

THE CHARACTER & BLESSEDNESS OF THE GOOD MAN.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL OF NASSAU-HALL,

ON THE SABBATH, JANUARY 9, 1831.

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A
DISCOURSE,

&c.

1 PSALM, 1 & 2 VERSES.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of Sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

THE book of Psalms, as well as the sermon of our Lord on the Mount, commences with a benediction. And in both cases the character of the person to whom the benediction belongs, is particularly described. In the first verse, the Psalmist states what the blessed man does not do; and in the second, what he does do.

Following the same order, I shall attempt to delineate the character of the good man, and to show the blessedness that belongs to him.

1. WHAT THE GOOD MAN DOES NOT DO:—*Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

It is remarkable with what accuracy and precision the Psalmist in these few words, points out the causes and progress of vice and impiety, from the first beginnings to the final consummation. Depraved as human nature universally is, there is a wide difference in the moral character of men : and in this respect, men do not differ more from each other, than the same man often differs from himself, at different periods in life. From the restraints of education and parental authority, a young man may be comparatively innocent and virtuous. When these restraints are removed, the example and society of others often inflame his passions, corrupt his morals, and lead him on, from step to step, until he becomes as profligate and abandoned as those whose conduct he imitates. Hence says the Psalmist—*blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.* This is expressive of the early stages of iniquity, and of the cause that usually develops and brings into active operation, the depravity of the human heart. Created with a capacity and relish for social intercourse, we are naturally led to select companions, and to form associations. And on the choice of our associates, especially in early life, our virtue or vice, our happiness or misery, in a great measure, depends. We almost necessarily adopt the maxims, and imitate the conduct of those with whom we associate. Happy the person whose lot is cast among the good and pious—it is hardly possible to resist the attraction of their amiable example, and to exclude from the heart the salutary influence of their pious conversation. The influence of bad example and irreligious conversation, is still more powerful : not because vice possesses more excellence than virtue ; but because it has a nearer affinity

to the corrupt propensities of the human heart. The person therefore, who walks hand in hand with those who do not fear God, will almost unavoidably imbibe their spirit and follow their example. There is in man something, which causes him to endeavour to bring others to adopt his sentiments, and to imitate his conduct. This is particularly the case with men of corrupt principles and vicious habits. Not content to walk alone in the path of the destroyer, they often use every art, and present every allurements to lead others with them. Conscious, it would seem, that they are treading on dangerous ground, they dread to be left alone. The presence of others seems to banish their fears, and to enable them with more boldness to travel the perilous and downward road. The most innocent conversation of persons of this description, is respecting the things of this world. The idea of God, of eternity, of the salvation of the soul, is entirely excluded. The person who lives in such society, is in danger of forgetting God—whose name he seldom hears reverently mentioned—and eternity, which is carefully kept out of view. But many, denominated by the Psalmist, ungodly do not content themselves with passing over in silence, the subject of religion. They often represent it as a dull and melancholy employment, which excludes its votaries from all the pleasures and enjoyments of life. Its doctrines are made the subject of profane wit and ridicule, and those who profess to live according to its holy rules, are represented as weak, well-meaning enthusiasts, or as designing and artful hypocrites, who wish to climb to affluence and power on the prejudices of the ignorant. The deception is the more ensnaring, especially to those who have not made attentive

and accurate observations on the subject: because it is often asserted, that there is no connexion between principles and practice, between religion and morality—that skepticism on the subject of religion has no tendency to make a man less virtuous and exemplary in his conduct. In confirmation of this position, a few examples are referred to, of men who, notwithstanding they paid no regard to religion, were temperate in their habits, amiable in their social intercourse, distinguished by their learning, the benefactors and glory of their country. But the physical and moral causes that operate in the formation of a character of this description, are not duly considered. It is not recollected that their natural temperament was cool and calculating—that the indulgence of sensual appetites and passions was inconsistent with the object of their ambition—that their situation in life exposed them to few temptations, and above all, that they owe their moral habits to the influence of that religion, which they despise and neglect. The moral and religious principles inculcated in early life, and the sentiments of a Christian community, operate imperceptibly and powerfully on many of those individuals, who are thought to owe all their excellence and virtue to the unaided reflections of their own minds. If the fact were distinctly known, that corrupt principles prepare the way for immoral conduct—that a vast majority of those, on whose minds the fear of God does not operate, are persons of licentious habits; habits, which lead men to disgrace and wretchedness in this life, and often hasten them to a premature grave—the young and inexperienced would pause, before they listened to the counsel of the ungodly.

