

THE EARTH FILLED WITH THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT BALTIMORE, SEPTEMBER 9, 1835,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING.

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And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

THE practice of confirming a declaration with an *oath*, is of very early origin. And although the multiplication of oaths is a great evil, and the act of taking or administering them with lightness, an aggravated sin; yet *they* are, undoubtedly, in great error who maintain that all swearing, even on the most solemn occasions, and on the call of judicial officers, is unlawful. *An oath for confirmation*, says an inspired Apostle, *is an end of all strife*. Accordingly, in the sacred history, we find many examples of holy men, on various occasions, employing this form of asseveration. But, what is much more decisive still, we find the High and Holy One himself repeatedly adopting it to confirm both his promises and his threatenings. Thus we read, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, *there being no greater, Jehovah sware by himself*; and again, in the same Epistle, it is said, that

God willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. And in the passage before us, the Lord said, As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

These words were spoken on a very distressing, and, to the eye of man, a very discouraging occasion. When the twelve men who had been sent from the wilderness of Paran to spy out the land of promise, brought back their report, the mass of the people were almost overwhelmed with alarm and discouragement. Nay, overcome by apprehension, and infatuated with a spirit of unbelief and rebellion, they proposed to make choice of another leader, and return back to Egypt. With this ungrateful and daring revolt the Lord was greatly displeased, and threatened to give them up to his destroying judgments, and to disinherit them forever. Moses, however, interceded for the people in a most touching strain of importunate prayer : and he prevailed. The Lord said, *I have pardoned them according to thy word. But as truly as I live, the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.* As if he had said—“Unbelieving and rebellious as this people now appear, and utterly desperate as their prospects may seem ;—neither my plans nor my promises, in regard to them or the world, shall be frustrated. My cause shall finally triumph over all the infatuation and rebellion of man. *The whole earth shall, in due time, be filled with my glory.*”

I shall not stop here to inquire, whether the original word here translated “the earth,” is intended to de-

signate the whole earth, in the largest sense of the expression ; or only that land, viz. the whole land of Palestine, to which the people were going. However this may be decided, we know that examples occur in other parts of Scripture, in which the term "earth" is applied in the largest sense, and also connected with a promise that the whole inhabited globe shall one day be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord. In giving the most ample interpretation, then, to the language of our text, we are certain that we do not go beyond the spirit of Holy Scripture.

There are *three* things in the passage before us which demand our notice—THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE WHICH IT CONTAINS ;—THE REASONS WHICH WE HAVE FOR BELIEVING THAT THIS PROMISE WILL, IN DUE TIME, BE REALIZED ;—AND THE DUTY DEVOLVING ON US IN RELATION TO THE PROMISE.

I. Let us attend to THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE BEFORE US. This import, expressed with so much solemnity of asseveration, is large and precious. *As I live*, saith the Lord, *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*

Glory is the manifestation of excellence. The glory of God is that display of his most blessed character and will, which opens the way for his intelligent creatures to know, to love, and to obey him. This glory is exhibited in various ways. It shines in all the works of creation. All the works of God, we are told, praise him. *The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of*

the world. Again, the glory of God is manifested by the works of his providence. Here his wisdom, his power, and his benevolence, gloriously shine. *The Lord*, we are told, *is known*—that is, is made known—*by the judgments which he executeth.* But, above all, is the glory of God displayed in the work of REDEMPTION ; in that great plan of love and mercy by a Redeemer, which was first revealed to the parents of our race immediately after the fall ; which was more and more unfolded in the ceremonial economy ; and which reached its meridian brightness, when the Saviour, the blessed “Sun of Righteousness,” rose upon a dark world. In this wonderful plan of salvation, the glory of God shines with its brightest lustre. Here all his perfections unite and harmonize, and shine with transcendent glory. Now, when the Gospel, which proclaims this plan of mercy, shall be preached and received throughout the world ; when every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue, shall not only be instructed in its sublime doctrines, but also brought under its benign and sanctifying power ; then, with emphatic propriety, may it be said that “the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord.” As the highest glory, of which an individual creature is capable, is to bear the image of his Maker ; so the highest glory of which our world at large is capable, is to be filled with the holy and benevolent spirit of Him *who is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person* ;—is to have the knowledge and love of the Saviour reigning over all the population of our globe, *from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same.*

