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THE

MODERN STYLE OF PREACHING,

AND THE

STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

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JOHN G. MARSHALL.

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ON SCRIPTURAL CONVERSION, &c.

“ Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah, lv. 7. “ Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”—Acts, iii. 19. “ Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”—Matt. 5. 13.

The first and second of the above texts, one contained in the *old*, and the other in the *new* covenant Scriptures, though differently worded, will be seen, as to meaning, to be in perfect agreement. The same is true of all the Scriptures under each dispensation, relating to the doctrines and precepts as to the faith and practice essential to the attainment of present and eternal salvation. This harmony is also clearly apparent in the following passages: “ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Prov., xxviii. 13.—“ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” John, i. 9.—“ Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” Jer., xxix. 13.—“ Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you.” James, iv. 8.—“ Cease to do evil; learn to do well.” Isaiah, i. 16-17.—“ Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.” 3 John, xi. There cannot but be this perfect agreement between the two revelations, as both were given by the same infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable God. Let none, therefore, be deceived by the thought, or belief that they are not bound equally by the *old* as by the *new* Testament Scriptures, in regard to the doctrines relating to vital saving faith, and the precepts regarding pious and moral duty.

It will be seen from the first and second texts, and the other Scriptures cited, that not only a repentance for all past transgressions, but turning from all sinful works and ways, must take place at the same time, with a seeking and hoping for divine forgiveness, through the atoning sacrifice rendered by the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the plan of salvation, as declared in those texts, and passages, there can be no well grounded hope of prayer being favorably heard and pardon obtained without the resolve and the effort to cease to do evil, and follow that which is good. Scripture declares: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* Much worse will it be if it is carried out in the practice.

In the present day nearly all who address the unconverted, merely exhort them to come to the Saviour, saying—"Come to Jesus just as you are," without mentioning a word as to forsaking sinful ways and habits. There is no Scriptural authority to sanction such a style of limited or single exhortation to the worldly and unconverted. It is unscriptural, and consequently unsafe and improper. It does indeed frequently have the effect of making additions to church membership; but very often they are either *self-deceivers* or worse. All the exhortations by the prophets and other true teachers under the previous dispensation as shown in the Scriptures, include not only a turning to God, but an immediate forsaking of all evil courses and practices. These two must be concurrent acts. Either of them singly observed will not suffice to obtain the promised blessings leading to, and connected with, a Scriptural and sound conversion. The Baptist, foretold in Scripture, as the forerunner to prepare the way for the Saviour, proclaimed the new dispensation by exhorting and commanding: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." The Lord and Saviour himself proclaimed the same words: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and again: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel."* The same was the substance and tone of the primary exhortations and teachings of all the apostles. The highly gifted and zealous Paul declared, as seen in Acts 20, that such teachings by him consisted in testifying both to the Jews,

and also to the Greeks—"Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Through all ages, since the same has been the plan and method of all Christian ministers, truly enlightened and skilled in the Gospel plan of salvation, and faithful to the most solemn responsibility with which they were charged, to "rightly divide the word of truth;" and without fear or favour to "declare the whole counsel of God." The Scriptural invitations and promises for obtaining spiritual rest and peace, are addressed to the "weary and heavy laden" with their sins;—to those who are "thirsty" to "come to the waters;" and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.* "They are not for those who neither form or express any intention of forsaking every evil course and practising the self denial, and observing the righteous conduct scripturally enjoined. That eminent Christian minister, so deeply skilled in the things of the heavenly kingdom, the Rev. John Wesley, in remarking on the conduct of those who hold forth to all, *indiscriminately*, the promises of the Gospel, employed the following language: "They know and use but one medicine whatever be the cause of the distemper. They preach the Gospel, as they call it. To give *comfort* is the *single* point at which they aim; in order to which, they say many soft and tender things concerning the love of God to poor helpless sinners, and the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Now this is *quackery*, indeed, and that of the worst sort. It is hard to speak of these 'daubers with untempered mortar,' these promise-mongers, as they deserve. They do, in effect, make the 'blood of the covenant an unholy thing.'" * * * The ordinary method of God is to convict sinners by the *law*, and *that only*. The Gospel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himself used for this end. We have no authority in Scripture for using it thus, nor any ground to think it will prove effectual. "They that are whole," as our Lord himself observes, "need not a physician but they that are sick." It is absurd to offer Christ to them whose heart is whole, having never yet been broken." In addressing such persons, the first effort should be to show them that they are really *diseased* and in need of a *cure*, before proposing or applying the healing Gospel remedy. Our Lord's sermon on the mount was almost en-

* Matt., iii. 2 8—iv. 17; Mark, i. 15. † Matt., xi. 28; Is., iv. 1; Matt., v. 6.

tirely of a legal deception. As a proof of that general indiscriminate method as to public preaching, and of failure to enforce repentance and expose, plainly, prevailing evils, and exhort to their abandonment as primary Scriptural injunctions, the writer of this discourse can truly say, that he has not for ten or a dozen years, or more, heard a sermon on repentance, although regularly attending on public religious services in different countries and various denominations. Yet repentance, both as a doctrine and a duty has, by inspired truth, ever been most strictly enjoined and placed at the very foundation and commencement of a religious life. It will readily be admitted by all that in every congregation there are very many, indeed the vast majority, who need repentance and conversion; and therefore it is the more essential that both, more especially repentance, should be frequently taken as subjects for pulpit and other religious addresses, and be fully explained and urgently enforced. On every such occasion, indeed, repentance should make a part of the earnest and pointed exhortations.

