



REV. DR. CONDIT'S SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Board of Commissioners for
Foreign Missions,

PREACHED AT WORCESTER, MASS.

OCTOBER 4, 1884.



The Missionary Enterprise a True Development of
the Life of the Church.

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S E R M O N ,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

MEETING IN WORCESTER, MASS.

OCTOBER 4, 1864.

BY

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AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

WORCESTER, MASS., OCTOBER, 1864.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be presented to the Rev. Dr. CONDIT, for his Sermon preached on Tuesday evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Attest,

SAMUEL M. WORCESTER, *Rec. Secretary.*



S E R M O N .

PHILIPPIANS II. 15, 16.

AMONG WHOM YE SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD; HOLDING FORTH
THE WORD OF LIFE.

THE responsibility of this hour is of no ordinary kind. The cause of missions in its eventful history, in its wide reach—looking to the restoration of a world to the allegiance of Christ, in its present posture, necessitous yet hopeful, makes a demand on him who pleads it, in view of which he may well tremble. What words shall he speak, so that something may be added to the power of the church in this work of love? His duty is plain. Let him take his position on the foundation which Christ has laid, and exalt the unchanging principles of his kingdom. Then under the blended light of providence and promise, let him shape his plea in harmony with the process by which God is working for the conversion of the world. The text will be an appropriate guide to such a plea. “Among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.”

Light and darkness represent two opposite states in which men are found. One is known by its

intellectual and moral elevation ; the other by its prevalent ignorance and corruption. Christ is the source of light. " In him was life, and the life was the light of men." From the era of its rising to the present time, it has been struggling with the darkness. " It shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not." As the struggle goes on, the lines which bound it are pierced here and there by its rays—the presage of a fuller shining. Indeed it has already " touched and glanced " on many lands not long since wrapped in darkness ; and faith anticipates the day when it shall become an all-pervading radiance.

The provision for extending this light is a beautiful example of divine wisdom. In one form of it, it depends on the principle of reflection. Character, moulded by Christianity, embodies its lessons and virtues, and becomes a living expression of the truth. It is a source of light all around ; in its full power " like the disk of the sun sending out a ray of light from every point in its surface." Another method is by the inculcation of truth, to show unto men the way of salvation. In both modes, the experience of the power of the word is an essential condition, and will be a guide to us in this attempt to unfold the true philosophy of the missionary enterprise. They, to whom the light has come with a saving influence, are not only invested with the commission, but with the spiritual endowment, for spreading it over the whole earth. The truth, therefore, to which I ask your attention is this,—

The missionary enterprise is a true development of the life of the church.

False views are often entertained of the relation of this work to the church. Some regard it as a scheme which has its origin, like that of many worldly enterprises, in the invention of ambitious minds; sustained by a passion for achievement, and therefore destined to a short existence. Others treat it as the fruit of an enthusiasm, in which there is no fair estimate of the power of Christianity, or of the power of the church to spread it; and having no intelligent principle as its basis: a scheme appended to the church, so morally significant as for a time to arrest attention; but economically unsound, and hence must ere long be a failure.

A system of effort for the renovation of the world must stand or fall by this test—Has it a foundation in that which is true, effective, and permanent? Is it the result of deep spiritual convictions? Has it an inner spring that can originate and sustain a steady movement against the powers of darkness? Life in the church seeks a development. This is true of all life. The nature of the life determines the form of its development. There is the never ceasing process in nature, from the germ to the stately tree, with its growing stock and branches. Life in man is the spring of growth and varied activity. A nation's life is manifested under the operation of some one or more grand principles. It may give the supremacy to a single principle. This determines the form of its institutions, the efficiency and direction of its forces. It exemplifies

this principle to all the world. According to its resources, and the devotion with which this idea is cherished, it is executing a mission to spread it among other nations. Its code defines it; its diplomacy is based on it; its flag is a symbol of it; its whole economy is its out-growth.

