

ON SINGLENESS OF EYE:

The Baccalaureate Sermon,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,

JUNE 22, 1873,

By *JAMES McCOSH, D.D., LL.D.,*

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

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S E R M O N .

“The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”—
MATT vi., 21.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”—JOHN vii., 17.

The light, or rather the lamp, of the body is the eye. What a lamp does to a house that the eye does to the body—shows the objects within, and enables the indweller to move and act freely, as it is expressed (Luke xi., 36), “As when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” We are commanded to have the eye single, as opposed to the eye that sees double, generally to a diseased, an evil eye. We may consider first the evil eye, and then the single eye, and in both regard it as looking to the two things spoken of in the text in John, to the doctrine we are to believe and the duty we are to perform.

The Double Eye, the Evil Eye.—No organ of the body is liable to more diseases than the eye. It is so because of the complexity of its structure, from its many coats, humors, and nerves, and from its extreme sensitiveness and delicacy. I have seen models in wax of upward of one hundred diseased forms which the eye of man may take, and these do not by any means exhaust the number. But the mind, which is the candle of the Lord, and is more fearfully and wonderfully made, is liable to a greater number of perversions. The two eyes are so constructed as to see things single and upright, but they may be so dislocated as to see everything double, so

diseased as to perceive everything in a perverted form or a false color, so blinded as to leave us in darkness. It may be the same with the eye of the mind.

It is one of the worst effects of the commission of sin that it injures the whole soul, just as disease, just as fever or consumption, weakens the whole body; it has a tendency to damage the acuteness of the mental vision, and to impart to it a fatal obliquity. The moral sense, being abused, loses its sensitive perception and delicate touch, and does not fulfill its purpose of discerning between good and evil, and warning us of the evil. He who has yielded to sin of any kind once, is more liable to fall into it a second time. By companionship and familiarity he loses the abhorrence which he at one time had for it. Having crossed the line that separates vice from virtue, he concludes that a few more transgressions may not much aggravate the offense, and he wears the rut out of which it will be difficult to move him, he wears the channel down which the stream will continue to flow. He who has told one lie will be tempted to tell a second lie, were it only to conceal the first. The youth who, after an evening of sinful excitement, has gone to bed without praying will feel reluctant to pray next morning, as he would have to begin with confessing the sin of the previous night; and, henceforth, the morning comes, bringing with it new blessings, but no expression of gratitude on the part of him who receives them; and the evening comes, after an ungodly day with its load of cares, with no confession of sin to relieve the spirit. He who has once yielded and fallen into the intemperate or unclean act, will find his passions fomented and his power of resistance diminished and the whole man becoming the slave of lust. A man's weak point is that at which he has yielded—is the limb which he has broken in a fall, is the member which has suffered from disease. At the place where the vessel has been cracked it will be most apt to break; at the point where the dam has burst it will ever

afterwards be most apt to give way and the waters will rush out in an irresistible torrent. Every one knows that if we once give money to bribe a troublesome accuser, we are hereafter at his mercy and must yield to ever increasing demands. Such is our lamentable position when we have given way to sin ; we have accepted the price, and are henceforth subject to him who first tempts and then torments.

This is the origin of prepossession and prejudice. You know that the sagacious Bacon found the causes that had hindered science for long ages in certain idols—*idola*, objects of false worship to which we are tempted to bow, *eidola*, false appearances that mislead us—and he warns us against anticipating nature, instead of following the observations of its operations. What the great founder of the inductive philosophy discovered in the history of science we may find in the working of the human mind and in the practical affairs of life. There are prejudices gendered which prevent us from discovering the truth, and which turn aside that love which we should entertain towards God and our fellow-men. The eye which was meant to see objects single, now sees them double and out of shape. Certain things, such as God and duty, pass very much out of sight, and certain other things, such as the pleasures and honors of the world, bulk out of all proportion. Our Lord, in the verses immediately following the text, gives, as an example, the man who, instead of serving God with singleness of aim, makes an attempt to serve both God and Mammon. A vain attempt, for “either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”

One of the lamentable results of this spirit is that the man becomes incapable of discerning between truth and error, between good and evil. He has trodden so many paths, all leading in different directions, that now he cannot tell which is the right one. He has lied so often that he does not know

what is the truth. He has been so long and laboriously employed in deceiving himself that now he cannot deal honestly with himself. Paul says of men's consciences that they accuse or else excuse one another (Rom. ii., 15); to defend them from an accusing conscience men learn to excuse themselves, and they do evil, maintaining it to be good. Like the color-blind railway conductor, he cannot distinguish the signal of danger from the signal of safety, and rushes on, without being aware of it, into destruction. He comes at last to call good evil and evil good, thus mistaking light for darkness and darkness for light. At length the devil enters into him, as he did into Judas Iscariot, and he assumes the attitude of a rebel, and declares that he does right to rebel.

