

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

I.

GOD'S MORAL SYSTEM, SUPERIOR TO THE MATERIAL.

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“ And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”—LUKE XVI. 17.

THE conception of the Material System is naturally accompanied in the mind by the impression of its permanence. Even the child perceives the solidity and hardness of the objects that surround him; and their power at once so absolutely to uphold and to restrict him, may well seem the evidence of their necessary duration. And as he comes to understand more fully the extent, and structure, and the history of the system, this first impression is naturally confirmed. As he learns how vast the Earth is,—not bounded by the horizon as he supposed, but bearing upon its mighty bosom islands, and realms, and empires, and continents even, with fathomless oceans poured round them as their drapery; as he examines the physical structure of the earth, and drives his drill into the granite bars that lock and interlock beneath its surface, or traces the ridges of rock and iron that stretch across it as its ribs of strength; as he follows backward the many generations that in succession have lived and labored upon its globe, and feels how changeless it has been through all their changes,—how absolutely it is now the same as when the Roman eagles traversed its surface, as when the temple of the Sun was standing in Palmyra, as when the hundred-gated Thebes stretched its stupendous front along the Nile; nay, as passing backward from even this computation he learns through what vast cycles and periods, and into what remote, impenetrable abysses, the researches of the naturalist seem to carry its duration:—and most of all, as rising from this view of the Earth, he learns to comprehend in some degree the magnitude of the System in which it is but part,

XIV.

THE PLACE AND IMPORTANCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL.

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"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."—1 Cor. xii. 20, 21.

My remarks on this occasion will have a single object. They will be designed to impress upon my hearers a sense of personal obligation in the cause of religion; the obligation resting on us as individuals. In doing this, I shall endeavor to ascertain the place and the importance of the individual in the social organization, and particularly in the church:—"There are many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." It will contribute to give order to the remarks which I propose to make, if I arrange them under the three following heads:—the erroneous views which prevail in regard to the place and the importance of the individual; the place which, according to the divine arrangements, he *necessarily* occupies in the social organization, and the place which he may *voluntarily* occupy in promoting the cause of religion.

I. First, the erroneous views which prevail in regard to the place and importance of the individual.

In regard to this, there are two quite opposite errors, though not equally bordering on virtue, or equally harmless.

1. The one which is most common, and the least virtuous, is that of *over-estimating* our importance, and consequently of being unwilling to occupy the place which we were designed to fill. It is unnecessary, I presume, to attempt to demonstrate the fact here adverted to, or to search out the causes of it. The error is the child of selfishness and pride; the effect of closing our eyes on the truth respecting ourselves; the result of always looking at one minute object, until it magnifies itself so as to occupy the whole field of vision. There are few persons who at some period of their lives are not seized with this overweening estimate of themselves;

there are many whom it accompanies all their lives, descending with them even to the mouth of the tomb. We think of our own consequence; our talents; our attainments. We think what a breach will be made when we die. We think of the mourners who will gather around us with broken hearts. We think of the solemn, sad procession that will go with us to the tomb:—forgetting how seldom it is that the hearts of any considerable proportion in a funeral procession are serious and solemn at all, or care anything about the dead. We look at our own affairs and press them forward, as if everything else should give way to them, and as if the world had no interests so great that they may not be required to yield to our convenience.

Now, how contrary all this is to truth and reality, it is hardly necessary to attempt to show. Few will care about it at all when we die; and the world at large will care nothing, and know nothing about it. A very little circle of friends will be affected—as a little circle of water is agitated when a drop of rain falls into the ocean. At the centre of that small circle of friends, there will be some deep emotion, and some tears of genuine grief will be shed; at a very little distance, the emotion will be fainter and feebler; at a point but a little more remote there will be none, and soon, very soon, all the agitation there was will have died away—as when the little drops of rain fall into the ocean—

The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will share
His favorite phantom.—BRYANT.