It is this universal prevalence of the true religion ; that religion which alone can enlighten, sanctify, and

save ; that religion which imparts the highest physical and moral glory, wherever it reigns, and in proportion as it reigns ;—it is the universal prevalence of this glory which is promised in our text. When this holy and benevolent religion shall fill the world, then shall be brought to pass the promise which is here recorded. Yes, when the benign power of the Gospel, and all the graces and virtues which it inspires, shall reign over all the family of man ; when the highest intellectual and moral culture shall be every where enjoyed ; when the voice of prayer and praise shall be heard in every tabernacle ; when the Sabbath shall be universally kept holy to God ; when the Christian law of marriage, that noblest and most precious bond of social purity and happiness, shall be universally and sacredly obeyed ; when the temperance reformation, without any unscriptural extremes, or fanatical perversions, shall pervade the world : when “ wars shall cease to the ends of the earth ; ” when fraud and violence shall be banished from the abodes of men ; when the voice of profaneness shall no more pollute the lips or the ears of creatures claiming to be rational ; when tyranny and oppression, in every form, shall come to an end ; when sectarian feuds and jealousies shall be unknown, save only in the pages of history ; when all heresy and error shall give place to the power of truth, and all vice and profligacy to the reign of Christian purity ; when the Mosque and the Pagoda shall be transformed into temples of the Christian’s God ; when the habitations of savage cruelty shall become the abodes of holiness and peace ; when the activity of a greatly extended commerce shall be directed chiefly to the intellectual and moral culture of society ; when justice, order, industry,

brotherly kindness, and charity shall universally reign;—in a word, when the church of God, with all its choicest influences, shall fill the earth;—then shall the promise before us be gloriously realized. This will be emphatically, “the glory of the Lord;”—the glory of his power; the glory of his holiness; the glory of his love. It will be, in its measure, the same glory which forms the blessedness of the heavenly world; the same glory in which those *whose robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, walk in white raiment before the throne of God*. O how glorious shall this fallen world be, when all the nations which compose it shall be “just, fearing God;” when those who are nominally “the people of God, shall be all righteous;” when every family shall be the abode of purity, order, and love; when every individual shall be a “temple of the Holy Ghost;” and when, from pole to pole, the song of jubilee shall be heard—*Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever! Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!*

Such appears to be the import of the promise before us.—Let us next inquire,

II. WHAT REASON HAVE WE FOR BELIEVING THAT THESE SCENES OF GLORY WILL ONE DAY BE REALIZED? This is, to the Christian’s heart, a most interesting inquiry. Let us ponder it with a seriousness corresponding to its unspeakable importance.

And here it is obvious to remark, that there will be no need of *miracles* (in the ordinary sense of that word) to bring about the accomplishment of the promise before us. Only suppose the genuine power of the Gospel, which we see to reign in thousands of

individuals and families now—actually to reign in all hearts, and to pervade the world,—and the work is done. But how can we hope for this? I answer—

1. First of all, and above all, our hope is founded on JEHOVAH'S FAITHFUL AND UNERRING PROMISE. This is, undoubtedly the chief ground of confidence. For that a religion which has been preached for eighteen centuries, and which has been as yet received, even nominally, by less than a fourth part of mankind, will one day, and, at most, in a century or two from this hour, pervade and govern the world, we can expect with confidence only on the promise of Him who is Almighty, and who cannot lie. But this promise is, surely, enough for the most unwavering confidence. *Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Jehovah is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.* Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of all that has gone out of his mouth shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled.

Let us attend, then, to some of the promises on this subject with which the word of God abounds. Take the following as a small specimen of the "exceeding great and precious" catalogue found in the inspired volume. *The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, Rev. xi. 15. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, Ps. ii. 8. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him, Ps. xxii. 27. From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name*

shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place shall incense be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts, Mal. i. 11. And I will gather all nations and tongues, and cause them to come and see my glory, Isa. lxvi. 18. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it, Isa. ii. 2. His name shall be continued as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed, Ps. lxxii. 17. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God, Isa. xxxv. 1, 2. And the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; and all dominions shall serve and obey him, Dan. vii. 27. He shall say to the North, Give up; and to the South, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, Isa. xliii. 6. His way shall be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations, Ps. lxxvii. 2. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, Isa. xl. 5. Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God, Ps. lxxviii. 31. The isles shall wait for his law, Isa. xlii. 4. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,

Zech. ix. 10. *All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God,* Isa. lii. 10. *We see not yet all things put under him,* Heb. ii. 8. *But he must reign until all enemies shall be put under his feet,* 1 Cor. xv. 25. *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Christ to the glory of God the Father,* Phil. ii. 10, 11. *For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,* Hab. ii. 14.

Such is a specimen of Jehovah's promises respecting the future prevalence and power of the gospel. Read them, Christians, with joy and confidence. Ponder them daily and well in your hearts, as a source of continual encouragement. And remember that they shall all, without failure, be gloriously accomplished. I cannot tell you precisely *when* this happy period shall arrive; but I can tell you, on authority not to be questioned, that, at the appointed time, this earth, so long the abode of sin and sorrow, shall be restored from its desolations, and made to bloom like "the garden of the Lord." I can tell you that her Almighty King will yet, notwithstanding every unfavorable appearance, *make Zion beautiful through his own comeliness put upon her*; that he will yet *cause her righteousness to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth*, Isa. lxii. 1. These promises may not, indeed, be all fully accomplished, until we, who now listen to their recital, shall be all sleeping in the dust; or, rather, if by the grace of God, we be made meet for it,—rejoicing before the throne, in possession of still brighter glory. But, "though we die, God shall surely visit his people" in mercy. Though neither we, nor even the next generation shall be permitted

to witness on earth the complete developement of “the latter day glory;” yet let us rejoice in the assurance that it will come in due time, and in all its promised blessedness. *The vision is yet for an appointed time; but in the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry,* Hab. ii. 3.

