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TWO

# DISCOURSES

These Discourses were written during an engagement  
to supply the pulpit at Dartington. With some abridg-  
ment and correction, they are now published, in the hope  
of contributing something towards strengthening what re-  
mains of religion.

## TOWNSMEN.

To the Society are preferred, from these Discourses  
were prepared, and to the Citizens or other Towns,  
destinate of a regular and educated ministry, they are

BY H. HILDRETH

OF EXETER.

SECOND EDITION.

EXETER :

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*Misc*

THESE DISCOURSES were written during an engagement to supply the pulpit at BARRINGTON. With some abridgement and corrections, they are now published, in the hope of contributing something towards strengthening what remains of religious institutions in the State.

To the SOCIETY AND PEOPLE for whom these Discourses were prepared, and to the CITIZENS OF OTHER TOWNS, destitute of a regular and educated ministry, they are very respectfully inscribed by the

AUTHOR.

April 9, 1824.



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## DISCOURSE I.

—  
LUKE, XII, 48.

*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.*

OUR best security for the performance of duty, consists in a deep sense of our being accountable to God. A variety of considerations may have great influence in restraining us from conduct, which would impair the confidence, or incur the displeasure of our fellow men;—but no person will go boldly and sincerely to his whole duty, without a settled conviction, that his conduct is matter of record, and that he must one day give an account of the deeds done in his body. Under the influence of such a conviction, the conscience becomes a constant and lasting principle, “and will hold a man fast, when all other obligations will break.”

Our duties result from the relations we sustain to our Common Parent, to one another, to the present and the future world. Among the important relations we sustain to one another, is that of fellow citizens of the same town; and among our important duties, are those, which grow out of this relation.

In this Discourse, I shall lead you to consider the nature of the trust, reposed in you as citizens of the same town, and the duties, which this trust enjoins.

I. As townsmen, my friends, much is given to you. You are intrusted with privileges, which were procured at the expense of much toil and suffering; privileges, that have been sealed to you with the blood of many, who were worthy.

Town governments, as we enjoy them in New-England, are of New-England origin. No such governments ever existed on the other side of the Atlantick. The very title of Selectmen, as a title of office, was first used in this country. Your privileges have descended to you, as an inheritance; and, in order to estimate rightly their value

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and design, you ought frequently to trace back your history, and the history of your fathers. You ought seriously to weigh the grand motives and views, which produced the settlement of New-England.

At the end of twenty years from the landing of the Pilgrims on the Rock of Plymouth, there had arrived in New-England about twenty one thousand souls. After this period, more people left the country, than came into it.\* These twenty-one thousand, therefore, are properly considered as our ancestors, as the Fathers of New-England. Now it is a fact, as notorious as it is important, that they came to this country, with the express design of procuring for themselves the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and of transmitting the same to posterity. The emigration of the Fathers was produced by the civil and ecclesiastical oppressions of the mother country; and they looked upon New-England, as an asylum prepared by Providence, where they might maintain the worship of God, and enjoy the blessings of equal laws. Spiritual privileges, however, in their estimation, far exceeded all others; and were placed by them as much *above* temporal privileges, as by us they are placed below them. The leading motives and views of the New-England Fathers, are well and truly stated by Mr. John Higginson, in a sermon, delivered before the General Court of Massachusetts in 1683.

“When the Lord stirred up the spirits of so many of his people,” said Mr. Higginson, “to come over to this wilderness, it was not for worldly wealth, or a better livelihood for the outward man. The generality of the people that came over, professed the contrary; nor had we any rational grounds to expect such a thing in such a wilderness. Though God hath blessed his poor people here, and there are, that have increased here from small beginnings to great estates; yet these are but additions; they are but additional mercies. It was another and a better thing, that we followed the Lord into the wilderness for. This is never to be forgotten, that New-England is a plantation of religion. And if any man amongst us make religion as *twelve*, and the world as *thirteen*, let such an one know, he hath neither the spirit of a *true New-England man*; nor yet of a sincere christian.”

