

# DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN

## MURRAY STREET CHURCH

ON SABBATH EVENINGS,

DURING THE MONTHS OF

MARCH, APRIL, AND MAY, 1830.

BY

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SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, ss.

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“Discourses delivered in Murray street Church, on Sabbath evenings, during the months of March, April, and May, 1830. By Dr. Spring, Dr. Cox, Dr. Skinner, Dr. De Witt, Dr. Miller, Dr. Sprague, Dr. Carnahan, Dr. Woodbridge, Dr. Rice, Dr. Woods, Dr. Wayland, Dr. Snodgrass, Dr. Griffin.”

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FREDERICK I. BETTS,

*Clerk of the Southern District of New York.*



## DISCOURSE I.

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

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PHILIPPIANS i. 9.—“ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment.”

It is natural, at the threshold of the enterprise to which these lectures are devoted, to endeavour to interest you in the worthiness of their object. To interest men in the truths of the Bible, is the great reason why a revelation was given. We know it is impossible for the mass of mankind to become adepts in theological science; and yet there are few but may, and ought to be familiar with the great doctrines of revelation. One would think it a reproach to good men, not to be familiar with the truths of the Bible. You would not expect a professed Stoic to be ignorant of the doctrines of Zeno; nor a Mohammedan to be unacquainted with

the Koran ; nor a Brahmin to be uninstructed in the Shaster. And why should a Christian be a stranger to the truths of Christianity ? Our design in this introduction to the following series of discourses is, therefore, to lay before you a few considerations, illustrative of the importance of Christian knowledge. To give some form and order to our remarks, we observe,

I. *The subjects which Christianity presents, are themselves the most important and sublime in the universe.*

Reaching from the eternity which the Immortal Creator inhabited before the foundation of the world, to the eternity we shall inhabit after this world shall have passed away, they are literally of infinite extent and compass. The light of revelation first leads our minds up to Him, who, though he dwells in light unapproachable, and fills the universe with his presence, is about our path and about our bed ; to Him, on whom all beings depend, from the arch-angel to the worm, to whom all are indebted for their powers and faculties, and from whom they derive their comforts, and who, while he is slow to anger and of great kindness, is terrible in majesty. Then it makes us acquainted with his vast and perfect purposes, comprehending all his works, and all the events of his providence in this world and other worlds, in time and through interminable ages. It then directs our thoughts to the great law which he has published, by which he establishes the moral order and

harmony of intelligent beings, both in respect to one another and to him, and by which he throws such everlasting responsibility on all worlds, and on every creature. Next to these elevating themes, it leads us to take a view of that world of wonders, the creature man—his intellectual and moral nature—his origin, his primeval rectitude, and his fatal apostacy—a mystery to himself, a mystery to angels, and yet, more than all the works of God, the means of drawing forth the manifold glory of his Maker. Afterwards, we listen to the glad tidings of great joy, announced in the wonderful method of redemption, by the incarnation and death, resurrection and intercession, mediatorial reign and triumph of God's co-equal son. Then, we dwell on the character and office of the Divine Spirit. We see the benighted soul of man, under his powerful influence, brought out of darkness into marvellous light; we see how this guilty, impoverished creature is furnished with every gift and grace; how he is enriched and adorned, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with saints in light. And then, when we have become familiar with providences and ordinances, with hopes and fears, with death and the grave, and with the resurrection both of the just and the unjust, we are introduced to eternity. Through the light that here descends upon us, we see the life and immortality that are brought to light in the gospel: we descry that vast continent that lies be-

yond the grave; we see the boundless universe that stretches itself immeasurably beyond. There, scenes and prospects rise, that alternately appal and enchant us—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven—the throne of judgement—the assembled universe—the final sentence—the everlasting retribution—the eternal heaven—the eternal hell!