Such a man often takes up the position that he is not responsible for his belief. In particular, he claims that he can not possibly be made to believe some particular truth of natural or revealed religion. True, he may not be responsible for his belief to his fellow-man. Man is responsible to man for his convictions only within very narrow limits—only so far as these convictions go out in evil acts or expressions. But he is certainly responsible to God for his belief, as well as for his desires and actions. But he says that he can not believe so and so—that, for example, he can not believe that God will ever punish any of his own creatures. And it may be true that, in his present state of mind, he can not believe it. But there is a previous question—Is he in the right state of mind? Has he not brought himself to such a condition that he can not consider the question candidly? The man under strong passion and deep disappointment, while in such a state, declares that he does right to be angry. So the man who has rolled sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue can not be made to believe that God will punish sin in him or any other—that he can not see the truth arises from a disease which he has himself produced. His incapacity to believe is an aggrava-

tion of his crime, not an alleviation of it. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reprov'd." Paul says that before his conversion, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them." It was not till after he was prostrated and blinded on the way to Damascus, and had his eyes afterwards opened, that his spiritual vision was rectified and purified to discern the right.

The lamentable issue of the whole may be that the man becomes spiritually blind, given up to a hopelessly infatuated mind. This is the last stage of a sinful process which has long gone on. The light within thee has become darkness, and then how great is that darkness! It is the rejection of the light that is the sin. "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak (or excuse) for their sin." The light has blinded them, and they see everything in a black hue, and they betake themselves to a region of darkness. They prefer the darkness to the light, because their deeds are evil. It is not the man born blind that is so much to be pitied, for he never saw the light of day, the beauty of plant or animal, or the smiling face of a friend; it is the man who once saw, but is now blind, that is to be commiserated. The brute is not to be condemned, because he is not capable of distinguishing between good and evil; the condemnation rests on the man who prefers the darkness to the light, because his deeds are evil. How pitiable the condition of such a man! The mind and conscience become defiled, and the unclean find everything unclean, for they defile all they touch. The conscience is "seared as with a red-hot iron," and loses all sensitiveness of

touch. You may allure the man by the most attractive considerations, but he will not listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. You may describe the loveliness of virtue and holiness, but you meet with no response in his bosom. You may tell him of Him who is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely ; but he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. None so blind as those who will not see ; none so wicked as those whose hearts have been hardened by a grinding process till they have become hard as the nether millstone. The man becomes at last incapable of distinguishing between light and darkness, of discerning between good and evil. It is the last stage of disease, in which there comes on an insensibility, called expressively mortification, the certain precursor of death, followed by a resurrection of unrepented sins, which become the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched.

The Single Eye.—And here the first question is, How is this singleness of eye to be got ? For, when any one begins to reflect and to put this question, he finds that he has already sinned, and so far lost his power of clear vision. How is he to recover it ? By a terrible fall he has sunk to a lower level. How is he to mount again ? It is as difficult for him to do so, as it was for our first parents to get back into Paradise ; a flaming sword is seen turning every way to guard the approach. There are two courses opened to the man who has sinned. One is to harden their necks, as the Scriptures graphically describe it, and go on heedlessly in the course on which they have set out. The other course is to surrender at once, to confess the past sin, to turn back and seek a new spirit. The latter is the method specified and dwelt upon in Psalm xxxii. It may seem a curious one, yet it is the heaven-devised one, and the only one fitted to accomplish the end. We have to begin with acknowledging our sin, with bringing it out and slaying

