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**DOEG, THE EDMITE;**

OR,

**THE INFORMER.**

*January 6<sup>th</sup> 1851.*

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## THE INFORMER.

A LECTURE ON THE FIFTY-SECOND PSALM,

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

JANUARY 6, 1861,

BY ALBERT BARNES.

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THE following Lecture was delivered in a regular course on the Psalms, without having been written. It has since been written out from the brief notes which had been prepared, with the same train of thought, the same illustrations, and, as nearly as could be recollected, in the very words which were used in the delivery. Of course, entire accuracy in this respect could not be expected; but there has been no intentional alteration of the language or the sentiments. It is not '*published*,' but it is now *printed* for reasons which will be readily understood by many. It is due to any who may have felt themselves aggrieved, that they should be put in possession of the means of stating precisely what it was that gave them, as they supposed, just grounds of offence; and it is equally due to myself that the exact words—even the unstudied utterances in a discourse which was wholly unwritten, should be stated, that I may not suffer from misapprehension. The principal subject of the discourse, moreover, is one which is not often brought into the pulpit; and pertaining, as it does, to an important and difficult point of morals, the interest which has been excited in the discourse by another topic springing out of that, may, perhaps, do something to direct attention to the main topic.

A note has been added, explanatory of what was said in the discourse, on the part which has excited most attention. As what is contained in this note was not *said* on the occasion, it could not honestly be introduced into the body of the Lecture, but it cannot be wrong or unfair for me to explain, in such a note, what was meant on the occasion, and what are the views which I hold on that point. Perhaps after the excitements of the present time shall have passed away, it will be regarded as remarkable that any offence should have been taken by the expression of an opinion as to what is fairly taught in the Bible, and what *seemed* to be in the fair line of my duty as a Pastor in explaining the Sacred Scriptures.

ALBERT BARNES.

PHILADELPHIA, *January 24*, 1861.

## DOEG, THE EDMITE.

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To the chief Musician, Masehil, *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee forever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.—*Psalm lii.*

I HAVE never in my ministry, now not a short one, preached on the subject on which I propose to address you this afternoon. I never should have done it if it had not occurred in the course of a regular exposition of the Scriptures. I never could have done it without giving occasion to an inquiry why that particular subject had been selected; whether there had been anything in my personal intercourse with others which suggested it; whether there was anything in the congregation which made it proper to preach on that particular subject; or whether there was any prevailing custom in the community around, or in the country at large, which required that it should be made the particular subject of a public discourse.

The fact here adverted to will illustrate the following things in regard to the mode of preaching which I have so long practised among you, to wit, by a regular exposition of continuous portions of the Sacred Scriptures.



(a.) The advantage of this kind of preaching in enabling me to introduce a great variety of subjects which could not perhaps otherwise be referred to without giving offence; for when a subject occurs in a regular course of exposition—of explaining the Book which it is the principal business of my life to explain—it is clear that no offence should be taken in such a course of exposition, whatever may be the subject, if a fair interpretation is given to the Word of God.

(b.) The advantage derived from the necessity of introducing many important subjects which could not, or would not, be referred to in any other mode of preaching. It cannot be denied that there are many subjects connected with religion and morals, in themselves of great importance, which we should not be likely to bring forward in any other mode of preaching. We may avoid them, either because we do not think that we fully understand them; or we may regard some other subject as more immediately desirable to be considered; or it may require more study to prepare ourselves on the subject which would occur in the regular course of exposition, than we are disposed to bestow upon it, preferring some easier topic of discourse; or there may be something in the state of public feeling, or some known views prevailing, which would make it probable that offence would be given if that subject were selected of design, and all this might induce us to defer it to a future occasion, or to avoid it altogether. None of these things will be as likely to influence us, when the subject is one that is suggested by a regular course of exposition, and that is, in a measure, forced upon us.

(c.) The fact here adverted to will furnish an illustration of the wonderful *variety* which there is in the Scriptures, and the adaptation of the teaching of the Bible to

the actual circumstances of human life. It is only when we pass, in a regular course of exposition, from book to book, and chapter to chapter, and verse to verse, that we learn to appreciate properly the variety and fullness which there is in the teaching of the Bible; the adaptedness of that wonderful volume to the actual wants of man; and the evidence furnished by that fullness, that variety, and that adaptedness, to the fact that it has proceeded from Him who knows the secrets of all human hearts, and who can take a comprehensive view of all the wants of mankind. There is not a duty which man is ever required to perform, in respect to which he cannot find in the Bible a direct precept or a principle to guide him; not a trial for which there is not, either by a direct promise, or by the experience of some one tried in like manner, a specific consolation; not a sin which man ever commits, which is not, by a direct command in the Bible, or by the recorded consequences of sin in some historical illustration, forbidden.

The subject to which I have referred as that suggested by this Psalm, is "*The Informer*;" the character of him who *tells*, or who gives information of others, of their conduct or their concealment.

The title of the Psalm indicates the occasion on which it was composed, and suggests the topic on which I am now to address you. That title is, "A Psalm of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech." Of the correctness of this title, there is no reason to doubt. It accords exactly, as we shall see, with the facts, the record of which has been preserved in one of the Books of Samuel.

The Psalm is designed to describe the character of the

man who had thus given "*information*" to Saul in regard to the conduct of Ahimelech in showing kindness to David, and at the same time to express the feelings of David in respect to the meanness and the guilt of such an act; to show the punishment which must certainly overtake such a man; and at the same time to express his gratitude to God that he, an innocent man, to whom the information especially pertained, had been preserved, and that now, notwithstanding the conduct of the informer, he was "like a green olive tree in the house of God."

A few explanatory remarks on the Psalm, will prepare us for the consideration of the general subject.

*Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief.* Why dost thou *exult* in that which is wrong; why dost thou find pleasure in evil rather than in good; why dost thou seek to triumph in the injury done to others. The reference is to one who prided himself in the schemes and projects which tended to injure others; or who congratulated himself on the success which attended his efforts to wrong other men. *O mighty man.* The clear reference of this is to Doeg as a man of power. The original word is one that is often applied to a hero or warrior. In this case, the *power* was that which was principally derived from wealth. ver. 7. *The goodness of God endureth continually.* Literally, *all the day.* That is, he could not hope to prevent the exercise of goodness on the part of God towards him whom he persecuted, or whom he sought to injure. The goodness of God was so great and so constant that he would protect his true friends from such machinations; or, was so unceasing and watchful that the informer and accuser could not hope to find an interval of time when God would intermit his watchfulness, and when, therefore, he could hope for success. *Thy*



*tongue deviseth mischiefs.* The word rendered *mischiefs*, means (a) desire, cupidity; then (b) fall, ruin, destruction, wickedness. The meaning here is, that he made use of his tongue to ruin others. The particular thing referred to, is the fact that Doeg sought the ruin of others by giving *information* in regard to them. He *informed* Saul of what Ahimelech had done; he *informed* him where David had been, thus giving him, also, information in what way he might be found and apprehended. All this was *designed* to bring ruin upon David and his followers. It actually brought ruin upon Ahimelech and those associated with him. *Like a sharp razor.* His slanders were like a keen knife with which one stabs another. So we say of a slanderer, that he "stabs" another in the dark. *Working deceitfully.* That is, it was by deceit that he accomplished his purpose. There was no open and fair dealing in what he did. *Thou lovest evil more than good.* Thou dost prefer to do injury to others, rather than to do them good. In the case referred to, instead of aiding the innocent, the persecuted and the wronged, he had chosen rather to attempt to reveal the place where he might be found, and where an enraged enemy might have an opportunity of wreaking his vengeance upon him. *And lying rather than to speak righteousness.* He preferred a lie to the truth; and when he supposed that his own interest would be promoted by it, he preferred a falsehood that would promote that interest, rather than a simple statement of the truth. The *lying* in this case was that which was *implied* in his being desirous of giving up David, and betraying him to Saul, *as if* David was a bad man, and *as if* the suspicions of Saul were well founded. He preferred to give his countenance to a falsehood in regard to him, rather than to state the truth respecting his character. His conduct in



