

# THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

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No. 2. VOL. XIX.]

FEBRUARY, 1845.

[WHOLE No. 218.]

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## SERMON CCCXC.

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### THE DUTIES WHICH THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OWE TO EACH OTHER.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, as also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been made to drink into one spirit. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 26.

THE subject which, from these words, I propose to illustrate, is *the duties which the members of the church owe to each other.*

There are duties which every society owes to itself, as there are duties which every individual owes to himself. Those duties arise from the nature and objects of the association. They are such as pertain to its own strength and respectability; to the conduct and welfare of its members; and to mutual help and counsel in relation to the purpose for which the society has been formed. A society *may be* of such a nature that a large part of its duties will relate own to its internal affairs; or it may be of a kind designed to act extensively on those around it, and yet its whole efficiency will depend on its vigilance over its own members.

Taking the church of Christ at large, there is perhaps nothing more remarkable than the little interest which the members have in each other. In many cases the entire vigilance over the conduct of the members devolves on a few, or perhaps on the pastor alone; in many instances the amount of interest and sympathy extends only to a civil recognition; in others there is not even the interest which secures the most distant acquaintanceship. In numerous instances those who enter a Christian church are left to struggle with difficulties and embarrassments without sympathy, where they feel no more at liberty to call on a member of the church for counsel or aid than they would on any other person; in many cases they struggle along with their spiritual conflicts disheartened and discouraged,

with no reason to suppose that a single member of the church sympathizes with them; in not a few instances members of the church are known to others to be living in the neglect of duty, or to be conformed apparently entirely to the world, and no one feels under obligation to administer the most gentle rebuke. In many instances also the members go astray, where a kind word from some one of greater age and experience would have saved them from a melancholy fall, and the church from open disgrace.

This is the more remarkable, from the condition in which many are when they become members of the church. Many of them are young and quite inexperienced. Most of them have just entered on the Christian life, and religion is with them like a grain of mustard seed. Many of them are in families where there is no religion, and where they can place no reliance on their kindred to "help them on to God." Many of them are thrown into circles where they are exposed to great temptations, or are engaged in kinds of business where there is every prospect that they will go astray. Add to this, that not a few of them are poor, and need assistance; not a few are called to descend from a state of affluence through great reverses, when a sympathizing word would be to them of inestimable value; and not a few are descending into the vale of years who seem to be forgotten in the prayers and sympathies of all those who are in the bloom and vigor of the Christian life.

It has become a very serious question whether it would be possible to restore that artificial thing which we call *the church*, to the model contemplated in the New Testament. The circumstances of the world have so changed, and the church seems to sustain so many relations to the world not contemplated by the organization of the New Testament churches, that it is a matter of grave inquiry whether it would be possible to restore that model; perhaps with many it would be a question whether it would be even desirable if it could be done. It can be very readily seen, from the slightest acquaintance with the New Testament, that no church approximates the model that was contemplated by the Saviour and the Apostles, and it might be made a serious question with some, whether the progress of society has not suggested some valuable improvement on the original pattern, and whether it be not like some republic or democracy that, with a very imperfect and rude constitution, answered well enough for the half barbarous age in which it was founded, but in which such amendments to the constitution have been made in conformity with the demands of increasing light and civilization, that a removal of those amendments, and a return to the primitive model, would be in fact a relapse into barbarism. What, for example, would any one of our churches become, if everything adventitious and foreign were removed, and it were at once placed on the model of the New Testament?

Hopeless, however, as it may seem to bring matters back where

they were, it is useful from time to time to recur to these ancient records, and to ask what the church of the New Testament was in its internal organization; in its relation to the world; and in the relation of its members one to another. I propose to state some of those things. With the New Testament before us, and throwing ourselves into apostolic times, let us inquire what the Christian church is.

