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SERMON XVIII

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**THE PRESENT STATE AND DUTIES OF THE
CHURCH.**

ISAIAH 11: 3, 4, 5. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

THAT is a very feeble interpretation of this passage, which makes it refer to the proclamation of Cyrus, and the return of the Jews to Jerusalem after their captivity. The Lord Redeemer coming to take away the sin of the world, and not his people returning to him, is predicted. The character and office of the forerunner of the Lord, and not the proclamation of any earthly potentate, form the subjects of this prophecy. Of this we are assured by the application of these words to Jesus Christ and John the Baptist, by the Evangelists.

It is worthy of remark, that each of the four evangelists has applied this passage of Isaiah to John, and Luke has given us an almost literal quotation of the whole of our text. The passage has been translated by G. Campbell.—“The voice of one proclaiming in the wilderness prepare a way for the Lord, make for him a straight passage, let every valley be filled, every mountain and hill be leveled, let the crooked roads be made straight, and the rough way smooth, that all flesh may see the Saviour (sent) of God.” This seems to me to be a good translation of Luke, and a good comment on Isaiah. By adopting this reasoning we obtain a very important sense. The leveling and straightening of the way is not only to facilitate the passage of this august personage, but that he might be seen at a greater distance. “That all flesh might see the Saviour, the sent of God.” And this seems to me to be the most appropriate sense; because

no obstacle can obstruct the passage of the omnipotent Saviour, whereas the smallest intervening object will intercept him from our circumscribed view.

There can be no question, but the future glory of the church is one great object of this prophecy, and particularly of the church as it respects its *extent*. "All flesh shall see it *together*," that is, at the same time and essentially under the same light, "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The *church*, then, and its future condition, is the principal idea contained in the words.

I. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCH.

1st. **THEIR NUMBERS.** It is granted that less than *one third* of the whole population of our world are Christians. The remaining two thirds, are Mahometans, Pagans and Jews. The heart of piety sinks when this fact is announced; and the crest of infidelity is proudly erected, while the disciple of the philosopher of Ferney, triumphantly asks, "are you christians, being but a handful, not ashamed to say you have the only heaven-born faith, that "there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved," but the name of Christ? A moment's impartial review of this subject, both as it respects ancient and modern times, will serve to tranquilize the heart of piety, and lower the escutcheon of infidelity. What was the religion of antiquity? It was a system of wickedness, engrafted exclusively upon *human pride and human appetite*. Hence deity and humanity were blended together. The vices of their great men were overlooked, and even applauded because they were the vices of the gods themselves. The passions, and the most loathsome lusts of the common people, were palliated, for Juno and Jupiter had their intrigues, Venus and Bacchus their orgies. Nor can any wise man for a moment be surprised that countless myriads of depraved, and sinful and corrupted beings should have crowded around altars polluted, should have worshipped deities who practised and approbated wrath and jealousy, and pride and lust in their very worst forms. And who does not know that the mythology of antiquity was interwoven, thread by thread, with the religion and jealousy of the nation. Touch the religion, and you change the policy, or change the civil policy, and the religion was endangered. Of the truth of these remarks we have abundant proof in the Acts of the Apostles, as recorded by Luke, and if further proof were wanting it is furnished in the fact that the religion and policy of antiquity perished together. We have not time to pursue these thoughts; had we, the investigation would awaken in our minds the most profound astonishment, that during the first ages of Christianity, she was not borne down; we would wonder, not that she had so *few*, but that she had so *many* votaries. Nor can the fact be accounted for upon human principles; we are compelled to refer them to heaven.

But we are told christianity is 2,000 years old: That 2,000 years is a long time: That ancient superstition has long since passed

