of truth against error, for the sake of man's salvation and his Maker's glory. Its vast store of beauty and richness, its magazines of strength and durability, are ransacked for figures in which to shadow forth the infinite idea of the soul's redemption by the death of Christ. Sun, moon and stars, mountain and vale, ocean and river,—yea, the foxes in their holes, the birds in the air, the lightnings of heaven, and the lilies of the valley, are all incorporated in the Redeemer's sayings and sermons. When he came from Galilee to John, to sanction his forerunner's work in beginning and building up his church, he divinely consecrates the limpid waters by saying, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness;" and being baptized in Jordan, makes it henceforth an emblem of regeneration and purification from sin, and the means of answering a good conscience.

When his great transactions as the incarnate are near their end, having put his holy impress on the world, in the church which his own blood had purchased, the consecrated bread and wine are made the lasting remembrances of his sayings and sufferings here below.

Whatever God has made is splendid, magnanimous or beautiful. Emulous to excel in imitating and preaching our Master, we may span the heavens,—number and measure their decorating orbs,—examine the regions of organic matter,—and in company with the great, and the wise, and the good of all ages, ponder the mysteries of infinite wisdom. Tracing the Everlasting in his works, we may set forth and illustrate the Redeemer in his word. An unbounded prospect lies before us, in every spreading page of which, divinity shines conspicuous, and on whichever side you turn your enraptured eyes, seen in the light of his own glory, God appears, and is declared here, as in his gospel, man's creator, benefactor and only Saviour.

2. The characters and qualifications of the men first appointed to preach Christ crucified, shew that success in the world's conquest was based upon their theme,—not themselves.

These had little worldly eminence, and it is well they had no more; for they were not sent to herald earthly, but heavenly greatness. O! it was a grand idea, that preachers of a crucified Saviour should be men in whose condition and conduct was shadowed forth a participation in



the lowliness and humbleness which the Divine author of this glorious scheme assumed. How foolish appears the wisdom of this world's plans compared with redemption by the blood of Christ. God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, in determining by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and he has enforced and illustrated it, in his calling not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble, to be proclaimers of his mercy to the lost and dying, whom he came to seek and to save. In this how evident it is, that he would have the excellence of the power to consist, not in man, but in God,—so that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord alone.

My young brother,—I may add, I trust, my son in the gospel,—for I well remember, and this day pleasingly recalls that solemn hour, when you came to me enquiring, “Pastor, what shall I do?” and when having obtained instruction and precious faith, you said, “See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” And I think of that happy hour, when these hands led you down into the water and baptized you, and you gave yourself to Christ and his church by the will of God,—whom I bless this day for having kept you, that your garments are unspotted from the world. He has preserved also your health, and prospered you thus far in your studies through college,—called and directed your way into the ministry, in this great State and this inviting field. My brother, continue faithful, and my heart shall be as your heart, our Master being judge.

From what I have said, and from your own knowledge, you have learned, that you are not called into the ministry and this day ordained, to preach yourself,—but Christ Jesus the Lord, and yourself the people's servant for Jesus' sake. Christ, I trust, is formed in your heart the hope of glory. He, as the hope of the hopeless, will be your theme of themes. Without him crucified, your best sermons will be soulless—lifeless. Egypt, Tyre, Greece and Rome, Cæsar, Cromwell, Washington and Napoleon, may be used as the artist uses his brush, to illustrate, bring out to view your thoughts,—but never to become the subject-matter of discourse. You will preach the advent, labors, death, resurrection, ascension, and final coming of Christ. You will dwell on him as a Prophet, Priest, King, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

At proper times, and always in a devout and reverent manner, you will dwell on the agonies of his soul in the garden and on the cross. In short, whatever the scroll of inspiration reveals, will be evolved in your ministry.

Man you will begin with in his pupilage, as a sinner against the nature of a holy, and the claims of a divine law. You will urge his obedience to authorities, his benevolence in giving for good purposes, from the little or much his Creator gives to him. You will preach, and enforce as a ruler in Christ's church, the discipline becoming the professed disciples of Jesus to maintain and observe. You will teach the duty of prayer in the closet, the family and social circle. You will announce God's requirements of man, "to deal justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God;" urge them to the spirit and practice of the meekness and gentleness of Christ,—to reason upon righteousness, temperance and a judgment to come, and whatever else becomes good living and sound doctrine, that you may now know or yet learn from the holy scriptures,—and in so doing you may both save yourself and them that hear you.

All this you may do faithfully, and yet be censured,—for either preaching Christ crucified too much, or not enough,—but you will feel that it is a small thing to be judged with man's judgment.

Some would have you dwell on their skeleton ridden hobby, as the true embodiment of all necessary preaching. Imitate Leighton, in stormy political Scotland. His brethren asked him, "Why do you not preach up the times, all the clergy are doing so?" Leighton replied, "If all the clergy are preaching up the times, one poor brother may be excused for preaching Christ and him crucified." Many, acting as if they were the only conservators of virtue and reform,—the very personifications of christianity,—paragons of clerical excellence, may envy and traduce you:—let them alone. Do all you can to keep yourself and hearers from their spectral systems of harm-doing. In a modest, fervent zeal, emulate the apostles,—yea, and Christ, the preacher's model. In every possible way exalt him and his religion; breathe his very spirit; keep close after him; do all you can as a christian privately, and as a minister publicly, to influence others to follow him in the new and living way.

Remember, the grand incentive to obedience is love. Love

has power to assimilate the heart into a Saviour's zeal and tenderness. And as there is no love so overpowering and impressive as Christ crucified, we can conceive nor recommend no agency so sure to work out your claim to the office of a bishop in Christ's church, and save your flock, as this: Jesus first, midst, last, all, and in all.

My brother, standing on Zion's high places, what do you see? A sight which, if any can affect heavenly beings, would make angels weep. An assembly of immortals exposed as brands to the eternal burnings,—sitting under the only means specially ordained for their rescue,—their fancies corrupted, their sensibilities charmed into ruinous indifference to religion,—candidates for eternity, sitting life away in the very sanctuary, where they are expected to learn how to live eternally. You watch for souls as one that must give account, and you will not charm them with vocal melody and poetic style, sprightly imagery and thoughts that fall on the ear with seductive quietness, and play round the head, but come not to the heart. You will not suffer such to retire and remember only what they should forget, and be pleased only with what they never should have heard. No, no! if they and you do these things, you know that they are not alone to blame. Legate of the skies! you will not for a moment cast aside the jagged cross, its nails, its thorns, its blood, its groans of an expiring God,—to throw over your own frail form the gorgeous drapery of human wit, or seemingly beautiful “men's inventions.” You cannot,—son of a minister of Christ,—a son of God I hope also. You will never cease to feel and act as if you were on your way to answer for your work; and can take no time to court a smile, or rouse the air of levity,—attract the wanton smile, or fill the idle gaze of those who hear you. If you do, you blindfold those who expect light from your lips, and lure to ruin those who, confiding in your honesty and sincerity, gave you their hand to be conducted up to heaven. To heaven may you, and your charge, and we all, come finally; and to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be glory everlasting Amen.



# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

New Series.

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No. 5.

## EMINENT PIETY IN THE CHURCH,

ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION OF THE MISSIONARY  
ENTERPRISE:

A sermon, by REV. J. TEASDALE, of New Jersey.

*God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. That thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*  
PSALM LXVII: 1, 2.

How dark is the picture, drawn by the pencil of inspiration, of mankind, while under the power and dominion of sin! The apostle says: "When they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened." Their vanity and ignorance developed themselves, in their "changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." All the various systems of idolatry, with their abominations, have resulted from the expulsion, from among the nations, of the knowledge of the *only living and true God*. For, *as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which were not convenient*.

How wide-spread are the evils! What do we behold, as we look out upon the nations, but the most shocking degradation and misery, resulting from the various systems of idolatry, whose cruel rites and ceremonies cause a chill of horror to pass through the christian's soul? While he gazes upon these deathless millions, enveloped in the thick gloom of heathenism, emphatically dead in sins, he exclaims with Ezekiel in the vision, "Can these bones live?" Sickened and saddened at the sight of human wretchedness and woe, as he turns away, the voice of prophecy breaks upon his ear,

announcing the glorious fact, "that the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High; and that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." Catching somewhat the spirit of the prophets, as he sees the standard of the cross planted in the very centre of the heathen nations, and its blood-stained banner unfurled and waving in glorious triumph over them; as he sees the people emerging from their gross darkness and abject slavery, into the light and liberty of the gospel; heathen temples crumbling down, and all things conspiring to hasten the glorious consummation, when "the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ;" hope sparkles in his eye, and joy unspeakable fills his heart. But now he descends from the rapturous height of his prophetic vision, to solve a most important question, viz: How shall these great things be accomplished? or by what *agency* shall the world be subjugated to Christ? Not willing to trust his own judgment in the answer, he turns aside, to listen to the instructions of Him, "who taught as never man taught." He hears him say to his disciples, "*Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world.*" From this lesson he learns, that the *agency of the church* is to be employed. He listens again, and hears the Master *directing* this agency: "*As my Father sent me, so send I you.*" It was not, however, till after his resurrection, when all power in heaven and earth was vested in him, that he gave to his constituted representatives their authoritative commission, to "go into all the world," &c.; thus informing them concerning the nature of their work, and to what extent their agency was to be employed. And to prevent the church from being overawed from the magnitude of the work, and becoming dispirited from a sense of her insufficiency, the *divine* presence and energy are promised, "*Lo, I am with you.*"

In the agency of the church, there is great adaptedness to the work. This consists, not merely in the fact that mind influences mind; but, also, in *increased* influence, resulting from an experimental knowledge of *that* gospel, which is to be their chief instrument for the world's conversion. Her ability to wield successfully this instrumentality, is derived mainly from her piety. No other endowment, however

splendid and complete, can be a substitute for this. It was *this* that gave to the apostles their unparalleled success. How mighty to subdue and save was the gospel in the hands of the apostolic christians! No opposition, however formidable, could stand,—no weapon formed against them could prosper. The results of their labor were adapted to inspire the hope that long ere this the power of the cross would have been universally triumphant. The only reason why it has not been the case, is, that the piety of the church has not been such as to secure this result. She is still too far in the wilderness for her light to be seen, “*like a city upon a hill,*” and for her influence to be felt, as it should be, to the earth’s extremities. Hence we see the propriety and wisdom of the prayer of the Psalmist in our text, “*God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, THY SAVING HEALTH AMONG ALL NATIONS.*”

He most evidently prays for an *increase* of genuine *piety* in the church, recognizing the fact, that *this* is inseparably connected with the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom. The text, therefore, furnishes us a suitable *theme* for the present occasion, viz: That *eminent piety*, in the church, is essential to the successful prosecution of the MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

May the God of missions render the discussion of the subject subservient to the advancement of his own kingdom. We remark—

I. That eminent piety is essential, in order to a just *appreciation* of the MISSIONARY WORK.

Our efforts are, generally, more or less successful, according to the estimate we place upon the object of pursuit. The christian, then, will be zealous, persevering and successful, *only* when he attaches great importance to the enterprise in which he is engaged. The christian’s *work!* How *dignified*—how *glorious*—how *enviable!* Angels might well envy the exalted position of the church among the agencies employed for the renovation of the world. *Her’s* is the work of leading a revolted world to throw down the weapons of their rebellion, and swear holy allegiance to their rightful Sovereign; the work of persuading the *guilty and condemned* to sue for pardon and life, in the name of the only mediator between God and man; the work of leading the sin-



polluted to the only fountain for cleansing,—the hungry and starving to the rich feast of the gospel,—the thirsty to the fountain of living waters,—the sin-sick to the great Physician; in a word, it is the *work* of saving souls from an everlasting *hell*, and fitting them for an eternal heaven. And yet, notwithstanding the dignity and importance of the work, the church, on account of adverse influences, is liable to undervalue it. This is invariably the case, where there is wanting a lively piety. *Then*, the world presents its various objects of attraction and pursuit,—*worldly* enterprises are more highly valued and vigorously pursued, greatly to the detriment of the cause of God and souls. Of these *facts*, the present state of things furnishes, alas, but too strong an evidence. We plead for a piety that will call into vigorous action every dormant power of the soul; that will lead its possessor to the foot of the *cross*, from which point of observation, he *must* look out upon a lost world, with the deepest emotion and concern. *There*, too, he will best sympathize with his compassionate Saviour, in his feelings for perishing souls, when he exclaimed, “*Here am I, send me.*” And as the tide of feeling rises for poor sinners, he will exclaim with the apostle, “*I have great heaviness and continued sorrow in my heart for deathless souls.*” Possessing such a frame of mind, he is to do, or to become any thing, that sinners may be saved. O! if this kind of piety could but be revived in the church, how infinitely important, above every other work, would the missionary enterprise appear!

2. *Eminent piety in the church is essential to the furnishing of such a ministry as is demanded in the work of subjugating the world to Christ.*

In this great enterprise, there is assigned to the christian ministry a most important and prominent part. The preaching of the doctrine of the cross, is the divinely appointed instrumentality for the salvation of the world. Other means may and *should* be employed, such as private instruction, Sabbath schools, the circulation of religious tracts and books, &c., &c.; but these must all be considered as aids to the work of the ministry. Indeed, very little has ever been accomplished in any place, independent of the preached gospel.

As the work is purely a spiritual one, and the object of attack the strongholds of sin, whose infernal influence upon mankind is to be counteracted and destroyed, we see at once

the importance of exalted piety in the principal agency employed. It has truly been said, that "the minister who would prosper in his work, must be a man of deep and thorough godliness. It is no ordinary type of piety that will ensure this result. It is not enough that he be merely a christian. He must have the fruits of the Spirit, in strong, vivid, and prominent exercise. He must possess a conscience acutely sensitive to the touch of evil, and keenly alive to the honor of God. He must breathe the very atmosphere of prayer, live continually under the influence of a heavenly temper, and maintain an unbroken communion with the skies." But how can we safely calculate upon such a degree of piety in the ministry, unless there be higher attainments in the church? The streams will not rise higher than the fountains whence they flow; nor will the ministry be far in advance of the church in piety. Let the church, as is her privilege, occupy a place near the throne, where she would be surrounded by a religious atmosphere, and her sons, who are to stand upon the bulwarks of Zion, having been born and reared in this spiritual element, will be men "full of faith and the Holy Ghost." It was this exalted piety that enabled the apostolic churches, in a very short period after receiving the commission of their Lord, to carry the good news into every province of the civilized world. It was *this* that gave to Brainerd, to Wesley, to Whitfield, and other modern luminaries of the church, such captivating, subduing power over their congregations,—that extorted from listening thousands, as the burning truth fell from the lips of these men of God, the enquiry, "What must we do to be saved?" *Such* a piety must all the heralds of salvation possess, in order to the successful prosecution of their great work.

Again: The missionary enterprise demands, not only a *pious*, but an *intelligent* ministry,—one of great intellectual power. Without stopping to assign *all* the reasons for such a demand, we will barely say, that the nature of the work to which they are called, requires that they be men of high intellectual culture. To furnish such a ministry belongs appropriately to the church. I heartily rejoice that we live in an age when the erroneous sentiment is fast giving way, that if God calls a man to preach, he will qualify him, both spiritually and intellectually, independently of his own exertions

or the aid of the church. Still the question might be asked, what has the *piety* of the church to do with the *intellectual* culture of the ministry? We answer, *much every way*. It would originate and sustain theological seminaries of the right stamp. Then, it would say to all the indigent young men, who are called of God to the responsible work of the ministry, "Go up to these schools of the prophets, that you may receive that mental training which the exigencies of the church and the world demand, and *we will* sustain you." Then, young men would not be thrust into the ministry with attainments far below those of the world, to row against wind and tide all their life, accomplishing not a tithe perhaps, of what they would have accomplished had they enjoyed the advantages of a thorough education.

Again: In order to the consummation of our great work, we need, not only a *pious* and *intellectual* ministry, but one, as to *numbers*, greatly increased. Said the Saviour, "*The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.*" If the necessity *then* existed for an increase of laborers, how much *more now*? The church has but to lift up her eyes, to behold the many fields already white and inviting the laborer. Look at China, with her hundreds of millions, long barred against the herald of salvation, but now her cities and provinces are open to the occupancy of the church. Indeed we may safely assert, that all parts of the world are inviting our efforts. How loud are the cries that break upon our ears, *come over and help us*? *Why, oh why*,—in the name of the perishing millions we ask it,—is not the church at her post, praying the Lord of the harvest to multiply and send forth laborers into these whitening fields? What answer can be given, but that her piety is too feeble? And must this state of things continue? Heaven forbid. The church must ascend the eminences of Zion, and from her elevated position, must look out upon the world anxious to be saved, and from the throbbings of a heart laboring under the mighty weight of deathless souls, must utter her *loud cries* into the ears of the Lord of the harvest, that he will call into his vineyard more faithful laborers.

This deep toned piety is not more necessary in praying for an *increase* of ministers, than it is to *encourage* those whose



duty it is to enter the sacred office. In *many* of our churches young men may be found, who have been deeply impressed with the duty of preaching the gospel, and at times have felt that woe would rest upon them if they refrained, to whom not a single word of encouragement has ever been spoken. Some of them, after a severe struggle with conscience and duty, without encouragement, have turned aside to other vocations, and will probably live and die in the neglect of this most important duty. Thus, many a Boanerges, as well as son of consolation, has been lost to the cause. Besides *these*, there are many more in our churches, of talent and influence, who *have* entered, and are *preparing* to enter, the various secular professions, or have gone into counting rooms, work shops, or upon farms, who, were there a higher tone of piety in the church, would say with their Master, as the Macedonian cry breaks upon their ear, "Here am I, send me." As, under the influence of such an all-pervading piety, all would be dedicated to Christ, time, talents, property, &c., they would say, I freely abandon my lucrative profession, my store, my shop or farm, for the good of souls. Thus, every one in the church would stand in an attitude of readiness to perform the bidding of their exalted Redeemer. Then, how great would be the number of those who preach the gospel among the nations? "Many would run to and fro, and knowledge would be increased."

3. *A greater degree of holiness in the church, would produce a spirit of evangelical liberality, which is indispensable in carrying forward the missionary enterprise.*

The gospel is a system of pure benevolence; and wherever its legitimate influence is exerted, we expect to find the *spirit* of benevolence. How fully sustained is this fact from the word of God? "God so loved the world, that he GAVE his only begotten Son." "The Son loved the church, and GAVE himself for it." The Spirit is given to renew and sanctify the church. In Jesus all things are given us *richly* to enjoy; so that, "as we have freely received, we are freely to give." How strikingly exemplified was this spirit by the apostolic church? They first *gave themselves* to the Lord, and then consecrated to his service all they had. "They possessed the grand secret of giving up all for Christ, and yet accounting themselves rich; the art of taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods; the *principle* of finding their hap-

piness in living to God; of spending and being spent in his service. It would have been difficult to convince them that they were giving too *freely* to the cause of Christ,—that they were *denying themselves*, in giving so much to him instead of consuming it upon their lusts; while they were *gratifying* themselves by so doing. It would have been difficult to convince them that their interest was distinct from the interest of Christ, or that they had occasion for tears while *his* kingdom was prospering, or any reason to exult in their own secular prosperity, if it did not subserve the advancement of *his* cause, to which they had given themselves.” There was no lack of *money* to carry on the benevolent operations of the church; for if at any time there was a want of *readiness*, they were carried by the apostles along by the cross, where they would hear the soul-stirring appeal, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” As this appeal penetrated the heart, every morbid feeling was thrown off, and they yielded themselves anew for the world’s speedy conquest. Such was the influence of the piety of *that* age upon the benevolent feelings of the church,—and such, too, would be the influence of a similar piety upon the *present*. But it might be asked, in view of the pittance now cast into the treasury of the Lord, has the genius of christianity been changed? or are its professors *now* released from the obligation to consecrate their *property* as well as themselves? We answer NO. But with much more propriety might the question be asked, has not the demon of selfishness taken such a hold upon the church, as greatly to counteract the benevolent influence of the gospel? This results from a superficial, visionary, powerless piety. Does not the present embarrassed state of the financial operations of the church, challenge immediate investigation, as to the cause? How crippled and inefficient the efforts of our *mission Boards* to spread the gospel, for want of means! What perplexity and trepidation attend all their operations! The missionaries abroad are fast sinking under the onerous burdens imposed, for want of more laborers; while the poor heathen are crying, “Send us *more* of those men of the great God, that show us the way of salvation.” But instead of sending a reinforcement to supply the places of those who fell while struggling manfully with

opposing interests, and also to encourage the hearts and strengthen the hands of those now toiling and almost exhausted, our Boards are under the painful necessity of expressing, to those noble spirits, their fears that they will be compelled, although with great reluctance, to call home some of the missionaries. How painful, how dispiriting such intelligence to these self-sacrificing men! "What!" they ask, "give up our stations, our churches, our schools,—give up all that we have accomplished, during years of painful solicitude? We *cannot* do it." If brother Brown of the Assam mission may speak for the rest, and *his* is the language of all the missionaries, they say: "We can part with our families, and send them home to be supported by their friends,—and we shall do it if necessary; but this field we *cannot* abandon. Should we be reduced to the extremity,—be recalled, or left without any regular support in a heathen land, I trust our Lord will not find us wanting in the day of trial. The call to *return* is one which we could never obey, so long as life and a moderate share of health is granted us. NO, the precious converts that are gathered in, and to be gathered in from among the people, are dearer to me than life, and with them, by God's grace, will I remain to the last." Here, brethren, is breathed the pure spirit of christian philanthropy and benevolence. And shall this soul-moving appeal, in behalf of the heathen and heathen converts, be unheeded by the 800,000 Baptists of America? Great God! what are we coming to? What will become of thy church, thy cause in the world? O! brethren, *will* not these melting, subduing appeals touch *some* chord, that will vibrate through the heart of the church, arousing into action all her benevolent feelings?

Oh *benevolence!* bright ornament of the primitive church, where art thou fled? *Missionaries are to be called home!* for *what?* For unfaithfulness to their brethren, to the heathen, to God? No, NO; to the praise of God be it spoken, *no.* Nor is it because the heathen will not receive their message of mercy; for they are crying for help. Called home for *what?* I blush when I answer; it is because 800,000 Baptists in America will not furnish the small amount necessary for their support. The *fact* can no longer be concealed. It will be published throughout the christian world to our prejudice and disgrace, should a single missionary be



recalled, or one be found willing and qualified, who could not be sent for want of funds. Such an occurrence would be a stain upon us, that ages could not wipe out. There is money enough and to spare in the church, could but the grasp of covetousness be broken, to carry on successfully our missionary operations, though they were increased a thousand fold. Higher spiritual attainments will alone break these Horeb hearts in the church. Then will flow out the streams of pure benevolence, to gladden and save the famishing. Then may we dispense with our present system of agencies for the collection of funds, as christians will give, not so much from mere impulse or momentary excitement, as from *principle*. Then will the treasuries of our benevolent societies be kept full, or if by any unexpected demand they might become exhausted, the fact need only be known, to have them speedily replenished. Then, too, will be fulfilled the predictions of prophets: "To him shall be given the gold of Sheba. The merchandise of Tyre shall be holiness to the Lord; it shall not be treasured nor laid up. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring their sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God. Kings shall bring presents unto him, they shall bring gold and incense."

4. *Exalted piety is necessary to the production of GOSPEL UNION in the church, which is essential to the world's conversion to God.*

The absence of this has presented to the advances of truth, the most formidable obstacle. The evils resulting from disunion are incalculable. "It supplies infidels with their most plausible topics of invective; it hardens the consciences of the irreligious; weakens the hands of the good; impedes the efficiency of prayer, and is, probably, the painful obstruction to that ample effusion of the Spirit which is essential to the conversion of the world." No plea for it is valid that rests upon the spirit of emulation or rivalry, which it is adapted to excite. No real good can result from such an emulation. The world cannot be converted by the employment of unholy means. With more propriety might an army of soldiers, raised for the defence of the rights and liberties of our nation, instead of moving forward in solid phalanx to drive back an invading foe, divide themselves into companies and spend their time and energies in a quarrel among themselves

about their different equipages. Such a course would be justly and loudly condemned by every patriot. Aware that *union* is strength, the grand enemy of man has availed himself of every means to keep the church in a divided, distracted state. Much time has been worse than wasted on account of it, brilliant talents have been employed in widening the breach, and thus lost to the cause; and there has been a useless expenditure of vast sums of money in support of numerous organizations, the offspring of disunion. Each sect must have its own peculiar church organization; its colleges and theological seminaries; its Bible, tract, and missionary societies; to support the *machinery* of which, a great amount of money and talent are required, which might otherwise be employed in direct efforts to save the world.

Who has not felt that a multiplication of conflicting church organizations is a serious evil, and detrimental to the cause of truth?—an *evil*, which is being increased by the intolerant and disorganizing spirit now at work in the church,—a spirit that is not satisfied by a division into sects merely, but is seeking to tear asunder those who have lived in delightful harmony, recognizing *one Lord*, exercising the *one faith*, and practicing the *one baptism*; a spirit that severs the holy bonds by which the north and the south, the east and the west, have been held together in one common brotherhood, putting forth their united energies in the great work of spreading the gospel among the nations. *New tests* of fellowship must be instituted. The flame of brotherly love that burned in the bosoms of a Baldwin and Williams at the north, and a Mercer and a Semple at the south, must be forever extinguished, and its blessed influence lost in directing to the one great object—the conquest of the world—the entire energies of the church. Unrestrained by divine influence, in what will this end? The necessity of christian union may be learned from the Saviour's last prayer for his church, "*That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" For some years the object of this prayer was realized, in the perfect harmony that prevailed in the church in doctrine, in practice, and in means for the advancement of their common cause. What success attended their efforts! Who could resist their powerful influence? Then it was that the church broke forth

“as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Had this spirit of oneness continued to pervade the church, long ere this the cause of the Redeemer might have been triumphant, and thousands of voices of glorified spirits have been raised to their highest pitch in making proclamation that the “kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.” This kind of union is considered, by the missionaries and all reflecting christians, a desideratum in the successful prosecution of the missionary work. But however important *union* may be, it is not to be sought by concession or compromise. The *only* safe basis of christian union is the truth of the Bible. All doctrines and practices, creeds and confessions, however revered for their antiquity, or ably sustained by ecclesiastics, having no sanction from the Bible, *must* be abandoned. This will never be done until Christ is acknowledged King supreme in Zion, and *his* expressed will taken as the rule of faith and practice. This recognition will not generally be made except under the influence of fervent piety. Every christian, thus filled with the Spirit, will regard the commands of Jesus as more authoritative and binding than the dogmas of their favorite church or teachers. The *cross* will be the only standard, around which they will rally, and its doctrines will be the mighty weapons, by which the embattled hosts of God’s elect will conquer and save the world.

5. Great piety is required, to inspire the church with *courage* and *fortitude* in the prosecution of her work to its final completion.

By the commission, “go ye into all the world,” the attitude of the church is made aggressive. It devolves upon her the duty to invade and conquer the kingdom of darkness. To these efforts of the church there will be offered desperate resistance, by all the allied powers of hell. *Satan will come down in great wrath, knowing his time is short.* *Infidelity* has already taken a bold and fearful stand, and is preparing for the encounter. We may adopt the language of a recent work: “No longer restricted to a solitary few, who were content to pursue their unholy speculations, far away from communion with common mind, it has come forth from its hiding places and is mingling with the throng of men in their daily walks, and in all their phases of opinion and



forms of intercourse. It does not even seek to disguise its object. Having thrown off the mask and shaken hands with shame, it stalks in the broad blaze of noon, and unblushingly proclaims its abominations in the front of day." Having assumed such an attitude, it will not be driven from the field, but by a vigorous effort of the church.

In carrying forward the conquests of the cross, the various systems of *false religion* must also be met and overcome. The vast empire of paganism, with its polytheism, cruel rites and abominations, is to be overturned. The pretensions of Mohammed are to be shewn to be wicked and illusive; and his deluded followers induced to renounce the false prophet, and receive Jesus as prophet, priest and king; to exchange the Koran for the pure word of God. In these encounters, courage and fortitude will be required of the church.

But the most powerful ally of the prince of darkness, with which the church must come in collision, is the Romish hierarchy. Although claiming to be *the church*, her doctrines are as much at variance with the principles of the religion of Jesus, as are those of Mohammed or the superstitions of paganism. *More* is to be feared from this source than all the other powers of the adversary combined. The *spirit* of this mother of abominations, has always been a persecuting one: and she has loved to riot in the blood of God's martyred saints. She has kindled her fires and led to the stake thousands of the dear children of God, of whom the world was not worthy. She has invented instruments of torture and death, unequalled by all the other inventions of hell. In her unquenchable thirst for power and dominion, she has hurled from their thrones kings and emperors, and crushed beneath her mighty tread kingdoms and empires. What she *has* done, she will seek to do again. Give her the power, and she will doom every protestant in the world to the dungeon and the stake. *Such* is the formidable array of enemies, which the church must encounter, in her efforts to plant the standard of the cross among all nations. In this sanguinary conflict, (for such we have no doubt it will be,) who can doubt, but that *courage* and *fortitude* will be required on the part of the church. *Courage* will be needed to brave the storms of persecution,—to meet dangers and death in their most appalling forms; and *fortitude* for the patient endurance of the toils, sacrifices, sufferings, &c., in-

cident to the work. What can originate, sustain and invigorate those christian graces, but an enlarged measure of the Spirit's influence? The Spirit's energizing power gives courage to go forward in the full view of these menacing powers of darkness; in view of the rack, the dungeon and the stake. It is deep piety that renders the church invincible to the aggregated powers of hell. Previous to that enlargement which resulted from the effusion of the Holy Spirit, how circumscribed were the views,—how feeble the efforts,—and weak the courage, of the disciples of our Lord? Even the voice of a female, on one occasion, was sufficient to fill the boldest of them with consternation. But when the Spirit is shed down upon them, how fearless and bold they become. Under their first sermon anxious thousands cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They proclaimed alike fearlessly the gospel to the king and his subjects; to the learned and the ignorant; to the rich and the poor; to friends and enemies; in the midst of dangers and death. With what irresistible power did the word fall from their lips? Kings trembled upon their thrones; heathen gods fell like Dagon before the ark; the superstitious, the proud, the Greek, the barbarian, all bowed beneath the power of the doctrines they proclaimed. Such courage and fortitude can alone result from a similar piety.

6. *Exalted piety is necessary to sustain a lively faith in the MISSIONARY CAUSE.*

The missionary work is peculiarly a work of faith. The prophets predicted, and our Lord virtually promised, that his kingdom should be universally established. Under the influence of an active faith in the fulfilment of these predictions and promises, the little band of disciples, as we have seen, after the ascension of their Lord, entered with great energy and zeal upon the vast work of subjugating the entire world to the cross of Christ. What principle less operative and powerful, could have impelled this feeble band,—feeble as to numbers, to wealth and worldly influence,—to stand up in opposition to the long cherished and almost deified maxims and doctrines of the world? They *believed* that error would recede before the march of truth; that false systems of philosophy and religion must give place to the doctrines of the cross, and that the gospel, like leaven, would diffuse its principles, until all nations shall be brought under

its saving influence. Circumstanced as they were, what could they do without strong faith in their work? and what can *we* do without it? *Unbelief* presents a thousand obstacles to the successful prosecution of our work; but *faith* surmounts them all. *Unbelief* operates as a palsy, but *faith* as a stimulus. All the great achievements of the church up to the present time, have resulted, to a great extent, from the operation of *this* principle. It was by faith that the ancient worthies *subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire*, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens. By faith *we* must go forth, like the early christians, as sheep among wolves; and, if need be, at the expense of all that is dear to us on earth, to carry the gospel to all nations. Let us believe as they did, that we shall go *in the fullness of the blessing of Christ*; then may we expect that *God will cause us to triumph in Christ, and make manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place*. Is not our Saviour now saying to us, my brethren, with reference to the measure of our success: "*According to your faith be it unto you.*"

7. Finally: *Eminent piety is necessary to keep alive in the church, the spirit of fervent and effectual prayer.*

How indispensably necessary is prayer, in connection with every effort for the enlargement of Zion! We may organize our missionary societies, educate our young men, and send them forth to translate, print and circulate the sacred scriptures among heathen nations; raise an ample amount of funds for their support; and no saving influence can be exerted upon the perishing, without the accompanying agency of the Holy Spirit. *This* agency is promised to the church, in answer to believing prayer. And it is written for our encouragement, that *He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask for it, than we as parents are to give good gifts to our children*. It was, doubtless, in answer to the united and fervent prayers of the disciples, who had been assembled of one accord, that the overwhelming influence of the Spirit was shed forth on the day of Pentecost. It was when the church at Antioch was waiting on the Lord and fasting, that the Holy Ghost said, "*Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*"



They were sent forth as missionaries, and by the prayer of the church were commended to the work. *Modern* missions had their origin in an extraordinary spirit of prayer. When our English Baptist brethren moved in the God-like work of giving the gospel to the heathen, how deeply imbued with this spirit were their minds? They implored divine assistance both in public and private, in their meetings for business, and in the concert of all the churches. Their prayers have been heard, and great things have been accomplished. If once this spirit departs from the church, Ichabod will be written upon all her efforts; if it mingle not in her services at home or efforts abroad, she will never see the world converted. Said the distinguished R. Hall, "Prayer touches the only spring that possibly ensures success. By *speaking* we move men, by *prayer* we move God. It is through the medium of prayer, that the littleness and meanness of men prevail with Omnipotence. The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields; he looks upon every other power as more or less opposed to him; but he looks upon this as a confession of man's dependence, as an appropriate homage to his greatness, as an attraction which brings down his divine agency to the earth."

Here every one may assist missions; and every tear in the closet, every prayer in the heart over the miseries of those who are dead in their sins, every prayer lifted up in that retirement where no eye sees but the eye of "Him which seeth in secret," affords a most important benefit. These are the elements of success; these the pledges of final triumph. No one who attends our monthly concerts for missions, that life to the social and family prayer, but will be convinced of the necessity of the revival of this spirit in the church.

With a few remarks we close the discussion.