2. But further, our confidence that the religion of Christ will, one day, fill the whole earth with its glory, is confirmed by the consideration, that THIS RELIGION IS, IN ITS NATURE, ADAPTED ABOVE ALL OTHERS TO BE A UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

In all the forms of false religion with which our world is filled, there is something which renders them unfit or impracticable for universal adoption. Some are adapted to particular *climates* only; others to particular states of *society*; a third class to particular *orders* of men; so that, in their very nature, they cannot be universal. Indeed none of the Pagans seem ever to have thought of a universal religion, as either to be expected or desired. Nay, even the true religion, as it appeared in its infant and ceremonial form, under the old economy, was not, in its external method of dispensation, adapted to be universal. For, not to mention many other circumstances, it required all its professors to go up “three times a year” to the same temple to worship. And, accordingly, long before the Messiah came in the flesh, it was made perfectly apparent, from so many of the descendants of Abraham being scattered abroad in different and distant parts of the world, that it was becoming, to the Jewish people, as such, an impracticable system. Suppose all the four quarters of our globe to be filled with zealous, devoted Jews. Every one

sees that a rigid compliance with their ritual would be physically impossible. And, therefore, when the time for *Shiloh's* appearance drew near, it became, every year, more and more plain,—however slow some of that “peculiar people” were in learning the lesson,—that the ceremonial economy *must* come to an end;—must, of course, yield to a system less restrictive in its character, and more fitted for “every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue.”

Accordingly, when we examine the religion of Jesus Christ, in its New Testament form, we find it divested of every feature and circumstance adapted to confine it to any particular territory or people. Its *doctrines*, its *worship*, and its system of *moral duty*, are all equally adapted to universality. It teaches that *God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth*, Acts xvii. 26.—*That he is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him*, Acts x. 34, 35.—That he is alike related to all the children of men, as their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; and that the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the monarch and the slave, all stand upon a level in his sight, and have all equal access, if penitent and believing, to the throne of his heavenly grace. It proclaims one method of justification for all classes of men; one kind of preparation for heaven; and that not ceremonial, but moral and spiritual; and one great code of moral duty, equally applicable to the learned and the ignorant, the polished and the rude, the civilized and the savage. And as all the great doctrines and principles of the religion of Christ are equally adapted to the whole human family; so the rational and benevolent laws,

the unostentatious rites, the simple worship, and the whole spirit and requirements of this religion, are no less adapted to be universally received as the religion of the whole race of man. It has nothing local; nothing national; nothing exclusive, except its uncompromising holiness; no burdensome ritual; no tedious or expensive pilgrimages; no blazing altars; no bloody sacrifices; no intricate genealogies; no special adaptedness to any particular form of civil government, or occupation in life. In short, every thing in this blessed religion;—the simple costume which it wears; the heavenly spirit which it breathes; its law of marriage; its holy Sabbath; its meekness, forgiveness, humility, and benevolence; applying alike to all classes of men, and to all states of society;—proclaim that it is suited to the condition of man, in all nations and ages; to meet the exigencies of all; to supply their wants; to refine and invigorate their talents; to elevate their character; and to unite all who receive it, into one sanctified and happy brotherhood. Surely this character of our holy religion is adapted to confirm our confidence that it will, one day, as Jehovah has promised, gloriously fill the world; and that, literally, in Christ, “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

3. I have only to add, under this head, THAT THE PRESENT ASPECT OF THE WORLD FURNISHES MUCH REASON TO HOPE THAT THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PROMISE IS DRAWING NIGH.

It cannot be denied, indeed, that, on the principles of worldly calculation, there is much in the present condition of mankind to distress and dishearten. More than *seven parts out of eight* of the whole population of our globe, are still sunk in deplorable dark-

ness and corruption. Of the eight hundred millions of immortal souls, which the earth is supposed to contain, only about *sixty*, or, at most, *seventy millions* are nominally Protestants. The great mass of the remaining *seven hundred and forty millions*, are either Pagans or Mohammedans, or nearly as destitute as either, of saving, evangelical light. Of these sixty or seventy millions of nominal Protestants, only about a third part, or a little more than twenty millions, can be said to have the real gospel of Christ, in any thing like its purity, so much as preached among them. Of those, which, in a large sense of the word, we may call *evangelical* congregations, probably not more than one half, or *twelve millions*, are even professors of religion, in any distinct or intelligent import of the terms. That is, of the *eight hundred millions* of the world's population, but little more than an EIGHTIETH PART ARE EVEN PROFESSORS OF RELIGION, in any scriptural form, or claim to know any thing of its sanctifying power. How many of these professors of religion we may calculate upon as probably real Christians—ah!—that is a question on which the humble, enlightened believer, though he may hesitate and weep, will forbear to attempt an estimate!

