

PULPIT ELOQUENCE

OF

The Nineteenth Century:

BEING SUPPLEMENTARY TO THE HISTORY AND REPOSITORY  
OF PULPIT ELOQUENCE, DECEASED DIVINES;

AND CONTAINING DISCOURSES OF

EMINENT LIVING MINISTERS

IN

EUROPE AND AMERICA,

WITH

SKETCHES BIOGRAPHICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE

BY

REV. HENRY C. <sup>Clay</sup>FISH.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY EDWARDS A. PARK, D.D.,

ABBOTT PROFESSOR IN ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY M. W. DODD,

No. 506 BROADWAY.

1857.

U. S. DISTRICT COURT

DECEMBER 20 1882.

(977)

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by

M. W. DODD,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

STEREOTYPED BY  
THOMAS B. SMITH,  
92 & 84 Beekman-st., N. Y.

PRINTED BY  
ROBERT CRAIGHEAD,  
83 Centre-st., N. Y.

## DISCOURSE XXVII.

THOMAS H. SKINNER, D.D.

DR. SKINNER was born March 7th, 1791, in Perquimous county, North Carolina, north shore of Albemarle Sound, near Harvey's Point. His father was a planter, a man of high position, and greatly beloved in the Baptist church, of which he was a member till his death, in 1829. At the age of twenty years he was converted and united with the Presbyterian church in Princeton, New Jersey. The special means blessed to this end were sermons preached by the Rev. B. H. Rice, D.D., and a severe domestic affliction. His studies were pursued at Nassau Hall, where he graduated in 1809.

Dr. Skinner was ordained in 1813 and took the charge of the Second Presbyterian church, Philadelphia, as colleague of the Rev. Dr. Janeway, successor to Rev. Dr. Green. His other pastoral charges have been the Fifth Presbyterian church, Philadelphia, assumed in December, 1816, and resigned in 1832; and the Mercer-street Presbyterian church, assumed in 1835 and resigned in 1848, at which time he was elected Professor of Sacred Rhetoric, Pastoral Theology, and Church Government, in the Union Theological Seminary, New York; a position which he still holds. He was Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in Andover Theological Seminary from 1832 to 1835. He has a son in the ministry, Rev. Thomas H. Skinner, jr., now of Honesdale, Pennsylvania. Many years ago he published two volumes, called "Religion of the Bible," and "Preaching and Hearing," and, more recently, translations of Vinet's Pastoral Theology, and Vinet's Homiletics.

In personal appearance, Dr. Skinner is about medium height, rather tall, slim and spare; hair light and thin, mingled with gray; forehead broad and deep, and a general expression of intellectual capacity and studious habits. As professor in the seminary in New York, he is much respected, and highly acceptable and useful.

As a preacher, Dr. Skinner's marked characteristics are, ardent love for the truth, clearness and richness of thought, deep evangelical sentiment, and precision, directness, and strength of expression. Some of his views on preaching, of which he is himself a fine illustration, are presented in the preface of his "Religion of the Bible," where he says: "It is not when its theme is *controversy*, but *certain* and *fundamental truth*, that religious discourse should be most distinguished by discrimination, exactness of statement, clearness, order, and strength of reasoning, as well as by pungency and earnestness. Nor do I wish to be thought of the opinion, that all discussion in points of dispute among Christians, is unlawful, or unnecessary. The *ordinary* teaching of the ministry, should, I am persuaded, have little to do with disputes. **IF ANY MAN SPEAK, LET HIM SPEAK AS THE ORACLES OF GOD.** It is a 'point of great inconvenience and peril to entitle the people to hear controversies, and all

kinds of doctrine. They say no part of the counsel of God is to be suppressed: so is the difference which the apostle maketh between milk and strong meat is confounded: and his precept, that the weak be not admitted unto questions and controversies, taketh no place.\* If, nevertheless, Christians will discuss their differences with becoming moderation, and earnest endeavors be still used to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, there doubtless are times and places in which they may do so, without sin, and, perhaps, to edification. Where, however, the business directly in hand is that of saving men, earnestness and skill in conducting that great work, will, as far as possible, preclude the intrusion of controverted points."

The subjoined discourse, printed by Dr. Skinner's permission, has had a somewhat wide, and most merited, reputation. It was printed many years ago, and if we mistake not, the substance of it was incorporated into a Review article. We lately heard one of the first preachers in the country remark, that this sermon was read by him a great number of years since, and had deeply influenced his ministerial and Christian career. The recollection of it, he said, was yet fragrant in his memory.

