

DIBBLE SHELDON

THOUGHTS ON
MISSIONS

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

To my Classmates in Theology.

Dear Brethren in Christ: – Few periods of our lives can be called to mind with so much ease and distinctness, as the years which we spent together in theological studies. The events of that short season, and the sentiments we then indulged, are clothed with a freshness and interest which the lapse of time cannot efface.

Among the questions that occupied our thoughts, no one perhaps was so absorbing, or attended with such deep and anxious feeling, as that which respected the field of labor to which each should devote his life. And many of us then, I remember, made a mutual engagement, that if spared and permitted for years to labor in different portions of the vineyard of the Lord, we would communicate to each other our *mature* views in regard to the claims of different fields.

Thirteen years have elapsed; and I propose to fulfil my engagement, by expressing, in the form of the present little volume, the views which I now entertain in regard to the claims of foreign lands. To you, my beloved classmates, the book is specially addressed; and if I use a frankness and freedom, which might possibly be construed into presumption, if I were addressing strangers and elder brethren, I am sure that I shall fall under no such imputation when communicating my thoughts to you. I wish to express my thoughts familiarly, as we used to do to each other, and at the same time with the earnestness and solemnity which one ought always to feel when pleading for the perishing heathen.

A free, full, and earnest discussion of such sentiments as those contained in this book, had no small influence, under God, in preparing the way for that extensive work of grace at these islands, which has been denominated the Great Revival. At the General meetings of the mission in the month of May of 1836 and 1837, the main doctrines of this volume were thoroughly canvassed, and with deep effect upon every member present. Our feelings were enlisted, our hearts were warmed, and our thoughts were absorbed by the great topic of the world's conversion. The theme, in all its amazing import and solemn aspects, was allowed to take possession of our souls. It gave importunity to prayer, earnestness and unction to our conversation and sermons, and zeal, energy, and perseverance to every department of our work; and the result was soon apparent in the wide-spread and glorious revival.

It can almost be said, therefore, that the main sentiments of this volume have received the impress of the Divine approbation.

In the fall of 1837, I was constrained by family afflictions and the failure of my own health, to embark for the United States. As I began to breathe the bracing air of Cape Horn, my strength in a measure revived, and having no other employment on board ship, I sketched the outlines of most of the chapters of this little volume. My heart was full of the theme in the discussion of which I had taken part before my embarkation, and I penned my thoughts freely, amidst the tossings of the ship and the care of two motherless children.

On my arrival in the United States, I revised and filled up the outlines I had sketched, and delivered them, in connection with various historical lectures, at several places, as Providence gave me opportunity. Now, having returned to these islands, I have thought best to give the chapters a second revision, to dedicate the whole to you, and with the help of the press to send you each a copy, accompanying it with my prayers and my most affectionate salutations. And may I not expect, beloved classmates, that you will read the book with candor, weigh well its arguments, admit its entreaties to your hearts, as those of your former associate, and act in accordance with the convictions of duty?

Among the considerations that have prompted me to the train of thought contained in this book, as well as to the views interwoven in my history of the Sandwich Islands, I may mention, as not the least weighty and prominent, a dutiful respect and filial obedience to the instructions delivered to me, in connection with others, by the wise and devoted Evarts, on the eve of our embarkation for the foreign field. The delivery of those instructions was his last effort of the kind, and they may therefore be regarded as the parental accents of his departing spirit. On that occasion of interest, to which memory can never be treacherous, a part of the charge to us was in the following words:

"From the very commencement of your missionary life, cultivate a spirit of enterprise. Without such a spirit, nothing great will be achieved in any human pursuit; and this is an age of enterprise, to a remarkable and unprecedented extent. In manufactures, in the mechanic arts, in agriculture, in education, in the science of government, men are awake and active; their minds are all on the alert; their ingenuity is tasked; and they are making improvements with the greatest zeal. Shall not the same enterprise be seen in moral and religious things? Shall not missionaries, especially, aim at making discoveries and improvements in the noblest of all practical sciences – that of applying the means which God has provided, for the moral renovation of the world?"

"There are many problems yet to be solved before it can be said, that the best mode of administering missionary concerns has been discovered. What degree of expense shall be incurred in the support of missionary families, so as to secure the greatest possible efficiency with a given amount of money; how to dispose of the children of missionaries, in a manner most grateful to their parents, and most creditable to the cause; in what proportion to spend money and time upon the education of the heathen, as a distinct thing from preaching the Gospel; how far the press should be employed; by what means the attention of the heathen can be best gained at the beginning; how their wayward practices and habits can be best restrained and corrected; how the intercourse between missionaries and the Christian world can be conducted in the best manner, so as to secure the highest responsibility, and the most entire confidence; and how the suitable proportion between ministers of the Gospel retained at home, and missionaries sent abroad, is to be fixed in practice, as well as in principle: all these things present questions yet to be solved. There is room for boundless enterprise, therefore, in the great missionary field, which is the world."

I have not attempted to discuss all the topics here named, but have endeavored to cultivate in some degree, as enjoined in the paragraph, a spirit of *enterprising inquiry*.

If this book shall impart any light on the interesting topic of Christian duty to the heathen, and be owned by the Saviour, in the great day, as having contributed, though but in a small degree, towards that glorious consummation of which the prophets speak, and to which we all look forward, I shall be richly rewarded.

Your affectionate classmate,
SHELDON DIBBLE.

Lahainaluna, *Feb. 17, 1844.*

CHAPTER I. THE TRUE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS

The apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, uniformly enforce their exhortations by tender appeals to the example, sufferings, and death of their ascended Lord. Is humility inculcated? the argument is, Christ "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Is purity of life enjoined? the plea is, Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." Is liberality required? we are pointed to Christ, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Is entire consecration to Christ enjoined? the appeal is, "he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again."