I. First, it is a community separate from other communities. It has an organization of its own, and that organization is complete. It has its peculiar laws for its own internal regulation, and for the regulation of all its members in their intercourse with each other, and with those that are "without." It recognizes no dependence on any other society for the promotion of its objects, and allows no foreign influence to come in and attempt to control it. It asks no patronage from the state; no support of the civil arm or purse; and it sues for no toleration. Its right to be in the world, and to pursue its own independent movements, is original and independent of the state, and is not a *tolerated* right. Though surrounded by other communities, it is independent of them all; and, in a most important sense, *separate* from them all. There *is* a sense which is not merely metaphorical and constructive, in which every member of that church separates himself from the world, and regards himself as no longer pertaining to it. This idea in regard to the church is found in such expressions as the following: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."—John xvii. 16. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."—John xv. 19. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."—James iv. 4. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—1 John ii. xv. "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."—John v. 19. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 3. "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein."—Rom. vi. 2. "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive unto God."—Rom. vi. 11. So the church is described not only as a community unlike that which constitutes the world, but as in an important sense, separate from it, or having no fellowship with it in its peculiar aims and plans. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? 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, and ye shall be my sons and daugh-

ters, saith the Lord Almighty."—2 Cor. vi. 14. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."—Rev. xviii. 4. "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."—Rom. xii. 2.

I have selected these passages, out of many more of the same kind that might be referred to, to show that the primitive idea of the church was that of a community distinct from the world, and in an important sense separate from it. In exactly what sense, and to what extent, it is to be separate, is not now the question before us, and there would not be time now to answer the question. The *general* idea is, that it has its own laws and regulations, and that the world has no right to interfere with them; that it is governed by different principles, and has different aims from all other communities; that for its own principles and aims those of the world are never to be substituted; that its spirit is to be unlike that of the world, and that though its members of necessity mingle much with the world, there should be such a marked difference that there need be no difficulty in distinguishing one from the other.

II. In the second place, the church, according to the model of the New Testament, is a community characterized by mutual love among its own members. My meaning is, that *love* is to be the distinguishing badge; the thing by which the members of the church are to know each other, and to be known; and the thing by which eminently they are to impress the world with the belief of the reality of their religion. Other societies have pledges and badges of their own. In some it is a secret sign, known only to the initiated, but which will be understood all over the world, and will be a passport to the confidence of a brother of the same craft everywhere. In others it is some peculiarity of speech or dress; some catch-word, rosette, or ribbon. In others it is some mystic sentence of a learned language, the initials of whose words only are exhibited to the world. In others it is in a written constitution, and in subscription to its articles. In others it is a common seal or banner. In others it is a cut of a cap, or the tonsure of the hair. Now it is remarkable that the Saviour and his Apostles prescribed no such external badge of membership or office, either for the officers or members of the society which they originated. This is the more remarkable because, perhaps every society then, as now, could be known by such an outward badge. The Jew would be known everywhere by his broad phylacteries and the borders of his garments; and, it was probably the case, that the Greek who had been introduced into the Eleusinian mysteries had some outward method of expressing that fact to the world everywhere. Nothing would have been easier than for the Saviour to have appointed some such badge for his own followers, for the great facts of his religion would

have furnished striking emblems in abundance. His ministers might have been directed, when they officiated, to encircle their brows with a crown of thorns; or the figure of a cross wrought with imperishable dye in the skin, like the mark which the Roman soldier often adopted, or worn near the heart, made of gold, bestud with diamonds, would have constituted such a badge. Some peculiarity of dress; some stereotyped and inconvenient fashion, soon to be ridiculously antiquated and singular, might have characterized his members; or some gorgeous vestment, often changed, might have made known the ministers of his religion. But you will search the records of his religion in vain for even the slightest *hint* which justifies the adoption of any such badge of distinction. There is not the most distant intimation that either his people or his ministers are to be so distinguished; nor, to meet all that there is in the New Testament, are they required in the slightest degree to deviate from the decencies and proprieties of ordinary social life. No one can fail to admire the beautiful simplicity of the New Testament arrangements in this respect; or perhaps to wonder that the founder of this new society did not imitate all others, and adopt some external badge by which to distinguish its members.

