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## Love of the Gift, Not Love to the Giver: A Thanksgiving Sermon Delivered Dec. 28, 1839, at Lewiston Falls

Horace B. Chapin

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LOVE OF THE GIFT, NOT LOVE TO THE GIVER.

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A

THANKSGIVING SERMON,

DELIVERED NOV. 28, 1839,

AT LEWISTON FALLS,

BY REV. HORACE B. CHAPIN,  
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

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## S E R M O N .

**Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles but  
because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.  
—John vi: 26.**

SAYS Lord Byron, in his conversation on religion with Dr. Kennedy, "Devotion is the affection of the heart, and this I feel ; for when I view the wonders of creation, I bow to the Majesty of Heaven ; and when I feel the enjoyments of life, health and happiness, I feel grateful to God for having bestowed these gifts upon me."

This sentiment, like most others where conscience and feeling alike pass verdict, expresses a mixture of truth and error.

Genuine devotion must indeed arise from the heart, but instinctive emotions, joyful sensations at the remembrance of individual kindness, is common to the worst and best of men. They cannot lay claim to the nature of gratitude, especially that kind of gratitude due to the Father of Mercies. No man wishes to be thought destitute of true devotional feelings, or of gratitude to the Author of life. Ingratitude is a sin of so base a stamp that all men are disposed to deny or repel the charge. "You ministers," said an intelligent infidel, "take from human nature that principle of goodness which certainly belongs to it. I know I love

God; when I look out upon my farm, and see the luxuriant grass and grain waving to the wind, my heart spontaneously rises in joy and praise to the benevolent Author of these gifts." "Very probable," it was replied, "but how would you have felt had a devouring worm lain at the root of every plant?"

Notwithstanding we professedly detest ingratitude, it is a melancholy feature of human nature that you may, in most instances, confer ninety-nine acts of kindness on your friend or the poor, and if you bestow not the one hundredth, your generosity will be questioned. Your past deeds, *if not of charity*, of friendly feeling and good will, shall have sunk like water in the sand.

You will have friends enough as long as your loaves and fishes hold out, or you can be of service to your neighbor; beyond that point, I regret to say, human nature has not much to boast. Do you say we have touched a fact too lamentably common? Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself. Thou dost detest such a disposition in thy professed friend, or in the poor to whom thou hast lent a helping hand, and in so doing thou condemnest thyself. Look up to that great store-house of infinite love which provides for us all, and has thy spirit paid homage there? Hast thou, O man, whosoever thou art, ever rendered unto the Lord according to the benefits received, or ever been truly grateful for one of his gifts?

There are seasons when all animal nature rejoices; when man forgets his poverty and trials; when he comes to some green spot and refreshing spring in the desert, some resting-place or starting-point in life, around which meet alike all classes and conditions;



where for an hour they suspend their toils, and drop their burdens, and fall into all the social glee and customs of the place and scene ; when the sons and daughters of men are reminded of what was done by their forefathers, and how we, like them, regard the dear relations and ties which bind us to society this side the grave. And there is a resting-place, one season in the year, when perhaps very few persons in New England doubt their thankfulness to Heaven. When they have gathered in their flocks and harvests, and their families, in peace and prosperity, are rejoicing around the festive board of the anniversary thanksgiving, and tears of joy are falling from the parent's eye,—then how easily may thousands persuade themselves into the belief that they remember the loving kindness of the Lord, and are truly grateful to the owner and giver of every good and perfect gift.

Happy are we to recognise in human nature this principle of social life ; happy to recognise in apostate man whatever has the appearance of reminding us that God is not forgotten. For the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but multitudes do not know, at least do not consider, who it is that crowns the year with his goodness, covers their hills with flocks and their vallies with corn.

To these common, instinctive emotions of humanity, based enough, in some circumstances, on a certain species of selfishness, to merit reproof, the Lord Jesus evidently alludes, when he says to the replenished multitude, Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.

Will our gratitude this day be of a higher order, a more heavenly origin ? Will our hearts dwell most on the gift or the Giver ; on our families and friends who

smile around us, or on Him who gives us all things richly to enjoy ?