Such is, confessedly, at present, the dark and distressing state of the great mass of our world's population. To what a lamentably small extent is that "glory," of which our text speaks, found to reign among our fellow men! What a little remnant, among all the multiplied millions of mankind, have any adequate or saving knowledge of the religion of Christ! O what a moral charnel-house does our world appear! What a valley of "dry bones!—exceeding dry!" "Can these dry bones live?" Yes, they shall live!

The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And even now, amidst the darkness and misery which brood over the greater part of the earth, there are appearances, every where, which promise the approach of better days. It is but a short time since a large part of the inhabited globe was absolutely closed against the missionaries of the cross. Ten or fifteen years ago, Egypt, Arabia, Persia, China, the Burman Empire, and a large part of Africa and her islands;—in short, by far the greater portion of the Pagan and Mohammedan world, were rigorously shut against the Gospel. Missionaries could not so much as enter those countries, without incurring either certain death, or the most immediate risk of it. But now it may be said, without exaggeration, that the whole world is opened wide to the bearers of the Gospel message. I know not that there is, at this hour, a single portion of the globe, to which the enlightened and prudent missionary may not obtain some degree of access,—unless it be some portions which bear the Christian name, but are under the spiritual despotism of “the man of sin, the son of perdition, who exalteth himself against all that is called God.” He who “sits as Governor among the nations,” seems to be spreading a *natural preparation*, if I may so express it, around the world, for the preaching of the Gospel among all nations. He seems to be slowly and silently laying a train for mighty movements in time to come. He seems to be showing us how easy it is for him to incline the hearts even of his enemies—from worldly motives—not merely to *permit* the Gospel to enter their territories, but to *invite* its ministers to come in and proclaim their message. Never before was so large a portion of mankind accessible

to the evangelical laborer. Never before was there so much evidence that the most massive fabrics of superstition are crumbling to the dust, and ready to give place to a more pure and rational system. Never before were there so many appearances which promise the fulfilment of that prediction, that “nations shall be born in a day.” It is believed by some that there are at this moment, in the city of Calcutta, several thousands of young Hindoos, who are disposed seriously to inquire on the subject of salvation, and by no means indisposed to exchange their miserable superstition for a better form of religion. Only suppose such a body of young men prepared by the grace of God, and going forth in the spirit and power of Christ into every part of Hindoostan, and how might that deplorable moral wilderness be transformed into a fertile and delightful garden of the Lord! How might a thousand Asiatic deserts be made speedily to “rejoice and blossom as the rose!” What say you, my Christian friends, to appearances and opportunities such as these? O ye who profess to know something of the sweetness of redeeming love, and the preciousness of Christian hopes, shall we be blind to these wonderful openings of Providence? Shall we be deaf to these importunate invitations to enlighten and save perishing men?

Contemplate, further, the singular progress of various forms of improvement throughout the civilized world; all of which may be considered as bearing on the great promise contained in our text. Behold the *intercourse* between distant portions of the globe increasing every day with a rapidity, and to an extent, beyond all former precedent! Think of the endless improvements in the means of *conveyance* from one

part of the world to another ; thereby investing missionary enterprises with facilities for carrying on their operations unknown to our fathers. Consider the wonderful improvements in the art of *printing*, and indeed in all the mechanic arts, rendering the multiplication of bibles, and other pious writings, for the benefit of the world, practicable and easy to an extent formerly thought incredible. Contemplate the extension of *commercial enterprise*, which late years have produced, presenting the means of benefiting mankind to an amount altogether new and extraordinary. Think of the enlargement of our acquaintance with the different *languages* of the globe ; it being probable that ten persons, if not twenty, now understand other living languages than their own, where one had this knowledge fifty years ago. Think of the Bible having been translated into more than one hundred and fifty languages at this hour spoken among men ; and of the process of preparing the Scriptures for circulation in every part of the globe, still going on with increasing rapidity. And dwell, for a moment, on what is no less remarkable—the *progress of public sentiment* in regard to the conversion of the world to God. What, ten years ago, would have been thought the extravagance of visionary dreaming, in regard to this great enterprise, is now looked at, and talked about, with a grave familiarity and confidence which it is delightful to contemplate. It is less than ten years since a proposal from a warm-hearted Christian in the State of New-York, to supply the destitute of one populous *county* with Bibles, was regarded as a bold attempt, and received with thrilling interest. Not many months afterwards, the young men of the college at Princeton, resolved,

