

# THE BIBLICAL RECORDER.

"RIGHTEOUSNESS, TEMPERANCE, AND JUDGEMENT TO COME."

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## TERMS.

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The following is an extract from a discourse delivered by the Rev. Wm. R. Williams, before the Hudson River Baptist Association, on the 16th June, 1835. We hope our ministering brethren, one and all, will give it a solemn and attentive perusal.

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

1. In the substance of our ministrations, we may contract the guilt of blood by delivering error in the stead of truth, and substituting the traditions of men for the testimonies and law of God. Or giving one portion of the truth, we may make it a virtual falsehood, by withholding the truth which in Scripture accompanies and guards it. We may preach human dependence to the subversion of the great truth of human obligation, or we may so insist on human duty and ability, as to mar the glorious truth of the necessity of the Divine influences. We may preach a Gospel that crucifies and tramples upon the law, the eternal and immutable law, that CHRIST came expressly to magnify; or we may hold up the law till it hides that Gospel of which it is but the precursor and the inferior. And even when we bring to the people of our charge the truth symmetrically, and in its fair proportions, we may fail to bring the well-timed truth adapted to the snares, the duties, and the trials of the passing day. We may be combating heresies they never knew, and indignantizing a Church who are already too proud of their orthodoxy; and too neglectful of their morals; or we may be preaching practically to those who are yet ignorant of the first motives, the seminal principles of the Divine life—principles which the doctrines of the Bible, and those doctrines only, can minister. And we may utter truths not entirely unreasonable, yet comparatively of less moment, whilst from the sides of our desk, from our pews and our hearts, one and another is sliding into eternity, untaught in the great lessons of repentance and faith. We may give an undue and disproportionate attention to the necessary, but the minor truths of the Bible, more anxious to make men partisans than Christians; whilst "the weightier matters" of its testimony are, scarce ever felt by our people, pealing over their heads, as with a voice of mighty thunders, the shortness of life, the nearness of judgment, the worth of the soul, the value of the atonement, the need of regeneration, and the promises of the wonder-working spirit. And what will be the testimony borne against us by them, as they awake in the light of eternity to a vivid knowledge of the whole Gospel? Is there not, herein, guilt upon us, my brethren?

2. We may attract the displeasure of our God in our pastoral character, by overlooking the extent and the minuteness of the duties owed to the Church in the personal delivery and enforcement of truth, or in the scene and made of our labors. We may dispense the Gospel too much in the generalizations of the pulpit, and too little in the special applications of private intercourse. When the Apostle vouched his own exemption from the curse of blood, he declared that he had not ceased day and night to warn every man, and with many tears, and from house to house. Although we would not give to these words the rigid interpretation employed by some, yet is it not too probable, brethren, that we are all deficient in the faithful and earnest visitation of the flock, and that the truth is too little urged home within the bounds of the family? And are not much of the remissness and worldliness of Christians owing to the want of a more thorough endeavor, to follow home the impressions of the Sabbath by the less formal and more familiar and searching intercourse of the week? In the world, is not our ministry defective, by resembling too faintly that of the Primitive Church, in its aggressive character, against the mass of impudent and unsanctified mind, that never enters our sanctuaries, and which must be sought out and assailed in its own lurking places? And if not able ourselves to accomplish the work, need we not in our churches to sustain a distinct class of men who shall thus go forth upon the world, and leave no home, where man is wretched and man is sinful, unvisited by that Gospel, which reveals the only remedy of his wretchedness, and the only hope for his guiltiness? Should not the wonderful success which crowned the faithfulness, in this work, of Baxter at Kidderminster, be resounding in the ears of us all, until we had attempted a similar onset upon the hearths of our neighborhoods? And is there not in our churches the guilt of blood, in our failing to maintain the high and severe standard of primitive discipline, delivering the Gospel to the world anew in the holy lives of its professed disciples? Shall not the blood of the covetous, and formal, and sensual, the drunkards, extortioners, and revilers, that lurk in the church, suspected or well known, but not warned or censured, cry out against us? Hardened, as they are, by impunity, shall not that impunity bloodily pleading against us in the great day of retribution? We preach the truth; is it enforced, and doled out anew upon the world, in the discipline of our churches? Yet again, would not Paul have been guilty, had he, in teaching the Ephesians, forgotten the more destitute of other lands, or had he neglected to inculcate upon the converts at Ephesus their duty in sending the Gospel to the lands that were yet unevangelized? Paul and the Christians whom he now addressed, would not have been