The life of the church is spiritual. The church is not a device of human policy; nor the product of circumstances in a given age. Neither is it a mere corporation, with its constitution, by-laws, and varied machinery, to perpetuate a privileged rank in its membership, and issue edicts against error and sin. It has its organization, its forms of worship, and modes of action; but it is a divine creation, deriving its life from God, and living on, because it is imbued with his life-giving Spirit. The development of its life is not a contest for supremacy in ecclesiastical power; nor a splendid framework of offices and titled dignities, guarding the sacred enclosure. Neither is it simply a zeal and courage in the maintenance of theological dogmas. As the spiritual body of Christ, it has holy principles, sympathies and aims, which exalt it as a great moral power, with a mission of mercy to the race. This its character indicates its true development in the missionary enterprise. This will appear as we consider some of the *essential elements of a spiritual, living church*.

I. The life of the church has its foundation in faith, or a deep, spiritual conviction of truth. Philosophy speaks of a "connection between the various forces of nature," suggesting that they have a "com-

mon root, or that they form a circle whose links are connected." We note a corresponding fact in the spiritual forces of the church. They have a common root in its inner life. They come forth in intimate union, and combine their strength in every department of service. In this circle of spiritual forces faith is the primary one, because it is the instrument of the interior working of truth, by which it becomes spirit and life. It appropriates the provisions of atoning mercy, and secures the needed culture for all the graces.

Christianity is directly connected with piety by its doctrines. Truth is called the "word of life" in the text, not merely because it reveals a life to come, but because it is the means used by the Spirit in the production of spiritual life. It pervades all genuine, Christian experience, and is ever a source of growth in holiness. It is not merely a creed, embalmed as a venerated symbol, to be handed down through successive generations—a monument in the history of religious opinions; but an in-working force through all the powers and affections. There must be more than an intellectual conviction of it. Spiritual life begins when the heart is opened to the entrance of the word, so that it penetrates with light and energy. Here we have the primary, impelling force to the dissemination of truth. Philosophy and the Bible agree on this point. The language of an eminent philosopher is, "If a man makes a mental advance, some mental discovery. . . what is the desire that takes possession of him at the very moment he makes it? It is the desire to

promulgate his sentiment to the exterior world—to publish and realize his thought. When a man acquires a new truth, has acquired a new gift, immediately there becomes joined to this acquirement the notion of a mission.” The Bible says, as the language of Christian experience, “ We believe and therefore speak ”—‘ we cannot suppress the truth which faith has accepted. Having this new discovery of the beauty and excellence of divine realities, we desire in every possible way to make them known to all people.’

Great power is vested in the truths of the Gospel ; as they unfold the character and government of God ; the glory of the Redeemer and his work of mercy for our lost race ; and the character and condition of man, by nature a child of wrath, with no hope of restoration to holiness and bliss, but through the atonement of Christ. We may set our seal to them in a public confession ; analyze and defend them with dialectic skill ; and they may have no more effect upon us than the common places of any familiar science. But they cannot be inwrought in the man by the power of the Holy Spirit, and be powerless. Can the soul come into fellowship with these divine thoughts in all their celestial power and heat, given to guide us to heaven, without being aroused to publish them in the hearing of all men ? Can they who have made such spiritual discoveries as faith imparts, and who, after the test of a blessed experiment, can say, ‘ We know whom we have believed,’ have no care to put the world in possession of such knowledge ? If the

philosopher, who has found a theory in science, which overthrows a prevalent error, hastens to the work of convincing the world of the truth of it; not less urgent will be the experience of the power of divine truth to lift others into the light of it. An eminent Christian scholar, tracing the history of doctrine in successive periods of the church, has recently said, "The scientific expansion of a single doctrine results in the formation of a particular type of morality or piety; which again shows itself in active missionary enterprises; and the spread of Christianity through great masses of heathen population." What then must be the effect, when all these great truths of the Gospel dwell in the very heart of the church, the spring of its joy and strength? When Luther received the doctrine of justification by faith, it became the master of his heart and all his powers, chartering them for the work of propagating the truth through all Germany. There is nothing mysterious in the fact, that the disciple of mere natural religion has no care to disturb Pagan mind in its moral death; that he has no longing of soul, no spirit of self-sacrifice prompting him to go forth on a mission. But faith embodies in the believer's life truths of such import and value, that the heart is deeply moved toward such an engagement. As it is a realization of these in respect to man's eternal destiny, what can suppress its tendency as a living force within, to give them extension?