with a moral daring which was then almost ridiculed as presumptuous, to attempt to supply the destitute of the whole State of New Jersey with Bibles in two years. Yet bold, and almost hopeless as this pledge appeared at the time of its adoption, it was, substantially, and with wonderfully apparent ease, redeemed. Hardly was this accomplished, before a resolution was adopted to attempt the supply of the destitute in the *whole United States* with Bibles within a specified time. For this resolution, when adopted, many even of the warmest friends of the Bible cause, were not prepared ; but feared it would prove a presumptuous and abortive undertaking. Yet, as far as any thing of the kind is practicable in such a country as this, it was faithfully and happily accomplished. But scarcely was this done, when the enlarged spirit of public benevolence—still augmenting in a geometrical ratio, called for a still wider and nobler field of pious effort. To supply *all the accessible portions of the whole world* with the word of life, within a specified time, was the sublime enterprise proposed to the American Bible Society, and to other Bible Societies in our own and foreign lands. A like rapid increase has been observable in the means furnished by public liberality, for carrying on the great enterprises of Christian benevolence which distinguish and adorn our age. They are, in all, from thirty to fifty fold, and in some more than a hundred fold, beyond what they were a quarter of a century ago. Now, in regard to all these, and other striking analogous facts, I ask, my friends, how shall we account for this *astonishing progress of public sentiment* in regard to plans for the conversion of the world to God ? Can we possibly consider it as merely accidental, and

without meaning? Surely such a conclusion would be as much opposed to reason as to piety. May we not rather consider it as a precious omen, that the great work which it contemplates is happily drawing near, and will, before long, be gloriously realized?

And to me, it appears worthy of special notice, that there are so many indications that the *English language*,—the language of those parts of the world which are most favored with Gospel light, will probably, ere long, become *the prevailing language of the whole world*. The extensive and rapid progress of this language on the American continent; in all the British possessions and dependencies in the Eastern world; in the continent of New Holland; in many of the Islands of the Sea; and, in short, in every part of the earth where American or British missionaries are permitted to lift up their voice for Christ, is truly one of the most striking and interesting spectacles now passing before the contemplative mind. If the time should ever again recur, when the “whole earth shall be of one language and one speech,” the *English*, I am persuaded, is more likely to be that language than any other. And may we not consider its gradual and remarkable extension as one of the means by which the “earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord?”

While we contemplate some of those prominent features in the aspect of the present day, which seem to portend an unexampled spread of the Gospel;—we ought not to overlook some shades in the picture which certainly wear a very different appearance. Infidelity and heresy were, probably, never more busy in circulating their virulent poison, than at the present

hour. Principles at war with all social stability and order, were, perhaps, never more widely extended in civilized society: and in both the civil and religious community, the ebullitions of morbid excitement have never been more threatening in their appearance. That there is a *great battle* yet to be fought with these opposing powers, no reflecting mind can for a moment doubt. How violent or long continued the conflict may be, I presume not to calculate. But let no man's heart fail him on account of these approaching struggles. A little before the advent of the Messiah, it was said, *I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill my house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.* And, in like manner, may we not hope that all the corruption in principle, and all the morbid feverishness in practice, which exhibit so revolting an aspect at the present time, may result, like many a process in the natural world, in which the animal body is renovated and strengthened by the consequences of a subdued fever; and in which the gradual and complete subsidence of feculent matter is hastened even by the violent agitation of an impure fluid? It is no new thing either for infidelity or fanaticism to furnish an antidote to its own poison, by disclosing the malignity of its virus, in the deadliness of its effects; and thus creating an extensive and permanent loathing of those moral potions which allure but to destroy. Many are "running to and fro;" but my hope is, that "knowledge will be thereby increased;" and that the present febrile state of the social body, will soon terminate, under the control of Him who is able to bring good out of evil,—in more firm and established moral health; and in more widely extended, and better

directed efforts than ever, for promoting the universal reign of knowledge, religion, and happiness among men. It remains that we

III. Inquire, WHAT IS OUR PRESENT DUTY IN RELATION TO THE PROMISE BEFORE US? And here,

1. Undoubtedly, our *first* duty is to *believe the promise*. This is the very least that can be demanded. Unbelief “makes God a liar;” poisons the very fountain of Christian confidence; cuts the nerves of all spiritual exertion; and tends to discouragement and despondency. To what purpose has Jehovah promised, if even his own people will not hear and believe? We may say now, I fear, to the great majority of those who bear the Christian name, as the Master himself said to the desponding disciples on their way to Emmaus—*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!* Ah, my friends, the lack of faith is the great, crying sin, not of an ungodly world only, but eminently of Christians. It is the littleness of our faith which makes us dwarfs in spiritual stature; cowards in conflict and in enterprise; narrow-minded in our views and plans of duty; and niggards in sacrifice and in contribution to the cause of Christ. Yes, it is the sin and the misery even of the sincere disciples of Christ, that the promises of God have so little daily influence on their practical habits. Christians! be afraid of unbelief; be ashamed of unbelief; only believe, and act as if you believed; and you shall see the salvation of God.