away, and that but one third of the human family are yet, even professedly, christianized. Now all this is granted. But let it be remembered that the death of one system of error, did but give birth to others, engrafted upon the same corrupt stock, and equally replete with crime and folly. What is Mohamedanism but a flattering appeal to the worst passions of our nature? Is any Mussulman taught to curb his ambition, to love his enemy, or to subjugate the evil propensities of his heart? So deeply does sense imbue the whole of his system, that the heaven of Mohamed is nothing better than a brothel. Now when it is remembered what we are by nature—that from infancy to old age we are a mass of sensuality; who would wonder that there are so many Mohamedans? Have we not reason to be astonished that this religion of *sense*, has not desolated the whole human family? Nor need we be at all surprised, in our intercourse with men of certain principles, to find them rather leaning to the Alcoran than the Bible. This is no more than sailing with the current—embracing that which is pleasing to a corrupt taste, and rejecting that which calls upon us to reform and amend our ways—to be holy. The above remarks refer with all their force to every system of Pagan religion upon earth. We defy their admirers to find any thing like purity of heart and life, in one of them. There sits enthroned the **DEMON OF LUST**. He is surrounded with a priesthood as loathsome as himself, and the millions who bow in homage at his feet, are driven to self-sacrifice and death, under the hope that the extinguishment of the lamp of life, that burns too feebly for their raging desires, will, beyond the grave, be immediately so rekindled that all the fancies of their polluted imaginations will then be realized. Such, if we mistake not, is the true philosophy of Mohamedanism and Paganism.

And now, my friends, with these thoughts present to your minds—with the immaculate purity of the Bible in your eye—remembering its unbending rigidity—the holy demand which it makes upon all its adherents—the unsensual character of the christian's present joys, and future heaven: when you look at all these things, and then look again to the polluted fountain within thy own bosom—are you not astonished that the gospel continues to subjugate individual after individual, and nation after nation—that it bows the hearts of the sensual worshipers of the sensual gods of the heathen, and enables them to put on the purity, with the faith of Christ? That though slowly, yet certainly, it is new-creating the world, bringing at once, glory to God, and felicity to man? Let the **GENIUS** of Infidelity stand by and witness the triumphs of the **CHURCH** to-day. She, so far from blushing at the fewness of her numbers, triumphs in the fact, that in such a world, and among such beings, such a pure and holy religion, should, from such a small beginning—from a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, in so short a time as 2,000 years, have achieved such wonders.

2d. **HER CHARACTER.** The character of the members of any community is a legitimate subject of inquiry in forming an estimate of that community. Who are Christians? What part of our world is under the influence of Prince Immanuel? Europe, and christianized America contain less than *three eighths* of the inhabitants of our world. But do Europe and christianized America possess no more than three eighths of the humanity and good-doing spirit of our world? Do Europe and christianized America appropriate to themselves no more than three eighths of that tide of felicity which is perpetually flowing from the beneficent hand of the Giver of all good? Let the infidel answer, yes, no more than three eighths, if he dare. Be as cold and philosophic as you please, analyse with any severity you may choose the pretensions of the Church, and, to gain your purpose, sarcastically repeat the cant phrase, "Every man thinks his own country the best, and his own philosophy the wisest," yet can you persuade yourself that there is as much humanity in China as in Great Britain,—as much felicity in Pekin as in New York—or as much good-doing in India as in Europe?

What has given those parts of the world, which in the beginning, and for thousands of years after the beginning, were nothing but howling deserts,—what has given them in these latter days, so far the ascendancy over the regions round about the site of the garden of Eden, and those no less delightful regions watered by the Indus and the Ganges? Why are Europe and America the wonder and admiration of the world, as it respects every thing that ennobles our species and felicitates man? Say not that it is the fertility of the soil, and the salubrity of the clime. Does the valley of the Mississippi exceed that of the Ganges, the Thames that of the Euphrates, or that in which Paris stands that in which proud Babylon once reared its head to heaven? Oh! my Christian brethren, *you* can solve this matter, and yours is the only rational solution. You come up to the solution of this question with hearts at once confident that you are right, and glowing with the most ardent gratitude. You believe that Europe and America flourish like the green bay-tree, not because they are under a more or less vertical sun, not because the clouds of Heaven drop down more fatness here than elsewhere: but because we feel the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, and are partaking of the root and fulness of the good olive tree.