1. We remark, first: That the *missionary enterprise*, both at *home* and *abroad*, is ONE.

Our State Conventions and General Associations, our Home and Foreign Mission Societies, are but parts of the same great moral machinery for the renovation of the world. None of these can be dispensed with, so long as they work in harmony, without serious detriment to the cause. We must cultivate well the field at *home*, that we may have men and means to send *abroad*. Had we time, we might profitably glance at some of the reflex benefits. Suffice it to say, that

by foreign mission efforts the energies of the church have been aroused to an extent far beyond what they would have been by merely operating in the home department. Let us feel, therefore, that the *missionary* cause is one and indivisible.

2. We remark, secondly: That in the providence of God, pressing demands are *now* made upon the church for greatly enlarged operations.

This is true, both as respects the *home* and *foreign* fields. There are many unoccupied, yet promising points, within the bounds of our own favored State. More than twice the number of missionaries now sustained by this Convention, might be profitably employed. And we may add, that such an increase is urgently demanded. And what shall we say of the operations of our *Home Mission Society*? If these were increased fourfold, they would come far short of the wants of the people in the great West. Many of the towns and villages now unoccupied are as important as are any of those stations at which their missionaries are laboring. How loud is the call for enlargement in this department of our christian efforts? Then cast your eye over the foreign field, *all white for the harvest*. Look at China, with her hundreds of millions, perishing for lack of knowledge. She invites our labors. We have said, that this *demand* is made in the providence of God. He has gone before the church, and opened wide the door for the diffusion of the knowledge of salvation among the nations. To meet all these pressing demands, how greatly enlarged must be the operations of the church.

3. Finally: It has now become a question with the church of great practical importance, how shall these demands for enlargement be met?

We need, as we have seen, both men and money to meet the exigencies of the case. To supply the *men*, shall all the pastors urge upon their respective churches, the duty of sending forth some of their most distinguished sons; and shall our theological seminaries be visited, and the young men who are pursuing their studies with reference to the ministry, be entreated to turn their attention specially to the missionary cause? *Something* might in this way be done, but it will never fully meet the demand for laborers. To raise the *money* required, shall we multiply collecting agents and send

them all over the country, to make known the wants of the perishing? This might, perhaps, increase the receipts into our treasury, but can never permanently supply the demand. In very many cases, as soon as the excitement subsides, which was produced by the moving appeals and effecting statements of the agent, covetousness is again enthroned in the affections, and the loud cries of the perishing are unheeded. But the question, still unsolved, "what shall we do?" presses itself upon us. Our answer is, we must commence farther back,—we must begin with the piety of the church. And in proportion to the increase of true piety here, will be the increase of laborers and means for their support.

Brethren in the ministry, let it now be our chief solicitude to increase and elevate our *own* piety, and that of our respective churches. If we all build over against our own doors, the walls will be joined and completed. Whenever we attain to that degree of holiness which our Lord requires, we can dispense with all our agencies, that are now needed to beg us to do our duty in giving to the various objects of benevolence, and ministers will have less trouble to collect a few dollars for the State Convention, the Bible, or the Mission cause. Then all will give from principle as the Lord prospers them. That we might have an increase of laborers "*full of faith and the Holy Ghost*," we sincerely wish that an additional professorship might be established in each of our theological seminaries, to be filled by a man of high spiritual attainments, whose sole business it should be to cultivate moral feelings and raise to a greater degree of eminence the piety of the young men qualifying for the work of the ministry. Were high attainments, in this respect, as constantly kept before their minds, as is the importance of great literary attainments, we should have a much more efficient and powerful ministry. Then would our young men, having completed their prescribed course of studies, instead of seeking a location in a large town or populous place, ask of our mission Boards an appointment to labor in destitute regions, or with the few now in the field among the heathen. Under the influence of such a piety, "many would run to and fro, and knowledge would be increased;" "the way of the Lord would be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations."



## SHORT SERMON.

Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.—1 Cor. vi: 19, 20.

What do we mean when we say that what we hold is not our own, but another's? We mean that we have no *right* to use it as our own. We must be governed in our use of it, simply by the direction of the owner. If we appropriate it to our own use, we are dishonest. We are guilty of robbery. Or, if he allows us to use it, or any part of it, for ourselves, we must be governed in all respects by his will. If a man commit his property into my hands for a term of time, I must surely do with it just what he prescribes.

And, again, we must give up what is not our own, whenever the owner calls for it. If we refuse, we are dishonest. We have no right to retain either the whole, or any part of it. It is all the owner's, and he is the only rightful proprietor. If you lend a man a hundred dollars, and when you call upon him for it he declines to surrender your property, or puts you off with a shilling, you would never trust him again.

Now this is precisely what is meant, when, in our text, it is said, "Ye are not your own." Whatever we possess is not our own, but Christ's. A certain nobleman delivered to his servants talents, and said, "occupy till I come."

You are called by the name of Christ. You profess to be his. You say you are not your own. But have you ever reflected on the meaning of this confession? You are a professional man; your learning, and talent, and influence, are Christ's. What right have you to use them for the purpose of fostering your own ambition, or in any respect ministering to yourself? If you thus use them, you rob Christ.

You are a minister of the gospel. You have been in a peculiar manner set apart to the service of the Saviour. You have, by your own will, laid yourself upon his altar. Have you then a right to live as other men live? Have you a right to shrink from hardship, and reproach, and inconvenience, and toil, and declare that you will serve Christ, but it must be in a comfortable settlement? Have you a right to pursue what studies you please, to read what books you please, engage in what enterprises you please, for the sake of reputation, or honor, or power; or, in a word, to make your calling as an ambassador for Christ, an instrument for attaining to temporal ease, or honor, or emolument? Christ had infinite-

ly greater facilities than you for doing this; did *he* use them thus? Paul was an abler and more learned man than you, *he* rejoiced in being made the offscouring of all things for Christ.

You are a merchant or mechanic. You are by industry and skill acquiring property and standing. But you say that these are not your own. By what right then do you use them as you do? \* \* \* In your arrangements at home and abroad, in your expenditures for pleasure or amusement, for yourselves or your children, in your principles of accumulation, I do not see that you even profess to differ from honest worldly men around you, who never profess that they are not their own. \* \* \*

But I have said, that if any thing with which you are entrusted is not your own, you are under obligation to surrender it up as soon as the owner calls for it. If what you hold be his, when he requires it, you have no right to retain it a moment longer.

Christ intimates his claim by the facts brought to your knowledge. A world for which he died is perishing. He has spread their case before you. They are demanding the word of life at your hands. They will perish if you do not come to their aid. Your talents, and labors, and wealth, are necessary to save a world from destruction. If you do not surrender them when he thus demands them, what do you mean by saying you are not your own? Will a man rob God?

Christian minister and candidate for the ministry, have you heard the cry of perishing millions? Christ demands your services. Have you offered them to him? Have you ever brought it home to your conscience, my talents are not my own, and Christ has a right to use them where he will? Have you not often looked around you on your circle of friends, your goodly parish, the comforts of home, the respect with which you are treated by your fellow-citizens, and said in your heart, I cannot give up all this for Christ?

Christian layman, the salvation of the heathen cannot, unless by a miracle, be accomplished without your property. Christ demands it of you. It is a solemn fact. You cannot escape from it. He does not ask for that which you do not feel. He requires that you make sacrifices for him, and to do it to any extent that may be necessary for carrying on his work of mercy.—*Dr. Howell.*

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## THE DIVINE RECTITUDE:

A sermon by REV. J. L. REYNOLDS, pastor of the 2nd Baptist church, Richmond, Va.

*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?—GEN. XVIII: 25.*

In a world like ours, in which evil abounds and triumphs, there is much to perplex the pious mind. The scenes of life are variously checkered with light and darkness, and the colors of good and evil are strangely intermixed and blended. Prosperity and adversity are capricious in their objects and their seasons, and "all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and the wicked." Eccl. ix: 2. Or, more perplexing still, "The ungodly prosper in the world: they increase in riches. There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness: and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in wickedness." Eccl. vii: 15. In the career of life, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong: neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." Eccl. ix: 11.

Such are some of the difficulties with which, to an ordinary observer, the dispensations of Providence are encumbered; and whether we turn our attention to the kingdom of nature or of grace, they equally meet our view, and baffle our comprehension.

It is sometimes the pleasure, as it is doubtless the prerogative, of Deity, to wrap his designs in impenetrable mystery; to throw around the measures of his government a darkness which the eye of man cannot pierce; and to involve the motives of his procedure in an obscurity which eludes the discovery of the philosopher equally with the peasant. When with an irreverent curiosity we attempt to pry into those



“secret things which belong unto God,” and with an incautious tread, to obtrude ourselves into the penetralia of that august temple, in which are treasured the counsels of the Almighty, the monition of heaven arrests our footsteps at its very threshold; and the irrevocable mandate is, “hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.”

For oft amid thick clouds  
 And dark, does heaven's all-ruling sire  
 Choose to reside, (his glory unobscured,)  
 And with the majesty of darkness round,  
 Circle his throne.

So that the most attentive investigation must stop short with the confession, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.” “Thy judgments are a great deep, and thy ways past finding out.”

Amid the obscurity which invests the divine administration, the mind might be perpetually agitated with doubts and fears; or, as its only refuge, landed in infidelity, had it not some anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. There is nothing so well adapted to stay the mind under all the vicissitudes of our present state of being, and to fortify it against the misgivings which are attendant upon misfortune, as a firm reliance on the rectitude of the Supreme Being. It behooves us therefore to have, as an antidote against the ills of life, and a refuge in times of trouble, a deep and settled conviction that the Judge of all the earth will do right; a confidence in the wisdom and justice of his administration, that will survive the most perilous shocks of adversity; a faith which says, “though he slay me, yet will I *trust* in him;” which can stand beside the grave of its buried hopes, yea the wreck of all earthly things, and in reverent submission exclaim: “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

If the Supreme Judge fails to do right, it must be either because he does not know what is right, or because he lacks the power to do right, or because he has no inducement to do right. It is the object of this discourse to shew, on the contrary,—

1. God has all the wisdom necessary to enable him to know what is right.

2. He possesses all the requisite power to do right. And

3. He can be under no inducement to depart from rectitude; but, on the contrary, has the highest possible inducements to do, in all cases, what is right.

Our first proposition, then, is:—

I. The Divine Being knows what is right.

This may be sustained by an appeal to every man's consciousness,—to the idea which every man forms of God. Our notion of the Deity is that of an assemblage of infinite perfections. Infinite wisdom must therefore be one of those perfections.

If we pass from our abstract conception of the character of God to his works, we shall see the most illustrious evidences of his ineffable wisdom. The whole universe is but one magnificent mirror, which reflects the intelligence of its great architect. The expanse of the heavens, whether at midnight presenting to the eye one vast illumination, or by day stretching out its interminable azure, robed in the drapery of clouds, or painted by the setting sun, bespeaks the wisdom of Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. The earth, with its myriad forms of life and beauty, and its matchless contrivances, most plainly indicates that infinite intelligence must have presided over its creation. "The earth is full of thy riches; in wisdom hast thou made them all." Contrivance proves design, and an intelligent design evinces an intelligent designer. If we trace the various marks of design which the material universe presents, to their source, we shall find them terminate in Him who formed this wondrous frame. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? He is the only wise God."

The inference from such indubitable manifestations of divine wisdom in the works of creation is, that God is possessed of infinite wisdom in every other respect. He who could fill a world with such perfect contrivances, and such wise adaptation of means to ends,—He who formed the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, and adjusted in every other respect the exquisite mechanism of man's frame, "so fearfully and wonderfully made,"—must be able to carry the evidences of his wisdom into every other department of the material and moral universe. In other words, he who knows

what is right in these cases, must know what is right in all others. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts xv: 10.)

The argument does not stop here. Whence have we derived our notion of justice? Did we not receive it from God? The archetype of this idea is eternally existent in the divine mind, and is only borrowed or implanted in ours. "Shall any teach God knowledge?" (Job xxi: 22.) There are just men upon the earth. But, "shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" (Job iv: 17.)

All our knowledge is either directly or remotely derived from the Deity. If there is a spirit in man, it is the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth him understanding. "He giveth wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding." (Dan. ii: 21.) "He that planted the ear, (is the just reasoning of the Psalmist,) shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" (Psl. xciv: 9.)

A frequent source of error in the decisions of earthly judges is their liability to be imposed upon by false evidence. Before a human tribunal hypocrisy may pass undetected, and the criminal may evade the penalty due his guilt, by resorting to the subterfuges and concealments of perjury. "But the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. vi: 7.) "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." (Job xxxiv: 21.) "If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." (Psl. cxxxvii: 12.) God sees the end from the beginning; the past and the future are equally well known with the present; and no contingencies can ever arise which are not embraced within the comprehension of his infinite intelligence. Experience makes no contributions to the divine knowledge, and hence the divine purposes have been formed under the guidance of a wisdom which spans the amplitude of all real and possible existences.



It is apparent, from the considerations which have been suggested, that the Supreme Judge knows what is right.

II. I proceed to shew that he possesses the *power* to do right.

Power is another attribute of divinity. It must therefore belong to the Most High. To deny it would be to recede into the cheerless void of atheism. "God hath spoken once: twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." (Ps. lxii: 2.) This power he submits to our inspection in the stupendous productions of his mighty hand. This it is that has founded the earth and garnished the heavens, and propels the vast and complicated machinery of the universe. Its magnitude is immense; its resources inexhaustible; its duration infinite; its manifestations indefinitely varied. It says, "let there be light, and there is light." It speaks into existence a world as easily as an atom. It unfolds the petals of the smallest flower, or gilds the wing of the butterfly, and kindles the burning fountains of the sun. It propels the current of life through the smallest animalcule, and wheels the planets through their mighty orbs. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. xviii: 14.) "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." (Is. xl: 12, 15, 17.)

God has also exhibited his power in the accomplishment of his promises; and those of the ancient prophecies which have already been fulfilled, are standing memorials of his irresistible might. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i: 2.) The wheels of his government roll steadily on against all obstacles. "Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lam. iii: 37.) "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou?" (Dan. iv: 35.) "Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment and in plenty of justice. Men do therefore fear him." (Job xxxvii: 23.)

It has thus been shewn, that the Judge of all the earth possesses all the knowledge and power requisite to enable him to do right. It remains to be shewn, that no inducement can prevail with him to prevent justice; but that we have every reason to expect a righteous judgment at his tribunal.

The motives which may operate with a judge to turn him aside from the path of equity and corrupt his decisions, are those which appeal to his own interest, or are derived from the fear or favor of the parties whose cause may be submitted to his arbitrament. We cannot suppose that in the paltry affairs of men the interests of Deity are at stake; or that he cannot so arrange the affairs of the entire universe, as that his own interests may coincide with those of his creatures, and with the claims of perfect rectitude.

God cannot be moved by fear, for he is omnipotent and may defy the universe. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that favor would bias his decisions to the side of injustice. The holy and just one cannot connive at wickedness. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Hab. i: 13.) "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. Is it fit to say to a *king*, thou art wicked? and to princes, ye are ungodly? How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes nor regardeth the rich more than the poor: for they all are the work of his hands." (Job xxxiv: 12, 18.)

The judge of a human tribunal may do wrong. Reason may be dethroned by passion, or perverted by selfishness, and the voice of justice lost in the jar and strife of conflicting interests; but injustice may not tarnish the throne of the Eternal. "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness: and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity." (Job xxxiv: 10.)

We can conceive of no inducement which could operate with the divine mind to subvert the eternal principles of rectitude; but a slight attention to the subject will shew that the Ruler of the universe has every possible motive for doing what is right.

A reference to the object for which the universe was created will elucidate this point. When God created man, and placed around him the magnificent theatre on which he is destined to move and act, he must have had some object in

view. This was doubtless his own glory. Although other subordinate considerations may have entered into the general design, yet the prominent object must have been his own glory. Thus, "he has made every thing beautiful in his time." (Eccl. iii: 11.) "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy-work." Every production of Deity is a visible manifestation of his perfections. The planets, as they roll in the immensity of space, utter forth a commanding eloquence in his praise. The comets, as they wheel their blazing cars to the utmost verge of creation, publish the glories of the Supreme Architect:—

“What though no real voice nor sound,  
Amid their radiant orbs be found,  
In reason’s ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is divine.”

The material universe has never failed in its allegiance to its Maker. The sun still shines as brightly as when his rays first fell upon the new-created earth, and the moon is as regular in her periodical visits as when her silvery light illumined the bowers of paradise. Sin has introduced into the intellectual creation confusion and discord; but from the material universe ascends one harmonious and universal anthem of praise to the Creator. Thus, inasmuch as the works of God display his perfections, it may truly be said with the Psalmist, "All thy works praise thee, O Lord."

But what is that of all his works, from which the greatest glory must redound to the Creator? Certainly, the most finished specimen of his workmanship. This is created mind. And how does the mind augment his glory, but by celebrating his praise? But praise, to add to the glory of any one, indeed to be praise at all, must be *willingly* offered. The forced adulation of the menial who crouches at the feet of the despot, adds not to his glory. Such praise is as degrading to him who receives as to him who offers it. To augment his glory, it must come as the spontaneous tribute of the heart. Hence, the highest glory of God in his works, consists in the voluntary praise of his intelligent creatures.

You will thus perceive, that is a matter of the highest



moment with the Deity, to act in such a manner as to deserve the praise of his creatures. Having himself established the principle of justice, and interwoven it, as an original sentiment, into the constitution of human nature, it is but just to suppose that he would make it the rule of his own procedures; and, in the administration of his moral government, would so exhibit his character to created intelligences as to commend it to their admiration, and elicit their spontaneous homage and confidence. The perfection of his nature, as well as the design of creation, necessitates this course. A single act of injustice would vitiate the claims of God upon his creatures, and absolve from their allegiance the intelligent universe. The loyalty of his subjects, whether human or angelic, rests upon their firm conviction of his immutable rectitude. The perpetration of injustice would reduce the government of God to an anarchy, or transmute it into an iron despotism, in which might would be right, and the caprice of a superior power the only criterion of rectitude.

This part of the argument may be briefly summed up in the following sorites: God must always act from the highest motive.—His highest motive is his own glory.—His highest glory consists in the voluntary praise of his intelligent creatures.—This praise is voluntary only on the supposition that he does right. The conclusion follows,—that he has the highest possible inducement to do in all cases what is right.

It has thus been shewn, that the Judge of all the earth possesses all the wisdom and power, and is under every inducement, to do right. The argument is therefore complete, and the conclusion follows, that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

If we appeal from argument to facts; to our knowledge of what God has done in the administration of his moral government among men; we shall have still further proofs of his immutable rectitude. The inspired history of that government, while it is replete with the evidences of his gracious benignity to man, is not less illustrative of the vigor with which he maintains the righteous honors of his throne. On that most illustrious of all the displays which have been made of the character of the Supreme Judge, the vicarious obedience unto death of his well-beloved Son, the claims of justice were all met and satisfied. When man had sinned, and incurred the displeasure of his Creator, the demands of

this attribute of Jehovah interposed the only obstacle to prevent the extension of pardon, and his restoration to the favor of God. But in the gracious economy of the gospel, this obstacle is effectually removed. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the friend and substitute of sinners, has obeyed the law and suffered its penalty. His perfect righteousness, imputed to the believer for justification, meets all the requisitions of the divine government; and God can now be "just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus." Never did justice appear so awfully severe as when her sword was unsheathed on Calvary, to smite the Son of God, and her claims were cancelled by the effusion of his precious blood. The cross is radiant with the glory of the divine rectitude; and proclaims the sternness and severity of justice, no less distinctly and emphatically, than the flaming summit of Sinai and the fearful retributions of eternity.

I have thus endeavored to establish the doctrine of the divine rectitude; to elucidate the ground on which we believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right. I shall conclude by a practical application of the truth which has been established.

A confidence in the rectitude of the divine government will reconcile the mind to the unexplained difficulties which encumber it. Many pious persons have suffered themselves to be perplexed with the mysteries of Providence and the economy of grace. There has been much speculation about the existence of natural and moral evil; the consistency of divine sovereignty with human responsibility; the eternal duration of future punishment; and many other questions which are but little helped by the most refined and attenuated speculation. These truths are plainly taught in the scriptures; and they demand our unqualified assent. Let us not vainly quarrel with the dispensations of God's providence, or the methods of his grace; but rather adore a wisdom which we cannot comprehend, and bow before a power which it would be folly to resist.

A conviction of our ignorance should induce us to pronounce with caution and modest reserve upon the measures of the divine government. "We are of yesterday, and know nothing." Our faculties are too limited in their range to compass the extent of God's moral government, and detect the motives which determine his procedures. His way is

doubtless perfect. Although "clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." If we fail to apprehend this truth, it is solely in consequence of the feebleness of our minds, the imperfection which attaches to all finite beings.

"All nature is but art unknown to thee,  
 All chance direction which thou canst not see,  
 All discord harmony not understood,  
 All partial evil universal good,  
 And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,  
 One truth is clear: whatever is, is right."

The truth which I have endeavored to establish, so fruitful of good to the believer, speaks no comfort to the sinner. It will fearfully augment the doom of the impenitent, that it is denounced in justice. Caprice may yield to circumstances, but principle, never. Passion may be calmed; malevolence may be appeased; mercy may be moved; but justice is inflexible. It should be a most alarming consideration to every impenitent sinner, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. May the truth strike every such person with salutary terror, and induce him to flee at once for refuge to that glorious gospel which, blending mercy with justice, affords the only means of deliverance from the wrath to come.

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## THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER:

Outlines of a sermon by Rev. H. KEELING.

*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*—JAS. v: 16.

Prayer belongs to the highest species of worship. It ranks with praise. Not only is it expressive of our dependence, obligation, and sinfulness: but it includes every attribute of devotion. It implies adoration, confession, petition and intercession. Our text has special reference to the last two.

It follows, that prayerlessness is practical atheism; and that the spirit of prayer both fits us for heaven, and partakes



of the very nature of it. The aversion of men to prayer is among the strongest proofs of depravity: since it comprises intimate and reverential intercourse between the soul and God.

The object of this discourse is, briefly to consider—

The character of the prayers which are efficacious; and the effect itself they produce. For convenience, we invert the order of these propositions, and inquire,—

I. *What effects* do prayers produce? Our text says, “they avail much.” *What* then do they avail? Let us understand, that we may appreciate our privileges and perform our duties.

Can they change “the wilderness and solitary place” into a “fruitful field,” or the garden of God? Have they power to level the mountains, or fill the vallies, that lie in the way of Messiah’s march? Did they ever regenerate a soul, sanctify an affection, overcome a single enemy, or resist any temptation? No, neither.—Of *themselves* they are nothing, but they are *part* of a system, which, together, is “mighty” to the “pulling down of strongholds.”

Every part of this wise, gracious, wonderful scheme, is essential to the perfection of the whole. The *holy life* of Christ served its own great purposes, but did not supersede the necessity of his *sacrificial death*. The *blood of atonement* has its own value, but *the influences of the Spirit* are not the less necessary. The *sacred scriptures* make wise unto salvation, but they dispense not with the *living ministry*; with *church example and effort*; nor, above all, with *divine efficiency*. Our Saviour made the “belief of the world” to depend, among other things, upon *his* prayer for *his then disciples*, and *their testimony* to others; but surely he excluded not the *voluntary agency* of the *repenting and believing* sinner in coming to God.—John xvii: 19–21.

It is a matter of *prophecy* for the conversion of the unbelieving, and of *promise* for the encouragement of the church, that the triumphs of the gospel are to be universal. “There shall be an handful of corn upon the tops of the mountains: the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.” But will *divine sovereignty* effect this, without *human means*, or by *other human means*, to the *exclusion of prayer*? It were as rational to believe that the covenant with Noah securing, until the end of time, the regular succession of night and day,

summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, is to be fulfilled without regard to what we call "laws of gravitation."

But not to detain you with argument or illustration on this point, I proceed—

II. To consider the character of the prayers which are efficacious.

1. They are "prayers,"—it is "*prayer.*" *What is prayer?* I like Montgomery's definition of prayer:—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Utter'd or unexpress'd,  
The motion of a hidden fire,  
That trembles in the breast."

It is true, that out of "the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" but, if the tongue of the publican had been palsied, so that he could not have uttered the words "God be merciful to me a sinner,"—or if the muscles of his arm had refused to obey the feelings of his heart, when "he smote his breast,"—there would have been real prayer in what he felt and *desired*. On the contrary, there would have been no prayer in the boastful panegyric pronounced upon himself by the proud pharisee, "God I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor even as this publican."

2. It is the prayer of a "*righteous man.*" There is a sense of the word "sinners," in which God heareth them when they pray. Otherwise, the prayer of the publican had not been answered. But the assertion of the man who had been blind from his birth, and to whom our Lord gave sight,—a man, who, although he could not read, knew more of religion than all the Sanhedrim together,—his assertion is true: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." John ix: 31. The pharisees denounced our Lord, as a transgressor of God's law, because he wrought this miracle of mercy on the Sabbath. The logic of the happy recipient of this favor was as sound as was his knowledge of divine things. God is favorable to none but the righteous. Yet this man hath given me sight. Therefore he must be of God.

The reasoning of David is the same. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me; but verily the Lord hath heard me;" therefore I do not regard iniquity in my

heart. Moreover, the theory is deduced from facts. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Daniel, Paul, John,—all, whose prayers have been efficacious,—have been “*righteous men.*”

3. It is the “*effectual,*” or, as the word means, “laborious, energetic prayer,” that availeth much. And the addition of the epithet “*fervent,*” animated, burning, increases the *intensity* of the thought.

If the repenting sinner would obtain mercy on his own account, he must be like the Syrophenecian woman, or the importunate widow, whose continual coming wearied out even an unjust judge, who regarded neither God nor man.

If the spirit of piety has become languid in our souls, we must expect it to be rekindled when like Job we can exclaim, “O that it was with me as in days past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me,”—and resolve with Jacob, “We will not let thee go except thou bless me.”

If on behalf of our friends and others we intercede, our intercessions can avail only as we feel as Abraham did when suing for guilty Sodom; or Moses for more guilty Israel; or Paul for a still more guilty generation of that same rebellious race.

## THE VALUE OF THE MINISTER'S WORK, AN ARGUMENT FOR HIS SUPPORT:

An extract from Professor HILLYER'S Sermon.

The minister's work is, however, infinitely more valuable than even the preceding facts would indicate. For there is *a hereafter*—death is not an eternal sleep; and the range of this great work reaches far beyond the confines of time. Let us then consider its value, in view of this important truth. The object which the preacher labors to accomplish, is the *salvation* of the *soul*. No other profession aims so high. The most precious thing which God has created on this earth is the human soul. Though marred and defaced, it still wears the likeness of its author. Its wonderful powers invest it with greatness, and its indestructible nature insures its immortality. Its capacities for happiness and misery, and its exposure to an infinite ruin, make it an object of intense interest. All the worlds in the universe are as the small dust of the balance, compared with one immortal soul. They



shall perish, but it shall endure; they shall wax old, and as a vesture shall they be changed, but, like its author, its years shall have no end. Yet it is lost. I cannot pause to tell you how, or why. Suffice it to say, that it wanders estranged from God, covered with guilt and shame, with the curse of a holy law resting upon it. In this condition, it is doomed to suffer the penalties of that world, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Yes, remaining unchanged, the soul must go down, with all its noble faculties, into that lake of fire which is the second death, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and whence the smoke of its torment shall ascend up forever and ever. The great God could not look on unmoved, and see it consummate its awful destiny. His compassion went out towards the creature of his hands. The soul, which he had formed in the beauty of his own image, he loved too well, to cast off forever from his presence. Therefore, the scheme of redemption was devised to save it. I need not detain you to unfold its principles, for you, my brethren, already know them. It will be sufficient to remind you, that while this scheme embraces the paramount agency of God, in the revelation of his word, in the gift of his Son, and in the operations of his Holy Spirit, it also includes, by his own arrangement, the employment of human instrumentality. For, by the foolishness of preaching he is pleased to save them that believe. This is his most usual and successful mode of gathering his elect. Preaching is the lamp of gospel light that throws along the dark pathway of the sinner its life-giving beams—revealing to his knowledge, on the one hand, “the terrors of the Lord,” and on the other, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But preaching is the minister’s appropriate work, and to save the soul is his high and holy purpose. It is not too much to say that this noble object is ever before him. When he reads the word of God, it is there to stimulate his researches; when he seeks his closet, it is there to burden his heart, and to bedew his cheeks; and when he ascends the sacred desk, behold it is here, to remind him of the terms of his commission, and to impress him with the solemnities of the coming judgment. Now, shall the minister who is thus engaged, be compelled to come away from his great work to seek for bread? Shall his spirit be forced back from its hold on the soul’s salvation, by the wants of nature and the cares of life?

But let me press this subject a little nearer home. You, my hearers, have a deeper interest in the preacher's work, perhaps, than has yet occurred to you. Are your sins forgiven? have you been washed in the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness? and have you, therefore, a pleasant and sweet hope of heaven? If so, for all these you are indebted, under God, to a preached gospel. You may tell me, perhaps, that you are an exception—that you received your serious impressions from another instrumentality. Allow me to ask, what other? was it a tract, or pious book? was it a prayer meeting or Sabbath school? was it the family altar, or a parent's counsel? or was it yet some other means of grace? I answer, no matter what may have been the particular thing, to which your impressions may be ascribed, you are still indebted for them to a preached gospel. It is true, there are other and very useful instrumentalities, but they are all subordinate to that one ordained of God. The minister's work is the source of all the rest. Nay, all others receive from it the vital energy that renders them efficient. Let this be removed, and the religious press would stand still; the colporteur would abandon his employment; the Sabbath school would close its doors; the prayer meeting would be forsaken; and even the sacred flame upon the family altar would by and by expire. The minister's work is the centre around which these revolve: should it be extinguished, they would be wrapt in darkness. Whatever, then, may have been the immediate cause of one's attention to his spiritual interests, let him not overlook his dependence upon the public ministrations of the word. The wayfater may see, and avoid the serpent in his path by the light of the moon, but this he could not do, if the sun were not to shine. Hence, if you are able to live in hope, to die without fear, and to commit your body to the dust in the expectation of a glorious resurrection, it is because he has thrown about you the influences of a preached gospel. In this view of the case, how will you value the privileges you have enjoyed? Can you make an adequate return to the good man by whose labors you have been so highly blessed? I put it to your conscience, do you owe him nothing? And looking away from the particular instrument of your conversion, do you owe nothing to that system of means, by which you have been made the recipient of such abundant mercies? Should not the believer

exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Thus we may see, that the minister's work, by the grace of God, has conferred upon each one of us a personal good of infinite value; and yet this is not all. We are more than personally concerned in this interesting work. The christian is not content to be saved alone. The relations of life originate the most tender associations, and the most endearing ties, that wind themselves about his heart, and awaken the deepest sympathies of his soul. Such is true, for instance, of the pious parent. How intense is that anxiety which he feels for the salvation of his children? How fervent, how deep is the prayer that he offers unto God on their behalf? Perhaps an ungodly son is, like the prodigal, wasting his substance in riotous living, and running through the various stages of excess to ruin. Perhaps a thoughtless daughter, spell-bound by the seductive charms of the world, may be intent only upon its attractive pleasures, wholly forgetful of her soul and of her God. Let such a parent remember that his "door of hope" for these dear children of his love is to be found within the compass of the preached gospel. This is the means that God most usually employs to answer the prayers of his people. Hence the practical effect which preaching exerts upon the eternal destiny of those whom we love, invests the minister's work with additional value. All the dear objects of our affections, however near to us by the ties of nature, must be separated from us forever, unless they can be united to us in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. It is to promote this union that the preacher labors. Suppose that he succeeds. Make the case your own, my brethren, suppose that he does restore to your arms as alive from the dead that beloved child for whom you have so long prayed. Can that soul be valued in dollars and cents? How will the paltry price, paid for the minister's services, compare with the benefit received? Would you not have given your entire fortune to insure the salvation of your child? How then shall we estimate the value of that work, the end, and aim, and effect of which is to save the soul; and how shall we compensate the laborer who is the instrument of conferring upon mankind such unmeasured blessings for time and for eternity? Compensation full and equal you cannot render. It would bankrupt christendom to attempt to return an equivalent for a single soul.



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## THE MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS:

A sermon, preached May 24, 1847, before the Virginia Portsmouth Baptist Association, convened in Portsmouth, Va.,—and published by request of the Association: By REV. J. R. SCOTT, pastor of the Baptist church in Hampton, Va.

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*I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* LUKE XVI: 9.

Two reasons have induced me, my brethren, to address you from these words. First, they present to the minds of most readers, certain difficulties, in an attempt to solve which, I have thought it possible some of you might be interested and profited. Happy shall I be, should I succeed in so elucidating the passage as to satisfy any who have been in doubt as to its true meaning. But another reason has had more weight with me. I conceive the text calculated to convey a lesson of high interest and importance to us all,—a lesson peculiarly timely on the present occasion. God grant we may be enabled, not only to apprehend clearly its meaning, but also to carry out in practice the duty it enjoins, in such a way as to secure the inestimable blessing it brings to view! The Lord enable us all so to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations!

The chief, or at least, most prominent, difficulty in this verse, consists, I suppose, in our Lord's exhorting his disciples to make friends to themselves by "the mammon of unrighteousness;" as though they were to be tolerated, and not only tolerated, but approved and blessed, by unrighteous means. It is not surprising, when we consider how strictly our Lord requires his followers to maintain integrity and holiness in all their conduct, that the pious reader should shrink back from any such construction of his language. Surely

he, who knew no sin, and cannot for one moment be supposed to legalize or justify sin in any of his disciples, is not to be understood as sanctioning in them any thing savoring of unrighteousness, even though it be avowedly for the attainment of the holiest and most desirable ends. This position may be very safely laid down, and we never need be afraid of applying it to the interpretation of any passage, whatever may be the face it may seem to carry. In regard to the case in hand, I hesitate not to say, the difficulty in question admits of a very satisfactory solution. We have the key so soon as we ascertain what the Saviour meant by the expression "mammon of unrighteousness." He evidently meant simply *worldly possessions*. Now substitute these words in place of "mammon of unrighteousness," and you will see without much trouble the idea Jesus intended to convey: "Make friends for yourselves by your worldly possessions; that, when ye fail, they" (that is, these friends,) "may receive you into everlasting habitations." But we may be asked, on what grounds it is assumed that our Lord meant worldly possessions simply, by the expression "mammon of unrighteousness?"