But was there no badge; no mark of distinction? I answer, yes—and one that was as beautiful, appropriate, and distinguishing, as it was original. It was LOVE. See how this is represented by the Master himself, and his apostles. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*”—John xiii. 34, 35. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”—1 John iii. 14. “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”—1 John iii. 23. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”—1 John iii. 14. “If a man say, I love God. and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”—1 John iv. 20. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.”—Romans xii. 10. “As touching brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”—1 Thess. iv. 9.

Such are specimens only of the New Testament language on the subject. Who can fail to be struck with the force of the first one quoted, and which was evidently the *germ* out of which all that is elsewhere said in the New Testament has sprung: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*”

I have said that this was as beautiful, appropriate, and distinguishing, as it was original. The Pharisee was known by his external rites of religion, and the peculiarity of his dress; the military man by his cloak, his sword, or by the mark of favor which a grateful country permitted him to wear; the Essene by his squalid habiliments and his contempt of the proprieties of life; the member of a secret society by some mystic sign or mark. In none of these cases had *love for each other* been the distinguishing and peculiar badge by which they were to be known. By no such badges, however, were the members of the Christian society to be known. Nor was it to be by any distinction of wealth, learning, or fame; by any peculiarity of speech, any outrage of the laws of grammar, any customs of dress that would shock the decencies of life, or by any affected prettiness or gorgeousness, in the apparel of its members or ministers. *They were to be distinguished all over the world, and in all ages, by tender and constant attachment for each other.* This was to surmount all distinction of country, of color, of rank, of office, of sect. Here they were to feel that they were on a level, that they had common wants, had been redeemed by the same blood, were going to the same heaven, and were in every respect *brethren*. There was to be *something* about this love so original, peculiar and universal, that it would serve to distinguish Christians all over the world.

Was it possible that this could be? It would hardly seem so if we were to judge of the church as it is now. Was it ever sufficient to constitute such a distinguishing badge? Yes it was, and the time has been when the attachment of Christians for each other has been such as to impress the world with the reality of their religion, and with the fact that they belonged to the family of the redeemed. They were once persecuted. "See," said the Heathen, "how these Christians love one another, and how ready they are to lay down their lives for each other." Is there still a lingering doubt how *love* could be the badge of discipleship, and could prove that they were of the same family of the redeemed? Can love, then, never be the indication of kindred, of relationship, of our belonging to the same community? Crowds of the young and old press on the bank of a river, and a little child falls in. Amidst the multitudes on the shore, is it difficult to ascertain who is the mother? A youth is led to the stake and chained, and the faggots are piled up, and tar and oil are poured on to make the flame quicker and hotter. There comes an old man, tottering and trembling, and says, '*release that youth, and let me die; I am old and decrepid, and can no more benefit my family or the world. He* has a sister, and a mother, and an aged sire, who are dependent on him. Let these withered limbs of mine feel the flame, but let him live. Disciples of the same Lord, I might die as well as he, and I pray that I *may* be permitted to lay down my life for my younger

Christian brother.' Would there be any doubt what flame burned still on the warm heart of that trembling old man? And if, as has been, when one was doomed to die for his religion, crowds pressed forward and asked that *they* might die; if, as has been in such scenes, the young, the beautiful, and the accomplished—those nursed in the lap of ease and affluence—pressed forward and asked that *they* might die to save a Christian friend, would there be any doubt that love *might* be a badge of religion? You will say, perhaps, that it is not so now. I answer, for anything that you can tell, if persecutions were to arise, these scenes might be acted over again. But *if* there is not religion enough in the church to do this, I answer further, that in this discourse my aim is not to describe the church as it *is*, but as the New Testament model represents it.