In like manner, in gaining a true idea of the spirit of missions, the proper course evidently is, to look at once at the missionary character of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was indeed a missionary. He came to save the lost. He was a missionary to *us*. He came to save *us*.

We had wandered and were lost. We were guilty and condemned. We were in a state of despair. Nothing within the compass of human means could avail in the least to avert the impending wrath of God. All wisdom became foolishness. All resource was futile. Not a ray of hope remained – not the least flickering gleam. Whichever way the eye turned, there was darkness – horror – despair. But Christ came, and hope again visited the earth. It was when we were helpless – hopeless – justly exposed to the horrors and agonies of the world of woe, that Jesus undertook his mission, and appeared for our relief.

This truth cannot be too deeply impressed upon us, here, at the very threshold of our inquiries in regard to the spirit of missions; and to spread it out distinctly before our minds, let us take a simple illustration.

You are a captive in a foreign land, and have long been immured in a deep, damp, and gloomy dungeon. Sorrow, sighing, and tears have been your meat day and night. Anguish, gloom, and a fearful looking for of death, combined with hunger, cold, and a bed of straw, have induced disease, wasted your flesh, destroyed every energy, and entirely drank up your spirits. Sentence of death is pronounced against you, and the day fixed for your execution. The massive walls and iron grating look down sternly upon you, and rebuke at once all hope of escape. Entreaties, tears, and the offer of gold and silver have been tried, but in vain. Effort and means have given place to horror and despair. The prospect before you is the scaffold, the block, a yawning grave, and a dread eternity. In this extremity a friend appears, and offers to be substituted in your place. The offer is accepted. You, pale, emaciated, and horror-stricken, are brought from your dungeon to behold once more the light of day. The irons are knocked off from your hands and feet – your tattered garments exchanged for cleanly apparel – and a ship is in readiness to convey you to the land of your birth and the bosom of your friends. The vital current of your soul, so long chilled and wasted, now flows again with warmth and vigor; your eyes are lighted up, and tears of joy burst forth like a flood. But, in the midst of your joy, you are told of your deliverer. You turn, and behold! the irons that were upon you are fastened upon him – he is clothed in your tattered garments – is about to be led to your gloomy dungeon – lie on your bed of straw, and thence to be taken in your stead to the scaffold or the block. You throw yourself at his feet, and entreat him to desist; but when you find his purpose fixed, you finally wish you had a thousand hearts to feel the gratitude you owe, and ten thousand tongues to give it utterance.

The Lord Jesus Christ has done for us all this, and unspeakably *more*. We were under condemnation. The sentence of God's righteous law was against us. The flaming sword of Divine vengeance was unsheathed. All above and around us were the dark frowns of the Almighty and the red lightnings of his wrath. Beneath us was not merely a damp dungeon, but the bottomless pit yawning to

receive us, and its flames ascending to envelope our guilty souls. There was no escape. The prospect was weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth – the agony of Jehovah's frown forever. In this extremity the Saviour appeared – substituted himself in our stead – bare our sins in his own body on the tree – received upon his own agonized soul what was our due, and thus delivered us from the untold horrors of eternal death, and opened before us the gate of heaven.

To save the lost, then, was the spirit of Christ. The apostles imbibed this spirit. *It is the spirit of missions.* The heathen are in a lost condition. If we have the spirit of Christ we shall do what we can to save them. The spirit of missions is not something different from, or superadded to, the Christian spirit, but is simply, essentially, and emphatically *the* spirit of Christ. It is compassion for the perishing; and such compassion as leads the possessor to put forth strenuous efforts, and to undergo, if need be, the severest sufferings.

As we shall look somewhat in detail at the manifestations of the spirit of Christ, we shall see very evidently the great outlines of what alone is worthy to be called the true spirit of missions.

Look at the *condescension* of Christ, and learn a lesson of duty towards the destitute and degraded of our race. The Son of God, by whom were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; before whom ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands prostrate themselves, ascribing power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing; of whom it is said, "Every knee shall bow to him, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" – the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God: this Infinite Being empties himself of his glory, and comes down to toil, suffer and die – and for whom? For us worms of the dust, insects that are crushed before the moth.

If the Saviour had come to our relief, clothed with the glory of heaven and surrounded by his holy angels, even that would have been a stoop of amazing condescension. But look at the babe of Bethlehem, born in a stable, and cradled in a manger; follow him to Egypt, and then back to Nazareth. What humility, lowliness, and condescension! Look at the Saviour in his public ministry. You find him oftenest among the *poor*, and always so demeaning himself as to be the one that was "meek and lowly in heart." His chosen walk was such, that it could be said with emphasis, "to the poor the Gospel is preached."

Such was the spirit of Christ and such his condescension! Such was the spirit of the apostles. They took much notice of the poor, and charged Paul and Barnabas, when going forth on their mission, especially to remember them. What else, I ask, is a missionary spirit, but to be willing to labor with self-denial and perseverance to elevate and save the low and the vile? Natural men, in the pride of their hearts, are inclined to look down upon the wretched – to regard them with that kind of loathing and disgust which disinclines them to make sacrifices in their behalf. This dislike is such that I have often thought it to be a favor to the heathen, that they are far off and out of sight; for if they were near and directly around many professed Christians, with all their defilement and ugliness in full view, much of the apparent sympathy for them which now exists, would be turned into contempt and cold neglect. But if such had been the superficial and ill-founded character of Christ's compassion, where should we have been at this present hour? There is not a wretch now wallowing in the deepest mire of sin, who is so vile and low in our eyes, as we all were in the eyes of infinite purity. Yet the more wretched we were, the more deeply did Christ feel for us. *This spirit of Christ is the only true spirit of missions*– the only spirit that will make self-denying, continued, and persevering efforts to save the heathen.