clear of the blood of the Heathen, had they forgotten them in their prayers, and confined their labors exclusively to the narrow province of their own home. Illyricum, and Spain, and Britain, were probably in the heart of the Apostle, while his hands were ministering to his own wants at Ephesus. The Gospel he preached was for the world; and he peached it in blood-guiltiness, if he did not regard and teach others to regard it, as going out over the length and breadth of the earth. And although God has blessed the church and the pastors of the present age, with the spirit of missionary enterprise, is there not yet a deficiency? Are not the garments of the church and her pastorship yet dripping with the blood of Pagan nations, accessible but not approached by the word of God? And here again, is there not guilt, the guilt of blood upon us, my brethren?

3. But the greatest of the dangers, as we believe, to which those now present are exposed, regards the *spirit* in which we utter our message. We may deliver the true proclamation in hypocrisy, and an angered God withhold from our labors all blessing. Or, by formality and listlessness, we may contrive to throw an aspect of tameness over the most momentous and thrilling of all topics, and the vast realities of eternity may dwindle under our hands into a three-fold and vapid "old wives' fable." In selfish avarice or ambition, we may be coveting with an evil covetousness to set our house on high, and build up our personal and social interests on the base of God's own church. There may be bitter envying and strife amid the common members of one mystical body, and the fellow-combatants in one strenuous and hard-fought warfare. We may grieve in secret at the fullness of the net which our own hands cast not abroad upon the face of the waters, or drew not to the shore. We may enact again the contest rebuked by CHRIST, and whisper to ourselves, "Who is the greatest?" when in lawlessness each should esteem others better than himself. Vain-glory and ostentation may be our companions in the study, and mount with us into the sacred desk; and while the famished church is weeping, and fiends exult over the world rushing into ruin at our feet, we may be busily employed in endeavoring to carve our paltry names upon the rugged front of CHRIST'S own cross. We may preach ourselves, and not the Master. While bound to seek out acceptable words, we may proceed too far, and harm the sword of the Spirit by gilding and blunting its edge. Self-reliance and self-seeking may palsify our spiritual strength; and we may beat the air, and labor in vain. While men admire, God may be writing upon us his fearful curse as pronounced by his servant Zechariah: "Who to the idol shepherd—the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be cleaved up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." Spiritual vigor and spiritual discernment may depart from us, while bowing in secret at the shrine of vanity. Or carelessness, and frivolity, and worldliness, may eat out the heart of our strength, and we may lie along in the church, the prostrate and rotting cumberers of the field we should have shaded with our foliage, and gladdened with our fruit.—How difficult is it, brethren, to guard well our own hearts—to act ever as in the love of CHRIST—and to preach in sight of the bar of judgment. And even where we may be preserved watching and praying against the evils already indicated, how far may our piety be beneath the high standard commanded by our God, and attainable to us. How little, brethren, is our profiting, compared with that which it might be, did we, like the bride of the Apocalypse, stand before the churches "clothed with the sun"—were there seen upon our example, our prayers, and our preaching, the lustre of a dazzling holiness, derived from intimate communion with God, and sending even into the eyes of the scoffer its vivid and blinding brightness. And shall we not be judged by the possible and attainable standard which was before us? Look to the wide and deep influence which has been gained by some devoted men in all ages, who, though often of inferior talents, were men mighty in prayer, in faith, and in the HOLY GHOST. See how the hearts of the world and the church melted at the opening of their lips—how the Spirit of Glory and of God tracked all their steps; and, turning from the sight let us ask:—Why are we not all such? We need a deeper piety, and the guilt of blood is upon us—is it not, brethren?—because we are not men of deeper piety, men baptized with the HOLY GHOST, and testifying to the churches what our own eyes have seen and our own hands have handled of the word of life.

