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## →\*SERMONS\*←

### THE MISCHIEF OF A FRACTIONAL ORTHODOXY—THE WORTH OF AN INTEGRAL ORTHODOXY.

Dedicatory Address delivered by Rev. JOSEPH COOK at the New England Congregational Church, Saratoga Springs, N. Y., Sunday, August 19th, 1883.\*

*Follow me.*—MATT. iv., 19.

It is the business of the Church to echo God. We are here to-day to dedicate this house to that inconceivably high and holy service.

My topic is, The Mischief of a Fractional Orthodoxy—the Worth of an Integral Orthodoxy. An echo is not divisive of the voice it represents. It has no selective, self-assertive power. And so the Church ought to tell not only the truth, and nothing but the truth, but the whole truth concerning religion.

The axis of orthodoxy is the proposition that God's opinions ought to be ours. The tendency of all heresy is to assume that man's opinions ought to govern God. The poet Goethe in his early life was blasphemous enough to affirm that he had something to forgive even in God. His moral shallowness at this period of his career is typical of much of the liberalistic scepticism of our age. "I had believed from my youth upwards," writes Goethe in his autobiography (eight book ), "that I stood on very good terms with my God; nay, I even fancied to myself, according to various experiences, that He might even be in arrears to me; and I was daring enough to think that I had something to forgive Him. This presumption was grounded on my infinite good will, to which, as it seemed to me, He should have given better assistance." God's good-will toward creation did not seem to be as great as

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## HARVEST HOME.

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*My Father is the Husbandman.*—JOHN XV., I.

WE were nearly all of us born in the country. So we all understand rustic allusions. The Bible is full of them. In Christ's sermon on the Mount you see the full-blown lilies and the glossy back of the crow's wing as it flies over Mount Olivet. David and John, Paul and Isaiah, find in country life a source of frequent illustrations, while Christ in the text takes the responsibility of calling God a farmer, declaring: "My Father is the Husbandman."

Noah was the first farmer. We say nothing about Cain, the tiller of the soil. Adam was a gardener on a large scale, but to Noah was given all the acres of the earth. Elisha was an agriculturist, not culturing a ten-acre lot, for we find him ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen.

All classes of people were expected to culture ground except ministers of religion. It was supposed that they would have their time entirely occupied with their own profession.

They were not small crops raised in those times, for though the arts were rude, the plough turned up very rich soil, and barley, and cotton, and flax, and all kinds of grain came up at the call of the harvesters. Pliny tells of one stalk of grain that had on it between three and four hundred ears. The rivers and the brooks, through artificial channels, were brought down to the roots of the corn, and to this habit of turning a river wherever it was wanted Solomon refers when he says: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and He turneth it as the rivers of water are turned, whithersoever He will."

The wild beasts were caught, and then a hook was put into their nose, and then they were led over the field, and to that God refers when he says to wicked Sennacherib: "I will put a hook in thy nose and I will bring thee back by the way which thou camest." And God has a hook in every bad man's nose, whether it be Nebuchadnezzar or Ahab or Herod. He may think himself very independent, but sometime in his life or in the hour of his death he will find that the Lord Almighty has a hook in his nose.

This was the rule in regard to the culture of the ground: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together," illustrating the folly of ever putting intelligent and useful and pliable men in association with the stubborn and unmanageable. The vast majority of troubles in the churches and in reformatory institutions comes from the disregard of this command of the Lord: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together."

There were large amounts of property invested in cattle. The Moabites paid 100,000 sheep as an annual tax. Job had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels,

500 yoke of oxen. The time of vintage was ushered in with mirth and music. The clusters of the vine were put into the wine-press, and then five men would get into the press and trample out the juice from the grape until their garments were saturated with the wine and had become the emblems of slaughter. Christ Himself, wounded until covered with the blood of crucifixion, making use of this allusion when the question was asked: "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel and Thy garments like one who treadeth the wine vat?" He responded: "I have trodden the wine-press alone."