The word "mammon" itself signifies wealth. Mammon was the Syriac god of riches,—a heathen deity supposed to preside over worldly acquisitions of every kind. The name accordingly came to be applied to worldly goods in general, and was in common use in this sense when our Saviour was on earth.

But why should Jesus call worldly possessions the "mammon," or goods "*of unrighteousness*?" This seems to imply that unrighteousness must in some sense be connected with them; and that this would be the case even in respect to those possessions which might come into the hands of his disciples. The truth is, he did not intend that so sweeping an inference should be drawn. He did not intend to say that wickedness is invariably and necessarily attached to the things that come into man's possession. Had this been so, he would have forbidden his disciples to have any thing at all to do with them. It is probable, from the contrast suggested by the text between them and the blessings of heaven, that our Lord characterized worldly goods in this manner particularly in distinction from the blessings of eternal life. No unrighteousness can pertain to the inheritance of the

saints in "everlasting habitations;" but how true that unrighteousness both can be, and commonly is, connected with those objects which men desire and pursue on earth. Jesus would thus in an indirect manner suggest to our minds how superior are the goods of heaven to the goods of this world; and by this consideration render us the more willing to part with our earthly possessions for the purpose of securing that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

The propriety, however, of worldly wealth being denominated "the mammon of unrighteousness," must appear, when we consider how often it is acquired by unrighteous means, and how often, when acquired, it is devoted to unrighteous uses.

How seldom is property *accumulated* by means which will bear a strict application of even those principles generally admitted by men as essential to honesty and uprightness? How many seek their gains at the expense of all that is dear in the interests of society,—seek them in such a way as renders them accessory to the bitterest woes that afflict humanity; in such a way as spreads degradation, and depravity, and brutality, and desolation, and want, and disease, and death, through community! How many a store has been increased at the expense of defenceless widows and orphans! How frequently do men practice on the ignorance of others, and thus secure exorbitant profits on their merchandize and labor! How often do they take advantage of the particular circumstances of individuals, and make gain out of the straits and difficulties of their neighbors! How frequently is property diverted from its rightful heirs! How common is it for persons to equivocate and lie, in order to make their bargains a little more lucrative! How many scruple not to break the express commands of God, and the laws of the land,—desecrate the Sabbath, and gamble, and steal, and rob, and murder, impelled by the love of money! How constantly are the wages of iniquity passing from hand to hand! However honest and virtuous we may be ourselves, we can hardly put a coin into our purse, but, if it could give us a true and faithful history of itself, we should be tempted, as lovers of right, to trample it in the dust. It is ours, and honestly ours; but to get that same coin in their clutch, a thousand hands have done deeds which might well



draw down the hissing bolts of heaven upon the heads of their perpetrators. For the sake of that coin, men have cheated, and lied, and perjured themselves, and gambled, and ground the faces of the poor; and litigated, and quarrelled, and broken the Sabbath, and brutified their neighbors, and prostituted themselves, and robbed, and imbued their hands in blood, and set at defiance every dictate of virtue and humanity. Surely, we may well stamp on it "mammon of unrighteousness," even though guilt may not have been invariably incurred in its transfers.

And then, when acquired, to what unrighteous *uses* are worldly possessions often put? How few ask, in what way shall I disburse these means which Providence has bestowed on me, so that God shall be glorified, and the happiness of my fellow-men promoted? How many hoard them up, merely that their miserly eyes may be gratified by gloating over them! How many part with them only on assurance made doubly sure of their speedy return, and that with large increase! How many lay them out only in the indulgence of their pride, vanity, and sensual appetites! To what luxury, intemperance, and prodigality, have they ministered! How many spend them only at the dictation of the wildest caprice, and often in support of the grossest errors, and of causes diametrically opposite to the welfare of society! What fearful prevalence and power have been given to the most pernicious and fatal schemes, through the wealth by which they have been advanced! What vice, what crime, what sin, that has debased men, blasted the most precious hopes of families and communities, prostrated the best governments, dishonored God, and sent souls to perdition,—what, that has not been fostered and furthered by misdirected wealth? The riches of this world, thus far surely, have done more, much more, to build up the kingdom of the evil one than the kingdom of Immanuel; and, having been made to such an extent the servant of iniquity, are certainly treated with no injustice in being branded "the mammon of unrighteousness."

But, I conclude, our Lord was led to designate worldly goods in this manner most especially by what he had been saying just before. Our text is the moral of a parable,—the parable of the dishonest steward. The steward had been accused of wasting the goods entrusted to him. He saw

that he must lose his situation, and cast about him to determine what course he should pursue in order to provide for himself, when this means of subsistence should be withdrawn. He could not dig; to beg he was ashamed. He soon, however, hits upon an expedient. If his employer will cast him off, he will see what he can do with his employer's customers. Can I not ingratiate myself into their good will, and get a home among them, when I am put out of the stewardship? He has the means in his hands. He must wrong his lord, but never mind that. Here is one of my lord's debtors, who owes for a hundred measures of oil. Take thy bill, and write fifty; and remember, one good turn deserves another. And here is one who owes for a hundred measures of wheat. Take thy bill, and write eighty; and recollect, it was through my friendship, you escaped paying for the other twenty. In this way, by gratifying the avaricious propensities of his lord's debtors, does he make them his friends, and prudently provide for himself a welcome to their houses in his day of want. Even his lord, we are told, commended him, "because he had done wisely." His employer himself, the greatest sufferer by his conduct, was forced to give him the credit of having taken a very shrewd and skilful course to provide for the future. But still it was most unrighteous conduct; and hardly less unrighteous on the part of the debtors who consented to his proposals than on the part of the steward himself; and goods, in consideration of which men could be induced to act so iniquitously, might well be termed "the mammon of unrighteousness." With such an appropriation of property in mind, is it surprising that Jesus, in speaking of worldly goods, although with reference to a very different use of them, should still speak of them as "the unrighteous mammon?"

Having thus removed what I take to be the most formidable difficulty in the passage, I pass to the explanation of another, which may possibly be a source of embarrassment to the minds of some.

*The conduct of the steward is held up for imitation.* When our Lord said, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteous," it was as much as to say, "My disciples, do as that steward did." But how could the holy Saviour set before his followers such a pattern of dishonesty for their example. The simple answer is, he did not set the

unjust steward before them to be imitated in his whole character, and especially in his dishonesty, but as a pattern of *prudent foresight and provision*. This was the sole point he would illustrate. To this only would he direct their attention. The rest of the parable was little more than mere drapery. It is not improbable that Jesus drew his illustration from some actual case familiar to his disciples. At any rate, it is quite certain, he no more intended to teach his disciples moral rectitude by the example of the unjust steward, than he did, on another occasion, to teach them the character of his Father by comparing the conduct of God with that of an unjust judge. Those who think to find for every minute particular in the parables of our Lord, its counterpart of instruction, leaving nothing introduced by him for the simple purpose of exciting interest and keeping up attention, may display their ingenuity to great advantage; but it cannot fail to be very much at the cost of any just reputation for sound common sense.

Jesus would say, you see how worldly men act. True, they are men of the world, and have their portion in this life; but as far as their views extend, they act consistently with those views. They look ahead; and when they see calamity threaten, they neglect no effort to avert it; and when they see any advantage to be gained, they rest not until every plan has been put in operation that they may reap it. How different the course of many who call themselves my followers! "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." How much care, how much caution, how much energy, do they bring to bear on the attainment of their trifling, evanescent projects, while you, who profess to be the expectants of eternity,—candidates for everlasting habitations in glory,—live unmindful of the end you have set before you, blind to the dangers that threaten the blasting of your hopes, indifferent and inactive in that whole line of conduct indispensable to the laying up of a good foundation against the time to come. As you have proposed to yourselves higher and nobler objects than the men of the world, so you ought to prosecute your ends with proportionably greater prudence and vigor than they do theirs; but instead of this, you exhibit the very reverse. You act as if your objects were, on the contrary, of less consequence than those of the children of this world. With what



eagerness do they plan and toil for time! O how keenly should you feel rebuked!—you, who profess to be living for eternity, and yet put forth efforts so few and so feeble to attain your end! Children of the light, learn a lesson from the children of darkness! Task your powers, strain every nerve, make any sacrifice, to gain your incorruptible inheritance, as they do to acquire the things that perish!

You perceive, my hearers, in what respect it was, that the Lord proposed the unjust steward to his disciples for their imitation. They were not to copy his dishonesty, but they were to copy the forecast and the energy with which he made provision against the failure of his present resources. As he failed, so ere long must you fail. As he set himself to a vigorous preparation, that when he should be put out of his stewardship, there should be houses enough all open to receive him, in like manner see to it that you make such use of the trusts committed to you, that when ye fail, ye may have friends enough to welcome you,—not to perishable tenements of earth,—welcome you to everlasting habitations.

Now, what, on the whole, is the lesson that Jesus would impress on the minds of his disciples by the passage under consideration? Very evidently, the use to which they should put the gifts of Providence. Every one of us to regard himself as a steward. In the use to which he puts his possessions, he is to be governed supremely by the will of their Giver. He is to devote them to those purposes for which they were committed to him. It is in this way that he is to find his own true happiness. In this direction lie all his real interests. By this means shall he at length have administered to him abundantly an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord. In this way shall he provide himself bags that wax not old; a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; in this way shall he obtain augmented glory, honor, immortality.

But here it is important that we guard against a mistake. There is danger of our inferring from all this, that we are to be saved in heaven on the ground of our own meritorious works; whereas, we are most distinctly and emphatically told in other places, that we are saved by grace; not of works, lest any man should boast; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God saves us. What then, it may be asked, becomes of works? and

how is it that in our text our Lord connects the use we make of our worldly goods with our reception into everlasting habitations? This is a point of great interest. If it is a difficult one, it is no less interesting. Let us look at the text once more: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail,"—when ye have no more to do with worldly things,—"*they* may receive you into everlasting habitations." Mark that: "THEY may receive you." Who? Why, the friends you have made by the use to which you have put your earthly possessions. You observe, there is no allusion here to your reception in heaven by God himself, but solely to your reception *by those whom you have benefitted and blessed on earth*. So far as the just and holy king of heaven is concerned, you are welcomed thither purely on the ground of the merits of his Son. The tremendous curse of his law must have been your doom, had he not given his Only Begotten that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Never but through the meritorious obedience of that same Son, could he allow the ransomed sinner to share in those pleasures which are at his right hand. So far as the Father is concerned, then, the sinner's admission to heaven can proceed only on the footing of what Christ has done. But still, heaven's Sovereign will see to it, that pre-eminent piety and faithfulness on earth be crowned with its proportionate distinction in his presence. He has been pleased to reveal that we are not only to be received by him. Another reception awaits his faithful servants. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!" No sooner do they rest from their labors than their works do follow them. According to the good we did on earth, will be the glory of our introduction on high. If any considerable time was allotted us in the vineyard of the Lord before our removal, and we toiled faithfully in his service, it is altogether probable that others have gone home before us, who were converted, or built up in piety, or relieved and comforted in times of trial, or, at least, in some respect benefitted by our instrumentality. Some of them perhaps we never saw on earth. It may be they were separated from us thousands of miles; but the mite we cast into the Lord's treasury, with a prayer that the Lord would make it a blessing, sent a Bible, or a tract, or a preacher, to them, and a happy eternity is the glorious result. And now they

recognize our ascending spirit as that of their earthly benefactor, and all wing their way to congratulate us on our release from earth, and escort us,—a resplendent convoy,—to the throne of God and of the Lamb. O how delightful must it be to be received thus to everlasting habitations! But however this may be,—let it be that we are removed first,—recognitions and greetings no less delightful, and rewards no less deserving of our aspirations, await us. “What,” exclaims an apostle to his brethren, “what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” What an incitement this to self-denying, self-sacrificing usefulness! How cheerfully, in anticipation of such a welcome, should we lay our offerings upon the altar of God and of humanity! How ought selfishness to die within us at such a prospect; or rather, how must an enlightened self-love itself impel us to deeds of beneficence and mercy,—to the most energetic devotion of ourselves to the welfare of our fellow-men, both for time and for eternity!

I have thus, my friends, endeavored to explain this passage, and remove the difficulties it presents. I hope its meaning has been made apparent to all who have felt sufficiently interested to follow me in the explanations that have been offered. It is an important passage,—important as a portion of the instructions of the Great Teacher; important, as disclosing a duty of high moment; important, as revealing a most stirring incitement to constant fidelity in the way of christian obedience. O that all who bear the christian name would set it to heart, and reduce it to practice! What an aspect would the church of Christ then assume! How apparent would be her destination to everlasting habitations! How rapidly would the ignorance, and errors, and vices, and woes of mankind disappear! How speedily would the truth, with all its train of light, and love, and gladness, have free course, run, and be glorified!

The views presented have shewn in what sense the goods of this world may be termed “the mammon of unrighteousness.” It is not that they are in themselves evil. It is not money itself, or what money will procure, but the *love of money*, that scripture declares to be the root of all evil. The mischief lies in an avaricious or a covetous disposition. Urged on by this, we seek gain regardless of the happiness and the rights of our fellow-men; and we disburse of our



acquisitions with reference solely to selfish and ignoble ends. Our heavenly Father has been pleased to make labor for worldly gain not only lawful but binding. Industry, and enterprise, and economy, are christian virtues. Laziness, and indifference, and shiftlessness, and extravagance, are denounced as vices. We are to provide for "things honest," (Rom. xii: 17,) not only in the sight of the Lord, but "in the sight of all men." The original word here rendered "honest," means literally, beautiful. The least we can make of it is, decent and respectable. How could indolence be more decidedly condemned than it has been by the pen of inspiration? Hear the wise man: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man." This is a scripture portrait. Whether it is for imitation, let each one judge for himself. And hear an apostle: "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." Surely if all this is the duty of christians, it cannot be that unrighteousness is necessarily connected with the results of labor; it cannot be absolutely unlawful to acquire worldly possessions. In what manner we should disburse them, however, and how far we are at liberty to retain them, are practical questions of solemn moment. Doubtless, great mistakes are made here. The danger of error and sin can hardly be overstated. Already, it would seem, enough has been exhibited to check us at this point of peril, and impel us in the right direction. But we are not yet done with the text. Another consideration, thus far kept in the back-ground, is well suited to furnish a powerful preventure.

The text reminds us further of an important fact, always to be borne in mind in our pursuit of gain. "When ye fail." We know not when, but it is certain *we must fail*. The day is coming when our resources, whatever they may be, must give way,—all of them. It will be to the rich man

the same as if he were poor. His riches, when he least expects it, may take to themselves wings and fly away. He may fail of them long before his departure from earth, and find himself left to struggle for bread beside that neighbor, and as hard as that neighbor, on whom once, in his purse-pride, he looked down with contempt, and whom he could hardly regard as of the same species with himself. Even before his coffers are emptied, he may fail at many points. There are many things that money cannot buy. It cannot buy intellect for an idiot's head. It cannot buy back wasted time and mis-spent opportunities. It cannot buy freedom from the chains of vicious and destructive habit. It cannot buy real respectability. It cannot buy the love and honor of our fellow-men. It cannot buy prosperity and worth for our children. It cannot buy a happy home. It cannot bribe inexorable death, and summon back to our desolate abodes the loved and lost. It cannot buy youth for age, ease for pain, health for disease. It cannot buy self-control for the passionate, sweetness for the unamiable, cheerfulness for the hypochondriac, a peaceful conscience for the guilty. It cannot buy pardon for the sinner. It cannot buy the favor of our final Judge. It takes more than money to get these things. The choicest blessings of life come, after all, without money and without price. If we have nothing else to give, we shall be much more likely to get just the contrary.

But the text clearly refers to our failure at death. Our funds, and farms, and buildings, and stocks, may continue and thrive, but they shall continue and thrive no more *for us*. They cannot purchase exemption from the shaft of mortality. Our failure will be as complete as that of the poorest pauper, whose very grave is the gift of charity. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." Our inward thought may be, that our houses shall continue forever, and our dwelling-places to all generations. We may call our lands after our own names. Nevertheless, man being in honor abideth not. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; they leave their wealth to others; the places that know them must soon know them no more forever. What a picture of vanity! Is this all? Is it only for this we are to live? Is it only for this we are to rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness? If this be all, miserable men that we are! Is no other and

nobler object presented before us, to stimulate our industry and enterprise?

Yes—thank God!—yes. Does not our text teach us that in laboring for the things of time, we are to have in view a still higher end? By our present possessions we are to make to ourselves friends against the day of our failure,—friends who shall welcome us to everlasting habitations. We are to labor, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. While we make suitable provision for ourselves, and for others dependent on us, we are to be careful how we restrict the purpose of our acquisitions to mere provision for ourselves and households. Our needy neighbors are to share with us. “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Nor is it made less imperative on us to attend to the spiritual than the bodily necessities of our fellow-men. We are to hold forth the word of life. We are to carry out, each one according to his respective ability, the great commission of the Redeemer to his church: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” We are to withhold no good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of our hand to do it.

There is one grand, comprehensive, solemn truth, which must govern us in the entire regulation of our lives. Our Lord propounds it in the immediate connection of the text. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Think of it, my brethren. What did your Saviour mean? What was the least he could have meant?—Judge ye. Remember the young man who went running and kneeling to Jesus, and earnestly asked, “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Sincere and earnest as he seemed, Jesus determined to test the strength of his desire; and placed before him the alternative, sell your property, and give it to the poor, and come follow me. He must do this, or he could not have eternal life. He went away sorrowful. He could not stand the test. He wished for eternal life, but not at the expense of his possessions. With him it was—eternal life *and* the world; with Christ it was—eternal life *or* the world: take your choice. And did the Saviour require any more of



that young man,—one so amiable that he could not help loving him,—any more, my brethren, than he requires of us? To all intents and purposes, he demanded the same. The truth is, the heart must, first of all, be surrendered. It is a sober question, and calls for profound self-examination, have I in fact given my heart to the Lord? If you can answer this question in the affirmative, mammon is no longer your God. You do not consider yourself as your own. You say, here, Lord, I am; speak, for thy servant heareth; do with me and mine as shall seem good in thy sight. “Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good: lead me into the land of uprightness.” Your ear is open to every call of suffering, and destitute, and benighted humanity. The thought of having something to lay on God’s altar nerves your arm with double strength. You thank God that if you can do nothing more, you can make money for his service. If he has not given you a talent to preach, he has, at least, given you a talent to support the means of grace. If you cannot yourself be a missionary, you can do something to send forth to the perishing the herald of salvation. If you cannot write and print, you can do something to put in operation the mighty press, and to help circulate the leaves of the tree of life. And in not a few ways you can, and will evince that your choice in the alternative, God or mammon, is, beyond dispute, the magnanimous decision of Joshua, “As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Happy man! little do you now know of the blessedness of your choice! Happy woman! casting in your two mites! it seems so small a contribution, that you blush as you throw it in, and almost doubt whether it be worth the while to bestow so poor a trifle!—But you are determined to do what you can. Take courage! an eye is resting on the treasury that has noted your gift. That same eye traces the sparrow in his flight, and numbers every hair of your head. HE will see that those two poor mites fulfill an illustrious mission, and after many days, return to gladden you with the report of their doings. Delightful prospect! Soon these places shall know you no more; but friends enough shall welcome you to everlasting habitations. Soon heart and flesh shall fail you; but God shall be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever.

## MORAL CULTURE, ESPECIALLY IN YOUTH:

A sermon, preached Tuesday, June 15, 1847, before the Virginia Baptist Sunday School and Publication Society, by REV. DAVID SHAVER, pastor of the Grace Street church, Richmond, Va.

*These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.—DEUT. VI: 6, 7.*

We may say of christian truth, as Hooker said of law, "her seat is the bosom of God; her voice the harmony of the world." A right knowledge of her is fellowship with Jehovah, and her light the life of men. Wisely, therefore, spake one of her noblest witnesses, in his declaration, that to the sacrifice of a single lesson gathered from her lips he should prefer, if it were possible, the loss of four hundred heads.\* Her's are utterances which are not to die. The Holy Ghost, which gave them forth from mortal mouth, designed that they should live and reign upon the earth, what time their authors, or as I should say their instruments, had perished and passed away forever. No doctrine gushing beneath her rod, but in the wilderness of the world shall prove a fountain, by which love and purity and hope shall dwell with song, and point aloft to the glorious heavens,—their home—her's—our's.

In this chapter, Moses renews the universal and unchangeable law, which confirms and embraces every other spiritual commandment, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." He published this injunction, under the serious and sublime conviction that his words, greater than himself, must survive him. Hence the precept of the text, which would secure them, in perpetual memory, to the two classes of society: to the adult and the youthful; to those in whom moral character had taken its maturity, and those in whom it had not yet emerged from its initial and formation state. With regard to the former,—as the result of personal study, these words were to be "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God: not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart."

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\* The language of Luther in respect of his article on faith.

To the latter,—in prayerful reliance upon hallowed and hallowing influence, they were to be taught diligently. The translation here covers over a striking figure of the original. “Thou shalt whet or sharpen them to thy children;” shalt make them keen and piercing; shalt give edge and point to them. In what manner, however, may human agency impart potency and effect to the truths which sanctify, and must therefore be divine? Only by the frequency with which we bring them into contact with mind, and subject it to their simple unadulterate force, which has all genuine power in itself, and suffers loss from combination with any form of strength distinct from its own. Upon this principle, the inspired legislator added, “Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up.”

The general theme, then, suggested by this passage, and by the design of the Society at whose request I appear before you, is—*Moral Culture, especially in the earlier stages of life, through truth revealed from heaven.* And, oh thou Holy Ghost! who art the great Educator of the conscience and the heart; of whom wisdom is but the echo or the shadow; to whom it belongeth to edit the hidden volume of character, in prospect of the hour which shall disclose it, amidst the lights of eternity, to the inspection of the universe—illumine, we beseech thee, the opaque and clouded eyes which now essay to penetrate a subject in all its depths open to thee alone!

Permit me, my brethren, to introduce the discussion of the topic before us, with a few words spoken to—

I. THE PECULIAR IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE TO THE HIGHEST DIGNITY, HAPPINESS AND VIRTUE OF MANKIND.

Knowledge, indeed, is *not* the “wing wherewith we fly to heaven;” but it is no inferior muscle in the power by which that wing is nerved for its flight and guided through it. Its general value, no reflections of yours will question, no language of mine can enforce. If to put out the eyes were an expedient conducive to its acquisition, where is the voice which would affirm, that the sage of antiquity, who, with this view, destroyed his own vision,\* sought it at a price too costly?

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\* Such is the common, but perhaps inaccurate, anecdote of Democritus:



The political tendencies of the age, nay, of the race, augment the interest with which this subject clothes itself, in what aspect soever we look upon it. The night of oppression melts into the dawn of liberty, which shall yet shine, more and more, unto universal day. Power is passing from the few to the many:—passing never to return. Society is thrown, finally, for good or for evil, into the hand of the masses. The people now assert the right to institute, to modify, and to abolish governments; which is, in effect to claim for themselves a supreme authority incompetent to limit or to alienate its functions. Shall the multitude, now first rising to the helm of the world's destiny, be fitted to steer along its perilous track with cleared and faithful eye? Shall the guide run astray through his own blindness? Shall the protector become a victim by self-immolation? When every arm is extended to grasp the reins, shall the popular mind of the nations be obscured by ignorance—envenomed with prejudice—bewildered by misthought—fired or flooded with error?—Upon the prospective career of our own country, this inquiry presses its extremest urgency. Here, through the great influx of immigration, population increases upon a scale which overflows all European proportions. It is difficult to define or to trace the process, which shall ultimately fuse these heterogeneous elements into affinity and mutual character. In this crisis, the star of promise which sheds the most fixed and brilliant light over the highway, upon which ourselves and our children must journey, is—the general diffusion of intelligence.

What, then,—I cannot stifle the question,—what is the nature of that intelligence, the benign influence of which, like the dew of Israel, is to rest upon the regained paradise of human holiness and felicity? In this presence, I place the seal of fervid approbation upon classic and scientific lore. I confess to little fear of that which antiquated Dr. Donne styles “the worst voluptuousness, an hydroptic immoderate desire of human languages and learning.” But these things, alone, are the mere “green tree.” They lack a corner-stone. Life is the nursery of immortality. Nay, more; amidst the storms of this world, the only anchor which can preserve virtue and peace from wreck, is cast within the world to come. Moral truth, therefore, is indispensable to man. It is so if we look no farther than the present existence, ere yet

the spirit is unhoused of its earthly clay. In default of this, there can be no genial and thorough development of

“The wish to know—the endless thirst,  
Which even by quenching is awaked,  
And which becomes or blessed or cursed,  
As is the fount whereat 'tis slaked.”

With it, the tree of knowledge is rendered that of life. These positions can scarcely be stated with too great latitude. The most elegant essayist of the day,\* declares that nine-tenths of the calamities which have befallen the human race, have had no other origin than the union of high intelligence with low desires. During the reign of terror in France,—when that ill-starred land was ravaged by “whatever is most obscene in vice and most dreadful in ferocity,”—when three millions of our species, with no disastrous stroke of heaven, perished from the earth, in the pitiless carnage of ten years,—even then, intellectual cultivation was in the ascendant; men sought the loftier walks of science; and philosophy grew everywhere to be a household word. Lavoisier and La Place shone upon the world from the same firmament, and in the same hour with Danton and Robespierre. Mireabeau and Condorcet beamed and burned alike in the political and literary constellations. That horrific era of humiliation to *man*,—that interval of chaos between the closing night of superstition and the earlier dawn of the latter-day glory,—that charnel-sewer of crime, for the blood of which inflexible justice not yet abates its inquisition,—was the age of mind, divorced from religious knowledge, but peerless in all other. 'Twere well we be lessoned by it, to account truth revealed from heaven, the salt of the world's salt, and the light of the world's light.—It is alliance with that truth, “the eclipse and glory of all knowledge,” which ennobles every other form of mental illumination. Its superior consequence appears from the testimony of those who place under levy to it all the treasures of erudition. Writes Sir Matthew Hale, “I carried along with me in all my studies this grand design: namely, to improve them and the knowledge acquired by them for the honor of God's name and the greater discovery of his wisdom, power and truth. So I translated my secular

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\* Macaulay.

learning into an improvement of divine knowledge." It is thus, oh spirit of thought and research! thou fulfillst thine office,—when thou bringest man to the feet of Jehovah and leavest him there to hear a language thou canst not speak, and to ponder revelations thou canst not unfold. There, my brethren, only there, Truth, the divine optician, provides for us those glasses, through which though we must see but darkly, we may still see accurately and constrainingly, the law of duty, the loveliness of virtue, the path of life, the far-off land, and the King's beauty. The feet which are not found pressing thither in patient, repeated pilgrimage, look ye for them among the ways of error which take hold upon death.

I pass to a second stage of the subject open to our meditation, and ask you to lament with me—

## II. THE FEARFUL DEFECT OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE, EVEN IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

Our natural ignorance of spiritual things betrays itself, by tokens too marked and too numerous to escape note. There settle and hang around every of us, the shadows of

"That eclipse which intercepts truth's heavenly beams,  
And chills and darkens the wide-wandering soul."

To scatter this profound obscurity, God will not teach us by inspiration, where we may learn by study. He will command the sun of his wisdom to shine, only when the lamp of inquiry fails to guide our steps. The doctrines which come up, in grand and solemn majesty, before the clear mirror of reflection, we shall be privileged to behold in it alone. Would we possess spiritual understanding, therefore, we must incline our ears, yea, must apply our hearts, unto her. We must receive her words and hide her commandments with us. We must lift up our voice for her. We must seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure. We must watch daily at her gates, waiting at the posts of her doors. To the attentive and teachable spirit, alone, she "syllables men's" characters, God's purposes, time's trial, eternity's awards.

The truth, however, draws nigh to the unregenerate man with rebuke and scourge. Hence, he gives back to it frown for frown, and for correction hatred. This enmity interposes perpetual check to the acquisition of sacred knowledge. It locks and bars against it the guest-chamber, free to all things



else. It spake out unblushingly in the hackneyed motto of scholars, orators and journalists, "Henceforward the discussions of science are to be completely separated from religion." Frightfully has every form of literature kept this pledge. The wisdom of men has not yet learned to sit at the feet of Christ. When the church is dependent upon the world for the higher grades of learning, it is as it was when the Philistines commanded that there should be no smith throughout all the land of Israel, lest the Hebrews should make them swords and spears; when every man went down to the uncircumcised to sharpen his share and his coulter and his axe and his mattock; and when it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear in the hand of any of the people. Minds purged from carnal dross, must arise, to imbue the popular philosophy and poetry with a higher, and, for this cause, a humbler, spirit than that which now animates them. In this view, we hail with pleasure the institution and efficient management of PUBLICATION SOCIETIES, by all evangelical sects. Our own denomination, if not apostate to its high trusts, will keep pace with the most athletic and unwearying rival, whose emulous foot-prints mark this track of light. Let Philadelphia and Charleston concur to prepare for posterity a sanctified literature; to enrich mankind with "divinity, not of the last edition, but the best;" to rear the standard of *the Christian*, against all the floods of scepticism; and to send forth every principle of *the Baptist* with

"A written label on its wing  
'Twere hard to read amiss."

The defect of religious knowledge, in a milder, but a terrible measure, spreads its cloud over the "congregations of faithful men," though in their midst "the word of God be preached and the sacraments duly administered." On this point, an eminent divine of our own country\* rings the alarm, in the following mark-worthy sentence: "*It is true, to a great extent, that, throughout all the divisions of the christian world, intellect has taken but comparatively little hold of the subject of religion!*"—From the structure of the globe, when a ship is seen at sea the sails first heave in sight; that which is highest breaks earliest on the view. With respect to the

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\* H. B. Bascombe, D. D.

soul, however, the vision always grovels. The low meets it and engrosses it. The highest is last to be noticed. Of this inconsideration, the noxious seeds grow even in the soil of the church. Israel may not know. Not until the Lord had spoken unto Samuel three times, did Eli perceive that the voice which filled the ear of the child came from above. So slow are believers to "bosom up" holy "counsel." There are times when a David, in folly and ignorance, may be as a beast before God.

America has been burdened with a seven-fold portion of this reproach. According to a foreign writer, whose works will "make the age to come his own," we have espoused christianity without investigation, and "religion itself reigns here, much less as a doctrine of revelation than as a commonly received opinion."\* Forbearing to decide the exact limits within which facts will sustain the denial of such a charge, in every quarter the emblazonry of ignorance strikes the most partial eye with conviction.

Heresy holds extensive sway. Full many a breach in the dykes of "sound words" allows the floods of error to rush in upon us. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, often becomes a nursing mother to dogmas, springing from the unnatural embraces of carnal reason and the demoness superstition. Hands, which profess commission from the Father of lights, throw the pure vestures of truth over doctrines, first baptized in the font of Grecian philosophy, afterward confirmed at the altar of German metaphysics.

These things are not infrequently displaced by a mere parrot orthodoxy. Thousands who never doubted because they never enquired, pursue the path of the Fathers, neither asking why nor knowing whither. They are prompt in the utterance of a denominational Shibboleth:—but the "echo in the valley repeats what has been spoken, yet comprehends not what it says." How can they gather the sheaves of thought from the harvest field of faith, meanwhile ignorant of the incorruptible seed from which they rose, and of the inherent excellence which parts them from the tares that grow around them? Oh, seldom we strike the vein of intelligent piety. Partially do those permit the bandage to be removed from their eyes, who nevertheless contend earnestly

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\* M. De Tocqueville, in his "Democracy in America."

for the faith once delivered to the saints: earnestly, but not wisely. To multitudes we must cry, Ye are dull of hearing. When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God. Ye are unskilful in the word of righteousness. Ye are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. Ye are babes.

Whence shall hope arise upon this gross darkness, "as light through the windows of morning?" Is there no power to break from another generation the chain riveted upon us? I now approach the point to which you have doubtless preceded me, and propose, as a third article of inquiry,—

III. THE PERIOD OF LIFE, AT WHICH RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE HAS THE RICHEST PROMISE, OF RECEPTION IN ITS PURITY, AND OF IMPRESSION THROUGH ITS EFFICACY.

The thoughts first struck out in infancy, childhood and youth, the propensities indulged, the principles established, are permanently moulded into the character. They are the levers that move, that elevate or lower, it, ever after. They are its debasing alloy, or its refining gold. An old lady, who was asked whether she had known Horne Tooke when a boy, replied, "No. He never was a boy. With him there was no interval between childhood and age: He became a man all at once upon us." No one is ever a boy, in the sense in which that term is tacitly understood, as implying the absence of character.\* "Even a child is known by his doings." Our earliest years write on the fleshly tablet as with heated iron; and the brand burns in so far it cannot be effaced—it becomes part of ourselves.—This truth has been stated in a directly opposite form of expression, "When we understand ourselves, we find we are children forever."† The thread which runs through life is woven in the "very May-morn" of existence, and dyed then to the color it never loses. "The child is father to the man." At the most juvenile stage, the fountain of character has already sent out its waters; and they must continue to flow. It is the sentiment of Marcus Aurelius, "That which one calls *man*, that is to say, *the moral man*, is formed perhaps at ten years of age. He who has not thus been formed upon his mother's knees,

\* "The mistress of a school of industry said to a lady lately, 'There are no CHILDREN now!'" Men are beginning to see this matter aright.

† Alfieri.



will feel it a heavy misfortune throughout his life. Nothing can stand in the place of such an education." That which seizes our dawn of being wins all to itself. The Alpha of life bespeaks the complexion of its Omega. Affections, opinions and pursuits are to the mind, then, not as the image upon the mirror, which fades away without a trace, but as the daguerrian likeness, which, fixed in a moment, endures, exact and indelible, forever. The intellectual marble assumes its form and hue: nor will it change from its symmetry or misproportion, its deformity or loveliness.

" Mind, through life's labyrinth, holds fast the clue  
That education gives it, false or true."