this, was strongly in contrast with that of Ahimelech. *He*, when arraigned before Saul, declared his firm belief of the innocence of David; his firm conviction that he was true and loyal. *For* that fidelity, he lost his life. (1 Sam. xxii. 14.) Doeg was willing to lend countenance to the suspicions of Saul, and practically to represent David as a traitor to the king. *Thou lovest all devouring words.* All words that tend to devour or *swallow up* reputation and happiness. *O! thou deceitful tongue.* An address to the tongue, as loving deceit and fraud. *God shall likewise destroy thee forever.* The reference here is not to the *tongue*, but to *Doeg himself*. The language of the verse is intensive and emphatic. The main idea is presented in a variety of forms, all designed to denote utter and absolute destruction — a complete and entire sweeping away, so that nothing should be left. The word here used would suggest the idea of *pulling down*, as a house, or a wall; that is, completely *demolishing* it, and the meaning is, that destruction would come upon the informer and the slanderer *like* the destruction which comes upon a house or a wall when it is entirely pulled down. *He shall take thee away.* The word here used is employed elsewhere only in the sense of taking up and carrying fire or coals. (Isa. xxx. 16; Prov. vi. 27; xxv. 22.) The idea in this place *may be* that he would be seized and carried away with haste, as one who takes up fire or coals does it as rapidly as possible, lest he should be burned. *And shall pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place.* Literally, *out of the tent*. The reference is to his dwelling. The allusion in the word here used is to the act of tearing up plants, and the meaning is, that he would be plucked up as a plant that is torn from its roots. *And root thee out of the land of the living.* As a tree is torn up from its roots, and thus destroyed. He would be no

more among the living. *The righteous shall see, and fear.* The effect of such a judgment will be to produce solemn reverence in the minds of good men—a solemn sense of the justice of God; to make them tremble at such fearful judgments, and to fear lest they should violate the law, and bring like condemnation upon themselves. *And shall laugh at him.* The idea here is not that of exultation in the *sufferings* of others, or joy that *calamity* has come upon them, or the gratification of a selfish and revengeful feeling that an enemy is deservedly punished; it is that of approbation that punishment has come upon one who has deserved it, and joy that wickedness is not allowed to triumph. It is not wrong for us to feel approbation and joy that the laws are maintained; that justice is done; and that wickedness is not allowed to triumph, even though this does involve suffering, for we feel that the guilty deserve it, and that it is better that they should suffer than that the righteous should suffer through them, and that they should be permitted to roam at large. All this may be entirely free from any malignant or revengeful feeling, and may be identified with the deepest piety, and the purest benevolence towards the sufferers themselves. *Lo this is the man that made not God his strength.* That is, the righteous would say this. They would designate him as a man who had not made God his refuge, but who had trusted in his own resources. The result would be that he would be abandoned by God, and that those things on which he had relied would fail him in the day of his calamity. He would be pointed out as an instance of what must occur when a man does not act with a wise reference to the will of God, and who, confiding in his own strength and resources, pursues his own plans of iniquity. *But trusted in the abundance of his riches.* From this it would

seem that Doeg was a rich man, and that, as a general thing, in his life, and in his plans of evil, he felt confident in his wealth. He had that spirit of arrogance and self-confidence which springs from the conscious possession of property where there is no fear of God; and to all that he did, he carried this reliance on his own importance as derived from wealth. In the present instance, the meaning is, that he would perform the iniquitous work of giving "information," with the proud and haughty feeling springing from wealth and from his own importance; the feeling that he was a man of consequence, and that whatever such a man might do, it would be entitled to special attention. *And strengthened himself in his wickedness.* That is, he had a malicious pleasure in doing wrong, or in injuring others, and by every art, and against all the convictions and remonstrances of his own conscience, he endeavored to confirm himself in this unholy purpose and employment. *But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.* I am safe and happy, notwithstanding the effort made by my enemy, the informer, to secure my destruction. I have been kept unharmed, like a green and flourishing tree—a tree that should grow up and be protected in the very courts of the sanctuary, safe under the care and the eye of God. *I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.* (a.) I have always done it. It has been my constant habit in trouble or danger to do it. (b.) I will always do it. As the result of my experience, I will still do it, and in thus trusting in God, I shall have the consciousness of safety. *I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it.* Because thou art the source of my safety. The fact that I have been delivered from the designs of Saul, and saved from the efforts of Doeg to betray me, is to be traced wholly to God. It has been ordered by thy Providence that



the purposes alike of Doeg and of Saul have been defeated, and I am safe. *And I will wait on thy name.* There is here (a) the expression of entire *dependence* on God; and (b) a willingness to *await* his interposition at all times; a belief that at the proper time he would always interpose, and bring deliverance; a confident feeling that however long such interposition might on any occasion seem to be delayed, yet that God *would* interfere, and a purpose calmly and patiently to *wait* until the time of deliverance should come. *For it is good before the saints.* That is, God is good; and I will confess it before his "saints." His mercy has been so marked and signal that a public expression of it is proper, and I will declare what he has done for me in the presence of his assembled people. Among the saints there is a common bond of union—a common interest in all that pertains to each other; and when special mercy is shown to any one of the great brotherhood, it is proper that all should join in the thanksgiving, and render praise to God.

The point, therefore, before us, in considering the Psalm, relates to the conduct of Doeg *in giving information, or as an informer*; that is, his conduct in making use of information in his possession for the ruin of the innocent.

It will be proper to illustrate this under two heads:

I. Considered as a trial of David, or as one of the many afflictions of his life; and,

II. Considered in respect to the morality of the action, or as an act of guilt on the part of Doeg.

I. As one of the trials of David.

In order to understand this, it will be proper to state the case somewhat more at length, and then to show what was the peculiar nature of the trial.



The full circumstances of the case are stated in the record preserved in the first Book of Samuel, and are the following :

“Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father’s house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king. And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord. And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king’s son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute anything unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech,

thou, and all thy father's house. And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword."—2 *Sam.* xxii. 7-19.

The case, then, was this. David, the son-in-law of Saul, had become exposed to his enmity and jealousy, principally from the praises bestowed on him for his valor in slaying Goliath, the Philistine. This jealousy had been, in a special manner, excited by the songs which were sung in the celebration of the triumphs achieved over the Philistines, and by the prominence given in those songs to David. "When David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.*" (1 *Sam.* xviii. 6, 7.) David, therefore, became an object of jealousy and of envy. His life was in danger, and he was constrained to seek safety by flight. In his distress and want, he had come to Ahimelech, the officiating priest, at Nob, and Ahimelech had given him, to supply his wants, the "show bread" in the tabernacle; and, as a proof of special confidence, had

also given him the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, which had been entrusted to him. (1 Sam. xxi. 1-9.) Yet David felt that he was not safe *there*. In another part of the narrative there is a statement made, not inserted in this part of the transaction, which shows *why* he did not feel safe even in the presence, and under the protection of Ahimelech. After Ahimelech had been put to death by Doeg at the command of Saul, (1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19,) David stated to a son of Ahimelech *why* he did not consider himself safe with his father. "I knew it that day, *when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul.*" (1 Sam. xxii. 22.) Doeg was, therefore, present when David presented himself before Ahimelech. He saw what Ahimelech had done. He had it thus in his power to betray Ahimelech, and through him, to betray David, if Ahimelech should be unfaithful. The character of Doeg was, from some cause, well known; and David felt that he would not hesitate to betray any one, or do any act of wickedness or meanness, if it would subserve his own purposes. David, therefore, fled to Achish, king of Gath. Achish was suspicious of him, and dreaded the consequences of harboring him; and David, for greater security, feigned himself mad,—with what propriety it is not needful now to inquire. Under a professed unwillingness to harbor a mad man, Achish refused him protection, and David again fled. He found a refuge for a time in the cave of Adullam, and gathered to himself there a company of four hundred men. (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2.) Then, to secure a place of safety for his father and mother in the time of trouble, he crossed the Jordan, and applied to the king of Moab for a shelter for his parents. (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.) Having secured this, at the instance of the prophet Gad, he recrossed the Jordan, and came into the land of Judah, and found a refuge in the forest of Hareth. (1 Sam. xxii. 5.)