As no natural sensation is *sweeter* than joy, no moral feeling is more truly benevolent and exalted than gratitude to God. There is much reason to fear, as far as the spirit of it is concerned, we may all come under the condemnation of the text. We may professedly seek God in his sanctuary, unmindful of the miracles of his power ; may relish the bounties of his Providence, and *forget* that in him we live, move, and have our being. And when is the enquiry ever more emphatically made than in reference to this yearly festival, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed ? Is not this the feeling which pervades households ? And if any new article of food or raiment is to be obtained, it seems to lose half its value if it be not associated with the scenes of this anniversary. Nor would I rebuke the custom ; we have derived it honestly from our Pilgrim fathers. A joyous thanksgiving is the happy birth-right of the Yankee—a term more ridiculed than despised—one that speaks quick discernment of spirit, a dexterous hand, a liberal heart, promptness of execution, and unwearied enterprise.

Nor would I suggest a thought to obstruct the current of social feeling and good will, or so to stint the provisions of our tables or our means that we cannot send gifts to the poor. And although I believe there is waste, daily and sinful waste, in many families, I am not such a friend to the “system of living on small means,” as entirely to set aside the rich, the various and abundant gifts of Divine Providence.

And further, I am just as decided against intemperance in eating, as intemperance in drinking ; nor have

I much faith in the temperance principles of that man who starves one appetite to feed another. A thanksgiving should make grateful and generous hearts, and bountiful hands. The poor, the widow, and the fatherless should not be forgotten. These things, however, I leave to flow in their natural channel, trusting to the kindness of hearts which I have never had occasion to doubt, while I call your attention to the principles and motives which should actuate your feelings and conduct. And here comes the inquiry, What is correctness of principle and motive?—what the ground of moral obligation and gratitude, or the standard of moral rectitude? To err here is to set the whole system of morals afloat. If moral distinctions are not immutable and eternal, what difference can we make between a selfish and benevolent action? The standard of right and wrong may be shifted in every generation, by the pressure of circumstances or the capricious will of man.

The sentiment involved in the text is essential. It touches the real point at issue between philosophers and divines, and according as we view it shall we take our position with the selfish or benevolent system of moral action. Nor can you scarcely turn over a page of moral philosophy without coming in contact with different opinions.

Every minister should know what is the standard of moral rectitude, or he can have no scriptural criterion of religious faith or experience among his people. We are then thrown upon the inquiry, What is moral virtue? "Virtue," says Mandeville, "consists in the love of praise, and this is the basis of all virtuous action." "*Utility*," says Hume, "is the essence and measure of moral virtue." "Virtue" says Brown, "is a



*for* relation, and nothing more." "Virtue," says Paley, "is the desire of doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God and *for the sake* of everlasting happiness." And he might just as well have said for the sake of everlasting selfishness. Who will follow Christ when the loaves and fishes fail? What constitutes the goodness of moral virtue? From what motives should we act? *Multitudes* follow our Lord, from whom, if you take away *their* loaf, ye take away all their religion. They do indeed look to the recompence of reward, but in a very different sense than Moses.

Do not understand me, as supposing man can be wholly regardless of his own happiness. Man is not a stone nor a tree; he has susceptibilities, feelings, affections, and a personal interest, and that teacher places an unwarranted reliance on Divine sovereignty and power, who does not feel the importance of presenting every possible motive to the sinner, as a moral agent, to reconcile him to God and awaken true gratitude of heart. What we affirm is, that the sinner should be governed by the standard of moral rectitude; that personal happiness is not that standard, and should never become the ruling and permanent motive of action. It might be, were the sinner's personal happiness of the most consequence. You say it is of the most to him; but you forget that he is a CONDEMNED sinner, and is bound to love himself and every moral being in proportion to his worth. How much, then, is a CONDEMNED sinner worth to God's universe? Worth as much, perhaps, as the life and happiness of the condemned murderer to the community. And to lay down no other rule of duty to the reckless VIOLATOR of law than his own personal happiness, is an insult to the government.



What is God's design in creation? As ministers shape their instructions from this question, they touch principles of eternal moment; and their preaching will more or less correspond with the feelings or awaken the enmity of the unrenewed heart.