When the tender and fragile blade first struggles into light, in it lie the distinctive qualities which afterwards rise into the nightshade or the rose. Poison is there; or beauty: not to receive character from development—but to give character to it.—Is not the fable that the infancy of Romulus and Remus derived nourishment from a wolf, a mere poetic exhibition and embellishment of the idea, that ferocity so extreme as theirs grew from potent early influence? Had the mother of Cæsar lived to rear him, how different might not his history have been! He who was a warrior, "shedding seas of gore," might have been a philanthropist; and, as such, might have slain more evils with his benevolence, than he slew foemen with his steel. The hero might have been a sage, with a self-denial whose power in conquering the heart, is more glorious than the valor which can conquer the world.

Mirth-moved, thoughtless, pigmy childhood! I reverence thee. Upon thy heart-leaves I read futurity in frontispiece and index. Thy bosom glows to the kindling fires of science, of empire, of a pure faith, and of an enraptured immortality. I put forth my hand to thee,—I would grasp with less awe an angel's crown and twirl it in my fingers. Thou art the seraph,—whose wing I may weaken and soil, and cast into the dust to rise no more. Whoso moves thee, effectually, to righteousness and truth, achieves a nobler work than if his voice might change from its sphere the world we tread on.

The premature origin and rapid growth of vice in childhood and youth, illustrate the peculiar facility with which, at that period of life, impressions multiply themselves and principles ascend to confirmation and sovereignty. Licen-

tiousness and crime may usurp the heart, may sway it, when still "as smooth as Hebe's the unrazored lip." From a statement of the number of youthful offenders taken into custody by the London police, 1845,\* you will be shocked to see the alarming rates at which guilt waxes with years. Of females, there were arrested under 10 years of age, only 19—at 10 and under 15, 167—at 15 and under 20, 1,448:—an increase 70 fold! Of males, there were arrested under 10 years of age, but 50—at 10 and under 15, 1,557—at 15 and under 20, 4,658:—an increase 90 fold!—So certain, so speedy, so exuberant—the harvest from the seed cast into the heart's virgin soil.

These general principles are but partially affected, whether by the grateful exceptions which appear upon the records of divine mercy, or by the melancholy exceptions which appear upon the records of human depravity. In our early years the mind is at once tender and tenacious. It is susceptible of the most diversified impressions, and retains them through the long lapse of life, with a distinctness and force great beyond our belief. The voices to which we give heed then, ring always in the ear, "as a trumpet heard at night." Without question, therefore, this is the period at which we should seek to enstamp upon the moral nature the grand and influential principles of spiritual truth. It is of infinite concernment that we neglect not so auspicious an era. Innumerable examples beckon us on in this line of duty, and put the face of hope upon vigorous, prayerful effort. The singular unction of the ministry, and the unsullied purity of the life, of Annesley, excite no surprise, when we learn that he read twenty chapters of the Bible every day, from his sixth or seventh year. A Lois and a Eunice gave to the gospel a Timothy; for, through them, he knew the holy scriptures from a child. Until six years of age, Dwight often perused the inspired narratives and detailed them to his mother;—a habit which enabled him, at all times, to summon their minutest incidents to his eye. Doubtless, it ministered no trivial service, to his subsequent faith, as a christian,—to his accuracy and evangelism, as the author of a system of theology, which has converted British prejudice into applause. The descrip-

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\* See an article on "The London Ragged Schools," London Quarterly Review, December, 1846.

tion of the angel in the tenth chapter of the Revelations of John, read by Sir William Jones, when but four or five years old, shone before him through life, in those colors of memory which will not fade. A mother in England was accustomed to take with her, into devotional retirement, her son. On one occasion of severe distress, when he was only six years of age, after frequently kneeling by his side during a single day, she said in her agony, "Pray for me, my child. Christ suffers little children to come unto him, and forbids them not." Who was that boy? Does it give you astonishment to hear that it was the holy, the heavenly-minded Leigh Richmond? "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Let us learn these lessons from the *Jew*. It was a tradition of the elders, that in the days of the Messiah, children and babes should have knowledge of divine things.

Let us learn these lessons from the *Heathen*. Enangered Brahmins vexed the ears of Baptist missionaries, with frequent complaints, that, by the school and the printing press, the gospel was instilled into the Hindoo mind from infancy.

Let us learn these lessons from the *Infidel*. A sceptic,—when the reason why he refused the attendance of his children upon the Sabbath school, was demanded,—made this memorable response, "They are taught there what they never forget."

Shall the *Christian* be the last to learn these lessons? Must we continue to pour forth the lamentation of Foster, "Education always appears to me as the one thing which, taken generally, is the most vilely managed on earth?" Will the church, in zeal and knowledge, consult the issue for which God ordained to the mass of adult mind its influence over the mass of youthful mind? Shall "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" prepare our offspring for a higher intelligence, a nobler piety, a more efficient usefulness, than ours? To these inquiries the answer, of most abundant promise, is—THE SABBATH SCHOOL! May faithfulness, self-denial and prayer bring all the servants of God into this

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\* "If there be any hope of the amendment of a wicked, miserable, and distracted world, it must be mostly done by *family-religion* and the *CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF YOUTH*."—*Baxter*.



this nursery of Zion, to dress it and to keep it. Press on, ye humble, laborious followers of Christ.

My brethren, I am an earnest believer in the reality and the power of early piety. Did not Josiah begin to seek after the God of David, his father, when sixteen years of age? Was not Pearce, at the same date, effectually turned to the Author of salvation? Were not the solemn impressions of Ryland written on the heart in his thirteenth year, while his baptism upon a profession of faith occurred in his fourteenth? Did not Davies set out upon the heavenward journey when about twelve years old? Did not Spener, from that period, walk with habitual caution before the piercing eyes of Him with whom we have to do? Were not the foundations of the piety of Wilberforce laid between the age of nine and twelve, by the ardent devotion of an aunt with whom he resided after his father's death? Was it not in his tenth year that Francke asked his mother for a little room, which he might call his own, and in which he might give himself to prayer without interruption? Did not Stephen Chapin, at eight or nine years of age, according to his judgment in mature life, become the subject of converting grace? Has not Fletcher testified that he "first felt the love of God shed abroad in his heart at seven years of age?" Did not the mother of the "almost infant" Origen, find it necessary to conceal his clothes to prevent his departure from home for voluntary martyrdom? Was not John the Baptist filled with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb? Oh God! we *will* teach thy words diligently to our children, hopeful of their adoption by thee.

"Now, in thy youth, beseech of Him  
 Who giveth, upbraiding not,  
 That his light in thy heart become not dim,  
 And his love be unforgot;  
 And thy God, in the darkest of days, will be  
 Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee!"

The subject discussed in the preceding pages is of import beyond the power of language to express or imagination to conceive. Its own image and superscription are impressed,

certainly and indelibly, by every antecedent generation upon the character of its consequent: especially is this true in morals. It is no valid objection to this principle, that society may improve, or that it may wax worse and worse; since the philanthropic on the one hand, and the ring-leaders of wickedness on the other, may be supposed to do beyond their proportion of effort.

The lessons deducible from these premises, so clearly stated and so amply defended in this little sermon, might fill many volumes, justly claiming to be faithfully studied by both classes—the adult and the minor. Most of these we shall pass over, and many reserve for larger space, and longer time. *Now*, we would urge, this one only, that our little pupils, and audiences of them, are those that promise the richest reward for works of faith and labors of love: a principle the very opposite of that almost universally sanctioned both in theory and practice. The ablest advocate is employed to defend the fortunes of the child; and the most skillful physician to guard his health; but his moral training is confided to mercenary and ignorant domestics, and his general education, for his first ten years, to those whose qualifications, or rather utter want of them, render them incompetent for any responsible employment whatever. In architecture, the plans and proportions of the building are more than its execution; and in agriculture, the service and skill of pitching and guiding the crop, more than its manual labor. But in education, the beginning, confessedly the foundation and source of all, is entrusted to anybody, or nobody, as chance may offer. Hence, thousands of youthful minds naturally fond of knowledge and truth, are discouraged or disgusted at the outset; and as many more, who persevere, require half a century to recover the damages cruelly inflicted in infancy, by indolence and stupidity.

Lord Brougham considers character, in its essential features, fixed as early as the tenth year. A single grain of corn produces, in a fertile soil, two thousand for the first crop, and for the second four millions: and let it be recollected, that the product of the thistle is seven fold.—ED.

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## MINISTERIAL ORDINATION:

A sermon by R. B. C. HOWELL, D. D., pastor of the First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.

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### PREFACE.

This sermon was prepared with some care, and preached to the church in Clarksville, Tenn., at the ordination of their young pastor, W. Shelton, on the 17th of January last. The presbytery who attended on that occasion, passed a resolution, approving its sentiments, and requesting a copy for publication. I did not comply with their wishes. I subsequently preached the same sermon to the church in Lebanon, Tenn., at the ordination of their pastor, J. Van Epps Covey, on the 7th of March ultimo. The presbytery in attendance there, also passed resolutions of approval, and asked a copy for the press. Again I declined. Two weeks since, I received a note from a committee, communicating to me some late proceedings of the church in Lebanon, in which they expressed their high satisfaction with the discourse, and solicited me to allow it to go to the public. Upon reflection, it has occurred to me, since it has proved so highly satisfactory in this quarter, that it may not be unacceptable to our brethren generally, and that as I know no reason why it should be entirely withheld, I would send it to the Baptist Preacher. It is herewith submitted, in the hope, that if it is attended with little good, it may be productive of no evil.

Nashville, April 22, 1847.

ROBT. BOYTE C. HOWELL.

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*A minister, according to the gift of the grace of God.—Eph. III: 7.*

To preach the gospel of Christ, and to administer its ordinances, God has been graciously pleased to appoint a select class of men. These are familiarly known as **MINISTERS**. To be legitimate, they must be conformed, in their *character*, in their *qualifications*, and in their *office*, to the requirements of the divine law. More particularly:—"A minister, accord-



ing to the gift of the grace of God," must have been renewed in his spiritual nature, by the Holy Ghost; he must have legitimately become a member of the true church; he must maintain a high standard of personal religion; and in other respects, possess the requisite *christian character*. To qualify him for his vocation, he must have been called of God to the work; he must have acquired clear and scriptural conceptions of the system of revealed truth; and be able, with facility, to communicate his knowledge to others; he must have derived his ministerial rights and authority from the source whence they are possessed; and, for lawful purposes, he must have been scripturally invested with the sacred trust. These constitute his *qualifications*. In his high *office*, he must preach the true doctrines of Christ; administer the ordinances, in both their form and substance, as the gospel enjoins; and he must rule as instructed by the king in Jeshurun. *Such a man*, all will admit, *is a true minister of Jesus Christ. Such are Baptist ministers; therefore the Baptist is the true ministry of Jesus Christ.* We have, consequently, all the authority which the gospel confers, or that any gospel minister can have, to preach, to baptize, to organize churches, to ordain ministers and other officers, and to do all other acts that may lawfully be done, by any minister of the gospel whatever.

In the present discourse, I propose to sustain two propositions. The *former* is, that *the authority and rights of Baptist ministers, in all respects, are EQUAL to those of the ministers of any other denomination whatever*; and the *latter* is, that *the authority and rights of Baptist ministers, are, in many respects, SUPERIOR to those of any other denomination whatever*. Both these postulates now announced, involve comparisons. These, I am well aware, are always proverbially odious. Permit me then to say, in advance of this discussion, once for all, that I would not, for a moment, indulge them, were I not called upon to vindicate what I conceive to be the true teachings of the word of God. And, were it possible, I would greatly prefer to accomplish my purpose in some other way. At all events, I beg you to be assured, that while I firmly advocate my own principles, long since fixed, I cherish at the same time, the profoundest respect for my brethren of the several denominations around us. If I must speak of their doctrines without

approval, I shall studiously avoid every word and thought calculated to give them pain, and shall ever delight to honor their piety, intelligence and usefulness.

1. *The authority and rights of Baptist ministers, are EQUAL, in all respects, to those of the ministers of any other denomination whatever.*

This is our first proposition. Is it true? Which of the three leading denominations in the south-west—and I shall refer to no others—the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Episcopalian, will question it? Do our Presbyterian brethren allow our claims to be *equal* with theirs? It is so *presumed*. Do our Methodist brethren? They it is true, are episcopal; they, therefore, have their bishops; and their ecclesiastical regulations have invested *them alone* with authority to ordain others. Still they are not understood to maintain episcopacy as of “*divine right*,” but simply as recommended by *expediency*. A bishop with them, is, consequently, merely “*primus inter pares*”—the first among his equals. They do not, therefore, so far as I know, deny to us as ministers, authority and rights *equal* with theirs. Our Protestant Episcopal brethren, hold a doctrine of an entirely different character; and, at this stage of our discourse, demand our chief attention. Bishops with them, are an order of men, *divinely appointed*, to a *superior grade* in the ministry—they inherit the apostleship—and they, or Catholic, or Greek bishops only, having descended in regular succession from the apostles, have authority to ordain other ministers! Those not ordained by them, are not ordained at all! We have not been ordained by them—consequently, we are not, in their estimation, ordained at all! We have, therefore, no right to administer ordinances, nor indeed to act, in any sense, as ministers of the gospel of Christ.

They alone, the true ministers of Christ! We, as such, destitute of authority! This is a high and imposing claim. What facts and arguments can be adduced in its defence? They are understood to allege, *first*, that successors to the apostles were actually appointed, in the days, and by the authority, of the original twelve apostles; *secondly*, that this succession is shown, by history, to have been continued in subsequent ages, and to have been preserved to the present time; and, *thirdly*, that the authority thus derived, was necessary in the apostolic church, and is still necessary, to minis-

terial character, and the validity of all ministerial acts. If these theses can be supported, our authority and rights, are *not equal* to those of Episcopalians. Indeed, we are in no proper sense, the ministers of Christ. We should, therefore, instantly retire from our pulpits, and while we hide ourselves from the public gaze, repent of the presumption with which we dared to intrude ourselves, uncalled, and unauthorized, into the sacred office. But we are not prepared to admit, as true, either of the propositions announced. The facts appear to us to be the opposite of them in every case.

*Successors* to the *apostles*, with the style and office of *bishops*! Appointed, too, in the days, and by the authority of the *original twelve*! And they the sole inheritors of this high distinction! Consider the peculiarities by which the apostolic office was marked, and tell me, whether, by possibility, they can characterize those known among us, *par excellence*, as bishops? The apostles, let it, in the first place, be observed, received their commission, not in any sense from men, but directly, and personally, and exclusively from Jesus Christ himself. It was, secondly, an indispensable qualification for an apostle, that he should have been a witness of the actions and teachings of Christ, and have seen him after his resurrection. The apostles, thirdly, were endowed with supernatural gifts, and with a complete and infallible knowledge of all things pertaining to the gospel. And, lastly, their doctrines and their commands, were the law of the church. All the apostles were thus characterized. This fact, the word of God places beyond question. The absence of the endowments indicated, to any man, made, and still makes, the apostleship to him impossible. Are our *bishops* thus distinguished? Have *they* received their commission, not in any sense, from man, but directly and personally from Jesus Christ? Have *they* been witnesses of the actions and teachings of Christ, and seen him after his resurrection? Are *they* endowed with supernatural gifts, and inspired with a complete and infallible knowledge of the gospel? Are *their* doctrines and commands the law of the church? And yet *they* claim to be *apostles*, and as such, successors of *the original twelve*! They have not conferred ministerial character and authority upon *us*, and, therefore, *we* have none!

The truth is, my brethren, the apostles, as *apostles*, had no successors. As ministers of the gospel they had successors;



but it is impossible, that as apostles, they COULD have had. Such a succession was wholly unnecessary. The God of grace never designed that the office should be perpetuated. Still it is claimed, and the plea must not be summarily dismissed. A writer of distinguished ability, himself a bishop of that church, in a recent work on Episcopacy, *thus* states what is called the *scripture argument*, (and with us, this is all important,) in proof of the proposition, that "Successors to the apostles, in the apostolic office, were actually appointed in the days, and by the authority, of the original twelve." He says:—

"After the order of deacons had been created, and the church had been provided with pastors also, we have mention made, Acts xiv: 14, of the appointment of two apostles—Paul and Barnabas. In writing to the Romans, Rom. xvi: 7, St. Paul mentions two more—Andronicus and Junius, as being of note, eminent among the apostles. In writing to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. viii: 23, he calls Titus and two others, whose names he does not give us, apostles of churches. In writing to the Gallatians, Gal. i: 19, he speaks of James, the Lord's brother, as an apostle. In writing to the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. i: 1, compared with ii: 6, he mentions Sylvanus and Timothy as apostles with himself. Epaphroditus is spoken of, Phil. ii: 25, as an apostle. Here," remarks the bishop, "we have mentioned in scripture *twelve*, [he should have said *eleven*,] besides the original twelve, in all making *twenty-four*" apostles. "The angels of the seven churches," mentioned in the book of Revelations, are believed also to have been bishops, or ministers, "*jure divino*," of a superior grade.

This is "*the scripture testimony*." It is, at the first glance, imposing and specious. Is it legitimate? If so, it is very nearly conclusive of the claims of Episcopacy. Our *equality with them* cannot be supported. If it is not just, all is irrecoverably lost to prelacy. No other argument, without this, is of any material value. Let us briefly review it.

In the mention of three of this number, I must observe the advocates of episcopacy are particularly unfortunate; because two of them, Paul and James, were of the *original twelve*, and one of them, Junia, (not Junius,) if we may determine *sex* by the *gender*, was a woman! She was the wife of Andronicus: and they were relatives of Paul.

“Salute,” said he to the Romans, in the passage quoted by the bishop, “Andronicus and *Junia*, my kinsmen, and fellow-prisoners, who are *of note* among the apostles”—not “noted, eminent, apostles,” but simply christians, early of great reputation in the estimation of the apostles. This is the plain common sense, and the evident meaning of the text, and so acknowledged to be, by our best biblical critics, of all classes. Thus, instantly, *four* of the extra eleven apostles disappear!

Here it is necessary for us to pause a moment, and make a remark, explanatory of the original word *Αποστολος*, since it appears that our bishops use the *Greek* version of the New Testament, and claim, that, wherever this term, *Αποστολος*, occurs in connection with a name, however it may be rendered in the common translation, the person so designated, must have been clothed with the apostolic office! By reference to philological works of authority, this word will be found to mean simply *a messenger*, one *sent*. If he is *sent*, no matter *who* he is, by *whom* sent, or what may be the *nature* of his errand, he is, in Greek, called an *apostle*. It follows, therefore, that whether the word, in scripture, is used of a *messenger of any kind*—one sent, without respect to his character, or the nature of his message—of a man merely sent to preach, or of the apostolic commission especially, must depend entirely upon the connection in which it occurs. With this fact distinctly before us, we proceed with the review.

Barnabas was an apostle. This is most cheerfully conceded. Luke, in the Acts, speaks of “*the apostles*, Barnabas and Saul.” But in what sense was Barnabas an apostle? He was *sent* to preach the gospel. This is positively all. There is not a particle of testimony in the word of God, to prove any thing more. The people of Lystra, when they wrought miracles, would have paid them divine honors; of “which, when the *apostles* [the men *sent* of God to preach to them the gospel,] Barnabas and Saul, heard,” they rent their clothes, ran among them, and, by a suitable address, prevented. Barnabas, then, was *sent* as a preacher, but he never was an apostle, in the sense in which Peter, and Paul, and John, and the others, were apostles. This is indisputably true.

“Titus and two others, whose names are not mentioned,” are claimed as apostles. The passage is relied upon for proof,

in which Paul says to the Corinthians: "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my fellow-helper concerning you; or our brethren be inquired of, [the two not named,] they are *the messengers of the churches*, [in the Greek, *αποστολοι εκκλησιων*, *the apostles of the churches*,] and the glory of Christ." And were these men clothed with the *apostolic office*? No such thing appears, either from this, or any other text. The sense of the passage is exceedingly plain. Let it be briefly stated. The poor saints at Jerusalem, despoiled by persecution, of all the comforts, and of nearly all the necessaries of life; and besides this, now suffering under the effects of the prevailing famine, were truly objects of compassion. The various gentile churches, determined to send them relief. Those of Macedonia particularly, had acted with great generosity, and the wish prevailed to infuse the same liberal spirit into the minds of the Corinthians. For this purpose, Titus and the others, were selected and *sent* on a visit to Corinth. Paul, the prime mover and active agent, in this enterprise of love, wrote, and transmitted by their hands, this epistle—in which he commends these three ministers to the confidence of the brethren, with the assurance that they were *sent to them, by several churches*,—on this mission of mercy. Any apostleship of Titus and the others, beyond their being thus, and for this purpose, *sent by the churches*—*αποστολοι εκκλησιων*—has not been, and never can be, made to appear. They apostles *in the episcopal sense*! So far from it, they were merely *agents*, sent out by the gentile churches to collect money to relieve the temporal necessities of the churches among the Jews! *Four* others thus leave the apostolic theatre.

*Three* only remain, for whom the apostleship is demanded—Epaphroditus, Sylvanus and Timothy. The episcopacy of the first of these, the bishop defends with this passage of Paul to the Philippians: "I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your *messenger*, [*υμων δε αποστολον*, your *apostle*,] and he that ministered to my wants." The amount of apostleship here indicated, is readily explained. Paul was ascertained to be in want of the means of support, and the Philippians, to relieve his necessities, kindly transmitted to him *a sum of money*, of which they made Epaphroditus the bearer. The design of the mission, extending



no further, and having now been accomplished, Paul sent Epaphroditus *back* to them, with this admirable epistle, in which he commends their gift, and also the manner of its bestowment; it having been borne to him by a brother beloved—his “companion in labor, and fellow-soldier” in the gospel of Christ. This, and no more, constitutes all the apostleship of Epaphroditus.

As respects the other two, Paul writes to the Thessalonians, that he, and Sylvanus, and Timothy, had been careful to give them no trouble, although they had a right, and “might have been burdensome, as *the apostles of Christ.*” Sylvanus and Timothy apostles of Christ! How? Being *with* Paul for the time, he inserts their names in his epistle, as he did that of Sosthenes in his first epistle to the Corinthians, and Timothy’s alone, in his epistle to the Colossians, and he bears testimony that they were his companions, and, equally with himself, were *sent of God* to preach the gospel. If because they were so sent to preach the gospel, which is all the word apostle here means, they are to be considered apostles, then all the primitive preachers were, and all true ministers to this day, are apostles, since they were, and are, all *sent of God* to preach the gospel. Thus the three last of the extra apostles depart, leaving *none* but the *original twelve.*

But were not the angels of the seven churches, mentioned in the book of Revelations, bishops, or ministers superior in grade, authority and prerogatives, to other ministers? I submit, in answer, three brief remarks. The first is, that the scriptures afford no proof whatever that they were. The second is, that the claim is disproved by the passages themselves, and parallel texts. *Ἀγγελος*, the name used to designate these ministers, means simply a *messenger*; and *Ἀποστολος*, means simply a *messenger*; both words describe any one *sent* to bear the message of the gospel; therefore, both are equally as appropriate *now*, to those who preach the gospel, as they were *then*, to persons of the same class. My third remark is, that the supposition is unreasonable. There were precisely as many *angels* as there were *churches*. Now, since there can be no bishop without a diocese, if each angel was a bishop, where was his diocese? The angels of the churches were not therefore bishops, but, most clearly, *pastors* only, in the ordinary sense.

Upon a full and candid examination of the whole "*scripture argument*," we now see plainly, that *no successors to the apostles*, were, in their days, appointed, either *by their authority or with their consent*. Besides the original twelve, not one minister can be found of a grade *superior or inferior* to presbyters. So far, therefore, as the scriptures are concerned, nothing appears to disprove, but every thing to sustain, the proposition, that the authority and rights of Baptist ministers *are equal* to those of Episcopalians, or of any other denomination whatever.

The first argument of our brethren in support of *the divine right of bishops*, having, as we now see, totally failed, the second, which assumes, that, the alleged succession can be proved by historical authority, to have been actually continued and preserved to our day, *falls*, as a matter of course, and all others predicated upon it, necessarily go with it. Yet it may be worth our while to give it a moment's consideration.

Is it true, I ask, that history bears testimony to a continued apostolic succession, and that from the apostles' times to our day, it has been preserved? How can history speak the truth, and bear testimony to a thing that never existed? If history does not prove the opposite to be the fact, then I have read history, I must confess, to little purpose. Let us glance at the testimony of history.

Mosheim says, Eccl. Hist. Intro., vol. 1, p. 17, "When we look back to the commencement of the christian church, we find its government administered jointly by the pastors and *people*. But in process of time, the scene changes, and we see the *pastors* affecting an air of superiority, and trampling upon the rights and privileges of the community, and assuming to themselves supreme authority." In his history of the First Century, vol. 1, p. 88, the same distinguished writer further says: "The rulers of the churches were called either presbyters or bishops, which two titles, are, in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men." He again remarks, p. 91: "Let none confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period, with those of whom we read in the following ages. A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who *had the care of one christian assembly*, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house."

The same facts, and many more to the same effect, are maintained by Ghiesler, and Neander, and the other reputable writers in the department of ecclesiastical history.

Permit a single passage from the christian fathers, regarding the history of apostolical succession. We will select it from Jerome, who wrote in the fourth century, and who was one among the most candid and learned of them all. He says, Comm. on Titus: "A presbyter is the same as a bishop." But "when every one, by the instigation of the devil, supposed that those he baptized belonged to *him*, and not to *Christ*, it was decreed, throughout the whole world, that one chosen from the presbyters should be set over the rest."

These, and such like, are the true historical authorities. They not only do not intimate the doctrine, but positively condemn apostolical succession. Nothing taught in history, therefore, can be found, contradicting the proposition that our authority and rights as ministers, are *equal* to those of any other denomination whatever.

The third, and last argument, in support of the doctrine that Episcopal authority is derived by succession from the apostles, and transmitted in an unbroken series of ordinations, is essential to the validity of all ministerial acts, is now utterly overwhelmed, cut off, hopelessly, from any connection with the subject in hand. Yet, two or three considerations require that it should receive a passing notice.

Apostolical authority *was* necessary at one period of the church. This is admitted by all. Our brethren conclude that it must, therefore, be necessary at *every other* period of the church. But I answer that this conclusion does not, by any means, follow, as a matter of course. It is a most obvious "*non sequitor*." Apostolical authority *was necessary* in the age of inspiration, to complete the system of divine revelation. The *New Testament* is the product. And here, in the New Testament, the whole apostolical authority and teaching are lodged, retained, and perpetuated, in all their freshness, force and vigor. In the New Testament, therefore, and no where else, the apostles, substantially, still live, and speak to *us*, as they did literally to their own personal associates. This is obliged to be the fact. Moses, for illustration, was the apostle, or lawgiver, and ruler of Israel, under the old dispensation. He had successors in the rulership; but as a



lawgiver, or apostle, he had no successor; he could have had none while that dispensation continued, without a total subversion of his laws. So the twelve were apostles, or lawgivers, and ministers, under the gospel. As ministers, *they* had successors; but as *apostles*, they had none; they *could* have had none, without a total subversion of the New Testament. Are bishops legitimate successors to the apostolic office? Then they have the same authority which was possessed by Peter, or James, or John. A letter of the bishop of Tennessee is, therefore, as obligatory, and as infallible, as any of the epistles of the New Testament. This doctrine is admitted, and acted upon at Rome, because it inevitably follows from the first principles of episcopacy; but will enlightened American christians give it their assent? I presume not. The apostolic office was necessary in the beginning of the church; but, as we now see, it was not, therefore, subsequently necessary; indeed, it could not possibly, in the nature of things, have continued to exist. It is, consequently, impossible that it can now be necessary, either to confer upon us ministerial character, or to give validity to our ministrations.

We have thus seen, that the apostles, as such, had no successors. Let it be conceded that bishops, in the episcopal sense, found their way, at an early period, into the church, and still, in some departments of it, firmly maintain their place. Yet for their existence, they have no scripture warrant. Our Episcopal brethren, therefore, provided even that in all other respects they are conformed to the word of God, have no ministers, they can have none, but plain simple presbyters. Those who wear the title of *bishops*, are nothing more, since no such office exists to be conferred.

But can it be that the scriptures authorize no such office in the church as bishops, in the episcopal sense? Than this, no fact appears to me to be more certainly true. The only officers appointed by God to preach, and administer ordinances, and whose commission has come down to our times, are called indifferently, elders, bishops and presbyters; all of which names, when referring to office, convey the same idea. They are convertible terms, and are frequently used interchangeably, to describe the same person. There is, however, some difference in their sense, which it is proper should be stated. A *presbyter* is a man clothed with the ministerial

office; an *elder* is a presbyter advanced in age; and a *bishop* is a presbyter invested with the pastorship. All have, however, the same authority to preach, to ordain, and to administer all the ordinances of religion. Let us refer, in proof, to a few passages of the word of God.

“For this cause,” said Paul to Titus, Tit. i: 5-7, “left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders, [πρεσβυτερους, presbyters,] in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, not accused of riot, or unruly; for a bishop [επισκοπος] must be blameless, as the steward of God.” Who does not see that in this passage, the same persons are called indifferently, elders, presbyters and bishops? And who was Titus, who ordained these *bishops*, not over large territories, but *in every city*? He was simply a presbyter, evangelist, or missionary. And who were these bishops? Nothing more certainly, than ordinary pastors.

Again. Peter, speaking on this subject, in his second epistle, v: 1, 2, says to the pastors: “The *elders* which are among you, [πρεσβυτερους, the presbyters] I exhort, who am also an elder, [συμπρεσβυτερος, a fellow-presbyter,] and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking *the oversight* thereof, [επισκοπουντες, exercising the office of bishops,] not by constraint, but willingly.” Here again we have the inspired declaration, that elders are presbyters, and that presbyters are bishops.

Once more. Paul the apostle came, Acts 20: 17-28, to Miletus, “and sent to Ephesus and called the elders [πρεσβυτερους, the presbyters] of the church,” and said to them, “Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [επισκοπους, bishops,] to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. The elders of the church at Ephesus were presbyters, and the presbyters were bishops.

Such are all the teachings of God’s word. Did the apostles understand this matter? Are we to rely upon their representations of it? If so, then four facts are firmly established. The first is, that the apostles, as apostles, had no successors in the church; the second is, that presbyters, bishops and elders, all hold the same office; the third is, that presbyters ordained bishops, who were pastors in the ordinary sense;

and the fourth is, that all ordained ministers were the equals, the peers, of each other. Our brethren of all denominations, if in every other respect they are fully legitimate, have received their ordination from presbyters alone. Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, have received this, and only this ordination. We have received the same. Our authority and rights, therefore, to preach, to baptize, to organize churches, to ordain ministers and other officers, and to do all else that may be done by ministers of the gospel, *are equal in all respects*, to the authority and rights of the ministers of any other denomination whatever. This fact is now placed beyond controversy.

2. *The authority and rights of Baptist ministers, are, in many respects, SUPERIOR to those of the ministers of any other denomination whatever.*

We do not intend by this claim, to derogate from the high christian character, intelligence, zeal, or usefulness, of *our brethren* of the several churches around us. Our purpose is only to defend what most certainly *belongs to us*. Exclusive pretensions are not often heard with patience, even by those who are willing to admit that they are well founded. We concede to our brethren equality with us, in personal religion, in love for the cause of Christ, in readiness to labor for the salvation of men, in deep sincerity, and in other christian qualities. They may, indeed, in many things, be even greatly our superiors. Still, in other respects, and especially in the ministry, we are obliged to believe that similar concessions cannot with truth be admitted.

It is most evident to us, that our authority and rights as ministers, *are superior* to those possessed by the ministers of any other denomination whatever, because *by baptism we entered, and became legitimate members of Christ's kingdom, before we assumed to be invested with the offices of that kingdom, or to administer its ordinances and government. They have never been baptized at all!*

I know of no competent authority any where, or in the opinions of any christians, Baptists or Pædobaptists, by which a man can be admitted even to *membership* in the visible church of Christ on earth, without baptism. Do the ministers of other churches *claim* to have been baptized? They were, I allow, *sprinkled in their infancy!* But such a ceremony, and at such a time, bears no more relation to baptism



than it does to the sound of the last trumpet. They have never even been baptized! Here, therefore, they labor under a capital deficiency, and our advantage over them is most obvious. I will not ask whether they are really members of the visible church. That is their own affair. If, however, they *are not*, what authority have they, what right, to exercise those *prerogatives* that belong only to the *officers* of that church? If the matter is *barely doubtful*, how can they, especially as there is no necessity for it, risk so important a qualification upon an uncertainty? Our authority and rights are, therefore, in this respect, *most certainly superior to theirs*.

They are *superior* upon another ground. We received our ordination from the only true source, whence, under God, it can be derived—the church, and her bishops, acting upon her order, and as her executive officers.

Ordinations conferred by a *bishop*, in his own right, and those also given by a *presbytery*, as a permanent body, and without church order, are *all*, and *equally*, destitute of divine sanction. I do not say that they are invalid. That is no business of mine; but I well know that they have no countenance in the word of God. Where is the warrant? Episcopacy is modeled after the ancient Hebrew Theocracy; and Presbyterianism after the Jewish Synagogue. Will these be quoted as authority? Surely not. Baptist principles look to the New Testament, and not to the abrogated forms of a former and extinct dispensation. There the law of Christ is fully recorded, and in it we find *two words* which are employed to express the conferring of the ministerial office; they are *καταστήσωμεν*, and *χειροτονήσαντες*. The former, which occurs in Acts vi: 3, Scapula assures us, (and he was confessedly one of our best writers on the sacred languages,) signifies to put one in rule, or to give him authority, or *ministerial sanction*. The latter, found in Acts xiv: 23, expresses, we are told, the *suffrages* or *votes* of the *members of the church*, by stretching forth the hand, in approval of the act of ordination. Ordinations, therefore, are the united acts of the church and her bishops. Ministers are employed in setting apart other ministers, not in virtue of their being bishops as a superior order, nor of their being presbyters, all of the same order; but merely as executive officers of the church, with whom the whole right is lodged by her great and adorable Head, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ordinations not so conferred are, of necessity, vitally defective, since the power is *possessed* by the church alone, and can of course be *imparted* only by the church. Paul and Barnabas, the former an apostle, the latter a presbyter, ordained bishops in Derbe, Lystra and Iconium, as we ordain them; and the same thing was done in other places, by Timothy and Titus, and all the other primitive ministers. The early churches had each its own bishop, and there were certainly as many churches as bishops. Nor did they when ordained, join *presbyteries*, or bodies of ministers, who thereupon ceased to have their names in the individual churches as before. They never ordained men *first* to a lower grade in the ministry, and then *again*, after a stipulated time, to a higher grade in the ministry, as is so often done among us. No such case can be found in the word of God, in the form either of precept or example. No New Testament minister, as a minister, ever received but *one ordination*. This was by the united suffrages of the church and her bishops. Such ordination only is scriptural and legitimate; and it confers upon all those who receive it, all the powers and authority requisite to the complete fulfilment of all the duties belonging to those of any class who preach the gospel, and administer the offices and ordinances of our holy religion. Baptist ministers have received this ordination; ministers of other denominations have not; our authority and rights, therefore, are, in this respect also, *superior* to those of any other denomination whatever.

