

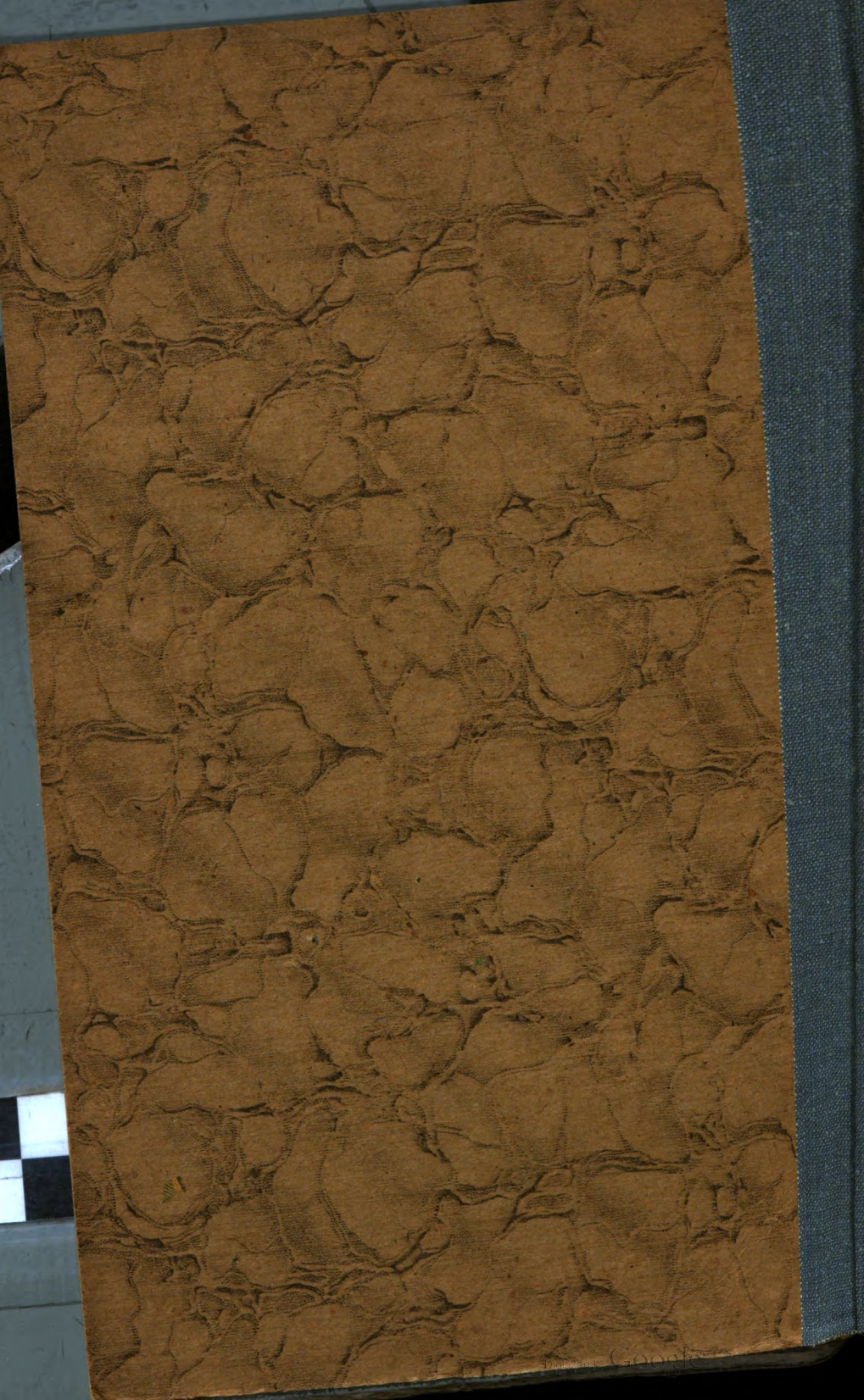
266  
En3p

Engles, William M.

---

Patriot's Plea for  
Domestic  
Missions





THE  
PATRIOT'S PLEA  
FOR  
DOMESTIC MISSIONS.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF PHILADELPHIA BY THEIR APPOINTMENT,  
AT COLUMBIA, PA. OCTOBER 31st, 1833,

BY  
REV. WM. M. ENGLES,  
Pastor of the Seventh Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA:  
RUSSELL AND MARTIEN, PRINTERS, GEORGE STREET.  
1833.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon was delivered in compliance with the appointment of the Synod of Philadelphia, to aid the efforts of the BOARD OF MISSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. A number of those who were present at its delivery expressed a desire for its circulation through the press ; urging as a reason, that, from the nature of its argument, it might reach the judgments of some who would not probably be affected by the *religious argument* for Christian Missions. From this consideration, the author has been induced to publish it for gratuitous distribution.