There is no romance in the practical and every-day duties of a missionary. The work is of a humble form, and emphatically *toilsome*. There is but little true missionary spirit in the world. It is not the sympathy of an hour, nor an enthusiasm awakened by romance, but the pure love of Christ in the soul, constraining the possessor to pray earnestly, and to labor cheerfully without notice or applause, for the lowest human objects; and which finds a rich and sufficient reward for a life of toil in leading

one ignorant slave, one degraded outcast, or one vile heathen, to accept the offers of salvation. My observation in the field for thirteen years testifies to the fact, that no sympathy or enthusiasm will come down to the arduous details of missionary work, and persevere in it for years, that does not flow from such genuine and permanent love as our Saviour manifested when here upon earth. The more we become like Christ, the more shall we possess of the true missionary character.

How slow we are to make *real sacrifices* for the good of others! It was not so with Christ. He chose, for our good, to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief – to be rejected, despised and hated – to become a mark for the bitterest rage and the finger of scorn.

Go to the garden of Gethsemane. There behold, what even the pencil of the angel Gabriel cannot fully portray. There, in the stillness of the night, the Saviour retires to give vent to the bursting emotions of his soul. Deep sorrow, keen anguish, and excruciating agony roll in, like continuous surges, upon his tender spirit. His strength fails. Low he lies on the cold earth, and the drops from his pale and agonized features, like the clammy sweat of death – no, "like drops of blood" – fall to the ground.

But the agony of his spirit does not perturb the submission of his soul, nor shake the steadfastness of his purpose. The furious mob arrive, and he calmly yields himself to their disposal. See him in the judgment-hall – meek under insults, forgiving under buffetings and abuse, submissive and quiet under the agonizing scourge. Then behold him, as faint from his gashes and his pains, and sinking under a heavy cross, he slowly moves towards Calvary. Look on, if your eyes can bear the sight. The rough spikes are driven through his feet and his hands – the cross is erected – the Lord of glory hangs between two thieves: – there, his torn, bleeding, writhing and excruciated body is to wear out its vitality in protracted agony. But all this suffering was as a drop in his cup of anguish. O the deep – fathomless, untold agony of his soul, when under the hidings of his Father's face he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

All this suffering and agony the Infinite Son of God endured, that we might be saved. He had a vivid and perfect view of all this, and yet voluntarily assumed it that we might live.

In view of such an example, what shall we say? If the Lord of glory shrunk not from ignominy and scorn, untold agony, exquisite torture and the most cruel death, can any one possess much of his spirit, and yet consider it too much to forego some of the comforts and delights of this fleeting life, and to labor and toil with perseverance and self-denial on a foreign shore, to instruct the destitute and the dying – to enlighten the millions and hundreds of millions of heathen, who have never heard the precious name of Jesus, and are entirely ignorant of the consolations of his grace? Is it too much, even to expose one's self to an early grave in a sultry clime, if necessary, that some ray of hope may break in upon the gloom of the benighted and perishing nations? God be praised, that the prospect of death did not daunt the spirit of the self-denying Jesus!

O, how has a feeling of shame and deep humiliation come over my spirit, as I have heard the objection, that "Missionaries and missionaries' wives especially go forth to die!" Thanks to the continued grace of God, that some of this spirit of Jesus – the self-sacrificing spirit, the spirit of devotement, even unto death – still exists on earth. Let the objector inquire seriously, whether much of it reigns in his own bosom; and whether in proportion as he is destitute of it, he be not lacking not only in the spirit of missions, but in the spirit of Christ, without which it is impossible to be a disciple. For it is true not only of missionaries, but equally of all Christians, that they are not their own – that they are bought with a price; and are under obligations of *entire consecration*, each in his appropriate sphere, that are as high as heaven and as affecting as the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. And we are bound, equally with the early disciples, to count it not only a duty, but "all joy" to labor, suffer and die, if necessary, for Christ's sake, and in the good work which he has given us to do.

Did we become sensible of our lost condition? Did we with one accord lift up our penitent and broken-hearted cries to the God of mercy, that he would provide a way for our salvation? Did the angels intercede in our behalf that the Saviour would come? No: *self-moved* he appeared for

our relief. He beheld us wedded to our sinful courses; unwilling to be taken from the pit into which we had plunged ourselves, and clinging with unyielding grasp to the very instruments of our ruin – strangely enamored with the very vampires that were preying upon our souls. The more disinclined we were to sue for mercy, the more the Saviour pitied us; for our very unwillingness to supplicate showed the depth of our ruin.

In like manner, the more indisposed any heathen nation may be to receive us to their shores, admit the light of the Gospel and partake of its blessings, the more deeply should we feel for them, and the more zealously labor for their salvation. That a nation has not called for our aid, but is resolutely determined to keep us at a distance, is a strong argument for being deeply interested in their behalf. Their very blindness and maniac disposition should call forth the deep commiseration of our souls. Such was the spirit of Christ. Such is the true spirit of missions. It is but a small measure of compassion to aid those who supplicate our assistance. The very blindness, guilt, madness and vile degradation of a people, should be to us a sufficient voice of entreaty. They were so to the heart of the precious Saviour, or he never would have undertaken the work of our redemption. O, when shall it be, that Christians and ministers of the Gospel shall arise *self-moved*, or rather moved by the spirit of Christ within them, and exert all their powers for the good of the perishing? when they shall not need appeal upon appeal, entreaty upon entreaty, and the visit of one agent after another, to remind them of duty, and to persuade them to do it?

It was not a world of penitents that the Saviour pitied, but a world of *rebels*— proud and stubborn rebels, ready to spurn every offer of reconciliation. He saw us, not on our knees pleading for mercy, but scorning the humble attitude of suppliants, and raising our puny arms against the authority of Heaven. He beheld us, not as the Ninevites once were, in sackcloth and ashes, but recklessly violating all his holy laws. It was in view of all the deformity, bitterness, rage and heaven-daring impiety of our naked hearts, that Christ left his throne of glory and died on the cross. It was for such beings that he voluntarily endured humiliation, toil, self-denial and death. He toiled and died for the ungodly. He came, though men despised his aid. He died even for his crucifiers.