To the class of which we are speaking, belong many persons, who do not designedly and systematically oppose the doctrines of the gospel, who without attempting to doubt or to lead others to doubt the divine authority of the Bible, follow the impulse of the moment, drink the cup of sensual pleasure, and revel in all the gayety of life. Such persons do not aim to corrupt the understanding. They appeal immediately to the feelings and passions of the young and inexperienced. By their conduct they present vice in a gay and flattering aspect, promising immediate and high gratification, attended with no injurious consequences. In the language of an elegant writer, they say to their companions with an air of joy—"Let us crown ourselves with rose buds before they are withered, let no flower of the spring pass away. Let us devote the present moments to joy, and give thought and care to the winds. By their flattery and fair speeches too often are the innocent ensnared. They mark the fair attire and smiles upon the cheek of the deceiver, sensual pleasure; but they discern not until it is too late, the pains, the diseases and the destruction that follow in her train: they discern not that her steps lead down to the grave, and that her bower is the anti-chamber to hell."*

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. He avoids the path that has led thousands to ruin. Ask the intemperate and licentious man, whose constitution is broken, whose property is wasted, and whose body is tortured by loathsome and excruciating disease, what cause led him to that course of life, which has terminated in his ruin; and he will point you to his intimacy with some

* Logan.

person destitute of the fear of God. Ask the malefactor, whose life is forfeited to the laws of his country, what was the commencement of his iniquitous course, and he will answer, bad company, ungodly associates. Trace the history of any individual, who has fallen into vicious habits, from the lowest to the highest degree, and you will arrive at the same result. *Happy is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.* There is no safety except in keeping at a distance, or in speedily escaping from the fatal and deadly infection.

2. For this reason, the Psalmist describes the second step, in the progress of iniquity, by *standing in the way of sinners.* Here we may remark, that the ungodly are persons destitute of piety. The term *sinners*, is descriptive of those who are not only void of religious principles, but are also immoral and vicious in their conduct. To *stand in the way*, is also worse than to *walk in the counsel.* *Walking*, is expressive of a transient act; *standing in the way*, of a fixed habit. The person who *walks in the counsel of the ungodly*, is a pupil, who occasionally attends the school of vice and impiety; but he that *stands in the way of sinners*, is one who, having been instructed in first principles, begins to practise the lessons which he has received. Is not this an accurate and striking description of the progress of many young persons, who have had a virtuous and pious education? At their entrance on the theatre of life, they dare not engage in the actual commission of open sin. By associating with those who do not fear God, their dread and their scruples are gradually removed. They hear the maxims and opinions of their parents ridiculed; the name of their Maker and every thing

that they had been taught to believe sacred, spoken of with irreverence and contempt. They see those, whose manners are polished, whose address is conciliating, and who profess for them the most ardent and lasting attachment, indulging in pleasures, enchanting to the sight, delicious to the taste, and which at first view do not appear pernicious in their consequences. They are induced to believe that none except men of weak and narrow minds, observe the rigid rules of morality—that bold and generous souls scorn the restraints of these narrow shackles—and that to speak profanely, and to drink deeply, is a mark of genius and spirit. Unable to resist these artful and flattering suggestions, the unhappy youth makes the attempt, and he acts as his companions act. He, however, by no means intends that his indulgence shall be frequent. After his first excesses he feels debased in his own estimation, and in the hour of sober reflection, wishes he had not listened to the voice of the deceiver. Having once passed the boundary of virtue and decorum, a criminal shame forbids him to retreat. And in order to convince his companions that he is a bold and intrepid spirit, who having thrown aside the prejudices of education, is prepared for the highest acts of impious daring, he plunges into scenes of vice and impiety, which astonish his older associates. Perhaps smitten by his conscience he inwardly trembles, while, with an assumed hardihood, he affects to defy Omnipotence. Again, in hours of retirement and reflection, the horrors of guilt prey upon his conscience, and make him impatient to forget himself in the society of his companions. By frequent repetitions his habits are fixed, and he is the willing slave of those passions, which, at the commencement of his course,