## SERMON.

PROVERBS, xiv. 34.

“Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.”

As constituent members of an extended, and thus far flourishing, republic, it becomes to us an inquiry of absorbing interest, what will best promote the national reputation, and thus tend to secure the national stability? The theory of our government is, in many respects, new, and is still in the course of experiment. To suppose from the apparently successful operation of the machinery during half a century, that no fatal derangement can subsequently occur, would be an extravagant presumption. As in the human constitution, insidious disease may be invading the strong holds of life, while robust health is indicated by external appearances, so in the body politic, the secret principle of decay may be urging a catastrophe which superficial observation had never led us to anticipate. History has admonished us that nations have sunk from magnificence into ruin, under almost every conceivable modification of government. It has transmitted to us the facts, that naval bulwarks and military legions have failed to avert the destructive crisis; that wisdom in the cabinet, and

skill in the legislative hall, have not been infallible conservators of the commonwealth; that patriotism, pure and fervent, has not always proved the palladium of political rights; that laborious industry and commercial enterprize are no pledge of perpetuity to a people;—that in despite of the cultivation of literature and the arts, a nation may eventually incur contempt, and sink into disgrace. Tyre, with her commerce,—Babylon, with her wealth,—Rome, with her heroism,—Sparta, with her legislation,—Athens, with her literature and arts,—Poland, with her patriotism—where are they? Sunk, alas, how low! Ruined, alas, how hopelessly! Admonished by the ruins of their fallen greatness, we should rejoice over our own country with trembling, and instead of boasting of the past or present, dwell with solicitude upon the future.

Our national destiny is inscrutably concealed from the most penetrating foresight; but its character will probably be determined by the present and succeeding generations. And it will be determined not so much by the adoption of any particular governmental policy, as by the prevalent practice of moral principles. We repeat it, our glory and perpetuity as a nation, will not depend upon an unrestricted and lucrative commerce; nor well sustained manufactures; nor successfully prosecuted internal improvements; nor on the completion of warlike defences; nor on the multiplication of wealth; but in the prevalence of

that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and on the prevention of that sin which is the reproach of any people. That the healthfulness of political communities depends upon the prevalence of sound morals, is a fact generally conceded. It is to this source alone that we are to look for the origin of well adapted laws, and for their equitable administration and respectful observance. The fulfilment of compacts, the perpetuity of the social relations, and the general rights of society are closely connected with the virtue of legislators, magistrates, and people. The selfish interests of men, various and conflicting as they are, always tend to alienate affection and generate discord; but a sound morality is the cementing quality which preserves the community from jarring and disruption. We affirm, for the Bible teaches it, that righteousness is the great preservative, occupying the same place in the social system, which the centripetal force does in the planetary—preserving the harmony of the system and preventing collision and ruin. Now it becomes an obvious inquiry under these circumstances, how can this virtue be so diffused as to become effective? How can it be made to pervade the mass of society, and affect the elements of which it is composed? The wisest legislators have thought that the object is to be accomplished by general instruction, although their sagacity has too often failed in suggesting the best practical method of imparting this instruction. In their theory it seems to be assumed

as a first principle, that knowledge and virtue, if not identical, are inseparably associated, and that the diffusion of the one will be the security of the other. Hence elementary schools have been established at the public expense; colleges have been endowed, and the facilities of learning have been extensively furnished. Their project as far as it extends, is truly noble and praise-worthy, and its completion is an object well deserving legislative patronage. But in itself it is insufficient. While it tends to promote the intelligence of the mind, it provides but a partial and inadequate control for the moral springs of the heart. Who does not know that a man may be scientific, and yet a villain; that he may be learned, and yet convert his learning into an agency for the subversion of the best interests of society? It is by no means an axiom that general knowledge, independently considered, would prove a blessing to our country; we want moral principles to regulate and direct this knowledge, and it is the harmonious blending of the two which constitutes that "righteousness" which "exalteth a nation." To accomplish the spread of this righteousness, embracing as it does both knowledge and virtue, we know of no device so happily appropriate and adequate, as the diffusion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This Gospel exerts a genial and appropriate influence for the improvement of the mind in useful knowledge, and for the cultivation of the heart, in all its best affections. But in the employment of this



mean, we do not merely intend the dispersion of the letter of the Scripture, however indispensable that may be, but principally the animated instruction and pressing expostulation of the living preacher, who, with God's commission, and in the spirit and power of the primitive teachers of Christianity, shall go forth in earnest, determined to accomplish his work in the face of privation and danger.