And, in such a research, is there nothing worthy? As mere topics of thought and intellectual cultivation, all other themes, in comparison with these, may be left out of sight and remembrance. Every other department of human science vanishes and fades away before the majesty and splendour of divine truth. These are the things “into which the angels desire to look.” Of all others, topics like these are objects of inquiry for which the mind of man, formed in the image of its Maker, seems appropriately designated. The perceptions, the judgment, the memory, the imagination, the conscience, the very emotions of the soul, fall far below their high destination, when they can no longer be absorbed in themes like these. Nor are they dry and heartless speculations, which the Scriptures reveal, and which a conscientious mind may throw aside as of no practical moment. Nor are they mere ideal schemes, which may amuse the spirit of speculation and then be rejected with impunity. They are inwoven with all that is real in our enjoyments and sufferings; with all that is cheering in our hopes and terrible in our fears;

with all that is solemn and affecting in our accountability and immortality. Whatever is fearful and weighty in the rights of the Creator and the obligations of creatures, in the designs of the Sovereign and the destiny of his subjects, is here disclosed. There is no truth in the Scriptures which, in its proximate or remote relations, has not a legitimate bearing upon the character, the duty, the condition of all rational agents. The truth of God is as interesting to the poor as to the rich ; as interesting to the low as to the high ; as interesting to people as to ministers ; as interesting to this world, as to that glorious world whence it emanated. When all that is embodied in the magnificent systems of human learning shall have been forgotten ; when the sun shall have been turned into darkness ; when these orbs, the nature, phenomena, and laws of which philosophers have occupied centuries to explain, shall have mouldered to ashes ; when this earth, whose bowels and treasures have been explored with such penetrating diligence, shall have been burnt up ; the system of truth, which God has revealed, will exist immutably the same, and be exhibited in augmented splendour, and beheld with increasing interest and admiration.

II. JUST CONCEPTIONS OF THE TRUTH OF GOD ARE INDISPENSABLE TO THE POSSESSION OF TRUE HOLINESS.

No principle is more explicitly recognised in the Scriptures. or commends itself more to the approbation

of common sense and sound experience, than that the change of character from sin to holiness, from man's native and practical wickedness to the rectitude of the gospel, which is every where so much insisted on as the indispensable pre-requisite to the enjoyment of the divine favour and kingdom, is effected through the instrumentality of divine truth. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The divine conduct toward men every where recognises their rationality ; and no where more sensibly, than in the method of his grace. In exciting proper affections toward the various objects to which they sustain a moral relation, he brings those objects to the view of the mind. Of the great multitude already sanctified by his grace, it may be said, they had slumbered in sin, unless they had been instructed, alarmed, convinced, and humbled through the instrumentality of truth. They had gone down to the grave and to the bar of God with a lie in their right hand, had not he, who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come, shewed them the things that are Christ's. And of the multitudes who are now ignorant of God and far from righteousness, must it be said, that they perish in their sins, until they become acquainted with God ; and until he, by his convincing, quickening, and renovating power, make those views of truth lovely. which were once odious : and reconcile them to the



declarations, character, and demands of a God of truth and holiness.

What is holiness, but obedience to truth?—'Truth desired, loved, obeyed,—this is the rectitude of moral beings. But how is the truth of God to be obeyed, unless it be *known*? Is it enough, that it be inscribed on the pages of revelation? Is it enough, that it be sealed up in a foreign and dead language? Is it enough, that it be announced from the pulpit? To every community might it be said, "Ye worship ye know not what;" on all their altars might it be inscribed, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD," so long as they remain ignorant of his truth. How can the mind be fitted for right volitions, except by a just apprehension of divine objects? Suppose a man in a Christian congregation, as ignorant of the truth of God as the Pagans; is there any charm in the privileges of the gospel that will break the bonds of his iniquity? What if he denies that God is the creator, and preserver, and governor of the universe; will he be sensible of his dependence or accountableness? What if he rejects the divinity and messiahship of Jesus Christ? will not the practical consequence be, that he seeks no interest in his redemption? What if he believes in the innate rectitude and practical integrity of the human heart; will he ever be voluntarily self-abased for his sinfulness? What if he strikes from his creed the atonement of the Son of God, the agency and office-work

of the Holy Spirit, the threatenings of everlasting punishment, and never detects nor eradicates these errors ; will he not find that his notions have a most sensible effect upon his practice—that he makes no effort to flee from the wrath to come—and that his intellectual ignorance and his intellectual deviations are ruinous ? Nothing is more obvious, than that doctrinal knowledge is essential to the existence of true religion in the soul. There can be no spiritual affections, where there are no intellectual perceptions of the truth. It is the unchanging law of our intellectual and moral existence, that the heart is affected through the medium of the understanding. There is no possible way by which the means of grace can be effectual to the conversion of men, except by an acquaintance with the truths they inculcate. The immediate effect of them is the communication of truth to the mind ; and without this impression, men might as well remain in the darkness of heathenism, as enjoy the privileges of the gospel. But,