---

### SPIRITUAL JOY AS AN ELEMENT OF STRENGTH.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength."—NEHEMIAH, viii. 10.

EXPOUNDING the rule of duty to those who have violated it, tends in the first instance, if they have ingenuous minds, to exercise them with sorrow, but that sorrow ends in joy. The children of the captivity, who by warrant from the King of Persia, returned to the land of their fathers, had for a long time been destitute of spiritual instruction, and almost as a matter of course, had fallen into spiritual insensibility and unconcern. But they were somehow led to gather themselves together as one man, to hear the word of God; and Ezra the Scribe, with certain Levites, his assistants, read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading. The effect was—an illustrious instance of the heart-melting power of divine truth—a deep sense of sin in the entire assembly. *All the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.* An unusual spectacle in this hard-hearted world! An immense concourse of men all in tears before God on account of their sins! Well might the ministers of religion hasten to fulfill the commission, *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.* It is needful that sinful men should sorrow, but there is nothing desirable in sorrow on its own account, and God works it in his chosen, only that by means of it, he may open a fit channel into their breasts for the consolations of his Spirit to flow in. Hence Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, and Ezra the Priest, the Scribe, and the teaching Levites, dismissed that great assembly of mourners with these gracious words: *This day is*

\* Lord Bacon.

*holy to the Lord your God: mourn not, nor weep; go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry, FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.*

As is the sorrow of a penitent heart, such is the nature of the joy to which it leads. Both are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. There are joys of a different kind. There is a natural joy which one feels after escaping out of great danger, or being unexpectedly blessed with worldly good. There is also a religious joy which springs from mistaken impressions. These are not the joy of the Lord; they are but for a moment; they pass away, and leave the heart void, desolate, and despairing. The joy of the Lord, the same which fills the eternal mind, is the only joy that meets the desires and exigences of any rational being. To all rational minds, of God, angels and men, there is but one true happiness. Angels are not happy, and men are not happy, unless they share the happiness of him who is over all, blessed forever. With him is the fountain of life—not a rill, not a drop of bliss in the universe, which that fountain does not yield. They who go elsewhere for happiness, wander into boundless deserts, where all is drought, and burning winds and vast desolation. What is the exhilaration of the animal spirits, what were intellectual delights, what the pleasures of sin, the utmost indulgences of the lusts of flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, to that immortal spirit in man which bears the image, and pants for the blessedness of God? How can a man be called happy, when almost every thing belonging to him that raises him above the brute, is either wholly portionless, or is tantalized with what is no more suited to its nature, than shadows or dreams to sustain the bodily life?

And now what is the joy of the Lord? It is joy arising from the same causes, terminating on the same objects, and yielding the same results as that which the infinite Being himself possesses, without measure. Its spring is holiness; its objects are the divine perfections and works; its results are the various forms of true beneficence and kindness. It is the joy of holy love; of complacency in God and goodness, and of benevolence to his creatures. It is delight, sensible and satisfying delight, such as forms the boundless and fathomless ocean of heavenly beatitude. As existing in sinners of mankind, its precursor ordinarily, as has been intimated, is holy sorrow; and its medium is a living union with Christ, by faith. It is, as shared by them, the purchase of the Saviour's precious blood, and the fruit of the renewing influence of the Spirit of God.

Our object, however, at present, is not so much to describe this feeling, as to show the power of it, as a practical principle. The joy of the Lord is OUR STRENGTH. It is the spring of our greatest efficiency for good; the great mover and inciter of the soul to holy action and achievement; the sustainer also of our energies in accomplishing our benevolent undertakings; what, above all things, keeps the mind going cheerfully

forward in its spiritual efforts and adventures, and bears on without fainting or weariness to a successful issue of its struggles and conflicts. We propose to offer a few remarks in illustration of this sentiment.

Joy is the achiever of almost every good or noble thing which is done under the sun. There is nothing like it to make the spirit of man erect, resolute, persevering, patient, and indefatigable. Almost universally, where there is great labor, at least available labor, there is also great mental delight. The exceptions do but confirm the general principle. Men may be impelled to labor by ambition, by necessity, by fear, by avarice; but unless their labor becomes itself delight, what great thing, or noble thing, or what thing worthy of their pains, do they ordinarily accomplish? Consult the sons of the muses, the toilers at deep investigation and exact analysis, the makers of those books—the best products of human labor—that come forth into the community like living luminaries to pour the light and heat of mind through ages to come; consult all successful artists, jurists, statesmen, merchants, and agriculturists; and you will find, that these several classes of laborers are held to their respective sorts of work mainly by the cord of sensible delight or pleasurable interest in the object of attention. Who would anticipate brilliant success from any course of exertion in which the man went forward under some other impulse than that of lively interest in his work? Where there is no delight, the heart will not be found; and what can a man do in one sphere, when his heart is in another? But we need not enlarge on this point. All men see it, feel it, perfectly understand it. It is responded to at once from the breast of every one.