Let the principle be adopted, that the design of creation is the happiness of the creature, and it is right to make our personal enjoyment, in any possible way, the supreme motive of action as a rule of duty; that no man can or ought to prefer the honor of the divine law, the glory of God or of his universe, to his own individual good,—then the prevalent sentiment in community will perfectly correspond with the desires and feelings of a selfish heart. It embraces unscriptural views of divine mercy, and tends to universal salvation.

By the side of this philosophy, let us place the simple rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, mind, and might, and thy neighbor as thyself. All the self-love, selfishness, duty, feeling, and happiness, which can possibly be pressed into the obedience of this command, do we most earnestly contend for—all that can be enlisted in doing good and is influenced by the heavenly maxim, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. We advocate the selfish system up to the full extent of its meaning as exhibited by Christ, when he said, I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me; and when crushed with a weight of agony, he submissively says to his Father, Not my will but thine be done. As appeared in Moses, Yet now if thou wilt, forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book. As in Paul, when in great heaviness and sorrow of heart he says,

I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh; or as expressed by John, Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Philosophy has written her thesis and assumed positions she cannot sustain, and many are rebuked for not bowing as reverently to her *explanation* of a fact as to the *inspiration* of the fact.

We must therefore caution you against the sentiment as erroneous, which goes to maintain the position that the only end and design of God in creation is the happiness of the creature, and that religion consists in seeking supremely our own happiness in the best way.\* What is religion? You say the fear of God; Doth Job fear God for nought? You have your opinion, and Satan his; he once thought there was no religion or gratitude apart from *benefits received*—the purest kind arising from self-love, or selfishness.

What is the meaning of the word *Religion*? We like Tholuck's definition—"regard for God." Philosophy says it is the highest regard for yourself in the

\* Those who maintain the opinion that God's design in creation is the happiness of the creature, adopt philosophical views of the Divine government. God creates men, when he knows they will be forever miserable. He created Judas, when he knew it were better for that man had he never been born; but God knows nothing of the future misery of men, irrespective of their true desert. Their character is one of their choice; their punishment is the reward of sin, is right—"whose damnation is just"—so says the scripture. To reason and philosophy this may be inexplicable. It tries our faith, and our faith may not be equal to the trial. But we must admit the fact, or impeach the Divine omniscience; or if we prefer it, say with Adam Clark, There are some things which God does not choose to know.

best way. Christian affection, is based on no natural principle or instinctive feelings. It is far more disinterested and expansive; can, like Job, bless God when he takes away; can praise his name, and rejoice to see him shower blessings on others, though he receive not a drop. This is love that looks up to a sovereign God as her source and light, to the happiness of her neighbor as her own.

Some moralists teach the sentiment that we ought to love God for the good he does us, and that we cannot love him from any higher motive. They say, "The only criterion of duty to God is self-interest, and God commands us to do things not out of any regard to his own glory or authority, but to promote our own interest and happiness; that God has no right to command his creatures, only as far as he annexes rewards to obedience, and makes it their interest to obey." What is this but contending for the loaf? Certainly this is strange language to hold to a CONDEMNED world. As if we were under no obligation to love the infinite perfections of Deity for what they are, holy and immutable, nor to give thanks for his conferring unutterable joy on others unless we are partakers of the same glory; or to rejoice that he has chosen others in Christ from the beginning, and thousands are renewed by his grace, unless we are of the number. The standard of moral rectitude lies in the nature of things; is something true and unchangeable, arising from no law, but is the foundation and guide of law. And motives of action should be the glory of God and the *happiness* of *others*, not our own.

God is the same, his goodness the same, though manifested in a different way, when he passes us by as when he visits us in mercy. We have the same



ground for loving his infinite perfections, and blessing his infinite goodness, in taking away as in giving. And it is at this very point at issue with self-love and selfishness, where the religion of Job shines so remarkably clear. At the very point in debate he proves Satan to be a calumniator and a liar.

Having stated what are the first principles of Christianity, the ground of moral obligation, the nature of virtue, and right motives of action, I proceed by these motives to test the character, principles, and doings, of man in relation to the goodness, power, and providence of God.