In all ages there has been great honor paid to agriculture. Seven-eighths of the people in every country are disciples of the plough. A government is strong in proportion as it is supported by an athletic and industrious yeomanry. So long ago as before the fall of Carthage, Strabo wrote twenty-eight books on agriculture; Hesiod wrote a poem on the same subject—"The Weeks and Days." Cato was prouder of his work on husbandry than of all his military conquests. But I must not be tempted into a discussion of agricultural conquests. Standing amid the harvests and vineyards of the Bible, and standing amid the harvests and orchards and vineyards of our own country—larger harvests than have ever before been gathered—I want to run out the analogy between the production of crops and the growth of grace in the soul—all these sacred writers making use of that analogy.

I. In the first place, I remark, in grace, as in the fields, there must be a *plough*. That which theologians call conviction is only the ploughshare turning up the sins that have been rooted and matted in the soul. A farmer said to his indolent son: "There are a hundred dollars buried deep in that field." The son went to work and ploughed the field from fence to fence, and he ploughed it very deep, and then complained that he had not found the money; but when the crop had been gathered and sold for a hundred dollars more than any previous year, then the young man took the hint as to what his father meant when he said there were a hundred dollars buried down in that field. Deep ploughing for a crop. Deep ploughing for a soul. He who makes light of sin will never amount to anything in the Church or in the world. If a man speaks of sin as though it were an inaccuracy or a mistake, instead of the loathsome, abominable, consuming and damning thing that God hates, that man will never yield a harvest of usefulness.

When I was a boy I ploughed a field with a team of spirited horses. I ploughed it very quickly. Once in a while I passed over some of the sod without turning it, but I did not jerk back the plough with its rattling devices. I thought it made no difference. After awhile my father came along and said: "Why, this will never do; this isn't ploughed deep enough; there you have missed this and you have missed that." And he ploughed it over again. The difficulty with a great many people is that they are only scratched with conviction when the subsoil plough of God's truth ought to be put in up to the beam.

My word to all Sabbath-school teachers, to all parents, to all Christian workers—**PLOUGH DEEP! PLOUGH DEEP!**

And if in your own personal experience you are apt to take a lenient view of the sinful side of your nature, put down into your soul the Ten Commandments, which reveal the holiness of God, and that sharp and glittering coulter will turn up your soul to the deepest depths. If a man preaches to you that you are only a little out of order by reason of sin and that you need only a little fixing up, he deceives. You have suffered an appalling injury by reason of sin. There are quick poisons and slow poisons, but the druggist could give you one drop that would kill the body. And sin is like that drug; so virulent, so poisonous, so fatal, that one drop is enough to kill the soul.

Deep ploughing for a crop. Deep ploughing for a soul. Broken heart or no religion. Broken soil or no harvest. Why was it that David and the jailer and the publican and Paul made such ado about their sins. Had they lost their senses? No. The ploughshare struck them. Conviction turned up a great many things that were forgotten. As a farmer ploughing sometimes turns up the skeleton of a man or the anatomy of a monster long ago buried, so the ploughshare of conviction turns up the ghastly skeletons of sins long ago entombed. Geologists never brought up from the depths of the mountain mightier ichthyosaurus or megatherium.

But what means all this crooked ploughing, these crooked furrows, the repentance that amounts to nothing, the repentance that ends in nothing? Men groan over their sins, but get no better. They weep, but their tears are not counted. They get convicted, but not converted. What is the reason? I remember that on the farm we set *a standard with a red flag* at the other end of the field. We kept our eye on that. We aimed at that. We ploughed up to that. Losing sight of that, we made a crooked furrow. Keeping our eye on that, we made a straight furrow. Now in this matter of conviction we must have some standard to guide us. It is a red standard that God has set at the other end of the field. It is the cross. Keeping your eye on that, you will make a straight furrow. Losing sight of it, you will make a crooked furrow. Plough up to the cross. Aim not at either end of the horizontal piece of the cross, but at the upright piece, at the centre of it, the heart of the Son of God, who bore your sins and made satisfaction. Crying and weeping will not bring you through. "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to give repentance." Oh, plough up to the cross!