it, and thus getting rid of it forever. Observe the effect when sin is not confessed, when it is bound up in the bosom, there, like a cancer, to eat ever inward. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." But how different when the sinner prostrates himself before God: "I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And observe the blessedness: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." The process is repentance and forgiveness; the issue "a spirit in which is no guile." You have seen an angry sky discharge itself in showers, and then smiling upon the refreshed landscape. Such is the effect of the soul being reconciled to God. The evil humors have been let out, and the body begins its healthy exercise. The conscience, the law in the heart is satisfied, for God, the lawgiver, is pacified; and the soul, freed from lashings and slavish fear, is ready to enter on a course of new obedience. The debt is paid, the load is lifted off, and the man walks in freedom. This is the Gospel plan of imparting a single eye. We part with the old and get the new. When the waves of the ocean are raging and cannot rest, how are we to allay them? It is of little use contending with them, of no use commanding them, for they laugh at our impotent efforts, and toss off all the restraint we would lay upon them, and cast them as mire and dirt upon the shore. But let the winds of heaven cease, and then the waves of the ocean will soon cease. So, let God be pacified towards us, let His anger be turned away, let His face smile upon us, and these tumultuous passions will soon rock themselves to rest.

He who has thus cast out the beam from his eye, and got his spiritual perception restored, is ready to receive light from every quarter, and he gets light. "When the eye is single the whole body is full of light." Even in scientific investigations, a sincere desire to discover the truth is the most effective means for finding it. It is Bacon who says that a man can enter the kingdom of nature in no other way than he enters the kingdom of grace, by becoming a little child. And, in moral and spiritual matters, it is not great intellect or great learning that is the best preservative against error and security for reaching certainty, but a sincere, a candid, a truth-seeking, and truth-loving spirit. The truth seeker is sure to be the truth finder, provided he seeks for it as for hid treasure, and is ready to value it when he finds it. The wish is father to the thought. It is so ordered in this world, that in moral matters we commonly get what we look for, though possibly not in the way we expected, or by the means we employed. He who wants to wander will be allowed to wander; he would have it so, and it is so. We can explain this psychologically. The heart has an influence on the head. When we love a particular object, that object will continually present itself, to the exclusion of other objects which we do not love. When we are bent on a particular course, all the arguments in its behalf, all the advantages likely to follow and the means to secure the end will continually press themselves on the attention. All this, by the well-known law of mental association, according to which, what we prefer—that for which we have an appetite or affection—is most apt to come up frequently and readily before the mind. It is thus that the evil that we love and cherish will mislead us, as certainly as "evil communications corrupt good manners." On the other hand, he who seeks the good way will find it. God will lead "them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."

Such is the law of man's nature appointed by God. Exactly corresponding to it is the method of God's procedure. They that seek the Lord shall find Him. God is the fountain of light, and the light shines on the eye that is open and looks toward it. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant." Yes, God makes known His will, not to the proud who are made to stand afar off, but to those who humbly seek him. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Jesus, when on earth, did not reveal Himself fully to the unbelieving Jews. He made Himself known most comfortably to His disciples, and to them as they were able to bear it. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." He spoke more explicitly to certain humble believers than even to the Apostles. When the woman of Samaria came, by the leading of Jesus, to say, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called the Christ, and when He is come he will tell us all things," then Jesus avowed, "I that speak unto thee am He." When the question was put to the man born blind, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? and he was able to answer sincerely, "Who is the Lord, that I might believe on him Jesus declared, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee."

And here let us observe the close connection between these two things—between knowing the doctrine and doing the duty. If we do not know the doctrine, how shall we know what is duty? We may mistake and do what is wrong, believing it to be right. We are not to give in for one instant to the wretched fallacy of those who say that we may pay no attention to doctrine—duty is all we need to look to;

as if doctrine were not in many cases needful, to enable us to understand what is duty. One end served by the performance of duty is to raise us, as a reward, to the contemplation of higher doctrine. But it is equally true that it is when we are doing the duty we are able to know the doctrine, whether it is of God. You complain that there are doctrines proposed to you apparently in God's word, that you do not see your way to accept. In such a case we may surely ask you, for the present, to suspend your judgment and not reject them. Meanwhile, there are other truths you profess to believe; well, then, proceed to act on them, and act immediately and consistently. As you do so and walk on you may get new views of some of the doctrines of which you were in doubt, and know whether they are of God. When you, students, entered on your studies at school or college, did you see all that they would lead to? It was as you advanced that you discovered what literature, and philosophy, and history, and science were fitted to open to you. Had you drawn back at the entrance, because you did not see the end, you would have been left with uncultivated minds and in ignorance. So in all matters of faith and practice, ascertain first that you are entering on the right path, and then walk on, and new views on the right hand and on the left will open to you as you advance.