“This was and is our cause—that Christ alone might be acknowledged by us as the only head, Lord and law-

• Trumbull.



giver in his Church; that his written word might be acknowledged as the only rule—That only and all his institutions might be observed and enjoyed by us, and that with purity and liberty, peace and power.” Mr. Higginson urged the duty and necessity of union and charity. “For there is not,” said he, “any one duty more pressed by our Saviour and his Apostles, than this of a holy and close union among those, who profess his name. The best of men may err; and there being divers measures of light and grace, there cannot but be different apprehensions in some things. And therefore, where there is not so full an agreement as is to be desired, it is our duty to forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” “This,” he added, “is the chief interest of New-England, the matter of the greatest importance in itself, and of greatest concernment unto us. Whatever may be said of our interest in other respects, yet we may be sure, that here lies our predominant interest and cause; and the great end for which we came into this wilderness, and continue in it.”\*

The extracts, which I have now given, while they state the leading objects and views of the New-England Fathers, speak also the language and sentiments of the worthiest portion of the New-England people in 1683. They speak the language and sentiments of the worthiest portion of the people of *New-Hampshire* at that time. It is true, the people here laboured under great disadvantages; they were of a mixed character; and religious privileges were not so highly and generally prized, as in other parts of New-England. Still your Fathers did by no means neglect them. They expressly acknowledged the duty of maintaining the publick worship of God and publick instruction in religion and morality. They reserved lands for the support and encouragement of the gospel ministry. If you examine the charter of your own town, you will find, that lands were reserved by it for these purposes; and the duties enjoined of erecting a House of worship, and supporting a minister. The same duties are strongly inculcated by the present Constitution of this state. Its language is to this effect—that morality rightly grounded on evangelical principles, is the only proper foundation of obedience to the laws—that religion is absolutely essential to the support of good government.

\* Mather's Apology.

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Such, my friends, were the language and sentiments of those, who have gone before you, and who have transmitted to you, in common with other towns, all the privileges, which the friends of religion and liberty, could ask or desire. They believed, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life, that now is, and of that which is to come." They believed that the temporal prosperity of towns, is intimately connected with their moral and religious welfare; that the most effectual means of preserving habits of industry and sobriety among a people, are the regular observation of the Sabbath, and a regular attendance on the institutions and ordinances of the gospel. So far were they from considering the support of ministers as tending to poverty, that they regarded it as one of the best means of promoting their interest even in this world. A ministerial tax in their days was no such frightful, or burdensome thing, as in our day it has come to be. They looked upon well principled and well educated ministers, as worthy of support. They considered, that the "Lord himself had ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel; and that a fixed and permanent support by taxation according to property, was not only the *easiest*, but the most likely to secure the services of men of education and character. They believed, (and their principles have since been verified) that publick instruction committed to illiterate men, tended not only to degrade the ministerial character, but to vitiate the publick taste. They did not esteem a preacher the *less*, for having had a regular and liberal education; nor were their ears offended at the sound of a written discourse. The doctrine, "that ignorance is the mother of devotion," they well knew, was no doctrine of Protestants. They honoured knowledge. They honoured an enlightened, as well as pious ministry.

Of late years, indeed, it has been the habit of many, to ridicule our Fathers, or to hold them up to scorn; to bring forward their failings, and to keep their virtues out of sight. Of late years, attempts have been made to render their institutions odious to the rising generation. Much has been said and written about "law religion" and the "standing order;" as though no order ought to stand; or as though our towns could not prosper, while the law gave them the power of maintaining the institutions of the Fathers, even if they were united in the measure.



But I have looked upon these things, not as symptoms of growing knowledge and virtue amongst us ; not as evidences of progress in true liberty ; but rather as symptoms and evidences of the downward course of society ; and as foreboding little for the benefit of those, who are to come after us. I have looked upon these things as just causes of sorrow to all who “ possess the spirit of true New-England men.” I have no doubt, my friends, that many of you have viewed these things in a light very similar ; that you have regarded them as attempts, rather to pull down and destroy, than to “ strengthen the things that remain.”

But notwithstanding all that has been said and done pertaining to the institutions of religion, it still remains true, that you are intrusted with most important privileges. It lies with you to say, whether or not, your town affairs shall be conducted with order, fairness and economy ; whether your schools shall be nurseries of virtue, as well as of useful knowledge ; whether the Sabbath shall be religiously observed, and the publick worship of God, respectably maintained among you ; whether your town shall present the pleasing aspect of a people, advancing in all those attainments, which render a people respectable and happy. It very much lies with you to say, what shall be the character of your posterity ; what rank and standing your town shall have among her sister towns, when your heads shall be laid low in the dust. Under God, my friends, these things still lie with you. They constitute a most important trust ; and they justify me in saying, that much is given to you. Your conduct as a body politick, or as members of religious society, involves consequences, unspeakably important to you and your children, and to the cause of good morals in this section of the State.

II. Let me now request your attention to the duties, which the trust reposed in you enjoins. “ Unto whomsoever much is given, of him will be much required.”