II. Again, I remark, in grace, as in the field, there must be a *sowing*. In the autumnal weather you find the farmer going across the field at a stride of about twenty-three inches, and at every stride he puts his hand into the sack of grain and he sprinkles the seed-corn over the field. It looks silly to a man who does not know what he is doing. He is doing a very important work. He is scattering the winter grain, and though the snow may come, the next year there will be a great crop. Now, that is what we are doing when we are preaching the Gospel—we are scattering the seed. It is the foolishness of preaching, but it is the winter grain; and though the snows of worldliness may come down upon it, it will yield after a while glorious harvest. Let us be sure we sow the right kind of seed. Sow mullen stalk and mu'llen stalk will come up. Sow

Canada thistles and Canada thistles will come up. Let us distinguish between truth and error. Let us know the difference between wheat and hellebore, oats and henbane.

The largest denomination in this country is the denomination of Nothingarians. Their religion is a system of negations. You say to one of them: "What do you believe?" "Well, I don't believe in infant baptism." "What do you believe?" "Well, I don't believe in the perseverance of the saints." "Well, now tell me what you do believe?" "Well, I don't believe in the eternal punishment of the wicked." So their religion is *a row of ciphers*. Believe something and teach it; or, to resume the figure of my text, scatter abroad the right kind of seed.

A minister in New York the other day preached a sermon calculated to set the denominations of Christians quarreling. He was sowing nettles. A minister in Boston advertised the other day that he would preach a sermon on the superiority of transcendental and organized forces to untranscendental and unorganized forces. What was he sowing? The Lord Jesus Christ nineteen centuries ago planted the divine seed of doctrine. It sprang up. On one side of the stalk are all the Churches of Christendom. On the other side of the stalk are all the free governments of the earth, and on the top there shall be a flowering millennium after awhile. All from the Gospel seed of doctrine. Every word that a parent, or Sabbath-school teacher, or city missionary, or other Christian worker speaks for Christ comes up. Yea, it comes up with compound interest—you saving one soul, that one saving ten, the ten a hundred, the hundred a thousand, the thousand ten thousand, the ten thousand one hundred thousand—on, on forever.

III. Again, I remark, in grace, as in the farm, there must be *a harrowing*. I refer now not to a harrow that goes over the field in order to prepare the ground for the seed, but a harrow which goes over after the seed is sown, lest the birds pick up the seed, sinking it down into the earth so that it can take root. You know a harrow. It is made of bars of wood nailed across each other, and the underside of each bar is furnished with sharp teeth, and when the horses are hitched to it, it goes tearing and leaping across the field, driving the seed down into the earth until it springs up in the harvest. Bereavement, sorrow, persecution, are *the Lord's Harrows* to sink the Gospel truth into your heart. These were truths that you heard thirty years ago. They have not affected you until recently. Some great trouble came over you, and the truth was harrowed in, and it has come up. What did God mean in this country in 1857? For a century there was the Gospel preached, but a great deal of it produced no result. Then God harnessed a wild panic to a harrow of commercial disaster, and that harrow went down Wall Street and up Wall Street, down Third Street and up Third Street, down State Street and up State Street, until the whole land was torn as it was never torn before. What followed the harrow? A great awakening in which there were 500,000 souls brought into the kingdom of our Lord. No harrow, no crop.

IV. Again, I remark, in grace, as in the farm, there must be *a reaping*.

Many Christians speak of religion as though it were a matter of economics or insurance. They expect to reap in the next world. Oh, no! Now is the time to reap. Gather up the joy of the Christian religion this morning, this afternoon, this night. If you have not as much grace as you would like to have, thank God for what you have, and pray for more. You are no worse enslaved than Joseph, no worse troubled than was David, no worse scourged than was Paul. Yet, amid the rattling of fetters, and amid the gloom of dungeons, and amid the horror of shipwreck, they triumphed in the grace of God. The weakest man in the house to-day has 500 acres of spiritual joy all ripe. Why do you not go and reap it? You have been groaning over your infirmities for thirty years. Now give one round shout over your emancipation. You say you have it so hard; you might have it worse. You wonder why this great cold trouble keeps revolving through your soul, turning and tumbling with a black hand on the crank. Ah, that trouble is the grindstone on which you are to sharpen your sickle. To the faith! Wake up! Take off your green spectacles, your blue spectacles, your black spectacles. Pull up the corners of your mouth as far as you pull them down. To the fields!