The world of faith and the world of sense are the two leading objects which have ever divided mankind. The motives which lead us to yield obedience to the external duties of religion, to the house of God, and to speak of the Divine goodness, may be various, and yet originate from the same selfish principle. The mercenary followers of Christ, had they been influenced by proper motives, would have seen displayed in his stupendous miracle of feeding five thousand, such power and goodness as truly to have won their love and gratitude. But it was not the existence or manifestation of this goodness, but its *application* which so deeply interested them. They sought Christ sincerely, would have honored him, taken him by force and made him their king, from no purer motive than their own aggrandizement. Men, by nature, care nothing for God except his gifts and the exhibition of his power; never thank him for his goodness, only as it blesses them. Herod wished to have seen some miracle done by Jesus; he felt no higher interest in his mission, his works, or character.

There are instances of Divine power, goodness, and

providence, which should never be forgotten, not simply as they affect us, but as they relate to others and to God.

I. Creation has been a standing miracle from its birth, proclaiming in the sublimity of its glory and silence an eternal Power and Godhead. There may be some minds of that high and contemplative order which occasionally think of creation in relation to its Author, his being, government, and glory, but by far the greater portion of our race think only of the visible universe as it relates to themselves. God has created a beautiful world and placed us upon it, made it productive and convenient in all that is necessary to our wants, opened channels of commerce by sea and land, and bound the whole fraternity of man by ties of flesh and blood, by a common dependance on each other, making it our duty and our interest to befriend the weak and help the needy and afflicted, to disseminate the spirit of peace and good will, and enlarge the circle of human happiness as far as our influence and example extend.

But how few of earth's millions look upon the world in relation to God, his agency in it and over it; how few view it as the favored spot where he unveils the glory of his character, displaying the eternity of his love, the riches of his grace, the treasures of his truth, the wonders of his Providence, and wisdom of his power? The vast multitude regard this world in no higher sense than it respects themselves, and spend life in culling from it what may please their fancy, gratify their taste, or satisfy mere animal nature. They are eager for the gifts, all chasing after the gifts which an unseen and beneficent Hand scatters in their path. They long for the loaves and fishes, and rejoice

*contented*  
*contented*  
when the field is fruitful. They enter the full storehouse of divine goodness, and pilfer from his garner and his table, without any purer feeling than gladness for the favor. They drink, and slake their thirst at the stream, and so does the whole ~~crowd~~ herd of animals a few feet below them, and all apparently alike, with the same stupid, unconscious gaze of the infinite Fountain which, from ~~morning~~ dawn, has watered the world with the river of God. How few who eat of the loaves and are filled, on a day like this, when reminded of a thousand blessings, will say in humble gratitude and praise, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.

II. The preservation of creation and of life is by the power of God. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. What less than omnipotence can sustain the universe? Worlds of immense weight and magnitude, destitute of thought and volition, we readily perceive demand an overruling hand. Motion in the planetary system is involuntary, yet far more regular and exact than any mind on earth. How silent, mysterious, invisible, and mighty that agency which moves in such perfect harmony all material things.

"The very law which moulds a tear,  
And bids it trickle from its source,  
That law preserves our earth a sphere,  
And binds the planets in their course."

The preservation, laws, and changes of creation are by thousands ascribed to a material principle, to an eternal, inherent, independent attraction, or something termed nature, which to them practically excludes the



belief of the ever-present, all-powerful, and controlling hand of Him who inhabiteth eternity. They seek to place nature between themselves and the Invisible One, to shut the Most High out of his own kingdom, unmindful of the fact that his immediate agency alone is the cause of all which lives, and moves, and has being; that in his hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. *Unmindful* that nature, as she stands over this ruined world, is the unbroken and spotless mirror of his glory, the *bright* and *everlasting* reflector of his Eternal Power and Godhead, which indicates his presence as much as the human countenance indicates the existence, the thought, intelligence, power and operations of the unseen spirit within.

A little child once standing under the firmament of stars, asked its mother, "Dear mother are those yonder the open places through which the glory of God shines?" Look up, my brother; see, the glory of God still rests upon the mighty tabernacle made without hands. In mercy, God comes forth to commune with thee at sunset, the midnight hour, and the morning's dawn,—he opens the doors and windows of heaven, and tunes all nature to sing her anthem, and asks thee to join the concert.