Are the heathen guilty – covered with blood and black with crime? Do they exhibit many traits that are repulsive and horrid? Would our visit to them fill them with rage and bitterness, and tempt them to crucify us? What then? are we to relax our efforts for them, because they are ungodly? So did *not* Jesus Christ. Let us learn from his example, and imbibe his spirit. That man, who may be called a missionary, and yet is capable of being alienated in his feelings by ill-treatment, contempt, abuse and rage from the heathen, is not worthy of the name. That professed Christian, in whatever land he may reside, who loves a sinner less on account of the personal abuse he may suffer from him, has not the true missionary spirit, or, in other words, the spirit of Christ.

And here I would repeat the remark with emphasis, in accordance with all that I have said, that *there is nothing peculiar* in the spirit of missions, except what peculiarity there may be in the spirit of Christ – that it is what all must possess to be disciples, and without which no one can enter heaven. It is a spirit humble yet elevating, self-sacrificing yet joyful, intensely fervent yet reasonable, meek and yet resolute. It is all this indeed, but yet nothing more than what is required of every Christian; and therefore no excuse can be more absurd and contradictory in terms, than that sometimes made, "It is not my duty to go to the heathen, for I never had a missionary spirit;" for one professes to be a Christian, and yet excuses himself, on the ground of not having a missionary spirit, or in other words, of not being a Christian – of not being in possession of a fair title to heaven. O, remember, Christian reader, that the least desire to be excused shows a deplorable lack of the spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER II. CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

On account of heavy domestic afflictions, and the failure of my own health, I was induced, a few years since, to visit the United States. Full well I remember my feelings when returning to my native land. I had been laboring among a heathen people, and impressions by the eye are deep and affecting. I had seen degradation and vileness, destitution and woe. I had a vivid impression of the urgent claim of the destitute and the dying; and I had formed some conception of the greatness of the work, if we would put forth the instrumentality needed to elevate and save them. And during a long voyage, I had time, not only to think of the Sandwich Islanders, but to cast my thoughts abroad over the wide world. The millions and hundreds of millions of our race often came up fresh before me, sunk in untold vileness, covered with abominations, and dropping one after another, as fast as the beating of my pulse – twenty millions a year – into the world of woe. Painful as it was, I could not avoid the deep and certain conviction, that such was their end.

Then I thought of the greatness of the task, if we would be the means, under God, of saving them from perdition: that we have idol gods without number to destroy – a veil of superstition forty centuries thick to rend – a horrible darkness to dispel – hearts of stone to break – a gulf of pollution to purify – nations, in God's strength, to reform and regenerate. With such thoughts the conviction forced itself upon me, that the work could not be done without an immense amount of means, and a host of laborers.

Think, then, how chilling and soul-sickening the intelligence that met me as I landed on my native shores, (in the spring of 1838,) that Christians were disheartened by the pressure of the times, and were receding from ground already taken: that the bread of life must not issue from the press, though millions were famishing for lack of it; that thirty heralds of salvation then standing on our shores must not embark, though the woes and agonies of dying souls were coming peal after peal on every wave of the ocean; that they must be turned aside from the perilous yet fond enterprise to which the love of Christ had constrained them, and that future applicants must be thereby discouraged – that missionaries abroad must be trammelled in their operations for want of means; and that multitudes of children and youth, the hope of the missions, gathered with much care, and partially instructed and trained with much expense of time, strength and money; the centre of solicitude, love, and interest; the adopted sons and daughters of the missionaries, must be sent back – in Ceylon three thousand in a day – to wallow again in pollution, bow down to gods of wood and stone, and wander, stumble and fall on the dark mountains of heathen superstition; a prey to the prowling monsters that lie thick and ready to devour in all the territory of Satan. Surely, thought I, (and had I not grounds for the thought?) Christians in America must be destitute of the common comforts of life: nothing but the direst necessity can induce them thus to surrender back to Satan the ground already taken and the trophies already gathered, and to put far off the hope of the latter day glory.

I looked abroad and made inquiries. I found indeed a derangement of currency and a stagnation of business. But did I find, think you, that Christians were destitute of the ordinary comforts of life? that they were in a distressing emergency for food and clothing? that their retrenchments had been made *first* in personal expenditures, and last in efforts to save souls? Alas! it was evident that the principal cause of the retraced movement was not found in the reverse of the times. It was found to lie deeper; and to consist in wrong views and wrong practice on the great subject of Christian stewardship. To this subject, then, my thoughts for a time were much directed, and I tried to look at it in view of a dying world, and a coming judgment. The subject, I perceived, lay at the foundation of all missionary effort; and my position and circumstances were perhaps advantageous for contemplating

it in a just and proper light. Be entreated, therefore, Christian reader, to look at the subject in the spirit of candor and self-application.

A little heathen child was inquired of by her teacher, if there was anything which she could call her own. She hesitated a moment, and looking up, very humbly replied, "I think there is." "What is it?" asked the teacher. "I think," said she, "that my sins are my own."

Yes, we may claim our sins – they are our own; but everything else belongs to God. We are stewards; and a steward is one who is employed to manage the concerns of another – his household, money or estate. We are God's stewards. God has intrusted to each one of us a charge of greater or less importance. To some he has intrusted five talents, to others two, and to others one. The talents are physical strength, property, intellect, learning, influence – all the means in our possession for doing good and glorifying God. We can lay claim to nothing as strictly our own. Even the angel Gabriel cannot claim the smallest particle of dust as strictly his own. The rightful owner of all things, great and small, is God.

To be faithful stewards, then, we must *fully occupy* for God all the talents in our possession. A surrender, however, of all to God – of time, strength, mind and property, does not imply a neglect of our own real wants. A proper care of ourselves and families enters into God's arrangement. This is not only allowed, it is required of us; and if done properly and with a right spirit, it is a service acceptable to God. This is understood then, when we say, that all our talents must be occupied for God. With this understanding, there must be no reserve. Reserve is robbery. No less than all the heart and all our powers can be required of us – no less can be required of angels.