III. In the third place, the church, as represented in the New Testament, is a community characterized by peculiar *sympathy* for those of its own members who suffer. The members of the church are indeed expected and required to have sympathy for all who are afflicted, but the idea is, that it is their duty in a peculiar manner to sympathize with each other, and that what affects one should affect all. It is supposed that Christians will be exposed to the same kind of afflictions as others, and that they will also have many sources of sorrow peculiar to themselves. They are liable to sickness, and bereavement, and poverty, like others; they are exposed to persecutions and trials on account of their religion, and they have internal conflicts and struggles unknown to other men. They have also peculiar *joys*, as they have peculiar sorrows; and alike in the one and the other, it is supposed that they will find cordial sympathy among their brethren. It is supposed that they are one body, and that in whatever part of that body there is joy or sorrow the whole will sympathize with it.

This idea occurs so often in the New Testament, that it cannot be expected that I should adduce all the passages which refer to it. A few must suffice. My text, in the connexion in which it stands, is one of the most prominent of those passages. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." The application of this to the human body is obvious. Such is the frame—so delicately constituted is it—such is the formation of the nervous fibres, and the tissues, that pain in one part affects the whole frame; that joy in one part diffuses itself over all. A pain in the heart, the side, or in one of the limbs, does not confine itself there, leaving the rest of the body in a state fitted for its usual employments, but every part sympathizes with that which is affected. And so the pleasure which we receive from beauty as seen by the eye, or from the melody and harmony of numbers as perceived by the ear, is diffused

over the whole frame, and we are filled with enjoyment. The same is supposed to be the effect in the church of Christ. What affects one member affects all. What gives pain to one, gives pain to all. What honors one, honors all; and as an injury done to a nerve in the body, though so small as to be scarcely traceable to an unpracticed eye, may be felt at the remotest extremities, and on the most important functions of life, so it is in the body of Christ. The dishonor done to the obscurest member should be felt by all; the honor done to that member should produce rejoicing. No member of the church should be regarded as so obscure or worthless that his happiness or sorrow should excite no sympathy among his brethren—as you can make no part of the frame so obscure as to be lost on the sympathies of the whole. “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

We have the same idea presented substantially in the following passages. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice. and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another.”—Rom. xii. 15, 16. “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”—Heb. xiii. 3. “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”—Rom. xv. 1–3. A church founded on this model would be a community where every member would regard every other one as a brother; where he would rejoice to hear of his welfare, and would sympathize in his griefs; where he would feel pleasure in any honor conferred on any other member, and would be ready to aid him in his sorrows. Without any officious intermeddling with the private concerns of individuals, there would be such an interest felt in the common welfare of the whole, that each one might be certain that he might depend on the sympathy of his brethren at all times, and in all circumstances.

Without attempting further to illustrate this point in general, let me for a moment refer to one aspect of the church to which it is always applicable, and in which the duty referred to may be discharged. I allude to the condition of the *youthful* members of the church, and the claims which they have on the kindness and sympathy of their older brethren. It now happens, and, under the influence of Sabbath school instruction, will happen more and more, that a large proportion of those who become members of the church enter it at quite an early period of life.

It is unnecessary to speak particularly of their condition then. They are inexperienced, alike in the world, and in religion. They have hearts susceptible to all impressions, good and bad. They are surrounded by evil influences from without, and there are



many who would rejoice in any false step which they might make, and any dishonor which they might bring on the cause which they have espoused. They have professedly left the world, and they can no longer look to it for its sympathy. They need instruction; they need counsel in perplexity; they need the strengthening influence of the prayers of the church; they need the watchful eye of those who love Zion; they need a kind word in their difficulties; they need an affectionate voice of admonition if they go astray. Perhaps they need aid in their business; and, not only that they may prosper in that business, but that they may honor religion in it, they need the counsel of those who have experience. What their circumstances require is, not only that they may feel free to seek the spiritual advice of their pastor, but that they may seek counsel on all subjects from their Christian brethren. No man knows what service he may be rendering to the cause of religion, by a word of affectionate encouragement and counsel to a young member of the church. He who takes a Christian youth by the hand and saves him from temptation, or encourages him to open his heart freely to him, or helps him in his efforts to get into some useful employment, or assists him in obtaining an education for the ministry, may be doing the most important service to religion which he can ever render, for he does that which shall be telling on the welfare of Zion long after he shall have gone to his rest.