A few friends will go and bury us; and then they will turn away to their own concerns, forgetful that we are sleeping in the grave. Affection will rear a stone, and plant a few flowers over our grave—but the hand that reared the stone or planted the flowers will soon become unable to cut the letters deeper as they become obliterated, or to cultivate the flowers—and in a brief period the little hillock will be smoothed down, and the stone will fall, and neither friend nor stranger will be concerned to ask which one of the forgotten millions of the earth was buried there. No “old Mortality” will go to cut again those effaced words which told our name, and the time of our birth and of our death. Every vestige that we ever lived upon the earth will have vanished away. All the little memorials of our remembrance—the lock of hair encased in gold, or the portrait that hung in our dwellings, will cease to have the slightest value to any living being, nor will even momentary curiosity be excited to know who wore that hair, or whose countenance is delineated there.

On my grassy grave
The men of future times will careless tread,
And read my name upon the sculptured stone;
Nor will the sound familiar to their ears,
Recall my vanished memory.—H. KIRKE WHITE.

2. The other error is the opposite one—more rare but more virtuous, and more nearly bordering on truth—that of *undervaluing* our importance as individuals. In melancholy mood we look at the facts just adverted to. We think of the hundreds of millions that dwell on the earth, each one just as important in his own sphere as we are, and ask ourselves how many there are of these that *we* know, or care about; and then, by a natural transition, we ask pensively, how many of them know *us*, or care anything about us. We remember what countless hosts have lived, and played their parts, and are forgotten; and then we seize the glass of the astronomer and look out on other worlds and systems—when the imagination is lost in their immensity and their distance, and fancy them all peopled with as dense a population as our own, and come back with the impressive truth that all our earth compared with these worlds is literally less in proportion than a single grain of sand to all the sands which are spread along the shores of oceans, and with no mock modesty we ask, what are we? Of what importance are we amidst these multitudes; these worlds? What interests would suffer if we should be overlooked; who would weep if we should be forgotten forever? “What is man that Thou—the Maker of these worlds—art mindful of him?” Who, in these worlds, would know it if *I* should cease to be?

Looking out, then, on these opposite errors, it is of importance to understand our *real* place in the system of things where our Maker has placed us; the real work which is given us to do; the real bearing of what we do on the organization around us.

II. My second object, therefore, was to consider the place which the individual *necessarily* occupies in the social organization. Perhaps we shall find something, not inconsistent with the exercise of humility and modesty, which will inform our minds with a conviction of his importance.

We have an illustration of what I mean in the text, and in the other verses relating to the same subject, in the chapter from which the text is taken. The body is made up of many members or parts, each one of which in its place is necessary to the harmony and happiness of the whole, and no one of which can be spared without injury. “The eye cannot undertake to do the whole work allotted to the animal frame, and say to the hand, I have no need of thee; the head cannot undertake the entire functions, and say to the feet, I have no need of you.” It may be indeed a question, which is the most valuable or useful, and which could be spared with the least disadvantage; but no member, however unimportant, is lost without our being made sensible, if we were never before, of its value. It is saying only what will occur to any one to remark, that the whole body is made up of all the individual members; that a nation is but the aggregate of individual citizens; that an army is made up of individual soldiers; that the “milky-way” in the heavens is made

up of individual stars ; that the ocean is an accumulation of individual drops of water. Any one in itself may seem unimportant ; and yet its value is to be estimated, not wholly or mainly by taking it out, and looking at it separately, and asking whether it would be missed by being withdrawn, but by the effect produced by all embraced—as we judge of the beauty and value of the eye, not by taking it out of its socket and placing it in a casket of gold, but where God has placed it in combination with the other members of the body.

The real importance of the individual is to be estimated by the greatness of the results of all in combination, and the place to *measure* his value is when we are measuring those combined and aggregate results. To see the *real* worth of the soldier, all look not at one private in the army, and ask what difference in such a host it would make if he were killed or should run away ; but we look at the results of such a victory as that at Waterloo—the effect on kingdoms, and on the course of the world perhaps for ages, and divide that result by the numbers engaged, and make *that* the point where we estimate his value. To see the importance of the individual laborer in the coral reefs, we do not select one of the countless millions of the little workers, and place him beneath the microscope, but we look at the land that begins to lift its head above the floods, or the groups of islands that form the habitations of men ; and, standing *there*, we form our estimate of the value of the individual laborers that have long since ceased their toils, and that never seemed to be worthy of notice.