You, my friends, are intrusted with the welfare of this town. You are bound then to consult its welfare. In your civil concerns, all private and party feelings should be suppressed. Every voter should come to the town-meeting with the purpose of acting with the same regard to integrity, and to the welfare of the town, as though he were about to perform the last act of his life. Every voter should act under the conviction, that he is accountable to a higher power, than that of man, for the vote he

gives, for the measures he supports. If this consideration had its due weight with a majority of voters, I am persuaded, the business of our towns generally, would be conducted with much greater unanimity, and much greater advantage to the publick interest. It is a melancholy spectacle to see a town divided against itself. In such a situation, no town ever did, nor ever can prosper. In your civil affairs, therefore, you will study the things that make for peace; the things that make for good order; the things that may make a favourable impression on the young men, who from year to year are coming forward to act as voters. You will consider your example as important to the rising generation; and adopt no means to carry favourite measures, which as good fathers and good men, you cannot conscientiously recommend to your own sons. You will set an example of moderation and candour; an example of true love for the honour of your town.

It belongs to you as legal voters, to raise money for the support of schools. Generous provision by law is made for this purpose. You are under legal obligation to raise a considerable sum; but if this sum prove inadequate to the just claims of your youth, you are under *moral* obligation to enlarge it. In providing schools for your children, you not only afford them the means of becoming respectable and useful in life; but you provide for supporting the government of your choice; for the security of your property, and of your neighbour's property; for the tranquillity and happiness of mankind. It is a maxim of our government, that one of its essential pillars is knowledge; that without the diffusion of a good portion of intelligence among the people, this government cannot be maintained. Popular ignorance may do for other governments, but it cannot do for ours. To speak of *ignorant republicans*, would be just as absurd, as to speak of *enlightened slaves*. But my friends, your concern with schools does not end with raising money for their support. The manner in which the money is expended, is of still greater importance, than the sum which is raised. You should pay particular attention to the qualifications of those, whom you employ to form the minds of your children. An ignorant teacher is little better than none: an immoral teacher is much worse than none. The teacher even of a common school, ought to be a person of respectable information. He ought to be one, who is given to reading and



fond of knowledge. He ought in fact, to know a great deal more, than he expects to impart to his pupils; otherwise, he cannot be apt in teaching even those things, which his pupils may wish to learn. Especially, should every teacher of youth be a person of sound morals. He should be one, whose general deportment and conversation will have a tendency to raise and improve the character of his pupils. Consider, my friends, what treasures you commit to the care of your schoolmasters. You commit to them the instruction of those, who are to bear up your names, when you shall be sleeping in the dust. You assign to them the high duty of forming the moral and intellectual character of those, who, in a few years more, will constitute the heads of families and the pillars of society in this place. Will you not then be attentive to the qualifications of the teachers you provide for them? Will you not seek for them such teachers as are worthy to bear a part in training up those, to whom the dearest interests of society will so soon be committed? Will you not take great pains to bring forward a well informed and virtuous race, to fill the places of their fathers, and to be ornaments to their families and town? If any anxieties, pertaining to this world, are virtuous, they are the anxieties we feel for our children; for their education, connexions, and standing in society. If we have no anxieties like these, we must be unnatural indeed; we must be destitute of the feelings of parents. These anxieties, however, are common to us all; but it is only through a careful provision for the intellectual, moral and religious education of our offspring, that we can hope to verify the proverb, "children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers."

It belongs to the legal voters of this town, to determine the great question of supporting among them the regular ministrations of the gospel. It belongs to you, my friends, to determine, whether the God of your fathers shall here be stately and unitedly worshipped; whether you will stately and unitedly come together to inquire for a right way for yourselves and your little ones; that is, whether you will avail yourselves of the benefits, which a regular ministry would bring to you; or whether you will forsake the assembling of yourselves together, (as the manner of too many already is,) or go on with your present very scanty means of moral and religious instruction. The

question of a regular support of the gospel, is a question essentially connected with your character and prospects as a people; a question, which you are bound to decide with reference to another day, when all your conduct will be judged by him, who has already said, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him will be much required."

I am aware that a recent law of the State has taken from you what townsmen anciently considered one of their dearest rights, the right of providing as a town, for supporting the institutions of religion. Were every voter in town heartily attached to the same order of christians, you could not call a town-meeting, and legally vote one dollar toward building a house of worship, or supporting a minister. But still there is a way in which you may enjoy, and legally enjoy, religious worship and instruction. You may associate as members of religious society, and support just such order as you agree to support. And if this institution of your fathers, or any other religious institution, is to be supported here, it is natural to expect, that it will chiefly be done by those who are voters in town affairs. And I beg you to be assured, that I consider myself as addressing those, who have a duty to perform in relation to this subject; that I consider myself as addressing reasonable men and conscientious men, who will not shut their eyes against the truth, and absurdly imagine, that because they have, for many years, *neglected* their duty, they may therefore *continue* to neglect it.