It will here be well to explain the nature of genuine repentance, what it includes, and produces as its fruits. Scripture declares that it includes a "godly sorrow." It has a reference to the Divine Being, and gives a view of sin as having been wickedly and ungratefully committed against his righteous authority and laws and gracious forbearance. It produces contrition of spirit and more or less humiliation of feeling before God, for having offended against his mercy and goodness, and is ever accompanied with a sincere desire and resolution to abandon all ways of transgression: and in accordance with the divine injunctions, "Cease to do evil, and learn to do well." Through grace and strength imparted in answer to prayer, and in the use of the other means scripturally enjoined, especially searching and obeying the inspired records, the penitent even at the outset of his religious course is enabled in some degree to carry into effect that good resolution, by refraining from his former external transgressions, and by bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." As true repentance is through the operation of the Holy Spirit, let every individual beware of continuing in sin, lest the grace or power to repent be withheld or withdrawn, and hardness

of heart and final impenitence ensue. If any desire for such true repentance is felt, let it be cherished as of itself a gracious inclination, and prayer be offered that it may early result in the truly penitential feelings scripturally described. Let all, however, beware of resting merely in a reformation of external conduct, supposing that this is all that is comprehended in the repentance required. Like every other part of religious experience, it must have its operation and effects on the spirit and the heart. There must however, as already intimated, be an immediate abandonment of every sinful course, and every form of iniquity and evil. It is only to him, who both "confesseth and forsaketh his sins,"* that the promise of mercy and pardon is made. Throughout the gospel invitations to the unconverted, repentance is mentioned as *preceding* that faith in the Saviour through which forgiveness is obtained. They are given in the following and similar terms: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel;"—"Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."† The word repentance as used in the Scriptures, implies of itself, and includes a turning from the ways of sin, as well as sorrow towards God for all previous transgressions. The latter without the former would not only be inconsistent and hypocritical, but would greatly increase the previous guilt.

The thorough conversion of the contrite and repenting sinner is also ~~required~~^{required}. The word *conversion* as applied to religion is of very large and comprehensive meaning. In several passages of Scripture it is described as a new creation, that is of the spiritual and moral nature of the human being; and so thorough and complete that it is said,—“Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new.”§ Whatever were the previous selfish, sensual, or other sinful desires and pursuits of the individual, whether for the acquisition of worldly honors, or wealth, or pleasure, in seeking and fulfilling “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye or the pride of life,” or all combined, they must and will, in the true convert, be subdued and pass away through the powerful influence of the new affections and pursuits produced by the divine spirit’s operations and the convert’s faith and obedience. The change may be more or less rapid, or gra-

* Prov., xxviii. 13. † Mark, i. 15; Acts, xx. 21. § Cor., v. 17.

dual, according to the degree of faith imparted and exercised, the inward qualities of the person, his ordinary conduct, and different external occurrences. Instead of the previous *pride* and *ambition*, there will be *humility* and desires and efforts for obtaining spiritual graces and enjoyments, especially the divine spirit's witness of pardon and acceptance. Instead of the love and pursuit of worldly gain, there will be the desire and zealous endeavour to secure "durable riches and righteousness," for the faith which produces love to God and the Lord Jesus,—to all of the household of faith,—as well as of all mankind,—and for the wisdom which is profitable to direct on all occasions. There will be constant prayer for grace and strength to resist and endure, under every form of temptation and trial; to be ever faithful and fruitful in the service of his God and Saviour; and finally, the employment of all means to attain that "holiness, without which none shall see the Lord," and thus be qualified for admission to those scenes and mansions "where there are pleasures for evermore." If the convert had been a sensualist or votary of pleasure, seeking happiness in fleshly indulgences, or in vain frivolous and dissipating courses, in amusements of the theatre, the ball room, the card table, dice board and billiard room; the book of romance, tales of imagination and fictitious narratives; the vain and frivolous conversations, and various other employments of sensual and fashionable life, he will, by the inward change he has experienced, feel a disgust and contempt for all those sins and follies. He will immediately enter upon a new career for obtaining enjoyment. He will seek it at its true fountain,—the sacred oracles of truth, wisdom and righteousness. These he will find and esteem as wells of salvation, for satisfying his spiritual desires and affections. They will constantly stimulate and enlarge every gracious emotion; inspiring and maintaining faith, hope, and confidence, and increasing love to his God and Saviour, while meditating on the numerous promises of divine loving kindness, guidance and protection. Prayer and attendance on other religious observances instead of being, as with many, burdensome exercises, will be highly esteemed and found to convey spiritual refreshment and solid enjoyment through communion with his reconciled God and Saviour. In meditation, also, he will be able to adopt the language of the Psalmist,—"My me-

dition of Him is sweet, I will be glad in the Lord ; I will delight myself in thy statutes ; I will not forget this word ; it is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

At the commencement of his new creation and spiritual course, he will not, indeed, experience all those changes and deliverances from the evils of the *old* nature, and all the blessings and enjoyments of the *new*. But even the desire and hope of such freedom and happiness will yield a measure of gratification, and of courage for persevering efforts to obtain further blessings, especially the divine spirit's witness of pardon, through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. When thus justified and accepted, the convert will joyfully go forward in all the exercises and duties of his spiritual life. His new desires and affections will produce a similar and corresponding change throughout his external conduct. If he was previously neglectful in the family relations, as to moral instruction, or kindly intercourse, or severe and unreasonable, he will by the inward change become earnestly concerned for the spiritual and moral welfare of all under his domestic charge, and will be constantly employing means and efforts for promoting that welfare ; and by various tokens and instances show his sincere and affectionate desire for their real and permanent good. In all his intercourse and dealings with others he will, in accordance with scriptural injunctions, not by constraint, but freely and sincerely, act with the strictest fairness and honesty ; abstaining from all selfish desires and attempts to promote his own temporal interests to the injury or unfair diminution of the interests of others. If previously he had followed any noxious employment, such as the sale of intoxicating drinks, or any other which is injurious as to religion, morals, or other good objects and interests, he will immediately abandon it. He will according to his means be liberal in contributions to the poor ; will feelingly sympathise with the bereaved and afflicted ; will abstain from all slanderous or reproachful speaking, and without strictly justifiable cause will avoid exposing their errors or faults ; will make due and charitable allowance for their ignorance and imperfections, and will, as to all, with whom he holds public or private intercourse, maintain a kindly spirit and behaviour. He will not yield to any resentful feeling, or commit any act in retaliation for any offence given or

wrong done to him, but will sincerely forgive, and endeavour as opportunities serve, to “overcome evil with good.” He will strive to live peaceably with all men, and as occasions offer, try to promote their welfare, especially their religious interests, by advice, exhortation and other means. In short, throughout the whole of his conduct, he will endeavour to act in conformity with the divine injunctions, to—“Love his neighbor as himself;” and “Do unto all men, as he would they should do unto him.” In all his conversations and conduct, he will be carefully *truthful*, and avoid all jesting, and language bordering on indecency, or rude and indecorous. He will be diligent in all his occupations, redeeming time for good and useful purposes; refraining from all reading, public performances, exhibitions, and exercises, merely amusing and gratifying to the sensual passions and desires. If laying aside suitable portions of money for assistance to children, at commencing to earn their own subsistence, or a comfortable provision for the probable widowhood of her to whom he is united, he will avoid investing such monies in shares or securities on opera or theatrical buildings, or halls, or other places in which vain fictitious and dissipating scenes and performances take place. This offence against christian principle and duty, especially as to example is committed by some members of evangelical churches who complacently pocket their portion of the gains sinfully obtained from the rents or use of ~~such~~ ^{those} places. The true spiritual convert will ever strive to restrain all his lawful natural passions, desires, and appetites, under the control and rule of religion and reason; avoiding all excess in eating and drinking, extravagance in apparel and displays in ornamental personal appendages of any description, and in luxurious furniture and decorations, and other things not required for reasonable use and comfortable subsistence.