III. If there is any justice in these remarks, they suggest another thought of equal importance. **WITHOUT THE SPIRIT OF THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE RAPID ADVANCES IN THE DIVINE LIFE.**

As holy affections must in the first instance be exercised toward some definite object, so must they continue to be exercised toward some object, well

defined, and clearly understood. Divine truth is so exactly accordant with the affections which the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, that they are kept alive only by means of this happy influence. It is the still, small voice of truth that vibrates on the hearts of good men. Truth—sometimes elicited by the dispensations of Providence, sometimes read and heard, but in whatever way communicated, truth still—is the great means which the Spirit of God employs to promote the sanctification of the church. But how can the truth become the means of augmented holiness, otherwise than by being understood? Our Lord prayed for his disciples, “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” Believers are exhorted to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” They are said to be “fed with knowledge and understanding.” Nor is it possible for them to have invigorated impressions of the beauty and loveliness of spiritual objects, without an invigorated view of those objects themselves.

The people of God, though initiated into the privileges of his kingdom, have much to acquire, before they grow in grace with observable rapidity. They have much to learn of God, that they may desire greater manifestations of his glory; much to learn of themselves and their imperfections, that they may be stimulated to greater attainments; much to learn of their obligations, that they may press after perfect

holiness ; much to learn of those mighty considerations to spiritual attainment, which direct, encourage, and stimulate them in their heavenly career—which rouse them from their slumbers, reproach them for their backslidings, and give increasing constancy and uniformity to their purposes and conduct. We are apt to lose sight of the ignorance of good men, and of the powerful tendency of their minds to ignorance of God above all other subjects. There is even *in their* bosoms the same remaining aversion to the doctrines of the gospel, that is found to the duties of the gospel ; and there is the same reason for watchfulness and caution in maintaining the truth of God, that is indispensable to the vigorous exercise of holy affection. They are equally self-denying. Hence we find, that when Christian men decline in the spirit and duties of piety, they are very apt to decline in the purity of their doctrinal views. And here lies the necessity of doctrinal instruction, and doctrinal research. Let the instructions of the gospel illuminate their understandings, and its heavy truths sink into their hearts, and the more secure will they be from dangerous apostacies, and the better enabled to maintain their heavenward course.

It is indeed lamentably true, that there are instances in which growth in knowledge does not secure growth in grace. And the reason is, truth does not make its appropriate *impression* upon their minds. There is some countervailing sin, which is superior in its in-

fluence to all the obligations of known truth. Good men always grow in grace in proportion to two things : the *extent* of their knowledge, and the *impression* which their knowledge produces. A man who is acquainted with a few truths *may* have more piety than the man who is acquainted with many ; because the few which he knows, make a deeper impression than the many which are known by those that are more extensively informed. The obligations to increased holiness, and the actual holiness of every gracious affection, are augmented by every accession of divine knowledge ; and other things being equal, those who make the most rapid advances in the one, must necessarily make the most rapid advances in the other.

There are not wanting those who question the expediency of devoting much of their time to the study of doctrines, lest it should impair the vigour, exhaust the tenderness, and freeze the fervour of their piety. ‘We do not need,’ say they, ‘so much dry discussion. We desire more of the milk of the gospel ; more to rouse and quicken us ; more to break up the fallow ground, and urge us on to practical godliness. We need useful information ; but we would not exercise ourselves in matters too high for us, to the neglect of our practical duty towards God and man.’ Is it so then, that “ignorance is the mother of devotion ?” Are there doctrines of the Bible which do not affect the practice of piety—increasing the love of it, confirming the habit of

it, and at every step elevating the mind toward God, and invigorating the desire to be like him? Is the theory of Christianity at war with the practice of Christianity? Do the doctrines of the Bible weaken the force of moral obligation? Of all studies, religion is the most practical. Doctrines that cannot be applied to practical purposes are no part of the Bible. Let the objector beware how he assumes, that there is any principle revealed in the divine oracles that has no practical tendency. Time will show how empty and superficial is that piety, that depreciates the great doctrines of the gospel, and that is not habitually inwoven with clear, intellectual perceptions of truth. It is not indeed necessary, that men should be familiar with all the truths of the Bible in order to be exemplary Christians.\* To some, God has imparted ten talents, and to others two, and to others one. Nor is the *mere* attainment of theological knowledge the great end of living. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." And yet, the humble Christian, who, like Enoch, walks with God, will tell you that the clearer his views of God, the more fervent is his love to his great and amiable character; the clearer his views of sin, the deeper and more self-abasing his repentance; the clearer his views of Christ, the stronger his faith; the clearer his views of duty, the higher is his delight in performing it; the clearer his views of the wants of his fellow-men, the more inexpressible are his desires to become the benefactor of