The language of the existing law concerning religion is this: You may support any religious institutions, or none at all, just as you please. But the Constitution of the State and the law of God speak a very different language. If you will take the trouble of reading the sixth article of the Bill of Rights, you will find, that, while it very properly guards the rights of conscience, it solemnly asserts the duty of supporting religious institutions. I trust I need not take up your time in shewing, that the Bible inculcates the same duty. I trust you will all admit the truth of these two propositions. First, that no government, depending on public opinion, that is, no *free* government, can be supported without piety and good morals. And secondly, that piety and good morals cannot be cherished and maintained in the community, without publick instruction. For my part, I should expect, that mankind at large, would just as soon understand reading, writing and arith-



metick, without schools or teachers; as become religious or moral, without publick instruction. I never heard of a virtuous péople, who had not such instruction. Now, if you admit the truth of my two propositions, how can you possibly avoid the inference, that it is your duty to support the institutions of religion in this place? You are indeed bound to support them, by your regard for the government under which you live. You are bound as good citizens, to adopt the best and most obvious means of preserving in your town an orderly, sober, industrious race of men; a race of men, worthy to enjoy, and capable of maintaining a republican form of government. If you can do this without regularly supporting the "publick worship of the Deity, and publick instruction in religion, piety and moraliy," you possess a secret, which your fathers never dreamt of; and you will authorize the conclusion, that human nature is different here from what it is in all other parts of the world. But the truth is, my friends, if you would be an enlightened and moral people, you must take the same steps to this end, which the wise and good part of mankind have ever found to be necessary. This end can be attained by no *other* steps.

The influence of stated religious worship and instruction is visible, not only in the good order of towns, but in the relative value of real estate. Look through christendom, and you will find, that towns, where the institutions of religion are well supported, compared with towns in which they are in a great measure neglected, have a decided advantage in the value of their farms; and this advantage constitutes a fund, much larger than is requisite for the support of the gospel. The quality of the soil and local advantages do not determine the entire value of farms. It is a serious truth, that the character of the inhabitants, their disposition and habits in relation to schools, to the Sabbath, and to the institutions of religion, are taken into the account. This is true of every farming town in New-England; and it always will be true, while there remains among us a vestige of good principle. So that you are furnished even with pecuniary motives in favour of supporting the gospel; and so true is it, that godliness has promise of the life that now is. I would not recommend a shew of religion for the sake of worldly advantage. This certainly would be very wrong. But I would recommend, that you seriously consider the inti-



mate connexion that subsists between the spiritual and temporal welfare of mankind. You cannot direct me to any numerous community on the face of the whole earth, comparatively distinguished for piety and good morals, and not, at the same time, comparatively distinguished for temporal prosperity.

I might now offer to your consideration the purely religious motives which should induce you to support the preaching of the gospel. I might speak of the importance of the means of grace, as connected with salvation. But I have time only to observe on this topick, that the preaching of the gospel is the great instrument, which God, in every age of the church, has made use of to convert and save the souls of men.

There are several apologies for neglecting, or refusing to support the institutions of religion, which in our destitute towns are more or less urged, and which deserve to be considered. One of these apologies is this: The people are so divided, that the support of a minister is impracticable. Now, my friends, wherever division consists in want of kind and good feelings, it is manifestly criminal in itself, and cannot justify the neglect in question. It shews that religion and morality are low, and that publick worship and instruction are very much needed to bring about a better state of things. And I know of nothing so well calculated to create, and cherish, and keep alive the friendly affections among a people, as the habit of meeting one another in the solemn assembly, where all are reminded of their personal frailties and sins, and taught to exercise a spirit of forgiveness one toward another. What can you imagine more likely to counteract the spirit of wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, than frequently assembling yourselves together, in the more especial presence of Him, whose offspring you are, and whom you are to remember as your common parent? The mere coming together, in an orderly and decent manner, and *seeing* one another, has a happy influence in cultivating friendly dispositions. By frequently meeting in this way, you acquire an interest in one another's welfare; you feel like brethren, having a common interest to promote. And if you come together with the prayer in your hearts, as well as on your lips, that your debts may be forgiven as you forgive your debtors, you cannot avoid becoming an affectionate and united people.



Some excuse themselves from giving their support to religious institutions, because they have an ill opinion of individuals, already supporting them; or because they disapprove some parish proceedings. Both of these reasons, my friends, are very deficient, as justifying reasons. You are bound, at all events, to do your duty, and to make the best of every thing. Dislike to other persons will certainly be a poor excuse to offer to your Judge, for neglecting an institution, expressly designed as a means of preparation for another and a better world. And what an ill symptom is it, that pilgrims on the same journey, and bound, as they imagine, to the same city of rest and glory, should fall out by the way, and refuse to walk together for mutual comfort and encouragement! What an evidence is it of want of proper views and feelings! of want of that meekness and comprehensive benevolence, which distinguished the character of Him who died, that we might live!