2. Another duty incumbent upon us in relation to this promise, is to *labor and pray without ceasing for its accomplishment*. They are undoubtedly guilty of an unwise and criminal perversion of God’s word,

who infer, because he has promised a specific and rich blessing, and will certainly bring it to pass, that *therefore* they may repose in a state of entire inaction and unconcern respecting the event. There is no piety, my friends, in that confidence which neglects *prayer*, and which does not add to prayer *diligent effort* to attain that for which it prays. *Show me thy faith by thy works*, is a maxim equally of reason and revelation. God's kingdom is a kingdom of means. He never did, and probably never will, convey the light of the Gospel to any people, by direct miracle; but by the agency of man. He "will be inquired of," he declares, by us—to accomplish even that which he hath promised, and which he fully intends to bring about. And although he is able to effect all his purposes of mercy and salvation without the instrumentality of man's labors, yet he condescends in all cases to employ them. And is it not a mercy that he *does* require and employ them? Does not every reflecting man perceive that it is a wise and benign arrangement of Providence which renders constant activity of body and mind indispensable to the highest physical, intellectual, and moral enjoyment? And can any one doubt that it is an equally wise and merciful arrangement which makes it our duty to pray, and exert ourselves without ceasing to promote the reign of salvation throughout the world? Not only is it certain that the great King of Zion has commanded us to send the Gospel to every creature: not only is it manifest that we may properly estimate our Christian character by the degree in which we take an active interest in the conversion of the world; but it is equally plain, that every fervent prayer we offer, and every sincere effort we make for hastening

this great consummation, has a tendency to benefit our own souls, as well as the souls of others; to increase our faith; to inflame our love; to enlarge our vision; in a word, to make us more like Christ, and to impart a richer preparation for the holy joys of his presence. In short, we may say of him who is much employed in fervent prayer, and in diligent labor and sacrifice for the conversion of the world to God,—that he is *twice blessed*; blessed as a benefactor of his fellow men, and as the receiver of a blessing, by the very act of conferring benefits on others.

3. A third duty, in relation to the promise in our text, is, that in laboring for the spread of the gospel, *no adverse occurrence, however painful, ought ever to discourage us, or at all to weaken either our confidence, or our efforts.* What could be more discouraging than the state of the visible church when the promise before us was given? Yet the promise itself really prohibited all despondency. If, indeed, we had any thing short of Jehovah's promise to rely upon, when difficulties or disappointments arose, we might despond. But *with* that promise, we may meet the most distressing difficulties without fear. What though some of our fondest hopes and plans are frustrated? What though some of those instruments on which the highest confidence was placed, unexpectedly fail? What though the lamented *Evarts*, and *Cornelius*, and *Wisner*, follow each other in quick succession, to their eternal reward, and leave us to mourn over the sore bereavement of the missionary cause? What though one beloved brother and sister after another falls, in the flower of life, and on the fields whitening to the harvest? What though even the hand of

of savage violence be permitted to cut down young, zealous and promising heralds of salvation, when just about to present the glorious Gospel to their merciless murderers? Our tears may flow over bereavements such as these. They ought to flow. But let no thought of discouragement arise. Frail instruments may die; but the "Captain of Salvation" lives. Is the military commander disheartened, when, in the shock of battle, some of his choicest subalterns fall around him? Not if he has the heart of a soldier. And shall the "good soldier of Jesus Christ" have less courage? In fact, every adverse occurrence ought only to constrain us to turn our confidence from the creature, and to place it more firmly and entirely on the Lord of all creatures. Tell us not, then, of the difficulties which beset our enterprise for the conversion of the world. Tell us not, that, going on as the Christian church has done for eighteen centuries, it will take thousands of ages completely to evangelize all nations; or rather, that, at that rate of progress, there is little hope that the work can ever be accomplished. We know it all. And if our dependence were on the wisdom and power of man, we might abandon all hope. But in the name and strength of Jehovah, our covenant God, who can never fail or grow weary, we may go forward with confidence, in the face of every difficulty; intimidated by no danger; disheartened by no disappointment or adverse occurrence. Nay, how often has it happened that those events, which we considered as deeply calamitous, and over which we mourned, as greatly hindering the Gospel,—have resulted in its signal and extensive furtherance! When Stephen, the first

martyr, was stoned to death by an infuriated mob, to whom he came with a message of love, “devout men,” we are told, “*carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.*” But, mark the event! That persecution, though not so intended by the persecutors, became the means of sending many ministers of the Gospel away from Jerusalem, in various directions, and thus of extending and building up the church of God, instead of effecting its destruction, as the malignant adversary had confidently expected.