Now, our remark is this, that the principle is as true in its application to man's moral agency, as to his physical and intellectual. It is joy, for the most part, that makes men industrious and indefatigable in the fulfillment of moral claims and undertakings. This is the great principle of Christian attainment; of holy zeal and enterprise in the people of God. Why should it not be so? Would it not be surprising and unaccountable to find it otherwise? Should we not ask with wonder, how is it that a principle which holds good in every other department of rational agency, should fail in this department? Are the laws of nature violated in the spiritual kingdom? No; reason requires us to believe that this is the very sphere in which, above all others, the efficiency of this influence is discovered. The influence itself exists here in a far nobler kind, than anywhere else. The joy of the Lord is as far above all other kinds of joy, as holiness is better than other kinds of excellence. The just conclusion is, that the effects of this joy are proportionately superior; the conclusion of common sense, confirmed by the universal testimony of Scripture and experience. It may, however, be useful, to enter somewhat particularly into an examination of the tendencies of this feeling; to inquire, in several instances, into the ways in which its efficacy is exerted and discovered.

1. We observe, then, in the first place, that joy gives life and spirit to all the mental powers and operations. A delighted mind is full of brightness and alertness, finds action easy, has all its faculties at command, and exerts them with intensity of application. Under the vivifying effusions of joy, imagination awakes, perception becomes acute, the range of observation is enlarged, judgment is invigorated, memory is sharpened, taste refined, the whole soul, in short, is instinct with the spirit of intellectual life, and waits only for the orders of the will, to put forth its utmost energies, and to accomplish the highest results of which it is capable. And the will itself is in a great degree influenced, if not determined by joy. It is when men have delight in the things about which their volitions and purposes are conversant, that they form bold and firm resolutions; then it is that they decide freely and promptly to enter upon courses of mental exertion, of which perhaps the thought would not have occurred to them in the absence of joy.

We offer no proof of what we now affirm, but make our appeal directly to human consciousness. No one who reflects on the history of his own mental states and operations, can call it in question. To every one the matter is as certain as consciousness itself; nor is it inexplicable. Happiness is the ultimate end of rational being. All sentient being, indeed, of whatever nature, languishes and pines, when kept back from the final end of its existence; it is, on the other hand, in its state of greatest perfection when it perfectly enjoys that end. It is so with the mind of man: joy is its ultimate end; in possession of that end, all its faculties are in their best condition. We only add, if other kinds of joy have an invigorating influence on the mind, much more must that incomparably higher joy, of which we speak.

2. Again, as this feeling imparts such life to the mind itself, so does it brighten by this means the objects of intellection. Its influence in this respect is sometimes as if a new sun had been created, to irradiate the world in which mind moves. You yesterday read Milton with a wearied heart, and fell asleep over the sublime glories of his page; this morning you perused the same page with a spirit refreshed by sweet and sufficient sleep, and you were amazed and overpowered by its wondrous creations of fancy and taste. The world of faith—the world revealed in the gospel—a short time since, when you endeavored to think upon it, with a soul almost dead to spiritual excellence, was nearly as the region of emptiness and darkness; now, when the spirit of a revival sheds its life through your bosom, that world of invisible glory eclipses the world of sense, and absorbs the powers and sensibilities of your being. What was the holy One to you, some weeks ago, when you pretended to worship him with a dull and worldly heart? What is he now, when a joyful sense of his excellency draws from your breast the ardent exhortation to those who know nothing of your blessedness, to taste and see that the Lord is good? What a difference in the character of the Saviour at

present, from what he seemed to you then? The whole Bible—the whole subject of religion—how immensely different. Yet the whole of this difference is the result of spiritual delight in your own mind. The joy of the Lord, then, is it not your strength? If you had an angel's powers, what could you do, with no distinct views of the objects with which those powers are conversant?