Are we accused of disparaging our vocation? Our reply may be in the quaint, but expressive language of Baxter. "Had our sins been only in Latin, in Latin they might have been rebuked; but if our transgressions have been wrought before the people, in the tongue, and before the eyes of the people must they be assailed and confessed." We are crying out against the dangers of the church from the rampant infidelity of the age. But, alas, it is not the feathered and barbed shaft of Voltaire, the refined scepticism of Hume and Gibbon, or the coarser blasphemies of a Paine, a Taylor, or a Carlisle, that most endanger us. Rather need we fear and deprecate the infidelity of the church, the practical scepticism of the lukewarm pastor, the effective atheism of a worldly, and a time-serving, a vain-glorious, and a selfish ministry. It is not the most specious or the most active of the speculative heresies of the day, that we have cause, brethren, so much to dread, as the heresy of heart found in CHRIST'S own church—the want of a purer love, and a simpler faith, and a more vigorous hope. We cannot afford the time requisite to decide the nicer controversies of the day among true brethren, while this, the great controversy of the church with her God, remains undecided. Our sin against the commandment that bids us love our God is as fearful a heresy as any in the list invented and propagated by human perverseness. No, brethren, is not a fitting season for the church to be compounding unguents for the freckled skin of a fancied, or at most a frivolous

heresy; while the plague of lukewarmness is sweeping her streets, and the bier of spiritual death is passing on its way from door to door of her habitations. We have another and a sterner quarrel to settle. The stain of blood—of the blood of souls, is on the floor of our deserted and untrudden closets—upon our pulpits—upon our Communion tables. It is, as the prophet of old witnessed, "not found by secret search, but openly, and upon all these." And yet we feel it not, or acknowledging it, we do not aright apprehend and repent of the evil of our ways.

## From the Christian Journal.

*The firmness and constancy of the Apostles and early Christians, when exposed to the most severe trials, a strong proof of the truth of Christianity.*

That the early Christians were, like their Master, exposed to persecution of the most malignant kind, is abundantly evident, not from the Scriptures alone but from the writings of profane authors. Neither is there any shadow of doubt as to the cause of their persecution. The simple preaching of the gospel, accompanied by their holy and blameless lives. The one setting forth an entirely new set of principles for the guidance of men, and the other, by contrast, exhibiting their vicious lives in a most unfavorable light. Wherever mention is made of their sufferings, admiration and astonishment are also expressed at their fortitude, at the tenacity with which they adhered, while in the midst of torture the most excruciating, to those very sentiments, the belief and expression of which had brought them into their situations.

Knowing these facts we are naturally enough led to inquire what there was to sustain and carry them through such trying scenes, unchanged in soul, and ready on the first opportunity, to repeat the same offence, if offence it may be called.

We estimate a man's virtue by the strength of the temptation which he resists; the firmness of his belief by the tenacity with which he adheres to his opinions.

In order therefore, to estimate correctly the strength of that principle which supported them, we need only glance at a record of their sufferings, and having comprehended its power, we look for some adequate cause.

As Jerusalem was the source from which the glad tidings were to flow forth to the gentile world, so here was the commencement of opposition. The enemies of the new religion exerted themselves with a zeal worthy a better cause, to crush in its bud that which was a rebuke upon their iniquities. The apostles and their contemporary Christians, were assailed in every form that ingenuity could suggest, to compel them to renounce their faith. This course of conduct extended wherever the Christians themselves appeared. At Rome, probably, the system of torture was carried to the highest perfection. It was their design to affect the mind and soul through the medium of the flesh. But vain indeed were all their attempts: when mothers would stand by and exhort their offspring to be true to their cause and their God, while stretched upon the rack—while writhing under the affliction of the burning pincers—while swallowing the melting lead, and just about to expire by torture beyond the human endurance. Vain and futile indeed were their efforts, when fathers would lead their sons into the circus to meet the devouring fangs of wild beasts of the swords of men scarcely less ferocious than the beast themselves.