4. A further duty, in reference to the promise before us, is, that we *pray without ceasing for the power of the Holy Spirit*, to render all the means which are employed for its accomplishment, effectual. When we recollect the extent and difficulty of the work to be done: how many millions are yet in darkness and misery: how hard and full of enmity the human heart; and how obstinately the warnings and entreaties of mercy have been resisted; we may well despair of human wisdom and strength; and look to Almighty power alone for success. *It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit*, saith Jehovah, that means are attended with a saving energy. Had we millions of the most learned, eloquent, and holy preachers in Christendom to send forth, and all the funds that could be asked or desired for this enterprise;—all would be in vain, unless the power of the Almighty Spirit went along with the laborers. While, therefore, we labor with unwearied perseverance for the conversion of the world; while we raise funds with growing liberality; while we select, instruct, and send forth the most able and

devoted missionaries that we can find, and while we employ all the means in our power for imparting the Gospel to every creature; let us remember, that all will be unavailing, unless the Holy Spirit accompany and give efficacy to the means employed. Let every thing pertaining to the spread of the Gospel, be done under the deep impression, that, in our own strength we can effect nothing; that as the promise is Jehovah's word, so the accomplishment of it is Jehovah's work; that to *Him*, of course, for bringing to pass what he has promised, every eye and every heart ought to be directed. And allow me, my beloved friends, to say, we are never likely to be either so happy, or so successful in any enterprise for extending the Redeemer's kingdom, as when we lie in the dust of abasement, sensible of our utter inability to command, by our own power, the least portion of the blessing which we seek; and placing all our dependence for success, at every step, on the Holy Spirit's life-giving energy. And I must also be allowed to say, that, in my own view, this doctrine, viz. *that success is all of God*, instead of being a legitimate source of discouragement, is, while it humbles, at the same time, one of the most comforting and animating of all doctrines. For though it be most true, that *he who planteth is nothing, and he who watereth is nothing—but God that giveth the increase*;—it is also equally true, that all hearts are in his hands, and that he is able to turn the most blind and hardened to himself, *as the rivers of waters are turned*. O, it is sweet to the believing heart, to lean on God; to plead his promises; and to rejoice in the assurance,

that, though man cannot do it, by reason of weakness, He, “with whom all things are possible,” and who “cannot lie,” hath promised that the whole “earth shall be filled with his glory ;” and that He is at once able and faithful to bring it to pass.

5. Finally ; if so great a work as evangelizing THE WHOLE WORLD, is promised, and is certainly to be accomplished, *then our plans and efforts for promoting this object ought to bear a corresponding character* : that is, they ought to be *large, liberal, and ever expanding*. We ought to consider it as our duty to devote to this object our utmost resources, and to engage the co-operation of all, over whom we can exert an influence.

The promise of God to his people is, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*. It is spoken of in various passages of Scripture, as an excellence in Christian character, that the *heart be enlarged* ;—that is, filled with large affections, large desires, large hopes, and large confidence. Never were Scriptures more applicable than these to the case before us. When we direct our attention to the spread of the Gospel, our views, our prayers, our efforts, are all too stinted and narrow. We scarcely ever lift our eyes to the real grandeur and claims of the enterprise in which we profess to be engaged. We are too apt to be satisfied with small and occasional contributions of service to this greatest of all causes, instead of devoting to it hearts truly enlarged ; instead of desiring great things ; expecting great things ; praying for great things ; and nurturing in our spirits that holy elevation of sentiment and affection, which embraces

in its desires and prayers the entire kingdom of God ; and which can be satisfied with nothing short of the “whole earth being filled with the glory of the Lord.”

We now and then meet with a professing Christian who really does seem to regard the kingdom of Christ—its enlargement and glory—as the greatest interest in the universe ; and who does seem to desire unfeignedly to consecrate all that he has and is to promote its progress. But, Oh, how small is the number of those who manifest this spirit ! My dear friends, the number of such must greatly increase, before the church at large can be expected to *rise from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments*. The whole style of Christian character—if I may be allowed the expression—must become, generally, more decided ; more active ; more unreservedly devoted ;—more abundant and fervent in prayer ; more enlarged and liberal in the system of giving—*far more*, before the spread of the Gospel can correspond with the divine promises ; before it is possible that our raised expectations with respect to the conversion of the world can ever be realized. Yes, life and power must be greatly increased *within the church*, before her *power on the world* can be widely extended and triumphantly glorious. Professing Christians must be seen to be really in earnest in their faith and hope, before they can be expected to make a deep impression on the impenitent around them. We often come to you, Christian brethren, soliciting your pecuniary aid, in bearing the Gospel and its heralds to the ends of the earth. And, truly, without this aid, we cannot carry on our benevolent operations for a single

day. But, after all, we are much more anxious to see your souls swelling with holy love, and holy zeal, and holy activity; because we know that *this* indicates more deep and enlarged spiritual advancement; and because it is a pledge, not of a mere fitful gush of liberality; but of a perennial stream of Christian bounty, flowing from love to the infinitely precious cause.