3d. **THE PRESENT ADVOCATE OF THE CHURCH.** Science is her advocate. When we speak of science, we mean that kind of knowledge which embraces the universe in all its actual states and dependencies. That science which recognizes God as the head of all things, and the whole frame as established by his will except so far as it has been deranged by sin. That apprehends God in Christ *alone*, and bows with holy deference to the high mysteries of God manifested in the flesh. We do not mean the

kind of philosophy, which makes man a bundle of nicely arranged and well organized materialities, and then would set this material, reasoning, and thinking being, to expound God and his works independently of what God has said. We do not mean that kind of heathen philosophy which would offer incense at the shrine of nature, and at the same instant trample nature's God and his laws under foot—which would set nature to the work of self-regeneration and creation, and exclude the hand of a wise and holy Providence. Nor do we mean that kind of Christian philosophy, the enemy of truth, and the present bane of the church, which would at once rob our Saviour of his proper divinity, and the sinner of his native pollution and responsibility, until "moral action" commences; and then sets this yesterday-made agent to enlightening his own mind, and regenerating his own soul by the exercise of his own power, or the moral suasion of his minister, independently of the Spirit of grace.

The church triumphantly, but meekly, asks an infidel world, what religion is that which at first put forth its claims in the very center of all the philosophy which was in the world, two thousand years ago; which has ever since delighted to accompany with science; which sought the light, and coveted the scrutinizing eye of sound literature; which has exalted Europe and America, and which has been exalted by Europe and America? The church, this day, is surrounded and sustained by her thousands and millions of enlightened advocates; the most august philosophers throughout the Christian territory delight to do homage to Prince Immanuel and his church; and every statesman, and every lawyer, is compelled, however reluctantly, to cast a respectful eye upon the Bible, while they lend their talents to perfect our civil institutions, which are all connected with the gospel.

4th. **PRESENT ASSUMPTIONS OF THE CHURCH.** The church has never, except under the influence of the grossest mistake, assumed any thing to herself as it respects the civil policy or government of this world. "My kingdom is not of this world," is a declaration of our Saviour which should never have been forgotten; and which is more sacredly regarded at this time by the church, than it has been at any former period. Yet the church has always had, and especially has at this time, very high assumptions.

The church *assumes* to herself the honor of having deposited in her hands, all the *moral truth* of any permanent and substantial worth, in the world. The church allows to philosophy all its just claims. It allows the astronomer to measure the heavens—the mathematician to describe his diagrams—the chemist to heat his retorts—the civilian to perfect codes of human policy—the moral philosopher to analyze mind, and develop the *natural* perfections of God. But she says to philosophy, here you must stop. The *moral* character of God, and future destiny of

man, together with the whole doctrine of pardon, are of heaven's telling.

The most important question ever asked by man, is, "who is God my Maker?" The church says, to this question no adequate answer can be returned, but by the aid of her bible. Does a trembling sinner come and ask, "What shall I do to be saved from the wrath of this terrible God?" The church talks not of merit, nor of morals, nor of power; she simply says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and then goes on to point the sinner to that Spirit, which, when asked, is given to work in us both to will and to do.

The church *assumes* to herself, in a peculiar manner, the care of *the rising generation*. This she believes she is compelled to look after, and of her faithfulness in this matter, she is persuaded she is to tender her account to her great Head at last. In this assumption, she pleads the authority of God in the first organization of the church in the family of Abraham, and the nation of Israel, and the confirmatory example and precept of the Saviour, when he came to complete the organization of the same church.

Who will take care of the young, if the church do not? To whom will you commit the training of your child for immortality? To persons who scarcely believe in an immortality, and profess to have no interest in any thing beyond the grave? To whom will you consign the work of eradicating those evil propensities which have had their spontaneous growth in every bosom for six thousand years, and which have converted our world into a field of blood and house of violence? To those who know of no such passions belonging to human nature—of no innate propensity to evil? To one whose unsteady hand cannot draw the lines of demarkation between virtue and vice; who in morals makes that crooked which is straight, and that straight which was crooked? The world may abandon their offspring, having fed and clothed them during infancy, and taught them how to provide for the first sixty or seventy years of their existence. The church cannot do so, nor can she stand quietly by and see the world do so, without being, in some measure, participators in their guilt.

But is this a pompous assumption of the church, unaccompanied with any appropriate effort to take the effective guidance of the rising population? Shew me the well organized school in Europe or America, where the voice of the church is not heard, and where she has not been able, in some form, to introduce the gospel. But she busies herself not alone about our public schools; the church minds not "high things" only; she condescends to things of "low estate." As a proof of this, look at her Bible classes and Sabbath schools. Can we doubt as to the effective operations, when in the American Sunday School Union at Philadelphia, they had during the year ending May, 1832, 542,424 scholars in connection, scattered over America?