Accept the truth and follow it out. It is a truth of science that you are asked to believe. Ascertain, first, if it is a truth of science, sanctioned by induction, and not a mere fancy or plausible theory; and if it is so, then receive it. But then, you say, it is not consistent with religion; and you ask, Which am I to give up—my Bible or science? I answer, Give up neither. But, you say, you do not discover the consistency. Oh! but is thy great intellect fitted and intended to discover the consistency of all truth? Canst thou so much as tell how thy soul is united to thy body—the thinking part

to the material? The two may turn out to be consistent, whether thy mole's eyes can see it or no. There was a time when people, pious and impious, thought Laplace's theory of the heavens inconsistent with religion. Now, every scholar sees, or may see, that there must be an ordinating power above, bringing such order out of what was once without form and void, as Scripture describes: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." When Darwin maintains that there is development in Nature, that there is a law of natural selection, that there is a tendency in the fittest to survive, he is uttering truth in thorough conformity with Scripture, which everywhere proclaims that there is development in the kingdoms both of nature and grace; that useful things are fostered, and noxious things allowed to become fewer and disappear. But if any one maintains that development can be carried on without the power of God, that there is nothing in Nature but development, that development does not imply something original out of which the development has come, and a process requiring to be arranged by a divine mind, and that there is not in man a thinking and responsible soul, as well as a material and organized body, he is setting himself not only against religion, but against natural observation and all philosophy. Darwin himself knows this, and has been calling in a vague pangensis or universal life to account for what his development theory does not even appear to explain. This pangensis is a vague, meaningless expression for the great spiritual power working in nature and above it, and without which we can account for nothing. Hold by the truths of science, but beware of premature hypotheses and crude theories which overlook vastly more than they look at; but hold, at the same time, by the truths of religion. There is a curious story told (1 Kings xiii.) of a prophet being sent to denounce the judgment of

heaven on the idolatrous altar at Bethel. He was to eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the way he came. But he was allured aside to his destruction by an old prophet, who said, "I am a prophet, also, as thou art." Beware of these men, whatever they call themselves, be they scientists, or literateurs, or speculators, who assume the air of infallibility and would draw you away from what you know to be the truth of God. "He that believeth will not make haste." Holding by the truth of Scripture, he believes that in the end all the truths of science will be found in accordance with it.

As he thus moves on, he may be in darkness for a time, having no light. But, sooner or later, a light will arise to guide him, as the star did to the seekers of wisdom from the East; and it will conduct you to the very place where truth is to be found—not, it may be, in the form which you expected, but the very truth of God, revealed to man, and before which you pour out the incense of a true heart, more precious than the gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh presented from the riches of the East to the infant Redeemer. There will be times when he feels as if he were hemmed in by insuperable mountains, but a way will unexpectedly open. He may not see the end of the path, but he sees the opening, and it is enough. And as he moves on in this pass—up, it may be, a steep ascent—suddenly he emerges on some Alpine top, where, with the blue heaven above him, he looks abroad on an expanse of hills and vales, of plains and cities stretching away before him, and bounded only by the boundless sky. And he cherishes the hope that, like that sun which he sees setting, when the time of his departure comes, his spirit will career on far beyond the horizon of time, with bright worlds ever opening on the right side and on the left, till he stays at last at the foot of the eternal throne of God.

So much for doctrine. A few words as to duty. Young

men are apt to feel as if they could command their destiny in this world by their ability, their skill, their prudence, their energy and perseverance. That these qualities are valuable, that they tend to bring success, is undoubted. Still they do not secure it. The youth forecasts for himself a bright and glorious future—he will be rich and honored. But how many circumstances, over which he has little control, must concur before he can gain even such inferior ends as these! Or, to put it more pointedly, how many things may occur to frustrate his design! He plans wisely, but an unexpected event occurs. He might meet it; but an unreasonable, ungrateful man opposes. He might defeat all this; but he is visited with ill-health at the very time when his strength was needed to make one great exertion. After gaining victory after victory, he is defeated, with nothing left him but complaints which irritate him—like Marius sitting on the ruins of Carthage, like Napoleon nibbling at his cage in St. Helena. Many an able, many a brave man is thus left in the end, stranded at the entrance of the harbor which he meant to enter so triumphantly.