"Yet ah! what do I see? That erect form which is made to walk through life with heaven in its eye, does not even look toward heaven, and that spirit which in its meditations may turn from earth to heaven and back again from heaven to earth, brings down no sure intelligence! I ask Wanderer, whither? Wanderer, whence? But there comes to my ear the answer, I know not, but I see the heaven full of stars and the hearts of men full of foreboding."

O, it is to draw away man from the creature to the

Creator, from the stream to the Fountain; to attract his attention, his heart and eye from the gift, to his Almighty Benefactor, and if possible awaken the emotion of love and gratitude that the great Redeemer so decidedly reprimands his selfishness and idolatry. Ye seek me not because you saw the miracles; as if he had said, ye come not to bless the goodness which provides, the power which sustains, the love which redeems, the grace which sanctifies, and the glory which crowns, but ye come, like all animal nature, like the raven which cries for his food and the lion which roars for his meat, and like them ye are glad when ye are filled. Ah, how many look to the means, to the gifts, rather than the giver, as the very cause of life's preservation. Who feels that it is the immediate and unceasing power of the Almighty which holds him in being?

Need we remind you that there is something within you which never dies? That man bears the defaced image of his Maker, the noble look of reason and immortality, spreading thought and beauty upon every human countenance, leaving there, as it changes, traces of the finger of the living God, who created us with more understanding than the fowls of the air.

Need ye be reminded that within you lives and acts an intelligent spirit, a *living creature*, differing from its raiment of flesh, which can never be disgraced by the coffin and the dust—one that cannot be satisfied with the shortness of time, or the narrowness and nothingness of this world's employment—one whose undying nature cries for a broader field of thought, of life, and occupation. A spirit which must have other worlds for its range, and eternity for its home.

And whatever effect, means and nourishment have

to sustain the body, we have no means to preserve the soul's existence a moment. The dependence of the mysterious world of thought, of the soul on God is immediate and forever. The continuance of its life and essence is not committed to us ; that lies infinitely beyond our means or ability to preserve or destroy. God has willed its existence to be immortal, endless as his own.

"It can smile on the dagger and defy its point."

Pain may seize it, sin pollute it, guilt degrade it, or faith purify it, but death cannot touch it or the worm devour it, nor the fires of hell consume it, nor the glories of the Lamb derange its construction or blast its vision.

Who adores infinite power for the wonderful preservation of the human mind, its faculties improved, its reason unimpaired, its affections unchanged, that we can be social, intelligent, interesting and happy in the beloved circle of kindred and friends—a *mind*, however, that will soon break away from its diseased and shattered tenement, and occupy a place in God's universe according to its character and choice.

Was it not in view of this momentous truth that the Lord Jesus said, Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto eternal life. Mark how the power and providence of God are revealed in the preservation of life, and how evident is our obligation to remember that power and be thankful to that providence. Some who were with you a year ago will be missing from your table. Some parents will not see the same sons and daughters rejoicing in each other's love, nor children the same parents. The widow and the fatherless may sit alone by the fireside once cheered by the voice, the prayer, and thanksgiving of one who is no more.

Peace and health may have been in your habitation,



lamentation and woe in others'. Look around upon the earth ; there has been the freezing up of a thousand hearts to friendship and to love. Mark how the pestilence at the South has moved on and left in its awful path the dead and the dying ; how the torch of the incendiary and other providential fires have wrought destruction in our cities, and numerous families been turned out to want—*rivers* in some places burst their boundaries and swept away the magnificent works of man. And though the finger of heaven may have slightly touched a few of you in some of these calamities, who among you, in view of his mercies will not be disposed to exclaim, What shall we say unto thee, O thou preserver of men ! We will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. We will enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise ; be thankful unto him and bless his name.

The power of God is continually employed in our preservation, but because that power is unseen and unfelt, we are prone to believe it bears no relation to us. Motives, numerous as our wants, are presented to draw and fasten our hearts to this power, and yet mercies, more numerous than our moments, are abused and forgotten.

We rejoice in existence, but why are we not as wretched as guilty ? we mean to do good in the world, but why are we not its abandoned outcasts ? we hope for happiness, but why not in the agonies of despair ? What is the power that upholds and restrains us ? Does it originate within us, or is the good hand of our God upon us ?

III. The free and abundant gifts of divine Providence manifest the power of God. What increases the product of a single seed or kernel a thousand fold ?