Although the christian graces and duties here described have been mentioned as forming the character of the *male* converts; nearly all of them are equally requisite and obligatory as to *female* professors. They need the like repentance, regenerating and converting grace; and in conformity with the new spiritual creation, and gracious dispositions and affections thereby implanted, they are scripturally required to be “grave and sober in their deport-

ment ;” “ not slanderers,” or “ wanderers from house to house ;” or “ tattlers or busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not.” If married, they are to “ love their husbands and their children ; to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their husbands ; guide the house, and give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” Both married and single must adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array ; but which becometh women professing godliness with good works.” Their adorning is to be that “ of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, of a meek and quiet spirit which is, in the sight of God of great price.” Now let none, either woman or man, say that these directions as to apparel and ornaments are of no importance as to vital christian principle and religious conduct. They are all literal and plain *divine commands*, recorded in the *inspired* epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, and the first by Peter. Indeed, all the injunctions, commands and directions herein beforementioned as to christian principles, affections and conduct, are *literally set forth in the Scriptures* as required by *divine authority*, to constitute the character of the genuine Christian, producing in *him* and *her* that holiness, “ without which none shall see the Lord,” and become partakers of the glories and joys of his eternal kingdom. No partial conversion or change will suffice to fulfil the claims of scriptural and spiritual christianity. It must be thorough and complete, both as to inward principles and graces and practical conduct ; so complete, that as Scripture describes it, “ Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new.” The Church of the faithful and finally saved,—the bride of the Lamb,—the Saviour King,—will be brought unto him “ in raiment of needle-work ;” * every grace and holy disposition and affection, patiently and perseveringly wrought and fashioned according to the divine pattern ; and her whole person and adornments, “ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing ;” the immortal spirit having, through heavenly influence, been thoroughly created anew in that holy and happy image in which it was first formed and united forever to a glorified body. There must, of necessity, be such a thorough and perfect renovation for the whole

* Ps., xv. 15.

of the redeemed, with the innumerable company of the holy orders who never sinned, will forever dwell in the presence, and under the guidance and favour of the infinitely wise and Holy One, who sitteth on the throne, and of the Redeemer and King of Saints.

But unhappily it is too apparent, that even in the present day, with such increased and abounding means for obtaining the required meetness for that holy and happy eternity, vast numbers, not only of mere congregational attendants, but members of the churches are resting on a foundation, and satisfied with a standard framed, it would seem, each one for himself, or by common consent, or with slight class or personal differences, but all *deceptive*, and very far below the scriptural and only safe standard. Like the Laodicean church, "they are neither cold nor hot," not knowing that they are "poor and blind and naked," but thinking that they are sufficiently "rich, and have need of nothing." * All this affords melancholy evidence of the truth of the scripture testimony, that the natural "heart is deceitful above all things." † They have not earnestly sought and acquired by prayer and searching the Scriptures, a spiritual conception and knowledge of the strict and holy requisitions and standard of true christianity, which the unchangeable God will neither reduce nor relax in accommodation to their desires and purposes. Their continuance in some or many of the various modes of sin and folly, of sensual indulgences, and merely vain and forbidden "worldly conformities," have chiefly contributed to deceive and blind them as to the perception of that sublime and holy standard. They "come and go to the place of the holy," and may,—and some of them do,—abound in attendance on public religious ministrations and services, but yet, from that native blindness still remaining through continuance in forbidden ways, the following scripture applies to their state: "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." ‡ Their outward religious services are not acceptable to the High and Holy One, who has declared that he requires "sincerity and truth in the inward parts;" and that if any "regard iniquity in the heart," He "will not hear them;" by which is meant that He will not bestow the solicited blessings. His word to Israel of old, by His prophet

* Rev., iii. xv. † Jer., xvii. 9. ‡ Eccles., x. 15,

Isaiah (chap. i.), applies to all such persons in every age : " Bring no more vain oblations ;" * * * " when ye make many prayers ; I will not hear ;" * * * " put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil, learn to do well." Such inconsistent and disobedient professors belong to some of the classes predicted in scripture to appear in the last " perilous times," and described by Paul to Timothy as being " lovers of their own selves, covetous, truce breakers, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof," and from such he was commanded to " turn away." Nearly all the *male* portion of such formalists are in various modes votaries of *Mammon* in ardent pursuit of gain. They " will be rich " if at all possible, and with most of them pleasure or amusement also is added, except of the gross or more generally condemned descriptions. These two objects, either singly or combined, engross the thoughts and form the desires, and direct the pursuits of all those carnal formalists, and may be said really to constitute what is called the " spirit of the age." The public musical performance, as well as that of the private luxurious entertainment, they readily attend, though some or all of the musical pieces celebrate merely earthly loves or feats of heroism, battles and conquests ; or are only fanciful or weak sentimental effusions gratifying to the ear, but enfeebling and otherwise injurious to the responsible and immortal spirit, instead of conveying to it edifying and cheering truth. They know not or disregard the scripture directions for recreation in this form : " Is any merry, let him sing psalms ;" " singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."* But further, most of these *formalists* think it quite allowable, to indulge in various other forms of gratification to the sensual desires ; the boat race, the circus, the card table, chess, backgammon and draft board ; also intoxicating liquors and tobacco excitements ; thereby incurring the guilt of unfaithful stewards in wasting the means employed in procuring those needless and pernicious indulgences, and exhibiting *evil* instead of *good* example ; also by some, books of fiction and romance contrary to useful edification, and otherwise injurious. Gossiping, evil speaking, and foolish talking and jesting, are also common with many

* Eph., v. 10—Matt., xii, 36—James, i, 26.

of these formalists, these “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,” and his word and ways though they profess his worship and service. They either do not know, or forget the Scriptures which say that “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment;” and that “if any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” More than a few of such formalists are not alway truthful in their speeches, upright in their dealings, and as benevolent as they ought to be to the poor and afflicted. To all such disobedient professors, the word of the Lord directly applies—“In vain do they worship” while following “the traditions of men” and *worldly conformities*, instead of His holy and righteous commands.