The letter of the Scripture may lie unnoticed and unfelt, but he that urgently exhorts carries with him a diffusive influence, and bears down resistlessly upon the judgments and hearts of those whom he would impress. The skilful politician does not exclusively depend upon the issues of the press, but relies upon the popular oration, and the power of persuasive and impassioned eloquence, to sway and secure the public opinion. And so the divine author of the Christian scheme, knowing the susceptibilities of human nature, and the surest methods of reaching the understanding and impressing the heart, expended much of his ministry in oral instructions, and appointed his disciples to traverse, first Judea, and then the land of the Gentiles, that they might every where proclaim the words of eternal life; and wherever the same human nature exists, the same necessity for the living teacher is implied. And oh, my hearers, our own beloved country, in danger of being reproached and cursed for its sins, needs the extension of this reforming agency. Distinguished as it may be, upon

comparison with the corrupt monarchies of continental Europe, and the barbarous despotisms of Asia and Africa, it still presses itself upon our attention as a field of the most extensive missionary enterprise. Multiplying its population in a ratio greatly disproportioned to the means of its moral culture, we have reason to fear that its liberty will degenerate into licentiousness, and its glorious institutions become the sport of political factions. We are a distinguished people, but nevertheless "a people laden with iniquity."

In the popular phrase of orators, our country may be lauded as the land of the free, as the asylum of the oppressed, as enlightened, virtuous and happy; and sanguine and enthusiastic Christians may joyfully celebrate the rapid triumphs of religion, and hail the dawn of the millennial glory already descried, but to our mind their hosannahs are premature, and the indications are more ominous of evil than of good. Look around your dwelling places, and extend your observation to a distance, and you will perceive enough of the aboundings of iniquity to disturb that repose which we fear, has in many instances been induced by the premature and ill-judged congratulations of too sanguine Christians. The work of reform, so far from being completed is scarcely commenced; the harness is to be girded on for the coming contest, and not to be laid aside for the celebration of a victory. Crime awfully abounds in our country, and

its frequent perpetration is characterized by even an increasing spirit of desperateness. The public journals are loaded with its shocking details, which might almost stir up in the mind of the sensitive reader the misanthropic wish for

“ A spot unvisited by human kind  
Where he might lonely live—unnoticed die.”

The criminal calendar is filled with the atrocities of the parricide and fratricide, of murders for revenge, and murders for gain, of suicides and of bloody-minded duellists. Robbers depredate by day and prowl by midnight, and the dark haunts of the libertine and gambler are multiplied. And then again, we have vice somewhat modified at the race-course, the theatre, the tavern, and the ball-room. We are assailed on every hand by the muttered blasphemies of the profane, and repelled by the bloated visage and staggering gait of the drunkard. And widely spread is the influence of infidelity and of doctrines which are not according to God. And almost universal is the love of gain; the absorbing interests of secular business, and the dishonesties of traffic; men hastening to be rich that they may pamper their lusts, and selling their hope of heaven for the pelf of earth. And we have the virulence of party politics, embittering the mind and alienating men from their brethren; and the cupidity for office, and the falsehood and slander which are employed with unsparing profusion, to

blacken the reputation of opponents, that in their ruin, political ascendancy may be secured.

These and similar evils stalk through the land, and instead of decreasing, become in most instances more manifest and spread a pestilential atmosphere around which threatens the health and life of the body politic. Unless these dishonouring features in our national character are effaced, the catastrophe seems inevitable, which will prostrate the best hopes of our best citizens. What method of cure shall be adopted? We repeat it again;—to grapple successfully with a monster so hideous and formidable, we must enter the field armed with the panoply of God. He has indicated the means and secured their efficacy in that single declaration, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” From the simplicity of the mean, it may be derided by the world as the “foolishness of preaching,” but with the promised accompaniment of God’s power, it can make a Felix tremble amidst his sensual indulgences, and shake the purposes of an Agrippa, in his ambitious aspirings.