As to parish proceedings, no person should expect, that they will always be conducted in the best possible manner, nor in the manner he thinks best. Imperfection is the lot of all human institutions; it is especially the lot of towns and parishes. Of this you should always be sensible; and, instead of refusing your aid to the support of gospel order, stand forward in the good cause, and remain firm at your post. If measures at any time are adopted, which are wrong in themselves, or which you disapprove, do all you can by fair, and gentle, and christian methods, to obviate their injurious effects. Religious society, and all other society, in this imperfect world, must be supported on principles of mutual concession.

But the great apology, which we most frequently hear offered, for neglecting to support religious order in our towns, are divisions in religious sentiments. Some are Congregationalists, some are Baptists, some are Methodists, some are Calvinists, some are Arminians, some are Trinitarians, and some are Unitarians; and there is such a diversity of opinions, that no general measures for the support of any one denomination, can be adopted. Has it then come to this? And is it true, that God has revealed a religion, that you might know how to honour him, and how to work out your own salvation? has he revealed a religion, speaking peace on earth and good will to men? and now is it such a matter of uncertainty what the essential

principles of this religion are, that you cannot be so far united, as to worship your Creator under the same roof, and sit under the preaching of the same minister? that you cannot, in fact, agree to support regularly any worship and instruction at all? Is Christ divided? Is he not forever one and the same? And must not all who receive the benefits of his mediation, possess one and the same spirit? Is not his religion most eminently a religion of love? Did he not, in the most solemn and affecting language, exhort his followers to be united; declaring, that the very badge by which they were to be known, was mutual love? Now, how does this comport with the divisions among us; and with the party names, that are got up, to prevent these divisions, if possible, from ever being healed? For my part, I consider most of our divisions as arising more from will and feeling, than from conviction and principle, and the names by which they are distinguished, as answering the views of the great enemy, rather than of the great Head of the church.

I believe, my friends, there *are* such things as conscientious differences in religious opinion. But these seldom form a proper ground of separation. Those who possess the spirit of Christ's religion, can forbear one another in love. They can agree to differ; and can walk together, although they cannot think alike on all subjects of Divinity. We have no reason to expect, that men will all think alike; but we have a right to ask, that they would not make their differences in opinion such a ground of separation, as to abolish the very institutions of religion. And we have a right to say, that this argument for neglecting these institutions, on account of differences in opinion, is a *false* argument, because it proves too much; it goes to the destruction of gospel order. It is my belief, that it cannot be taken as an excuse at the hands of any people of competent numbers and property, that they cannot maintain gospel order, because they cannot agree to do it; any more, than it could be taken as an excuse for their general want of uprightness, that they could not *agree* to be *upright*. The matter of agreement is a matter of duty; of duty, which no people can perseveringly neglect, without bringing down upon themselves, in one form or another, the judgments of Heaven;—without perpetuating a moral desolation.



## DISCOURSE II.

REV. III, 2.

*Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.*

THESE words contain a serious admonition to all churches and religious societies, in which religion itself is in a languid and decaying state ; and, I trust, they will not be considered as ill adapted to the present circumstances of this church and people. They were originally addressed to a church of which it was said, that it had a name, that it lived, and was dead. That is, the church was still in an organized state ; the institution remained ; but the ends of the institution were very scantily answered. The institution itself was much less cherished, than it had formerly been ; its friends were remiss, or discouraged ; and its enemies, unceasingly vigilant in contriving its ruin. The situation of the church at Sardis, seems to have been remarkably similar to that of many churches at the present day ; and, I am persuaded, bore no distant resemblance to the situation of the church in this place. The same general considerations, therefore, which made it desirable that the things which remained in that church, should be strengthened, make it likewise desirable, that the things which here remain, should be strengthened. And the same general duties, which devolved upon the few disciples of Christ at Sardis, devolve also upon his few professing followers here ; and, indeed, upon all, who have any serious desire to see the regular ministrations of the gospel reestablished in this place. "Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die."

In this discourse, I shall endeavour to shew, that the things, which here remain are worthy of being strengthened ; and to suggest the means of doing it.