In still another department, our authority and rights are *superior* to those of others. We are not ordained for unscriptural purposes, such as to place us over other ministers as their governors, and to become legislators, and judges, in the kingdom of Christ.

If a man is ordained to do what the scriptures do not allow to be done at all, or if at all, not by ministers, then so far certainly as those things are concerned, his ordination is no ordination. A minister, for example, has no right, in his quality as such, to exercise the office of a civil magistrate. Suppose he should be ordained to that office, would he therefore be a civil magistrate? Certainly not. Such ordination would surely be void. So of every other authority not divinely given. And now, where in the word of God do you find that the inferior clergy are subjected to the govern-

ment of a superior, called a bishop? Where does that word speak of ecclesiastical courts, or of courts of judicature, and courts of appeal? Show me the grant for enacting laws by the clergy, or by any one else, for the government of the church? Jesus Christ is the supreme, and the only supreme Bishop in his church. "All ye are brethren." He is sole Ruler, Lawgiver and Judge. We know no other; we admit no other; and so far as men are ordained for such purposes, their ordinations are a nullity. *We* are ordained to execute the laws of Christ, in the church, and in the world, and we can never forget that where there is no command there is no obedience. We dare not assume powers which Jesus Christ has never granted. Our ordination, therefore, being conformed, as to its purposes, to the word of God, confers upon us authority and rights *superior* to those possessed by the ministers of any other denomination whatever.

Our authority and rights are *superior* in several other respects; but we have sufficiently illustrated this part of our subject, and we must not longer detain you.

We have now seen what is necessary to constitute a true minister of Jesus Christ, "according to the gift of the grace of God," and that all the characteristics of such are possessed by Baptist ministers; we have seen that the authority and rights of Baptist ministers are, in all respects, *equal* to those of the ministers of any other denomination whatever, because those from whom we received the ministry had full power from the great Head of the church, to confer it, and did confer it upon us in all its plentitude, by the agency of lawful presbyters, which is all that can be said of Presbyterian, Methodist, or Episcopalian ministers; and we have seen that our authority and rights are, in many respects, *superior* to those of all others, particularly in the fact that, by baptism, *we* entered and became legitimate members of Christ's visible kingdom upon earth, before we assumed to be invested with the offices of that kingdom, or to administer its ordinances and government; in the fact, that *we* received our authority and rights from their only depository and legal source; and in the fact, that *we* are not ordained for unscriptural, but for lawful gospel purposes.

From this whole subject, maturely considered, we conclude in the first place, that with our authority and rights as ministers of the gospel, we have ample reasons to be entirely satisfied.



No Baptist minister, of whom I know any thing, ever had the slightest misgiving upon this point. Did your hearts, brethren, ever hesitate for want of full confidence? *No*, I am ready to answer for you, no, *never*. Did any well instructed christian, who has received the ordinances from the hands of Baptist ministers, ever doubt their validity, from apprehension that we want authority to give them? Far, very far from it. On the contrary, there are millions, and I confess myself to be of the number, who would consent to accept them from no other administrators. No, here we stand on firm ground. We may fail in our fidelity, our devotion, our zeal, but our authority cannot be shaken. The Lord sustain us in the duties of our high vocation.

We, in the second place, conclude, from this subject, that upon us particularly, devolves the obligation to understand, and be governed strictly, in all that pertains to the ministry, by the word of God.

Our brethren of other churches, have, in many instances, gone far aside, and their return to the simple teachings of revelation is hardly to be hoped. How can they return without a total breaking up of their several systems of ecclesiastical polity? Will they, *can* they do this? As for us, the Bible is our standard, and our only standard. To comprehend its teachings, therefore, and to be governed by them, is our paramount duty. We are then prepared, not only to do our duty, but to defend the truth, and to teach others the service of Christ. Ignorance of the divine law, or disregard of its instructions, is the teeming source of all error. Every departure from the beautiful system revealed by Christ, is a derogation from the power and effect of religion. Jehovah can never be pleased with that which he has not appointed. To us the command is not less imperative than it was to the Hebrews: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

This subject leads us, in the third place, to conclude that, in religion particularly, we should estimate men as they are conformed to Christ.

We are but too prone to be attracted by titles; to be dazzled by pageantry; and to be seduced by flattery, and the love of power. Many, for these baubles, sacrifice their claims to gospel purity. Shall they ever cause us to forget, and to swerve from the truths taught by our blessed Redeem-

er? The gospel claims our obedience wholly: Submission to Christ generally, and in the ministry particularly, should be our only test of character. Yes, and he shall be most loved and revered by us, who most loves and obeys our adorable Saviour.

The pulpit, we conclude, in the last place, never can be clothed with all its wonted power over the hearts and consciences of men, until it fully corresponds with the laws of its institution. Then, and not till then, may it be properly said:

“There stands the messenger of truth; there stands  
The legate of the skies! His theme divine,  
His office sacred, his credentials clear.  
By him the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders, and by him, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.  
He ’stablishes the strong, restores the weak,  
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,  
And, armed himself, in panoply complete,  
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms  
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule  
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,  
The sacramental hosts of God’s elect.”

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#### NOTE.

Touching the subject considered in this sermon, one of the ablest discussions we recollect ever to have read, was comprised in three letters, addressed by Rev. Thornton Stringfellow, through the Religious Herald, in the year 1844, to a lady from whom he had received a copy of Bishop Onderdonk’s Essay on Episcopacy, with the question annexed:—“How can the reasoning of this essay be refuted?” We should be glad to see these letters embodied in a tract, and laid before the whole Baptist denomination, and indeed the whole christian world. From the first of these letters we have room to make the following extract:—

“The true question at issue in this controversy, is a question of original, inherent power, between the clergy on one side, and the followers of Jesus Christ on the other. It is a question that involves the right of private judgment and of conscience, in things which relate to men and their Creator.

Episcopacy means an absolute right in bishops to govern. Presbyterianism means an absolute right in presbyters to govern. Both systems assert, that clergymen are the divinely consecrated fountains of *authority* in the church of Christ—with a right to perpetuate their own official existence—and to transmit to successors, four inherent spiritual rights, which they claim to have received by *succession*—not from churches—but from the apostles.

An inherent right is defined by the Bishop to be “a right which cannot be taken away, or justly suspended, (except by punitive discipline,) but is always valid.” (See page 15.) The inherent spiritual rights which they claim a right to exercise and transmit, are thus summed up by the Bishop at page 11. First, “the right to ordain.” Secondly, “the right to confirm.” Thirdly, “the right of general supervision.” Fourthly, “the chief administration of spiritual discipline.” In all other spiritual rights, the theory admits an equality with bishops on the part of the inferior clergy.

Do you understand what is meant by the language of this summary? If you do not, I will tell you; when analyzed, “the right to ordain” means an absolute right to make all officers in the church—“the right to confirm,” means an absolute right to make all private members—“the right of general supervision,” means an absolute right to govern all churches—the right of “the chief administration of spiritual discipline,” means the absolute right of inflicting pains and penalties for all disobedience in the church; in other words, to ordain is to make officers—to confirm is to make members—supervision is to govern both—discipline is to exclude both for disobedience.

This is a princely inheritance for Americans to bestow on mortal men. These inherent rights may suit the angels of heaven, but you will agree with me, that they define the character of an earthly tyrant.

Episcopacy, in its true colors, is enough, it seems to me, to make a free man tremble; but if it be of God—if indeed he has clothed a self-creating and self-perpetuating body of ecclesiastics with such powers, (no matter how wicked,) according to the Bishop’s own shewing, so long as they continue in office, (see page 5,) why let us submit to them, because what God ordains, is ordained in wisdom and righteousness. The question to be settled is this—has he done it? This



question must be settled by the New testament; and although Episcopacy gives you and myself no right to judge this question, yet by the law of Christ, and by our civil law, we both have a right to sit in judgment upon this question, and to decide for ourselves, whether the New Testament was designed to teach that God has ordained the Episcopal clergy to be our conscience-keepers. For, if Episcopacy, in the sense of the Bishop's argument, be true, then this is true as a consequence.

Episcopacy asserts, that the apostles *exercised* four inherent rights, viz: the right to make officers—the right to make members—the right to govern—and the right to enforce authority—and then claims for Episcopal bishops a transfer from the apostles, of these four inherent rights, which, “except for discipline, never can be retracted, suspended, or modified, except by the giver or givers.”—(See page 15.)

Presbyterianism, according to the Bishop, asserts that these four rights were *exercised* by the apostles; but claims that the transfer was made to the Presbyterian clergy; or, in other words, to presbyters in general.

The Baptists assert, that these four rights are inherent in the church. (By church, the New Testament means a congregation of saints worshiping in one place.)—ED.

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## THE UNIVERSAL DOMINION OF CHRIST:

A Sermon, preached before the Georgia Baptist Convention, at Savannah, May 14, 1847, and published by resolution of the Convention, by REV. A. T. HOLMES, Pastor of the Hayneville church, Houston co., Ga.

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*“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.”*—REV. xi: 15.

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The text follows the announcement, that “the second woe is passed, and behold, the third woe cometh quickly.” By reference to the context, it will appear, that the third woe is connected with a final consummation. It is argued by some, that this consummation was effected in the taking and sacking of the city of Jerusalem, and the burning of the temple, having assumed, that the beseiging of the city by the Romans was the second woe, and the seditions among the Jews themselves, was the first; yet the whole passage may justly be considered as referring to that day, contemplated in every promise and in every prophecy, when the ultimate and complete triumph of the truth should be secured, and the universal and undisputed reign of Him should be accomplished, to whom “should be given the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” The joyful acclamations of the heavenly host, consisting of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, may be, consistently, regarded as a prophecy, in which the event, that should be most assuredly realized, is celebrated as having already transpired. In the calculations of eternity “one day is as a thousand years,” and, therefore, in the language of eternity, the past and the future, involving promises and their fulfilment, purposes and their accomplishment, and judgments and their execution, are comprehended

in one, eternal, *present* existence. In this sense, the kingdoms of the world *are* become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ; but considered with respect to time, the event is *yet to come*. The seventh angel shall yet sound the trumpet which proclaims to all the world that "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews," is Jesus the Christ, the King of kings. The triumph of the cross shall be complete, the dominion of grace shall be established, the enemies of God shall be destroyed.

"The Prince of salvation in triumph is riding,  
And glory attends him along his bright way;  
The tidings of grace on the breezes are gliding,  
And nations are owning his sway.

Ride on, in thy greatness, thou conquering Saviour,  
Let thousands of thousands submit to thy reign;  
Acknowledge thy goodness, entreat for thy favor,  
And follow thy glorious train.

Then loud shall ascend from each sanctified nation,  
The voice of thanksgiving, the chorus of praise;  
And heaven shall reëcho the song of salvation,  
In rich and melodious lays."

It is proposed to notice—

I. The grand instrumentality which God has appointed for the accomplishment of the end contemplated in the text.

II. Some of the evidences that such a consummation is in progress.

In noticing the first general view presented, it is important to understand, that the conquest of the world is the Lord's work, and that the Lord himself will accomplish it. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The conquered, in the great victory to be obtained, will share the glory, only so far as they reflect the glory of the conqueror. What instrumentality soever God may use in effecting his purposes of grace, and how distinguished soever any number of individuals may be in the success and triumph of the truth, He will cause his own absolute and indispensable agency to be manifest; and subordinate agents, in every successful enterprise, will be heard to exclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy



mercy, and for thy truth's sake." The warfare which is waged, is conducted upon principles peculiar to the Divine administration. Man is enlisted in the service, and required to be armed for the conflict; yet, it is the armor of the Lord that must constitute his preparation for that conflict, and hence he is exhorted to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of *his* might, for the weapons of his warfare are not carnal. The kingdoms of darkness shall be destroyed, and the kingdoms of the world subdued; but God will be recognized as directing every movement, giving efficiency to every measure, and overruling every event. To himself, will he secure, beyond all controversy, the glory of that conquest which shall have been obtained, when the banner of the cross shall be unfurled, and spreading its ample folds over the nations of the earth, shall proclaim universal dominion in the language of our text:—The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

In illustration of this truth, your attention will be occupied in noticing one or two of the many instances in which God has signally declared that he will not give his glory to another.

In what are denominated, by some, the *wars of the Lord*, there is *one* event which shines with peculiar brightness. Israel had rested forty years after the conquest of Jabin, and Tisera, the leader of Jabin's host, had been sold into the hands of a *woman*, according to the prophetic declaration of Deborah to Barak.\* But the anger of the Lord was again roused against his people, and their deliverance from the king of Canaan is followed by the oppression of Midian. In their distress they cried unto the Lord, and once more is their deliverance effected. But mark the divine proceeding. The angel of the Lord is sent to the house of Joash, a poor man in Manasseh, and *Gideon*, the least in all that household, is commissioned as the leader of Israel's host. Go, says the angel of the Lord, in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. In obedience to the divine command, Gideon goes forth, and sounds the trumpet for battle. An army is soon collected from the various tribes, and he finds himself at the head of two and thirty thousand men. Compared with the host of the

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\* Judges iv: 9.

Midianites, with which he must contend, this was a number by far too small to afford any hope of success. Gideon, doubtless, supposed that the number must be increased, but the Lord plainly informed him that it must be diminished. "The people that are with thee are *too many* for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath done it." Accordingly, the thirty and two thousand are reduced to three hundred, and each man, with his trumpet, and lamp, and empty pitcher, shouting the war-cry of "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," beheld with astonishment the dispersion of the foe. It is true that each man stood in his place round about the camp, and executed, promptly and strictly, the order of his leader, but as the host of the Midianites "ran, and cried, and fled," it was signally obvious to all, that the victory was the result of divine interposition. "It was the Lord's doings, and marvellous in their eyes." This is but a solitary instance among many which might be stated, and "the time would fail" to tell of Samson, and David, and Jonathan, of Caleb and Joshua, and a host of others, who, in the name and strength of the Lord, subdued their enemies, and aided in effecting the ultimate possession of the inheritance designed for his people.

But further:—During four thousand years previous to the appearance of the promised Messiah, God was preparing the world for the important event; and he led the people among whom he was to be born, for many ages, through various dispensations. In the successive changes of power from Babylon to Rome, the world was gradually approaching a state of universal peace, until, under the wise and prosperous reign of Augustus, the truth, for once, seemed to be admitted, that man might cultivate relations of friendship with his fellow-man. Judea had become a Roman province, and occupying, as it did, a central position with reference to the ancient world, it became the chosen spot from which should proceed the light of truth that should shine upon the surrounding nations. The "*star in the east*," which guided the wise men to the cradle in the manger, proclaimed that soon would be seen, above the moral horizon, the "*Sun of Righteousness*," that, from this common centre, would enlighten a benighted world, and dissipate the darkness in which sin had enveloped a fallen race. Thus, fifteen hun-

dred years after, when God determined to correct the abuses of Papal supremacy, and rescue his holy religion from the corrupt perversion of spiritual Babylon, in the exercise of that wisdom peculiar to the divine administration, he passes by all those countries in Christendom, which, in their turn had shared in the history of the church, and singles out as the spot in which this mighty reform should begin, the only place which had continued to be involved in darkness. As Judea was located with respect to the ancient world, so Germany was situated in the midst of christian nations, and here did He, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," determine to kindle the torch, which, though reflecting but a feeble light at first, should gradually expose the "*mother of abominations*," and lead to a religious regeneration which, in a later day, should awaken the various nations of the christian world. Human wisdom and policy are condemned, for Jerusalem and Rome are neglected as the birth-place of the incarnate Redeemer, and Bethlehem of Judea is immortalized by the event so pregnant with good to men; and, while enlightened Europe, in Greece and Rome, in Britain and France, had surprised the world with her orators, her statesmen, her warriors and philosophers, it was from the humble fire-side of a miner's cottage, in the centre of Europe, a dark, and almost barbarous region, that the man should go forth, who was destined to arrest the mighty tide of error and corruption, and to re-model the vital principle of christianity; "an expression of God's purpose, by his means, to cleanse the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold in his furnace." Thus, in these two great and infinitely important revolutions, one a revolution from paganism and idolatrous superstition, to the pure and saving influence of gospel truth; the other, a revolution from corruption and priestcraft, and fatal delusion, to primitive purity and simplicity; God stands alone, in his sovereign independence, while he prepares for the mighty work. And, when the time is come, the time of his own appointment, behold the instrumentality which he employs! Peter and James and John, with their associates, as the apostles of Christ, go forth from the humbler walks of life, with the divine commission, and under the divine direction, to give the first impulse to the stupendous enterprise of man's recovery; and Zwingli, and Melancthon, and Luther, proceed from the same condition,



claiming connection with no higher class, to awaken the world to a conviction of their alienation from God, and once again to direct their feet in the pathway of the just. Estimated, according to the calculations of human policy, the agency employed is insufficient for the accomplishment of any important end; and as *contemptible as insufficient* when regarded with reference to that homage which man in his *folly* pays to man in his *pride*. Yet, from the *cottage* to the *crown* their power is felt, and *peasants* and *princes* yield to an influence which they may not resist. The combination of kingdoms and empires, in opposition, fails, for it is the power of God with which they contend, and, in accordance with the immutability of his purpose, the work moves steadily onward to its final consummation. Thus, in the method of God's providence, great results are effected by inconsiderable means, because he *will* maintain his own right, and will *not* give to another, that which essentially belongs to himself. Second causes he will recognize, and upon thousands sustaining this relation to himself has he conferred signal honor; but as the *great First Cause*, he will be known to all the universe over which he reigns.

We enter, now, upon the examination of the text, according to the arrangement proposed, and proceed to consider—

I. The grand instrumentality which God has appointed for the accomplishment of the great and glorious result contemplated in the text.

That instrumentality is the *gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Thus did the apostle regard it when he declared to the brethren at Rome, that it was "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek;" and thus did the Son of God intend that it should be understood, when he proclaimed, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must he be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. This gospel is, more peculiarly, the burthen of the latter dispensation, yet was it distinctly intimated in earlier times. The great anti-type of the offerings and sacrifices of the former dispensation, was exhibited in the promises of God with reference to the work of recovery which should be accomplished, which promise, in the language of inspiration, is the *gospel* itself, for "the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,

preached before the *gospel* unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.”—Gal. iii: 8. Hence, the adoption of the term *gospel*. It is good news, or glad tidings: it is the revelation of the grace of God to fallen man, through a Mediator, and therefore, denominated by the apostle, in his last interview with his brethren, previous to his departure for Jerusalem, the *gospel of the grace of God*. It is the exhibition of wisdom and power and love combined, the proclamation of peace and reconciliation, the gracious tender of pardon and restoration to favor forfeited and lost. It is the wise and holy and gracious constitution of Jehovah, minutely adapted to overcome every hindrance, to answer every objection, to meet every emergency, and to satisfy every demand. It approaches man as a rebel, and subdues him; as an enemy, and reconciles him; as corrupt, and purifies him; as morally degraded, and elevates and ennobles him; and yet harmonizing with the divine attributes, and maintaining the divine requirements; proposing at the same time the glory of God and the welfare of man, it presents for the admiration of all intellectual beings, in heaven and on earth, the affecting, subduing, overwhelming spectacle of “mercy and truth meeting together, of righteousness and peace embracing each other.” And what, may one enquire, who looks enraptured on a scene like this, what can such a display discover, respecting the design of God? Will the guilty escape the penalty incurred? Are not justice and judgment the habitation of his throne? The answer is heard in the song of the “morning stars,” in the shoutings of the sons of God. From the *cross* proceeds the note of triumph and exultation, as the glorious sufferer announces that the work is finished, for justice is satisfied, and judgment executed upon him who offers himself a sacrifice, the just for the unjust; and now is opened up the prospect of that final consummation, when it shall be sounded aloud through all the universe of God, that “the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

But there is an opinion respecting this final restitution, *assumed* at least by many in the present day, which the preceding remarks make necessary should be noticed here. I mean the opinion that the salvation which the *gospel* publishes, is a salvation irrespective of character, and that the power exerted is not a sanctifying as well as a saving power.

Such an opinion involves the doctrine, that Christ is a Saviour, but not a Saviour from sin, and like the error of the Nicolaitans, seems rather to make him the minister of sin. But, says the scripture, "if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor," and this in connection with the forcible demand, that, "if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" Does he promote iniquity by establishing a "lax morality," and freeing man from the wholesome restraints of the law? Does he issue a license that the workers of abomination may prosecute their work with impunity, and by securing this privilege, constitute himself the *master workman*, not in destroying, but in building up the empire of darkness? Well may we start back, with horror, from such an exhibition, and with the apostle exclaim, "God forbid." Let those entertaining such an opinion consider well the charge of the Lord Jesus to the church at Pergamos,\* with reference to those among them who held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, and to those also, who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing he hated. Let it never be forgotten, that between Christ and Belial there can be no fellowship, and that the sceptre of the Son of God, in that day when he will reign the sovereign Arbiter of the universe, will be extended, not only over a *ransomed*, but also over a *regenerated* dominion. That day will come, but first, they that are in their graves must hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. Else, what means the language of the apostle to the church at Corinth, (2 Cor. ii: 15, 16,) "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other, the savor of life unto life." The allusion is to an ancient custom among the Greeks. In triumphal processions, the captives of principal importance followed the chariots of the conquerors, in chains. Among these captives some were *pardoned*, but others were *condemned to die*, as soon as the procession should end. The streets through which the vic-

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\* Rev. ii: 12—16.



torious generals passed were strewed with flowers, and the smell or incense was to the pardoned, the *incense of life*, but to the condemned, the *incense of death*. Nevertheless, it was incense still, and the fragrance of the flowers was not affected by the different condition of those who followed in the conqueror's train. Even so, the gospel is the gospel still, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear; it is a sweet savor of Christ, whether unto life or unto death, and although in "the day of Jesus Christ," when as a mighty conqueror, he shall ride in triumphal procession through the world, some will follow his chariot, condemned to die, still does the gospel remain the exhibition of the *grace* of God. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii: 36.) The dominion, therefore, referred to in our text, is a *spiritual* dominion, and a *holy King* is contemplated, extending that dominion over an empire of holy subjects. But alas! how many will realize the condemnation of having loved darkness rather than light! To them had been extended the overtures of peace, but they loved their rebellion more: to them had been tendered the offer of pardon, but they valued not the forgiveness of him whom they did not love; and delighting in the corruption of a wicked world, or yielding to the impulses of a proud and unbelieving heart, they are denied the privilege of uniting in the joyful acclamations of those who witness, with delight, the *closing triumph* of the *King of kings*.

In order, however, that the instrumentality to which we refer shall prove effectual, it must act upon those who are to be subdued. The gospel of Christ is the power of God, unto salvation *to all them that believe*. But how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? In view, probably, of this important end, did the Saviour utter that memorable declaration, "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." These glad tidings, then, must be proclaimed, and the joyful sound wafted upon every breeze, until, having traversed every ocean, and ascended every mountain, and penetrated every dark corner of the earth, it shall rouse the slumbering nations to a consciousness of error and moral darkness, and commu-

nicate the cheering intelligence of life and immortality brought to light. It will be profitable and interesting to consider the means of God's appointment, with regard to the result, and we notice:—

1. The *preaching* of the gospel. And this gospel of this kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to the nations, and then shall the end come.—(Math, xxiv: 14.) The prophet, Daniel, contemplating this end, and desiring, though in vain, to comprehend the mystery, respecting which he was instructed to write, is informed that many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. In the commission given to the first apostles, and continued to each succeeding generation, we find this promise fulfilled. Beginning at Jerusalem, repentance and remission of sins must be preached in *his* name, who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, and, therefore, the command is given, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. This is the appointment of God, and in this is manifest the wisdom of God. For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.—(1 Cor. i: 12.) Hence, the divine institution of the gospel ministry. In the figurative language of scripture, the Son of Man must be lifted up, even as the brazen serpent was elevated in the midst of the camp of Israel. This, in a pre-eminent sense, is the preacher's office. He is God's honored instrument, to publish the glad tidings of salvation, and, accordingly, he must proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; he must lift his voice so that all the world shall hear, peace on earth and good will to man, and catching the Spirit of the great "*forerunner*" in this enterprise of heavenly benevolence, and echoing the voice of "*one crying in the wilderness*," he must say to a *world of sinners*, "Behold the Lamb of God." And notwithstanding the conceited and aspiring Jew may stumble, and the wise and polished Greek may deride—though the sensual and evil-hearted infidel may scoff, and the malignant Spirit of anti-Christ may oppose, yet will the retributions of eternity testify to the wisdom and goodness of God, and the developments of the judgment day reveal the inspiration of the prophet when he declared, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good

tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.”—(Is. lii: 7.)

2. While the preaching of the word, however, may be regarded as the principal agency in communicating gospel intelligence, and as the only agency, indeed, which can be regarded as of divine and special appointment, yet there are subordinate agencies, which, in a most signal manner, have received the divine sanction, and which, no doubt, have been suggested by the promptings of the Divine Spirit. And in the imposing, the commanding train of auxiliary instrumentality, we hail, first in order, and first in importance, the noble institution for the universal distribution of the *word of God*. What an auxiliary is this! The Bible translated into every language, a copy of the sacred oracles deposited in every house, and the saving truths which they contain brought within the reach of every heart. How sensibly did the devoted, untiring Judson feel the need of such a help, when, month after month, he toiled and labored, that he might give a Burman Bible to the Burman empire; and how did he appreciate the help which had been secured, when, in the retirement of his study, which had witnessed his prayer of faith, and labor of love, he gave thanks to God, upon his knees, that the important work was done, and that hundreds of immortal beings, deluded, degraded and ignorant, groping in the darkness of moral night, might have shining upon them the light of eternal truth, and be guided in safety to the land of promise and of peace. In the successful progress of this noble enterprise, the miserable victim of pagan idolatry *will read*; and will learn to worship the *one living and true God*; and no longer seeking the annihilation of his being, will aspire after the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, the crown of glory, and honor, and immortality.

In intimate connection with this grand scheme for the dissemination of gospel truth, we find kindred institutions exerting their influence, and lending a helping hand to the effectual accomplishment of the end proposed. From the *press*, devoted to the ultimate success of divine truth, publications of various kinds are continually issued, and tracts and newspapers, taking the wings of the wind, will fly from country to country, and exert no inconsiderable agency in “turning the hearts of the disobedient, to the wisdom of the just, and



making ready a people prepared for the Lord." These secondary instrumentalities, all co-operating with the prime agency of God's appointment, may be regarded as the means by which the nations of earth shall be subdued, and the reign of the Prince of peace shall be established. They make no public display of the power necessary to overcome, and yet they carry with them the elements of universal conquest; and, as the priests, by the direction of Joshua, compassed the city of Jericho with the sound of the trumpets, so will they, at last, compass the entire earth, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, with the sound of the everlasting gospel; and as the walls of the city fell, when the long blast of the trumpets was heard, so, when the gospel trumpet shall wind its note of universal proclamation, the kingdom of satan shall be demolished, and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ.

"Awake, all-conquering arm, awake,  
And satan's mighty empire shake;  
Assert the honors of thy throne,  
And make this ruined world *thy own*."

II. We proceed to notice, in the next place, some of the evidences that the result spoken of, is in progress.

Events which indicate the approach of the "latter day glory," are regarded as proceeding from different causes, and tending to different results, according as the mind of man is variously affected. In their contemplation, that construction will be contended for which corresponds with the peculiar opinion which may be entertained. There are those who do not recognize the hand of God in the occurrences which mark the history of respective nations. Political revolutions, the changes of power, the "rise and fall" of kingdoms and empires, the important discoveries, and useful inventions of different ages, are all considered with reference to their bearing upon personal benefit and national prosperity. The truth in regard to such, admits of ready solution. Their vision is bounded by time, and their calculations reach not beyond the limit of the present world. Interest, enjoyment, hope, are all measured by the continuance of mortal life. Death is the awful calamity which they deprecate, because, in the hour of dissolution, interest must be abandoned, en-

joyment must cease, expectation can no longer be indulged, and desire fails. At times, the immortal Spirit within, impatient of the confinement, and rebelling against the circumscribed limit which human policy has thrown around it, would look beyond the narrow confine, and range abroad in search of other interests, and higher and more extended enjoyments; but the effort is weak, the entanglements of sense have crippled its energies, and the noble impulse is arrested by those unhallowed influences which maintain their almost undisputed control. Not so with those who reflect the light of eternal truth. To them, the world assumes its proper dimensions, the little space of three score years and ten, constitutes but a passing moment in the eternity of their existence, and the important events of time, but make up a train of providences, which tend, one by one, in the succession of their occurrence, to complete the triumph of that day, when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

Among other facts which afford evidence that this great event is approaching, we may notice:—

1. The persecutions of the people of God. In giving persecution a prominent place as connected with the ultimate prevalence of divine truth, it is not intended to hide any portion of its deformity, or to offer any plea in extenuation of its horrible guilt. Its spirit is at variance with the Spirit of God, and, abstractly considered, is destructive to his cause. It has had an existence coeval with sin, and had no inconsiderable agency in disturbing the peace of Eden, and causing the blood of righteous Abel to cry for vengeance upon his guilty brother. Its origin can be traced only to "the Prince of the power of the air," and its relationship is intimate with that spirit which has always worked in the hearts of the children of disobedience. That God would recognize such instrumentality in effecting his purposes, cannot be urged, cannot be believed. But there is an overruling providence, and Almighty power and infinite wisdom unite in defeating the adversary of his cause, with the very weapon formed to arrest it in its onward and prosperous career. "The wrath of man shall praise him," the opposition of his enemies shall advance the glory of his name, and the very means devised for the overthrow of his kingdom, shall become instrumental in extending his dominion over all the

earth. To admit more than this, would be to charge Jehovah himself with the tremendous guilt of those who made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints. But the great object of the "Most High God," is the dissemination of truth, because by the power of truth his reign shall be established; and the great object of the "*father of lies*," is to prevent its circulation; and while the appointment of God to effect this object, is the preaching of the word, the plan of the enemy is to frustrate the end, by persecuting his people. Hence we hear of fiery furnaces and lions' dens—of the refinement of malignant wrath and heartless cruelty in the various departments of the inquisition; of stripes, imprisonment and death; all resorted to, that the purposes of grace and mercy may be defeated, but all directed and controled in securing their accomplishment; for while thousands have escaped to publish in different lands, the truth for which they suffered, thousands have sealed their testimony with their blood, and, with their dying breath, have preached in tones that will yet be heard to the ends of the earth. Thus, in the early state of the church, when persecuted in one city, the disciples, by the command of Christ, fled to another, leaving behind them, and carrying with them, the mighty influence which quietly, but effectually, presses onward to its final conquest.

The history of the persecution of christians by the Jews, is the history of their own persecution by the heathen, and by those of their own name, with unimportant modifications. For the space of three hundred years the very spirit of extermination seemed to rage with accumulating violence, and from Nero to Diocletian, each succeeding emperor, either in person, or by his representative, seemed to emulate the vindictive fury of his predecessor in committing havoc among the people of God. From the days of Constantine to the reformation, the bloody scene is but little changed, and when Martin Luther comes forth to oppose the errors of the church of Rome, and the memorable council of Trent is called, almost the entire continent of Europe unites, to drive the heretic from the earth, and to maintain the vile misrule, the corrupt perversion, and the bloody intolerance of the Roman Pontiff. Yet Luther lived in spite of Popes and Emperors; the church survived, and the truth, though hindered, maintained its onward course; while the civilized world, gradually recognizing the liberty of conscience, and extending to



every man the right to worship God, as conscience, enlightened by the truth, shall dictate, will at last render powerless, this, hitherto, mighty engine of the "*wicked one.*" "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The tempest raged, and the waters towered above the loftiest mountains, but the ark of the Lord rode in safety on the bosom of the surging waves—the storm ceased, and the deluge passed away, and the ark of the Lord rested in safety on the top of Ararat.

2. The missionary enterprise affords commanding evidence. During the last half century, the banner of the cross has been unfurled in more than one idolatrous nation, and the doctrines of the cross have proved the power of God, unto salvation, to more than one benighted pagan. To the American Indian, and the African, to the Hottentot, the Greenlander and the South-sea Islander, to the Hindoo, the Burman and the Chinaman, the herald of the gospel is heard to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, and paganism is yielding to the influence of divine truth. In many of the dark places of the earth, filled as they are with the habitations of cruelty, God is "having respect to the covenant," and the humble disciples of his Son are spending a life of toil and hardship that the word of life and salvation may be heard, where, hitherto, the people have "dwelt in the land of the shadow of death." Where the highest hope, entertained by the miserable idolater, was the annihilation of his being, the hope of the resurrection has been set before him, and the way-worn pilgrim, now turns away from the car of Jugger-naut, to prostrate himself before a sin-forgiving God. Since the commencement of the Serampore mission in 1790 to the present time, such men as Carey and Judson of our own denomination, and kindred spirits of other denominations have been found, braving every danger, encountering every difficulty, "enduring every hardship" and submitting to every privation, that immortal beings, benighted, deluded, degraded, bound for a world of darkness and despair, might know the God of Israel, and through the enlightening and elevating influence of the *cross of Jesus*, "might hear of heaven and learn the way;" and as the sure result, altars have been demolished, and temples forsaken, and oppressive and unprofitable ceremonies abandoned, while the rescued victims of a degrading superstition, listen to the glad sound

of life and salvation through a Saviour's blood, and receiving the "hope that maketh not ashamed," rejoice in prospect of peace with God beyond the grave.