This character was once much more common, than it is at the present day. How ought we at once to be humbled and animated, when we read the history of the *primitive Christians*! Many of them literally and cheerfully gave up all for Christ. Contemplate, my beloved friends,—contemplate the affecting narrative! Ah! how they labored, and denied themselves, and made sacrifices, and gave their substance—sometimes to the last farthing—for the cause of Christ. See them “counting all things but loss,” and even cheerfully going to the stake, when the Saviour’s honor required it. Read this narrative, professing Christians, and then say, whether those who feel reluctant to give the price even of a few luxurious dinners for promoting the Redeemer’s kingdom, can seriously believe that they are actuated by the same spirit with those devoted disciples?

But how ought we to be still more deeply humbled and animated, when we call to mind what our blessed Saviour has done for us! I have sometimes heard professing Christians talk of doing and giving as much toward the spread of the glorious Gospel, “as they *conveniently* could.” Surely this is wonderful language for the professed followers of a crucified Redeemer! Did our blessed Master do no more for

us than he “*conveniently could?*” Did He not give *his life* for our redemption? Did He not, in offering up himself a sacrifice, that we might not die, yield himself to sufferings unparalleled and indescribable? Shall not every one, then, who calls himself by the name of Christ, make the language of Paul, in all its force and tenderness, his own?—*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.*

Lift up your eyes, Christian brethren, on the unnumbered millions of our globe, sunk in ignorance, pollution, and misery! Think of their condition: a condition in which *you* must have been at this hour, had it not been for the wonderful grace of God. Contrast with that condition your own mercies and privileges, and then ask, whether you ought not to feel for those who are thus miserable, and try to help them? Christians! can you enjoy your bibles, your Sabbaths, your sanctuaries, your sacramental tables, and all your precious privileges and hopes *alone*? Can you enjoy these hallowed scenes, and heavenly gifts, and know their value, and yet slumber in ignoble indolence over the moral desolations of those who are perishing for lack of them? Can you calmly sit by, and see million after million of treasure cheerfully expended in amusement, luxury, and sin; and only a few stunted thousands devoted to the greatest, best work of enlightening and saving the world? O whither has the spirit of the Bible fled?

May He who gave the Bible, and the promise before us, restore it in his time !

Let us, then, with one accord, rouse ourselves, and endeavor to rouse others to new zeal, and larger enterprise in spreading the knowledge and glory of the Lord. Every heart, every tongue, and every hand, that can be stirred up to engage in this great work, from infancy to old age, is needed. And remember that the more thoroughly any of the children of men can be excited and consecrated to this work—the richer the benefit they gain for themselves. Christian brother! Christian sister! whoever you are, in this large assembly!—you have each, respectively, a duty to perform in reference to this mighty work. It is incumbent upon you to do *all in your power* for sending the light of life to the benighted and the perishing. Nay, upon every human being, whether in the church or out of it, there lies an obligation to aid, as far as God gives the opportunity, in sending to “every creature” that gospel which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” We invite you all, my hearers, not merely to the *duty*, but to the *precious privilege*, of co-operating in this holy and blessed enterprise. And we can venture to assure you, that, if the day should ever come, in which your hearts shall be thoroughly imbued with the *spirit of missions*, it will be the happiest period of your lives; as well as the pledge and the dawn of that wide-spread glory, which our text proclaims as certain and approaching. We can point you to no higher honor, no richer pleasure on this side of heaven, than that which is found in enlightened, zealous, active, absorbing zeal

for spreading the holy, life-giving religion of Jesus Christ from the rising to the setting sun.

For the promotion of this work, my friends, the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" has convened in this place. Our hope in coming together is, that we may be enabled, by the grace of God, to excite each other to more lively sensibility, and more ardent zeal, in the great Missionary cause which we have associated to carry on; and also, that we may be instrumental in adding something to the missionary spirit which we hope already exists in the enlightened and favored population of this city. We are now celebrating the *twenty-sixth* anniversary of our Board: and, instead of being weary of our work, we can sincerely declare, that in looking back on our past course, our only regret is, that we have not labored with far more diligence and sanctified ardor in the cause of the world's conversion; that our plans have not been more enlarged; and that we have not prayed more, and done more in this greatest of all causes in which Christians can engage. Yes, brethren, beloved of the Lord, we come to mingle our vows with yours, to proclaim with deeper conviction than ever, that we consider the cause of missions as the most precious cause in the world; and to bind ourselves by new resolutions, that we will, by the help of God, with greater zeal than heretofore, "spend and be spent" in this most blessed service. What more worthy object can we seek, than contributing to fill the earth with the glory of the Lord? Brethren, pray for us, that we may be faithful to our sacred trust. Pray for yourselves, that you may not be found wanting

in the payment of that mighty debt, you owe to your Divine Master, and to a perishing world. And let us all, more and more, aspire to the honor of being "workers together with God" in hastening the triumphs of Immanuel's universal reign. *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; and let the whole earth be filled with thy glory!* Amen! and Amen!