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he intended only occasionally to indulge. The rebukes of his conscience become less frequent and severe, until he is utterly abandoned by God, and permitted quietly and without remorse, to commit all kinds of wickedness. We do not mean to say that every individual, who has once passed the boundary of virtue and decorum, proceeds to this utmost limit, and is unchangeably fixed in habits of iniquity. But we say that many have, in this manner, been utterly ruined: and that the danger of advancing with accelerated speed, in the downward road, when once in motion, is great and awful.

To prove *that the man, who standeth not in the way of sinners, is blessed or happy*, we need not refer you to the Holy Scriptures, in which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. We need not speak of the terrors of the coming judgment, and of the prison of despair and anguish. Even in this life, God has marked with his curse the man who *stands in the way of sinners*. Enter the hospitals and alms-houses in our large cities, and you will see assembled, the miserable victims of intemperance and sensual pleasure—you will see the diseases, the pains and the anguish of those who listened to the deceitful siren, who charms only to destroy. We do not say that these monuments of Christian charity contain none but the profligate and dissipated. There the children of misfortune and calamity also find a refuge—yet they are few compared with the sons and daughters of unhallowed pleasure. Look over our comparatively happy country, from the hovel to the splendid mansion, and you will see scattered, not the bones of superstitious pilgrims—but what is more to be lamented—the bloated countenance, the emaciated form, the

palsied limbs, the diseased bodies of the votaries of dissipation. Could you take the Catalogue of Nassau-Hall, or of any other literary institution of equal age, and in reading over the names, trace the history of each individual; what a melancholy and instructive lesson would it teach! There you would see the sottish and ignoble life of that indolent youth, whose highest aim, during his collegial course, was to eat and to drink, and to lounge and to sleep. As the commencement of his career excited no high expectations, so the infamous termination of his days occasioned no disappointment. There too, you would see the end of that pleasant, amiable youth, whose nature was too pliant to resist the least solicitation; who went to places of dissipation merely to gratify his companions, and who eventually contracted habits that terminated in his total ruin. There too, you would trace the disastrous and melancholy end of that noble, high-minded young man, who seemed to be designed to act a distinguished part in life; the pride of his parents, the boast of his instructors, the rising hope of his country. Alas! he too, is seen bowing at the shrine of sensuality. And all our hopes are extinguished—all our expectations blasted.

3. The Psalmist points out one thing more which the blessed man does not do—*nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*. In this expression there is an obvious allusion to the custom of Doctors or Teachers in ancient times, sitting while they delivered their instructions. To sit in the seat of the scornful, is to become a teacher of vice and impiety. And as persons of this description usually depend more on sneers and ridicule, than on solid arguments, to accomplish their object, they are denominated *the scornful*. When a

man places himself in the chair of the scornful and endeavors to annihilate the fear of God, to remove the restraints of conscience, and to induce others to practise iniquity, he has attained the highest degree in wickedness. We do not say that every one, who has passed through the stages of vice before described, arrives at this pre-eminence in impiety : yet the practice and the habits of sin, have a natural tendency to make men scoffers at every thing sacred. The whole tenor of divine revelation is opposed to the practice of their lives. If there is a God who avenges the violations of his laws, if there is an eternity of happiness or misery, the ungodly can look forward to the close of life, only with anticipations of horror and despair. Hence their strenuous efforts to rid themselves of these painful apprehensions. Distrustful of their own opinions, they desire the testimony of others in confirmation of their skepticism. Therefore they labor to diffuse, as far as possible, their pernicious sentiments. We are aware, that the persons of whom we are speaking, are desirous to have it understood, that they reject the doctrines of the gospel—not because they are holy—but because they are repugnant to the dictates of reason. If such were the fact, why employ the weapons of ridicule and scoffing?—Surely the subject is too serious and important to admit of levity. We will not say that no one ever honestly doubted the truth of divine revelation, but we have a right to say, that all those whose morals are corrupt, are unbelievers; not from the sober convictions of the understanding, but from the feelings and passions of the heart. Their criminal conduct has made it their interest, that the Bible should not be true; and therefore they labor to persuade