Worse than useless were all their expedients, when maidens of youth and beauty would encourage with kind looks and words, their lovers, whose limbs were being torn from their bodies, or their flesh from their bones; who would themselves, with firm step and cheerful countenance, descend to the tomb from which they expected the last trump would summon them. Various and horrible beyond conception were their devices, but the result was the same. The victims were unmoved. With eyes looking above, with hearts fixed and firm, they boldly and fearlessly braved all the tortures of their enemies, and defied all their attempts to seduce them from their faith.—When we learn that all these tortures, as well as the scorn, insults, and reproach, which continually assailed them, could have been avoided by a simple denial, and that very few ever made the recantation, we involuntarily exclaim—strong, powerful, and unshaken beyond expression, must have been their faith in the truth of their doctrine. We feel sure that such conviction could have been produced only by being actual witnesses of what they asserted, as compared with the strongest possible conviction that they had not been deceived, or else by an intercourse with witnesses of undoubted veracity, and whose testimony received the strongest corroboration from the whole tenor of their lives. I am not indeed sure but that among those who were not actually eye witnesses of the works of Christ himself, belief was strengthened most by the pure and holy lives of the true disciples.

Standing, as they then did, the light of the world, with the universal gaze upon them, watching for an instance wherein their lives did not correspond with the doctrines they taught, it became them, and faithfully did they redeem their pledge by living such lives, that their enemies were often heard to exclaim in despair, "why cannot we find some fault in these Christians?" Happy, thrice happy would it have been for the world, if the same could be said of all professed Christians, since Christianity would not have been confined to a comparatively small portion of the globe. Here I would ask, whether the very conduct of professed Christians does not do more towards advancing or retarding the spread of the gospel, than all the preaching of its friends or the opposing efforts of its enemies? The Saviour himself said to his disciples, when sending them forth, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves;" well knowing how important were these injunctions. Or he might have said, Imitate me; recommend the gospel you preach by pure and blameless lives. If this is of so much importance, does it not become every individual who desires the spread of the gospel, to give his chief attention to the regulation of his own life, to watch over himself, to correct every error, to walk in the steps of the early Christians, so far as they walked in the steps of Christ, and compel their enemies to say, "we find no fault in them?"

## SUMMER PRESENTS US WITH IMAGES OF DEATH.

A few weeks ago, when we walked in our gardens, we were surrounded with the most beautiful and pleasing object, and every thing raised emotions of joy in our hearts. But now, every day diminishes the number of pleasing objects, or renders their appearance more uniform. The greatest part of the flowers which then beautified our gardens have disappeared, and we begin to have only faint traces of the once charming scenes which so ravished our senses. These revolutions in nature may be very instructive to us. There is a period in our lives in which all the charms of spring make gay and happy our moments, that swiftly glide away, whilst we are beloved and caressed by parents, fondly solicitous for our welfare and anxiously expecting from our future conduct the rich fruit of all their tender cares. But how often is this hope deceived!—Many a sweet floweret falls before the blossoms expand. Sickness withers our charms, and nips our opening beauties; and an early death changes hope into the gloom of despondency.

We see spring flowers which bloom till summer, then perish in a few hours. A very striking emblem of death! And scarcely a day passes in which some human being is not unexpectedly and without warning met by the messenger. The days of man are as the grass; he flourishes as the flower of the field: the wind bloweth upon him and he is gone, and the place that knew him knows him no more.

We are now in that season in which the fervent rays of the sun induce us to seek repose in the refreshing shade of the groves. These cool sequestered retreats are favorable for serious reflection; and our thoughts will there sometimes be directed to the awful solemnity of the grave, where the just will be received as into a safe harbor from the tossings and dangers of a life of care and trouble.

The reaper prepares to cut down his corn; the sickle levels the tall ears on the right and on the left, and leaves behind it the fields empty and deserted. This is a just emblem of life: all flesh is as grass, and all the glory, all the honors and duration of life, as the flowers of the field: like them man flourishes for a time; and when the Lord of the harvest ordereth, fills under the scythe.

Let us imitate the activity and industry of the bees; and as they are busied in collecting and preparing their honey from every flower that scents the air, may we also be ever diligent in amassing those treasures of wisdom and virtue, which will be our delight when age presses heavily upon us, and our great consolation in the final separation of the soul from the body!