It is our reasonable service. We require the same of the agents we employ. Suppose a steward, agent or clerk, in the management of your money, your estate or your goods, devotes only a part to your benefit and uses the rest for himself, how long would you retain him in your employment? Let us beware, then, that we rob not God. Let us be faithful in his business, and *fully occupy* for him the talents intrusted to us. God has an indisputable right to everything in our possession; to all our strength, all our influence, every moment of our time, and demands that everything be held loosely by us, in perfect obedience to him. For us or for angels to deny this right, would be downright rebellion. For God to require anything less, would be admitting a principle that would demolish his throne.

No less engagedness certainly can be required of God's stewards, than *worldly men exhibit in the pursuit of wealth and honor*. Let us, then, look at their conduct and learn a lesson. They are intent upon their object. They rise early and sit up late. Constant toil and vigorous exertion fill up the day, and on their beds at night they meditate plans for the morrow. Their hearts are set on their object, and entirely engrossed in it. They show a determination to attain it, if it be within the compass of human means. Enter a Merchants' Exchange, and see with what fixed application they study the best plans of conducting their business. They keep their eyes and ears open, and their thoughts active. Such, too, must be the wakefulness of an agent, or they will not employ him. Notice also the physician who aspires to eminence. He tries the utmost of his skill. Look in, too, upon the ambitious attorney. He applies his mind closely to his cause that he may manage it in the best possible way.

Now, I ask, shall not the same intense and active state of mind be required of us, as God's agents or stewards? Can we be faithful stewards, and not contrive, study, and devise the best ways of using the talents that God has intrusted to us, so that they may turn to the greatest account in his service? Is not the glory of God and the eternal salvation of our ruined race, an object *worthy* of as much engagedness, as much engrossment of soul and determination of purpose, as a little property which must soon be wrapped in flames, or the flickering breath of empty fame? Be assured, we cannot satisfy our Maker by offering a sluggish service, or by putting forth a little effort, and pretending that it is the extent of our ability. We have shown what we are capable of doing, by our engagedness in seeking wealth and honor. God has seen, angels have seen, and we ourselves know, that our ability is not small, when brought fully into exercise. It is now too late to indulge the thought of deceiving either

our Maker or our fellow men on this point. We can lay claim to the character of faithful stewards, only as we *embark all our powers* in serving God, as worldly men do in seeking riches, or a name.

Then, too, to be faithful, we must be as *enterprising* in the work that God has given us to do, as worldly men are in their affairs. By enterprising, I mean, bold, adventurous, resolute to undertake. Worldly men exhibit enterprise in their readiness to engage in large projects – in digging canals, in laying railroads, and in sending their ships around the globe. No port seems too distant, no depth too deep, no height too high, no difficulty too great, and no obstacle too formidable. They scarcely shrink from any business on account of its magnitude, its arduousness, or its hazard. A man is no longer famous for circumnavigating the globe. To sail round the world is a common trading voyage, and ships now visit almost every port of the whole earth. A business is no longer called great, where merely thousands of dollars are adventured; but in great undertakings, money is counted by millions. Such is the spirit of enterprise in worldly matters.

Now, I ask, are we not capable of as much enterprise in using the means ordained by Christ for rescuing souls from eternal burnings, and raising them to a seat at his right hand? Had the same enterprise been required of men in some former century, they might have plead incapacity. But it is too late now to plead incapacity. Unless we choose to keep back from God a very important talent, we must put forth this enterprise to its full extent in the great work of the world's conversion.

Such enterprise is needed. If the latter day glory is to take place through human instrumentality, can it be expected without some mighty movement on the part of the church? Can a work of such inconceivable magnitude be effected, till every redeemed sinner shall lay himself out in the enterprise, as worldly men do in their projects? If the promises of God are to be fulfilled through the efforts of men, what hope can there be of the glorious day, till men are resolute to undertake great things – not for themselves merely, but for God, their Maker and Redeemer.

Is it not a fact that will strike us dumb in the judgment, that it is the love of money, and not zeal for God, that digs canals, lays railroads, runs steamboats and packets, and, in short, is the main spring of every great undertaking? The love of money has explored the land and the seas, traced rivers in all their windings, found an entrance to almost every port, Christian or heathen, studied the character of almost every people, ascertained the products of every clime and the treasures of the deep, stationed agents in all the principal places, and in not a few ports, a hemisphere distant, erected shops, factories, and even sumptuous palaces.

Men exhibit no such enterprise in serving God. How many ships sail the ocean to carry the Gospel of Christ? And in ports where one magnificent Exchange after another is reared, stretching out its capacious arms, and towering towards heaven, how difficult it is to sustain a few humble boarding-houses for wandering seamen. Worldly enterprise is bold and active, and presses onward with railroad speed. Shall, then, Christian enterprise be dull and sluggish, deal in cents and mills, and move along at a very slow pace? The thought is too humiliating to be endured.

Suppose angels to be placed in our stead, would they, think you, be outdone by the seekers of wealth in deeds of enterprise? No: their cars would be the first in motion, and their ships the first on the wing. They would be the first to announce new islands, and the first to project improvements, and *for what?* that the Gospel might have free course and be glorified. Enterprise and action would then be exhibited, worthy of our gaze and admiration. "O! if the ransom of those who fell from heaven like stars to eternal night, could only be paid, and the inquiry of the Lord were heard among the unfallen, 'Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?' hold they back? No: they fly like lightning to every province of hell; the echo of salvation rolls in the outskirts as in the centre; a light shines in the darkest dungeon; the heaviest chains are knocked off, and they rest not till all is done that angels can do, to restore them to their former vacated seats in the realms of the blest."