Let us follow the history of these two youths setting out on the journey of life—the one taking counsel of himself, the other taking counsel of God. Both prosper for a time; but, as years roll on reverses come, enemies assail them, friends do not stand by them, and a sudden catastrophe overwhelms and crushes them. When they come to this pass, is there no difference between the two—between the one who trusted in himself and the other who trusted in God? There is, after all, a mighty difference—far greater than the difference between outward failure and success. The one has no pleasant reflections; his confidence was in his own wisdom, and it has failed him; and he has nothing left but his folly to brood on; and he complains of chance and fate,—powers which will not listen to him any more than the winds of heaven and the waves of the

ocean. All he can say is, "They have taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more?" But the other has far more left than has been taken from him. He has acted for the best, and he has the consciousness of rectitude, and he floats like the lily upon the flood. He left the issue with God, and he knows that God will, somehow or other, bring him out of his difficulties. "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."

But, then, it is urged by some one, there are many who succeed in this world, and I hope to succeed. Look, then, to these two other young men, acting in much the same way as the other two, but with different issues; for both prosper and reach riches and honors. But is there no difference between them? There is a vast difference, far greater than if the one had failed and the other succeeded. The most miserable men I have met with in this world are those who have toiled all their life, and sought by selfishness and crooked policy to earn wealth and fame and pleasure, only to be obliged to say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" They find that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor the lust with gratification, nor the ambition with success, and they have nothing else to fall back upon; and, in the midst of wealth, they feel themselves the poorest of men. The other never set his heart on this world; he has had all along other sources of enjoyment, which sanctify the Mammon of unrighteousness, and enable him to turn it to a good and profitable account for this life and the life to come.

When any one is passing through an unknown country, it is of great use to have before him a prominent object on which to fix his eyes, and by which to guide his movements. They who traverse the ocean have the sun or a star above them, unmoved by winds or waves, and by which to steer their course. So it should be with those on the journey or voyage of life: they should have an object above them and

abiding, on which to fix their eyes; they should have the law of God and the glory of God as ends which they keep constantly in view, and this will give a constancy and a consistency to their path. At times the Christian may feel as if he were in the position of the Israelites, with Pharaoh behind him and the Red Sea before him; but he hears the voice addressed to him to go forward, and as he goes forward he finds the waters receding and the depths of the sea made a way for God's people to pass in. There may be times when he is perplexed by darkness and beset by storm, but he casts out anchor, and waits for the morning light and the calm; meanwhile, though moved, he is "not much moved," and he is ready to go on with the first favorable breeze. At first he may feel the course irksome, but habit will make it pleasant; and he will reach the state which Aristotle represents as the sign of a perfected habit, in which the irksomeness ceases and the work becomes easy and pleasant throughout.

He who cherishes this spirit will find himself pursuing a steady and consistent course. He walks in the straight line which is the shortest distance between two points. He gains the confidence and can secure the help of his friends, who always know where to find him—that is, in the path of integrity. The foul breath of calumny will not rest on a character thus bright, thus strong as steel. He who is thus trained finds his soul coming more and more into unity with God, and he does the will of God on the instant, as if instinctively. As two clocks placed on the same wall, at first somewhat diverse in their movements, come to give the same time; as two friends, say husband and wife, at first somewhat different in natural disposition, come by constant fellowship to feel alike, so the heart of the believer comes at last to beat responsive to the will of God. A harmony is thus established, and they correspond as the shadow on the dial on earth follows the movement of the sun in the heavens.

Gentlemen of the Graduating Class: With you I have been connected by special ties such as can never be formed between me and any other class. You were the first class entering College after I became President. I have watched over your progress with intense interest. Nothing unpleasant has happened in your history from the time of your entrance until now, when we are about to send you away with our imprimatur upon you. I cannot remember at this moment an act of any member leaving a painful impression in my memory—anything that would prevent me from meeting you in our future lives with pleasure, or from welcoming you as friends, should you come back, as I hope you may, to visit us.

We can now see in the older classes the influence and effect of the improvements which the college authorities have been seeking to make in the last few years; of the modifications and enlargements in the course of study; of the more systematic examinations and the stopping of unfair means at competitions; of the effort, already crowned with a large measure of success, to abolish the degrading customs of American colleges; and of the encouragement given to learning by prizes and fellowships. There has been, I hope, an increased spirit of study in the various classes, and a larger amount of reading. There are in this class a number of as studious and bright youths as ever graduated at this institution, and we look forward to their future career with confident expectation.