It has cost many experiments, and has been the fruit of long study, to know the true worth and place of the individual in the world. At one time, he has seemed to be so unimportant, and there seemed to be such evils from his being associated with others, that it has been held to be the height of virtue to sever all connection with the living, and to carry out the idea of individuality and isolation, to the utmost possible extent. Antony in Egypt, and Benedict in Italy, types of this class of men, and fathers of the great and disastrous experiment, believed that virtue consisted in cutting the cords which bound them to the living world, and in separating themselves from the race. They withdrew to caves and solitude, and made it a virtue not to look on the face of man, and to take no part in the good or the evil of the world ; in its social virtue, toils, sufferings, joys. There was to be no family for them ; no church ; no clan ; no tribe ; no country ; nothing which was to bind them to any of the living. The idea of *individuality* was to be carried out to the utmost possible extent, without anything of alliance or combination ; and the single virtue to be cherished was to be that, which we now deem to be the excuse of the most severe and solitary punishment of felons—*solitariness*. The whole monastic system, so fruitful of mischief everywhere, grew out of that conception ; and all its inexpressible vices and follies have been the result of ignorance

of the proper place of the individual in the organization where God placed him. Gloomy and ascetic spirits there are in all ages; misanthropic, and disappointed, and disturbed minds; the dissocial, and the proud, and the indolent, and the soured, to whom the cell of the monk is the appropriate home; and it shows some knowledge of human nature, and gives some popularity and power to a system of religion, to open caves in the desert for such minds as that of Antony, or to build monasteries like those on Sinai and Lebanon, for the soured and the disappointed;—or, which is the same thing, to establish a nunnery to which the disappointed, and the superstitious, of the gentler sex may retire, where they may close all communication with a hated world; and where, before physical death has done its work, the body and the soul may be entombed. All this is because the true place of the individual was not known.

An opposite but equally dangerous thing is to combine individuals in unnatural and unholy alliances; in secret associations for evil, or public confederations of iniquity. Here the *power* of the individual is required; but he is allied with others for purposes which nature never contemplated, and where the organization must sooner or later infringe on some law of society. Here too man, dissatisfied with his Maker's arrangements, is always making experiments—as wide of the truth, and as disastrous in the end, as the scheme of the hermit, or the rules of the monastery. Now at New Harmony; now at Nauvoo; now at Niskequana and Lebanon; and now in the encampments of the Fourierites, the experiment is made over and over again, to see whether the individual cannot be disposed of in some better association than the Creator has designed, and whether some new organization may not be made up that shall be in morals what was sought in the laboratory of the alchemist—to find out some new combinations that should produce the elixir of life or the philosopher's stone.

God has grouped individuals in their natural relations as he thought best. He has left us free to form new combinations, *if these natural groupings are not rudely sundered*—but not otherwise; and he frowns on all combinations where they are *not* observed. If those natural groupings are not regarded; if the new disposing of the individual does not contemplate and recognize them, the new arrangement falls to pieces. The natural grouping of the parts of the human race, as God has arranged them, is into families; neighborhoods; tribes; nations. He *might* have peopled the world with independent individuals—bound together by no common sympathies, cheered by no common joys, impelled to effort by no common wants. All that is tender in parental and filial affection; all that is mild, bland, purifying in mutual love; all that is elevating in sympathetic sorrow and joy; all that is great and ennobling in the love of the species, might have been unknown. Isolated individuals, though surrounded by thousands, there might have been no cord to bind us to the living world, and we should

have wept alone, rejoiced alone, died alone. The sun might have shed his beams on us in our solitary rambles, and not a mortal have felt an interest in our bliss or woe. Each melancholy individual might have lived, as the hermit seeks to live, unbenefited by the existence of any other, and with no one to shed a tear on the bed of moss, when in despair he would lie down, and when he would die.

But this is not the way in which God has made the world. He has made the race one great brotherhood; and each one has some interest in the wildest barbarian that seeks a shelter beneath the rock, or that finds a home in a cave. This great common brotherhood he has broken up into communities of nations, tribes, clans, families—each with its own set of sympathies, with peculiar interests, with peculiar sorrows and joys.