At this time the events occurred, which are referred to in the Psalm. Saul complained that no one had informed him of the treasonable conduct of his own son, and of the conspiracy against him and his government. (1 Sam. xxii. 7, 8.) Doeg, therefore, came forward *as a voluntary informer* against Ahimelech for having harbored David; for having shown him countenance; for having aided and assisted him. He had seen David with him. Ahimelech had provided for him; had given him the sword of Goliath; had showed himself to be his friend. He, therefore, knew of him; he was in his confidence; he must know where he was. Ahimelech had resisted the government of Saul, and had been the protector of the fugitive. It was *presumed* that he understood what were the relations at that time of David to Saul, and that he meant to harbor a rebel. It might still be presumed, also, that he was in league with David, and that he could give information to Saul of his place of retreat.

Ahimelech was summoned to meet Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 11,) and with him were summoned also all "his father's house, the priests that were in Nob." In reply to the charge that he had conspired against Saul; that he had befriended David; that he had "given him," in modern language, "aid and comfort;" that he had assisted him so that he could "rise against Saul;" and that he had so befriended him, that he could "lie in wait for him" at that time; he boldly declared his conviction that Saul had not a more faithful subject in his realm than David was. "And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house." And he says that he did not *originate* any movement in regard to David; he had not led him into any act of violating the law; he had done nothing to induce him to depart from



Saul, or to set up rebellion. He came to him a fugitive, and he helped him; he was hungry, and he fed him; he was a poor wandering man — an outcast — and he befriended him. “Did I then *begin* to inquire of God for him? Be it far from me. Let not the king impute anything unto his servant, nor to all the house of my fathers: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.” (1 Sam. xxii. 14, 15.) There Ahimelech stood—an example of a bold, firm, independent, honorable, honest man. He maintained the innocence of David, as well as his own. He sought no favor by joining in the clamor against David. He did not seek to avert the blow which he could not but see was impending over himself, by any sympathetic or mean compliance with the prejudices of the king. He did nothing to flatter the offended monarch, or to gratify him in his purpose to arrest David, the fugitive. He made no offer to disclose to him the place of his concealment. Any one of these things — any act in the *line* of that which Doeg had performed — might have saved his life. That he knew the place of David’s retreat, is apparent from a circumstance incidentally referred to in the ultimate account of the affair; for, after Ahimelech had been put to death, it is said that one of his sons—Abiathar—fled at once to David, (1 Sam. xxii. 20, 21,) and disclosed to him the dreadful manner of his father’s death; thus showing that the knowledge of the place of his retreat was in the possession of the family, and could easily have been disclosed to Saul, and yet it was not done. Neither Ahimelech, nor any one of his family, even intimated to Saul that they knew where David then was, and that they could put him in possession of the means of securing him. That the fact that they did not, and would not, betray the place of his retreat, was one cause of the wrath of Saul, is apparent from the reason

assigned why the "footmen" were commanded to put them to death. "And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, *and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it unto me.*" (1 Sam. xxii. 17.)

It cannot be doubted, therefore, that if there had been an offer of furnishing the information; if there had been a tender of their services in the case; if there had been evinced a spirit of ready compliance with the prejudices and passions of Saul; if there had been among them the same spirit of mean sycophancy which characterized Doeg, Ahimelech and the whole family would have been safe. But no such thing was done; no such offer was made; no such spirit was evinced. There they stood — noble-minded men — father, son, all the family, true to honor, to virtue, to religion; true to God, to Saul, to David, and to themselves. They lodged the secret in their own bosoms; they neither proffered nor submitted to any mean and dishonorable compliances that they might save their own lives. There was, on the one hand, Doeg, *the "mighty" man, but the mean informer*; there was, on the other, a noble-minded man, standing up in the conscious integrity of what he had done, and maintaining it even at the hazard of life.

The result is well known, and was that which, so far as the fate of Ahimelech was concerned, could easily have been anticipated. Saul, maddened against David, was now equally infuriated against the honest man who had befriended him. He commanded him to be put to death at once. And here, in this remarkable transaction, where so much of meanness and honor, of fidelity and falsehood, of integrity and corruption, of soberness and passion, come so near together, we have another striking

instance of fidelity and virtue. Saul commanded the "footmen," (marg. the *runners*,) who were about him, to "turn and slay" Ahimelech and his sons. "Their hand," he said, "was with David, *and they knew where he fled, and did not show it to him.*" They had refused to inform him, and were all alike to be held guilty. Yet the "footmen" declined to do the bloody work. Noble men, themselves, they saw here an instance of true nobleness of character and of deed in the priests of the Lord, and they refused, even at the peril of the wrath of Saul, to execute an unrighteous sentence on men so noble, so honorable, so true. There *was* one, however, that would do it. There stood the mean, the sycophantic, the base man, Doeg, who had 'informed' against the priests, and he was ready to do the work. The command was given, and he consummated the work of betrayal and of meanness, by putting at once to the sword, four score and five priests of the Lord, and by carrying desolation and death through the city of their habitation, "smiting with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep." (1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19.)

We are now prepared to look on this as a *trial* in the life of David.

On this, I may make the following remarks :

(1.) As a *personal* trial; or as a part of his personal sufferings. It was a trial *added* to all that there was in the alienation of Saul, and to all that there was of personal danger in his case. It was the trial resulting from the fact that he was never safe; that he knew not whom to trust. It was not the mere trial derived from open enemies, and from personal dangers, but it was that form of trial which is most difficult to be borne when one does not know whether he is among friends or foes;



when he feels that he is surrounded by spies and malignant observers; when confidence has failed; and when a man knows that he may be at any moment betrayed by secret enemies, or abandoned by professed friends. David had much of this to encounter in his life. Thus in Psalm liv. he refers to another trial precisely similar to this:—"When the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?" (*Title.*) Thus in Psalm xli. he records a similar act of treachery and secret malignity:—"Mine enemies speak evil of me, *When shall he die, and his name perish?* And if he come to see me he speaketh vanity, [he makes false professions of friendship,] his heart gathereth iniquity to itself, [he seeks to find occasion to carry out the wickedness of his heart by something that I may say in my trouble;] *when he goeth abroad he telleth it*; [he discloses what I may have said in my trouble and sorrow that may be construed to my disadvantage.] Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." So also in Psalm lv. he records a similar trial:—"It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." Thus, wandering from place to place; driven from one refuge to another—only to find that unsafe; homeless and waylaid; not knowing whom to trust; suspecting that there might be a lurking enemy anywhere and everywhere; encompassed by men who were mean enough to profess friendship with the purposes of traitors; and feeling that at any time his place of retreat



might be made known to Saul by those who were base enough to act the part, and covetous enough to seek for the gains of wickedness by performing the work of *informers*, he had no place of security; he knew not whom to trust; he had before him the basest form of human depravity. There are no trials more difficult to be borne than those which spring from such sources as these, and it is no wonder that his heart overflows with holy indignation in this Psalm against conduct so unprincipled—so base.