The church stands at this moment, in the most important attitude to the whole family of the poor and the miserable in our world, especially as it respects their *mental* wants. She has assumed to herself the special charge of their interests. The child of wretchedness is visited by the church, in the person of one of its members. He brings food in one hand, and the balm of life in the other. Whilst he gives the sufferer the bread that perisheth, he speaks of the bread of life. While he throws over him the covering which shall shelter his wretched limbs from the frost of winter, he speaks to him of the robe of a Saviour's worth. While he soothes him under the sorrows he feels, he speaks to him of the sufferer who was wounded for our transgressions. While he listens to his tale of woe, he endeavors to affect his conscience with a sense of his own sin, and ingratitude against God. While the sufferer exclaims, "there is no rest for me in this world," the Christian speaks to him of the rest prepared for the people of God, where the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling.

Nor have the poor sailors been forgotten. A sailor and a sinner, until a few years ago, were connate ideas in almost every man's mind. It is no longer so; and that it is no longer so, is solely owing to the interest that the church has assumed to herself in these wandering sons of the deep. How much national wealth and prosperity may be advanced by the reformation of seamen, it would be difficult to calculate; we know that the sum of human happiness and goodness, has been greatly augmented by these means.

The church has assumed to herself the sublime and godlike work of *enlightening* the world. This is one of her most interesting attitudes.

Among all the countless millions who have peopled our world during six thousand years, only two men have been found who have indulged the chimerical hope of conquering the world by *arms*. The madmen of Macedon and of Corsica, have both passed away, and with them have perished their projects. Now the idea of subjugating the world to the control of PRINCE IMMANUEL, is one that plays warmly about the heart of every true son of the church. Lord Gambier, Elias Boudinot, and their countless fellow-laborers, have nerved and put into operation the faith and hope of Newton, of Tillotson, of Doddridge, of Howard, and of thousands such men. Modern Christians are applying active labor and effort, to those things which were but in prospective and hope to our forefathers.

That the subjugation of the world to the faith of the gospel, is a high assumption, an imposing attitude of the church, we are willing to grant; but that it is a chimera, we do positively deny, and hope to prove presently.

To the CHURCH, I this day solemnly address myself. I call upon her to come and survey again the elevated ground she has

assumed. It is too late now to talk of difficulties. To the declaration of her Lord, "YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD," the church has returned her solemp and deliberate AMEN, "yea, Lord, we know we are the light of the world, and the world will be enlightened." We will roll back upon guilty infidelity in full tides of gospel blessedness, the scoffs and contempt she has cast upon our efforts. We will penetrate the cave of Mecca with the light of heaven. We will spread the gospel day through the almost interminable darkness that lowers over Asia and Africa. We will convey again to the family of Abraham, that lamp which they extinguished with the breath of malice. Nor are these mere boastful words. The Christian world are in some good degree alive. The church is beginning to put on, not only her beautiful garments, but her whole armor. She pours floods of tears over the impenitent—she commiserates the heathen—she enters the abodes of wretchedness—she exults in the triumphs of the cross—she mourns over the waste places of Zion—she trains up her sons to be Christian heroes—she nurses the schools of the prophets—she multiplies bibles by millions—she sends her dauntless missionaries wherever they are called for—she prepares asylums for converted and persecuted Jews—she goes into the high-ways and streets, and fills her Sabbath schools with myriads of children—knowing that the silver and the gold are the Lord's, she devotes her millions to the support and spread of the gospel—she covers up party spirit with the mantle of charity, while she contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—and from her humblest knees, she is ever saying to her Lord, "thy reign come, and thy will be done, upon earth as it is in heaven." Does the world behold this with indifference? The answer to this question we must defer for another discourse. We will close with two reflections.