In these organizations the individual is *never* overlooked or forgotten. He is an essential part, and there is not a feeling or law of his nature which is not consulted or regarded. He can play his individual part in his place; act out his nature; develop his talents; and you can form any new combination for good in entire consistency with these laws. The individual is never lost sight of, and yet his *power* is greatly increased by the combination. The *father* is an individual, and yet it is never lost sight of that he *is* a father, and not a man occupying a place which any other man might occupy; the mother is an individual, and yet she is recognized *as* a mother, and not merely a *woman* whose place could be as well filled by another; the brother, the sister, the child, the neighbor, the patriarch, the patriot, is an individual, and fills his place *as* such, and yet no small part of the influence which he wields grows out of the place which he occupies.

See now, for one moment, what may be done in accordance with these laws, or what may grow out of these laws for the good of the whole.

There is, first, the widest play for individual genius and talent. The name of each one of the workmen of St. Peter's, as well as the name of Michael Angelo, might have been preserved; the labor of each stone-cutter, and carver, and gilder was needful; and the glory of the whole is the result of the combined skill of all. The fame of Newton is his own, and ever will be; but the world shares the glory and the benefit of the principle. The genius of Milton as an individual had ample play, and his fame is his own; though the happiness of millions has been promoted by the *Paradise Lost*. It was a toiling *individual* that wrought all this. So all that there is in our literature, and arts, and sciences, is the result of the labor of individuals—individuals not exactly like the builders of the honey-comb, or the coral reefs, that are produced by unvarying and unconscious instinct; individuals not like the builders of the pyramids, or the soldiers in a disciplined army—positions which nature never contemplated, where there is little more of genius, or freedom, or independent thinking than there is in the labor of the bee or the

beaver: but individuals exulting in the consciousness of freedom; indulging in their own plans, and fired with their own aspirations; fettered by no improper restraints; walking in the light which their own genius has kindled, and yet in their freedom contributing to all that is noble, and grand, and progressive in society.

There is, secondly, in accordance with these laws, and under these arrangements, the utmost made that is possible of the labors of the individual. He accomplishes most, and works to best advantage, when he is in his own sphere as God has placed and designed him. In the days of Nehemiah, when they built the walls of the city, the work went on and was completed, because every one "repaired over against his own house," and "over against his chamber," Neh. iii. 28, 30. In an army, the battle is secured not by fighting in disorder, or by forming new combinations, at the pleasure of the soldiers, but because each man contends in his appropriate place. The result, whatever glory there may be, is always the effect of the labors of individuals in their own places, and according to the measure of their talents and skill. Look over our country. It is studded over with cities, and towns, and villages, and smiling fields of harvest. It is penetrated with turnpikes, and railroads, and canals. Its lakes and rivers are covered with steamboats, and with the evidences of an extended commerce. Its great rivers are crossed on bridges; their falls are ascended by locks; their obstructed channels are cleared out; their shallow places are deepened. The sound of the loom and the mill is everywhere heard in the land. Once all this was an unbroken forest; no cities or towns were here; there were no railroads, bridges, or canals; no vessel, save the bark canoe, had ever pressed the bosoms of these lakes and streams. What we see now is the result of innumerable individual blows of the axeman in levelling the forests; of the labors of innumerable masons and carpenters in building our cities; of innumerable diggers of our canals; of great multitudes of farmers cultivating their own lands, as if there were but *one* farm on the earth to be ploughed, and fenced, and sown. The looms and spindles of the land are individual things, and there are individual minds that attend to them. All this aggregate of beauty and of wealth exists because there are an innumerable number of operatives, each minding his own business, and each, perhaps unconsciously, contributing to the beauty of the whole—as the individual rose on the prairie contributes its own part to the beauty of the whole.

Under these arrangements, and by these laws, there is a third thing which demands a somewhat more extended illustration. It is, that while the individual *necessarily* occupies this important place in society according to the arrangements of our Maker, there is a field left for *voluntary combination of all sorts for good*. This leads me directly to the