The preaching of the Gospel, however perverted in particular instances, supposes the employment of men, who are stimulated not by the love of gain, but by the love of souls; men whose benevolent sympathies are deeply enlisted; who are skilful in dealing with human nature, and who in the prosecution of their godlike

enterprise are not readily appalled by difficulty and danger. Let such men be multiplied and sent forth in the spirit of the Apostles, not merely to perform a routine of service, but intent upon the successful accomplishment of their work, and their influence will be felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. They would disturb the repose of stupidity and awaken reflection; they would stir up the slumbering energies of conscience and excite men to inquire for relief from the uneasy consciousness of their unregeneracy; they would alarm transgressors by faithfully delineating their character and their doom; they would spoil the pleasure of sinning by unfolding the bitterness of its fruits; they would persuade men to walk in the dignity and moral beauty becoming their character as candidates for heaven. All this the Gospel can effect and has effected from its first promulgation to the present period. It is clothed with power from on high; it reveals a doctrine suited to the fallen condition of the race; it inculcates a virtue as pure as that practised by the hosts of heaven, and it wields the tremendous retributions of eternity to secure attention and enforce obedience. It is God's device for the reformation and restoration of our race, and any other instrument to effect this will speedily betray its futility. The preaching of the Gospel deals with men's consciences and with their judgments,—with their hopes and their fears,—with their dearest interests for time



and eternity; and although to some it may prove a stumbling block and to others foolishness, yet when rightly directed it is the power of God and the wisdom of God to salvation. Let the means for its extension be commensurate with the necessities of our country, and vice would be frowned into obscurity and the morals of Christianity would become predominant. The Sabbath, now desecrated, would be honoured,—impieties now rife, would cease to awaken the indignation of heaven,—the numerous sins which have been legalized by custom, would be no longer tolerated, and the social relations so often infringed, would become fountains of human happiness. We say all this is within the range of influence of a published Gospel, when extensively, faithfully and perseveringly insisted upon; it therefore must be the favourite and cherished instrument for the promotion of that righteousness which proves a national glory, and for the banishment of that sin which entails national reproach.

And now, my hearers, mark the fact, the increase and efficiency of this instrumentality depend materially upon the right spirit of the church. In answer to her prayers ministers are to be given, and through her contributions they are to be sent forth. In the settled order of providence, the divine blessing is made answerable to the earnest prayers and zealous exertions of his Church. When the people of God are supine, iniquity triumphs, when they are militant

for God, the kingdom of satan totters to its base. Moral reformation therefore will be promoted and spiritual blessings will abound, just in proportion to the spirit with which the Church of Christ pledges her zealous cooperation to him who reigns in Zion. And do you require argument and expostulation to kindle in your bosom the spirit of enterprize in a cause so holy? The cause is full of argument. Look, my brethren, at the necessity of the case. The population of our country is increasing with unprecedented rapidity; irreligion is widely diffusing itself; the facilities of travel have as yet done little but to promote the spirit of worldly traffic, and present inducements for the profanation of the Sabbath; the wicked have innumerable agencies at work to counteract the spread of the Gospel; our large cities are rapidly assimilating themselves to the corrupt capitals of Europe, and are sending forth their unhealthful streams throughout the country; and is there no argument in all this for prompt action on the part of the Christian? Each of you may exert no inconsiderable influence in the application of the remedy. This remedy, as we have remarked, *has* proved effectual, and it has lost none of its virtue in the lapse of time. Compare places enjoying the faithful ministrations of the Gospel with those destitute of these privileges, and the contrast furnished by their respective moral conditions will indicate the necessity of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

And why has not every city and village and countryside experienced more liberally the meliorating influences of the Gospel? Is it not because Christians have been deficient in their duty? And do they not, in refusing to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty, become obnoxious to the charge of countenancing and encouraging the increase of irreligion and crime? Yes, surely. Their neglect to arrest the course of sin proves as subsidiary to the cause of Satan, as would their active participation. The professing Christian may be as guilty of the blood of souls, in refusing to withhold the sinner from the precipice, as if he should lend him an impulse to precipitate his fall. The talent which is suffered to lie idle, incurs as fearful a responsibility, as the talent which is perverted to positive evil. He that would exclaim with Paul, "I am pure from the blood of all men," must, like Paul, be the cordial and active friend of Missions,—he must so love his neighbour as himself as to extend to him that Gospel which has been first borne in upon his own heart in all its purifying and consoling influences. Besides, do you owe no debt of gratitude to God for the very charity which we are inculcating? If Christianity has benefitted you; if it has checked the depravity of your hearts; if it has removed from you the reproach of sin, and exalted you by its righteousness; for these blessings you are indebted to the spirit of missions, which was first kindled in Judea; which sustained the

Apostles in their arduous and perilous journeys among the heathen ; which was caught by their successors and perpetuated, and propagated, until with its accompanying signal of the cross, it passed the boundaries of the seas and gladdened this western continent with its annunciation "peace on earth and good-will towards men." Yes, the principle which Jesus Christ sanctioned when he sent forth his disciples to preach the Gospel, has in the lapse of ages, brought the light of truth and the purity of righteousness to cheer your dwelling places ; and now the maxim which Jesus Christ would enforce on you is, "freely ye have received, freely give,"—and this must ever be the maxim of a heart devoutly grateful to God, and warmed by a diffusive Christian charity.