Faith acts too in the light of the promise that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the

Lord." Accepting the promise as that which cannot fail, it expands to the compass of the promised achievement. This is no romantic idea of a golden era in the future, luring men by baseless visions to a certain disappointment. Faith rests on the unchangeable word of Jehovah, who has authority and power to subject all agencies to his service. The desire for the propagation of the word is not left to fall back on itself because there is no answer to the question, How can it be done? Faith gives the answer. Directing the soul to God as the author of its own light and peace, it associates every conquest of truth with his power and faithfulness. It receives the announcement that this world shall be converted to righteousness, not as a possibility, not as an event subject to circumstances which often cause a failure in human projects, but as a glorious certainty; keeping before the heart, especially in every adverse hour, the promise of the Master, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Paul appreciated this development of faith in the direction of missionary effort, when he said to the church in Corinth, "Having hope when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, according to our rule abundantly, to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you."

This then is the power of a deep spiritual conviction of truth. And when men in darkness are now crying, Who will give us light? Where is the tablet from heaven, on which we can read the lessons of truth adapted to the immortal spirit? Will not the faith of the church spring with augmented energy

to embrace the auspicious moment? Surely those who hear this voice, having proved the efficacy of truth, will be prompted to go forth, announcing to the benighted multitude, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth. Come and see. Come and read the lines of mercy, written by the finger of God. Look up, for the day-star has risen in the heavens. Listen, for a voice comes from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'

II. The sympathy of the church with Christ in the purpose of his life and death, has its direct development in the work of extending the Gospel. As the life of the church has its origin and support in him, there is implied an intimate union with him. It is such a union that he comes into sympathy with his people; manifesting it in kind watching, effectual protection, and holy intercession. They also come into sympathy with him, adopt his cause, and respond in the heart's deepest voice to the language of his heart. As each can say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" so he becomes identified with the work of him whose great purpose was to seek and to save that which was lost. By the very law of the new life, this sympathetic element must have expression in the pursuit of the object to which the Saviour consecrated himself. Believers must determine its claims upon them, according to the position to which he exalted it, by the costliest sacrifice infinite love could make. They cannot

live in intimate fellowship with him, and fail to catch the fire of his heart. As they see him filled with his high purpose, and pressing on to its accomplishment amid determined opposition; and then hear his memorable words, 'And I, if I be lifted up on the cross, will draw all men unto me;' can they help coming with "hearts warm from the cross," into the work of bringing all men under its attractions?

Let not this sympathy be regarded as a mere emotion, and not an element of character. It has the force and permanence of a principle. It imparts tenderness to the spirit, so also courage and decision. The gentleness which it begets is a reflection of the spirit of the Lamb of God, which blends with, and gives dignity and charm to the earnest purpose—"I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day." While Paul is passing his imprisonment at Rome, waiting the decision of his destiny for life or death, he sends his sympathizing words to his former flock at Philippi—all self-forgetful, with no defiant spirit towards his enemies, with no complaining appeal to his friends. But at the same moment, with his heart leaning on the bosom of his Lord, his sympathy with him flows out in the calm, majestic purpose of one whose "taste it was, to believe, to suffer, and to love,"—"For me to live is Christ,"—"I have nothing to recall of past devotion to him. If I live, it shall be to exemplify his spirit, and spread abroad the knowledge of his name. I am bound in my life's best energies, and to my latest breath, to the object

of his life.' When the modern missionary says, contemplating a violent death at the hands of his enemies, 'My life is given to Christ; he will take care of it, if it is his will that I live; I am set here to work, and, if need be, to die for him;' we find the spring of such heroism in this warm sympathy with Christ. Indeed you cannot separate it from the hopes and obligations of believers. We have traced its root in the gracious life within. It grows under the culture of the Spirit, and adds strength to the bond which unites the soul with Christ. It is on this as a principle of action Gospel arguments for duty and sacrifice fix their grasp. It is an ever-living power, forming the character after Christ as the model. When he said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work," he declared the fixed purpose of his life. It awaked with every morning light; each day teemed with some new manifestation of his heart of love. It bore him onward till the last blow was struck, which was needful to turn out the invasion of sin, and restore this world to the service of its Maker. This was the mind of Christ. Sympathy with him is the mind of the man; not a temporary emotion to be started into being at every new phase of the necessities of the world. It underlies that career of consecrated living, in which the object of the Saviour's heart is embraced in its commanding attitude and claims.