The missionary cause! truly, it is the cause of God. It involves the prime instrumentality of God's own appointment, and recognizes each subordinate agency; and looking out upon the *world* as the field of its operations, and cherishing the Samaritan spirit for every son and daughter of a degenerate race;—bearing upon its chart the impress of the divine sanction, and regarding as its paramount purpose the advancement of the divine glory; it contemplates, as identified with its own success, the announcement that "the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ." But is it so? Is the cause of missions indeed the cause of God? Is there, in the operations of its various departments, considered with respect to their design and tendency, evidence to be found that the result spoken of in our text is in progress? Let the objecting enquirer cast his eye over this assembly, and tell me what means this congregation of strangers here. These are no political aspirants after office: here are no men of capital, met together to consider some promising speculation, or to plan out some pecuniary enterprise, or to make some profitable investment of funds. These are men of prayer, professedly, the people of God, and this is, emphatically, a Convention of missionaries. But, it may be asked, convened for what purpose? The answer is at hand. They meet for prayer, and from the closet, the family altar, the session room, and the sacred temple of the living God, there goes up to the throne of heaven, during the progress of its business, the petition of a hundred hearts, "*thy kingdom come*;"—while the divine injunction, "pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send laborers into his harvest," is recognized as the paramount obligation of those who thus meet together as the servants of God. Theirs, however, is the prayer of faith, and, like the apostle James, while others shew their faith without their works, they would shew theirs by their works. Hence, after invoking the divine blessing, and seeking the divine direction, they proceed to deliberation and corresponding action. Plans are submitted and adopted as, in their judgment, will tend most directly and effectually to secure the end proposed. Appropriations are made, the word of life is circulated, and the

heralds of peace are sent forth, that the light of truth may shine upon them who walk in darkness; that the knowledge of God may be increased, and that the "*Son of Man*," lifted up in all the attractive, soul-subduing power of the cross, "*might draw all men unto him.*" We give of our substance, but we give to the Lord; we unite in supplication, but we pray unto the Lord; we circulate truth, but it is the truth of the Lord; and we send forth the messengers of salvation, but we send them forth in the name of the Lord. May we not, then, consistently regard our cause as the cause of God, and, in that day when the note of victory shall be sounded, may we not exult in the spirit of those who have shared in the glorious conflict? Yes, beloved brethren, in the fear of that God whom we serve, we may say, such is our business here, such the character of the work in which we are engaged; and, when in the order of Divine Providence, the arch-angel shall proclaim *universal dominion* in the name of our God and of his Christ, then, and not till then, will it be known, to what extent we have been instrumental in bringing to pass the great and glorious event.

3. Another encouraging evidence may be found in the *ingenuity* and *enterprise* of man, as exercised with reference to commercial intercourse. The facilities of transportation, by the overruling providence of God, are made tributary to the advancement of his cause, and there is no extravagance in the belief, exultingly entertained, that the progress of truth henceforth, will be most decidedly accelerated. Nations, heretofore the very antipodes of each other, are brought into comparative proximity, and the intervention of mountains and deserts and oceans is disregarded, in view of the conquering power of steam. Important intelligence flies upon the wings of the wind, and events affecting the commercial relations of respective nations, are communicated with a dispatch only surpassed by the flight of thought, or by the lightning's flash. But, as the various ends of secular interests are thus promoted, so is the cause of the Redeemer's kingdom promoted. Gospel news is conveyed as all other news is conveyed; the car, the steamboat, and the magnetic wire, are alike available to the votaries of pleasure, the worshippers of mammon, and the *friends of Christ*; and upon the deck of the same ship that spreads her canvass to the breeze, in search of some distant, foreign port, stand, side by



side, *the man of business* and *the man of God*. In connection with, and in confirmation too, of this fact, it is worthy of remark, that in those countries where the spirit of enterprise and ingenuity has been most extensively cherished, and most obviously developed, there, also, has the spirit of christian benevolence been most decidedly awakened and acknowledged. In the United States and in Great Britain, more than elsewhere, the spirit of internal improvement prevails. Railroads, canals, and telegraphic offices, are soon to effect one continuous chain of communication throughout these respective countries; and from them, as from common centres, the "gospel of the kingdom" will radiate its beams of heavenly light; and, as the claims of the Lord Jesus upon his followers are more fully recognized, and more sensibly felt, and all these advantages are brought to bear upon the cause of truth, the language of the prophet will become more intelligible, as contemplating the end from the beginning, it is announced, (Zech. ix: 10,) "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river, even to the ends of the earth." "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—(Isa. lii: 10.)

Other evidences might be urged, and one of no ordinary interest and importance, is to be found in the effect of christianity upon intellectual and moral being. Under its benignant influence, moral excellence is promoted, and mental power is developed; the arts are encouraged, and science is fostered; in short, all that tends to elevate man in the scale of being, is not only induced, but encouraged and sustained, and thus commending itself to the favor of the wise and reflecting of every land, it will sooner or later secure an introduction, and have afforded an opportunity for the more important exercise of its sanctifying and saving power. But circumstances will not justify more time being occupied on the present occasion, and the subject will be dismissed with two reflections.

1. We walk by faith, not by sight, said Paul to the church at Corinth, and to the Hebrew brethren he declared that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. All true faith rests upon truth. It is founded

upon evidence, and that evidence is the word of God, and hence it is properly called the *belief of the truth*. Man, awakened to a sense of sin, its rebellion, its corruption and its danger, hears that Christ is able to save. That which he hears is truth, and embracing the hope thus set before him, he, like the apostle can exclaim, "Whom, having not seen we love, in whom, though now we see him not, yet *believing*, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." As it is in man's individual deliverance, so is it in all that relates to the revival, prosperity and ultimate triumph of the church. Faith is the secret,—*faith in God*. Thus Noah believed, and amid the wreck and desolation of an unbelieving world he looked forth from the ark to witness the faithfulness of Him in whom he trusted. Joshua believed, and the crumbling of the walls of Jericho testified to the power of faith in Israel's God. Caleb believed, and despising the report of walled cities, and the sons of Anak, he stilled the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it." Carey believed, and Fuller and Pearce; Judson believed, and the little band that have labored, and that yet labor with him in a far distant, heathen land. As with them, so with all who are now engaged, whether at home or abroad, in the service of the Lord. Nothing but faith can induce a willingness to undertake the work, and nothing but faith can encourage and sustain amid its hardships and difficulties. Yet faith is sufficient, and the "wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

2. The triumph of the Son of God will be the triumph of his friends, but the overthrow of his enemies. There are those who will be subdued to the obedience of faith, and submitting to the dominion of his grace and following in the train of the Mighty Conqueror, shall help to swell the anthem of praise that shall hail him the acknowledged Sovereign of universal empire. But there are those who despise the riches of his grace, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness. These also will follow in that train, but the warrant of death is signed against them. In the language of the prophet Isaiah, it is fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies. "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me, for many that sleep in the earth, shall awake, some to

everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Whoso are wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

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IMPEDIMENTS TO THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

The *figurative language* employed by the sacred writers, may have affected the minds of many, not excepting those who are accustomed to discriminate, in the manner now described. We pray in the language of the bible that the "sun of righteousness" may arise upon the benighted nations, till imagination deceives us with the illusion that the darkness and depravity of the human soul is to be dissipated by some supernatural illumination, and in a manner as independent of human aid, as that by which the darkness of night is dispersed by the light of day. We pray that the "windows of heaven" may be opened, and an abundant blessing poured out, charmed with the beauty of an image which represents Omnipotence as raining righteousness down from heaven like showers that water the earth. We read of the "arm of the oppressor being broken," and the "pison doors" which are to be thrown open, and we wait for some almighty power to palsy the one, and some miraculous agency like that which liberated the apostles, to accomplish the other. It is our daily prayer that the knowledge of God and the gospel of his Son may speedily be communicated to the whole human family, and while the petition is yet warm upon our lips, imagination pictures some white-robed seraph, flying through heaven, bearing the everlasting gospel; as if this inspiring representation of the prophet were to be construed into an acquittal of all human instrumentality. Thus it has come to pass that we have lost sight of the little means and processes by which the purposes of God are to be accomplished amid the splendors of the prophetic vision. Thus we dwell more on the ultimate results we expect—the glory of the church, than upon the "foolishness of means" by which they are to be secured. We pray more that God would send out his light and truth, than that he would send us to proclaim that truth with our own living voices. We pray more that the gospel may be circulated through all tribes and languages of men, than that we may be employed in the work of translating, printing, and despatching them with our own hands.—*Christian Spectator.*



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## THE FAITHFUL MINISTER'S COURSE—ITS MEANS AND END.

A sermon delivered at the ordination of brethren F. M. Barker and Wm. Jeter, at Suck Spring, Bedford county, Va., August 2, 1846; by Rev. JAMES C. CLOPTON, of Lynchburg, published at the request of the Presbytery.

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“*Study to show thyself approved unto God.*”—2 TIM. II: 15.  
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It is a truth admitted by all believers in Revelation, that the vocation of the gospel minister is the highest on earth. If this be so, then whatever pertains to this calling is of the greatest importance. Paul has magnified this office to such a degree, both in his letters and his personal sacrifices, that those who are the worthiest to follow him, often feel that they have run before they were called; and there is no doubt that many, from a want of consideration, or from vanity, or from some sordid motive, thrust themselves upon the churches and are sent forth to perform a work for which they are entirely unqualified. I am more and more settled in the opinion that churches ought to be exceedingly cautious in putting into the ministry those who *seek* this office. If there be a post on earth, that should be filled with diffidence, and fear, and trembling, it is that of an ambassador for Christ. A laborer in the vineyard of the Lord, should be a man of more than ordinary qualifications. Better in doing the work of the Lord to have one Aaron, who is called of God, than a thousand others, who take this honor unto themselves.—Heb. v: 4. Gideon, in warring against the Midianites, was commanded by the Almighty to tell all that were fearful and afraid, to return. Twenty-two thousand returned; leaving ten thousand. “And the Lord said unto Gideon, the people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there.”—Jud. vii: 4. Out of this ten

thousand, only three hundred were chosen to subdue Midian. It is so now with the church. There is too much confidence placed in numbers when they are fearful and afraid. We lift up our eyes and see the fields white already to the harvest, but the laborers are few, hence the disposition on the part of churches to send forth all who say, "here am I, send me." And if I might be allowed to drop a word of caution to the churches, I would say, beware of sending forth men to do the Lord's work whom the Lord doth not send. Consider well their piety. Is he blameless, chaste, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach? Is he not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre? Is he patient, not a brawler, not covetous? Does he rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity? Is he not a novice? Has he a good report of them that are without? On such an one let the church lay hands, but not suddenly. Let him first prove himself to be of this character. Harken to the voice of inspiration, and you will send those whom the Lord hath chosen, and you may rest assured in their ultimate success. For the Lord will go with them. God will bless them—even our God. He will be with them always, even unto the end of the world. Our text suggests two thoughts—the object of a faithful minister's pursuit, and the means of attaining to it. That object is the *approbation* of God; those means are *constant* and *assiduous labor*. It is as though the apostle had said, "Employ all the energy you possess, with a view to the approval of the Judge of all." Let us now proceed to consider:—

I. The *labor* implied in the term *study*.

Our first parents did not spend the hours of their innocence in idleness. Adam was required to dress the garden of Eden and to keep it. Labor has been pronounced a part of our curse. How pleasant would it be to man to spend his time in ease, and only to go forth in the midst of plenty produced by the bounty of heaven without his co-operation? How pleasant would it be could the philosopher go forth and ascend the arduous steeps of science without toil, and without research? Were every minister in his spiritual birth constituted a Paul or a John, how much of the labors of the study would be dispensed with,—but God has seen that these things would not be best for man, in his present fallen

condition. Every man must live by the sweat of his brow. He who would reap, must sow and cultivate. He who would become learned, must experience much weariness of the flesh. He who is wise to win souls must *study*.

1st. *Nature, or God's material universe.*

It might here be asked, what advantage does a minister derive from the study of the material world? We answer: First. It enlarges his conception of the Divine Being. The man who contemplates the works of God as he ought, finds them of far greater magnitude than he had anticipated. And as he advances in the contemplation of these high and noble objects, at every step he takes, he is more and more convinced of the Almighty power of him who said, "Let there be light and there was light." It was an enlarged conception of the works of the Creator which made the Psalmist to exclaim, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints." Thus by increasing our knowledge of God they tend to inspire us with reverence and devotion. Again, they furnish the divine with arguments to overthrow Atheism; for such immortal treatises as Butler's Analogy and Paley's Natural Theology could never have been produced by persons who were not conversant with the works of creation. But this is not all: An acquaintance, with the material universe, has furnished prophets and inspired ones with some of the most appropriate figures, for the purpose of illustrating spiritual things. Hence, the beautiful and striking language of the prophet, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;" and of the Saviour himself, "Ye are the light of the world," "ye are the salt of the earth." The figures drawn from nature to illustrate the mysterious doctrine of the new birth; how aptly chosen; how fully do they teach us of that *entire* change which must take place before we can enter into the kingdom of God, and the *mysterious* nature of that change. If then prophets have taken advantage of these works; if they afford the most powerful weapons against Atheism; if they exalt our conceptions of God, and inspire devotion; if the Redeemer himself draws from this source figures and illustrations; it is surely a matter of great importance, that his ministers make the works of his hands a matter of deep study. The minister is not required to be a Chemist, an Anatomist, a Natural Philoso-



pher, or an Astronomer; but the more he knows of these subjects, consistent with other engagements, the better workman will he be, in rightly dividing the word of truth.

2nd. *He must study man.*

It has long been said, that "the proper study of mankind, is man." As a being possessing only a physical organization, how wonderful is he? How well calculated to impress us with feelings of admiration and love for our Great Creator. Well might David exclaim, in viewing his physical construction, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

But it is not so much as a creature possessed of body as of mind, that man becomes an object of study to the minister of the gospel. The mind is the great inlet to the heart. This enables man to rise above all other animals, and to feel that he is allied to creatures who are entirely spiritual. Men have minds which are ready to *perceive* whatever is stated from the pulpit, and not only so, but this power enables them to detect the least impropriety in gesture, or in feeling. They can perceive when a man is proud, or when he is humble; when his manner is affected and when it is simple; when his feelings are sincere and when they are hypocritical. They have memory also which enables them to retain what is said and to re-call trains of thought and reflection which may have been long forgotten. Father Abraham, in addressing the rich man, takes advantage of this capacity, and wakes up the rich man's thoughts to reflect on his career on earth. Son, says he "*remember* that thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Peter refers to this power of the mind several times in his second epistle, as it enabled him to stir up the christian by way of remembrance. The power to compare one object with another, or thought with thought, and to deduce proper conclusions, is also an attribute of mind, called *judgment*. Paul refers to this when he says of the Bereans that they were more noble than the Thessalonians, because they searched the word with all readiness of mind to see if those things were so. Unlike many professors in our day, they read and thought and judged for themselves. He who acquaints himself with man as he ought, must take these things into consideration and make them the subject of patient investigation. There is an advantage in the study of mind

which is found in the study of no other science; it can be done without books. The mind is its own library and its own laboratory. Investigation and experiment can be conducted when alone. It is because of attention to these things, that many ministers are useful, who are precluded from securing knowledge directly from books. In the shop, or at the plough, or as they journey by the way; the mind is absorbed in contemplating its own powers and operations, and thus as it enlarges itself, it raises its possessor to distinction and usefulness. But man must be studied, not only as a mental, but also as a moral agent. Men have feelings deep and very excitable. The heart is the seat of these feelings. It loves and it hates, it rejoices and it mourns. Out of it are the issues of life and death. All thoughts are rendered virtuous, or vicious, according to the purpose or design of the heart. A knowledge of the powers and operations of the mind, and the corresponding affections which certain thoughts are calculated to excite, together with a proper judgment of corresponding action, is a knowledge of *human nature*. The Bible excepted, this is the most important study to the gospel minister. Paul was so well versed in this knowledge that he could say, "I am become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. To the Jew, became I as a Jew, that I might gain the Jew." If he was with the Jew, such was his knowledge of their thoughts, feelings and prejudices, that he could accommodate himself to them. And if ministers accommodate themselves to their hearers, it must be from a knowledge of human nature. Whoever is ignorant here cannot shape his course properly, but will often become an object of ridicule to the world. A knowledge of what was in man, enabled the Saviour to rebuke his adversaries successfully, and to triumph over them in every effort to entangle him. There are three ways in which we may study human nature: First, as it is presented in the Bible. Second, as seen in the acts of men, when witnessed by us, or recorded in history. Lastly, by studying our own hearts. In the study of character in profane history, we labor under some disadvantage resulting from the unfaithfulness of historians, and our inability to judge of motive, even when the act comes under our own observation; but in studying the character of man,

as it is recorded in the Bible, and on the tablets of our hearts, we have more infallible guides. In our own mental operations we can observe the first traces of thought, and as it darts in among our moral powers, we can discover the first ebullition of feeling, and as that feeling is embodied in action we learn the motive, which motive gives character to our action and it is pronounced to be right or wrong accordingly. Viewing this process in various instances we soon learn to apply our knowledge to others in similar circumstances and thus judge of their acts. Hence, a man with the most enlarged experience, who has been placed in the greatest variety of circumstances, is better prepared to form a proper judgment of man, than he who has mingled little with the world. But we must not dwell longer on this important subject, but proceed to remark:—

3rd. *He must study the Bible.* This must be *his textbook.*

*As to history,* no book can vie with it in antiquity, none in authenticity, none in simplicity, beauty, and sublimity of expression. In all these views it becomes a history of the first importance, not only to the divine, but to all men. It reaches, in its description, from man in his primeval innocence along down the track of time and pours the effulgence of its light on events yet to transpire, and on ages yet to come. For prophecy is but the prediction of what the historian will and must record. Whether we consider the Bible as containing an account of the creation of all things; or of the fall of our first parents, and in fact of all recorded in the Pentateuch; it stands alone like some mighty pyramid, or as a great rock, on which are inscribed events which must otherwise have been lost forever. As a record of facts from Moses till Christ, it stands above all others in vivacity, and from Christ until the death of John, the evangelist, it records events which surpass all others in interest; events of which the christian minister must not be ignorant, if he would win souls. There are facts which may be forgotten; but these must not be forgotten. There are ponderous volumes of history which the minister may never open, but it must not be so with this, if he would rightly divide the word of truth. How important that the man who takes care of the church of God, should be intimately acquainted with the acts of the apostles, or the history of the early church. Here he



learns the principles of church organization and of church government. And from the history of the early progress of christianity, he will be enabled to learn the errors and deficiencies of the present day, and to apply his knowledge so as to correct the wrongs and supply what is lacking. The Bible must be his text-book.

*As to prophecy.* He who understands the object of this gift, will readily admit the importance of this observation. The gift to foretell future events, is the most astonishing ever conferred on man. To stand on some lofty eminence, and cast the eye forth through the vista of the future, and to tell of events which are to come to pass a thousand years hence, is a privilege which has been granted to but a few of our race. A privilege granted, only that the most wonderful event ever recorded might rest on a basis which nothing can shake. Infidels have endeavored to bring prophecy to nought, that they might thereby discredit the mission of Jesus Christ; for so long as prophecy is admitted, christianity must be admitted, and when prophecy is undermined, christianity must fall with it. Hence, it is not surprising that her enemies attempt to lay the axe at the root of the tree. Prophets were inspired to testify of Jesus, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."—Rev. xix: 10.

Can he be supposed qualified for his work, who is ignorant of its great and fundamental truths. Let such as would approve themselves to God, not forget that it is a duty that they owe to him, as well as to man, to make this part of revelation a matter of deep study. It is truly a difficult subject, but not more difficult than interesting. It was by searching of books, that Daniel told that the end of Israel's captivity was at hand. It is by searching the same books, that we shall find how God is still developing his purposes, and unloosing the seals, that the world may behold and glorify him. The clock of prophecy has been wound up; and her hand has pointed to one event, and to another, and to another; and soon the hand will point to the last event, and as the pendulum of time vibrates its last, the knell of time will be sounded, and the world will hear and know its doom. As ministers, it becomes us to watch that hand, as it passes slowly on, that we may warn the world of its danger, and of the approach of the final consummation of all things. The Bible must be his text-book.

*As to doctrines.* We shall be recreant to the trust imposed upon us if we do not learn and teach the doctrines of the gospel. Not that this is to constitute the whole of every discourse, but it must be so understood as to be placed at the foundation of our instructions. Men are influenced greatly by their faith, and if it be built on false doctrine it will produce wrong action. He who satisfies himself that there is no heaven, will make no efforts to gain it; as he who believes there is no hell, cannot be supposed desirous to shun it. Hence, it is all important that he who guides others in doctrine, should first be right himself. Mankind are prone to extremes. At one time preaching was mostly doctrinal, now we have gone to the other extreme and our preaching is almost altogether experimental and practical. He who understands the word as he ought, will combine doctrine, experience, and practice in such proportion, as at the same time to increase faith and influence action. No part of the teachings of inspiration, has been so much abused as doctrine, and one reason is, no doubt, because much of it is hard to be understood. Too many preachers love to meddle with those portions of scripture which are hard to be understood. Hence, the Revelation may be called *a book of texts* for presumptuous and ignorant preachers. Here they allow themselves an unbridled license, and feigning themselves inflated with the same spirit which inspired John, they amuse or disgust an audience with conjectures, assertions, and doctrines, which are conjured up by a disordered brain, and delivered, with such an air of confidence, as one might suppose those assumed, who were authorized to deliver the oracles of heathen gods. This is an error into which young ministers are too apt to fall—selecting dark sayings for texts, and dwelling on doctrines of which twenty years' study of the Bible will teach them how little they know. Young men should be content with milk, or the simple truths of the scriptures, until by reading, prayer and meditation, they become strong enough to use meat, or able to digest and expound the deep things in the holy scriptures. Give thyself, said Paul, to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.—1 Tim. iv: 13, 15.

“Doctrines, (says A. Fuller,) though abused by some, yet properly considered, lie at the very foundation of religious

experience, and will influence the heart and life. Thus, the idea of God's sovereignty excites submission; his power and justice promote fear; his holiness, humility and purity; his goodness, a ground of hope; his love excites joy. The obscurity of his providence requires patience, and his faithfulness, confidence." If this representation be true, and that it is we must all admit, it shews how extremely important that he who would become a good minister of Jesus Christ, should make the doctrinal portion of the truth of God, a matter of deep study. I insist the more on this point, because it is of such paramount importance. The rising ministry are to give tone and character to the church of God in their generation. If they are loose in doctrine, the church will be loose in morals. For we may rest assured, that as their faith is, so will it be unto them.

The bible must be his text book—lastly,

*As to style.* A minister should study to imitate the style of the Bible. Every thing earthly seems to have its rise, perfection and decline. Such is the case with language. That language is always best which is most simple, and expresses our ideas most forcibly. The language of scripture is of that character. The words are such as are in most common use; but so chosen, as to give the most forcible expression to the idea. So transparent, that they present the idea without interposing themselves as an obstacle; thereby lessening the force of thought. The mercury on the mirror presents a perfect image, without attracting our attention; so, that language is best, and most to be desired, which delivers up the thought and then escapes without being seen. Such is the language and style of scripture. As the heaviest burdens are borne by wheels having the shortest spokes, so, the sublimest thoughts in scripture, are conveyed to the mind by words of one syllable; such as "Let there be light; and there was light." The words used by the Redeemer are of the same sort; such as "Peace, be still;" "Lazarus come forth." This style is not only best suited to the sublime, but it is well adapted to convey the beautiful. Hear the Saviour again, when he is expressing the wonderful providence of God, "Behold and consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." We point to those memorable



words of Julius Cæsar to shew how much more forcible simple words are than complex, "Veni, vidi, vici,"—I came, I saw, I conquered. I feel the more need of recommending this subject, as there are so many new and foreign terms introduced into the old Anglo-Saxon tongue, which are calculated to mar its beauty, and weaken its force. I feel the more need of it also, because of the tendency in churches to rejoice in a *show of words*, rather than in *sound speech*, which cannot be condemned. The excellency of speech with many, is the criterion of a good minister. Every minister should use such words as will be acceptable to the most fastidious ear, and at the same time understood by the most ignorant and uncultivated hearer. Let not the young minister seek to beguile the wise by good words and fair speeches. They will only deceive the hearts of the simple. Let the words which inspiration has selected be chosen by you. They are best suited to the high and responsible work of the gospel ministry. In the language of Cowper—

" Be simple, grave, sincere,  
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,  
And plain in manner."

Here we must leave this branch of the subject, and devote a few moments,

## II. To the *object* of this study and labor.

It is not to make us wise in our own conceits, or cause us to think ourselves better than we ought; or to produce a line of division between us and any of our race. It is not required of us to study that we may gain a reputation which will secure to us the title of learned, or teacher, or Rabbi. It is not that we may have a sure source of living, in case we should be unfortunate, and the world should go ill with us. A higher motive than all these must animate and cheer us. The fact that men are wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; that they are without hope, and without God in the world; in a word, lost; is enough to excite our warmest energies, and ever to inspire us with an ardent desire to qualify ourselves for saving them. If a view of this world in its fallen condition, brought the Son of God to earth, and influenced him to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; if a view of man's condition

caused him to humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; surely, he had no object in sending his servants forth but their salvation. He came to seek and to save them that were lost, and this great object should ever be before us. So rooted and grounded should it be in our hearts, as to expel every other feeling with which it might come into conflict. So absorbed should we be, and so swallowed up in the contemplation of this subject; that states, and empires, and worlds, should dwindle before it into nothing. Our study should be to save a soul from death, and introduce him to the joys of paradise. It should be to pluck souls as brands from the everlasting burnings, and make them heirs of an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. How different the object of a minister's study from that of all others! Take that of a lawyer for example. He should acquaint himself with many parts of scripture. He must not be ignorant of man, nor of the material world around him. But what is the object in all this labor? It is to secure the honors of a professional character, and a means of subsistence to himself and to those who look to him for a living. He has wisdom, but it dies with him. An object he has in view, but it is earthly, and sleeps with him in the grave. Not so, however, with the minister of Christ. His wisdom lives after him, and when dead he speaketh. His object is not gained, though he sleeps in the tomb. Some layman or minister perhaps, won to Christ by his labors, carries forward the cause which he loved, and for which he studied, and wept, and toiled. His soul will not be filled with that joy of which it is capable; nor feel that the object of its toils is accomplished; till he shall meet all the elect of God in glory; and conduct the pious ones whom he has been honored in saving, up to the Redeemer and say, here am I Lord, and those whom thou hast given me. What an ennobling object! How pleasant it is to know that we are toiling for other worlds than this. The object of other men's study is to fit men for living here; that of the christian and the christian minister, to fit them for living hereafter. Can we conceive of an object more worthy the noblest efforts of man? To strike a chord which will vibrate through all time and through all eternity. To set in motion a wave which shall continue to propagate itself forever. When we consider

these things, we do not wonder at the labors and toils and sacrifices of Paul. It is this object that influences the missionary to leave friends, and home, and country, to labor, and weep, and expire, in a land of darkness and heathenism. How smooth and soft does it make the pillow of the dying christian, when he feels that he has been the honored instrument in turning sinners to righteousness. But there is a higher object in view than the welfare of man. It is the glory of God. The satisfaction of knowing that we have pleased him. It may be, that after all the exertions of a minister to win souls to Christ, but little success may crown his efforts. His head may be waters and his eyes a fountain of tears; and yet the unjust may remain unjust still, and he who is filthy may be filthy still. Under such circumstances, where is consolation to be found? It is in the approving smile of our heavenly Father. Should we prove unto some the savor of death, the ground of our joy even in this case is, that we are seeking to glorify God. This is the highest motive that can be presented to man, and when every other comfort fails, and we are called upon to suffer shame for our Master's name, we rejoice that we are counted worthy, and thus have an unfailing source of comfort, in the testimony which conscience gives that we have pleased God. It is this more than any other thing which sustains us as we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death." It is natural for us to seek the approbation of man, and under its influence, the warrior who has nobly defended the rights of his country, can retire from the field of battle, and die with a smile upon his countenance; and if so, what shall we say of the christian warrior; of the man who has had so many conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil; who has so often unfurled the banner of the cross, and breasted the foe? When he falls under the wound of the great adversary, what is his joy? Paul has told us in his dying words, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also, that love his appearing."

Brethren, it matters not to whom we preach, provided we preach the word. It matters not who disapproves and persecutes, if God be for us. It matters not where we fall;



whether in Burmah, or China, or America, so that we are borne from the field with our armor on, and our hands clenched to our swords. Angels will conduct us from this world to our heavenly home. Crowns of glory will be given unto us; and the smile of God's approbation will rest upon us forever. We can seek nothing higher than this. The approbation of man is a great comfort, but when it is won by a disregard to the smile of God, it is the most withering of all curses. When a man loves the praise of men, more than the praise of God, he cannot be in a more fearful condition in this world, and if he die thus, fearful beyond description will be his reward. One of the most awful thoughts to my own mind, is the end and reward of an unconverted minister. The blind leading the blind. It is one thing to ascend the sacred desk, and altogether another to be qualified to fill the post. We may impose upon the church, and deceive her members; we may impose on ministers, and deceive those who are called to lay on hands; but let us remember there is a being whom we cannot impose upon, nor deceive. There is an eye which searches our hearts which we cannot shun. We cannot go from his presence. What is it to be a steward under such a being, and what will be the weight of his indignation, on such as enter unrenewed into the holy place, and deceive the sinner? They will appear before the great Judge in the last day, with the plea, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? But the Judge shall answer and say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you. Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! To expect heaven, and be thrust down to hell. To look up and anticipate the smiles of the Judge, and behold his frowns resting upon us. Can man conceive the horror, and misery, and despair, that will fill such a soul?

Let us, my dear brethren, look well to the ground-work of our hope. Let us be sure that the voice of God has said to us, through the church, "Go, preach." And let us, under the guidance and aid of the Holy Spirit, make full proof of our ministry, and in the end great will be our reward.—  
Amen.

## MEDITATION.

But it is time now, O my soul, to call thy thoughts away from the multitudes of mankind, and to look carefully into thyself. There is reason enough for grief and lamentation indeed, if we survey the thousands round about us, who are mere slaves to their earthly passions, who let them loose among creatures, and shew very few tokens and evidences of a supreme love to their Creator: But would it not be matter of far more painful, more penetrating and inward sorrow, if thou shouldst carry this evidence, this test of divine love, into thy own retirements, and shouldst hardly be able to prove thyself a lover of God? Awake, awake to the work, O my heart! Enquire, examine, and take a strict account how are thy passionate powers employed? Go over thy various affections, and enquire of all of them, how stands thy love to God?

Admiration is described as the first of the passions: It arises on the notice of something new, or rare and uncommon: But it never ceases nor is lost in the contemplation of God, whose glories are infinite, and in whom the holy soul always finds something new and wonderous. He is a rare and uncommon object indeed, for there is but one such being in heaven and earth: There never was but one from all eternal ages past, nor ever will be but one to all future eternal ages.

Hast thou seen him, my soul, so as to love him? then thy work of pleasing contemplation and wonder will be still renewed. Among creatures we go on to admire what we love, but the Creator will lead us to everlasting admiration. And if thou lovest him, thou wilt ever find something new and wonderous in him, as thy knowledge of him increases. Ask thyself then, hast thou seen the glories and the graces of thy God, so as to wonder at the infinite variety of his wisdom, the greatness of his majesty, and the condescensions of his mercy? Are his displays of glory in nature and providence, in the Bible and in the church, and especially in his beloved Son *Jesus*, the matter of thy joyful meditation and high esteem? Does a sense of his transcendent grandeur and goodness strike thee, as it becomes a creature to be stricken with the ideas of a God, that is, with a holy veneration, and with an awful delight? The love of so sublime

and infinite a being, is naturally turned to pleasing adoration; and becomes an act of noble worship: But when earthly lovers adore their meaner objects, to express the strength of their love; they turn idolaters, and affront God their Maker. Remember, O my soul, God alone must be adored.

But proceed now, and ask, how stand thy desires and wishes? Is the favour, the presence, and the enjoyment of God, the object of thy strongest desires, and of thy constant pursuit? Dost thou long after a sense of the pardon of sin, the love of God, and a preparation to dwell forever with him, above all things besides?

Yet further enquire, what is thy heart's chief delight? Are those the sweetest seasons of life when thou art brought nearest to God in the temper of thy spirit, in the lively hope of his love, and in humble converse with him? Are the secret hours of retirement dear and delightful to thee, above all human society? Are the workings of thy heart, in warm and affectionate devotion, thy sweetest pleasures? Can it be that ever I should love God supremely, and yet not find my converse with him to be my supreme joy?

Again: Are the things that relate to God and eternity the objects of my choice and love, above and beyond the things that relate to men and this life? What value hast thou, O my soul, for the Bible, the book of God? His words will be treasured up in the heart, and will become the sweet entertainment of thy solitary hours, if God himself has the highest room in thy affection. Let me enquire again, how stand my desires toward the sanctuary, toward the places and seasons of divine worship? "Am I glad when they say unto me, come, let us go up to the house of God."—Ps. cxxii: 1. Are the courts of *Zion* my delight, because the blessed God manifests his power and glory there? Do I love the saints of God? Is the company of lively christians refreshing and entertaining to me, above all the idle discourse of the world, or the vain merriments or more polite amusements of the age? Do I look upon the children of God with a peculiar respect, with an eye of distinguishing love, and that for this reason, because they stand related to God, and bear his image? Do I feel a sympathy with them in their sorrows? Do I pity and relieve from my very heart the poor in this world, who are the sons and daughters of the most high God?



And is *Jesus* the supreme Son of God, the highest in my esteem, and the dearest to my heart?

Ask yet again, O my soul; is every thing little and contemptible in thy eyes, in comparison of the things of God? Can any thing fill up the room and place of God? Or canst thou say all things are emptiness and vanity where God is not? When St. Austin, who was exceeding fond of the writings of Cicero, the Roman orator, came to taste the pleasures of religion, by the knowledge of Christ, the writings even of Cicero lost their relish with him, because he found not Christ there. How stands it now with thee, in respect of some of thy dearest delights of nature? Are they all placed, as they ought to be, in thy esteem, infinitely below God? Are thy best earthly joys empty and unsatisfying without God? Canst thou say, in the language of the apostle, and assume his triumph, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, by whom we are brought near to God the Father?'—Phil. iii: 8.