But if angels would act thus, we too, as the stewards of God, ought to be the first in enterprise. God's work is infinitely more important than wealth or honor. And how shall we, in the judgment,

be found faithful, if the seekers of wealth or the aspirants for renown are suffered to outstrip us on every side.

It is not faithfulness for any one to consume *on himself or his children* more of God's property than he really needs. Suppose you hold in your hand an amount of property. It is not yours you remember, for you are merely a steward. God requires that it be used to produce the greatest possible good. The greatest possible good, is the promotion of holiness in yourself and in others. Luxury, pride and vanity can lay no claim. Speculative knowledge, taste, and refinement must receive a due share of attention, but be kept in their place. Our real wants, of course, must be supplied. But what are our real wants – our *wants*, not our *desires*– our *real* wants, not those that are artificial and imaginary?

We really need for ourselves and families what is necessary to preserve life and health; we need a mental cultivation answerable to our profession or employment; need the means of maintaining a neat, sober and just taste; and we need too, proper advantages of spiritual improvement. Things of mere habit, fashion, and fancy may be dispensed with. Luxuries may be denied. Many things, which are called conveniences, we do not really need. If provision is to be made for all things that are convenient and pleasant, what room will remain for self-denial? Things deemed comfortable and convenient may be multiplied without limit – consume all of God's wealth, and leave the world in ruins. If the world were *not* in ruins, then it might be proper to seek not only the comforts, but even the elegancies of life.

Take a simple illustration: In the midst of the wide ocean I fall in with a crew floating on the few shattered planks of a hopeless wreck. I have a supply of water and a cask of bread, but the poor wrecked mariners are entirely destitute. Shall I keep my provisions for my own comfort, and leave these sufferers to pine away with hunger and thirst? But suppose I have not only bread and water, but many luxuries, while the men on the wreck are perishing for the want of a morsel of bread and a drop of water? And then, suppose I have casks of bread and other provisions to dispose of, and intend with the proceeds to furnish myself with certain of the conveniences and elegancies of life; and my mind is so fixed upon obtaining them, that I refuse to relieve the poor tenants of the wreck, and leave them to the lingering death of hunger and thirst. O, who of you would not shudder at the hardness of my heart and the blackness of my crime!

But the world dead in sin is surely a wreck. Millions upon millions are famishing for the bread and water of life. Their cry – their dying cry has come to our ears. Shall we then take that which might relieve them, and expend it in procuring conveniences, elegancies, and luxuries for ourselves? Can we do it, and be guiltless of blood?

But, perhaps here, some one may have the coolness to thrust in the common objection, that a man's style of living must correspond with his station in society. It is wonderful to what an extent this principle is applied. A man, it is said, cannot be a governor of a state, a mayor of a city, a member of Congress, or hold any high office, unless his house, his equipage, his dress and his table, exhibit some appearance of elegance and wealth; and if a man live in a large and opulent city, he must be somewhat expensive in his style of living, that he may exert an influence in the higher walks of society. Then, country towns, and small villages, take pattern of the large cities, and the plea goes down through every rank and every grade. Scarcely a Christian can be found, who is not familiar with the doctrine. It is a very convenient doctrine. In a *qualified* sense it may be true, but in its unlimited interpretation it may be made to justify almost every article of luxury and extravagance.

It seems to be conformity to the world, and the world has always been *wrong*. The principles of the Gospel have always been at variance with the maxims and customs of the world. *Conformity is always suspicious*.

Again, the doctrine cannot be applied to all places. Suppose a missionary conform to the society around him. Instead of raising up the heathen from their degradation, he would become a heathen himself. The descent to heathenism is easy. The influence of comparing ourselves with ourselves, and measuring ourselves by ourselves, is felt by those living among barbarians as well as at home,

though the insidious influence leads in another direction. If there is a man on earth, who, more than any other, needs to cultivate neatness, taste and refinement, both in his mind and in his whole style of living, it is the man who is surrounded by a heathen population. Here, then, the rule contended for fails. Travel round the world, and how often will it fail?

Let us turn away, then, from this fickle standard, and look to reason enlightened by the Word of God. Shall we not then find, that substantially the same style of living that is proper in one latitude and longitude, is proper in another; *substantially* the same, paying only so much regard to the eyes of the world, as to avoid unnecessary singularity and remark; and that this rule, founded on the principles of the Gospel, makes a proper provision for health, mental cultivation, and a neat, sober and just taste? Are not these the real wants of men allowed by the Gospel, whether they live in London or in Ethiopia?

But the ground on which I choose to rest this inquiry more than any other, is the perishing condition of our dying race. Is fashion, splendor and parade, appropriate in a grave-yard, or in the chamber of the dead and dying? But the whole world is a grave-yard. Countless millions lie beneath our feet. Most of our earth, too, is at this moment a chamber of dying souls. Can we have *any relish* for luxuries, folly and needless expense, amidst the teeming millions commencing the agonies of eternal death?

I erect a splendid mansion; extend about it a beautiful enclosure; furnish it with every elegance; make sumptuous entertainments, and live in luxury and ease. In the midst of it, the woes and miseries of my ruined race are brought vividly before me – their present wretchedness and eternal agonies. And it is whispered in my ear, that these woes might have been relieved by the expense I have so profusely lavished. O! how like Belshazzar must I feel, and almost imagine that the groans of lost souls are echoed in every chamber of my mansion, and their blood seen on every ornament!

Let us have the love of Christ in our hearts, and then spread distinctly before us *the world as it is*– calculate the sum total of its present wretchedness and eternal woes. In such a world and as God's stewards, who can be at a loss in regard to the course of duty? When twenty millions of men every year are entering upon the untold horrors of the second death, and we are stewards to employ all means in our power for their salvation, O, away with that coldness that can suggest the necessity of *conforming* to the expensive customs of the world. May we, in heaven, find one of these souls saved through our instrumentality, and we can afford to forego all we shall lose by a want of conformity. There is a nobleness in taking an independent stand on the side of economy, and saving something to benefit dying souls. There is a heavenly dignity in such a course, infinitely superior to the slavish conformity so much contended for. It is an independence induced by the sublimest motives; a stand which even the world must respect, and which God will not fail to honor.