themselves and others that it is false. Hence, by their sneers and sarcasms, they endeavor to make ridiculous and contemptible, truths, which fair reasoning and solid argument cannot invalidate.

Blessed is the man that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful. He is not answerable for sneers and blasphemies uttered against almighty God. He will not go down to the grave, followed by the curses of parents, whose children have been taught to make a mock of sin and to insult the majesty of heaven. He will not rise to judgment, attended by those whom his profane scoffs and irreligious conversation have corrupted and ruined. Eternity only will disclose the full wretchedness of that man *who sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* *O my soul, come not thou into their secret, and with their assembly mine honor be not thou united!*

II. WHAT THE GOOD MAN DOES DO.—The blessedness of which we have spoken, like that of the character to which it belongs, is of the negative kind. It consists in an exemption from the wretchedness of those who have brought upon themselves the wrath of almighty God. The full and perfect blessedness pronounced in the text, is the property of that man, *whose delight is in the law of the Lord; and who meditates on this law day and night.*

It is not the design of the Psalmist to state the ground of the blessed man's hope, nor the meritorious cause of his justification in the sight of God; but merely to mark the prevailing temper of his mind, and to point out the rule by which he governs his actions.

The law of the Lord, in this passage, ought not to be understood in a limited sense, as signifying a rule of conduct; but in the extensive sense in which it is frequently used in the

book of Pslams, as including the whole of divine revelation. In this law the good man delights, and here he finds the subjects of his most frequent and joyful meditations. Others follow the inclinations of their own hearts, and the counsel of their companions—and therefore they are often led astray. The pious man consults the word of God. From it he learns his duty, and according to this unerring rule, he endeavors to regulate his conduct. This law he regards not only as giving good and useful instructions, but as imperative and authoritative. And whatever some men may imagine, it is a fact, established by experience, that a regard to the authority of God, is the only effectual means of checking the turbulence of passion, of resisting the force of temptation, and of imparting an uniform principle of conduct. Here is a rule which never varies—here is a witness which never leaves us—here is a Judge whose decisions are supreme and authoritative. The man who observes this law, escapes the errors and vices that have ruined thousands. And in proportion to his conformity to the law of the Lord, is his consciousness that he has performed his duty, and his evidence that he possesses a new nature, and is interested in the salvation of the gospel.

The man of whom we speak, *meditates on the law of the Lord, day and night.* That is, the revelation which God has given, furnishes the subject of his most frequent and delightful meditations. Here the perfections and providence of that glorious and adorable Being, who made and who governs the universe, are exhibited; and the justice and majesty of his law, held up to view. Here the wonders of redemption and the riches of divine grace and mercy, are displayed. Here the balm which soothes and heals the