The church and society here remaining, are of the ancient order, introduced and established by the first fathers of New-England. For almost a century from the landing of the Pilgrims, the people of New-England were nearly all of

this order. Ample time had been given to test the worth of their religious institutions, long before some denominations, now growing numerous, were ever heard of in this country, or even in the world. Now, my friends, all who have paid any attention to the history of New-England, know very well, that our Fathers were wonderfully prospered and blest. Their religious institutions had a happy influence upon their general character. They were eminently a moral and religious people. Indeed, no person can fairly examine their history without perceiving, that God, in a remarkable manner, owned and blessed their religious institutions. Shall we, then, lightly esteem, nay, shall we count as *vile*, what God himself has owned and blest? Shall we turn our backs upon institutions, which the great Head of the Church has honoured with his own presence, and rendered subservient to the conversion and sanctification of multitudes, who have gone before us? Shall we not rather strengthen what yet remains of these ancient, venerable, and precious institutions; and do all in our power, to repair the breaches they have sustained?

You will not understand me as recommending an institution, merely because it is ancient. I know very well, that the antiquity of an institution, is no certain evidence of its real value and utility. But when an institution has been found by the experience of successive generations, to be highly capable of answering all the important purposes, for which it was established, it certainly is a good reason for continuing to support it. We ought not to exchange such an institution for any other of recent origin, and, at the same time, of very doubtful tendency.

The Congregational churches of New-England have been instrumental in bringing down the richest blessings upon the land. In the bosom of these churches were nurtured that fervent piety, that christian fortitude, that unwavering trust in a superintending Providence, which prepared our fathers for the grand enterprise of converting a savage wilderness into a dwelling-place for enlightened and civilized man. In the bosom of these churches were nurtured that spirit of liberty, and that boldness of character, which fitted them for resisting, at every step, the encroachments of arbitrary power. The Congregational Fathers of New-England laid the foundation of all, that is most valuable in our civil institutions.\* To those fathers,

\* I allude to the civil institutions of the New-England States.



under God, we owe it, that we are now a free people; and so richly provided with the means of becoming wise, and virtuous, and happy. It was their earliest concern, to establish schools, to organize parishes and churches, to build houses of worship, to settle and maintain pastors and teachers, and to do all in their power for the improvement of succeeding generations.

I would not be understood to say, or to believe, that our Fathers were perfect. I know they were tingured with a portion of the intolerance of their age. But I believe myself entirely justified in saying, they were as worthy a race of men, as existed in their day. Their memories are worthy of being honoured by us; and their institutions, worthy of being maintained. And, I will add, unless they *are* maintained; unless they are cherished and supported with greater zeal and interest, than seem to be customary at present, especially in this quarter, there is much reason to fear, that the state of society will grow worse and worse; and, at no very distant day, that we shall become a grossly wicked and profligate people. Every father, every mother, every friend to his country, has reason to be anxious for the rising generation.

What, my friends, would have been the feelings of our Fathers, had they supposed, that their children would treat their most valuable institutions with cold indifference? Would they have encountered so many hardships for the sake of transmitting such privileges to a thankless posterity? Would they have offered so many fervent prayers to God for his guidance and blessing, had they imagined, that the more they themselves were prospered, the more guilty would be their children? And what a sad compliment to the memory of those worthy and pious Fathers, is the situation of many a Congregational church and society in New-Hampshire! Say not that I am unreasonably attached to a particular order of christians. I can heartily say, "peace be with all those, that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and I can heartily rejoice in the success of true religion, in whatever sect or denomination it may be found. Still I feel authorised to plead for the Congregational churches; because I believe them well calculated in themselves, to promote piety and good morals; entirely consonant to the principles of republican government; and, to say the least, as much as any other existing order, agreeable to scripture. I believe these church-

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es have been the means of preserving among us, more than all other means, a sense of God's providence and of a world to come; of holding up, in a multitude of honourable examples, a standard of christian character, which has been, and still is, of invaluable benefit to the community. I believe, if these churches are forsaken, and finally become extinct, that no regular institutions of religion will soon be established in their place; and that the name, as well as influence of christianity, will be in danger of disappearing from the land. Believing these things, I cannot hesitate to exhort you to strengthen the things that remain; nor can I hesitate to say, that the things which remain, are worthy of being strengthened.

II. I will now suggest some of the means, by which the end proposed in the text, may be attained; some of the means, by which you may hope to strengthen the things, that remain in this place.