the human race, and the blessing of the world ; the clearer his views of the glorious scenes beyond the grave, the more ardent are the longings of his soul to be absent from the body and present with the Lord : and the more, with open face, he beholds in these mirrors the glory of the Lord, is he changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is because the doctrines of religion so intimately affect the spirit and subject of religion, that there is such a charm thrown around every well directed and humble inquiry into the truth, as it is in Jesus. There are seasons when other objects are gradually excluded from the mind, and the things pertaining to godliness absorb the attention, and every grace is in active exercise. The veil between time and eternity is drawn aside. Future things appear present, and invisible things appear visible ; and there is nothing to impede the most sensible exercise of holy affections. Thus it was with David : " While I was musing," says he, " the fire burned." Thus it was with the disciples on their way to Emmaus : " Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures ?" And thus it is with every child of God, when he is advanced to high degrees of holiness. But,

IV. THE ATTAINMENT OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE IS THE SOURCE OF PURE AND ELEVATED ENJOYMENT. If the rational and immortal mind is

invested with the capacity for constant and perpetual progression ; if this thinking and active existence within us is capable eventually of knowing all that can be known, and of rising to higher and higher attainment, without measure and without end ; then is there in the mind of a devout and well informed christian, a foundation for pure and elevated joy. Of all the prospective emotions, the desire of knowledge is one of the most exalted. "Knowledge is pleasant to the soul." The pleasures of intellect rise as far above the pleasures of sense, as the mind is superior to the body. One of the distinguished advantages of a well cultivated and well disciplined mind, is the habit of abstracting it at pleasure from the objects of sense, and directing it to the varied combinations of truth. And the intellectual enjoyment resulting from this exercise bears a proportion to the excellence of its object. If pleasure attends the sublime operations of the intellect in other sciences ; if the men of research, and the men of letters, as they wander over the regions of intellect, felicitate themselves on their past attainments and their new advances ; how much purer, how much higher the felicity consequent on advances in the knowledge of God ! The happiness resulting from thought on other subjects, is little better than the grosser indulgences of the animal world, compared with the holy pleasures experienced from the various exhibitions of divine truth. God and his truth are the purest objects in



the universe ; they are the brightest, the most complete, and most durable ; and the joy that springs from them, is the purest, the most vivid, the fullest and the most indestructible joy. The truth of God is the natural aliment of all spiritual consolation. The best, the most comfortable seasons with which the people of God are favoured in the present world, are those in which they enjoy clear, exalting, and humbling views of truth. When, in their progressive acquisition of divine knowledge, the true nature of God is unfolded to their view, and all that is glorious in the divine power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and faithfulness, is disclosed to their gratified inspection, there is something in the view that captivates and transforms the mind. When they gaze at the light which is thrown in upon the world in which they dwell, and upon other creatures and other worlds, from the perfection of the divine plan, and the wisdom of the divine administrations—all shining more and more resplendent by all the darkness that has in vain attempted to obscure them—and when they see all the apparently diverging rays in the moral sphere converging in one luminous point, the cross of Christ ; every thing is gilded with light, and there is no darkness at all. All that is untoward in this world, and in other worlds ; all that is unmeasured in the invisible futurity—the holiness and the sin—the blessings and the curses—the glories and the terrors—in their governed subserviency to the

best of purposes, is contemplated with alternate wonder, submission, and joy. "Thy testimonies," says the happy Psalmist, "are *wonderful* ; therefore, doth my soul keep them. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. Thy word have I hid in my heart. I will delight myself in thy statutes."