3. Attend, next, for a moment to the influence of spiritual pleasure on the performance of devotional exercises. Who is it that has grown weary of his closet, his Bible, his domestic altar, the meeting for prayer, and the solemn services of the Sabbath? Could you inspect the heart of such a person, is it probable that you would find it the abode of much religious enjoyment? Do you think it would be possible to discover any thing in such a man's heart, to justify his saying, with the spiritually-minded Psalmist, "One day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand?" No one, I am sure, could believe it possible. A deserter from the throne of grace, a neglecter of devotional duties, is one who takes little or no delight in the performance of those duties. To him who has heavenly joy springing up in his mind, the sanctuary, the place of social prayer, the closet, the solitary walk, will be the gate of heaven. Such a man will be inclined to pray, not merely thrice, nor even seven times a day, but to be praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, to abide in the tabernacle of the Almighty continually. The spirit of devotion never tires, while the joy of the Lord is its prompter. Day and night it can continue its aspirations and outpourings of affection. It has no content in shortness, in interruption, in lifeless exercises. No; the joy of the Lord lifts the heart up to heaven, and keeps it there, communing with holy angels, with the church of the first-born, with the spirits of just men made perfect, with God the Judge of all, with Jesus the Mediator, and with his most precious blood of sprinkling.

4. We will now advert, in few words, to the influence of this grace on other gracious states of mind. We refer not to the indirect influence which it exerts upon them, by promoting the mind's spiritual intercourse with their objects, by inclining it to heavenly meditation and prayer, but to a direct and necessary connection between this and any other holy feelings. All the gracious affections, being of the same family, and intimately allied to each other, exert a reciprocal influence upon one another, promotive of each other's strength and growth; but there appears to be a pre-eminence in the friendly power of joy upon its sister graces. The reason seems to be, that joy, being the end of all the heavenly affections, when this feeling connects itself with them, they must, of course, be more vigorous than in any other circumstances.

Let us illustrate in a few instances. Love often *exists* apart from joy, but it seldom *flourishes* apart from it. It is when the heart finds delight in loving, that it loves with great intensity and enlargement. Then it



is that it gives itself away to the beloved object, and, as it were, loses itself in it. Hope, too, is fed by joy; joy, in this world, being the earnest and foretaste of the object of hope. The full assurance of hope is always the effect of joy reigning in the soul: it can come from nothing else; it can not be gained from inference, or any witness without; no, it is the beginning of heaven—the peace of God which passeth all understanding. This it is that displaces every doubt in the soul, and fills the mind with certainty respecting its eternal blessedness: joy does it, and nothing else can. Faith, likewise, rises and approximates to vision, when joy gives it wings; for when the things believed are at the same time rejoiced in, how can it be otherwise than that faith in the reality of those things should amount to the utmost confidence and boldness? How, also, does the relenting of the heart, in view of sin, and the mercy of God abound, when the soul turns her eye to these objects, after being melted into tenderness and sweetness, by a rejoicing sense of the beauty of holiness? We could add to these instances if it were necessary; but they are sufficient. It is exceedingly manifest that it must give zest and strength to every good feeling of which the mind is capable, to have that feeling attended with conscious delight, and such delight, too, as the joy of the Lord, the very joy of the supreme and blessed God.

5. Let us next notice how nobly this feeling of spiritual delight can bear up the mind amid assaults of outward affliction. Through these assaults must all make their triumphant way, who at last gain entrance into this world of rest. *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.* Here it is that strength is demanded; and what, in these circumstances, imparts strength like this holy joy? Hope and faith are indeed needful; but it is joy, commonly, which gives faith and hope their strength. Unattended by joy, they may stay up the mind in some sort, amid these seasons of storm and darkness. They may keep it from sinking into the deep waters of despair; but they may not do even this without a great inward strife. Many a saint, going through the floods of trouble in the mere exercise of hope and faith, has meanwhile trembled in himself, lest by failing to retain these supporters, he should perish in the passage. But how is the scene changed at once, when the light of heavenly joy springs up in darkness? What can any floods or fires of tribulation then do, to hinder the mind's steadfastness and swift progress in its upward course to God? These trials seem to assist rather than hinder it on its way.

How matchless the efficacy of this divine joy! It enlivens faith and hope, and all the other heavenly affections. It is as if omnipotence itself had entered into all the feelings of the mind. The mind becomes more than a conqueror. The very violence of fire is quenched; and sometimes, as in the case of the martyr, the fiercest flames, under the influence of spiritual joy, not only lose their peculiar power, but become an instrument of ease, as the dying martyr found the flames were to him a

bed of roses. This may savor of mere ardor to the externally-strict religionist ; but he is not set to judge in the case. We appeal, in verification of what we have said, to the Scriptures of truth and the history of the church. It has been fulfilled in thousands of real examples, of whom the world was not worthy.