wounded spirit—the blood which procures the pardon of sin—the promises which sustain and console the believer—the joys and felicities of heaven, are made known. In a word, whatever is sublime and adorable in Deity—whatever is grand and magnificent in the works of creation and Providence—whatever is vast and awful in eternity—whatever is lovely and sacred in virtue and religion—whatever can soothe our sorrows, animate our hopes, strengthen our faith, purify and ennoble our nature, is here presented to our contemplation. A more false and ill-founded opinion was never entertained, than that which is too common in the world; we mean that the pious man has no sources of enjoyment—that his life is spent in gloom and sadness. Take that happiness which arises from the exercise of the understanding and imagination; where can you find subjects so well calculated as those in the Bible, to give employment to these faculties? Take those emotions, that spring from the contemplation of grand and magnificent objects, and where can you find subjects so suitable, as the doctrines of the gospel, to produce these enrapturing feelings? Call it enthusiasm, or what you please, the fact is undeniable, that the happiest moments of our existence are those in which we wonder and adore. If love and gratitude are pleasing and delightful, where else can we find objects so worthy, and motives so adapted to excite these feelings? Have we sorrows to soothe and afflictions to mitigate? Here are consolations suited to every circumstance in which we can be placed. Have we difficult duties to perform? Here are motives to excite our efforts, and assistance promised to make these efforts successful. We do not wish to conceal—our divine Master did not conceal—

the fact, that distresses peculiarly painful, and conflicts numerous and arduous, are to be expected. But let it be remembered that these distresses and conflicts arise—not from the existence of piety—but from the want of it, either in ourselves or in others. And if the pious man has sorrows, peculiarly his own, he has also joys and consolations, which belong to him exclusively. Faithful and true are the words of our divine Master. *My peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* The precious and faithful promises contained in the word of God, are a copious and never-failing fountain, from which the believer draws frequent and seasonable refreshment. Hence his joys are not dependent on the ever-changing scenes of this world. Above all, the Divine Comforter promised by our Lord, diffusing his light and his consolation through the soul, dispels the darkness and cheers the drooping spirit. Thus the good man is blessed in this life. But if we would know the full measure of his blessedness, we must follow his happy spirit, when it leaves this world of sin and sorrow, and ascends to heaven ; we must conceive of his transports, when the trumpet of God shall wake the slumbering dead, and place all nations before the judgment seat : we must estimate his felicity, while eternity rolls on its unnumbered ages. This is that *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which cannot be seen, nor heard, nor conceived.

Thus we have given a faint representation of the character and blessedness of the good man.

The subject naturally suggests many important reflections peculiarly adapted to the age and circumstances of the audience before me. Here I see youth, collected from various

parts of our country, separated from their parents and friends, exposed to temptation, and forming characters, which will determine not only their own future destiny ; but probably the destiny of hundreds of other immortal beings.

How weighty and solemn the charge of those who direct the studies and guard the morals of young men, in a course of liberal education ! Next to the solicitude of a Father, for the welfare of his children, should be that of a Teacher, for the interests of his pupils. Believing, as I do, that without moral principles and virtuous habits, literary and scientific attainments will only prepare you for more extensive mischief and lasting wretchedness, I feel an intense solicitude to guard you against errors and habits, ruinous to your present and future welfare. With this view, and actuated by these motives, let me suggest to you a few cautions arising from the subject on which we have been meditating.

These cautions relate to the companions which you select, the habits which you form, the influence which you exercise, and the duties which you owe immediately to God.

1. The remarks already made, as well as your own observation, must convince you, that the persons with whom we associate, have a powerful influence on our character and conduct. This fact is readily admitted, as far as respects every individual, except ourselves. Each one is apt to imagine, that his principles are so firm, and his habits so fixed, that in his own case, there is no danger. And perhaps some of you may suppose you have now arrived at that age, in which you may with safety trust yourselves in any society. Beware of this confidence. It has ruined thousands. If the persons, who present themselves to your notice, be such as

you would not wish to imitate, keep at a distance. Familiarity with vice, will imperceptibly, yet certainly, destroy your abhorrence of it. But if your duties shall expose you to the society of persons of corrupt principles and immoral conduct; must you necessarily follow their example? An obstinate and unyielding disposition in things not important, is unbecoming a gentleman and a Christian. But are you to go all lengths? Are you to comply with every practice? Are you never to judge of what is right or wrong? Are you to be winded and bandied about at the caprice of every individual whom you meet? If so, where is your independence of mind—where your dignity, and consistency of character? If such be your course of conduct, instead of procuring the esteem, you will merit and receive the contempt of every individual who knows you. There is an energy, a decision of character, which is more noble and useful than almost any other endowment. Without it, you will become the mere dupes and tools of every unprincipled knave whom you meet. And when should you assert your independence and right to think, and to act for yourselves, if it be not when your morals and your duty to God are concerned? You may indeed expect to be ridiculed, to receive the scoffs and sneers of those, who assume the right to prescribe what is fashionable, and honorable, and becoming a gentleman—silently bear their sneers. You may live to see these self-created umpires of honor and gentlemanly conduct, become the most effectual refutation of their own principles and practice. You may see them, after fluttering in their ephemeral glory, sink into insignificance, and become the stigma and abhorrence of human kind.