First, I would recommend to the few professors, who remain connected with this church and society, a greater earnestness and zeal in the cause of their Master. You, my friends, must be especially solicitous to honour the religion you profess. You have assumed a situation highly responsible. You have taken upon yourselves the vows of God. You have declared your allegiance to *Him*, and professed to experience the power of his grace. You profess to have taken up your cross, and to have become the disciples of Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people. You call upon the world to take knowledge of you, that you have been with him. You have charged yourselves with the high office of maintaining the honour of his kingdom in the world; of exhibiting the power of his religion to rectify the human character. You, in effect, say to others, be ye followers of us, even as we are of Christ. The glory of God, the prosperity of the church, the cause of religious order and religious instruction in this place, the health of your own souls; every consideration of duty and interest, urge you to exhibit the peculiarities of the christian character. You must be persons of sound morals, of daily prayer, of visible and fervent piety. You must be frequent in your supplications at the throne of grace, that pure religion, the religion of the heart, the religion which renews and sanctifies the life, may revive amongst this people. You must imitate the



examples of Nehemiah, Ezra, and other eminently pious persons of every age. They humbled themselves before God, on account of their *own* coldness and indifference, as well as on account of the *general* disregard to religion. And while they were earnest in prayer, they were earnest also in action. So you, my friends, must evince, by your personal exertions, as well as by your devotional habits, your zeal to promote the cause of truth and righteousness. You must let it appear, that you are not ashamed of the gospel. As a church, you should occasionally meet for prayer and mutual encouragement. You should endeavour to make it manifest, that, although your number is greatly diminished, the spirit of prayer still remains among you; and that you are ready to do whatever is incumbent on you, as professors of Christ's religion, to repair the breaches that have been made here, and to strengthen the things that remain.

In the second place, I would recommend to those, who are decidedly favourable to the order and mode of worship, introduced and maintained by their fathers, to be more active and engaged in the good work of reestablishing the regular ministrations of the gospel. I trust, here are still remaining a goodly number, who would rejoice to see this church and society in a flourishing state. I trust here are a goodly number, who are convinced and satisfied, that the religious observation of the Sabbath, the regular support of publick worship in a house set apart for that purpose, and the weekly publick instructions, as well as friendly private admonitions of a christian minister, are absolutely essential to a well regulated and moral people. To this goodly number let me say then, you must take a still deeper interest in this great concern; this concern, connected not only with your own personal welfare, but with the welfare of the children, whom you love, and of the town at large, whose prosperity you would gladly promote. Here in this town, my friends, lie your most important temporal interests. Here are your estates; and here are the children whom you expect to inherit them; and whom you wish to come forward in life, well informed, well behaved and respectable. You would gladly do much to promote their advancement. Now what measure can you adopt, better calculated for the instruction of your own children, and of the children generally in the town; better calculated to secure an orderly, industrious, intel-

ligent and worthy posterity, than to provide yourselves with a pious, discreet, and well educated minister? I say it seriously, I say it boldly, that your children and posterity would be better situated with half the property they might inherit, provided they could inherit likewise the blessings of gospel order and gospel instruction, than with all your property, along with a broken state of society and a general indifference to the institutions of religion. The inheritance you might leave them in a convenient and respectable house of worship, and in the virtues and labours of a worthy christian minister, would be the most valuable inheritance in your power to leave; even if you consulted merely their welfare in the present life. For, after all, it is moral worth, and not riches, which constitutes the true dignity, and true happiness of a people.

But, my friends, you have immortal souls, and your children have immortal souls, whose welfare in a future state, should be your highest concern. This world is not your home. It is a state of probation. It is a transitory state. It will soon come to an end. But its consequences will remain forever! Will you not, then, take an important step, on your part, towards rendering your being a blessing to you, and your children's being a blessing to them? Will you not make great exertions, great sacrifices, if need be, to provide yourselves and your children with the customary privileges of a christian people?

In the last place, I may be permitted to say a few words to those, who are in the habit of doing *nothing* for the support of any order of worship in any place.

You, my friends, stand aloof, and, like the nobles of the Tekoites, put not your hands to the work of the Lord. Can you now before God, and, at the bar of your own consciences, justify yourselves in the course you are taking? And will you, on a more solemn day, be able to justify yourselves? I take upon me to say, that you are under obligations, which no *law* of man, nor *will* of man can dissolve, to assist according to your ability, in providing and maintaining the regular ministrations of the gospel. You are as much bound by the law of God, to provide for the instruction of yourselves and your children in religion and morality, as you are, to provide food, and raiment, and shelter.

But perhaps you are in doubt, what order of christianity to support. I reply, any order is better than none. But



if all were to follow your example, no order whatever would be supported. No christian institutions would be found in the country. You would not see houses of worship erected or repaired; but all would go to decay, and disappear from the face of the earth. This state of things, I am confident, would give you great pain. You could not witness, without deep regret, such a sad departure from the practice of your fathers. You cannot readily give up all thoughts of attending publick worship; of assembling, at least occasionally, with your families and neighbours, in the House, where God has graciously promised to hear and to answer. Why, then, do you hesitate to contribute according to your ability, towards the support of an institution, which you acknowledge and believe to be useful and necessary?