But how shall those possessing *large capitals* best employ them as stewards of God? I speak not of the hoarding of the miser; that would be a waste of breath. I speak not of property invested in stock that habitually violates the Sabbath. No remark is necessary in so plain a case. But I speak of large capitals, professedly kept to bring in an income for the service of the Redeemer. The subject is involved in many practical difficulties; and they who are business men have some advantages of judging in the case which I have not. I will therefore merely make one or two inquiries.

Is not the practice in many cases an *unwise investment* of God's funds? Is there not a reasonable prospect that one dollar used now, in doing good, will turn to more account than twenty dollars ten years hence? A Bible given now may be the means of a soul's conversion; and this convert may be instrumental in converting other souls, and may consecrate all his powers and property to God; so that when years shall have passed away, the one dollar given to buy the Bible may have become hundreds of dollars, and, with God's blessing, saved many precious souls. One pious young man trained for the ministry *now*, may be instrumental, before ten years shall expire, in bringing into the Lord's kingdom many immortal souls, with all their wealth and influence; and so the small sum expended now, become ten years hence entirely inestimable. The same may be said of a minister sent now to

the heathen, instead of ten years hence; and the same, too, may be said of every department of doing good. It would appear then, that, in all ordinary cases, to make an immediate use of funds in doing good is to lay them out to the greatest possible interest; that by such a course we can be the means of peopling heaven faster than in any other way. We can hardly appreciate how much we save by saving *time*, and how much we lose by losing it. Worldly men, in their railroad and steam-packet spirit of the present day, seem to have caught some just sense of the importance of time, and we, in our enterprises to do good, must not be unmindful of it.

Again, is not the expenditure of property in the work of doing good, not only the most advantageous, but also the *safest* possible investment of God's funds? Whilst kept in capital, it is always exposed to greater or less risk. Fire may consume it. Floods may sweep it away. Dishonest men may purloin it. A gale at sea may bury it. A reverse of times may engulf it. But when used in doing good, it is sent up to the safe-keeping of the bank of God; it is commuted into the precious currency of heaven; it is exchanged for souls made happy, and harps and crowns of gold.

Again, A. keeps a large property in capital, and therefore B. resolves to *accumulate* a large property, and then give the income. But whilst accumulating it, he not only leaves the world to perish, but also runs the risk of ruining his own soul – the awful hazard which always attends the project of becoming rich. And the result is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, that the summons of death arrives before the promised beneficence is paid in.

In view of such considerations, would it not be *wiser, safer, and very much better*, in most instances at least, that the greater part of large capitals should be made use of at once in the service of the Redeemer?

It is said of Normand Smith, that "he dared not be rich;" and that "it became an established rule with him, to use for benevolent distribution *all the means* which he could take from his business, and still prosecute it successfully;" and that he charged a brother on his dying bed, to do good with his substance while living, and not suffer it to accumulate to be disposed of, at the last extremity, by will. Sound advice. A few other such men there have been in the world, and they are the shining lights. Their example is brilliant all over with true wisdom.

It is not acting always as faithful stewards, merely to accumulate wealth to promote the cause of Christ; for there may be more need of our *personal service* in disseminating the Gospel, than of any pecuniary means we can contribute. Christians are not faithful stewards, merely when they labor for Christ, but when they do *that* by which they may most promote the cause of Christ. The dissemination of Gospel truth is the great end to be aimed at, either directly or indirectly. Now, it is evident that many must further this object by accumulating the pecuniary means; but the danger is, that too many, far too many prefer this course. Many conclude, with perfect safety and justness, that in practising law or medicine, or in selling goods, in tilling a farm, or in laboring in a shop, they are doing as much to further the object as in any other way; but some, it is believed, come to such a conclusion either from mistaken views or mistaken motives. The fact that so large a proportion of God's stewards resort to the notion of operating by proxy, and that so few choose to engage in the direct work, shows that there is danger existing. Not only the fathers, but a vast majority of the middle aged and the young, prefer to advance the cause of Christ by accumulating the pecuniary means. Now, why is there such a rushing after this department of the great work?

The Saviour calls for a great army of preachers, to carry his Gospel everywhere, and to proclaim it to all nations, kindreds and people. In truth, you need not go beyond the limits of the United States to feel the force of this remark. Look at the destitutions in the more newly settled states and territories, and see if there is not need of men to preach the Gospel. But notwithstanding this need, only a small number, comparatively, offer themselves to the work. Almost all young men, even the professedly pious, slide easily into lucrative occupations; but to bring them into the direct work of making known Christ, they must be urged and persuaded by a score of arguments.

It is needed, too, of lay members of the church, to do much in searching out the destitute and the dying, who exist in multitudes, even about their own dwellings; to give here a word of warning, and there a word of consolation; to add here a helping hand, and impart there the restoring effect of sympathy and kindness; in short, to employ some hours in the day in going everywhere, as the early disciples did, from house to house and street to street, and in communicating, in an appropriate way, the simple truths of Jesus. Laymen, too, are needed in great numbers in the foreign service. There are reasons numerous and urgent, which I cannot here name, why lay members in the church should go abroad.

But notwithstanding this call for personal effort, it is too often that we meet with church members who are completely engrossed, from early dawn to the close of day, in accumulating wealth; and who deny themselves the luxury of spending either hour of the twenty-four, in conversing with souls, and leading them to Jesus. Such persons will give somewhat of their substance, when called upon; and press on, almost out of breath apparently, in the cares of the world, not thinking to say to this man or that, on the right hand and the left, that there is a heaven above and a hell beneath, and death is at the door. You would almost imagine, from the conduct of some, that they would like to commit to proxy even their own faith and repentance. Now this entire engrossment in worldly cares, even though professedly for Christ's sake, will never illumine the dark recesses of the earth – will never usher in the millennial day.