6. The power of this feeling, as evinced in its resistance to the influence of worldly good, is a further commendation of it. It is this influence, far more than that of outward affliction, which tries and ensnares the spirit of man. Indeed, what is it that constitutes the bitterness of affliction but its abridging or destroying our enjoyment of the world? Were we wholly dead to worldly good, small would be the power of affliction to disturb us. It is this, then, the world's influence, that forms our grand encumbrance. Here is the great adversary of our souls. Here is what gives all other temptations their strength. It is this which gives the great destroyer himself all the advantage he has against us ; which enables him to reach our spirits with his wiles and darts of perdition ; and which makes us his willing captives and vassals. What, then, can most effectually secure us against the enchantment and tyranny of this present evil world? Whatever that is, it is more to be desired than all things in the universe besides ; he who has it, would be a madman to part with it for the treasures of creation.

What, then, is this priceless treasure? It is, unquestionably, a happiness higher than that which the world has to offer. The human mind, by the nature God has given it, evermore seeks enjoyment. Since its sad perversion by the original apostacy, it looks for enjoyment to the visible and outward world. That world besets it with its insnaring temptations at the commencement of its existence, and works in it the fatal delusion that in worldly good lies the supreme blessedness. This gross delusion—the grand difficulty to be overcome in recovering the mind to the dominion of virtue and truth—can no otherwise be disarmed of its controlling influence than by the presence and experience in the mind of a better happiness than the world can give.

We appeal, for confirmation of this remark, to human consciousness in all the generations of mankind. Many means have been employed to break the world's power in the heart ; the world's deceitfulness has been set in the strongest light ; the terrors of eternity have been set in array against the idolatry of the world ; the utmost power of motive and persuasion has been exhausted ; and to what result? The understanding has been convinced, resolutions have been formed, vows have been made, seclusion from the society of men has been tried ; but the world's pleasures have been secretly loved ; and if they have not been returned to, with increased eagerness, the effects of forced mortification and abstinence have been worse, if possible, than those of indulgence itself. For levity and smiling deceit, and contemptuous indifference to divine things, there has been an exchange of disdainful self-righteousness, and grave

formality, and bitter misanthropy. No; never has the influence of the world been truly excluded, or even interrupted, except where the mind has been conscious of having within itself a joy superior to any which can be obtained from created and temporal things. And what is such a joy but that whereof we speak? Besides this, and creature joy, there is no other. Here, then, is the one thing needful for the effectual resistance and banishment of the spirit of the world, the strength of all temptation, and of the tempter himself.

This is the world's vanquisher; and how easy, how perfect is its triumph. The heart takes a farewell of the world—a glad and rejoicing farewell—a farewell, final and everlasting. Why should it not? Does he who eats at the table of a king care for the beggar's crumbs? The man who walks at large, enjoying the sweet influence of God's works, and exulting in the consciousness of being an illustrious family's boast, or a nation's benefactor, does he envy the fancied greatness of the naked maniac chained to the floor of his cell? No more can he who tastes the joys of the Lord, long, while he does so, for the low pleasures of the world. How can he be tempted by appeals to ambition, whose ambition is already fixed upon higher honor than that of any throne in creation? or by appeals to the love of possession, who is, by enjoyment, at this moment the heir and possessor of all things? or by appeals to the love of pleasure, whose spirit is drinking of the pure river of the water of life? The joy of a renewed soul, when it first sees and adores the beauty of the divine character, what a poor recompense would the wealth and the glory of a thousand creations be to that soul for the loss of what it then feels.

O there is nothing so much needed, in order to invest Christians with the mild glory of a heavenly conversation, as this frame of soul! Were this sacred feeling habitually dominant in their breasts, how would it adorn them in the eye of God and man, in all the beauties of practical spirituality? Holiness to the Lord would be inscribed on all their secular actions and pursuits; they would be, in respect to fare for the body, as the fowls of heaven for their food, and the lilies of the field for their clothing; in room of a fretted and peevish spirit, under the bitter disturbances of life, they would have enduring meekness and quietness; instead of aiming, by covert measures, at self-promotion in the church, there would be brotherly love, in honor preferring one another; and, instead of that spirit of mutual contention and concision, which has ever been the reproach of the Christian name, there would be the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. O this is the greatest desideratum for the times in which we live! Have what we may—be the signs of the times more animating than they ever have been—let revivals be more and more multiplied—there will not, there can not, be the needful improvement in Christian character and temper, until God, in his mercy, shall send abroad the spirit of holy joy in the hearts of his unfaithful, unworthy people.