Many of these last described vain and injurious amusements and worldly conformities, are equally, or indeed more generally followed by the *female formalist*, especially the musical performances, reading books of fiction and romances, attending the circus, the theatre, public scenes and exhibitions of legerdemain and jugglery, and indulging in various other modes of vanity and dissipation, gratifying to the desire of the flesh the merely sensual propensities. The scripture directions regarding female christians, especially as to apparel and ornaments, have been given in a previous part of this discourse. There are many, and some of them even in the *ministerial order*, who rashly and irreverently speak of these directions as to apparel and ornaments, as of being of no importance; that it is quite needless to say anything about them in religious ministrations, or at all in relation to christian principle and practice. They say, “preach the Gospel, that is what is required.” Do such persons know the meaning of the word *gospel*. It has a meaning as comprehensive as the whole system of christianity. It is derived from the old Saxon word, *God’s spel*, meaning *God’s word*, *spel* signifying *word*; and, therefore, *gospel* means and includes the whole of divine revelation. But these objectors, generally from defect of knowledge, limit the word *gospel* merely to the sublime and gracious truths, that “God so loved the world that he gave up His only begotten son;” and the Lord Jesus, the Son, so loved us, that he gave himself to the death of the cross to atone for our sins and procure our everlasting salvation and happiness. The true

meaning of the word being as above explained, the directions and commands in the Scriptures as to unsuitable and improper apparel and ornaments by professors of christianity, are just as much a part of the Gospel, and to be obeyed, as that which says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" "who died for our sins and rose again for our justification." If those *repeated* prohibitions and commands, regarding female apparel and ornaments, are so unimportant as those apologists say, why did the Lord, by his evangelical prophet Isaiah in chap. iii., so minutely specify and condemn those vanities and sins by the women of Israel; and why did He do the same by his servants Paul and Peter, in their inspired epistles. The truth is, that all those displays and ornaments, clearly manifest that *native pride* and *vanity of the mind and heart* which are directly opposite to the required love to God and the Saviour, and entire consecration to their service; and also to the self denial and humility indispensably enjoined on the christian. But it is said, "preach the Gospel and get them converted, and then they will of course abandon those vanities." But is it so with those *said* or *supposed* to be converted. Not at all, but they remain on the point just as before. Those vain and extravagant displays are so palpably evident at all times, and are so contrary to the scripture directions on the subject, that any minute or detailed description of them need not here be given. They are so numerous and various, that it would occupy quite too large a space. For a somewhat similar exhibition of female vanity and folly, the reader is referred to Isaiah, chap. iii., before alluded to, where some of the *modern particulars* in those vain exhibitions will be literally found. One of these modern displays of worse than folly may here be mentioned;—the preposterous and disfiguring appendage of false hair or other material in addition, or in place of the fine and beautiful hair given by the Creator, as one of the chief ornaments of the female, especially the youthful maiden. Not a few *elderly* matrons display the same disfiguring or even disgusting appendage. Doubtless all do it because it is fashionable. Those in the various trading employments who make, and those who supply those forbidden vanities in female apparel, and most of them are members of churches, incur on christian principles equal culpability and censure with those who display them. As to those already mentioned, who seem to

think so lightly of those female vanities, and speak of them as of little or no importance, and say "preach the Gospel to gain an reform the unconverted," it may be answered; by all means, let this be frequently and faithfully done, but *only* according to the following and other directions of our Lord himself and his apostles: "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel;"—"Repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" repentance being always placed *first*, and including as previously shown, the commands to "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." But further do not those persons know, indeed they cannot but know, that nearly the whole number of those *supposed* to be converted, and who are in church membership, are just as deeply involved in the constant display of those vanities of apparel and ornaments, as merely worldly persons, making no special profession of religion, by being members of any church. The former show that such is their state, even at Sabbath worship, and when partaking of the sacramental ordinance. It has indeed been said that some of these persons who have superior means for making such vain displays, exhibit them more profusely than many of the merely worldly class. It being then, manifestly true, that those vanities in dress and ornaments are almost universal within church membership, surely it is a needful and proper subject for public admonition, instruction and discipline according to the divine commands: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgressions," giving to all a portion of meat in due season," and declaring "all the counsel of God"* as faithful stewards and dispensers of His word; and as solemnly responsible to give an account to Him as to their fulfilment of *every part of that counsel and duty*.

Now each and all of those scenes and modes of sensual and worldly indulgence and pleasure, and of vanity and folly which have been described, are directly contrary to the scriptural divine commands to practice "self denial," to "mortify the deeds of the body," to "redeem time," to be "watchful," and "walk circumspectly," to "work out salvation with fear and trembling," "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure," to be "faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God," and to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." In truth those sins and vanities are in

* Is., liviii. 1—11. Tim., iv. 2—4 Tim., v. 19—Luke, xii. 52—Acts, xx. 27.

direct opposition to the whole spirit and precepts of our pure and perfect christianity, as revealed in the inspired Scriptures, which alone form the sure and safe standard for religious faith and practice." Large numbers of such formalists, especially the female portion of them, readily attend special or stated gatherings for religious services, and some of them through excitable circumstances and exercises generate a fervor in themselves as to conversion, or receive it from others, but to all such it may well be recommended to ponder most solemnly the following scripture: "Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." * If all, both male and female, old and young, in the several churches to whom some, or many of the before-described sins and vanities and evil ways apply, were accurately numbered, they would be found to compose the vast majority; and of others, the mere congregational attendants, nearly the whole. Here, then, arise the solemn consideration and inquiry; what means are the best, and should be diligently employed to draw those lovers of gain and pleasure, and vain and heedless formalists out of their state of *self-deception* and impending ruin? It is true that the chief, and indeed only perfectly available means for deliverance, are the operations of the divine spirit applying His word as a "two-edged sword," piercing the conscience and convincing of sin; arousing fears of impending eternal wrath and punishment; enlightening the mind in revealed truth, and leading the person to seek for pardon and peace. The public ministrations, however, of that truth, if appropriately and faithfully applied is, as scripture declares, like to a *hammer* breaking the stony heart; and also, "quick and powerful" for effecting those gracious purposes.