III. Third point, which I proposed to consider—the place which

the individual may *voluntarily* occupy in promoting the cause of religion. A good man in the sphere in which Providence places him, should he never make any voluntary effort to go out of that sphere, cannot but do good, for there is an unconscious and undesigned influence in favor of virtue which every such man exerts, and which is of inestimable value to the cause of truth. The world could not do without this, and no good man can *possibly* live in vain, unless he withdraws himself to a cave or a dungeon. A consistent Christian father, mother, son, brother, merchant, neighbor, lawyer, farmer, cannot but do good by an example of virtue and piety, and by the discharge of the duties to which these natural relations give rise; though he may not be doing all the good which he might do if he would combine his influence more with others. For, there is a higher and more decisive good of a voluntary kind which can be done without disregarding any of these relations, or impairing at all this involuntary influence on the world. In the course of thought pursued thus far in this discourse, I have considered the former of these influences; I shall now proceed, in what remains of the discourse, to illustrate the latter—the place which the individual may *voluntarily* occupy in promoting the cause of religion. I refer now particularly to Christians; and in illustrating this part of my subject, it will be natural to notice the slight sense of personal obligation felt in general by professed Christians; and then to consider the place which the individual Christian may and should voluntarily occupy.

1. First, the slight sense of personal obligation among Christians. I mean by this, that there are large numbers in the Christian churches who have only the feeblest conviction, if they have any, of obligation to make direct personal efforts to promote the common cause; and that the responsibility of maintaining and carrying forward religion in the world in the more direct, and self-denying, and voluntary efforts, is devolved on others. A few brief illustrations here will show what I particularly wish to get before your minds. First, there is a feeling that the ministers of the gospel should be peculiarly holy, and self-denying, and dead to the world—dead to its pleasures, its gains, its ambition, far more than others. And yet, will any one point me to a place in the New Testament which requires ministers of the gospel to be more devoted to the work of their Master than other Christians; or to any precept or permission which would make that to be right in you which is wrong in us? Second, there is a prevalent feeling that the missionary to the heathen should be more deeply imbued with the spirit of the Lord Jesus, and with the principles of voluntary benevolence, than other men; that he should be more willing to take up his cross, and to traverse pathless sands, or go through driving snows to do good; that he, with almost no advantages for the cultivation of the graces of the spirit in a heathen land—a land without Sabbaths and sanctuaries, and Christian fellowship—should be more holy than we

who in a Christian land enjoy in rich abundance all the means of grace. But will any one point to the place in the New Testament which shows that there is to be one standard of holiness and self-denial for him; another for you and me? Third, there is a feeling connected with that just adverted to, that private members of the church may do that which it would be highly inconsistent and improper for ministers of the gospel to do; that they may train up their families in a different manner; that they may engage in other forms of amusement; and that they may cherish and manifest a spirit of worldliness which would be wholly improper in their Christian pastor. But where in the New Testament will any statement be found which, in regard to amusement, and conversation, and general manner of life, makes a distinction between a pastor and any of the members of his flock? Fourth, there is a feeble sense, on the great body of professed Christians, of personal responsibility in regard to the institutions and duties of religion. I allude to the slight impression among many private members of the church, that any portion of the responsibility rests on them, or that they have anything more to do than to render the most general countenance in favor of religion. How few are they in any church who feel the responsibility of laboring for the conversion of sinners, as a specific thing to be done! How few are they who feel any responsibility for keeping up meetings for social prayer! How few are they, who among those who are well qualified, who feel under obligation to engage in sabbath school instruction. How few are they, and even among those who will not refuse to contribute to the object *when applied* to, who feel under personal obligation to *originate* any movement for the promotion of the objects of Christian benevolence, or to be the well-known and efficient patrons of the institutions which contemplate the conversion of the world! On the minds of the few these obligations are deeply, and permanently felt; on the mass even of professed Christians, it is feared, they are not felt; by the mass certainly they are not regarded.

2. I will proceed, then, to show the place which the individual Christian may occupy, and should occupy in the promotion of the cause of religion. The statement must be a brief one.

First, every professing Christian, with whatever denomination he may be connected, bears a portion of the honor and the responsibility of religion in the world. He is a part of that total church which the Saviour came to redeem, and which is declared by him to be "the light of the world, and the salt of the earth," and to which he has issued the commandment to "preach the gospel to every creature." Whatever there is of honor, of purity, of truth, of respectability, in that church, is in part intrusted to his hands—as to each freeman in a republic is committed a portion of the honor of his country; to each soldier in an army a portion of the honor of her flag. When he became a member of that church, by the very nature of the transaction, a portion of its honor was intrusted