But if we might strengthen the argument by an appeal to your feelings of self-love, we would point out the possibility, that in the vicissitudes of life, some of you may be compelled to wander far from your present habitations, and from the social converse and privileges of Christian society, to places where the sanctuary of God has no consecrated spot and where the solitude is uncheered by the weekly ministration of God's accredited servants. The supposition is not extravagant, for such are the privations of thousands whose early feet were found with those who went up to the house of God in company. And as they feel, so would you feel in the utterance of the cry "come over and help us." And if parents under

the sound of my voice, may regard such a transition as improbable for themselves, it is surely not improbable for their children. The enterprize of your sons, and the marriage of your daughters, may throw them within the tide of western emigration, and in a brief period they may be found on frontier stations, where Christian institutions are but little known, and where they may soon cease to regret the loss of Gospel privileges, and learn to cast off the fear of God and the thoughts of their soul's welfare, and where they may pass from a life misspent into an undone and despairing eternity. And in the righteous retributions of God, the sad fate of these objects of your dearest attachment, may be traced back to your unchristian supineness, and to the niggardliness of your contributions to the cause of domestic missions. Yes, it may be made to appear to your consternation, that the very wilderness which was solitary and covered with the shadow of death to your children, might, through your Christian exertion, have been made to bud and blossom as the rose.

But even should your immediate families be exempted from an allotment so destitute and perilous to the soul, there are many thousands connected with you by the ties of humanity and country, who in this land of promise, are perishing for lack of knowledge. Yes, there are thousands in the valleys and upon the mountains, in the depths of the forests and on the prairies, who are growing up without religious instruction, and



under the hardening influence of unchecked sin; whose conscience is bound by no moral obligation, and whose actions are uncontrolled by the law of God. And these increasing multitudes if not reclaimed and rendered virtuous by the Gospel, will, in addition to their own spiritual loss, eventually punish our neglect, by sending back upon us as a dreadful recompense, a political influence nurtured in the lap of infidelity, and which in its predominance in our national legislature, will prove alike inimical to morals and religion. This is not the expression of morbid apprehension. The countless population which is yet to fill the western territories is destined to exert a preponderating influence in the national government; and if that influence partake not of the spirit of Christianity, farewell to the fondest hopes for our national weal! Righteousness will not exalt our nation, but sin will be the reproach of the people!

Christian patriotism exclaims, shall the glorious temple of human freedom be preserved? Its foundation has been consecrated by the blood of our forefathers; it has arisen in beautiful and bright proportions under the auspicious smile of God; many eyes gaze upon it with delight, many tongues rapturously pronounce its eulogy; and shall it be perpetuated in unbroken beauty for centuries to come? Let the precepts of the Gospel be inscribed upon its columns, let the votaries who crowd its gates be unstained by crime and awed by the majesty of God, then shall

perpetual sunshine rest upon it, and a mighty providence protect it,—otherwise the bolts of heaven shall shiver its summit and lay bare its foundation. In a cause involving the intellectual respectability, the moral dignity, the political safety, as well as the spiritual interests of our country, who would not feel honoured in being engaged? When God commands and Christ urges our co-operation, who is willing to stand apart? Do we not hear from each individual in this assembly the feeling exclamation, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? If so, it becomes our pleasing privilege to state to you the requirements of God. He requires a portion of your time to be consecrated to this service, in devising and executing liberal plans for the amelioration of the condition of men; he requires the weight of your influence exerted in its appropriate sphere; he requires your prayers, not feebly, but earnestly and importunately, urged at the throne of grace; but these are requirements so obvious, that their suggestion may be sufficient on the present occasion. But in addition to these, God demands a fair proportion of every Christian's property for the furtherance of the Gospel. Prayer for the spread of the Gospel is acceptable and prevalent with God, but it is exclusively the prayer which is sincere and heartfelt: and the only test of sincerity which is to be admitted in this case, is the cheerfulness with which personal sacrifices are encountered. Yet alas, how seldom is this