In view therefore of the sins, vanities, and other evils before described, and the many others which abound throughout the churches, what an awful responsibility rests upon the ministers of the sanctuary to declare the inspired word as divinely commanded, with earnest and fearless zeal and fidelity, dividing and adapting it to the various conditions and the sins and vanities of the people; neither fearing their frowns or displeasure, nor seeking their favor

or applause; but declaring the whole counsel of God, giving to each and all an *appropriate* portion. Under the former dispensation those who were divinely called and appointed to declare the word of the Lord to the people, were commanded, under the most awful warnings and penalties, to do it fully, and with the utmost plainness and fidelity. The following are especially pointed and explicit: "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." "And thou shalt speak my word unto them. * * * Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house." "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth." Of those who have failed to perform faithfully those solemn duties as messengers of the Lord to the people, it is said: "Their shepherds have caused them to go astray." And under our more spiritual christian system the injunctions on the subject are equally imperative. Hear our Lord himself:—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Again, by his apostles: "Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."* "Reprove, rebuke, and exhort."* * * "Study to show thyself approved unto God—a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* All in this most solemn and responsible of all official relations, should ever remember and strive to follow the example of the greatest of the apostles who, realising his deep responsibility and final account of his ministerial charge, declared to the assembled ministers of the Ephesian churches, as recorded in Acts, xx. : "I kept back nothing that was profitable."* * * "I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Even in these degenerate times, as to the like faithful preaching adapted to the general contrariety between the spirit and lives of professors of Christianity, and its Scriptural character,—there are some, however, though comparatively few, who are indeed bold and faithful in appropriately dividing and declaring that whole divine course. These are zealous and pointed in publicly rebuking and reproving prevalent sins and vanities, and exhorting to genuine heartfelt repentance, and the exhibition of its corresponding fruits, of forsaking all evil ways, and yielding obedi-

* Jer., xxiii. 28—Ezek., ii. 7—Mal., ii. 7—Matt., xxviii. 20—Col., i. 28. † 2 Tim., 2, 15—4, 2.

ence to all the divine requisitions, both as to the spirit and letter of the Scriptures. If all, or even a very large proportion of the ministerial order, were equally fearless and faithful; where *now* there are so *very rarely*, any improvement in the spirit and conduct of members of churches; and so very seldom one real spiritual conversion, through the public ministry of the word, there is plain Scriptural warrant for believing that there would soon be a vast increase in real piety, and practical christian conduct, in the membership, and dozens or scores of such conversions. It would seem as if it was one of the chief designs in that public ministration, to afford an extensive and gratifying *variety* in the subjects presented and discussed.

Every minister, if spiritually and truly converted, cannot but know, that not only among the great body of mere congregational attendants, but among those in church membership, there are large numbers who need repentance, and real conversion. Yet how very rarely is there a discourse expressly on the first subject, expounding and explaining it, though, according to Scripture, it is the primary and essential requisite to true conversion; and to succeeding christian principle and conduct. With reference to the females who generally compose the larger number of every religious assembly, the eyes, alone, of the minister will tell him of the extravagant and varied displays of *pride*, and *vanity*, in merely ornamental apparel, and appendages, both among the members of his church, and the rest of the assembly; for, indeed, in this matter, except in extremely few instances, is there any difference between the two classes, both being involved in the like disobedience to Scriptural principle and precept. Most especially will he have a full and saddening knowledge of those prohibited, and if persisted in, ruinous evils, when they appear at the solemn Sacramental ordinances, thereby expressing an entire dedication to the disposal and service of God. Those displays, showing the inward vanity, are only consistent with the theatre, the opera house, or ball room, but certainly not with the humility of spirit and demeanor, which are becoming in sinful creatures, in the sanctuary of a heart-searching and holy God. Yet, the prohibited evils are permitted to continue, without reproof, exhortation, or notice in any of the public religious minis-

trations or services; nor probably by church officials, in any private communications.

In the ordinary and special prayer meetings, earnest invitations are being very generally given, for persons to offer themselves as subjects for united prayer for their conversion, and in most instances some do so present themselves; and either then, or shortly after, profess to be converted; or in a good hope of early obtaining the blessing of a conscious sense of pardoning mercy. Thus additions are from time to time made to the churches. But unhappily it often occurs that in no long time intimations or allusions are heard as to *backsliding* and unfaithfulness, and a return to the ways of sin and folly. But in nearly all such instances there is good reason to conclude that the persons were not influenced or impressed by the Divine Spirit, but were brought into a state of excitement or impulsive feelings through those public urgent solicitations, or perhaps, the equally ardent entreaties of relatives or friends, to enter into the church fellowship as a ready or available means of securing salvation. Now, let it not be supposed, that by what is here said, there is meant or intended, *any disapproval* of special religious meetings. They are not only expedient but extremely *needful* and proper. But it may well be suggested, whether it would not, as to enduring good effects, be much better in conducting the exercises in those meetings, to apply suitable and awakening passages of the inspired word, with faithful exhortations as to the abandonment of all sinful ways and works; all contaminating associations and other injurious and evil courses; with entreaties to a resort to frequent private prayer, searching the Scriptures, and other religious means. All these are in full accordance with the texts—"Let the wicked forsake his way," &c.; "Repent and be converted;" and the following and other similar Scriptures: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel;" "cease to do evil, learn to do well."* In all these and the like passages, repentance and turning from evil precede, or form essential parts in a real spiritual conversion. It was by such Scriptural instructions and exhortations, fervently employed, especially by the pointed application of awakening and alarming passages, given forth under the personal unction of the Holy