to him ; and by the same transaction he assumed a portion of its responsibility. In his profession of religion, he identified himself with the Lord Jesus, and with his cause. He left the community of the " world," and united himself with the fraternity of Christians. He abandoned, of choice, the associations where amusement, and wealth, and vanity, and pleasure are all that is sought, for that community where religion is primary, and where men bind themselves to live unto God. He left the abodes of sensuality and of song ; came out of the halls where are music and dancing ; forsook the " tents of wickedness," and voluntarily entered the temple over whose doors is inscribed " holiness to the Lord," and became a dweller in that city—the holy city of Zion—whose " walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise." I say, he did it of choice. No man forced him to do it. Nor father, nor mother, nor pastor, nor friend, nor foe, compelled him to become a member of the Christian church. It was among the most free acts of his life, in many instances among the most deliberate and carefully weighed. In many cases it was the result of warm gushing emotion ; in all it was the result of choice, when he came and pledged himself over the sacred emblems of the body and blood of Christ to lead a holy life. Now, into such a community, what right has any one to bring a worldly spirit ? Why should any one voluntarily enter into such an association only to live to himself ? What right has he to withdraw from his brethren ; to spread around him the maxims and feelings which pertain to the world ; to refuse to co-operate with those who are endeavoring to maintain the common cause ? How can he forget, moreover, that there is always a part of the world which will form their idea of the nature of religion from the conduct of the private members of the church ? They form it not from the Bible ; for many never read the Bible. They form it not from what is stated in the pulpit ; for many never enter the sanctuary, and if they do, they say that religion is not what is taught, but what it is seen to be in the lives of its friends. They form it not wholly from the lives of the ministers of the gospel, for they say that preachers are professionally holy, and that it is their business to be religious ; and perhaps they may charitably add that they are paid for it, and that their very living depends on it. They form not their views of religion from the lives and deaths of the martyrs. Many of these have never heard the names of the martyrs, and the world cares little how Ignatius and Cranmer felt at the stake. But they form their impressions of the nature of religion from the lives of the individual members of the church—their honesty, and integrity, and fidelity ; their temper, and their consistent zeal in that noble cause which they have voluntarily embraced, and judge of religion by what they see there.

Second. Every Christian has facilities for doing something in the cause of the Redeemer which no other one has, and his individual influence and talent is demanded in that cause. A father has an

influence over the little circle where he presides, which no other man can have; and that influence, if he is a Christian, belongs to Christ, and is that on which he much relies for the promotion of his cause in the world. A mother has an influence within that narrow but sacred enclosure, which is as valuable and controlling as it is interesting and tender. No artificial forms of society can create it elsewhere; no law, no fashion, no art. That too belongs to Christ. So the physician; so the teacher; so the magistrate; so the eloquent advocate; so he who has been trained in the schools of learning; so he who is endowed with eminent gifts by his Maker. There is an influence which each man possesses which is of value to the cause of virtue and religion; and that individual influence the Redeemer claims in its proper sphere as his, to be employed in the promotion of his cause in the world. On any one man, in proportion to his ability, the claim is as imperative as on another; and the fact that you have any peculiar facility for doing good imposes the obligation so to employ it. And the work which you are to do need not be that which amazes the world by the eloquence of a Massillon or a Whitfield; not that which lays the foundation of undying fame by the reasoning powers of an Edwards; not that which moves nations, and effects a sudden change in human affairs by such mighty efforts as those of Luther or Knox; not that which produces a new and enduring organization of men like the far-seeing sagacity and the piety of Wesley. It may be the noiseless and unobtrusive daily work of doing your duty in a family, of teaching a class of little children in a Sunday School, of visiting a cottage of poverty and want, of putting quietly a little tract into the hand of a neighbor or a stranger, of going to your closet and there unobserved by men pleading for the salvation of a world.

Third. Success in promoting religion in the world depends on personal and individual effort. There are no armies which secure a victory in the battle-field but such as are made up of individuals: there are no cities, towns, palaces, navies, or bulwarks of war but such as are the work of individuals. The victory of Nelson at Trafalgar depended, perhaps, more than on anything else, on the magic power of the watchword of the day, "England expects every man to do his duty." "All at work, and always at work," was the significant and characteristic motto of John Wesley; and to the principle which prompted this, under the divine blessing, can be traced the far-spread and happy results of the labors of the denomination of Christians of which he was the founder. In building the immense coral reefs of the South Seas, each insect assiduously labors while life lasts, and the vast work is done by individual effort. In our own land, these forests have been levelled, and these cities built, and these canals and railroads made, and these farms have opened their bosoms to the sun and rain, and these gardens make the air fragrant, and these ships whiten every sea, because an immense population has been individually at work.