IV. In the fourth place, the church, according to the model in the New Testament, is a community in which its members accommodate themselves and their conduct, so far as can be done with a good conscience, to the views and scruples of their brethren. It is a community in which it is the duty of its members not to give needless offence to their brethren; not to do that, unless conscience requires it, which others regard as wrong, and to be ready to sacrifice what they may regard as harmless indulgence, if it should be the occasion of leading others into sin. This important principle it is my business now to show was laid down by those who had authority to give laws to the church, and was cheerfully practised by themselves. Having shown this, the question will arise, in what circumstances the application of the principle is demanded now.

We are naturally reminded of the conduct of the Saviour, as stated in a passage already referred to. "For even Christ pleased not himself."—Rom. xv. 3; comp. John vi. 38. It was not his object to gratify himself; nor did he ever do anything which would lead the most ignorant of his followers into sin. He indulged in nothing that could give offence to any who were most anxious to lead lives of deadness to the world, and evinced throughout a readiness to deny himself of any personal gratification which could be indulged in only at the hazard of the souls of men. And so it is said of all Christians: "None of us liveth to himself; and no man dieth to himself."—Rom. xiv. 7.

But was it the idea that, from respect to the opinions and feelings of others, it was proper to give up what would otherwise be regarded as innocent and harmless? Was it ever the idea that the conduct of a member of the church was to be influenced by the views of his brethren, so as to lead him to sacrifice what he would himself regard as harmless and proper? And ought a reference to the feelings, the views, and the weaknesses of our brethren, to be allowed to regulate our own conduct in anything that is not a matter of conscience? We have a very striking case, in answer to this question, in the conduct of the Apostle Paul. The question arose in the primitive church, whether it was lawful for a Christian to eat the flesh offered in sacrifice to idols. It was urged, on the one hand, that if this were done it would seem to lend a sanction to idolatry, and would lead the feebler members of the church, who were not accustomed to nice discrimination in reasoning, into sin. On the other hand, it was alleged that the eating of flesh that was exposed for sale was not unlawful, and that the purpose for which it was offered could not affect the question whether it was lawful to partake of it. Paul was clearly (1 Cor. viii.) of the latter opinion, and yet the former consideration decided him in regard to his own practice. The eating of meat could not be with him a matter of conscience, and if his doing it were the occasion of leading one into sin, he was willing to forego the indulgence. Hence he so firmly says: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."—1 Co. viii. 13.

A question of similar character, and perhaps in the same connexion, came up in regard to the use of wine, and the Apostle stated a similar principle, that, whatever might be his own convictions as to the absolute lawfulness of the practice, it could not be right if it were the occasion of leading others to sin. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."—Rom. xiv. 21. His own general rule in all such matters, he has elsewhere stated: "I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain those under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."—1 Cor. ix. 19—22.

The general principle, as an illustration of what the Christian church is to be, is here plain. It is this: 'There are some things which are right or wrong in themselves. They depend on the positive enactments of God, and on the eternal distinctions of things,

and cannot be compromised, modified, or disregarded. There are other things, however, which may be regarded as matters of personal comfort, convenience, or gratification. They are clearly right in themselves, but they may be so connected, or there may be such associations in regard to them, or others may entertain such views of them, that indulgence in them by us will be an injury to others. It may shock or pain them as if we were doing wrong; or, acting on our example, they may be led farther than we would go, and fall into sin; or they may be led by our example to do that which they *now* regard as sin, and which would be sin to them. In such a case, the course which *we* are to pursue becomes clear, and it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby a brother is offended, or is made weak.'