You have come to an epoch in your lives. You had to pass through a crisis when you entered college. You have reached, now that you are about to leave it, another crisis. You may make this as profitable a Sabbath as ever you spent within these walls, by looking back on the past and gathering lessons from its memories, pleasant or unpleasant—lessons of encouragement, lessons, it may be, of humility. You will be grateful to God and man for the means of improvement enjoyed, for the knowledge of words things, and for the principles which

have been instilled in science, mental and physical, in morals and religion, and for the training through which you have been put, fitted to invigorate the faculties, to refine the taste, and to fit you for the active duties of life. Some, in the course of the survey, may be made to feel as if they could gather lessons from their very failures, from their want of system, their want of diligence, their want of earnestness; and your resolution this day will be to profit by your mistakes. You will realize that you have now to start upon a new field and a more formidable competition. Let those who stand highest know that the contests in which they have engaged and the victories they have won are merely the drill to prepare them for that battle of life which they have now to fight. The laurels we place on your brows are meant to be an encouragement for you to go on and earn fresh ones; and if you neglect this they will soon wither and be felt to be an incumbrance. In the race of life he who stops short is liable to fall headlong; and there will be some here stirred up by their very disappointments, to resolve that those who were least shall be greatest, and those that were last shall be first.

My special anxiety is that you do now set out on the journey before you, bent on knowing what is right and determined to follow it whithersoever it may lead you. If this be not your purpose, I have fears of you, whatever be your talents or attainments. If this be your resolution, formed in a strength that does not fail, I have no fears of you.

It is a time in which some of you have to choose a profession in life or enter upon a profession. At such a season there will usually be a strange combination of confidence and yet of diffidence—the confidence may be the more manifest to the spectator, but there will be a diffidence felt to be the undermost and the deepest by the young man himself. There will be hopes, never to be fully realized in this world; perhaps there will be fears, never to be altogether fulfilled; and where

the event implies separation there will be sorrow which a youthful pride seeks to conceal. It is certainly an era in that young man's life, and this whether he acknowledges it or no; he had to look forward to it, and often will he have to look back upon it. It is a time fraught with vast consequences. While the young are altogether unconscious of it, their character, their habits, and with these their whole destiny are in the course of being determined. Just as their bodily frames are taking that particular shape which they are ever after to retain, so their tastes, inclinations, and principles may be assuming, imperceptibly, that particular form and set which they are to keep through life—through the present life and the life to come.

In the very choice of a calling young men should have a respect to the law and glory of God, declining those employments which are unlawful or unholy, which are injurious to the best interests of humanity, or which may bring an exposure to temptations which it is most difficult for human nature to resist; and they should be sincerely anxious to choose that profession to which they seem to be called by native taste or talent, or in which they may be most useful or best promote the glory of God. Ah! it is too seldom that at such a season there is a sense of dependence on God. In these matters the young are apt to feel as if they were independent, not only of man, but of God himself. And yet, at such an epoch, momentous above every other, there should be a waiting on God, and much consultation, as it were, with him. It is because they enter on the business of life in a God-despising spirit of self-dependence that so many make shipwreck of honor, honesty, character, reputation, and a good conscience, and descend so rapidly the road to ruin. Again, in entering on the duties of their selected occupations, the young should ask a special blessing of God, make a solemn dedication of themselves to him, resolve to conduct all their business, not with eye service, as

men pleasers, but as the servants of God and in accordance with the unbending principles of integrity, and to employ their earnings and their acquired influence for the good of man and the glory of God.

At such a time the youth should seriously inquire whether he is not required to make a special dedication of himself to the service of God. "The field is the world," the "harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few;" and in the case of some of you a father's counsels and a mother's prayers, and the dedication which you made of yourself to God, and events in providence, and the very voice of God, by His word and spirit, may be saying to you, "Go to-day and work in my vineyard." This is a call not to be carelessly set aside, but to be prayerfully attended to. There are surely some young men here who have a desire to live for a great and a good end, not for the mere purpose of making money or reaching a certain worldly eminence, but aiming at nothing less than to leave the world wiser and better than they found it. This is no mean or paltry ambition to be ridiculed or repressed; if it be but sanctified it may be the seed which, cherished for a time in the secret heart, is in due season to come forth as a noble tree which will afford food and shelter when we ourselves are slumbering in the tomb.