1. Nothing is better understood, or more frequently practised by the grand enemy and his coadjutors, than the *power of union*. It is no secret in hell, nor to bad men on earth, that all the evangelical churches, are at this moment throwing aside their minor differences, and rallying around the cross. Prayer, and effort, and money, are thrown into a common stock, and the united effort is to unfurl the banner of Prince Immanuel in every land. What is got up by our grand enemy in opposition to all this? The repairing of the old crumbling partitions, which have separated one branch of Christ's church from another? No. The stream of charity is too fully set to be stopped. It is by arraying brother against brother, and Christian against Christian. It is by clothing the most deadly error in the habiliments of truth, so that the common church, can scarcely discern one from the other. It is by reviving obsolete errors under a new nomenclature, propped up by "philosophy falsely so called." By new and unscriptural measures, aided by fanatical zeal; and all this ruin is often carried on by good men. Satan has inflated

their vanity, by prompting their pride of talent or distinction. "Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. A second reflection. From what quarter is the church hereafter to look for her most dangerous foes? I answer, within her own bosom. I do not say the world will go asleep and permit the church unmolested to pursue her present splendid career. Interest and wickedness, will both combine to induce a different course. But opposition from this quarter is comparatively harmless, because to this the church has been accustomed. But as the Saviour's deepest wounds were from the Jews, his brethren according to the flesh; so his church may look for, and even does now experience her deepest affliction, and greatest danger from those within her own bosom, many of whom are her sons. Even under the name and guise of truth—a continued toleration of the most flagrant departures from the truth, under the name of charity—hidden and unceasing warfare under the semblance of *peace* and *love*. These are sources of danger with some; while others, perhaps, are making beams of motes, and mountains of mole-hills. Is it not time we should cease to lacerate our own flesh? But we should tremble lest we incur the woe of causing offences. Why should we not all delight to speak of that which I hope we all love—the *cross*, the simple *cross*, and throw ourselves upon our great work of saving sinners and enlightening the world? Amen.

SERMON XIX.

BY JAMES BLYTHE, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE AT SOUTH HANOVER, IA.

THE PRESENT STATE AND DUTIES OF THE CHURCH.

ISAIAH, 11: 3, 4, 5.¹

HAVING in a previous discourse pointed out the *present state* of the church, we now come to treat of the *duty of the church*, under existing circumstances.

May I hope for the prayerful attention of my audience? This is the important part of our subject. Of what avail is it to know our *present condition*, unless we realize our *present duties*?

We closed the last discourse, by asking the question, "Does the world behold all this effort of the church with indifference?"

We now answer the above question. The world does not behold the present strenuous efforts of the church with indifference. Investigate the matter when you please, it will be found that the present state and efforts of the Christian world, form, not only one of the leading features, of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but they are considered by reflecting men of all parties, as that which is likely to give a new complexion to the whole subsequent history of our race, and by Christians as that which must open to man a fountain of happiness, of usefulness, and of glory, where nothing but desolation and death have hitherto reigned—as that which must dry up the thousands of sources, whence have issued moral pestilence and ruin. I am not able to say whether the great mass of the leading men of the age be *for* the church in her present splendid career, or *against* her. Suffice it to say, many are for her, and many are against her.

Many are AGAINST HER. Now can this annunciation be made in the ears of the church, and be believed by her, without opening to view, an almost interminable train of duties and of conflicts? Let it be, my brethren, as the alarm-gun, the trumpet of war to us to-day. It is not in natural warfare, as it is in this war. There you cut off an enemy's head, and you have done with him. Not so here. How often has an infidel foe, or an errorist, been foiled, wounded, and killed, and at the next corner, you meet with the same foe dressed in the old fractured armor of a Herbert, of a Ched, of a Voltaire, of a Socinus or a Pelagius, and you have the battle to fight over again?

There are those among us now, who in their gay hours deride your whole scheme of Christianizing the world, and when in a philosophical mood, deprecate it as inducing certain ruin to them and their party. When they attempt to reason, they ask you what right you have to interfere with the religion of other nations and other people—to come in between God and his creatures? You are asked, is not the homage of one man's heart as pleasing to Jehovah, as the homage of another man's heart, provided it be made in sincerity? Why should not the sacrifice of Jugernaut be as pleasing to the Deity as the sacrifice on Calvary? Now my brethren, it is but a very small part of the duty of the church, when she hears such blasphemies as these uttered against the Gospel, to tell the gain-sayers that she has her Lord's command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and God's promise that the heathen shall be given to Christ as his possession. This is well; but the main part of her duty is not to *reason* but to *act*. Let the church so act, that a voice will fall back from the heathen world, upon the ear of infidelity; this, or the voice of the last judgment, will reach the sinner's heart.