V. Again, I remark, in grace, as in farming, there is *a time for threshing*. I tell you bluntly that is death. Just as the farmer with a flail beats the wheat out of the straw, so death beats the soul out of the body. Every sickness is a stroke of the flail, and the sick bed is the threshing floor. What, say you, is death to a good man only taking the wheat out of the straw? That is all. An aged man has fallen asleep. Only yesterday you saw him in the sunny porch playing with his grandchildren. Calmly he received the message to leave this world. He bade a pleasant good-by to his old friends. The telegraph carries the tidings, and on swift rail-trains the kindred come, wanting once more to look on the face of dear old grandfather. Brush back the gray hairs from his brow; it will never ache again. Put him away in the slumber of the tomb. He will not be afraid of that night. Grandfather was never afraid of anything. He will rise in the morning of the resurrection. Grandfather was always the first to rise. His voice has already mingled in the doxology of heaven. Grandfather always did sing in church. Anything ghastly in that? No. The threshing of the wheat out of the straw. That is all.

The Saviour folds a lamb in his bosom. The little child filled all the house with her music, and her toys are scattered all up and down the stairs just as she left them. What if the hand that plucked four-o'clocks out of the meadow is still? It will wave in the eternal triumph. What if the voice that made music in the home is still? It will sing the eternal hosanna. Put a white rose in one hand, and a red rose in the other hand, and a wreath of orange blossoms on the brow; the white flower for the victory, the red flower for the Saviour's sacrifice, the orange blossoms for her marriage day. Anything ghastly about that? Oh, no. The sun went down and the flower shut. The wheat threshed out of the straw. "Dear Lord, give me sleep," said a dying boy, the son of one of my elders, "dear Lord, give me sleep." And he

closed his eyes and awoke in glory. Henry W. Longfellow, writing a letter of condolence to those parents, said: "Those last words were beautifully poetic." And Mr. Longfellow knew what is poetic. "Dear Lord, give me sleep."

"Twas not in cruelty, not in wrath  
That the reaper came that day;  
Twas an angel that visited the earth  
And took the flower away."

So it may be with us when our work is all done. "Dear Lord, give me sleep."

VI. I have one more thought to present. I have spoken of the ploughing, of the sowing, of the harrowing, of the reaping, of the threshing; I must now speak a moment of the garnering.

Where is the garner? Need I tell you? Oh, no. So many have gone out from your own circles—yea, from your own family, that you have had your eyes on that garner for many a year. What a hard time some of them had! In Gethsemanes of suffering, they sweat great drops of blood. They took the "cup of trembling," and they put it to their hot lips and they cried: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." With tongues of burning agony they cried: "O Lord, deliver my soul?" But they got over it. They all got over it. Garnered! Their tears wiped away; their battles all ended; their burdens all lifted. Garnered! The Lord of the harvest will not allow those sheaves to perish in the equinox. Garnered! Some of us remember, on the farm, that the sheaves were put on the top of the rack which surmounted the wagon, and these sheaves were piled higher and higher, and after a while the horses started for the barn, and these sheaves swayed to and fro in the wind, and the old wagon creaked, and the horses made a struggle, and pulled so hard the harness came up in the loops of leather on their back, and when the front wheel struck the elevated floor of the barn, it seemed as if the load would go no farther, until the workmen gave a great shout, and then with one last tremendous strain, the horses pulled in the load. Then they were unharnessed, and forkful after forkful of grain fell into the mow.

O, my friends, our getting to heaven may be a pull, a hard pull, a very hard pull; but these sheaves are bound to go in. The Lord of the harvest has promised it. I see the load at last coming to the door of the heavenly garner. The sheaves of the Christian soul sway to and fro in the wind of death, and the old body creaks under the load, and as the load strikes the floor of the celestial garner, it seems as if it can go no farther. It is the last struggle until the voices of angels and the voices of our departed kindred and the welcoming voice of God shall send the harvest rolling into the eternal triumph, while all up and down the sky is heard: "Harvest home! Harvest home!"

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Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.—JOB v., 26.