This was the principle on which the Christian church was evidently founded, and on which the Apostle Paul acted. It may be observed here that it is a principle for which there will always be occasion in the church. The particular questions in connexion with which it was stated may not occur, but questions precisely similar are occurring in every age, and under the numerous phases in which society appears. There are certain things which are absolutely right, and always right, and from the obligation to do which no modification of society or custom can absolve us; and there are certain things which are absolutely wrong, and always wrong, and which no modification of society can make right. And there are certain things, always quite numerous, where the consciences of some are entirely clear as to their lawfulness, and of others much in doubt, or when the tendency of indulgence would be to lead others into sin. In such cases, what is Christian duty! What would Paul do?

We will take two cases, one of which Paul has himself referred to; the other not.

The one is the use of wine. You regard it as lawful. You think the Scriptures do not condemn its use, and refer to the example of the Saviour in justification of its use. But many of your Christian brethren have strong doubts on the subject; no matter whether well founded or not. What is more to the purpose, perhaps, is, that many of them might not be as *safe* in the use of it as you would be. They are younger; they are liable to be invited to places where you would not be; and there is a moral certainty that, sustained by your example, they will be led to excessive indulgence, and may bring reproach on the religion which you and they profess to love. *In such cases, what would Paul do?* Would it be found on his own table; would his conduct be such that it *could be construed* in favor of that which had led others astray? *We know what his conduct would be.* "It is good not to drink wine, or anything whereby a brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak.'

The other case you have probably anticipated. It is that of dancing. You think it not wrong, though the arguments on which a Christian justifies it have not yet been submitted to the public. You would refer in this instance to neither the example of the Saviour or his Apostles, nor to any recorded experience of theirs as to its lawfulness for a Christian. But there are, we will suppose, views which make you think that it is not inconsistent with the proper spirit of a Christian, and the precepts of the New Testament. Meantime there *are* very different views among your brethren. They have no doubt about it, and they do not hesitate to express their conviction that it is inconsistent with the general spirit of the New Testament, and with the proper example of a Christian. Some of these may be among the "weaker" members of the church, but not all. There are found the great mass of the most devoted and useful ministers of the gospel in all denominations, and many, very many, of the most spiritual and exemplary members of the churches. I may make an appeal to you yourself on this subject just here, which I mean shall convey no invidious idea, and excite no invidious comparison. It is, whether, as far as your own observation has extended, you do not yourselves believe that the most consistent and devoted members of the church—they who have the most *enjoyment* in religion—regard it as improper for Christians. If you find a very devoted and eminent Christian, do you, or do you not expect to find him in the ball-room, and do you expect that he will regard this species of amusement as that which is proper for a Christian? But still more to the purpose. This practice which *you* regard as proper, and in which, for supposition *only*, we will regard as safe for you, will not be as safe for all. There are the young, the inexperienced, the "weak," in the church. There are those of little education, of ill-balanced minds, of the imperfectly subdued love of the world. There are those who are surrounded with more temptations than you are, and there is a moral certainty that, sustained by your example, they will be led into sin. In such circumstances, what would Paul do? Am I wrong in inferring, from the principles which he has laid down, that he would not enter a ball-room "while the world stands?" If I am wrong, will you tell me exactly where there is a link wanting in the chain of reasoning by which I am conducted to this conclusion?