Enquire yet again, does thy love to God awaken and employ thy zeal and holy activity for his honor? Art thou solicitous to keep all his commandments, and hereby manifest thy love? There is no evidence of the love of God can be sufficient or sincere, if this be wanting. Dost thou seek to grow more and more like to God? Dost thou breathe earnestly after greater conformity to Jesus, the first and the brightest image of the Father? Is it a pain to thee to find thyself so unlike him, whom thou lovest supremely? Love will create likeness.

Let us examine thee now, my heart, how stand thy uneasy and painful affections? Hast thou a rooted hatred of every sin? Hast thou an inward aversion to every thing that displeases God? Dost thou look back on thy own former transgressions, with holy shame and sincere sorrow? Art thou covered with an inward blush at the recollection of thy past follies? Are thy sins thy heaviest burden, and the most uneasy load? Has thy sincere and unfeigned repentance been manifested by all the proper passions that attend a penitent, by self-abasement and inward confusion, by mourning in secret, and a holy displicency and resentment against thyself and thy folly? And is it a grief and pain to thee, to see and hear others transgress against thy God, and affront his law and his love?—*Watts' Love of God.*

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THE CERTAINTY AND THE JUSTICE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF  
THE SINNER, IN HIS REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL:

A Sermon by REV. WILLIAM HILL JORDAN, of Wake county, N. C.

*He that believeth not shall be damned.*—MARK XVI: 16.

The certain, and just condemnation of the sinner, in rejecting the gospel of Christ, is a subject of the greatest solemnity, and one which cannot fail to affect, with a lively sensibility, every one entertaining any just apprehension of the value of the soul, and the importance of its salvation. This subject is presented to our consideration, in the solemn words which we have read; and the discussion and enforcement of it, will be the object of the present discourse.

The destruction of those who reject the gospel, will be unavoidable—and will be just. There will be both a natural and moral necessity for it. They *must* be destroyed—because they reject the only means of salvation. And they *will* be destroyed—because, for such rejection, their destruction will be right and just.

I. The destruction of men, in rejecting the gospel, will be certain—because they reject the *only* means of salvation. If there be salvation for men, (of which it is the merciful object of the gospel to assure us,) it must be *one*, and an *only* salvation. This will appear from the following considerations:—

1. More than one would be *unnecessary*. The whole human family is of the same moral character. Their spiritual diseases are the same. The same transgression—the same guilt—the same condemnation, is common to them all. If there be a difference in the conduct of men, the difference is circumstantial, not essential; attributable to incidental influences, rather than to intrinsic character. Such is the plain declaration of the word of God, which agrees, too, with the

common observation of mankind. Now, what one of the human family needs, *all* need. The medicine which will heal one, will heal *all*. A salvation suited to one, is equally suited to all. None other, therefore, is necessary for *any*. And, (unless we are willing to believe that God is disposed to waste his bounty, with a senseless profusion,) none other, we may be sure, is to be found.

2. It is repugnant to all that sense of propriety, implanted for valuable purposes in our nature, to suppose that the God of wisdom and all prudence, would devise different, not to say contradictory, plans of salvation, by which men might equally be saved, and which, therefore, they were equally at liberty to accept, as discretion or caprice might dictate their choice. Such a plan, would be a strange anomaly among the works of God. And the supposition of such a plan does equal violence to the common sense and moral feelings of our nature, and to the word of God.

3. If there be different plans of salvation, it must be supposed that each one of them is sufficient for all, unless, we suppose such *different* plans to be necessary for persons in the *same* condition—(and then, how shall each one know which is the salvation proper for himself?) If any *one* of these plans is sufficient for the salvation of *all*, then *any one* is *unnecessary* for this purpose. And hence, the love of God in giving his Son to die for sinners—the death and atonement of Christ—the ministry of his Spirit—are all entirely unnecessary in the salvation of men! To such a precipice are we brought by the supposition;—a supposition which involves a practical rejection of the gospel, and a contempt of all that wisdom and grace which are contained in its revelation.

Whether, however, there be salvation for man—and what is the nature of that salvation—is not a matter of speculation, but of revelation. All would be impenetrable darkness, and dreadful uncertainty, but for this light which shines from heaven. Men are willing to believe the declaration which assures them of salvation. Now, the same revelation from which we learn there *is* salvation, teaches us that this salvation is connected with the reception of the gospel; and that in the rejection of it, there is none other. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be



saved." This great truth, it is the object of the scriptures—in all their extent—to unfold and inculcate. It was the subject of the ministry of the prophets. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." And the apostles went through the world preaching, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth *not*, shall be damned."

What then have men to object to the doctrine of the certain and necessary destruction of such as reject the gospel? We suppose, of course, they must seek their help in other refuges. Besides what has already been said on the general subject of the salvation of the gospel, as being the *only one*,—these resources, upon which men rely in opposition to the gospel of Christ, will be refuted by some little attention to their individual merits.

1. Some, in the rejection of the salvation of Christ, flatter themselves with a hope of future happiness, in reliance upon their own conduct and character. They hope to *deserve* heaven by their deeds; or at least, balancing their evil by their good deeds, not to deserve hell. Some for what they have done; some for what they have intended to do; some for what they have *not* done; some for their liberality; some for their morality; some for their attachment to the people of God; some for their formal services; some for their tears, that easily come, and go as easily;—*all*, from a vain-glorious and destructive principle of self-righteousness, hope to be justified before God, "by the deeds of the law." Now,—not to dwell upon the vanity and danger of such a dependence, as taught in the scriptures of truth—there are, I think, two considerations which are calculated to expose its fallacy. Such a dependence will neither satisfy the reason nor conscience of men. If they will reason, they must soon feel the force of the declaration, that "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit;" that a sinful life cannot satisfy a holy law; and therefore, that "by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified" before God. But whether they will reason or not, sin will still live, and make itself to be felt. They will still be slaves of sensuality—the victims of guilt—in bondage to fear. The grave will still be dark—eternity dreadful. Conscience will still flash before their guilty and affrighted eyes, the coming wrath; and harmonize, in its

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restless perturbations, in its writhings and agitations, with the authority and justice of Christ, in the dreadful sentence, "he that believeth not, shall be damned."

2. Others, while they refuse the gospel, profess to rely for salvation, upon the benevolence—the goodness—the mercy of God. But why not rely equally upon his justice? *This* they dare not do. Such a reliance, therefore, is evidently to array the attributes of God, one against another, and amounts to the daring hope, that he will be unjust, for the salvation of the sinner. Let the sinner tremble at the guilt of such an expectation from the holy God. If an honest man would resent, with strong indignation, any estimate of his character, implicating his integrity;—if a virtuous woman, insulted by dishonorable proposals, would demand, with a withering rebuke, what had been seen in her to justify such villany;—what may be expected to be the resentment with which God will vindicate his character from such foul aspersion? He will shake off from him the miserable wretch, who, with his slimy touch would pollute the garment of his holiness—into hell.

But we deny that the professed reliance of the impenitent sinner, upon the mercy of God, is in fact, such a reliance. It is of the nature of true reliance, honestly and diligently to employ all the means necessary for the attainment of the blessing which is desired. Can there be a more odious spectacle than that of a person committing offence and practicing injury, under the idea, that it can be done with impunity? And more especially, when such impunity is the effect of goodness in the injured party. What a disgusting exhibition of impotent tyranny and mean pussillanimity, when one man will take advantage of the restraint of morals and religious principles to abuse another. How rife for destruction is the ungrateful and profligate child, who, speculating with unfeeling cruelty upon the tenderness of parental feeling, persists, by his profligacy, in wringing with grief the fond heart of his mother, and in bringing down to the grave, in sorrow, the grey hairs of his father. How despicable and detestable the conduct of him, who, faithless to his vows to the confiding creature, who has committed herself to his arms of promised protection, accumulates unkindness upon her uncomplaining head. Does such imposition, because it can be committed with impunity, authorize the offender to con-

sider himself as relying for protection and forgiveness upon the kindness of those, on whom he is practicing his misdeeds? Is it not rather a deep and damning injury, which cannot well be visited with too severe a retribution? Yet such is the reliance of the impenitent sinner upon the mercy of God. He too, promises himself security in sin and crime. But he will find himself mistaken. He will find that the attributes of God are not elements of weakness, but of power; and that he will prove himself as severe in his judgments upon those who abuse his mercy, as he is rich in blessing to those who properly improve it.

Why do men so carelessly overlook the great truth that the *gospel* is the greatest conceivable exhibition of the mercy of God. Why do they not, if sincere in their professions of reliance upon the divine mercy, embrace that mercy as revealed in the gospel of his Son? To be talking of mercy, while rejecting the gospel, is to trifle with God. It is, under the treachery of a pretended friendship for his character, to conceal our love of sin, and to charge upon him our destruction. Such cold and unfeeling contempt of the divine authority—such wanton profanation of the name and truth of God—such treacherous pretensions to a reliance upon his mercy, while the streaming blood of his Son is despised—will but expose the hypocritical pretender more fully and more fearfully to the import of the declaration, “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

3. Others, again, seek their hope in the principles of infidelity. This, truly, is attempting to escape the storm by jumping out of the boat. Or, what is worse, it is an attempt to deceive ourselves, with the idea of safety, by shutting our eyes and rushing recklessly upon destruction. It is, of course, not the object of the present discourse to go into a formal argument on the evidences of christianity. Some practical appeal only is intended to the understanding and the unsophisticated feelings of men. With this view, I would ask, has the conduct of infidels been so exemplary and lovely—have they furnished us with such sublime examples of virtue—such devotion to principle—such patience under injury and trial? Have their lives been so happy—their deaths so peaceful and instructive, as to furnish us with encouragement to try their principles, or to rely upon their resources? Let the death of Paine—let the guilty horrors of



the dying Voltaire, furnish an answer, which, as *thunder*, shall shake every power of the soul. If the argument for christianity rested upon the character and conduct of those who reject the gospel, and make a boast of their rejection, it certainly would be conclusive. For these men, so abandoned in principle—so immoral in conduct—so restless in life—so guilty in death—*cannot, surely*, be such as are prepared to hear the righteous Judge say unto them, “*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*” There is no evidence more impressive and convincing, than that which is furnished by the character of infidels, to the awful truth, “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

II. But the destruction of men, in the rejection of the gospel, will be as just as it is certain.

1. The *justice* of this destruction we may safely and confidently infer, from the *certainty* of it. That it will be, is a sure argument that it will be *right*. Nothing can be more certain to a well-ordered mind—one under a healthy influence—one that seeks and is willing to know the truth. It rests upon that sure basis, upon which rests, with solid confidence, all the hopes of man—the *righteousness of God*. This is the consideration which ought to influence men. Instead of speculating with dreadful uncertainty, and infidel temerity, upon the character and purposes of God, it ought to determine us, with irresistible energy of purpose, to hasten our escape from that destruction, which—because it is most certain—is, therefore, we know, most righteous and just. Men *will* be damned, it is certain; and it is equally certain, that their damnation will be just.

2. The very reasons which prove that men *will* be condemned, do, in like manner, prove that they *ought* to be condemned. It is on account of a rejection of the gospel, that they will be finally condemned. For this rejection they *deserve* to be condemned. This solemn truth will appear more fully from a consideration of the depravity and guilt involved in a rejection of the gospel.

1. In rejecting the gospel, men wilfully refuse salvation. In the language of the apostle, they put it from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; and by such refusal, they justly forfeit its blessings.

The force of this principle is easily understood, in the ordinary affairs of life. It is recognized in morals, in law, and

in government. And if it be—as it undoubtedly is—a sound ethical principle, it is equally applicable to our relation to God, and to his dealings with us. He who refuses a benefit freely offered—especially is this the case when moral considerations are disregarded by such refusal—not only deprives himself of such benefit, but is considered, by the common consent of mankind, as justly subject to the evils arising from such deprivation. He *wilfully and deliberately* brought them upon himself.

In the gospel, life and death are set before men. They are warned of the one; they are invited to the other. All the instruction which is proper in the case is communicated. They are told of their sin, their danger, and their remedy. The depravity of their nature is exposed; the just and holy law of God is explained; and the merciful remedy provided in the gospel is exhibited, and its claims enforced. There is no deficiency of instruction, either with regard to the danger, or the means of avoiding it. There is, too, an appeal to every motive of dignity, of happiness, and of safety. Nothing is wanting but a heart, on the part of the sinner, to accept of salvation. If, for the want of this—through the love of the world—through the pride of his heart—through false philosophy, foolishly entangling and bewildering itself in things too high for human speculation, but plain upon the authority of Him who “cannot lie”—if, I say, for the want of a heart to accept of salvation, he loses his soul, *who* will be to blame for such a catastrophe? Will not he suffer the *just* consequence of his folly, his pride, and his obstinacy? Let common sense and right reason reply.

2. In the rejection of the gospel, men despise the goodness and defy the power of God; and for such contempt of the divine authority and goodness, they will suffer *just* destruction.

Rich and various as are the blessings of Divine Providence, we will not now speak of them—eclipsed, as they are, by the greater displays of mercy in the gospel. It is in view of this mercy, especially, that the sinner's condemnation, in the rejection of it, will be just. It is the goodness of God to man, as a *sinner*, which asserts the strongest claims upon his gratitude, and which it will be found most criminal and most dangerous to have disregarded. Let us consider this goodness, as illustrated in some of those gracious assurances of

mercy which "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation," proclaims in the ears of "all men."

1. It is the blessed assurance of the gospel, to guilty and ruined man, that "there *is* forgiveness with God." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren,"—is the joyful publication—"that through this man"—even Jesus Christ—"is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "Him hath God exalted, at his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The sovereign Lord himself proclaims, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! what goodness—what mercy! What a joyful assurance, that we may be saved from sin and hell! and that the pardoning mercy of God will embrace wretches guilty as we are! What a wondrous truth, that infinite power will condescend to a guilty worm, and immaculate purity consent to an alliance with pollution and misery! *Oh! can it be true!* Will the holy God forgive my sins and love me as his child! Will the eternal Sovereign of the skies pardon such a rebel, and restore him to the embraces of his love! Will he banish forever my fears with the sweet smile of paternal kindness, and exchange the hell I deserve for the heaven which his grace alone can bestow! Yes! blessed be God, such is the *very* message of the gospel. God is *willing* to forgive the sinner. We *may* escape the doom which our sins have deserved, and be made everlasting partakers of the riches of the inheritance of the saints in light.

2. It would, however, afford but a very inadequate exhibition of the mercy of God, were we to contemplate it only under the idea of his *willingness* to save men. His love is displayed yet more wonderfully in that amazing provision of his mercy, in which the salvation of man can harmonize with the claims of divine justice. *Such* was the love of the eternal God to a guilty world, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "*Herein* is love, *not* that we loved God, but that *he* loved us, and sent his *Son* to be the propitiation for our sins." In the adoring contemplation of this love, the apostle exclaims, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." While angels are admiring and celebrat-



ing this love—while heaven, as it looks upon the scenes of Bethlehem, is filled with higher and deeper strains of adoration—while the spirits of light are studying the mysteries of redemption, as displayed in the incarnation of deity—what is to become of him for whom all this scene of love is displayed; what is to become of him, if—while angels adore and devils tremble—*he* shall despise “so great salvation.” Heaven and earth—the saved and the damned—will concur in the justice of the sentence, “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

3. If, again, the soul of kindness was ever embodied in language, it is in that affectionate entreaty—that tender complaint—that kind remonstrance—that melting expostulation, in which, by the ministry of his Spirit, God appeals to the heart of man. He claims him as his own. He tells him, that *He* is his father; and that it is his dignity, and should be his happiness, to belong to him. He tells him, that sin will ruin him; that there is a deep, a fearful hell, at the end of the unhappy way in which he is progressing; and warns him, with a voice loud and long-continued, to retrace his steps and escape from danger. He assures him, that his arms of love are open for his return, and that he will receive him without one upbraiding word. And, as the sinner lingers, he stirs up his love—presses his entreaty—exclaims, in the tumult of holy passion, “Why *will* ye die?” Oh! it would seem as if it were sufficient to excite to life the ear of death, and turn to tenderness the heart of stone. “Incline your ear,” cries the almost weeping God, “incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live.” “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity.” “Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you.” It is impossible to despise such mercy—to harden the heart against such sacred influences—without incurring deep guilt, and exposing the soul to *just* destruction. Often, indeed, the sinner, even in this world, in the pangs of conscious guilt—in the fell remorse which knaws into his suffering soul—begins to feel the earnest of that eternal and most fearful doom awaiting his final impenitence. So does the light of eternity flash upon his guilty and horror-stricken conscience, that, even on earth, he justifies God in his eternal destruction. Oh! it will be found a fearful thing to have trifled with the mercy and grieved the Spirit of God; and, by having refused

the treasures of his grace, to provoke Almighty God to discharge, in one eternal storm, upon our guilty and defenceless heads, the treasures of his wrath.

3. But it is in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, beyond every other consideration, that we are to estimate the guilt of sin, and the justice of the sinner's condemnation. Let us reflect, for a moment, upon the *dignity* of his character; the wonders of his *humiliation*; and the painful scene of his *death*. *Who is it*, let us ask, that came into the world for the redemption of man? Was it Moses—or Job—or Samuel? Alas! they were sinners themselves, equally needy with us. Was it some kind angel, willing to resign the splendors of heaven, the presence of God, and the society of the skies, to rescue guilty and undone man? Vain attempt. The work exceeds an angel's power, as far as it does an angel's love. No! *This* is the great and faithful saying, which deserves and demands all acceptance, that it was Christ Jesus—the Son of God—who came into the world to save sinners! It was he, who was the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" *he* "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" that was, nevertheless, "found in fashion as a man," "made himself of no reputation," and "became obedient to death—even the death of the cross!" It is the "true God," who has become to us "eternal life!" It is the "everlasting Father," who is the "Prince of Peace!" He it is, "who upholds all things by the word of his power," who, by his own blood, has purged our sins!

But let us, with the wise men of the east, and with the angels of heaven, repair for a moment to the wonders of Bethlehem. There—in the arms of his virgin mother, must we behold "Emanuel!" There—in his swaddling bands, must we look upon the King of glory, and the Lord of life! There—where the effulgence of a divine glory shoots its bright and copious beams through the wondrous scene of humiliation, with which it is invested—*there* must we learn the love of God, and the responsibility and danger of man. Well might the apostle, in the profound meditations of his soul upon the sacred wonders of redemption, exclaim, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Well too, while he contemplated the dignity and glory of the submissive and divinely appointed victim for our sins, might he cry, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation."

But a deeper scene of instruction yet awaits us. The dark shadows of Calvary fall across our path. The appalling cross presents itself to view. From one scene of trial, to yet a greater, the devoted Saviour urges on his way, to his appointed destiny. Let us go, with the meek sufferer, to those scenes of pain and shame, which, with lamb-like patience, he endured for our salvation. Behold this person, of mysterious and ineffable dignity—whose voice the stormy seas obey; before whom dread death retires, disarmed and vanquished—and at whose sovereign mandate, life springs from the putrefaction of the tomb—behold him, “led as a lamb to the slaughter!” In the uncomplaining Jesus see, “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” Forsaken—in agony of spirit—prostrate on the ground—behold the Prince of Peace, while the dark billows of death are flowing in rapidly upon him. Hear—from the Lord of glory, as he lifts his bruised and fainting soul to the eternal Father—the piteous, the lamb-like cry, “Oh! my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Look to the awful cross—where his pale and death-stricken countenance, still speaks forgiveness; where his last accents of love ascend to God, in intercession for his enemies; and where the beams of compassion and rays of mercy still linger in his dying eye. For what was it that those pains, the sharpness and strength of which we can never understand, shot their fiery streams through every faculty and power of the divine victim? It was that the *sinner* might not die; that the pains of hell and the sorrows of the damned might never pierce *his* guilty heart. Let us think of his immaculate purity—of the inconceivable concentration of all excellence in his person—of his devoted and inviolable love—of the scourge, of the crown, and of the cross—until penetrated and filled with the sentiment of the apostle, we shall with him exclaim, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed, when the Lord shall come.” It is a fearful sentence, but a *just* one. Heaven from above will pronounce a deep amen; and I doubt not, that the groans of the damned will respond, in just submission.

Let us suppose the case of a *mother*, insulted, betrayed and abused, by an unfeeling and infuriate mob; and among that mob, a cherished and beloved son. Let us imagine their bitter taunts—their heartless licentiousness—their



demonic rage, and their hellish cruelty. They add injury to insult; and expose the unoffending victim of their outrage,—naked, weeping, and in agony of spirit,—to a cruel and shameful death. But as she hangs and dies, the eye of a mother's love finds the beloved object of her heart's affection, and its dying beams rest upon her profligate son. That dying look speaks words unutterable. Oh! my son, (it says,) do you thus requite the mother that bore you—whose delight it was to hush to rest all your infantile sorrows upon the bosom of her love; who rocked the cradle of your repose, and watched with a mother's fondness, and guarded with a mother's vigilance, the sanctuary of her hopes—the couch of her sleeping boy! Oh! my son, how can you thus behave to one who has loved you so well? Still this heart beats with undying fondness for you; and with my dying breath I pronounce upon you the forgiveness of your injured, but devoted mother. I make my appeal to the heart of every affectionate child, who loves a fond and excellent mother. Does not your flesh quiver, and your heart burn, at the idea of so black an imputation? Do you not cry from the depths of your soul—No place is fit for such a wretch but hell—no society but damned spirits, banded together in enterprises of guilt and damning shame. But so odious and abhorrent a conduct, would be virtue itself, compared with the guilt of slighting the love and despising the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. *His* love was such as even a *mother* never felt; his pains, such as even a *mother* never endured. He that can remain unaffected by that love, and callous to those pains, will, in the *just* judgment of God, be devoted to eternal destruction.

A sympathy with moral, or intellectual excellence, is an essential evidence that we possess, in some degree, the same excellence; as does the want of such a sympathy, equally prove us to be destitute of it. To understand the writings of Newton, is evidence of a high degree of mathematical knowledge. No man would be allowed any taste in the fine arts, who did not admire the paintings of Raphael. He knows nothing of the soul of oratory who cannot appreciate Cicero; or Demosthenes; or of the inspiration of poetry, whose heart is not awaked to sweet emotion, and sublime contemplation, by the genius of Shakspeare. For what is he fit, but for plots of insurrection, treason and murder, who has no heart to sympathize with the high-souled patriotism

of Washington—or the god-like philanthropy of Howard? And for what is *he* fit, who has no mind to understand—no heart to feel the love of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ?

4. If, after the views we have now presented, there were a necessity for additional observations in illustration of this subject, they might be found in the fact, that in the rejection of the gospel there is a criminal disregard of our own happiness and safety, and a desperate determination upon sin, whatever may be its consequences.

The sense of interest, and the disposition to self-preservation, is so much the law—I may say, the instinct—of our nature, that to be devoid of them must imply some strange dereliction in our moral character. The man who, without regard to shame, abandons himself to vice; and without regard to danger, abandons himself to crime; it is easy to see, is a suicide of the most malignant character; and has unfitted himself for all individual, as well as all social excellence and happiness. It is the *murder of his soul*, of which he is guilty. And if by the perpetration of so deep and irretrievable a crime upon another, he would deserve the most severe retribution, he equally deserves it for such a perpetration upon his own immortal spirit. God gave him his soul—not that he should destroy it—but that he might cultivate its powers for his service and enjoyment. And *now*, he calls upon him—not with maniac fury, to tear open his ulcerous and bleeding wounds—but to come to Calvary, that they may be healed by its efficacious balm. The sinner has *no right* to destroy his own soul. It belongs to him for no such purpose of deadly abuse. And in the disregard of God's threatened vengeance, as well as of his offered mercy, there is a fearful disregard of his own safety and happiness,—criminal in its nature, and destructive in its consequences. In persisting in it,—by persisting in rejecting the gospel, he will *deserve*, what he will receive, the final displeasure of a righteous God, in the eternal destruction of his soul.

Such a disregard, equally to the authority and mercy of God, and to our own happiness and safety, cannot be continued without a desperate determination of guilt, to hazard the fearful consequences of sin, whatever they may be. The language of the sinner who refuses submission to the gospel, is, I will *not* repent. I am *determined* upon my own way. I will neither believe the truth, or obey the commands of God. So sweet is sin, if it

from its embraces. I will rush through the fires of hell in pursuit of pleasure. Such is the daring language—I do not say of the sinner's lips—but of his heart—in refusing the love of God, in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And God hears and understands that language. The sinner, too, will understand it, at a future day. Oh! let him *now* beware of the guilt and danger of rejecting the gospel of Christ.

5. But, there is yet a necessity, of another kind, for the destruction of those who reject the gospel. It results from the moral character of such persons. There is no fitness in them for the enjoyment of heaven. *They are fit only for destruction.* What employment will they find in heaven adapted to their taste? The angels of God are engaged in studying the eternal and unsearchable mysteries of redemption. *They* are singing the praises of Jesus. The pillars of heaven are trembling, and its vault resounding, with the mighty song of the great congregation, “unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, are gathering around the throne, in joyful acclamation, to put the crown upon the head of him who has been despised, rejected and crucified by the gospel-slighter. *He* cannot lift his song, *he* cannot bend his knee, amid that glorious multitude. *He* does not love the Saviour. The guilt of his blood is upon his soul. *Where* will he find society? If he go to Abraham, *he* has no heart for any other subject, no harp for any other song, than the praises of that Redeemer—even whose distant day gladdened his heart. If he turn to Moses, *his* face is shining with a brighter glory than on that eventful day when he returned from communion with God in the holy mount, as he *now* looks upon the face of Him of whom he once “did write.” The strains of seraphic animation and profound adoration, breaking from the harp of *Paul*, in the praises of Him who “came into the world to save” the chief of sinners, rebuke the hope of any companionship with him. He has already pronounced, with what he saw of the Redeemer's glory, even amid the impurities of this mortal state, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.” *Where* will he seek repose for his guilty heart and his unblest he fit, but for *face* is fragrant with the love of Christ, re-has no heart to sympathize wholiness, and perfumed with



the breath of the Lord. The unsullied flowers of paradise strike an awe upon his guilty soul, and remind him that this is no place for the enemy of God and the despiser of the Lamb. *Where*, will he find companionship? Not until he sinks into that dark abyss, where are to be found, "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth," the enemies of God and the despisers of Christ. Ah! little does the sinner know what he is doing, when he is rejecting a crucified Saviour. If there be such a thing as responsibility—if men be not above it as gods, or below it as brutes—the rejection of the gospel must involve a fearful responsibility.

But, after all, objects, perhaps, the unwilling sinner—seeking rather to justify himself in his sins than to be saved from them—it is severe, it is hard, it is *unjust*, to condemn a creature to eternal misery for the sins of this short life. Hard and severe I will acknowledge it to be. Such it will be found—to a degree of which, at present, we can form no adequate conception—by all who shall unhappily fall under so disastrous a doom. But that it is not *unjust*, I think, all that has been said is calculated to shew. Let it, furthermore, be asked, is the condemned criminal a proper judge, either of the nature of his crime or the degree of its criminality? Sin, let it be remembered, consists, not so much in action as in principle. It needs not years for a man to prove whether he be a thief, a liar, a traitor, or a murderer. Let principle display itself in one single characteristic act, and his character is confessed, his doom pronounced. He is just then what, without an entire revolution in the moral elements of his character, he will *forever* be. By one single act—indeed, by one unholy thought—as well as by years of protracted profligacy, may a creature expose himself to eternal damnation.

This view agrees, too, with all the analogy with which we are conversant. By *one* false leap, may a man precipitate himself into a bottomless abyss. It requires, not many—nor does the nature of the case admit of it—but by *one* false step, he falls from the greatest height to the lowest depth. Such has been the unhappy fall of man. Such the depth from which the Son of God came to rescue him.

As in the natural, so also in the moral aspect of the subject, are we supplied with analogy illustrative of the *decisive* character of a single act. Who would acknowledge any force in the complaints of the condemned criminal, with his hands bloody with the murder of his brother?

when freed from their manacles, to repeat his crime, arguing the injustice of depriving him—for one single act—of his life, which can never be restored to him? What shall redeem lost character, or brighten tarnished reputation?—Reputation, lost by *one* foul, one damning act? How many, by *one* false, *one* fatal step, stamp upon their character indelible disgrace? It will be vain to complain that it is hard. Such is the natural course of things. There is no remedy for it.

But, says the sinner, I cannot *understand* how men should deserve to be damned for the sins they commit in this world. What then? Is it, therefore, not true? Is the proposition to be admitted, that nothing is true—in physics, in morals, in religion—which men do not understand? Is our understanding the rule by which to ascertain the dimensions—the line by which to sound the depths of all truth? Can we see no necessity, with our very limited faculties—blinded and depraved as they are by sin—for an infallible revelation, that we may both know and do our duty? Alas! how great is the folly—how great too the danger, rejecting the sure word of God—of betaking ourselves to the bewildering and delusive glare of human reason! God has mercifully given us a light, to which, if we take heed, we shall do well. If we neglect it, we shall stumble in darkness.

It only remains, my friends, that I press upon your minds the solemn subject of this discourse—the *certain and just destruction of those who refuse submission to the gospel of Christ*. If you reject “the glad tidings of great joy,”—the publication of peace and love from God to man—upon the authority of that Saviour who came to redeem you from hell, and who will judge us all in the last great day, you will be damned. Oh! fearful doom of the impenitent sinner! Think of it *now*, before it is too late. Think of your souls! Think of the love and blood of Christ! Think of the terrors of an avenging God! What will become of the sinner, if he shall despise the grace of the gospel! Soon will he be ripe for the sickle of avenging justice! *Soon* the Spirit of God will be gone, and all holy influence have forsaken him! The measure of his iniquity now full—the willing and fast-bound captive of the devil—he stands for a time to attract upon his guilty head the lightning of the divine wrath! Miserable man! He has rejected Christ! Such is his awful doom! May God, of his infinite mercy, save us he lit, but for *protection* from such a doom. Amen.  
has no heart to sympathize with.

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## THE OBJECT AND IMPORTANCE OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION :

A Sermon preached before the Virginia Baptist Education Society, in Richmond, June, 1847, by REV. JOHN NEWTON BROWN, of Lexington, Va. Published by vote of the Society.

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*“Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth.”—*  
JOHN VII: 51.

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These are the words of Nicodemus in the Jewish Sanhedrim. Uttered on a memorable occasion, they illustrate his candor and courage in rebuking the unjust proceedings of that body, for deciding without due inquiry against the claims of Jesus to be the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. I take the general principle involved in his words, and apply it, not to the claims of the Saviour himself, (which are admitted by the hearers whom I address to-night,) but to one of the methods by which we seek to promote his cause. My wish is to remove unfounded prejudices against the mode of ministerial training now approved and generally adopted among us, as appropriate to the indications of Providence and the exigencies of our age.

Appearing before you in behalf of the Virginia Baptist Education Society, I shall endeavor, with as much simplicity as possible, to submit my views of the object of ministerial education, and the character of those means which are employed by this Society. I shall then, perhaps, add a few considerations tending to shew the importance of such education to one who, like the man after God's own heart, would serve his own generation by the will of God. Deny me not your sympathy and prayers.

### I. THE OBJECT AT WHICH WE AIM.

There is the most need of dwelling on this point, both that our own views may be adjusted to the scriptural standard, and that they may be clearly understood, where they are



greatly misconceived, or but dimly apprehended. Certain it is that there yet remain in the christian community some who doubt the scriptural character of Education Societies. The causes of doubt are various. It may be that they have seen men who substituted learning in the place of piety, as an indispensable qualification for the ministry. It may be they have heard that these societies are designed to multiply ministers, by making ministers of those whom God has never called. Or, it may be they have known some cases in which the students of such institutions have conducted in a manner unbecoming their sacred profession and destination. Or, it may be they indulge vague fears of the tendency of such institutions, as they loom large through the misty atmosphere of future years. And any one of these things, or all of them together, may have raised in their minds strong prejudices against these institutions, while ignorant of their real object and legitimate results.

To all such persons, (and among them are beloved brethren,) we say, as did Nicodemus to the alarmed and excited Sanhedrim, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Do you yourselves, in other cases, decide upon a man's character, till you ascertain the leading object of his life, and the means he employs to accomplish it? Let this society be judged on the same principles. First ascertain its real object, and compare this with the scriptural standard of ministerial qualification. This is the preliminary step, indispensable to a just judgment.

Now the object of our society is not, as the phrase is, to "make ministers." The thing intended by this phrase, we explicitly and emphatically disavow. It is out of our sphere. It is beyond our power. We fully concur in the views of the excellent Newton, that "none but He who made the world, can make a minister of the gospel." Without this fundamental maxim, we believe that we should stumble at the very threshold. It is indeed sufficiently easy to train up religious teachers of certain descriptions; but ministers of the gospel, really and sincerely such, must be made of God. We know of no divine prerogative more sacred than that of selecting the ministers of his mercy in reconciling a rebellious world.

While we avow this to be our solemn conviction, we are willing at the same time to explain how much we mean by

it. We do not mean that they are supernaturally inspired and endowed, as were the apostles and prophets; who formed the first links in the golden chain of God's gracious communications to man. But the natural abilities specially requisite in the work of the ministry, we believe to be the special gifts of God. He also calls these gifted individuals by his grace, and endows them with that spirit of genuine piety which sanctifies every natural gift to his service and glory. He too moves them by his Holy Spirit to engage in the work of the ministry, in absolute preference to every other employment, however tempting, splendid, easy, or lucrative. He it is who opens the door for their entrance and usefulness, in answer to prayer, and according to the methods prescribed by his own infinite wisdom in his word. He it is, moreover, who, in his all-presiding providence, places before them the means of improvement in knowledge, and grace, and every ministerial qualification. And all these means he commands them to employ diligently, that their progressive profiting may appear unto all. And he it is, in fine, by whose blessing alone these manifold means are efficacious. "Not as though we were sufficient of ourselves, to think anything of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament."

After this free statement of our views, I need hardly add that it is no part of our object to substitute learning in the place of piety; to give preference to sparkling over solid talent; to indulge indolence; to foster pride and ambition; to encourage effeminate and expensive habits; much less to teach the morality of expediency for that of the New Testament, or the cold philosophy of the schools for the warm, living, quickening truths of the great salvation. Neither is it to fall in with the fashion of the age; or to rivet the falling chains of sectarian bigotry; or to train up a race of theological polemics, to disturb and disgrace by their angry controversies the peaceful precincts of the church of God.