Is not this increase as it were a new creation from the original stock, utterly surpassing all human conjecture? How unsearchable that goodness, kind that heart, and liberal the hand which unceasingly supplies the wants of living creation.

Man labors hard through the year to provide bread for his household, but God, morning, noon, and night, spreads the table for Adam's race, and every living thing. . These, O God, all wait on thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season; that thou givest them they gather, thou openest thy hand and they are filled with good. Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Shall man live unmindful of the goodness which dispenses innumerable and undeserved gifts over the wide earth?

● Shall he receive his manna in the desert, and think he earns it because he gathers it, and raise not a thought beyond his need of the gift? Shall he have confidence in his field that it will yield its increase, and none in God who giveth the increase? Shall he winter in his dwelling, insensible of his Maker as other animals who provide their food in the harvest, and whose very instinct leads them to share frugally their hoarded treasures? ●

A relish for the gifts, but a forgetfulness of the Giver, is the besetting sin of the world. I might think of a thousand instances in which I have neither felt or expressed the gratitude I ought, even for the kindness of a fellow creature. O how then can I number the guilty omissions, the instances of ungrateful failure in feeling and expressing my obligation to that Parental Being whose loving kindness is new every morning and repeated every moment.

Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but

because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. He who declares unto man what is his thought, has struck here the great principle of human nature, which, in relation to the Author of mercies, governs this apostate world. And can our hearts and conversation this day witness to a more spiritual benevolence? Or might the Lord say, Ye draw nigh unto me with your lips, while your hearts are far from me; ye thank me not because ye love my character and adore my goodness, but because ye eat of the loaves and are filled. Ye who have nothing of your own, but your sins, hearken to the voice of his word. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Alas, how many will be proud of the rich variety they place before their families and guests, and still be more brutish than the ox that knoweth his owner—will ask no blessing and return no thanks to the Lord their God. Men who raise no thought of gratitude and praise to the Almighty for what he is in himself, for the blessings which he bestows on others as well as what he imparts to them, can claim no purer motive in all they do and say, than what is predicated upon love to the loaves and fishes.

Strange it is that within the vast temple of Jehovah, and under the eternal fires with which it is illuminated, man hardens down to ingratitude and infidelity, and hates and curses rather than loves and adores the character of his Maker. He separates the goods and gifts received, from all obligations on his part, as a steward, to be faithful. A sense of undischarged responsibility troubles the conscience, lies heavy wherever it rests, makes man unhappy, and to free himself from an accusing conscience, he breaks from obligation by denying its *application*, or by thinking there can be no



higher duty than for him to eat, and drink, and enjoy the good of his labor. I remark,

IV. The *manner* in which the world *express* their gratitude, proves they never look beyond the gift and prosperity enjoyed. Thus it was with rebellious Israel in their idolatry; the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play. They sang his praises, they soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert; and he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. According to their pasture so were they filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me.

Will not hundreds in our towns and villages consecrate this day in a manner that is an abomination to the Lord. We know very well how the lovers of rum and wine will observe it. Scores of them will not be guilty of the sin of having a Thanksgiving go by, without getting drunk. Such an omission would dishonor their profession and not indicate their customary humiliation to the proclamation of the chief magistrate. And what is the practice at our national festivals and noisy celebrations? Is God remembered, and his right arm that wrought our deliverance exalted? The virtue of the statesman and the courage of the warrior seem to occupy the *first* place, to fill the whole canvass. As a national government, we are apparently not only disposed to desecrate the Sabbath, and frame evil by law, but to strike the Providence of God out of our history and fall back to the infidel sentiment that he is no longer governor among the nations.

I might further proceed to speak of the public blessings which the Father of Mercies has bestowed on us as a great people; of the facilities of education and

improvement among all classes and races of men ; the means of enlightening and purifying the whole mass of mind, our civil and religious privileges, our railways and canals, resources of commerce and wealth, and our prospects as a vast and growing empire. This would be the bright side of the picture, and might rather flatter our pride than awaken gratitude to the Author of our prosperity. There is, however, a dark shade to this picture, and it is yearly growing darker ; and as it increases, there are sad surmises and fearful forebodings, threatening evils, oppression and suffering, which the Christian, the philanthropist, the statesman and patriot contemplate with no ordinary interest and emotion. The public mind on various questions is fitfully agitated, in some places, desperate.