The church must convert heathens and Jews, that heathens and Jews may convert Christian infidels. I have more than once seen the face of hardened sin turn pale, at the reading of the story of a converted Jew, or heathen, which face has smirked and smiled under the solemn eloquence of the pulpit. Such facts speak volumes to the church.

They say the first grand duty of the church, is *to see well to the pulpit*. The *pulpit* is of heaven's ordination. It stands pre-eminent among God's appointed means of grace. "For that after the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." If ever there was a time when it became imperatively the duty of the church to guard the pulpit with vigilance, that time is the present. The whole world is in a state of excitement and effort. Look to what department you please, the whole is in commotion. The philosophy, the policy, but especially the *theology* of the world, seem to be in danger of being loosened from their ancient moorings and set afloat. Let the philosophy and the policies of the world take their course. "Let the potsherd of the earth, strive with the potsherd of the earth." But shall the guardians of the pulpit stand by and whisper *peace* to themselves and their friends, when their bosoms quake at beholding the pulpit fast changing into an arena, upon which metaphysics and "mental philosophy" are to display their subtleties, and supplant the simple gospel? Shall the friends of the cross stand patiently by, and see the faithful representative of the errorists of the fourth century approach it, and wipe from it the sacred blood with which it was stained on the day of expiation, and take from it all its imputative value? Shall Pelagius, resuscitated from his grave, and decked out in the metaphysics and philosophy of the nineteenth century, stand up in our pulpits, and

teach our people, that the minds of their children are as pure as the driven snow, until something that is called "*moral action*," takes place, and that then and not until then, are they amenable to God's law? Let the guardians of the pulpit see well to it, that the doctrines of the reformation—of our standards—of our Bibles, be not one by one wrested from them, until nothing shall be deemed heresy except Socinianism—until imputation in all its forms, shall be deemed a fragment of those times, when the "*philosophy of the human mind*" was not understood as it is now—until human reason and human power shall be substituted in the place of the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit.

2. *Our Schools.* It is the duty of the church to look well to her schools, especially to the schools of her prophets. This is amongst the most sacred duties entrusted to the church.

When we cast our eyes over the middle, southern and western parts of these United States, how many thousands and hundreds of thousands of children do we find, some of them the children of the church, who are growing up without any knowledge of letters! Who will take care of these hapless children, whose parents are too poor, too careless, or too wicked to provide for their education? In many parts of the country no provision is made by law in their favor. *Their only hope is in the church.* Politicians will speculate. They will talk of the necessity of an educated community, in order that the liberties of the country may be perpetuated. It will all end in speculation. The *grand principle of human effort and enterprise is wanting, viz. conscience.* I repeat it, the only hope of the uneducated part of the community is in the church. It is the grandest enterprise in which the American church could engage. It ought to be distinctly laid before the church. It must, it will be taken up by the church.

But the schools of the prophets! who can look at them but with the deepest interest? Who can pray for them, with a cold heart—who can labor in them without feeling that he is laboring in the center plat of his Lord's vineyard. Let the church keep a vigilant eye over these schools. Let the authorities of the church, see well to it, that they be fountains of simple gospel truth; firm, but kind supporters of their several standards. And whenever any such school changes its character, and becomes the advocate of heartless speculation, of new and unscriptural doctrines and measures—let it be abandoned.

8. *The present attitude of infidelity and its cure*, call especially at this time, for the attention of the church.

The absorbing question presents itself, what present means have the church to meet this old foe in his new armor?

Of so substantial, and matter-of-fact a nature is the gospel, that it cannot be propagated alone by words, or didactic precepts. What gave the gospel its power at first among the Gentile nations? The presence of the apostles. It could not then, nor can it now be diffused over the world upon the bosom of the air; it