It is not so much, after all, an accumulation of wealth that is needed, as the personal engagement of Christians in making known everywhere, at home and abroad, the precious news of Jesus. The disposition to go everywhere, regardless of wealth, and with Jesus on our lips, must be the spirit of the church, before we can expect much good either at home or abroad. The world will not be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, till men to make known that word are scattered like rain on all the earth – not only in heathen lands, but in the streets and lanes of large cities, and throughout the Western desolations. "So long as we remain together, like water in a lake, so long the moral world will be desolate. We must go everywhere, and if the expansive warmth of benevolence will not separate us, so that we arise and go on the wings of the wind, God, be assured, will break up the fountains of the great deep of society, and dashing the parts together, like ocean in his turmoil or Niagara in its fall, cover the heavens with showers, and set the bow of hope for the nations, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. God is too good to suffer either Amazon or Superior to lie still, and become corrupt, and the heavens in consequence to be brass and the earth iron." God is too benevolent also, in the arrangements of the moral world, to allow his people to be inactive – to have here a continuing city, and be immersed in the cares of the world as though here were their treasure, while thousands about them are dying for lack of instruction, and the heathen abroad are going down to death in one unbroken phalanx. The church must take more exercise, and the proper kind, too, or she will become frail and sickly, too weak in prayer, and too ignorant in effort to usher in the millennial day.

It is a possible thing to seek wealth *honestly* for God; but he that is called to such a work, has more occasion to mourn than to rejoice: he has occasion to tremble, watch, and pray; for to be a faithful steward of God's property, requires perhaps more grace than to be a faithful steward of God's truth. We find many a faithful preacher of the Gospel where we find one Normand Smith, or Nathaniel R. Cobb, or one firm of Homes & Homer. The grace needed is so great, and the temptations to err so many, that almost all prove defaulters, and therefore it is that the world lies in ruins: not because the church has not wealth enough, but because God's stewards claim to be owners.

How small the sum appropriated by a million and a half of God's stewards to save a sinking world! The price of earthly ambition, convenience and pleasure, is counted by millions. Navies and armies have their millions; railroads and canals have their millions; colleges and schools have their millions; silks, carpets and mirrors, have their millions; parties of pleasure and licentiousness in high life and in low life have their millions; and what has the treasury of God and the Lamb, to redeem a

world of souls from the pains of eternal damnation, and to fill them with joys unspeakable? The sum is so small in comparison that one's tongue refuses to utter it.

There must be a different scale of giving; and the only way to effect it is, to induce a different style of personal consecration. Let a man give himself, or rather let him have a heart that cannot *refrain* from telling of Jesus to those who are near, or from going to those who are more remote, and the mere item of property you will find appended, as a matter of course, and on the plain principle that the greater always includes the less. We must learn to devote, according to our vows, time, talents, body, soul and spirit. Bodies and minds are wanted; the bones and sinews of men are required: these more substantial things are needed, as well as property, in arduous services at home and still more self-denying labor abroad; and no redeemed sinner can refuse either the one or the other, and continue to be regarded as a faithful steward of Jesus. *Money, though needed, is by no means all that is required of us.*

Though God has devolved upon us, as stewards, a responsible work, the weight of which is fearful, and sufficient to crush us unless aided from on high, yet the employment is one of *indescribable delight*. It is a pleasant work. Angels would rejoice to be so employed.

Is there any professed Christian who does not relish the idea? To such an one I would say, Your condition is by no means enviable. You deny yourself all true happiness. If you do not delight in the thought of being God's steward; of holding not only property, but body, soul and spirit at God's control, then you know not what true luxury is. There is pleasure in doing good; there is a luxury in entire consecration to God. The pleasures of this earth are empty, vain and fleeting; but the pleasure of doing good is real, substantial and enduring. The pleasure of doing good is the joy of angels; it is the thrill of delight which pervades the soul of Jesus; it is the happiness of the eternal God. In not wishing to be God's steward, you deny yourself this luxury; you refuse angels' food and feed on husks. O, there is a richness of holy joy in yielding up all to God, and holding ourselves as waiting servants to do his will. This fullness of bliss you foolishly spurn from you, and turn away to the "beggary elements of the world." Do you feel that the principles of stewardship contained in the Bible are too strict – that too entire a devotement is required of you? Angels do not think so. Redeemed saints do not think so. The more entire the consecration, the more perfect the bliss. In heaven devotement is perfect, and joy of course unalloyed. Blot out this spirit of consecration, you blot out all true happiness on earth; you annihilate heaven.

But it is not only a luxury, but *an honor* to be the stewards of God. What honor greater than that of continuing the work which Jesus commenced; of being employed in the immense business of saving a ruined race? What work more glorious than that of being the instruments of peopling heaven? What employment more noble than to rescue immortal souls from endless agonies, and to raise them to eternal joys; to take their feet from the sides of the burning lake, and to plant them on the firm pavement of heaven; to rescue victims from eternal burnings, and to place them as gems in the diadem of God? Would not Gabriel feel himself honored with a work so noble and glorious? Were a presidency or a kingdom offered you, spurn it and be wise; but contemn not the glory of being God's stewards.

Remember, too, whether these are your views or not, the work of God will go on. The world will be converted. The glorious event is promised. Almighty power and infinite wisdom are engaged to accomplish it: all the resources of heaven are pledged. The God of heaven, he will prosper his true servants, and they shall arise and build; but those who do not relish the idea of being God's stewards, can have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem. The wheels of God's providence are rolling onward: those wheels are high and dreadful. Will you, being a professed Christian, dare to oppose the march of God? "Ah! we do not *oppose*

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