The greatest danger of the present age is to be apprehended from the ebullition of deep and powerful feeling. Sympathy and feeling are good in their place, and are designed by our Creator to answer an important purpose, but sympathy has no conscience, no rule of duty, or fear of God. It is the impulse of instinct or excitement, is liable to act irrespective of right or wrong, good or evil. It can run the whole length of the boundary line, and break the nation's faith at the south and the north. As the ground of obligation or moral action, there is no trusting it any where. In fact, its influence constitutes one of our strongest temptations to do evil, and its direful consequences often prove that it is entirely destitute of that wisdom which is profitable to direct. This power, may become as irresistible as the whirlwind, and woe to the offensive victim or object on which it happens to fall. The antagonist principle of prudence, discretion and forbearance is overborne, and what safety can

there be for religion, law and government, in unrestrained sympathy and feeling? These easily excited and mighty elements of the human character are assuming an alarming aspect, are coming forth with a spirit and power that may disband the church and prostrate our noblest institutions.

When a sense of duty is resolvable into matter of sympathy and feeling—whether the question relates to the church or our national government, the ruler or the ruled, the master or slave, minister or people, the teacher or the taught—then Judge Lynch has the ascendancy, and dispenses the law from his chair.

Right or wrong, natural sympathy is the goddess of the day, and a bewitching and a powerful goddess she is. She goes up in the name of Phrenology to her throne of hills on the human skull, and tells us who is the villain and the dupe, the murderer and the saint. She creeps along our veins and our nerves and over our flesh, and laps us into the most delicious sleep of Animal Magnetism. Sympathy,—sympathy, every thing goes by sympathy, from the amalgamation of black and white, to the Perfectionism of Oberlin,\* and the New Jerusalem of the Mormonite.

“And hence this master passion in the breast,  
Like Aaron’s serpent swallows up the rest.”

There is the sympathy of denomination, of profession, of family, of trade, of *wealth* and *poverty*, of opinion, fashion, and party; the sympathy of nature, and the sympathy of sin; but where the men of sterling integrity of principle, of honest heart, and the fear of God; men who swear to their own hurt and change not, and cannot be subdued by temptation nor shaken by popular excitement from the line of duty?

\* See Note, page 28.



I appeal to the record of the past, and ask if it be not your candid conviction that true *honest men*, men who know no other rule of duty than to fear God and keep his commandments, are becoming scarce. These are the few men that will stand firm on the rock and have a peace those can never enjoy who are shifting to every point of feeling, temptation and hope. Believe me, if we have any honest, virtuous principle, we had better keep them—we may need them soon. We wish for reconciliation and consistency between the active and passive virtues—between faith and patience—love and forbearance—rejoicing and humility. Faith without patience is presumption; love without forbearance is *impulse*, emotion and not an affection; and joy and triumph, without humility, is but waving the flag of our own pride and conquest. The passive virtues are often hidden or disregarded, while the active are soon noticed and noised abroad. Had there been more of the *fear of God*, an *abiding* impression amid all the opportunities of dishonest gain and secret sin—of the truth, *thou God seest me*, the church had not gone through such scenes of speculation, nor wept over the disgraceful fall of so many of her ministers. The spirit of speculation has been sadly disastrous to the church. Pastors and missionaries have unhappily, in some instances, yielded to its influence; have had too much to do, for the honor of their office, with Banks and Counting-rooms; have seemed to prefer a seat with the money-changers, than to give themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the word. This desire to make money to do good with, is a temptation of the devil, and fraught with a most covetous spirit of self-deception. If a man is not disposed to do good with what money he has on hand, a thousand dol-

lars will not help him to the disposition. And some, to do good, have been as reckless in attempting to promote religion, as others in the acquisition of wealth. What a band of devoted speculators, who have hoped to convert souls enough in a fortnight, and lay up religion, if not money enough, in a few months, to *last* them through life.