must float upon the bosom of *facts*. Christianity cannot even be proved to be true, to the satisfaction of every one, by argument alone. It derives its substantial demonstration from **FACTS**. The Christian is constantly appealing to *facts, facts* ancient and living. *These* with the hand of triumph, he points out to his antagonists. Not that we would underrate argument. But argument alone will not do. We all know that the whole field of argument as it respects Christianity, was nobly fought over during the last century. Never was an intellectual conflict more worthily sustained on both sides; and since the origin of man, never was there so much talent brought to bear upon one subject, as was brought to bear upon the single question, "Is the Bible of Divine authority?" As far as argument could go, the question was settled; candid infidels themselves being judges. Yet still infidelity lingers among us. How is the many-lived monster to be conquered? Has he either the courage or ability to enter the field of manly argument again? I answer, he must be conquered by the practical prowess of the church—by overwhelming him in light—in light that may be felt—a light that shineth as brightly about the domestic altar as in the consecrated dome—light that plays as constantly about the path of the christian, as about his public ways—light that seeks to push its way to the ends of the earth, and visit the darkest corner, and the most desolate hovel among the abodes of poverty. But who is to inflict the last deadly wound upon the monster, infidelity? Do you imagine the honor is reserved for philosophy—or is it to be confined to the winning eloquence of the pulpit? These powers have been resorted to, and with noble effect, still the monster is seen walking in our streets; and he will continue to walk there, till his death's arrow be sent quivering to his heart by the hands of the Jews. The Jews are a wonder, both to the politician and the divine. The politician has no way by which he can account for the unparalleled fact, that amidst all the wars and turmoil of 2,000 years, the Jews have remained a perfectly distinct people, every other people having been whelmed in the overflowing tide of political power and assimilation. These people have remained the infidel's stumbling block, and the Christian's wonder; an inscrutable wonder upon every other principle than that of supposing the immediate hand of God to be in this thing. We believe the Jews have been preserved by God, a distinct people from all others, for two purposes. *First*, to be a safe depository for the old scriptures; and, *secondly*, to put to silence the last surmises of infidelity—not by argument, but by their general conversion. The first of these purposes they have already answered, for there are at present, thousands of Hebrew scholars in the church, as capable of preserving their invaluable deposit, as have been the Jews. God and the church have no further use for the Jews in this respect. The time we believe, is just about to come, when the Jews are to improve the **second grand purpose** of their distinct preservation. The spirit

of Abraham's God, has at once fallen upon the seed of Abraham, and upon the Gentile churches. The movements, the feelings are simultaneous, because produced by that God, in whose hands are all hearts, and he turneth them whithersoever he will. We this day announce it as a duty, distinctly indicated by the train of events, extending back 2,000 years, and binding upon the church, to labor to convert the Jews, that the Jews may be the instrument of silencing infidelity, and regenerating the world. Nor are these the baseless conjectures of a theory-loving fancy; they are precisely the ideas of the Apostle Paul, for he says, "Now if the fall of them, (speaking of the Jews,) hitherto have been the riches of the world, and the dispersion of them the riches of the Gentiles, *how much more their fullness*—for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the gathering of them be, but *life from the dead!*"

4. Therefore it is the imperative *duty of the church* to come up one and all to the *aid of the missionary cause*. It is a proposition that admits of no proof. The missionaries of the church must preach the gospel to Pagans, to Jews, and to Catholics, or they will remain Pagans, Jews and Catholics forever.

Two principles are vital to the missionary cause. 1st. It is the business of the church in her *distinctive or church capacity*. 2. It is the duty of every distinct branch of the church to have its own distinct missionary associations. Until both these principles are fully realized and acted upon, the missionary cause never will fully prosper. The command of Christ to preach the gospel was given to the church as such, not to individuals alone. Individuals and unrecognized associations *may* do it. The church *must* do it, or disobey her Lord.

We must have studied human nature very imperfectly, if we can suppose the various evangelical denominations in America ever can heartily unite in any grand missionary enterprise. Say the difference among them is only about church government—say they agree in all the grand essentials of religion—still the matters in which they differ, are, with every Presbyterian—every Congregationalist, every Baptist, and every Methodist, things, though not of vital, yet of considerable importance. And however much these Christians of various denominations ought to love one another, and labor together at home, and however this happy spirit is gaining ground among us; still, when the question is the planting new churches, or the evangelizing the heathen, these peculiarities will, and, permit me to say, ought, to a certain extent, to have their influence. One of God's methods hitherto, of blessing the world, has been by means of different denominations, agreeing about the great fundamentals of religion, but differing about minor matters. And who is prepared to say this is not the best plan?

When every evangelical denomination in our country shall be a missionary society, and every member of such church

shall feel bound to be an active and contributing member of such association, then, and not till then, will the world be converted.