It is just so in religion. Salvation is an individual work; and destruction is an individual work. Satan plies his powers not on a community as an abstract thing, but on the individual, as if there were but one, and as if he had nothing else to do but to ruin that one soul. The man that becomes an infidel is an individual. The young female that is seduced from virtue is an individual. The young men that are made intemperate or licentious are individuals; and there is as definite and distinct a work in reference to each one as if he were the solitary dweller on earth. When the great tempter approached the bowers of Eden, he felt that if he was to be successful, he must approach the mother of mankind as an individual; he must find her alone. So the great poet sings:—

“He sought them both, but wished his hap might find
 Eve separate; he wished, but not with hope
 Of what so seldom chanced; when to his wish,
 Beyond his hope, Eve separate he spies,
 Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood,
 Half spied, so thick the roses blushing round
 About her glowed.”

“———‘Behold alone,’ said he,
 ‘The woman, opportune to all attempts,
 Her husband, for I view far round, not nigh.
 So spake the enemy of mankind, enclosed
 In serpent, inmate bad! and toward Eve
 Addressed his way.” *Par. Lost, B. ix.*

And ever since, the work of destruction has been, and must be, a work on individual minds.

And so in the salvation of men. It is a work that pertains to individuals. Christ died for individuals; and each one who is brought to heaven is to be renewed, sanctified, guided, defended, as if he were alone. That child in your family is to be converted. That member of your Sunday school class is to be saved. That brother is to be renewed. That sister, daughter, wife, is to be brought to love the Saviour. These thousands and tens of thousands round about us, are individuals, and are to be saved *as such*. In each case it is an individual work. It is not a vague, intangible, unmeaning, and abstract generality. It is the work of saving individual sinners from the horrors of eternal despair; and each one is to be saved by the same anxiety, and effort, and prayer as if he were alone.

There is a fourth and final remark which I will make, in accordance with the views advanced in this discourse. It is this, that there is a large field of Christian effort, in which, without sacrificing any principle pertaining to you as an individual, you may co-operate with others in promoting the great end of all social organization. You labor on your own farm, or in your workshop, or in your own office or study, and promote your own welfare, and the good of your family. Yet, in entire consistency with your own

individual plans, you unite with your neighbors in building a bridge, or making a road for the public good; in erecting a school-house where your children may be educated together; or in building a church where you may worship God. You have your own views of poetry, architecture, and the arts. You have your own ways of tilling your ground, and your own theory about the succession of crops, and about the time of sowing your wheat. You build your barn and your apiary in your own way; and yet you can unite with your neighbor in promoting education, and temperance, and the love of peace—for then you meet on common ground. You are a Calvinist, and in your own place may maintain and enjoy your views of religion, and seek to promote them, and defend them when you are attacked in the best way you can. Another is an Arminian, and with equal freedom has a right to maintain his own principles, and make them the basis of his joys and hopes; but still, there are more vital points in which you agree than there are in which you differ; and you may stand up side by side in defending your common Christianity in opposition to all “Infidels, Jews, Greeks or Mohammedans;” in distributing the Bible, the charter of your common hopes; in maintaining everywhere the doctrine of human depravity; the fact of the atonement, and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the duty of holy living. You are a Presbyterian, not from chance, and not because you deem your principles of no value, and not worth defending; and yet with Methodist, and Episcopal, and Baptist brethren, and with all “who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” you can see that there is common ground which you can take in regard to the government of God, and the atonement, and the character of man, and the nature of true religion, and the doctrines of future retribution. Here we may stand together, compromising no principles; affecting not our influence as individuals; but blending our power into one, as beams of light come out from the sun and mingle together, pouring the flood of day on these worlds—yet capable, if we choose to do it, of being divided by the prism into red, and orange, and yellow, and green, and blue, and indigo, and violet, and all made up in fact of such rays; or as many little individual rivulets hasten down from the mountains to form the mighty river as it rolls on to the ocean.