2. Let me exhort you to beware of the passions which you

indulge, and of the habits which you form. Here is the rock on which thousands have been shipwrecked. Here is the coast, whitened with the bones of many promising youths. In this gulf, are buried the hopes of many disconsolate parents ; and yet, the multitudes that have perished, the roaring of the foaming billows, and the beacons which ages have erected, are insufficient to keep the young and inexperienced mariner at a distance. At its margin, the current that carries him to destruction, is smooth and gentle ; a favorable breeze swells his canvass, and he seems to be capable, at any moment, to change his course. As he advances, the current becomes stronger and stronger. At length, fearing there may be danger, perhaps he makes an ineffectual effort to change his course. But he is carried onward, and onward, with accelerated motion, until he shoots the fatal gulf, and sinks to rise no more.

Habits are formed by repeated acts. Passions, especially those of the sensual kind, are strengthened by indulgence. And the man, who once submits to the dominion of these passions, is often led on to destruction by the impulse of his feelings, as certainly and as fatally as if he were impelled by irresistible, physical force. In such a case, the remonstrances of reason and conscience, the dictates of interest and duty, are too feeble to resist the demands of appetite, and the bias of passion. The man often sees and laments his ignoble and debasing bondage : but he has not resolution to assert his freedom, and strength to burst the chains with which he is bound. In vain his friends remonstrate, and point out to him the loss of property, of reputation, of health, and of life, that inevitably awaits him. Deaf as the adder, he continues his course, and falls the miserable victim of degrading and

ungoverned appetite and passion ! There was a time, when the government of his passions would have been comparatively easy. There was a time when he had to force himself to taste the cup for which he had no relish. He sported with the poison. He took to his bosom the fire which consumes him.

To young men who have the opportunity of a liberal education, I would deem it unnecessary, and even unbecoming to make these remarks, if experience did not teach us that no class or description of men is secure from danger. Sensual indulgence, or what is usually called dissipation, is the prevailing sin, and the desolating scourge of our country. More destructive than the pestilence, it enters the hamlet and the city, and infects the illiterate peasant, and the gentleman of education and fortune. By the anguish of your parents and friends, by the mortification of those who direct your studies, by the blasting of your worldly prospects, by every thing sacred and solemn in time and eternity, let me beseech you to flee from the first approaches of this deceitful and desolating monster.

3. My next remark respects the influence which you should exercise.

Situated as you now are, you may have an influence on each other, highly salutary, or directly the reverse. It is hardly possible that so many youth can be assembled together, and not impart to the intellectual and moral character of each other, a favorable or unfavorable impulse. Mind meets mind, in the common pursuit of literature and science ; and heart breathes into heart, its own spirit, in the intercourse of friendship and social feeling. How imperceptibly and

fatally may one youth corrupt and ruin another. And how rapidly may the infection spread from room to room, and from heart to heart, until an association in wickedness, is formed, too powerful to be withstood!

Beware, that you be not the authors and leaders in a course of iniquity. Be assured it will afford you no pleasure in future life, to recollect that you gave the first wrong impulse to the passions of the unsuspecting youth, whose future life shall be infamous and wretched.

It matters not, that you have no intention of producing these effects: if your conversation and example tend to lead him from the path of rectitude, you are answerable for the consequences which may follow.