The husbandmen will soon assemble to collect the fruits of the earth, and deposit them in their granaries. The days of harvest are the most important of any in the year; but how much more solemn and momentous will be that great day, when the Creator of the universe shall himself collect the harvest, when the graves shall open, and deliver up their dead; when the Supreme Judge of nations shall say unto his angels, "Gather the tares into bundles to be burnt, but gather the wheat into my garner!" Upon this day of awful solemnity the righteous may meditate with joy and reverence: here they labor and travail, and weeping sow their seed in the ground; but the joyful day will arrive, when they shall carry their abundant harvest to the altar of God with songs of joy and of gladness.

Meditation upon death is proper to make this happy season still more useful and beneficial. When we consider death in its true point of view far from regarding it as the enemy of our pleasures, we shall acknowledge that its contemplation ennobles our ideas, and increases our real felicity. When the image of death is frequently present to our minds, can we deliver ourselves up to riot and excess? Should we make an improper use of the gifts which God grants us, if we continually remembered that the hour must come, when we are to give an account of our stewardship to him whom no one can deceive?—Would the blessings of this life possess our affections, if we considered how soon every thing must perish? If we considered that the evening would arrive and bring us ease and repose, should we murmur and repine at the burthens we bear through the heat of the day, or the sufferings to which we are subjected? Or, if we frequently meditated upon that better world, and those purer and more exalted pleasures, in which the souls of the righteous shall find a sure resting-place; should we imagine that our chief happiness consisted in the enjoyment of this world, and the pleasures it can afford?—*Sturm's Reflections.*

## From the Religious Souvenir for 1835.

### INFLUENCE OF WOMEN.

We know of no place under the broad Heavens—we know no circumstances in which the influence of woman may not enter, either to be an evil or a good, a blessing or a curse, a joy or a sorrow. She shares the thrones of monarchs, and of course their influence; and in many instances, woman herself has swayed the sceptre of a kingdom. In such case the happiness or misery of millions hangs on her fiat. Fortune and fame, prison and the scaffold, alike maintain her bidding. Christianity, with all its blessings follows in her steps; and peace, religion, and prosperity adorn her reign; and make glad the nation; no vice, licentiousness, and cruelty, disfigure her empire, and ensure the misery of her subjects. We might cite many examples of women who have held conspicuous places upon earth, and made or marred the fortunes of nations, as well as individuals: but it is for the most a melancholy list, and we can only say, when influence is so extended and so perverted—"O my soul, enter thou not into their secrets! Unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united!" Instances are not wanting, too, and they are noble ones, where the influence of woman has been extensive, powerful, and salutary, through the medium of her own pen. We have only to mention the names of More, Taylor, Sherwood, Kennedy, and others, to feel that they have given dignity and honor to their sex, increased the moral loveliness of virtue, strengthened the power of

principle, set forth religion in its most attractive garb, and it may be, have been the means of winning many souls to Jesus. We love to rest upon such characters, we love to think that a wish to be useful has caused their extended efforts, and to imagine the rich harvest of good that may attend their labors. And while paying a just meed to excellence, the self-denying, benevolent, saintly Mrs. Fry should never be forgotten. Not content with visiting the poor and sorrowing in their own humble dwellings, she enters the prison doors, goes fearlessly among the criminal and the profligate, like an angel of light in the dark regions of despair and guilt, and proffers to the wretched convicts pardon and salvation in the name of Jesus.

But it is needless to multiply examples.—Every day's experience and observation may convince us of the influence of women, in the relations of mother, wife, sister, daughter, friend—in fortune, fame, fashion, religion, and happiness. She was given to man as his better angel, to dissuade him from vice, to stimulate him to virtue, and to make home delightful, and life joyous; and when in the exercise of these gentle and holy charities, she fulfils her high vocation. We have known her meekness, her tenderness, her patience, and her Christian firmness, to be triumphant under God, in subduing vice and awakening virtue, when all other means seemed powerless. We have seen the drunkard melt into tears of contrition and sorrow, at the mild and affectionate appeals of an uncomplaining, and heart-stricken wife. We have seen the passionate man subdued to the docility of a child, by the soft and appealing answers of an amiable daughter. We have seen the unblushing libertine bend with remorse before the pure, and dignified, and lovely to the earth, who, instead of encouraging his vices with smiles of approbation and blandishment, turned from him with virtuous and maidenly reserve.