(2.) A trial as bringing calamity on the innocent who befriended him. The trial was not merely personal. He had been the innocent occasion of bringing a horrid death on his protector and friend—the faithful, firm, honorable man who had provided for him in his want; and on all the family of that friend. It added to this, that he had been *apprehensive* that this would occur, and that he had had no power to avert it. When Ahimelech had met him so kindly, he had noticed this same *Doeg* there, for what purpose is not specified, and from that moment he anticipated what actually followed. He felt assured that the base man would disclose to Saul all that he had seen, and he could not doubt what would be the result in regard to Ahimelech. “And Abiathar had shown David that Saul had slain the Lord’s priests. And David said unto Abiathar, *I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father’s house.*” (1 Sam. xxii. 21, 22.) This form of the trial was this: It was that which occurs—as it may among the trials of life—when our conduct, however proper, is made the occasion of bringing calamity on others; when in consequence of what we have done, sorrows which we cannot avert rush upon them; when

they suffer because they have taken our part—have befriended us—have aided us—have spoken a good word for us—have done us an act of kindness. It is the sorrow which comes over us when the circumstances are such that we cannot step in and avert what is coming upon them by taking it on ourselves; or when they are cut off from life, and we feel that we have it not in our power now to express our sorrow and our sympathy in their sufferings. It is often much harder to bear this kind of affliction than it is to endure that which comes directly upon ourselves. No burden of life is greater than that which we are called to sustain when our conduct involves others in calamity, or when they are made to suffer on our account.

(3.) This may be referred to as *illustrating* the sorrows which came upon the descendant of David—the Redeemer. In the proper sense of the term, we cannot, indeed, regard the trials of David as “*typical*” of those of the Saviour—for in the very nature of a *type* there is the idea that it was *divinely appointed* to represent or adumbrate some future event, and we cannot well understand how that could occur in the voluntary actions of men, even of good men. But there was so much in the life of David which *resembled* what occurred in the life of the Redeemer, that it often seems *as if* the one had been ordered with an express design to shadow forth the other; so similar as naturally to suggest what occurred in his life; so much alike, that what took place in the life of the one may be made use of in illustrating what took place in the life of the other. How closely, in this instance, did the trials of David resemble those of the Saviour! How naturally is the mind turned from the one to the other, *as if* the one had been designed to shadow forth the other! For he, too, was a wan-

derer and an outcast; he had no home and no security; he was driven from place to place; he was surrounded by enemies, open and secret; he was approached, under the garb of friendship, by the crafty and the mean; he was uncertain as a man whom he could trust; he had with him always a secret enemy—a spy upon his conduct, among his most intimate friends, ever watching him, and ever ready to betray him; and at last he was given up to a cruel death for a paltry consideration, by a man most mean, base and treacherous—an *informer* of whom Doeg might at least be regarded as a type and emblem—by a crime similar in character, and only higher in degree as he whom he betrayed was more exalted than David.

II. We are now prepared to consider this act with respect to the morality of the action, or as an act of guilt on the part of Doeg.

This brings before us the question respecting the guilt of an informer; or, the larger question of casuistry, in what cases it is our duty to give information which may be in our possession about the conduct of others, and in what cases it becomes a moral wrong or a crime to do it.

This is a question of much importance in respect to our own conduct, and often of much difficulty in its solution. I confess myself unable to answer all the inquiries which might be made on this subject, or to lay down principles of undoubted plainness which would be applicable to every case which may occur, and all that I can hope to be able to do will be to suggest a few general principles which may be a guide on some of those questions.

The question on the subject is one which may occur at any time, and in any situation of life. Is it never right to give such information? Are we never bound



to do it? Are there no circumstances in which it is proper that it should be voluntary? Are there any situations in which we are exempt by established customs or laws from giving such information? Are there any in which we are bound, by the obligations of conscience, not to give such information whatever may be the penalty? May there be information or knowledge in our possession which no earthly power should wrest from us? And where and when does guilt begin or end in our volunteering to give information of the conduct or the concealments of others?

These questions often come with much perplexity before the mind of an ingenuous school-boy, who would desire to do right, and who yet has so much honor that he desires to escape the guilt and the reproach of being a 'tell-tale.' They are questions which occur to a lawyer, or, rather, which *did* occur before the general principle, which I will soon advert to, had been settled by the courts, in regard to the knowledge of which he has been put in possession under the confidential relation of advocate and client. They are questions which may occur to a clergyman, either, in respect to the confidential disclosures made at the Confessional of the Catholic priest, or, in respect to the confidential statements of the true penitent made to a Protestant pastor, in order that spiritual counsel may be obtained to give relief to a burdened conscience. They are questions which it was necessary should be settled in regard to a fugitive from justice, who seeks protection under the roof of a friend or a stranger. They are questions respecting fugitives from oppression in foreign lands, when they flee to other countries—suggesting the inquiry whether they shall be welcomed there, or whether there shall be any law by which they shall, on demand, be restored

to the dominion of a tyrant. They are questions which the conscience will ask, and does ask, about fugitives from bondage, who apply to us for aid in securing their liberty, and who seek an asylum beneath our roof—questions whether the law of God requires or permits us to render any active assistance in making known the place of their refuge, and returning them to bondage. When, and in what cases, if any, is a man bound to give information in such circumstances as these?—I have said that I cannot solve all these questions. I admit that cases may occur in which there would be great difficulty in determining what are the exact limits of duty, and I do not know that writers on the subject of morals have laid down such clear rules as would leave the mind perfectly free from doubt, or be sufficient to guide us on all these points. It will be admitted that some of them are questions of much difficulty, and where *instruction* would be desirable.

Much may be learned in regard to the proper estimate of human conduct among men, from the *language* which they employ—language which, in its very structure, often conveys their sentiments from age to age. The ideas of men on many of the subjects of morals, in respect to that which is honorable or dishonorable, right or wrong, manly or mean, became thus *imbedded*—I might almost say *fossilized*—in their modes of speech. Language, in its very structure, thus carries down to future times the sentiments cherished in regard to the morality of actions—as the fossil remains that are beneath the surface of the earth—in the strata of the rocks—bring to us the forms of ancient types of animals—of ferns and palms, of which there are now no living specimens on the globe. They who have studied Dean Trench's Treatise on '*words*' will recollect how this

idea is illustrated in that remarkable work; how, without any other information about the views of men in other times, the very *words* which they employed, and which have been transmitted to us, convey to us the estimate which was formed in the remotest ages in regard to the moral quality of an action, as proper or improper—as honorable or dishonorable—as conformed to the noble principles of our nature, or as indicating the reverse.

As illustrating the general sentiments of mankind in this respect, I will select *two* words as specimens of many which might be selected, and as words in which men have been agreed in applying to some of the acts referred to in the questions of difficulty which I have just mentioned, and which may enable us to do something in determining the morality of an action, so far as those words, in their just application to the subject, indicate the judgment of mankind.

One of these words is the word "*meanness*"—a word which a school-boy would be most *likely* to apply to the act of a tell-tale or an informer, and which we instinctively apply to numerous actions in more advanced periods of life, and which serves to mark the judgment of mankind in regard to certain kinds of conduct. The *idea* in such a case is not so much the *guilt* or the *criminality* of the act, considered as a violation of law, as it is that of being opposed to just notions of *honor*, or as indicating a base, low, sordid, grovelling spirit—"lowless of mind, want of dignity and elevation; want of honor."—*Webster*.

The other word is the word "*sycophant*." The Athenians had a law prohibiting the exportation of figs. This law, of course, had a penalty, and it was a matter of importance to the magistrate to ascertain who had been guilty of violating it. It suggested, also, a method of securing the favor of such a magistrate, and perhaps of



obtaining a reward, by giving *information* of those who had been guilty of violating the law. From these two words—the Greek word *fig*, and the Greek word to *show*, or to *discover*, we have derived the word *sycophant*, and the word has come down from the Greeks, and through the long tract of ages intervening between its first use in Athens to the present time, always bearing in every age the original idea imbedded in the word, as the old fossil that is now dug up bears the form of the fern, or the leaf, or the worm, or the shell that was imbedded there perhaps millions of ages ago. As such a man would be *likely* to be mean, and fawning, and flattering, so the word has come to describe always a parasite; a mean flatterer; a flatterer of princes and great men; and hence it is, and would be applied as one of the words indicating the sense of mankind in regard to a “tale-bearer,” or an “informer.”—*Webster*.