On the contrary, do all the good you can. Be not content with a mere exemption from every thing which is obviously vicious. Let your influence be positively felt in dissuading others from vicious habits, and in alluring them to the practice of virtue and piety. I rejoice that so many of you have given your names and your influence to the cause of temperance. It is the cause of humanity and of religion. Go on, and do all the good in your power. The influence you now exert, may extend to hundreds and thousands in various parts of our land.

Be assured this is the road that leads to true glory and lasting happiness.

Let me exhort you never to exert an immoral and irreligious influence. Never *sit in the seat of the scornful*. Never attempt to banish morality and religion, by scoffs and sneers. Believe me, my young friends, there is nothing to be gained, and there is much to be lost, by such conduct.

It will not raise your reputation as men of learning and talent. It will not advance you to stations of honor and profit. The time was, not many years ago, when skepticism, and even open infidelity, were fashionable in this country. When it was thought to be a mark of genius to speak lightly and contemptuously of the Holy Bible. Thanks to God that age has passed away. The able and unanswerable defences of Christianity, which this formidable attack called forth, and the demoralizing effects which the dissemination of infidel principles produced on society, opened the eyes of the community, and introduced such an entire change in sentiment, that Christianity, in some form, may now be said to be reputable in the United States. It is true, that low, scurrilous, and virulent attacks are again made, in some parts of our country, on the religion of the Bible: but thus far, few men of talent, who value their reputation, would consider themselves honored in being enrolled with those, who are waging war against all the decencies and charities of social life, as well as against the doctrines and precepts of the Bible. But if you shall have nothing to fear from the disapprobation of the circle in which you may be placed, you will not, it is presumed, hazard the demoralizing effects of scoffing at morality and religion, and assume the awful responsibility, of answering at the bar of God, for the souls you may ruin.

The danger is, that while you manifest an external respect for Christianity, you may neglect to imbibe its spirit and to practice its duties. There are men of high standing in society, who, far from showing any disrespect to the gospel, pay it a visible homage: and yet they seem to act as if they thought the practice of its precepts not necessary for them,

and intended only for the ignorant and lower classes of society. What! Is there any man too great to bow before the eternal God?—Is there any man too enlightened to do homage to that Redeemer, whom angels worship?—Is there any one who shall not need the consolations of the gospel in the agonies of dying?—Is there any one who shall not need *mercy of the Lord in that day*, when he shall stand before the holy and burning tribunal of Jehovah?

4. Permit me then, my young friends, in the last place, to exhort you to make religion a practical and personal concern. You need to be instructed by the word and spirit of God.—You need the forgiveness of sin through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.—You must die, and you must go to judgment. How soon this event may take place, you know not. The brilliant and enchanting prospects which your youthful imaginations are painting, may all vanish in an instant. Instead of entering on the active and busy scenes of life, you may enter the house of silence, and your immortal spirits ascend to the place of Judgment. In such an event—which, with regard to some of you, is not improbable—what would you wish had been your first and great care? Suppose you should live to an advanced age, and attain the highest honors and the greatest prosperity that your imagination can anticipate—what is time compared to eternity?—What is the applause of men to the approbation of God?—What the riches of this world to the treasures of heaven? I do not wish to damp your ardor in aspiring to whatever is honorable, noble, and valuable in this world—but let it be in a manner consistent with your duty to God, and subservient to your everlasting welfare. *Seek first the kingdom of God and*

his righteousness. First, and above all things, secure your eternal interest. And to this end—*Let your delight be in the law of the Lord, and in his law meditate day and night.* The Bible will be your safest and surest guide amidst the darkness that may surround your path. The Bible will teach you lessons more important than any other which you can learn in this institution. It will teach you that you are sinners, and it will point you to *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.* The fear of God, Most High, will be your most effectual security against the influence of those passions, which may blight all your earthly prospects, and send you to a premature grave. The love of God, Most Holy, will purify your affections, and ripen you for heaven. The compassion of a Saviour, bleeding and dying, will strip death of his terrors, and enable you to die shouting. *O Death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

God grant that such may be your happy end, for Christ's sake. AMEN. 9:7:10