Vice is to be discountenanced in all its forms. Young ladies do not act as if they were aware of the influence they exert over the other sex. The gamster, the profane, and the licentious enter with impunity the society of the refined and elegant and receive as warm a welcome, and it is to be feared a much warmer, often than the pure, the pious, and the excellent. This ought not to be so. Leaving religion out of the question, delicacy, propriety, and dignity forbid it. She whose heart is warm with benevolence and sensibility, should never smile on the gamster, who in his cold and utter selfishness would not scruple to impoverish his friend; the maiden of softness and refinement should never hear the name which she must fear even if she does not love, mingled with blasphemy in the coarse oaths and ribald jests of the profane and interperate; youthful purity and loveliness should turn with abhorrence and disgust from the man who would pry upon innocence, or debase himself in the haunts of pollution.

If young ladies would enter into a mutual compact to discourage these vices, if they would resolve to hold no companionship with those who practice them; the aspect of society would very soon be changed, and the world see better fathers and better sons, better brothers and better husbands. This is not a dream of the imagination.—Man although he is lord of this lower world, cannot exist in comfort without the softening, sweetening, subduing influence of gentle woman.—She administers to his convenience, soothes his sorrows, assuages his resentment; by her tender care alleviates his sickness, shares his fortune in life, and seems like a ministering angel on the bed of death.

Is it possible that he should not prize her; that he should not seek her society; that after the fatigues and vexatious pursuits, or the weariness of study, her winning ways, cheerful smiles, and balmy voice, should fall upon his vexed and burning spirit like the soft dew of Heaven upon a drooping plant? Man must love women—necessity is laid upon him. She must effect his fortune, his judgment and his principles. It then she lend all her energies to the cause of truth, purity and goodness, she will soon rejoice in the conviction that her influence is as blessed as it is extensive. If she has brothers, they but furnish new channels through which her pure principles may flow into countless others, encouraging their virtues, confirming the doubtful, and reclaiming the vicious. Thus she may become a public benefactress, although unknown, and the temporal and eternal happiness of multitudes be the offspring of her active and unobtrusive instrumentality. But the sweet luxury of doing good shall be her guardian in this world, and thought cannot picture the blessed reward which God has prepared for her in the world to come.

### PHRENOLOGY.

The same reason which leads phrenologists to banish all idea of punishment from their moral code also induces them to expunge from their thoughts and homilies on moral and religious discipline, all such terms as sin, remorse, wickedness, depravity and repentance, regeneration and sanctification, salvation by the blood of CHRIST, and the indwelling power of his Spirit. These ideas are too evanescent and mystical to be entertained by any but bigots and fanatics. Old-fashioned people, perhaps, may be excused for not having emancipated themselves from such loose and dreamy notions; but no rational and ingenious mind, that has witnessed the late dissections of the brain, can be tolerated at all in adhering to them. Every thing must be dwarfed and flattened to the phrenological standard, "On thy belly shall thou go." Moral maladies arise from disproportioned bumps. These must be altered, if we would accomplish any thing; and we must proceed to shape and develop them, as we would any other animal functions. Do we wish to make a weak man stout and vigorous? Put him to efforts that task his strength to the utmost. Think not of lashing vigor into him. Do we wish to make a bad man good. Envelop him with whatever things are pure, lovely, and of good report, and the result will as infallibly be secured, as that a sheep will fatten in luxuriant pastures. The reduction of our faculties to instincts, puts the moral nature under the law of physical cause and effect. They forget that the acts of man's will are self-originated, and that, without its own permission, it is under no foreign power; that it depends on its predominant state, whether good influences work well or ill upon it; that in all men this predominant state is wickedness, until they are regenerated by the HOLY GHOST; that the only means which God has deemed adequate to awaken the will from its superior love of sin, to a search after holiness, is the denunciation of wrath to come, that the sinner may be incited to flee therefrom.—*Churchman.*