Such *words* as these indicate the general judgment of mankind on such conduct as that referred to in the Psalm before us. Of course, to what particular *actions* among these general questions they are properly applicable, would be another point; they are referred to here only as indicating the general judgment of mankind in regard to certain kinds of conduct, and to show how careful men are in their very language to express their permanent approbation of that which is *honorable* and *right*, and their detestation of that which is *dishonorable* and *wrong*.

Let us now consider more particularly the subject with respect to *duty*, and to *criminality*. The question is, whether we can find any cases where it is *right*—where it is our *duty* to give such information; or, in what cases, if any, it is right, and in what cases it is malignant, guilty, wrong. The points to be considered are—

(1.) When it is right, or when it may be demanded that we should give information of another; and

(2.) When it becomes guilt.

(1.) When it is right, or when it may be demanded of us.

This is not, indeed, the main point before us, and I confess that I am not able to determine the exact limits of right in the case. A few remarks may be made, however, as bearing on the subject.

(a.) It is to be admitted that there are cases in which the interests of justice demand that men should be *required* to give information of others; or, there are cases where the courts have a right to summon us, to put us upon our oaths, and to demand the information which may be in our possession. The courts constantly act on this; and the interests of justice could not be promoted without this right, nor could a cause ever be determined without exercising this right. If all men were bound in conscience to withhold information simply because they have it in their possession, or from the mode in which they came in possession of it; or if they withheld it from mere stubbornness and obstinacy, of course, all the departments of justice must stand still, and the officers of justice might be discharged, since it can neither be presumed that they would possess all the knowledge necessary to the administration of justice themselves, nor would the law allow them to act on it if they did. The law never presumes that a judge is to decide a case from a knowledge of the facts in his own possession, or simply because *he knows what was done in the case*. The ultimate decision must be made in view of testimony *given*, not of knowledge *possessed*. In most cases, however, there is no difficulty on this point. There is no necessary violation of confidence in giving this informa-

tion. There have been no improper means used to obtain it. There has been only an observation of that which any other man might have seen. There has been no baseness in *spying* out what was done. There has been no "sycophantic" purpose; there is no voluntariness in betraying what we know; there is no dishonourableness in making known what *happened* to be in our possession. A man may *regret* that he witnessed the act of crime, but he does not blame himself for it; he may feel pained that his testimony may consign another man to the gallows, but he does not deem it dishonourable, for he has no mean purpose in it, and the interests of justice demand it.

(*b.*) It is an admitted principle that one employed as counsel in a case—a lawyer—shall *not* be required to give up information which may be in his possession as counsel; information which has been intrusted to him by his client. It is held that it is essential to the interests of justice, that whatever is thus communicated to a professional adviser shall be regarded by the court as strictly confidential, and that the counsel incurs no blame if he does *not* give information on the subject; or, in other words, that the true interests of justice do not demand, and that the principles of honor will not admit, that he should betray the man who has intrusted his cause to him. How far a man governed by a good conscience, and by the principles of honor, may undertake a cause which from the statements of his client in the beginning he may regard as doubtful, or where in the progress of the case he may become sure that his client is guilty, is a point which does not come under the present inquiry, and which may, in fact, be in some respects a question of difficult solution. It must still, however, even in such a case, be held that he cannot be



required to give the information in his possession, and every principle of honor or of right would be understood to be violated, if, abandoning the case, he should become a voluntary “*informer*.”\*

(*c*) In like manner, it is understood that the law does not require that a juryman should give voluntary “information” of what may be within his own knowledge in the case that may be submitted for trial. The extent of his oath and his obligation is that he shall give a verdict according to the testimony submitted under the proper forms of law. He may not *go back* of that and base his opinion in the verdict on any private knowledge which he may have in his own possession, and which has not, under the proper forms of law, been laid before the court; nor may what he himself may have seen and heard enter at all into his verdict, or influence it in any manner, unless it has been submitted with the other testimony in the case to the court. The verdict is to be based on evidence *given*; not on what he *has seen*. An accused man has a right to demand that *all* that shall bear on the sentence in the case; *all* that shall enter into the verdict, shall be submitted as testimony, under the solemnities of an oath, and with all proper opportunities of cross-examination, and of rebutting it by counter testimony. A juryman may, indeed, be called as a witness in a case. But then he is to be sworn and examined as any other witness, and when he comes to unite in making up the verdict, he is to allow to enter into the verdict *only* that which is in possession of all the members of the jury, and is not to permit *any* knowledge which he may have, which was not obtained from him in giving testimony, to influence his own judgment in the case.†

\* 3 Blackstone, p. 370, Book iii., ch. 23.

† 3 Blackstone, p. 375, Book iii., ch. 23. See p. 370. Note.

(d.) There are cases, however, in which matters entrusted to one *as* a secret, or in confidence, may be required to be given up. Such cases may occur in a matter of private friendship, or in a case of professional confidence.\* In the case of a clergyman of our own denomination, it has been held lately that he was bound to submit a letter to the court which had been addressed to him by the accused as her pastor, and which was supposed to contain important disclosures in regard to her criminality.† In this case, however, the disclosure was not originally made by the pastor; nor was the fact of the existence of such a letter made known by him. The fact that such a letter had been sent to him, was stated by the party herself; and the court, having this knowledge of it, *demand*ed its production in court. It was submitted after taking legal advice, and the community will justify the conduct of the pastor. So the principle is regarded as well settled that a minister of religion may be required to disclose what has been communicated to him, whether at the “confessional,” or as a pastor, which may be necessary to establish the guilt of a party; and that the fact that it had been communicated in confidence, and for spiritual advice, does not constitute a reason for refusing to disclose it.

(2.) But the point before us relates rather to the in-

\* “The confidence which is placed in a counsel or solicitor, must necessarily be inviolable when the use of advocates and legal assistants is admitted. But the purposes of public justice supersede the delicacy of every other species of confidential communication. In the trial of the Dutchess of Kingston, it was determined that a friend might be bound to disclose, if necessary, in a court of justice, secrets of the most sacred nature which one sex could repose in another. And that a surgeon was bound to communicate any information whatever, which he was possessed of, in consequence of his professional attendance. And those secrets only, communicated to a counsel or attorney, are inviolable in a court of justice, which have been entrusted to them whilst acting in their respective characters to the party as their client.”—3 *Blackstone*, 370, *Note*.

† In the “Burch” case, recently tried in Chicago.

quiry when the act of giving such information becomes *guilt*, or in what circumstance is it forbidden and wrong?

Perhaps all that need to be said on this point can be reduced to three heads: when it is for base purposes; when the innocent are betrayed; and when professional confidence is violated. The illustration of these points, after what has been said, need not detain us long.