7. Again. Notwithstanding the advancement of this age on former times, in respect to liberality and labors of love, there will never be what we judge needful, in these grand respects, to the conversion of the world, until the time comes for the more general effusion of this spirit upon the church. The joy of the Lord is our strength, for making what we deem to be the requisite sacrifices and exertions for the universal spread of the gospel.

We have more than enough of treasure in our hands, but we have no heart to use it for the purpose in question. We admit that we ought so to use it; we confess this to one another; we confess it in prayer to God; we lament over our parsimony; but we still lavish our possessions on our lusts, or hoard them for the ruin of our children; and reluctantly give, it may be, the fraction of a tithe to aid in pouring the glorious light of a Christian hope over the wide world of heathenism. Appeals on appeals, the year round, are rung in our ears from every quarter of the earth. We are plied almost daily with a system of strenuous solicitations; the universe of motive is searched for materials of persuasion; but, still, the mass of Christians, having ears to hear, hear not, and having hearts to perceive, yet, in this matter of giving for the spread of the gospel, they do not understand. That it is a privilege and a mercy to be allowed to contribute any thing for the furtherance of this object, is to them a mystery indeed; they can not even comprehend the extent of *duty* here; they are wearied beyond their patience by incessant calls for aid; and after all is done, the burden of the expense of carrying on the great enterprise, to which Christians have, by profession and covenant, devoted all they have, is borne chiefly by a few.

Can we be ignorant of the cause of this insensibility to sacred obligation in the Christian church? Do we not see what it is that makes members of the church so merciless toward the souls of their fellow-men? Is it not palpable that the joy of God's salvation is wanting in their own hearts; that they take little or no lively pleasure in the things of the Spirit? If their own hearts were but moderately expanded with this pure feeling, they would not be able to shut up their compassion from the wretched children of darkness, who, by myriads a day, are dying without hope. It must verily be so; the Christians of this age have generally but little happiness, little sensible delight in God. They are not, as to any feeling of blessedness, happy Christians. They have little communion in spirit and feeling, from day to day, with the Head and members of the heavenly church. The first touches of this joy would break asunder every cord of avarice, and open wide the heart and the hand for beneficent action. There seems to be a tendency in all delight to incline us to liberality. Hence, those who solicit our favor, prefer making their approaches to us when our mood of mind is happy.

But this joy is the very life and strength of benevolence; it is the parent of all good; the source of every stream and drop of blessedness

in creation. Let it enter the heart, and covetousness is gone out of it, by the same necessity by which darkness flees before the face of the sun. See how its contrariety to covetousness showed itself in the first converts to the cross of Christ. What solicitation did they need to induce them to give for the extension of the gospel? They gave all they had, and who can suppose that they could have had as much pleasure in appropriating it to themselves, as they enjoyed in parting with it, for the good of the common cause? Instances of the like kind, in individuals, at least, are not wanting in modern times. Such instances our recent revivals have supplied. The joy of the Lord is the strength of revivals; and who knows not that revivals are the church's only hope, both for the means and the men, by which the world is to be converted?

Assuredly, we want nothing else to replenish the treasury of the Lord, and supply all requisite resources, but that the hearts of Christians should cease to be so void of that sensible enjoyment of God, with which they should always be full. Had the church but that fountain within herself to draw from, rivers of treasure, if needed, would be at her command; and she could supply at once, the very ends of the earth with the means of salvation. She would have a missionary in spirit in each of her sons and daughters. It is this blessedness I speak of, which looses the tongues of Christians, and makes them eloquent in teaching, every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, that knowledge of God and Christ which is unto life eternal. "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation," said the mourning Psalmist; "then will I teach transgressors thy ways." It would wing their feet for swift journeys through the length and breadth of the earth, and the glad tidings of saving love would spread from land to land, and be heard in every island, every hamlet, every dwelling on the globe, before the present generation has passed away.

8. And, finally, we are not sure, that if the joy of the Lord pervaded the Christian church to the degree to which it might, and by all means should extend, the work of saving the world *would not go on of itself*, almost without labor. Certain it is, that, in that condition of things labor would itself be a joy; but may we not believe (now that Christianity is no stranger in the earth, but has, for eighteen hundred years, been giving infallible proof of her celestial descent, and her continued connection with the place of her origin), that the necessity for patient and agonizing effort, if the church were in the state supposed, would be superseded?