In moral science as well as every other, good men begin their intellectual career from well nigh absolute ignorance. And yet, from the eager desire of knowledge, there are minds, even of an humble order, which make rapid acquisitions in the knowledge of God. The veriest infant in the school of Christ finds his understanding satisfied, his heart filled with love, his soul refreshed at the discovery of some new and important principle in the word of God. And as he passes on from one principle to another, and contemplates one truth after another in its divine nature, its wide connections, and eternal consequences ; as he discovers the harmony between them, the unexampled symmetry of the parts, and the beauty of the whole ; his soul is rapt in admiration, and he is allured by joyful communion with things unseen. He feels himself in a world of knowledge—new and illimitable. His are regions of intellectual pleasure, where the ardent eye of genius fades, and the proudest wing of genius tires. Already, his joys bear a resemblance to those where truth opens new and infinite sources of delight, and saints and angels rise higher in felicity, as they advance

in knowledge; where "the pure in heart shall see God;" where nothing shall eclipse the full vision of God and the Lamb; and where we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. I remark,

V. The importance of christian knowledge is still further evinced by ITS INFLUENCE IN EXTENDING THE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

The highest wish of a good man is to be conformed to the image of God, and to become the instrument of good to the world. In our inquiries after the truth of God, we have little to do with what is merely curious. There is no truth in the Bible, which when clearly understood, does not have a favourable effect, not only upon our internal graces, but upon all benevolent exertion. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." A well informed church, a well informed christian, is like a city set on a hill. There is a "throb of christian intelligence" in such a bosom, which is likely to give impulse and influence to every thing he devises. Such a man possesses a weight of character and a power of moral feeling, which exert the best influence. There is an "inspiration of enlightened affection" within him, that rarely fails to act directly upon the most important concerns of men. Such a man is always ready for action. There is nothing so quiescent in his nature, as to leave him in perpetual and perplexing vacillation between conflicting points of duty. If the spirit of his Master rests upon him in proportion to his intellectual

attainments, he will instruct the ignorant, strengthen the weak, comfort the afflicted, reclaim the wandering, and often become the instrument of converting some sinner from the error of his ways, or of arousing lukewarm and backsliding christians to renovated zeal and activity. If enfeebled churches need counsel, if benevolent associations solicit direction, if duties of high and weighty responsibility are to be performed; these are the men to whom the church and the world look for the blended influence of intelligence and integrity. There is a capriciousness and self-sufficiency of character which often attach themselves to piety of an unenlightened sort, and which however it may "brave danger and support toil," is disqualified for energetic and permanent usefulness. It is too apt to leave the beaten track and to be carried away by the mere novelties of benevolence, and the pretensions of sect. That exclusive and bigoted spirit, which has hindered the church of God so long from co-operating in the advancement of his kingdom, has no surer remedy than an enlarged view of the doctrines of the gospel. The spirit of sectarianism has ever been fortified by giving a disproportioned magnitude, not so much to the fundamental principles of the gospel, as to a few points of minor importance. Every truth in the Bible has its proper use, and its proper connection with the general system to which it belongs. The more comprehensive knowledge we have of the whole, the more have we of

a distinct knowledge of every one of its parts, and its due proportions. And who does not see, that enlarged views of the Redeemer's truth, grace, kingdom, and glory, would induce men more often to compromise their smaller differences and to "meet on the ground of their common christianity?" Nor is this at all incompatible with the most unyielding opposition to error. Truth has its surest advocate in the man who is able to "give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear." It is he alone that can discriminate between "the precious and the vile," or that can safely "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." If error rush in like a flood, who shall be instrumental in lifting up a standard against it, if not the men of enlightened piety? When we look around with apprehension on the invasions of heresy, such as the church has seen, and will see, and which are wisely permitted, "that the truth may be made manifest;" how else is she to be conducted through the labyrinth, and to keep herself from being bewildered, darkened, and enervated, but by the blessing of God upon her augmented knowledge and acquisition of the truth?

The church of God has sustained no small detriment from the ignorance of good men. How few compared with the mass of her numbers, will be found to be stable, well instructed christians. You see men of zeal, but it is not a zeal that is according to knowledge. They read without thinking. and hear without ever

being at the trouble of examining whether what they hear be according to godliness. Plausible conjecture passes with them for sound reasoning, and bold assertion for rigid argument. And hence, their creed varies with their instructions and they are almost sure to "go along with the last preacher they hear, and the last author they read." It is impossible for persons of this description to attain eminent degrees of usefulness. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." Ignorance, especially in an active mind, becomes almost necessarily the source of error.