*First.* When it is for base purposes. This would include all those cases where it is for gain; where it is to secure favor; and where it is from envy, malice, spite, or revenge. The case of Doeg was, manifestly, an instance of this kind, where the motive was not that of promoting public justice, or preserving the peace of the realm, but where it was to ingratiate himself into the favor of Saul, and secure his own influence at court. The parallel case of the Ziphims (Psalm liv.) was another instance of this kind, where, so far as the narrative goes, it is supposable that the only motive was to obtain the favor of Saul, or to secure a reward, by betraying an innocent and a persecuted man who had fled to them for a secure retreat. The case of Judas Iscariot was another instance of this kind. He betrayed his Saviour; he agreed, for a paltry reward, to disclose his place of usual retreat—a place to which he had resorted so often for prayer, that Judas knew that he could be found there. It was for no wrong done to him. It was from no regard to public peace or justice. It was not because he even supposed the Saviour to be guilty. He knew that he was innocent. He even himself confessed that in the most solemn manner, and in the very presence of those with whom he had made the infamous bargain; and with just such a result as the mean and the wicked must always expect, when those for whom they have performed the mean and the wicked act, have



no further use for them.\* Such, also, is the case of the “sycophant.” That a man *might*, in some circumstances, give information about the exportation of “figs” contrary to law, or might even be required to do it, may be true; but it was equally true that it was not commonly done with any patriotic or honorable ends, but from the most base and ignoble motives; and hence the sense of mankind in regard to the nature of the transaction has been perpetuated in the word itself. So, in a school, there is often no better motive than envy, or rivalry, or malice, or a desire to obtain favor or reward, when information is given by one school boy of another; and hence the contempt and scorn with which a boy who acts under the influence of these motives is always regarded—emblem of what he is likely to meet in all his subsequent life.

*Second.* The innocent are never to be betrayed. The divine law pertaining to this seems to be perfectly plain, and the principles of that law are such as to commend themselves to the consciences of all mankind. At this point, I will read two passages of Scripture as illustrations of what that law is. The first is in Isaiah xvi. 3, 4, “Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler.” The other is in Deuteronomy xxiii. 15, 16, “Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.”

\* “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. *And they said, What is that to us?*”—Matthew xxvii. 4.

On these passages of the Bible, I remark :

1. That they seem to me to be settled principles of the law of God. There is no ambiguity in them. They have not been repealed. They are, therefore, still binding, and extend to all cases pertaining to the innocent and the oppressed.

2. They accord with the convictions of the human mind—the deep-seated principles which God has laid in our very being, as designed to guide us in our treatment of others.

3. They accord with some of the highest principles of self-sacrifice, as illustrated in history—the noblest exhibitions of human nature in giving an asylum to the oppressed and the wronged ; instances where life has been periled, or even given up, rather than that the persecuted, the innocent, and the wronged, should be surrendered or betrayed. How often, in the history of the church, has life been thus periled, because a refuge and a shelter was furnished to the persecuted Christian—the poor outcast, driven from his home under oppressive laws ! How honorable have men esteemed such acts to be ! How illustrious is the example of those who have at all hazards opened their arms to receive the oppressed, and to welcome the persecuted and the wronged ! In the year 1685, by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantz, eight hundred thousand professed followers of the Saviour — Huguenots — were driven from their homes and their country, and compelled to seek safety by flight to other lands. In their own country, fire and the sword spread desolation everywhere, and the voice of wailing filled the land. Those who could flee, did flee. The best men of France—those of noblest blood—fled in every direction, and sought a refuge in other countries. They fled—carrying with them not only the purest form, and the

best spirit of religion, but the best knowledge of the arts, to all the surrounding nations. Belgium, Holland, England, Scotland, Switzerland, opened their arms to welcome the fugitives. Our own country welcomed them—then, as now, an asylum for the oppressed. In every part of our land they found a home. Thousands of the noblest spirits—the best men of the South and the North, were composed of these exiles and wanderers. Thousands found a home in North Carolina and South Carolina; aye, *in South Carolina*—alas! where are those descendants now? But suppose the world had been barred against these exiles and wanderers. Suppose they had been driven back again to their native land, poor persecuted men and women returned to suffering and to death. What would have been the just execration of mankind at such an act?

*There is a law in this land on the subject here referred to, which cannot be executed. It is against the moral sense—the conscience of mankind, and such a law cannot be carried out. And believing, as I do, that the principles laid down in the texts of Scripture which I have quoted, are binding on the conscience, if a man should come to me as a fugitive from oppression anywhere, I would treat him precisely as I would desire that my own son should be treated in a similar case, and as I would treat my own brother. He should find in me a helper and a sympathizing friend.\**

\* I have emphasized this passage, for it was this which gave offence. In the expression which I used, "There is a law in this land on the subject here referred to which cannot be executed," I did not say that it "ought" not to be executed; nor did I mean to say that it can *never* be executed; or that there would be any organized and open resistance to its execution in any part of our country; nor did I intimate that if there should be such resistance, it ought to be countenanced. Though the language was strictly unpremeditated, yet it *happens* exactly to express the idea which I intended, though not so fully as to preclude the propriety of a few remarks in explanation of its meaning. I meant by it, then, as I expressed it, that where there is a law in any country



*Third.* Professional confidence is not to be betrayed. We have seen, in the remarks before made, that those who are employed as counsellors in the courts, cannot be required to communicate facts that are stated to them by

which is against the moral sense or the conscience of mankind, or which, however proper *some* law may be on the subject, contains provisions which require any considerable portion of the community to violate their consciences in carrying it into execution, though under a penalty, it will *in fact* not be executed in the spirit and intent of the law, or it will practically become "a dead letter," and will be inoperative. There may be no organized resistance to it, no open violence, and no actual hinderance thrown in the way of those who are appointed to carry it out, but, although *it may be executed in any particular case*, there will be so much odiousness attached to it; there will be so much expense in carrying it out; there will be so many ways of evading it; there will be so much to prevent its execution by simply standing aloof and *not* co-operating in the case, that ten cases will occur in which it will not be executed for one case where it is.

I did not mean, therefore, that in respect to the particular law referred to, there would be any organized resistance to it at the North, or any legislative interference that would set it aside, nor did I express any approbation of such a course, if there should be. On the contrary, it is a fact, that *in all the specific cases where the law has been attempted to be put in force, it has been executed*, and the North has shown all the fidelity which could be demanded, so far as public *acts* are concerned, to carry it out, and even has shown an EXCESS of zeal on this subject bordering on servility, and, as a matter of fact, the South on this score has no reason whatever to complain. On this point, the following remarks of the Princeton Review, in an article understood to have been prepared by the Rev. Dr. Hodge, are strictly in point, and are exactly just.

"On whom does the obligation to restore such slaves rest? Upon the Federal Government, or upon the state authorities? Upon the Federal Government, according to the solemn decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, our highest judicial authority. Assuming that the obligation rested upon the states, Pennsylvania passed certain laws to regulate the manner in which the Duty should be performed. The Supreme Court pronounced those laws unconstitutional, on the ground that it belonged to the Federal Government to carry into effect that provision of the Constitution. Has the General Government refused to perform that duty? It is the party on whom the obligation rests. Has it failed to discharge that obligation? Not at all. Stringent laws for carrying into effect that part of the constitutional compact have been passed by both houses of Congress, and approved by the President. The whole judicial and executive power of the Government is pledged to their execution. In not one instance have the judicial or executive officers charged with this duty failed to perform it. *So far from it, the judicial officers have notoriously erred on the other side. They have sent free men to the South as slaves, who*

their clients, but that confidential communications made to others may be demanded in promoting the interests of justice. The point now, however, relates only to the cases where professional confidence is voluntarily vio-

*have been returned on their hands. They have shocked public justice in their zeal to carry out the law.* The United States troops have been called out to secure its execution. Slaves have been returned to their masters, in some instances, at an expense of twenty, thirty, or forty thousand dollars to the Government. Educated men, professors in our colleges, have been condemned to imprisonment for attempting to interfere with the execution of the fugitive slave law. At this moment, if any Southern man can point out a slave living in Massachusetts or Vermont, he will be restored, though it should cost a hundred thousand dollars, or even a civil war. The Federal Government, the party bound, has never failed to discharge to the utmost its constitutional obligations in this matter. It is not true, therefore, that the national compact has been broken. *The North, as represented in the Federal Government, the only organ through which it can constitutionally act in the premises, has not only been faithful in this matter, but it has carried its fidelity to the verge of servility.* Contrast the zeal of the General Government in carrying out the provision of the Constitution in reference to fugitive slaves, with its conduct in regard to the provision which requires that the citizens of one state shall have in all other states the same privileges as the citizens of those states themselves. This provision of the Constitution, so far as concerns colored persons, is a dead letter in some of the Southern states. It has been formally nullified by law. A gentleman of the highest social and professional standing was sent to Charleston, peacefully and respectfully to bring the validity of that law before the United States courts. He was not allowed to do so. He was ordered and forced to leave the city. No judicial officer of the General Government has been commissioned to carry out that provision of the Constitution. United States troops have not been ordered out to secure its faithful observance. It has not been executed, and it can not be executed. The attempt to enforce its observance would inevitably split the Union, and therefore the North quietly submit." pp. 14, 15, 16.