V. In the fifth place, the church is a community in which it is contemplated that there shall be mutual admonition among the members, if they go astray. I will not now tax your patience by illustrating this point at length, though it is a point which I had designed to make somewhat prominent. Yet it was an elementary idea in the early conception of the Christian church. Look at the fundamental principle laid down by the Saviour: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

—Matth. xviii. 15. “*Thy brother;*” that is, clearly, a fellow member of the church. You are not to blazon it abroad; you are not to allow the *suspicion* that he has done you wrong to lie and rankle and fester in your own mind; you are not to allow it to make you cold, and distant, and evasive and repulsive when you meet him, without his knowing the cause; you are not to whisper your suspicions to this one and that one with the hope that *they* will hint to your ‘brother’ that he has offended you; you are not to send him an anonymous letter, or a message by any one; you are to ‘go’ to him, and see him by himself, and give him an opportunity of explanation or confession. If he ‘hears’ you, you have gained him; and if he repents, you are to forgive him ‘even till seventy times seven,’ and to no one else are you to say any thing about it. Math. xviii. 22. “If thy brother trespass against thee,” said the Saviour again, “rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him.” Luke xvii. 3. And so said the old Mosaic statute: “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.” Lev. xix. 17.

But I may not dwell on this duty, though its illustration might be easily made to occupy the time of a whole discourse. I will just say, that the church is not now in this respect what it was contemplated it should be. Almost the whole of the painful duty—for it *is* a painful duty—of rebuking an erring brother, is supposed to devolve on the pastor; and there are many who would not *receive* a rebuke from any other, even if they would from him. Nothing is more common than for members of the church to see other members going astray, or leading what they regard as inconsistent lives, without feeling the slightest obligation on themselves to rebuke them or to attempt to reclaim them. It would be said by these that the customs of society, and the different ranks and circles of life, and the fact that the offenders are rich, and that they are themselves poor, make it impossible and improper for *them* to attempt to administer a word of kind admonition. And this illustrates just the point before me, that the church is not now what it was in the time of the Saviour, and what it was contemplated it should be. It is an artificial thing, in which a thousand rules and institutions have come in to displace those of the New Testament, and to make it, at large, almost essentially unlike the ‘platform’ of a church there laid down.

Yet I cannot forbear, in conclusion, to advert in one word, to the beautiful conception—the *beau ideal* of the church as organized in the New Testament. It is a society essentially unlike that of the world; organized on pure and holy principles; and intended to be governed by peculiar laws. It contemplates that its members shall perform with honesty, fidelity, and purity, all the relative duties which they owe to their kindred, their neighbors, their country; but on principles not of policy, expediency, or worldly morality, but found in its own code of laws. It is a community whose badge and

characteristic is love for its own members—a peculiar love founded on their common redemption and hope of heaven, and their attachment to a common Saviour, and which knows no distinction of color, caste, age, or country—a love so strong and pure that it is to be seen by the world to be a new element in human conduct; the development of a new law. It is a community where there is sympathy, deep and sincere, for its suffering members, and where, as in the human body, joy or sorrow in one part thrills along the whole frame.—It is a community requiring of us mutual kindness, concession, and forbearance; a careful solicitude not to offend, and not to lead others into sin; a willingness to forego our own comforts and indulgences if we may help others who are feeble and weak on to heaven. It is a community all of whose members are liable to go astray, but in which each member feels an interest in the welfare of every other, and who, whenever he wanders, would by prayer and supplication and appropriate personal effort, seek to lead him back to the paths of pure religion. Such were some of the features of the New Testament church; had this always been its character, long since its glory would have enlightened all lands, and the earth would have been filled with the knowledge of salvation.

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## S E R M O N C C C X C I .

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### THE NATURE AND EMPLOYMENT OF HOLY ANGELS.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.”—Hebrews i. 14.

FROM the earliest ages, mankind seem to have had some conceptions of an order of beings superior to themselves. Nor, when we contemplate our situation, is this surprising. We see orders of beings *below* us in rank—beasts, fishes, reptiles, and insects; and it is reasonable to conclude, that there are orders of beings likewise *above* us, in the scale of dignity and intelligence. We know not why there should be any gaps or chasms in the creation of God; why that chain should be broken, of which man seems the middle link, and which stretches from the incomprehensible Jehovah down to the half-formed animalculæ. We, indeed, know nothing *certain*, respecting this, but by revelation; yet, as the restless mind of man has been ever conjecturing, it is not strange, that when there was so