The magnetic influence of sympathy pervades every department of life. The State feels it. The loaves and fishes have a sympathetic attraction along the line from Madawaska to Detroit. Was there ever a nation swayed to and fro by such an invisible power? The cry of the people is Liberty! but liberty with her stripes and stars, her cap and banner, is going from the government to the mob. Liberty is becoming a name, and the loaves and fishes of office, the merry meeting place of the multitude. A freshet of feeling, self-interest and *speculation*, destitute of honest principle and religious duty, has swept through the land.

The sailor's *heave-ho*, is not only heard on his anchoring ground and at the wharf; the sound rings with life, like the stirring note of a bugle, from the sea coast to the Rocky Mountains. Within a few years, men that walked circumspectly and lived independently, started into the race for a richer prize; every one striving to go ahead of his neighbor, and fool some one as he himself had been fooled.

No one knows what next will come up to seduce us from the path of duty. But it is from the combined influence of sympathy and feeling, the love of gain—of the loaves and fishes, that we, as a government, have the most to fear, and the church of Christ the most to dread. And if wisdom does not preside in our counsels, and discretion and prudence are to be ban-

ished as obsolete, and humility discarded because she cannot keep up with the spirit of the times, what are the prospects of our Zion and our country ?

Time was, when wisdom and prudence could be heard, and patience was considered a Christian grace ; but now there seems to be a fiery and restless element beating hot, high, and strong in a thousand hearts, to try experiments which may bring disaster and ruin in their train. Wisdom, prudence, and patience have never yet proved a curse to the church of God, but they have guided her through many a conflict, many a dark and stormy night and hour of peril. Nor will our national Government ever suffer from obedience to these cardinal virtues. Certainly Maine has not.

True, we know not the future ; whether darker or brighter days await us ; but come what may, there will always be some mercies while we live, for which we should bless our Father in Heaven.

Permit me to congratulate you in view of the circumstances in which a kind Providence has placed you, calculated to make you contented and happy in comparison with thousands, scattered around in the woods and waste places of Zion—the means you have for educating your children, your proximity to the house of God, and the social life, intelligence, and beautiful scenery of a rising village to interest the eye and win upon the heart. Happy am I that we can meet and rejoice with our relatives and friends on this anniversary festival, without the note of rebellion and the alarm of war.

To some of you, however, the interview may be embittered with the reflection that death, at home or abroad, has removed some of your [number. Around your full-spread board, in the midst of your pleas-



ure and smiles, the tear may fall, and the dead or departed hold communion with your spirit. Such scenes are common in this vale of suffering, but should make you none the less grateful for what is spared to you here. Go then, my dear people, not to mourn, but to rejoice and bless the Lord your God. Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared, for the day is to bless the Father of mercies; neither be ye grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Are there any poor in your neighborhood, for whom nothing is prepared? send them just as good as God has given you. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Blessed is the man who can look back on life and be cheered with the reflection that he has labored to do good to others; that can say, like Job, When the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him—the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to leap for joy.

Such a review of life, is dearer than any earthly treasure,—such an example is imitating Christ.

In reproach, affliction, and bereavement, there stands by you a friend that sticketh closer than a brother—Hope is an anchor. Faith a substance. Love a reality. Patience a submissive will, and Humility a crown. At death, such a believer gives his testimony to the world, his blessing to the church, his body to the grave and his soul to God. And when he awaits the awards of the final Judgment, a voice comes to him out of the throne, saying, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

NOTE 2. PAGE 23.

We should be happy to learn whether the Perfectionism of Oberlin resembles that which arose in the Hamp-  
tons, Mass. under the ministry of John Truair, the re-  
puted author of New Measures. That was not the right  
kind. It grew so fast we soon lost sight of it,—was all  
faith and no repentance,—love and no patience,—sym-  
pathy and no judgment. It groaned under a heavy per-  
secution for righteousness' sake, until it had no use for  
the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer, and became too  
holy for the classics or the world. It could break down  
the Institutions of Heaven and the Church, with the  
shouts of Hosannah and Glory to God.

It abounded in visions, prophecies, and dreams,—holy  
kisses and ecstasies. It loved every body, but its own  
members in particular.

We have witnessed a few effects of this kind of Per-  
fectionism, tintured occasionally, we suspect, with a  
little opium. We do not like it. It intoxicates the par-  
taker, and he cannot always remember the truth.

We have not a word to say against the right kind,—  
perhaps Oberlin has it.