Spirit, that the wise and faithful Wesley and others as watchmen and leaders on the walls of Zion, were blessed and honored in being made instruments of great and true revivals of spiritual and Scriptural Christianity. Similar genuine revivals, and a permanent increase of members and piety in the church, by the employment of the like means by a zealous and faithful ministry, would undoubtedly often, if not always follow. One of the subjects in the last meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, was "intercession for the visitations of the Holy Spirit on the churches and the world." That gracious Being, in accordance with the character of His promises, is always ready and willing to bestow His graces and blessings on all who sincerely and earnestly desire and seek them. If they are not imparted in answer to supplications for their bestowment, the withholding cause is with ourselves, with the churches, ministers and people, especially the latter. Each and every one who fails to receive the desired gracious answer, will do well to examine whether the Scripture in Ps. xvi. is not applicable, which says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Still worse will it be if this is carried out in the conduct. Of many, both within and outside the churches, the formalists, worldlings, sensual and vain persons previously described, it may also be said as of revolted and disobedient Israel: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone;" or like those of Laodicea they are "poor, and blind, and naked," as to spiritual graces and riches; and yet, "not knowing" it. * All such carnal and disobedient persons have need first to adopt the penitent Psalmist's cry: "Make me to know my transgressions;" and also to entreat, preserve me from being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" and like the Psalmist again: "Be not silent to me, lest if thou be silent to me I become like unto them that go down into the pit." They must also according to the divine commands, put away all their idols, and no longer follow "that which is evil, but that which is good." *Then and only then*, will they be scripturally warranted and encouraged, to expect the gracious answers of that Holy Spirit, whom they have resisted

* Isai. lix. 2. Hos. iv. 17. Rev. iii. 17.

and insulted by their iniquities and vanities, and general worldliness of spirit and conduct.

Here, with all due deference and respect, it may be suggested that to all the vain formalists and the other disobedient before described ; and all the other unconverted, both within and outside of church membership, that style of public preaching is especially needed and most appropriate, which is in accordance with the texts of this discourse and with such further scriptural exhortations and commands as the following: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."* "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." But they said, "we will not walk therein." "Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts." "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." "Unto them that are contentious, and who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." †

Such a style of preaching as here intimated, will, of course, be objected to by many, as being of what is called a *legal* character, and not suited to gospel times and purposes. But let such objectors look at our Lord's first and most extended discourse, called the Sermon on the Mount, and they will see it to be, almost entirely of this legal description. It is an exhibition and enforcement of the old covenant law, and duties, personal and relative ; with higher and more spiritual motives and demands ; and more severe penalties and punishments for disobedience and violations. He then declared ;—"Think not that I am come to dis-

* Eph. v. 14. Sam. iii. 40. Jer. iv. 3. † Jer. vi. 16. Mal. iii. 7. Ezek. xviii. 30. Luke vi. 40. John xiv. 21. Math. xvi. 24. Luke xvi. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 19. James i. 22. Rom. ii. 8-9.

obey the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil, for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Surely those objectors, as the Lord's professed disciples ought to be satisfied with his divine and authoritative pattern, or method, for producing the inception and regulation of the christian life.

Such awakening and appropriate passages of Scriptures, as those before cited, are not, however, in harmony with the almost universal style of pulpit discourses in the present day ; and comparatively, but seldom form the subjects of such discourses. The subjects, now almost universally introduced and dwelt upon, are the abounding love and mercy of God, and the Lord Jesus, for sinners ; and the divine willingness and readiness to forgive their sins ;—the sufferings and death of Christ, to atone for their iniquities, and procure their pardon ;—the divine, earnest desires for their salvation and happiness ; with other kindred subjects, all of a gracious and encouraging nature. Now all these are sublime and blessed truths, but as previously shown, they are chiefly adapted, and suitable, to be held forth for the encouragement and hope of true penitents ; though doubtless they are intended for the benefit of all others, as being deeply interested in them. With passages of Scripture on such gracious subjects, as the above, and discourses on them, none can be offended ; but all the unconverted, both within and outside of church membership, will sit and hear them ; some with unmoved complacency, and others with cold or dozing indifference, because of their frequent repetition. But let earnest and faithful discourses on any such awakening and alarming texts, as those given above, be delivered and suitably applied, and some, or probably many of the unconverted formalists will be highly displeased, and think themselves to be pointed at, and considered as requiring conversion ; and in danger of being eternally lost ; whereas they feel satisfied that they are very fair christians ; quite as good, or even better than their neighbours, either in the church, or outside of it. They may for a time, be displeased with the minister, and think of attending some other place of worship, or joining some other church ; but on further consideration, they will think it as well,

or best, to remain where they are. Under a continuance of appropriate and faithful preaching, they may be led to conclude that all, with them, is not as it ought to be, and may be shaken out of their false security; and be brought earnestly to seek, and ere long obtain, true spiritual conversion. Now, such self-deceived formalists are the very persons for whom such awakening preaching is most desirable; and it is best adapted to produce such happy results, not only with them, but with every other class of the unconverted. Those within the church, and those outside, who are less reliant than were the others, as to a safe condition, and are naturally rather humble and tractable, will be sure to receive benefit by such appropriate and faithful preaching; and some or many of them, will, most probably, according to the divine promises, sooner or later, also become true converts; and thus increase of members and of piety in the churches will be the permanent results. The preachers will also be blessed, with the testimony of a good conscience, for having faithfully "declared the whole counsel of God;" and given to all "a suitable portion in due season;" and in being prepared, when called away, to give up their final account, "with joy and not with grief."

In addition to all the other good results of such an appropriate and awakening style of preaching, as before described, it would, through the increased number of true converts, and of advanced piety in the churches, have also the effects of a general increase of spontaneous liberality, for the support of all christian institutions and purposes. For some time past, there has been on the part of the "lovers of pleasure," and other formalists, in the churches, such a defect of free and liberal contributions for religious objects, that there has been a constantly increasing resort, to the very exceptionable means of bazaars, soirees, musical concerts, and similar modes of festivity and amusement, to induce members of churches and others, to contribute to those institutions and objects. Instead of giving, "not grudgingly, or of necessity," but freely and heartily, for needed christian purposes, they must be *allured* and *enticed* to do it, by some of those modes, gratifying to their bodily senses, and desires of pleasureable excitement. If a chapel, or school house is to be built, repaired, or furnished; a minister's house to be improved or supplied with furniture; an organ to be