Perhaps some of you may plead, that your property is small, and that you are unable to do much for the support of the gospel. I do not ask you to do *much*; I ask you to do *something*. I ask you to do what you are able to do, and no more. How little soever you may do, if it be according to your ability, it will not only show, that you are friendly to gospel order, but will help to strengthen the hands of this society. You can all cast in, at least, *two mites*; and you know, that *two mites* were neither rejected, nor ill spoken of. Be entreated, then, to consider this subject in a more serious light, than you have hitherto done. Consider what bearing it may have on your own welfare and that of your families in the present world; but above all, what bearing it may *possibly* have on your welfare in the world to come. You cannot feel certain, you are *right* in withholding your aid from this institution of religion. I think, you may be very sure, it will be *safe* to *give* your aid. Now, my friends, it is a good rule, where one side is doubtful and the other side safe, always to take the safe side.

I trust you will all do me the justice to believe, that, in the plain discourse I have now given, I have sought not *yours*, but *you*. Though I have spoken plainly, I have endeavoured to speak kindly; and to offer such considerations, and such only, as are worthy to influence the candid hearer. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them, which are sanctified."

## EXTRACTS

*From DR. DAN'S Election Sermon, 1823.*

“Those laws which are founded in righteousness will give an efficient protection to the Sabbath. Of all the institutions which our world has witnessed, this is the most purely benign. Had it been a mere human invention, it would have justly ranked its author among the greatest of philosophers, and the most illustrious benefactors of his species. Stamped, as it unquestionably is, with a divine authority, it is most precious to the patriot and philanthropist, as well as the Christian.—The devotions of the Sabbath are the grand cement of human society. They put to flight those baleful passions which invade its order and prey upon its peace; while they powerfully cherish all those dispositions which constitute its beauty, its harmony, and its happiness. The instructions appropriate to this sacred season, are calculated to produce a similar general effect. All which the Scriptures reveal respecting God, his law, the wonders of redemption, the distinguishing excellencies of the Saviour, the genius and spirit of his religion, powerfully tends to humble the pride, and soften the asperities of the human breast; and at the same time, to inspire those virtues which are the ornaments and safe-guards of human society, and the sweeteners of human life. The result is, that the Sabbath is the best friend of social, as well as of individual man; the most efficient patron of publick peace, order, virtue and happiness.”

“It has, I am not insensible, been maintained that Religion, being a concern between man and his Maker, and having its principal reference to our spiritual interests, and our immortal destiny, needs not the support of civil government. This position, with certain obvious limitations, may be true. Still there remains a most important question. Does not civil government; do not all the great and momentous interests of society, need the support of religion? Have not the wisest legislators, ancient and modern, heathen and Christian, felt and acknowledged the inefficiency of all institutions and laws merely human; and to supply the defect, resorted to the high and ever-



lasting sanctions of religion? Such were obviously the views of the Framers of the Constitution of this State. All restraints on religious liberty; all invasions of the rights of conscience; all preferences of one sect or denomination to another; all impositions, by the civil power, of creeds and liturgies, we sincerely deprecate. No enlightened Christian, nor enlightened patriot, would wish to see, in our favored country, a religious establishment. It would corrupt religion, without affording substantial aid to the state. Nor is it to be desired that such provision should be made by Christian societies, for the clergy, as should render the sacred office a lure to ambition, or to avarice. The system, so opposite to this, which has long prevailed in this state, has had its influence, it may be believed, to preserve the purity of the clerical profession. Still, that a minister of the gospel, instead of relying on the justice of a society which has pledged him a support, should be liable to be cast on the world; should even find himself a *mere pensioner on private bounty*; cannot be favorable, either to his dignity, or his usefulness. By the nature of his office, he is required to declare unwelcome truths, and to press unwelcome duties; to dispense warnings, admonitions and rebukes, without partiality, and without fear, to all classes of mankind. The best interests of his hearers therefore, and of society at large, forbid that he should be subjected to such temptations to unfaithfulness, as no ordinary degree of virtue can withstand. Should he even, by a rare moral heroism, combine an *entire independence of mind* with an *extreme dependence of circumstances*; still his influence in guiding the judgment of the community, in forming its taste, and regulating its manners, would be comparatively small."

I will merely subjoin to these excellent sentiments, that not only is *extreme dependence of circumstances* unfavourable to the character and influence of Christian ministers; but *extreme ignorance* also. An enlightened and religious people will not fail to require knowledge and sound learning, as well as fervent piety, in those who sustain the clerical profession.

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