Heaven then, would, in a sense, come down to earth; the tabernacle of God would be with men; and mankind would know and see the place of happiness; and would they not also, by the grace of God, through the operation of that new spectacle, be drawn thitherward as of themselves? The nature of man still inclines him after happiness. The disappointment of six thousand years has not abated the strength of this indestructible propensity.

Who can tell but that such a sight as the general church of Christ, filled with the joy of the Lord, would, under the divine blessing, determine that propensity to its proper end? That it is of all things the best adapted to have this effect, is certainly a good reason for supposing that the Spirit of grace, who is also the Spirit of fitness and order, would prefer it before any other instrumentality. For our own part, we can not but think it would do more in a few years, independently of labor, than the labor of many ages without it. It would make the church a wonder in the earth. The mountain of the Lord's house would stand upon the top of the mountains; it would be illuminated with divine glory; its luster would outshine that of the sun; it would enlighten the world; the remotest nations would see it, and would not all nations flow unto it?

The world hitherto has not regarded the church as the seat of blessedness. It has had too little reason thus to regard it. Religion, by old report, is happiness; but it is religion as contained in books, not as dwelling in the hearts, or as shining out in the examples of its possessors. With comparatively few exceptions, since the primitive times, the lives of Christians have misrepresented the spirit of their religion. The world have judged it a sour, unhappy, gloomy spirit; and they have not wanted occasion to do so. They who have called themselves Christians have seemed little happier than others. The great majority of them have practically declared their religion a gloomy thing, by going to the world itself for pleasure. Of the rest, the generality seem to pass through life, either with just enough of interest in religion to keep their membership in the church; or in a cold, perfunctory preciseness; or in austerities which make religion identical with penance; or in a forced, driving zeal, which bespeaks more of fierceness, than calm, heavenly peace and joy. A few noble exceptions, indeed, there have been; but to the world's eye these exceptive cases have commonly been lost in the multitude of their gloomy, or earthly-minded brethren.

Has not the church been the dwelling-place, rather of doubt and fear, than of sensible delight in God? Is it not the way of even the best of her members to be habitually questioning in themselves whether they be not reprobates, instead of exulting in the full assurance of hope? Besides, has not the church been almost continually a scene of contention, and confusion, and bitter wrath, a dread and terror, rather than a charm to the world? O, let it not be said that the experiment of what may be done to save the world by the influence of a general example of spiritual peace and joy, has yet been tried. Enough has been ascertained to encourage the highest expectation; the success of the first Christians, the fruits of the individual examples of such blessed men as Baxter, Flavel, and Edwards, beget the greatest confidence as to what would be the result of experiment; but the experiment remains to be made. Come the day when it shall be in full operation. Hope is fixed on the appearance of that period, and that it will appear, can there be a doubt? Have

not the prophets declared it? The Lord in his compassion cut short the delay; make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and so a praise in the earth; give to all Christians, in answer to the prayer of Christ, that unity of soul, in which the Father and the Son are united to each other, the unity of divine love and joy. Then shall our unhappy world learn the error of its way, forsake the broken cisterns of sin, and come to the fountain of living waters.

These considerations make it manifest that none of those who call themselves Christians, ought to live so much as one day, or one hour, except when taking their rest in sleep, without the feeling of spiritual delight, potentially at least, in their hearts. It should suffice no member of the Christian church, to maintain a conversation externally irreproachable, to live in honesty and in credit with mankind, and to observe the stated times and services of religion; no, not even, if, in addition to this, he sets an example of liberality. This is but a low standard of religion, and no man who has any just concern for the cause of God in this world, or for his own salvation, can content himself with it. A man may live in this manner, and live in darkness, in coldness, in fear, respecting his own soul, and his fear may be realized. Every Christian on earth ought to be a specimen of the happiness Christianity is adapted to impart; a reflector by example of the light of heavenly joy. He ought to be not only a conscientious, a devout, a liberal Christian, but a happy Christian also; happy in God and the spirit of heaven all the day long. He owes it to the cause of his Saviour, to himself, his family, his brethren in the faith, the world of mankind, to live a serene, cheerful, and heavenly life. This is plainly a just inference from the preceding remarks, and it is an inference which divine authority confirms.