5. Another duty on this subject, presses itself strongly upon my mind. We all know that there are many associations in the church at this moment; they are differently denominated, but their object is one and indivisible. *It is to promote the coming of the reign of Christ.* Now I think no proposition is susceptible of more distinct proof, growing out of our very nature, and drawn from obvious Christian duty, than that every child, in every Christian family in the whole church, *should be a member of some one of these associations.* And to me it is a mystery, how Christian parents can employ themselves in putting their children forward in the *world*, as it is called, and so utterly neglect to pursue that course with them, which would so obviously tend to blend their feelings and interests with that cause which involves all worldly, and all eternal interests. I know of no mean of grace, that at so tender a period, addresses itself so powerfully to the feelings of a child as this. It is making them feel that they are co-workers with God and with his church, before they can work for their parents, or earn their daily bread. It is giving them an elevation and a stand in society, which cannot fail to have the happiest effect upon their moral and social character. Let not the matter of expense be pleaded by any person. There is not a child in ten thousand, even descending down to the poorest orders of life, no, not one in fifty thousand, that might not, by proper care and management on the part of parents, be taught either to make, or spare more in each year, than would entitle to membership of some society of this kind.

But there is still another point of view in which this subject must be contemplated. Say the church of Christ covers a territory containing at present three hundred millions of people. Say that in all that extent, there is only twenty millions of children, the descendants either of pious parents, or of parents friendly to the present glorious effort of the church to convert the **WORLD**; say that each of these children either make or save in each year one hundred cents. Here is twenty million dollars at once, to be annually expended by the church; which added to at least half that sum, the munificence of opulent piety, or honest industry, would put in circulation more bibles, and send forth more missionaries in one year, than the last eventful thirty years have produced. Nor is this a chimerical project. It is perfectly practicable.

Finally: We have said that the church has assumed to herself the splendid work of converting the **WORLD**. It is the bounden duty of the church to redeem this pledge. She must perform the work she has so nobly begun. Some valleys have already been exalted, and some mountains have been made low. But the command of God is, "make straight in the desert a highway for

our God, exalt every valley, and make low every mountain, and straight every crooked way, that all *flesh* may see the Sent of the Lord." Now who shall do this but the church? There is no power on earth can be used by God as an instrument to effect this great work but the church. The *Sent* of God is obscured from the sight of the Jews, by an obstinate unbelief, and vain looking for another, which have been the growth of two thousand years. Christian effort, persevering strenuous effort of the church, must melt this obstacle down, and show the Jews that in vain do they look for another; that Jesus is indeed the Christ. An interminable waste of native darkness, cold and chilling as the hand of death, rests upon the Pagan and Mohamedan world. The light of science has not reached even the frontiers of these territories of the prince of darkness; the hand of investigation is trimming her fitful lamp before their eyes, which corruscates for a moment, and then sinks back into darkness, while the gospel is slowly winding her gentle current around their borders. Who but the church shall show these countless millions the Sun of Righteousness, arising with healing under his wings, accompanied with all the blessings of science and civilization? Let it not be said the work is too difficult. Let it not be said, "Whither shall we go up; the people are greater and taller than we, their cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there." Suffice it to say, "The Lord your God, who goeth before you, he will fight for you." Has God promised, saying to his Son, "I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And will he not do it? Has Christ come to take away the sin of the world: and shall not the sin of the world be taken away?

Let the church this day consider how far she has gone, what vantage ground she has gained—what struggle she has made to awaken the present tone of feeling and of effort—what expectations she has excited—what terror she has awakened in the camp of the enemy. With all these things in view, let us suppose every thing sunk back again into the apathy of only thirty years ago; what triumph to the foe—what withering to weak faith—what centuries must roll away, in all probability, before a similar state of feeling could be again awakened. The heart grows sick at the prospect. Thank God it is nothing but a phantom. The present spirit of the church will never die. It may wax and wane, as all human efforts in doing good have done, but the present spirit, the main body of it will, I believe, never decline. The conversion of the world is fairly commenced, the proper instruments are at work, the circulation of the bible, and the sending forth the missionaries, the schools of the prophets, the schools of the sabbath. And let all the congregation of the church of Christ say this day, Amen, praised be the Lord!