You have to go out from this place into a world in which there is a keen contest between truth and error, and you must be prepared to take your part. However we may account for it, our world has been from the beginning an arena of contest, a succession of darkness and light, of night and day: first of warring elements, according to Laplace's theory; then of warring animals, and a struggle for existence, and the strongest and fittest prevailing, according to Darwin's theory. There is still a war between the conscience and the passions in the breast of man; between the flesh and the spirit in the breast of the Christian; between truth and error; between purity

and pollution in the world. I wish you to realize, in starting, that it is into such a world you are now to enter, through such a world you are to find your way. In this contest the decisive battle was fought in the middle of the human æon, upwards of 1,800 years ago, and we have to continue the contest as soldiers under Him who then gained a victory—an earnest of the final and complete victory.

It is a contest between truth and error. The error takes different forms in different ages. The contest is now a fundamental one—not about the outposts, but for the very citadel; not about this truth or that truth, but as to whether there be any truth above what can be discovered by the senses. It is as to whether man is made after the image of God or after the image of the lower animals. It is not about metaphysical subtleties, but whether man has a soul spiritual, responsible, and immortal; whether we have proof of the existence of any other world than this passing one. In going into such an arena you must be prepared by intellectual discipline and must take a firm stand and show courage, otherwise you will be thrown down and have to roll in the sand amidst the jeers of men. I believe that in this conflict you will often fall back on the great fundamental truths—scientific, philosophic, and religious—which you have been taught in this college. For a century and a quarter Princeton has defended the truth, oppose it who might, and she confidently expects of the sons she now sends forth that they will in their day act the part which their fathers did in their day, and, as good soldiers, stand valiantly for the faith on which our hopes are founded.

Then you are going forth into a world in which there is a contest between pollution and purity. Various parties will approach and address you. Pleasure will come in gay attire and with smiles upon her countenance and flattering words on her lips, and she says, “Youth is the season of enjoyment; come with me for a little while, now that all these college toils

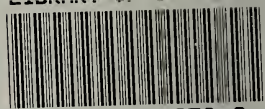
are over, and I will throw open to you everything on which your heart is set ; and afterwards, when the shades of evening are gathering around you, you will find it more pleasant to seek for the joys of a better world." The world, too, comes with its profits and its riches, its rank and honors, and holding them out before you it recommends to you the things that are seen as infinitely to be preferred to the things which are unseen. Lust, too, comes, with painted visage and gorgeous dress to cover her loathsomeness, and with the attire of an harlot : " She is loud and stubborn, her feet abide not in her house ; now she is without, now in the streets and lieth in wait in every corner ; and she says to the simple, Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him." Indolence, too, comes, with easy gait and languishing air, and tells him not to be over anxious, that in the meantime he may take some rest in the heat of the day, being sure that a cool evening will come in which he will find it agreeable to work. Pride, too, comes, with looks of lofty pretension, and suggests that there is something too mean and humiliating in these conditions which Christ requires of him, and exhorts him to remain contented with his present state. With all these parties clamoring in the ear of youth, they are apt to pay no attention to another, also pleading, and in far sweeter accents, if only they will listen to Him. " As He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street," there is a risk of His being overlooked. Yet there He is, standing at the door of our hearts and saying, " If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Setting out on the right path, in the proper spirit, and trusting in the unfailing aid, be not so anxious to seem good as to be good. I have known students in college making an elaborate preparation to deceive at an examination, only to be

detected and exposed; whereas, if they had taken the same pains to master the subject, they would have been successful. Many fall into a like mistake in life; to save appearances, they make efforts which would have secured the reality, which has always a good appearance. Be not so desirous to gain eminence as to gain character, so that they may say of you, "This is the honest lawyer, the honorable merchant, the faithful physician, the godly pastor"—this may turn out to be the best way to gain eminence. Let not your grand aim be to obtain riches, or fame, or honors; these may be as likely to come to you, not when you are seeking them, but seeking the sound principle and the good name which are best fitted to bring them.

Gentlemen of the Graduating Class: We send you forth with our imprimatur upon you. You will feel that you have to sustain the reputation of this ancient college. We send you forth with our good wishes. We send you forth with our earnest prayers that the blessing of the God of our fathers may rest upon you. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even forever more."





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