proof of sincerity furnished! The mass of professing Christians will listen with complacent acquiescence to the demands made on their prayers, but if a draft is contemplated on their purse, their countenance changes, the tone of their feelings is disturbed, and with one consent they begin to make excuse. How glaring their inconsistency! What definite notion can they have of the object for which they pray? Do they imagine that the most High will answer their requests by the interposition of miracles? Do they presume, when it is the settled order of his providence to work through appropriate means, that he will in compliance with their penuriousness, adopt supernatural methods for the diffusion of the Gospel? Ah, believe it, the specious prayer of formal godliness cannot impose on the omniscience of Him who searcheth the heart. On this subject God has already settled the principle, which not only involves the minor charities which concern the body, but the higher charities which relate to the soul. James, speaking in the name of his Master, says: "What doth it profit my brethren though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" And how much, suppose ye, will your prayers prevail with God, if they do not prevail over the selfish feelings of your

own hearts? But not only is the Christian obliged to this duty, but his charity must be in some degree commensurate with the magnitude of the object. Niggardly contributions for the diffusion of the Gospel will prove just as inadequate, as they would if applied to any great worldly enterprize; and yet it would seem from the scantiness of the Christian's offering, as if he really expected a repetition of the miracle, by which the five loaves were multiplied to feed five thousand.

We honour the gifts of the Lord's poor, small as they may be, for they have a peculiar value in the sight of God. The poor widow's mite was commended by Christ because it was the mite of a *poorwidow*. The gift was the utmost exertion of her ability, it was a sacrifice which she felt in her domestic economy, for it was all her living; and therefore it was more estimable in the sight of God as a free will offering, than all the wealth which the rich men cast into the treasury, for they gave of their abundance what they could spare without inconvenience, but she of her penury. Let not then her sacred example be perverted by the rich, who, conscious the while, of the inadequateness of their offerings, are disposed to affix to them the honourable but misapplied appellation of the 'widow's mite.' The mass of Christians must do immeasurably beyond what they have done, before their contributions will bear even a remote resemblance to that honoured offering of humble piety. Under the

Jewish dispensation, individuals contributed to the service of the Lord, in the proportion of a tenth of their income; and in many instances this was done with such scrupulous exactness, that they extended the principle to the herbs of their gardens—they tithed mint, anise, cummin and rue. Now, let me ask, do your religious gifts, upon impartial investigation, amount to this proportion of the means which God has entrusted to you? And why should they not? Can you detect any thing in the spirit of the Gospel dispensation which would justify a less liberal disposition? By all the motives which are derived from Calvary, our obligations to religious charity are multiplied, instead of being diminished. Why should men, and men professing Christianity, expend so much in the gratification of their sensual tastes, and give so grudgingly to God? Is it not because they are carnal? because their spiritual tastes are so sluggish? Men of the world proportion their liberality to the intensity of their interest in a particular project. If great works are to be accomplished, if distant places are to be connected by long lines of canals or rail roads, hundreds of thousands and millions are not wanting for their completion. And why should Christians be less liberal in accomplishing the far greater project of connecting the great interests of eternity with time? Surely the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, and may well condemn the inconsistency of those, between whose professed de-



sires for the diffusion of the Gospel and their efforts, there is so little correspondence. But it may be said, that men of the world are excited to these heavy expenditures by the expectation of a rich return. Be it so; and has the Christian no expectation of interest upon his expenditures? Is the consciousness of having done his duty, no reward? Is the reflection that his benevolent sympathies have led him to benefit and save a suffering humanity, no reward? Is the smile of God's approval no recompense? Has he ever pondered that saying, "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord;" or that promise of Christ in relation to those who make sacrifices for his sake, that they "shall receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting?" Is not this receiving our own with usury? My brethren, no truth is more explicitly taught in the word of God, than the recompense of Christian charity. God loveth a cheerful giver, but he scorns the penurious. "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." In a word, the command of God, whose is the silver and the gold, has been laid upon us, and who will attempt to evade it? The cry of perishing souls has fallen upon our ear, and if we refuse them relief, "how dwelleth the love of God in our heart." We have feebly pleaded the cause of domestic missions; it is the cause of philanthropy, it is the cause of our country, it is the cause of God.

**Lithomount  
Pamphlet  
Binder**  
Gaylord Bros. Inc.  
Makers  
Syracuse, N. Y.  
PAT. JAN 21, 1908



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 124130664