But it is our object to receive such young men as the churches approve, and judge to be called of God to the work of the gospel ministry, though yet deficient in culture and in means; and to aid them to the utmost in acquiring such a degree of qualification as the word and providence of God demand. Nor is that measure small. We have taken some

pains to draw forth from the scriptures a clear and comprehensive account of it.

There are, first of all, SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS. They include—

1. *Established and exemplary piety.* It is the recorded will of the great Head of the church, that the piety of his ministers should have both a deeper root and a riper growth than that of ordinary christians. One reason assigned for this is, because they are, by means of their elevated office, exposed to new forms and severer tests of temptation, such as must utterly overthrow minds not firmly settled and maturely exercised by christian experience. Hence the cautions, "Lay hands suddenly on no man"—"Not a novice; lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." Another reason assigned is the eminent force of official character and example for good or evil. Hence the injunctions, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers in speech, in deportment, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Hence too, the earnest admonitions, "Flee youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Hence the adoring acknowledgment, "I thank Jesus Christ, our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Hence the solemn adjuration, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." "That good thing which is committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." "And the things which thou hast heard of me before many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." These are specimens of the style in which ministerial piety, as the foundation of ministerial faithfulness, is described and inculcated in the New Testament.

2. *Unblemished character.* "If any be blameless," says Paul; "for a bishop (a pastor,) must be blameless as the steward of God." And this not only in the view of the church. "Moreover, he must have a good report of them



that are without; lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil."

3. *Decided predilection of the work.* This is considered fundamental. "If any man desire the office of a bishop, (a pastor certainly, not a *prelate*,) he desireth a good work." The original word translated "desire," is very emphatic. It signifies to desire earnestly, to covet, to long for. Now it is true that men may desire the pastoral office from wrong motives, especially in a community where it is held in honor, amply supported, and associated with literary ease and distinction, rather than with reproach, poverty, toil and self-denial. But to desire it for its own sake; to love it for the nature of the employment itself, for its spirituality, piety, usefulness, and aids to progress in seeking personal perfection after the image of Christ; to be willing, under the most unfavorable circumstances, and as one of a "sect everywhere spoken against," to labor and suffer, live and die, in this work, as infinitely the most precious of all human employments; this appears to me, other essential qualifications being understood, to indicate the man whom God has inwardly called and moved to take it upon him.

4. *A solemn sense of obligation.* I believe this is usually associated with the other spiritual qualifications I have named. Perhaps it is, however, a subsequent feeling, arising from much reflection, patient self-examination, and prayer for divine direction in relation to this point. Yet, unless this is felt, unless it becomes a matter of conscience, as well as of desire, it seems not to come up to the scriptural standard. Paul felt himself a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise, to preach the gospel to them to the utmost of his power. And I can hardly conceive of any one as spiritually qualified for this great work, without a similar feeling of solemn obligation, a feeling which utters itself in the awful words of the apostle, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel."

To these spiritual qualifications must be added others, also required by the New Testament, which are more properly INTELLECTUAL. These are four—genius, knowledge, skill, energy.

1. *Genius.* Let no one be startled by this term in such a connection. I claim genius as an essential attribute for

the christian ministry; and I mean to vindicate the exalted claim. In the use of the word I include both the ideas usually associated with it, namely, superior mental power, and that peculiar disposition of the faculties which fits a man to succeed in his chosen employment. I mean by it, what the old writers mean by parts, and modern ones by talent, and what our churches intend when they speak of a man as having a ministerial gift. This, I suppose, is what the apostle Paul intends when he says that to fit a man for the pastoral office he must be "apt to teach." There must be natural, as well as acquired ability. There must be mental power in general, and a certain aptitude, or genius for instruction, in particular, to qualify a man for doing this particular work better than any other. It is precisely this quality which marks out the man whom God designs for this peculiar sphere, just as the fin of a fish, or the wing of a bird, designates in what element it is designed to move. Without this sort of aptitude for his profession, no man will succeed well in it, whether he attempt the elegant or the useful arts; whether he be a poet, a painter, a musician; a farmer, a mechanic, a merchant; a physician, a lawyer, or a statesman. Without something of it, no man can successfully manage a common school: how much less is he qualified for the divine and difficult work of the christian ministry? A man may be a useful minister without a fine taste, or a brilliant fancy, but not without that ready, practical good sense, which though by some opposed to genius, I think rather to be of the very essence of genius, since it enables a man to combine religious ideas with rapidity, judgment and effect.

Though spiritual qualifications are of higher value in the sight of God than intellectual, yet we trace his wisdom in interdicting from the christian ministry those whom he has not endowed with some obvious degree of this peculiar aptitude and power. True genius is commonly characterized by unusual sensibility; the love of solitary study and meditation; a propensity to trace the resemblances, harmonies and analogies of things; to analyze a whole into its several parts, and collect the scattered elements of truth into a comprehensive unity; to watch the processes of cause and effect, and profit by its observations in originating new plans and combinations of its own. It is as often found among the poor as among the rich. It may exist without education; where it does not,

no course of education can confer it; but where it does, it will seize with avidity every advantage which education can bestow. Without it, however pious, blameless, eager for the work, or impressed with the idea of obligation, men may be, we are not authorized to think them called of God to the ministry, or to anticipate for them any lasting honor or success. If they unadvisedly venture upon it, as Newton observes, "they soon find themselves unequal to the work; or if self-conceit prevents *them* from feeling it, their hearers at least are very sensible of it. They often mistake error for truth. They retail scraps and shreds of sentiments, which they pick up from others, and for want of judgment misapply them. They think vociferation is preaching with power, and that to utter every thing that comes upon their minds, without end or side, as we say, without regard to text, context, occasion, or connection, is preaching extempore." Whose observation will not confirm the justice of these remarks? So necessary is it to the work of the ministry, that a man be "apt to teach," that he have pulpit talent: or, in other words, ministerial genius.

2. To genius must be added *knowledge*. No talent will enable a man to communicate to others what he does not himself possess. The New Testament requires that the minister of the gospel be "a scribe instructed," one whose "lips keep knowledge," one who "gives himself to reading," one who is "able to teach others also." Of the importance of this qualification, I shall have occasion to say more hereafter.

3. To knowledge must be added *skill*. This is the joint product of instruction, observation, reflection, and practice. And the utmost attainable amount of this fine quality is demanded of the New Testament minister. And with good reason. For not only must he be able to instruct the church with "sound speech that cannot be condemned," but what is yet more difficult, "both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Apollos "mightily convinced the Jews" at Corinth, because he himself was "mighty in the scriptures." Paul and Barnabas entered into the synagogue at Iconium, and there "so spake that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed." In preparing his discourses in a spirit of humble dependence, to work with saving effect on the immortal souls of his hearers, a minister ought never



to forget that he is an artist of transcendantly the highest order. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed: rightly dividing the word of truth."

4. The fourth and last intellectual qualification is *energy*. This includes activity of mind, pastoral industry, moral courage, and holy zeal. Hear Paul: "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power." "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee." A bishop must be "vigilant," but vigilance implies energy. He must be "instant in season, and out of season; he must take heed to himself, and to the doctrine, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him overseer." He must put them in remembrance, as well as instruct; charge, as well as exhort; command and entreat, as well as reprove and rebuke; with all authority, as well as with all long-suffering. In short, he must perform a vast variety of duties, each of which demands of him activity of mind and energy of character. "Watch thou in all things; endure afflictions; do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry." What human energy is equal to all this!

It is easy to see that to accomplish the work assigned to a minister of the New Testament, no small degree of *PHYSICAL*, as well as spiritual and intellectual qualification, is required.

1. He needs *health*. A sort of military hardihood is enjoined upon him. "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Hence he must rigidly obey the laws of temperance and exercise. He must be "temperate, sober," that is to say, govern not only his appetites, but his passions, which, as Dr. Rush remarks, "pour a constant stream upon the wheels of life." He must take care of his health for the sake of his usefulness; remembering that "the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Thus Paul, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away." "He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. And they do it for a corruptible crown; but we for an incorruptible."

2. He needs also *habits of order*. "God is not the author of confusion." He has assigned to every duty its time and

place, and made everything beautiful in its season. By not attending to this arrangement of divine wisdom, by neglecting that great law of order which pervades all the works of God, how much time is lost—how much talent, temper, labor, comfort, harmony, success!

3. *Politeness* is also required of him. In its profound attention to *motives*, the New Testament does not overlook *manners*; for in the eye of the world at least, which we seek to save, "manners make the man." Hence christians in general are bidden to be kind, gentle, courteous. And it is expressly required as a ministerial qualification, that a man be "of good behavior," or as the word employed literally signifies, "polite;" attentive to the laws of good breeding; careful to correct ungainly manners; cultivating on christian principles, and exemplifying in every company, benevolence, affability, modesty, simplicity, grace, dignity, ease.

4. *Eloquence* is the last qualification of this order. I speak of it here as a physical accomplishment merely, for the christian ministry. It is called in the New Testament, "the gift of utterance." On its importance, in connection with other qualifications, intellectual and spiritual, I need not enlarge, as it is sufficiently obvious to all. Although Paul disclaims that "excellency of speech," that rhetorical artifice, refinement, flourish and embellishment, so much applauded in the degenerate schools of Greece, and relied on by the sophists and false teachers of the age, yet, he is far from despising, indeed he is continually exemplifying, every real, unaffected, manly excellence of style and composition. At Lystra, in Asia Minor, he was even mistaken by the enthusiastic people for the god of eloquence incarnate. The eloquence of Apollos is celebrated by inspired men. How much more do they love to dwell on the superhuman eloquence of Him who was fairer than the children of men, into whose lips grace was poured, and to whom all bare witness, as they hung on his gracious words. "Never man spake like this man." Paul even entreats the prayers of the churches, "that utterance might be given to him;" nor can any one who has remarked how much the effect of the most important sentiments depends upon the manner in which they are delivered, deem this a prayer unworthy of the great apostle. Defects of elocution capable of being remedied, should therefore never be tolerated in himself by a minister of the gos-

pel, since they seldom are tolerated by his hearers; and by inspiring unnecessary disgust, bring neglect or contempt upon his all-important message.

Such then is the high standard of ministerial qualification required, I do not say by the Baptist churches of Virginia, but by that Sovereign Head of the christian church, whom the Baptist churches of Virginia recognize and adore. How does it rebuke that low estimate of ministerial gifts and acquirements, which too generally prevails among us all! How should we tremble before God, in view of our manifold deficiencies,—intellectual, physical, and spiritual! By what diligence in study, in practice, and in prayer, should we seek incessantly to have our faults corrected, and our deficiencies supplied!

Our object as an Education Society, I have already said, is to aid our young brethren in the ministry to come up to the scriptural standard. I proceed now briefly to speak of the character of the means we employ for this end.

## II. THE MEANS WE EMPLOY.

It is obvious, on a moment's reflection, that there is not one of the ministerial qualifications enumerated above, which is not susceptible of cultivation. It is equally evident from the language already quoted from the New Testament, that God requires them to be cultivated, and this to the utmost possible extent. And this is equally true, whether we look at the spiritual, the intellectual, or the physical. It is manifest that piety may be strengthened; character elevated; esteem of the office enhanced; and the sense of obligation and responsibility deepened. So too, genius may be developed; knowledge extended; skill acquired; energy awakened and increased. Even health may be invigorated; habits of order established; manners softened into simplicity and gentleness; and elocution made natural, easy, appropriate and impressive. On what other principle did Paul say to Timothy, "Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear unto all?" All this may be accomplished by education, wherever the *stamina* of ministerial talent exist. For it may, I think, be laid down as a universal maxim, that every man who is "apt to teach," is still more apt to learn.

"By what sort of artifice," says the late Dr. Mason, of New York, "do men cozen their understandings into such



argumentation as this? Talent without education is better than stupidity with it, therefore talent ought not to be educated! Here is a colt of excellent points and mettle; he is worth a dozen of your dull, blundering jades, that have been in harness ever since they were able to draw, therefore, he will do very well without breaking! It is surprising that so many otherwise discreet persons, will maintain that to be wise and good in the church of God, which they know to be absurd and mischievous in everything else. In fact, talent, instead of being exempted from the necessity of cultivation, is alone worth the trouble, and needs cultivation in proportion to its strength.—No talent can coin facts; and without facts, it will run to waste. Without information, it has no material to work upon; and without discipline, it will work wrong. The power of doing evil, is in exact proportion to the power of doing good. Petty minds produce petty harms and petty benefits. The errors of powerful minds are great errors, and draw after them deep and lasting consequences. It is of unutterable moment that they be set right in the beginning.”

Were it necessary to adduce examples in confirmation of these remarks of Dr. Mason, we could point to the errors of such great men as Origen, Cyprian, Pelagius, Jerome and Augustine, in the ancient church; and in more modern times, of Bernard, Loyola and Bossuet, in the Romish church; of Socinus, Priestley and Channing, among Protestants; to say nothing of Baron Swedenberg, Professor Bush, or Alexander Campbell. What would have become of such a powerful mind as that of Robert Hall, independent and erratic in all its early tendencies, but for the discipline afforded him by means of the Bristol Education Society, first in their own Academy, and afterwards in the University of Aberdeen? Happy had it been for John Foster, perhaps the most original and the mightiest intellect of the nineteenth century, could he have enjoyed the benefit, not of one brief year at Bristol, but of the full course pursued by his excellent tutor and friend, Joseph Hughes, the immortal founder of the British and Foreign Bible Society. We might then, probably, have been spared the sad anomaly of his great error on future punishment, which gathered, with some of inferior magnitude, around the matchless, mental luminary, like dark spots in the splendor of the sun.

It is true we are sometimes asked, what had education to do with the qualifications of Christ's first ministers? We answer—first, it takes years of study now to put a young man on a level, in point of biblical knowledge, with the uneducated fishermen of Galilee. But this is not all. They were three or four years in the most perfect theological seminary in the world, trained under the daily instructions and personal care of Christ himself. And then, after all this, they were endued with miraculous "power from on high." "It is with the worst possible grace that we are referred to the apostles as patterns of an *illiterate ministry*, when the Holy Ghost was at the pains to teach them *by miracle*, things of which we are confidently told the christian ministry has no need whatever."

It seems too often to be taken for granted that the christian pastor has nothing to do in his official instructions, but to teach the simplest doctrines of the gospel, in the simplest forms. But this is a false supposition. It confounds the work of the pastor with that of the evangelist. It overlooks the apostolic distinction between "milk" and "strong meat;" between the wants of spiritual infancy and spiritual maturity. Its tendency is to keep the church in a state of perpetual childhood; in direct opposition to the revealed design of her great Head, in the institution of the pastoral office. Ephs. iv: 12-16. God has charged his people to "leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection," as the workmen leave the foundations of the building, when once broadly and firmly laid, in order to carry up the superstructure to its full height, in all the strength, majesty and beauty of its original plan and harmonious proportions.

The human intellect was formed to be the treasury of divine truth. The requisition of the moral law (often overlooked) is, that we love our God with *all our understanding*, as well as with all our heart, and soul, and strength. And with reason. For of any object fervently loved, we are always anxious to increase our knowledge. And every increase of knowledge, when the object is worthy, adds new impulse and ardor to our affections.

Ignorance of divine truth was, therefore, originally the offspring of sin. It is now a terrible part of the curse consequent on man's apostacy. Hence sinners are represented as *alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that*

*is in them.* And hence christians are said in regeneration to be *renewed in knowledge*, as well as in righteousness and true holiness. Hence also, they are called *children of light*, and are commanded to *walk in the light*. Having tasted the sweets of sanctified intelligence, they are to thirst and struggle for more; having caught a glimpse of the glory of God, they are to *follow on to know him*, especially as revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ, that they may obtain a more comprehensive view, a clearer perception, a more intimate knowledge, a more lively relish, and a more exquisite enjoyment.

Such injunctions are worthy of God—of Him who is emphatically light, and in whom is no darkness at all—of Him who is the original centre, sun and source of all truth, natural and moral, human and divine—of Him who is infinitely worthy of being known, admired and adored, in all the exhibitions of his character, whether those already made, or those which he is continually making, in the magnificent system of Creation, Providence and Redemption.

But if it be the will of God that all his people should obtain so enlarged a knowledge of himself, what degree, think you, would He that his chosen ministers should possess? If He charged his whole family to acquire such ample stores of sacred truth, what treasures would He have those acquire who are to be the instructors of his family? What lights should irradiate those who are to be the light of the world? What riches should they amass who are to enrich the church of God?

Learning, then, so far from being inconsistent with the genius of the gospel, is not only sanctioned, but enjoined by it. The spirit of the ministry is eminently *the spirit of knowledge*. How is it possible for us to love truth too fervently? How can we be too intimately acquainted with those subjects which it is our duty and glory to publish fully, plainly, and faithfully, to our fellow-men? Who can doubt the will of God that every one of his ambassadors, charged to negotiate between God and man the great affairs of an eternal salvation, should labor to qualify himself to the utmost, and by all means, to discharge his appropriate duties with a dignity, wisdom, and success, that may put to shame the low intrigues of cabinets and the petty diplomacy of statesmen? And who can doubt but that in order to this,



every minister, especially if in the pastoral office, should feel a deep, well-grounded conviction of the truth and worth of christianity—that he should be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine, spirit, worship, ordinances, order and discipline of the New Testament—and that he should know the best methods of unfolding, illustrating, defending and recommending these to the people of his charge, with all their diversities of character, age, sex, talents, attainments, relations, conditions, necessities, prejudices?

But how is he to attain these qualifications? They are not all born with him. Neither are they communicated in his second birth—nor in his subsequent call to the ministry—nor by immediate inspiration from heaven in the hour of ordinary need, when he rises in the pulpit to do the work of an evangelist or to feed the flock of God. Thousands of sermons are preached every Sabbath which demonstrate this by most disastrous experiment. Notwithstanding all that has been done for him, then, by nature, by grace, and by divine commission, the christian minister now, like Timothy of old, must *study*. He must *meditate on these things*. Like the wise royal preacher of a still earlier age, he must *search out and set in order* the messages of divine wisdom. He must not even disdain to *seek out acceptable words*, provided always that his *words are upright, even the words of truth*.

Can any man acquire a strong sense of ministerial duty, without studying the duties appropriate to his sacred profession? Can he steadily maintain the devotion of the heart, but by prayer, springing faith and meditation, nourished by the word of God? Can he obtain a deep, well-grounded conviction of the truth and worth of christianity, in any other way than by studying its admirable adaptations to the wants of the human soul, and its bright array of evidence, external, internal, experimental and analogical? Can he acquire a thorough knowledge of the scriptures in any other way than by searching them daily—by studying them, if possible, like the primitive preachers, in their inspired original—by acquainting himself with the fundamental elements of biblical interpretation—by availing himself of the ripest fruits of criticism, commentary, and systematic arrangement, and historical development, collected by the labors of others in this ample field, that he may keep up with the progress of the human mind, and meet with manly decision the demands of his own place and age?

But you say, all ministers of the gospel cannot do this, for they have not the requisite means, and are altogether unable to obtain them. True—And for that very reason, it is no just impeachment of their character. Let them only do what they can. It is not required of them to perform impossibilities. But this I venture to say of such men; that where they possess the spirit of their office, there you will see them grieving over the scantiness of their Biblical knowledge, and the poverty of their intellectual resources,—thirsting for truth, and sighing to think, that where the wells of salvation are so pure, so fresh, so deep, they should be, for lack of knowledge, unable to draw. Who can despise such ministers because they are not learned? Rather let them be honored for the diligent use which they make of the means afforded. If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to what a man hath.

Yet would any of you wish a minister of Christ to be in such circumstances, if it can be avoided? If he is a teacher, should not his acquisitions and resources be at least superior to those of the people who are to be taught by him? And is it right for the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth, whose duty it is to maintain her ministers, that they may give themselves wholly to the work of their high calling, to leave them without the means of improvement in their studies, by which, and by which alone, *their profiting may appear unto all?*

It cannot be. The Sovereign Head of the church has fully intimated his will on this point. He has made it the duty of his ministers to study; and he has made it the duty of his people to maintain them while thus employed. Let us hold fast these great maxims of the Bible through the whole of our subsequent observations.

It is the duty of ministers of the gospel to study. But study demands books, time, thought, application. These are expensive. Should not the churches then, who are to reap the fruit of all this study, be willing to defray the expense? Clearly it is the dictate of equity and wisdom.

Now there are three ways in which study can be pursued; either alone, or with a private tutor, or at a public school. Which of these should be preferred? It is of importance that we determine this question well. The stability and growth of the churches are at stake.

It is clear that a minister already settled has no choice. The first is the only course which, generally speaking, he can pursue. It is otherwise with our young ministers, just entering into their great work. To them a choice is open. To them the first course is full of obvious disadvantages,—which only the force of a mind like that of John Bunyan or Andrew Fuller has been able to overcome, and then by unparalleled exertions. Shall a young minister then turn to the second, and pursue his studies with a private tutor? Doubtless he will be greatly aided by the guiding example, cheering voice and helping hand of such an instructor; yet there is still a more excellent way. Not that there may not be found men of learning and piety, men of deep thought and high theological attainment, in whose families and libraries great facilities may be found for the prosecution of study; but that one man is not equal to many—that a man engaged in many other avocations, cannot devote himself to teaching like those who make it their only avocation—that a private library is not so extensive and varied and valuable as a public library—and finally, that a young minister in that situation is not only often, but also overpoweringly tempted to exchange the character of the profound and diligent student for that of the agreeable, but superficial companion. With very few exceptions, all experience decides against private, in favor of public tuition. Many are the young ministers who having commenced a private course, have felt compelled to abandon it for the sake of a more free and full and finished education at a public institution.

The advantages of larger and better selected libraries; of instructors chosen and approved by the churches; of association with kindred minds in kindred pursuits; the mutual aids, the lasting friendships, the future harmony of action, as well as unity of faith, thus secured, are not easily estimated. In a word, a public school, as compared with private tuition, is no less scriptural, being sanctioned by the example of Christ and his apostles; it is more economical, more social, more happy, more efficient; and inasmuch as other denominations around us are now agreed in giving such advantages to their rising ministry, it is manifest that duty to our own, and to the cause of truth committed to our hands as a denomination, demands of us a universal, steady and generous support of those institutions of learning established among ourselves.



III. Little space remains for me to enforce the importance of this great duty of our churches and of our age. I must sum up a few considerations in a brief closing appeal.

Look around you then, my dear brethren. Among the manifold indications of providence, by which God reveals his will, and determines the duties of his servants, *can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Think of the state of the world, and especially of the circumstances of our own country. Think of the general advancement of society—the progress of science and art—the diffusion of popular education—the demand for teachers of the highest order of attainment—and tell me if all this rapid advancement and prodigious activity of mind, has no relative bearing on the qualifications and success of the christian ministry. It were madness to doubt it. Has not Virginia suffered already by our failing as a denomination to meet the just demands of the age, by a higher culture, and wider intellectual grasp in the pulpit? Doubtless we want more piety, but we want more knowledge too.

Our age is an age of conflict. Probably, indeed, we stand on the very verge of that final conflict of the church, called *the battle of the great day of God Almighty*. If the pulpit and the press are to decide the issues of that day, are we fully armed to do our part? When the enemy comes in like a flood—when old exploded errors are revived in new forms of enchantment, like Jannes and Jambres to withstand the truth of God—when infidelity attempts to supplant vital christianity, by seizing on the powers of science, and the graces of a seductive literature, will the Spirit of the Lord suffer us to sleep, while heaven lifts up the standard of the holy war?

Think, again, my brethren, of the claims of the missionary enterprise, and of its kindred institutions of benevolence in our times. Behold the Board of a Southern Convention, located in this very city, and sending out its selected agents, not only to enlighten the darkness of Africa, but to grapple hand to hand with the philosophical Pantheism of Foh, and the polished skepticism of Confucius, in the literary circles of China. In this great work can we dispense with the service of disciplined and cultivated mind? Give us Peter and James and John; they are all needed; but we want Paul and Apollos also.

Finally, think, my brethren, of our own country,—its

progress, character and destiny. With a vast and fertile territory, capable of supporting eight times the population that now dwells on the face of the whole globe, it is startling to think, that even during the life-time of some who now hear me, she will number as her citizens, a greater multitude of people than the Roman eagle ever overshadowed. Long before that time, indeed, she will hold the balance of power among the nations, and thenceforth, of necessity, sway the destinies of the world. But O! what shall be her own destiny? What the spiritual and eternal destiny of the myriads of her children? Is it certain that christianity, in its vital power and original purity, will govern their souls, growing with their growth, and strengthening with their strength? We hope so. But let us not forget the existing facts.

Remember that here christianity rests, as she ought to rest, on her own resources, unaided by the secular arm. Remember that here all the interests of the country—all that is precious in her free institutions, her morals, her happiness, her hopes, rests on the universal and permanent ascendancy of the pure and powerful religion of the Cross. As in Judea, in the time of Christ, so now in the United States, the temporal, as well as the eternal happiness, the national existence, as well as the individual welfare, of a great people is at stake. Consider the serious and startling fact, that notwithstanding all our advantages—our churches, ministers, Sabbaths, Sabbath schools and revivals, the population of this country, for years, has been actually outgrowing its piety. Converts are not multiplied at the rate of a thousand a day; but to hold good even the present proportion of christian influence, there should be at least one-third more than that number converted every day in the year. Consider that this painful and alarming fact has a cause: and that cause must be mainly in the defects of the ministry. It is not a deficiency in *numbers* merely, or chiefly—though this is obviously great—but it is manifestly owing to a still greater deficiency in *qualifications* such as the word of God requires, to meet the peculiar exigencies of our age. The twelve apostles, and the primitive ministers generally, were better qualified intellectually, as well as spiritually, than we are,—they were thoroughly adapted to their times,—and consequently were far more efficient agents under God in reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ. Fewer in number—in a

sphere far more extensive, and far more difficult, the vast measure of their success is the best measure of our sad deficiency.

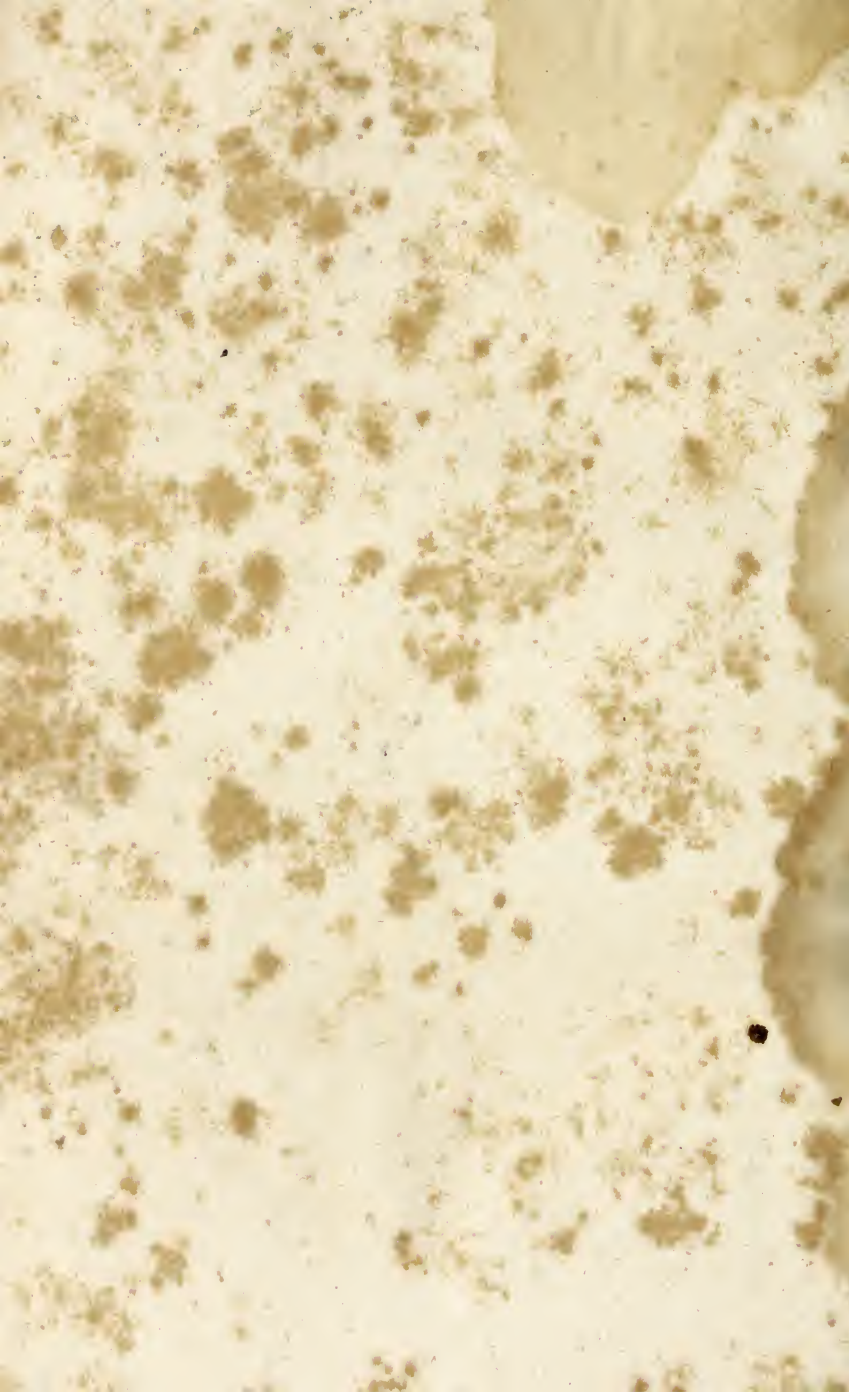
My dear brethren, I can say no more. I sink under the awful weight of this single reflection, and ask you what more is necessary to enforce the great object for which I plead. It is to remedy this defect in the rising ministry, that the Virginia Baptist Education Society is established. It is to avert the appalling evils that threaten our beloved country and the never-dying souls of men. It is to fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord, and train immortal beings every where, through the gospel and the grace of God, for the perfect happiness of heaven. With these great ends in view, to raise the standard of ministerial qualification to its scriptural elevation, surely must be our united, earnest, generous, prayerful, persevering aim.

You have heard us. It is now time to judge. God grant that you may judge righteous judgment for his Son's sake.  
AMEN.



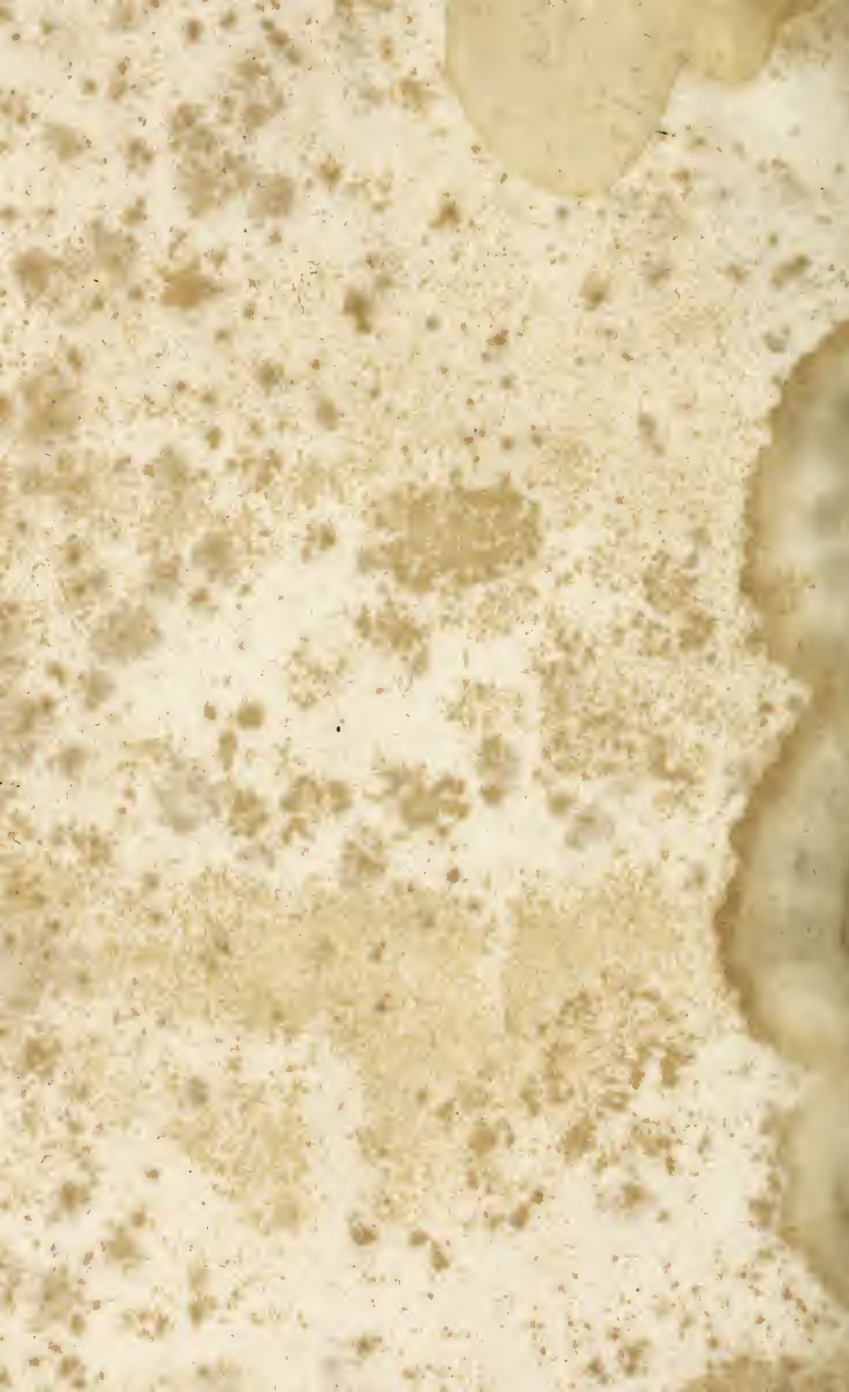












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