III. Another element of the life of the church which gives the same direction to its efforts, is love to man. This is inseparable from sympathy with

Christ. Faith and love are also combined in the union of believers to him. If one is the instrument that forms it, the other seals and binds it. If faith accepts the privilege, it works by love to manifest the union when formed; not only love to Christ, but also to man for whom he died. Love to man has indeed a foundation in what he is, and in the relation of one to another. He possesses marks wherever you meet him, which assure you that he is your brother. He has an intelligent spirit, giving out a spark, when you touch it with truth, which indicates its alliance with immortality. He has hopes and fears and cravings like your own. The millions without the Gospel, bowing down to their "gods many," are your brethren. But looking at man in the light of Jesus' love to him, and in sympathy with his manifestation of it, love assumes a new tone and vigor. You have pondered such questions as these—What does the law of love to a brother enjoin us to do for him? Have we that which will make these dead men live again? Have we that which will restore their debased natures, so that they shall shine in the likeness of God? Go, sit beneath the cross, and let the heart kindle under its power; and you will give a right practical answer to these questions. It will put every sinner of the race in the position of one who has a common right with you to the blessings of the Gospel. It will show that the mercy seat where you go for pardon was built for him as well as for you; and that the atonement of Christ is ample for all, in all their guilt. The cross not only reveals the depth

and corruption of the sepulchre in which men are buried, but also the possibility of a resurrection to moral beauty and happiness. It defines the way in which we may pour light into their dark hearts, make them awake from their spiritual death, throw off their grave-clothes, and put on the vestments of purity and love.

Here is light concerning man in his ruin, and the method of his deliverance, which no Grecian sage, no Confucius, nor "Doctors of eternal reason" have furnished—the source and nourisher of that love which is another name for the religion of the Bible. It has no true definition in any other professed system of truth. It has had no lodgment in human hearts under the teachings of human wisdom. Here it is, at once the child of the cross, and the inspiration of the infinite heart. When the missionary stands the representative of this principle amid the narrow, selfish systems of religion which cover the heathen world, it is in this he is a mystery to their disciples. What wonder is it, that at first they count him a selfish schemer? That they suspect him of concealing some mercenary design under a profession of love to their souls? And I may add, what wonder is it, that, at length, the power with which this love invests him, is the means of opening their hearts to his message? What more reasonable interpretation of such a mission to save them, than that the religion he brings to them is divine? The message itself—the reasonings, the appeals, the tone and tear, with which he enforces it, all be-

speak the origin of that love in him who first exemplified it in a mission from heaven to save sinners.

The work of evangelizing the world by the system of Christian missions, carries with it its own explanation. It is the love of Christ to man, reproducing itself in his followers. It is in every converted soul a power for the conversion of other souls. When you say, that the law of love to man is founded in my constitution, I respond to it. But expound it as the Saviour breathed it; stamp it with the signet of his heart; publish it, not only arrayed in the majesty of Sinai, but also in the glories of Calvary; it comes with an incomparably stronger force. Love then becomes the passion of a heart enlarged to embrace a world. It kindles an energy that breaks down the wall of selfishness, that cannot be baffled by the forces of evil, nor discouraged before any degree of corruption and misery. It seeks to get the ear of every wanderer from God, and tell him of the way to eternal life. It craves the privilege of going into every jungle, of traversing every mountain and valley, where man in his wretchedness dwells, to minister to his soul the balm of the Gospel. It longs to stop before every altar of heathenism, where deluded worshippers are offering their sacrifices, and point them to the one great sacrifice for sin, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It would make the circuit of the globe, spreading the knowledge of Jesus "wide as sunshine."

IV. But with this faith in God, sympathy with Christ, and love to man, is combined a desire for the glory of God, as a principle of church-life. God established and has preserved the church for his own glory. When his Son came down to redeem the world, angels ushered in his coming with the ascription, Glory to God in the highest. When he was about to leave the world, he said, "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth." Then he identified his followers with this end. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." "Ye have received the truths of my Gospel; they have become to you the elements of a new life; now manifest that inward power to the glory of its divine Author." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." They come under the power of this principle of action. The grace that made them new creatures, gives this direction to their spiritual activity. Their first act of self-consecration is a declaration of this desire—let God be glorified. Such a desire, united with a sense of obligation, never dies, but grows with every new discovery of the riches of Christ. As the new life becomes deeper and stronger, the tide of gratitude rises, bearing the soul upward in an ever-increasing devotion to the honor of God.