That there are those, whose usefulness is confined within no narrow sphere, who are not *distinguished* for their knowledge of divine truth, cannot be denied. The small and scanty stock of knowledge they possess is improved to so much better advantage than that of others who have more, that such instances are not true standards of its intrinsic importance. It is very possible for men to be mere theorists; but then they are not christians. Doctrinal knowledge, unassociated with benevolence and activity, is by far a more useless thing, than benevolence and activity shrouded in no inconsiderable ignorance. But this is no evidence that the character which unites knowledge with holiness is not the character that is truly desirable, and that the men of "light and love" are not they that adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion to the world. I add,

VI. There is a single consideration, on which I would dwell more largely, if I were not afraid of being misinterpreted and misunderstood. *The peculiar character of the age in which we live furnishes a powerful reason for solicitude in relation to the great doctrines of the Bible.*

It is not so much the age of a speculative philosophy, that the friends of truth have any thing to fear on that account. It is not the “unlinging subtlety” of the enemies of the cross, that threatens a removal of the ancient landmarks, were it not for the negligence and indifference of the friends of truth themselves. But from some cause, there is a strange apathy to the truth. It is the age of business, and not of investigation. It is the age of a charity so liberal, a benevolence so active, an excitement so febrile, that nothing seems to satisfy good men, short of that spirit of mutual concession, which savours of a criminal indifference to all religious opinions. Men, from whom the church had hoped better things, are satisfied with very easy and liberal views. Thirty years ago, the church of God aimed at large attainments in grace and knowledge ; and in too great a degree, to the unwarrantable exclusion of benevolent action. But the order of things is now changed, and at the expense of truth. And yet, who would not tremble to say, that too much is either done or attempted for the conversion of the world? When we look abroad upon the world. we see that a

field of labour is opening that is unspeakably gratifying to every benevolent mind, and such a field as the church never before saw. But is it not possible that this zeal for christian enterprise needs the baptism of an orthodox spirit ; and unless it is more deeply imbued with it, must not only fail of accomplishing what it might otherwise accomplish, but scatter in wide profusion, tares among the wheat ? Combinations of truth and error, even in plans of benevolent enterprise, are of very doubtful tendency. Error has always been willing to go with truth, just so far as truth will go with error ; whereas truth ought to go with error no farther than error will go with truth ; and even in this apparently safe companionship, truth is very apt to become crippled and lame. If I do not survey the signs of the times through a deceptive and gloomy medium, there are dangers in this matter, to which neither the church, nor her watchmen, are sufficiently awake. We should not be surprised, if in this age of business and ignorance, action and concession, it should be found necessary, before the expiration of many years, for another Whitefield or Edwards to sound the note of alarm to the American churches. Nor do I feel at liberty to suppress these reflections while urging the importance of attainment in christian knowledge.

Who duly appreciates the intrinsic excellence of truth ? Who duly estimates the place it holds in the purposes of divine mercy toward this apostate



world? Who that would live not to himself, but to him that died for him and rose again; would not grow in knowledge, while he grows in grace? God grant that your self-devotement to his cause, and your active exertions, and your sweetest charities may abound a thousandfold, and that they may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment! We would not exalt one part of the religion of Jesus at the expense of another; but would combine and inweave its intellectual, cordial, and practical excellencies, that “in every thing you may be enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge:” so that you may “all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” If you would be happy in yourselves, and a blessing to all about you, you must be well informed and growing christians; “rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” And for this I would devoutly pray—that “your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches and the full assurance of understanding, and to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wonder and knowledge!”

And now in bringing this discussion to a close, allow me to remark.

1. That the ministers of the gospel *ought not to be reproached for instructive preaching*. This is the reproach of many a faithful minister. And yet instructive preaching is the best preaching. No man can preach intelligibly and profitably, without explaining and proving the great doctrines of the gospel. In the ordinary method of divine grace, there is no other way in which their people will become wise unto salvation. Would a preacher honestly say to those who have sat under his ministrations, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you;" with equal honesty, he must say, "I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God." If we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, it is not by walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth. Other things being equal, he is the best, the most profitable, the most successful preacher, who exhibits the most truth. Instructive preaching may offend, because the words of the wise are as goads. But do we now persuade men, or God? Or do we seek to please men? for if we yet pleased men, we should not be the servants of Christ. It is a melancholy fact, that orthodoxy is becoming a term of reproach; that steadfastness in the faith requires unwonted self-denial. Unbending adherence to doctrines has already become a burden, well nigh too oppressive to be borne. Doctrinal instruction is becoming unpopular, and is already too

cold and heartless for the spirit of the age. And yet, my brethren, none of these things should move us. Still let the pulpit teem with all the riches and variety of revealed truth. Both the letter and the spirit of our commission require us to "go and *teach* all nations." At a very great remove from the preaching which our ascended Lord requires, are the vapid and vapoury sermons of a multitude of preachers. Instead of truths, clearly conceived and wisely selected from the vast variety and mighty range of instruction, spread out before them in the scriptures, their discourses are made up of loose and crude appeals to the passions, and at best of the fatiguing repetition of a few common-place thoughts upon the same first principles of divine truth. After all that is said against doctrinal preaching, no man can be a weighty and powerful preacher, whose discourses are destitute of solid instruction.