At the same time, however, it *is* true, as alleged by the South, that very few of all those "who have escaped from service," have been restored; and it is true that this must continue to be so—especially under the law as it now stands. There is no disposition on the part of the North to do an unconstitutional act, but it may as well be understood everywhere what the real difficulty is. It is possible to conceive that a law on this subject that would be strictly constitutional might be framed that would be much more likely to be executed than the present law. The law referred to (that of 1850) *may be* "constitutional"—that is, it may have no article or clause that can be demonstrated to be contrary to the Constitution, but it is also true that another law *might be* equally "constitutional" that had few or none of the offensive features of the present law, and that would secure a much more ready acquiescence

lated, or where knowledge thus obtained is made use of in a manner which cannot be sanctioned either by the principles of honor or religion. Two such instances may be referred to as illustrations :

from the people of the North. The old law of 1793 on the subject was undoubtedly, also, *constitutional*, but was far less offensive to the people of the North than the present law. It *seems*—and indeed this has been said to have been avowed—that in the law of 1850 there were some clauses inserted in the bill which were *designed* to be as offensive to the North as possible, and yet so as to give the government the power to execute it; intended, in fact, to try the temper of the North as much as possible, by making it the duty, in certain circumstances, *of every man, under a heavy penalty*, to assist in the execution of a law which, at the same time, “according to the solemn decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, our highest judicial authority,” pertained to the Federal Government alone, and should be executed, if at all, by its own officers and armies, and not by the individual citizens or civil officers of any state.

I have advised no open resistance to the law. I have never advised or countenanced open resistance to law. When, in 1838, Pennsylvania Hall was fired by a mob—the mayor of the city, the police, the firemen, and the citizens, calmly looking on, with no attempt to disperse the mob or to extinguish the flames, and evidently with gratified feelings at the doings of the mob—I preached and printed a sermon on “The Supremacy of the Laws,” designed to show the guilt and danger of suffering the laws to be prostrated by a mob, and the fearful consequences which must follow when the laws are not executed. I should do the same thing again in any attempt to resist by violence the execution of *any* constitutional law of my country, however distasteful that law might be to me, and however, in proper circumstances, I might express my disapprobation of it, and seek, in constitutional methods, its repeal, and however I might refuse, on conscientious grounds, *to assist* in its execution, except in cases where an evil reaches such a point as to justify *revolution*, or the *overthrow of a government*, when all other methods fail, as is supposed to have been the case in our own Revolution in 1776, I do not believe that resistance is the way to remove the operation of unjust laws, or to prevent their execution. The true method, in all other cases, is to seek the change by a constitutional mode—a way secured in our country in reference to *all* laws, even when they are made a part of the very *constitution* of the land—a right reserved to every man who lives under these laws. The duty of good citizens in all such cases is to endeavor to secure the alteration of the Constitution and the laws in a peaceful manner, and, in the mean time, if their consciences will not allow them to *aid* in the execution of the laws, quietly to submit to the penalty, as the Quakers do in regard to church-rates in England, and to the militia laws in our country, but not to resort to open resistance or violence. The early Christians offered no open resistance to the laws under the government of the Emperors, but when they were required to worship Roman idols—to throw



(a.) One occurs when a clergyman, to whom such knowledge is imparted *as* a clergyman for spiritual advice, instruction, or comfort, abuses the trust reposed in him, by making use of that information for any other

even a grain of incense on the altar—rather than do this they prepared calmly to die. If they had lived under a *constitution* they would have sought at the ballot-box a change of the laws or the government; as it was, *they* suffered the penalty, and left it to time, under the providence of God, to work out what they had it not in their power to do in a peaceful manner, and what they had too much principle to attempt to do by violence.

But all this is a different question from the inquiry whether a law which violates the conscience, or which shocks the moral sense of any considerable portion of a community, *will be executed*, or whether I, as a Christian man, ought to aid in carrying it out. If I consent to be a magistrate in such a case, my duty, of course, becomes plain. But whether a Christian man should obey or refuse to comply with a law requiring him to offer incense in honor of a heathen divinity, or whether a Quaker should obey or refuse to comply with the law which requires the payment of church-rates, or which taxes a people for the purpose of waging war, is a far different inquiry, and is an inquiry which, after many struggles in the development of the principles of true liberty, it was *supposed* was well determined. At least there is very little difference of opinion on the subject in the standard writers on morality. The true principle was stated long ago, and has been generally acquiesced in as a correct principle. At any rate, it contains all that made the conduct of the Christian martyrs capable of defence. It is in the following language: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We *ought* to obey God rather than man." Acts v. 29. It is implied also in the command of the Great Teacher, "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, *and unto God the things that are God's.*" Matth. xxii. 21. The principle is, that we may refuse to exert our influence in the execution of such laws, and be blameless. On this point the following remarks of Dr. Hodge (Princeton Review, January, 1861) seem to me to be so just that they will commend themselves to every one. I have not said as much in the discourse to which this note is appended, as is implied in these remarks.

"There is a very prevalent mistake as to the responsibility of individuals for the Constitution and laws under which we live. We are bound to use all our influence to make the Constitution and laws what they ought to be. But if, without our agency, or in despite of our efforts, constitutional provisions are adopted, or laws enacted, which our conscience does not approve, it is not our fault. We are not at liberty to resist them. Submission to their operation implies no approbation. *We are not bound to co-operate in giving them effect. We may quietly refuse, and submit to the legal penalty.* It is thus the Quakers act with regard to church-rates in England, and to the militia laws in this country. They do not muster for military training as the law requires, but they pay the prescribed penalty. The moral responsibility of such laws

purpose whatever. It is entrusted to him for that purpose alone. It is understood that the secret is to be with him. It is committed to him as a man of honor. The secret is lodged with him, with the implied under-

rests upon those who pass them, not on those who have no agency either in their enactment or their execution." \*

I might have said, and would have said it if the train of thought in the Lecture had demanded it, that I would not go into any state or country where oppression prevails and excite an insurrection; that I would not go and present an inducement to a slave to escape from his master; that I would not send an agent there for that purpose, or lend my countenance to such an agency; that I would not uphold, but would set myself against any purpose to invade a state secretly or publicly with a view to excite slaves against their masters; and that I would not by force or violence interfere with the law existing on this subject. What I would do, and all that I would do, except in endeavoring to secure a constitutional change of laws, should be done by the fair influence of the Gospel in disposing the hearts of men to "do to others as they would that others should do to them." So I understand the early Christians did in regard to slavery, to idolatry, and to every other form of evil that was entrenched in the laws. No man ever heard me utter a word, in public or in private, or ever will, in defence of the "*raid*" at Harper's Ferry, or in condemnation of the act of Virginia in punishing the perpetrators of that act, or in the expression of any doubt as to the propriety of that punishment, saving perhaps the utterance of a doubt whether the principal actor in that scene was not so far an insane man that all the interests of justice might have been secured by his perpetual imprisonment—putting it out of his power to do the same thing again.