This principle has its fit expression in the work of missions. This appears in view of the origin of the enterprise. God's hand was in it at the beginning. Some have seen in it so much of

human wisdom and calculation, that they have forgotten it was no device of man. Its charter came from the lips of Christ just before he left the world. The first action under that charter had the broad seal of his authority and power. It was the unfolding of spiritual life under the striking manifestations of his providence and spirit. In respect to the origin of missions in this land, we may challenge the world to give any other explanation of it than this—it was the result of a direct and wonderful movement of God. In it was heard his “still small voice.” It was no conventional plan to match the powers of evil. It was no scheme of youthful ambition to get a name. No messengers came from the heathen world with a warm appeal to Christian sensibility. There was no assurance of an open door to the Gentiles. What then was the spring of that movement? There was a waking up of spiritual life in a few faithful servants of Christ, under a special, divine influence—a development of faith, Christlike sympathy and love, which demanded the consecration of themselves to the missionary work. The hand of God was there. When he touched the hearts of those noble men, they rose to a position of faith and hope, to a sublimity of purpose, far in advance of the church. Thence a power went forth, which has been steadily spreading till the present moment. As we now turn the eye back to the scene of its remarkable beginning, more than half a century ago, is not every heart ready to ascribe the glory to God?

The relation of the enterprise to this end appears also in the fact, that God is the source of power in its execution. . A master-spirit may infuse into it an inventive skill, and the energy of an indomitable purpose, which will command admiration ; but God gives it success and thus connects it with his own glory. What has been the import of all the despatches that have come to us, reporting the triumphs of truth by our missionary forces ? What is the voice of that " nation born in a day " in the Sandwich Islands, coming to us from its churches, schools, and household altars ? What is the testimony of the infant churches in Turkey and Ceylon ? Or that which reaches us so often in gladdening tones from revival scenes in the Nestorian mission ? Should I ask a representative from some mission field, now with us, he would stand up and cry, " Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." This truth which shines out amid Apostolic successes, is prolonged in the achievements of the Reformation, and in the victories of the Gospel to-day. You see the church in battle, then rejoicing in victory ; in darkness, then emerging into light ; moving on with an extinguishable life ; kings coming to its fold, and kingdoms regenerated ; but at each successive step all are prepared to join in the doxology, " Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake."

At length, in the universal extension of the Gospel, the church will have its complete development ; and every part of the work done will reflect

the glory of God. The church will be made up of a redeemed multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues. They will gather in throngs from China. India will add her long procession. From the land of the patriarchs and prophets accessions will be made to the vast company. The children of Africa will come in redeemed from their bondage, and made free in Christ. The dwellers on every continent and island will swell the host, to meet the Lord, when he comes to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe. They will stand clothed in white robes, each having a harp and a song. As they look at the wrath they merited, and the grace that rescued them ; at what they were, and at what they now are ; wearing the seal of a gracious adoption ; heirs of a kingdom prepared for them ; they will sing with one voice— “ Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.” This is the end of the perfectly developed life of the church. “ When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.” In Christ, all the building fitly framed together, has grown to a holy temple in the Lord. Glorious temple of Zion ! An eternal monument of grace to the honor of God ! In every one of its “ lively stones ” his image shines ; and the blended radiance of every part is the manifested glory of the builder. This is the consummation to which the power of the church in the missionary enterprise is directed.

Is it said that the voice of history is not in harmony with the truth which I have aimed to establish? Though the energy of a living church has not always been put forth in missionary effort, it is not difficult to trace the influences that have prevented it. Some may suggest an explanation derived from the process of nature. As the life of the tree in winter is not discernible in the blossom and the fruit, so spiritual life in God's people must have its winter season, when its ordinary fruits are not brought forth. We do not recognize any such established law in the kingdom of grace. The primitive development of the church was, in an eminent degree, of the missionary type. The early disciples, if not at first appreciating the diffusive spirit of the Gospel, soon accepted the token from heaven to give it extension. But the life of the church was ere long impaired by the prevalence of an unholy ambition and a worldly policy. Formalism took the place of spiritual devotion. The awakenings of the Reformation were marked by the outflowing of sympathy with the cause of Christ. But the reasons are obvious to all why no system of effort was adopted for the extension of truth to other lands. The spirit of the Reformation, if it had not been perverted, would have led forth an emancipated church to teach the nations. But the direction given to the learning and energy of the age, by some controlling minds, checked that development which the springing life of the church indicated. A missionary zeal was not characteristic of the piety of the seventeenth century