To rejoice in the Lord, is a command urged with great earnestness upon all Christians. Scripture is exceedingly strenuous in its mode of enforcing this command: *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.* What has been said may show us that there is a sufficient reason for this requirement; and is it not strange, indeed, that Christians, whose characteristic spirit is submissiveness to the divine will, should scarcely seem to blame themselves for an habitual disregard of it? What more could God have done, than he has done, to give his people grounds and occasions for joys? Has he kept his glory out of their view? Has he not shown himself good enough? Could he have loved them more than he has done? Could he have made greater sacrifices for their sakes? Could he have gone to greater lengths to win their complacency, than to give up his own dear Son for the ransom of their souls? Could he have added a greater blessing after that, than to send down his Spirit to dwell with them forever? Could he have been more explicit and more full in his assurances of kind feeling and tender love? Could he have given them better promises, or spread before them brighter prospects, or called them to greater privileges, or to a more

honorable service? Has not God seemed in all his dispensations and doings toward his people, to have had distinctly in his purpose, that they should want nothing which infinite love could supply, to call forth their joy and gladness of soul? When, by his apostle, he lifts up the voice of authority, commanding them to rejoice in the Lord always—can they be justified in replying to him, We have no causes for joy; the state of mind required, demands an object suited to produce it, and no such object has been presented to us?

There are, it may be thought, *subjective* difficulties in the way. But, can it be that there are insurmountable difficulties of this kind, when obligation to rejoice is in full force upon the mind? Who can believe this? Surely nothing but mental insanity, or such a condition of the body as sets aside self-control, in either of which cases, obligation ceases, can be a just apology for not exercising holy joy. So abundant are the promises of divine grace, that if we are not straitened in ourselves, we may be able to keep up a calm, and cheerful, and heavenly frame of spirit in any circumstances of worldly discomposure which do not produce a real derangement of intellect. The triumph of some Christians over such circumstances has been complete; nervous debility, severe sickness and pain, and the very agonies of dissolution have not been able to keep them from rejoicing in the Lord. If any feel incredulous in respect to this matter, let us ask them to consider whether, if they walked as closely with God as did Baxter, or Paul, or Enoch, they would be likely to retain their present doubts. Alas! we destroy the health of the body by our reckless way of treating it, and then make bodily indisposition an excuse for keeping the soul in darkness, and leanness, and spiritual distempers.

The plain truth is this, that what hinders our joy is allowed sin. The power of sin to do this is great. This little hand, said Whitefield, placing his hand near his eyes, as he was preaching in the field, while the glorious sun was flooding creation with his beams—this little hand hides all the luster of the sun from my eyes; and so a little sin may involve the soul in darkness, though the spiritual world be all bright as heaven itself. But should we, therefore, be content to live in darkness, or set ourselves with more resolution against all forms and degrees of sin? The latter is the course of duty, and is it not also the course of wisdom? Is it idle to ask the question, What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Why is it we do not understand, that our only concern in this world is to keep a guileless spirit, a conscience void of offense? Alas! that we should suffer such things as love of lucre, or of pre-eminence, or of sensual pleasure, or jealous, and envious, and irascible feelings, to rest in our bosoms, and stay there from day to day, and week to week, and month to month, in the place which should be ever sacred to the gracious affections; in the temple of the Holy Ghost! Alas! that we should be so infrequent, so cursory, so cold



in prayer ; so seldom in fastings, so formal and lifeless in the duties of the sanctuary ; that we should be so uncircumspect in speech, so little intent on walking in the Spirit ; in all the pursuits of life, so regardless of the great principle of Christian morals, which demands that we do all things, even to eating and drinking, to the glory of God ; that we should have so little fellowship (might we not rather say, such disagreement?) with Paul, in his purpose to do but this one thing all his life long—forgetting the things behind, and reaching forth to those before, to press toward the mark, for the prize of his high calling? Here is the secret of our want of religious joy, of our spiritual doubts and fears ; and also of our readiness to justify them.

But shall such things vitiate and set aside the law of Christ's kingdom before recited, Rejoice in the Lord always ; and again, I say, Rejoice. No, this is as irreversible as any other statute of the eternal realm. It has been given out, not to be neglected, but obeyed. It is the duty of all Christians to rejoice evermore, and the importance of their fulfilling this duty, no tongue can fully tell. Immortal souls, in countless multitudes, have gone to an undone eternity, in consequence of its not having been fulfilled ; the salvation of the world still lingers from the same cause ; for want of holy joy in the church, all the means of grace in operation, are comparatively ineffectual ; the triumph of the gospel is kept back on this sole account ; and the gloominess and sadness of Christians keep up a sort of rejoicing among the spirits of darkness.