Except in stating and defending the great principles of liberty, my duty to one who is held in servitude *begins when he comes to me*:—when he comes a fugitive and needs shelter; when he comes hungry and needs bread, thirsty and needs drink, naked and needs to be clothed, a stranger and asks me to take him in, an ignorant man and asks for a guide to a better land or a better world, a man trembling with fear and needing a sympathizing word—when he comes to me panting for that freedom to which, in accordance with the principles of our Declaration of Independence and the Bible, I believe God has entitled all men; when he sighs for the same liberty which I enjoy, and wishes that his children may possess the same freedom as mine; when, having thus come to me, the question occurs whether I shall inform of him, or force him back to bondage, or help him in securing that which I have been taught to regard as the right of all men, and which I have learned to value beyond all price—liberty. Here then comes to me a voice from the Bible, from my nature, from the patriot deeds and bloody fields of the Revolution, from the Declaration of Independence, from the universal sentiment of humanity, which

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\* The *italics* are my own.

standing that it is there to remain, and to be employed *only* for that purpose. Whether at the “confessional” of the Roman Catholic, or whether made in the confidence reposed in a Protestant pastor, the principle in the

I dare not and will not disobey; and in *saying* this, I am only saying what the great mass of men *feel*, though multitudes do not dare to express it. In thus saying, I am only declaring that I would *act* as others *do* act, and *will* act in such circumstances, though they might not think it wise or prudent to say it.

It is there, and there only, I apprehend, when a man thus comes to me—a fugitive, poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, and a stranger, that my duty *begins*. *But there it DOES begin*—for thus it will be said on the final day to numberless millions: “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*”

To this long note I may add that these views are not the result of mere abstract study and reflection. I have been taught a practical lesson on this subject which I shall not be likely to forget in this world, or ever. About twenty-five years ago, as I was entering the gate of my church to go into my study in the morning, while it was yet quite dark, I saw standing at my gate a fine-looking colored man, apparently about twenty-five or thirty years of age, who addressed me, and told me, after a little conversation, that he was a runaway slave from Maryland, and desired some assistance to help him forward. Influenced by feelings which prevailed commonly at that time, and, as I then thought, in accordance with the Bible, I endeavored to show him the impropriety of his leaving his master, and to convince him that he ought to return. I labored to prove this from the Bible, but I observed that I made no impression on his mind. I referred him, as many would do now, to the case of Onesimus (Epistle to Philemon), and tried to show him that the Apostle Paul had returned a fugitive slave to his master, but he was wholly insensible to the force of my reasoning. Satisfied that I was right, and that he was wrong, I declined to aid him, and left him. Yet the remembrance of the act did not leave me. I was induced to re-examine the position which I had taken, and the force of the reasoning which I employed on that occasion. For the error which I committed in that case I have never ceased to feel regret, and as I believe that I did him a wrong, and since I cannot repair the wrong which I did to that poor stranger—a man descended from the same ancestor as myself, and redeemed by the same blood, and entitled by him who made him to all the blessings of liberty which have ever been conferred on me, I owe a debt, which I intend to discharge, as I may have opportunity *always*, to suffering humanity. *From the beginning of the world I do not believe that any slave who has escaped from his master, has been induced to return into bondage by any reasoning drawn from the Bible, or that the slightest impression has ever been made on any such man's mind, by all the commentaries in favor of returning slaves to their masters, which have been written on the Epistle to Philemon!*



case is the same. Whatever advantage may be taken of that for the promotion of any other ends; whatever object the minister of religion may propose to secure, based on the fact that he is in possession of that secret; whatever influence he may choose to exert, founded on the assumption that he *could* divulge it; whatever statement he may make in regard to such a person, based on the fact that he is in possession of knowledge which he has, but which he is not at liberty to communicate, and designed to injure the person; whatever use he may make of it as enabling him to form an estimate for his own purposes of what occurs in a family; or, in general, whatever communication he may make of it, of any kind, except under process of law, and because the law demands it, is to be regarded as a betrayal of professional confidence. The interests of religion require that a pastor should be regarded as among the most faithful of confidential friends; and no man, or class of men, should be placed in such circumstances that they may, at the "confessional," or in any other way, have the means of arriving at secrets which may be employed for any purposes of their own whatever.

(b.) It is a breach of professional confidence when a lawyer is entrusted with knowledge in one case by a client, which, by being employed in another case, and on another occasion, he uses against him. The secret, whatever it may be, which is entrusted to him by a client, is for that case alone; and is, to all intents, *to die* when that case is determined. It is dishonorable in any way for him to engage as counsel for another party against his former client when, by even the remotest possibility, the knowledge obtained in the former occurrence could come as an element in the determination of the case, or could be made use of to the advantage of his new client.

Every sentiment of honesty and honor demands that if there is a *possibility* of this, or if there would be the remotest *temptation* of the kind, he should at once promptly and firmly decline to engage against his former client. Every sentiment of honor demands that such confidential disclosures should be held sacred in the bosom, and should on no account, and under no pretence, be made subservient to the interests of the advocate himself, or be employed to the injury of the man who has confided in him.

In human nature fallen, and, as I believe, wholly destitute of holiness, or of any tendency to spiritual good, there are two classes of propensities or principles :—those which are generous, magnanimous, gentle, kind, benevolent, large-hearted, humane, noble ; and there are those which are low, grovelling, sordid, sycophantic, mean, ignoble.

Though man is destitute of holiness, and though, as I believe, not one or all of these things which I have referred to as generous and noble, can by cultivation become true religion, or constitute, by mere development, what is needful to secure the salvation of the soul, yet they *are* to be cultivated, for they are invaluable in society, and necessary to the happiness and the progress of mankind. On these things, more than on most other things, the happiness of families, and the welfare of the world depend ; and whatever may be our views of the necessity and value of religion, we are not required to undervalue “ the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” or those virtues which we connect, in our apprehensions, with that which is manly and honorable, and which tend to elevate and ennoble the race.

Christianity has, if I may so express it, a “ natural

affinity" for one class of these propensities ; it has none for the other. It, too, is generous, humane, gentle, kind, benevolent, noble ; and it blends easily with these things when it finds them in human nature, and produces them in the soul which is fully under its influence, where they did not exist before. It has no more affinity for that which is mean, ignoble, morose, sycophantic, than it has for profanity or falsehood ; for dishonesty or fraud ; for licentiousness or ambition.

That true religion may be found in hearts where these virtues, so generous and noble, are not developed, or where there is not a little that dishonors religion as *not* large, and liberal, and courteous, and gentlemanly, it is, perhaps, impossible to deny. There are souls essentially so mean, so sycophantic, so narrow, so sour, and so morose, that a large part of the work of sanctification *seems* to be reserved for the close of life — for that mysterious and unexplained process by which all who are redeemed are made perfect when they pass "through the valley of the shadow of death." But though there *may* be religion in such a case, it is among the lowest forms of piety. What is mean, ignoble, and narrow, is no part of the religion, and can never be transmuted into it.

There has come down to us as the result of the progress of civilization in this world, and with the highest approbation of mankind, a class of virtues connected with the ideas of honor and honorableness. That the sentiment of honor has been abused among men ; that an attempt has been made to make it the governing principle in cases where conscience should rule ; that in doing this it has established a code which, in many respects, is a departure from the rules of morality, there can be no doubt ; but still there *are* just principles of honor which Christianity does not disdain ; which are to be incorporated



into our principles of religion, and which we are to endeavor to instill into the hearts of our children. Whatever there is in the world that is "true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report;" whatever belongs to the name of "virtue," and whatever deserves "praise,"\* is to be blended with our religion, constituting our idea of a Christian man.

It is the blending of these things—the union of Christian principle with what is noble, and manly, and generous, and humane, which, in any case, entitles to the highest appellation which can be given to any of our race, that of **THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.**

\* Phil. iv. 8.