in England. Extension beyond its own sphere was not a quality of the sanctified intellect of that period, distinguished as it was for effort and sacrifices in behalf of the truth. The consciences of good men were educated in another direction. They believed they were doing the work of their generation in contending for the faith. While we acknowledge the value of their labors, we cannot fail to see that the secular and ecclesiastical influences of the age prevented the wealth of intellectual and moral power vested in it, from being consecrated to the work of evangelizing the nations. Richard Baxter, almost if not quite alone, among ruling minds of the time, looked out with a sympathizing heart over a benighted world. We are not surprised that this holy man, who wrought with burning zeal for the salvation of men around him, had such sympathy with the condition of the heathen world, and a longing heart to do something to save it. We are not surprised, that as he stood among two thousand ministers ejected from their pulpits by the arm of power, he saw little to regret if they could but go forth, a missionary band, to preach the Gospel to "Tartars, Turks, and heathens." Let God be praised that he has put the church in thisland in such a posture, and under such a ministration of the Spirit, that its life may have its true development in the spread of the truth. It is not ours to question the ways of God in the trust assigned to good men at different periods. But it becomes us to accept the spiritual emancipation which he has wrought for us; opening to us the wide field of

the world, and enlarging the faith of many to go up and take possession of it for Christ. It now shines out, as at "the beginning of the Gospel," that the life of the church demands the form of aggressive action, instead of that which is chiefly self-protective. Not merely the erection of defences to resist attack ; aiming at little more than to preserve the order and prestige of the church. Not the forces of the church in an encampment, answering at roll-call for an occasional drill ; most of the time with armor off, satisfied with a secure resting place ; but enlisted and organized for one long campaign ; pushing out on every side to make conquests for Christ, and binding conquered foes to his standard.

We are now prepared to see the value of God's discipline of his church, as adapted to develop its life in the missionary work. It is first in the form of *conflict*. Opposition began with the Apostolic missions, and is still continued. Not always in the form of bloody persecution ; sometimes it is by the agency of wealth, philosophy and learning, designed to crush the truth and strengthen false systems of religion. Then it is the discipline of *loss*. The work of missions has put on such magnitude and responsibility, in its various departments, that it calls most earnestly for the consecration of men of the highest culture, as well as those of most ardent devotion. Such sons of the church are its great necessity. But, as in the past, so recently, noble men have been stricken down, while still strong

and "valiant in fight" for the Lord of hosts. As Stoddard, Bridgman, and Dwight have fallen, we have been ready to say, the cause of missions cannot spare them. It has also been the discipline of *delay*. We have heard of the "quickness with which the barrenness of some northern regions is turned into a paradise, so that there appears to be no interval between the frost and the flowers;" and some have indulged the hope that thus quickly the moral desert would be made to rejoice and blossom as the rose. They have found it easy in theory to leap into results, and gather them speedily around the beating heart of the church. They forget that God may have important ends to accomplish by leaving them to sow the seed and then wait long for the harvest. I believe that a more rapid progress awaits this enterprise. If the "day of the preparation" is not yet ended, the universal Sabbath of the church is hastening on. But the burden of the labor is yet upon us. God's command is—'Go work in my vineyard to-day, and whatsoever is right I will give you. Cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; go through the step and the beat of the sower; drop the seed in the valleys and on the tops of the mountains; then like the husbandman, have long patience.' But now God's discipline is in another form. Never before has the church in this land felt his hand as it does to-day, when the nation is reeling under the shock of his fearful judgment. If this war is putting to the test the existence of our admirable Government, and taxing the wisdom and courage of our strongest men; is it not, in a

special sense, a trial of the faith and devotion of the church ?