2. We may see why it is that the scriptures so often *represent the love of the truth, as a conclusive test of christian character.*

That they do so, is perfectly evident. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." It belongs

to the nature of piety to love the truth of God. Impiety may make shipwreck of the faith. The eternal interests of men are suspended upon their believing and loving the essential doctrines of the gospel. Good men do not see any way of becoming pious themselves, but by believing and loving the truth of God; and they see no way by which others can become so. We shall discover our true character, my hearers, in no small degree by our opinions. If we imbibe error, and especially, if it be serious, fundamental error, it will be because we have not sought the truth in the love of it, and have chosen darkness rather than light. How can men be holy, who have not the word of Christ abiding in them? How can men be holy, who oppose the truth of God, when the exercise of a holy temper would infallibly lead them to believe and love it? How far men may go in rejecting the truth of God and yet be good men, let none be hasty in determining. There are doctrines that are fundamental to the gospel, and so essential to it, that to deny them, or any one of them, would subvert the whole gospel itself. And it is very possible for men to be ignorant of some of these doctrines and yet be saved. They may not understand them; they may not discern their connection and importance; and their ignorance in this respect, and their misconceptions, may not prove them to be the enemies of truth and holiness. But while this is an indulgence which christian charity asks and gives, let it be settled in our minds, that no man can under-

stand any one of the fundamental truths of the gospel and reject it, and at the same time be the friend of God. Lord, to whom shall we go, but unto thee? for thou hast *the words of eternal life*; and we know and *are sure*, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

But we add,

3. And we desire to add with emphasis, *Rest not satisfied with mere intellectual attainments in religion*. Many a man, we fear, does rest satisfied with a mere speculative knowledge of the truth of God. Multitudes under the light of the gospel have been educated in the belief, that religion is a mere science. They have been taught to “say their prayers;” to read the Bible; to repeat the catechism; to attend the worship of God on the sabbath; to come to the Lord’s table; and here their religion ends. From childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, they grow up under the influence of such a religion, and live and die in all the usages and orthodoxy of their fathers—and mournful to relate, live and die the enemies of God. They have never been made acquainted with the plague of their own hearts; they have never come as ruined and condemned sinners to the cross of Christ; and they have no more knowledge of internal, vital piety, than the heathen. Such was the religion of the scribes and Pharisees. Such was the religion of Paul before his conversion. And if any of us are satisfied

with such a religion, dear hearers, unless sovereign grace interpose, we shall most certainly die in our sins.

A mere intellectual acquaintance with the truth of God is not godliness. "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not *love*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and *understand all mysteries and all knowledge*, and have not *love*, I am nothing." There is many a well informed understanding where there is an unhumbléd heart. "Thou believest there is one God : thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble." Clear and strong perceptions of moral truth only enhance the turpitude and aggravate the guilt of wicked men. "He that *knoweth* his Lord's will, and *doeth it not*, shall be beaten with many stripes." You may see and approve the better, and follow the worse. "They know too much of religion, far too much, for their future comfort, who know more than they obey." The truths you understand must be loved and obeyed. However humbling, they must be loved and obeyed. However particular and personal in their application, they must be loved and obeyed. However offensive to the carnal mind, they must be loved and obeyed. Yes, *they must be loved and obeyed !* And this is the religion. my respected audience, which it is the design of these lectures to urge upon you. A knowledge that puffeth up and does not edify ; a knowledge that justifies obduracy and impenitence. and does not excite tenderness

and susceptibility, would only become a savour of death unto death. While we therefore respectfully solicit your attention to some of the more important doctrines of the gospel, in the name and by the authority of the God of truth and holiness, we claim for him and his truth the submission of your hearts. As ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. They are no obscure and deep points of speculation, that are about to be presented to you. Few, *very few* such points are to be found in the Bible. They are plain, solemn, interesting truths, which we hope may not only enlighten your minds and our own, but find a passage to our hearts. And God of his infinite mercy grant, that they may be so preached and so accompanied by his omnipotent Spirit, that we who preach may be helpers of one another's joy, and you who hear may be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.