bought, or other purpose, relating to the church and its affairs to be accomplished, there must be the bazaar, a tea party, or other public entertainment, to obtain the pecuniary means for effecting it. At the bazaars, twice or four times the value of a fancy, or other article will occasionally be given which, most probably would reluctantly, if at all be given, independent of the visit to the pleasurable scene. As for the tea party and the concert, there are the good feasting and speeches, and the companionable hilarities at the first, and the enjoyment of the ear and other senses at the latter, which, pleasures in each case are considered to be well worth the money bestowed. Such *alluring* and *enticing* modes of procuring the means of effecting religious objects, can scarcely be reconciled with the scripture exhortation: "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity," meaning with that *spontaneous liberality*, which accords with the gracious *reminder*, "freely ye have received, freely give." It has been said, and with too much truth, that without the employment of such methods, the people would not give as needful, for the required religious purposes. Admitting this, it may fairly be suggested, would it not be every way better, by such awakening discourses as have been intimated, and through the divine spirit applying the Word, to get them truly converted, and then they would, inevitably, be led to see it their christian duty and privilege, to contribute liberally to promote those purposes, and would freely and cheerfully do it. Thus, instead of *descending* for such contributions to their *sensual* modes and standards, or rather no standard whatever, they would be *brought up* to the true and only divinely acceptable standard of *free heart liberality*.

There is another subject in which those formalists and lovers of pleasure and amusement are combined, and possess much influence in the churches, on which a few words, by way of suggestion, may here be offered. It is that of the *musical* part of the public worship. Select members of this class under the name of *choirs*, partly through the approbation and aid of the rest seem, in most, if not all of the churches, to have got the management and direction of the whole of this cheering and delightful part of the divine service. In this, as in every other part of the public worship, all should unite. There should indeed be a few better skill-

ed than others, in general, to attune and commence the exercise ; but there is no absolute necessity for those regularly organized bands or choirs, now existing in all the churches. The chief evil, however, in the matter is, that in general, the female portion of the choirs, is composed of the vain, gaily decorated, and frivolous young persons described in a previous part of this discourse ; in some of the churches just emerging from childhood. It is painful to any truly spiritual mind to see, as the writer has several times seen them, with all their gaudy decorations, whispering, laughing, and gossiping with each other in their seats, and in a few minutes after starting up and almost shrieking forth the sublime and beautiful psalm or hymn, given out for their performance. But what is by far the most exceptionable and improper regarding these choirs, is their musical performances during certain pauses in the pulpit service, when they have it all to themselves ; and pour forth in vociferous strains, some composition unknown to nearly all but themselves. Certainly, this is not according to the scripture direction, “ making melody in the heart to the Lord ;” but it is a select few at their own will, singing and making artistic music with their mouths for the entertainment of their formalist sisters and brethren of the congregation who love to have it so. Thus the public worship is, so far, perverted and defaced. Some ministers have occasionally made efforts to remove the evil innovation, but through defect of proper and persevering firmness they did not succeed, and the choristers have still remained masters of the field. Now, it may just be further remarked, that if organized choirs must and will be suffered to remain, they ought, in consistency with due decorum and propriety in the divine worship, to be composed of persons of rather mature years, and of established piety and truly religious character ; and no musical service should be permitted but such as forms a part of the worship of the whole congregation.

That eminent and learned divine, Dr. Adam Clarke, in his commentary of the Scriptures, remarking on musical choirs, has used the following words : “ Those who are well skilled in music have seldom a devotional spirit, but are generally proud, self-willed, contentious or arrogant. Do not these persons entirely overrate themselves ? Of all the liberal arts, surely *music* is the least

useful, however ornamental it may be. And should anything be esteemed in the House of God, but in proportion to its utility? A good singer among the people of God, who has not the life of God in his soul, is *vox et præterea nihil*, as Heliogabalus said of the nightingale's brains, of which he desired to sup—*he is nothing but a sound*. Some of those persons, I mean they who sing with the understanding without the spirit, suppose themselves of great consequence in the Church of Christ, and they find foolish superficial people, whom they persuade to be of their own mind, and soon raise parties and contentions if they have not everything their own way, and that way is generally as absurd as it is unscriptural, and contrary to the spirit and simplicity of the Gospel.ⁿ

The same venerable Dr., in his comments on 1st Chron. xvii, remarking also on instrumental music, in connection with the choirs in the public worship, has thus written:—"Query: Did God ever ordain instruments of music to be used in his worship? Can they be used in Christian Assemblies, according to the spirit of Christianity? Has Jesus Christ or his Apostles ever commanded or sanctioned the use of them? Were they ever used anywhere, in the Apostolic Church? Does it ever appear that bands of musicians, either in their collective or individual capacity, are more spiritual, or *as spiritual* as the other parts of the Church of Christ? Is there less pride, self-will, stubbornness, insubordination, lightness, and frivolity, among such persons than among the other professors of Christianity? Is it ever remarked or known that musicians in the House of God have attained to any depth of piety, or superior soundness of understanding in the things of God? Is it always found that the ministers which affect and recommend them to be used in the worship of Almighty God are the most spiritual men, and the most spiritual and useful preachers? Can mere sounds, no matter how melodious, where no word or sentiment is or can be uttered, be considered as giving praise to God? Is it possible that pipes or strings of any kind can give God praise? Can God be pleased with sounds which are emitted by no sentient being, and have in themselves no meaning? If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, then, *query*, Is not the introduction of such instruments into the worship of God anti-Christian, and calculated to debase and ultimately ruin

the spirit and influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? And should not all who wish well to the spread and establishment of pure and undefiled religion, lift up their hand, their influence and their voice, against them. The argument from their use in the Jewish service is futile in the extreme when applied to Christianity."

Again in his comments on 2nd Chron. xxix. he has thus written: "Moses had not appointed any musical instrument to be used in the divine worship; there was nothing of the kind under the first tabernacle. The trumpets or horns then used were not for song, nor for praise, but as we use bells, *i. e.*, to give notice to the congregation, of what they were called to perform, &c. But David did certainly introduce many instruments of music into God's worship, for which he was solemnly reprov'd by the prophet Amos, chap. vi. 1-6. But were it even evident, which it is not, either from this (meaning 2nd Chron. xxix.) or any other place in the Sacred writings, that instruments of music were prescribed by divine authority, under the law, could this be adduced, with any semblance of reason, that they ought to be used in Christian worship? No; the whole spirit, soul and genius of the Christian religion are against this; and those who know the Church of God best, and what constitutes its genuine spiritual state, know that these things have been introduced as a substitute for the life and power of religion; and that where they prevail most, there is least of the power of Christianity. Away with such portentous baubles, from the worship of that infinite Spirit, who requires his followers to worship him in spirit and in truth, for to no such worship are those instruments friendly."