Let us mark the connection of such varied discipline with the development of church-life. Uninterrupted success has tended to relaxation and forgetfulness of dependence on God. We cannot measure the growth of the church by its external prosperity. Its energies have been brought out in proportion to the demand—working most effectively under pressure. Put to the test in reverses, they have been nerved to bolder action. Let principle as the basis of action be supplanted by motives which are semi-secular, or founded in popular sympathy; let corruption take its seat in high places, and the names of men be exalted as bulwarks of the cause; let covetousness and worldly conformity prevail; then we may look for God's hand to be laid upon his people in some form of discipline, if he would recover them to a spiritual vitality and devotion. Obstacles to success multiply; helpers fail; defeat after defeat attends the forces of Zion. In such a time, no temporizing expediency will avail. It is soon felt that success can only come, by falling back on that element of strength, unyielding Christian principle. That principle now assumes new power. We have marked the wisdom of God in training men to meet the "moment to which heaven has joined great issues." The form of his providence was effective in developing individual life and energy. It is the spirit rocked in the storm, that is nurtured for doing great things. The same is true of national life. The principle of its life may be

dormant. God puts the nation through a process of trial ; when that principle strikes its roots deeper, and comes forth in a more vigorous manifestation. It demands emphatic expression. It begets an upheaving of mind to throw off corruption. It obeys the summons to the protection of endangered interests. That which is true of individual and national development, is a law in the church. One season of stern trial, like that through which we are now passing, may be worth a thousand fold more to the church, than many years without check or strait.

• We give thanks to-day that the churches have practically endorsed the recommendation to put five hundred thousand dollars into the treasury of the Board during the year now closed. Is it a mistake to interpret it as the fruit of an expanding spirit of benevolence under God's disciplinary providence? His hand is touching the heart of the church. Lessons of duty are now invested with unwonted solemnity. The sanctions of conscience put on a more impressive power. Motives derived from the peculiar displays of God's character and purposes, are arrayed with a penetrating force. Trust, love, sympathy, and a desire for the glory of God, are invigorated. Submission and patience are made to blend with a steadfast faith in prayer, and an energetic purpose in action. The church has sometimes been reduced to a feeble band, in the presence of enemies strong and defiant ; so that some were led to say, its end is near. Yet, at that moment, it was drawing strength from a divine source, with which to go forward. Though scarred in battle, it came

forth radiant with the light of promise, joyful in its leader, and loving the cause better by reason of the trial to which it was subjected. Discipline and development go together.

In conclusion, we ought to note the importance of the present moment for bringing out the strength of the church in the work committed to our hands. This is the point where there is reason for deep solicitude. God has opened the way for the church, but the inward, propelling power is wanting. If he binds us to this cause by his authority, so also by the very life he has imparted to us. The necessity of the hour is this—that the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, to produce a full exhibition of the principles of this inner life. The past admonishes us against retreat. The present reveals most impressively the necessity of multiplied resources. The future invites with all the attractions of promise—promise of needed aid and of ultimate success. In view of embarrassments, unbelief may prompt some to say, stop—wait for more decided tokens that God bids us advance, and make conquest of new territory for Christ. Shall we stop, when we have such proof of the power of the Gospel? Shall we stop, when we have such evidence of the capacity of the church to do the work, and of the faithfulness of God to give success to our efforts? Shall we stop, when voices come from the graves of those who have fallen in the fight, bidding us not to faint? When voices come from the more than one hundred and fifty churches gathered on

heathen ground, calling us to help them in the onset against the powers of darkness! When voices come from myriads yet in bondage, sighing for deliverance? Stop! No, not till "great voices are heard in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." We cannot stop. For what was this new life begotten within us? For what are we kept in this world? For what, if not to be the "light of the world and the salt of the earth?" We want no further sign of the Master's will. He gave it just before he ascended to his Father—"Go ye therefore and teach all nations." It is hung out to-day on the banner of the cross. No reverse shall take it down. The struggles of truth are not over. It has yet to meet mighty foes. But as in the past, when depressed, its friends few, and its enemies boasted that it was buried forever, it rose again and appeared unto many with a spiritual presence and power; has since lifted its voice on many a Pentecost, assailed many a strong-hold and gained the victory; so, as God is true, it shall live through every coming conflict, till it shall take the throne of universal empire. Blessed day, when the people of every land, lifted out of darkness and corruption, shall put on the "beautiful apparel" of truth and righteousness; and earth and heaven unite to celebrate the final victory of him who rose to conquer and to reign.