The same pious and learned divine, in further remarking on the subject in his comments on Amos, chap. vi., has written as follows — "I believe that David was not authorized by the Lord to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into the Divine worship of which we read, and I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet; and I further believe that the use of such instruments of music in the Christian Church is without the sanction and against the will of God; that they are subversive of the spirit of true devotion, and that they are sinful. If there was a woe to them who invented instru-

ments of music as did David under the law, is there no woe to them who invent them and introduce them into the worship of God in the Christian Church? I am an old man and an old minister, and I here firmly declare that I never knew them to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music as science I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the House of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity. The late venerable and most eminent divine, the Rev. John Wesley, who was a lover of music and an elegant poet, when asked his opinion of instruments of music being introduced into the chapels of the Methodists, said, in his terse and powerful manner, 'I have no objections to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither *heard* nor *seen*.'

Now, whatever may be thought or said, as to other religious denominations, on this point of instrumental music in public worship, surely all, both ministers and laymen—even in these degenerate days—who bear, and rather glory in the name of original and *true Wesleyans*, ought to defer, and *submit to the judgment*, of two such learned and eminent fathers and authorities as Dr. Clarke, and Mr. Wesley; most especially the latter, whose name they have adopted as their distinctive church appellation. But it is not so, but, nearly everywhere, just the opposite. The passages in the book of the prophet Amos, to which Dr. Clarke has referred, as conveying a censure on David, for his inventing instruments of music, and introducing them into the divine worship, are contained in chap. vi., where the prophet, in describing those who were "at ease in Zion," and were sensual and disobedient, says of them: "that they lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore, now shall they go captive, with the first that go captive." Viewing the whole context, it does, indeed,

seem, that the prophet has intended and conveyed, a censure of David, regarding those musical instruments. But whatever may be said as to their being permitted and used, in public worship, under the Jewish dispensation, it is quite certain that there is not a word in the New Testament Scriptures, to intimate, or sanction, their use in any Christian worship.

Both these subjects,—choirs and musical instruments,—are, in all the churches, except those of the state establishment, chiefly, or it may rather be said, *exclusively*, under the authority and regulating decision of the ministers, in their various organized associations. In the matter of the choirs, it is for very good reasons, essential that they should introduce such a reform, or rather *entire change*, on the subject, as well render that part of the worship conformable to Scriptural Christianiity; and restore to it that solemnity, reverence and decorum with which it should be performed, and prevent those musical performances during the period of public worship which the choirs are now in the habit of giving, at their own will, during the pauses in the services, and which form no part in the worship of the whole assembly.

But although the suggested reformatory changes as to choirs and musical instruments are most desirable and needful in order to the proper celebration of that part of divine worship. yet they are of minor importance in comparison with the essential preliminary towards a general revival of pure Scriptural Christianity, namely a reclaiming and reformation of the vast numbers of inconsistent and disobedient members of Churches from those ruinous evils before described. A reform from their insatiable desires and seeking for secular gain; from their vanities and the love and practice of forbidden sensual indulgences and wordly maxims and conformities. These are the great and almost insuperable hindrances to any such revivals of spiritual religion. They have also most injurious effects as regards religious and moral reform in general society.

We hear it frequently repeated, and with perfect truth, that even in the countries where Evangelical Christianity is most generally professed, the most vitally important subject is, the reformation and deliverance of society from the numerous crimes and other evils by which it is now constantly endangered and afflicted. In all those countries there are vast proportions of the people

who are living not only in utter ignorance of the true religion, but in greater or lesser degrees sunk in depravity and vice in all their various forms, injurious to others, as regards example and influence, and hostile and dangerous to the welfare, or even the existence of orderly and peaceable society. Although, in this our favored land of comparative freedom from the dangerous prevalence of those great evils, in reference to social security, there are large numbers in all, especially in this city, who are living in almost utter ignorance of religious truth, and neglect of the means and appliances for attaining to its knowledge and practice. Now, not only for these, but for all others, the Christian Church by its ministers and members, is designed by its Divine Author and Head, to be the enlightening and efficient instrumentality, for removing and preventing all individual and social crimes and evils ; and establishing and maintaining pure scriptural religion, and thereby securing truly moral conduct and social security and happiness. All the plans and methods of philosophers, so called and well-disposed moral reformers, have ever utterly failed to produce in anything like the required degree, those blessed results. Genuine scriptural christianity, alone, can secure them. Its infinitely wise and gracious author has, in the various symbols of " salt of the earth"—" lights" in a dark world—" a city set on a hill," represented his church, as his intended power for effecting true spiritual conversion, and pure christian morality throughout the world. But, unhappily, the Christian Church itself, requires in a very large degree, the like conversion, and a scriptural reform as to moral conduct. Even within this sacred institution there is much needed, a very great increase of vital christian principle ; a self denial and freedom from vain worldly customs and conformities, and from the almost universal desire and striving for secular gain and sensual indulgences, and also other divinely forbidden ways and works ; and on the other hand, an entire consecration in heart and practice, to the plain requisitions and various personal and relative duties of scriptural christianity.

When a general abandonment of those evils, and an observance of those duties, shall take place in the churches, through the divine blessing accompanying the appropriate and faithful preaching of the Word, then, and not till then, according to scripture

truth, can there be any well founded expectation of any extensive operations of the Holy Spirit, and consequent general revival in the churches, and numerous accessions of truly converted souls. The Lord is now, in effect, saying to the churches, as he formerly did, by his prophet to his ^{dis}obedient people: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." "Return unto me, and I will return unto you saith the Lord of Hosts."* When they shall remember, and hearken to those solemn expostulations, and comply with the commands, to "stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein;" "become doers of the Word, and not hearers only;" "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good;" "cease to do evil, and learn to do well,"† then will the gracious Head of the Church, who is ever ready to pardon and bestow his grace, abundantly fulfil his munificent and enduring promises: "Behold I will pour out my spirit unto you." "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning; and thine health shall spring forth speedily; then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not; and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."§

* Isai. lix. 2 — Mat. iii. 7. † Jer. vi. 16 — James i. 22 — Rom. xii. 9 — Isai. i. 16. § Prov. i. 3 — Isai. lviii. 8., &c.

