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"LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS."—HEBREWS X. 24.

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DIVINITY.

THE WITNESSING CHURCH.

A SERMON,

BY THE REV. JOHN HARRIS.

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."—Isaiah xliii. 12.

[CONTINUED.]

III.

Now, if such be the design of the church, and such its illustrative history, let us, *thirdly*, attempt to enforce that design; and we shall find that the motives of the Christian church, and its responsibility as a witness for God, are greater now than at any preceding period. Not only do all the original motives to this duty exist, but they exist in aggravated force, and others, in addition, have come to reinforce them.

1. For instance, the first witnesses for Christ required no higher motive to duty than the divine command of their risen Lord. They no sooner saw that he *designed* his church to bear his testimony to the world, than they hastened to obey. Brethren, that design is not merely essentially the same—it is now more apparent than ever. Could those first witnesses return to the church on earth again, they would find that the history of every church, since the time of Christ, had unceasingly illustrated and enforced that design, without a moment's intermission. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." And this is the language of the Spirit, as he conducts us over the ruins of once flourishing churches—"Exist aggressively, or not at all. Behold in the state of every existing Christian church, an illustration of the principle, that to act the evangelical missionary church is to prosper—to neglect it, is to languish and perish."

2. "But is there the same necessity for a witnessing church now as at first?" The wants of the world are more urgent than ever; or, what amounts to the same thing in the matter of our responsibility, we are better acquainted with them, and our facilities for meeting them, as far as Christian instrumentality can meet them, are greater than ever. The map of the world, in the days of the Apostles, was only the map of a province, compared with that which lies open before us. Every geographical discovery since, has only served to enlarge our ideas of the great Satanic empire. Oh! in what a small majority does the Christian stand! What a fearful expanse of darkness around him!—and that darkness how dense!—and what hideous enormities does it conceal! There, cruelty has its chosen habitation, and feasts perpetually on human blood. There superstition has its temples, and its sacrifices of human suffering, and its music of human groans. There, sin has its priesthood—its ceremonial of murder, and its ritual of lust!

By a very slight effort of the imagination, we can cause the hosts of evil to pass before us—and what a spectacle to behold! First, come the Jews out of all nations under heaven, each with a veil over his heart, and stained with the blood of the Just One. Next, nominal Christians, by myriads, and from all parts of Europe, headed by one who drags a bible in triumph, as a dangerous book, and embraces an image, or an amulet, instead. Then comes the crescent of imposture, followed by Turkey and Persia, by large tracts of India, the islands of the Eastern sea, Egypt and northern Africa, the inhabitants of the largest and the fairest portions of the globe. After these, the swarthy tribes of Africa, central, western, and southern,

with their descendants of the Western Indies, laden with the spells of witchcraft, and covered with the charms of their Fetish worship. Now come the aborigines of the two Americas, and the islanders of the great Pacific—fresh from the scalp-dance, the cannibal feast, or the worship of the snake-god. Next, the selfish Chinese, one-third of the species—in appearance, all idolators—in reality, all atheists—a world of atheists, to whom all truth is a fable, and all virtue a mystery. Last comes India—the nations of southern Asia, and the many islands of the Eastern sea, a thousand tribes, including infanticides, cannibals, and the offerers of human blood, dragging their idol-gods, an endless train, with Juggernaut at their head, worn with the toil of their penances, and marked with the scars of self-torture. And who are these that close the train? The Thugs of India, just discovered—a vast fraternity of secret murderers—the votaries of Kalee, who has given one-half of the human race to be slaughtered for her honour. Oh, God, and is this *thy* world! Are these *thy* creatures! Where is thy church? Oh, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, and thy church, appointed to declare thee, hath neglected to fulfil her trust! Christians, did you count their numbers as they passed? Six hundred millions at least. Did you ask yourselves, as they passed, whither they were going? Follow them, and see. Can you do so, even in imagination, without feeling an impulse to rush and erect the cross between them and ruin? That is your office—that is the great practical design for which the church exists, to go and testify this faithful saying, *that Christ has come to save them all.* "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

3. And this reminds us of another inducement—the testimony of the gospel is divinely adapted to them. It is not the fearful burden of Isaiah, threatening judicial blindness and hardness of heart, or we might hesitate to go. It is gospel. It is a message from Pity to Misery—an invitation from Mercy to Guilt. It is a gift from the fulness of God to the emptiness of man. The witness for Christ takes with him a treasure more precious than the ancient Jew, could he have taken the ark of the temple. Christian missionaries, you take with you tears—the tears of incarnate compassion; blood, the expiatory blood of the Son of God. "Before your eyes," said the Apostle to the Galatians, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." Brethren, you go to India with the cross, to repeat the scenes of Calvary—to let the Hindoo see Christ crucified before his eyes. Do you feel sufficiently the grandeur of your message? You go to Africa with the identical gospel that Paul took to Rome. You go to China with the identical blessing that Christ brought from heaven. Oh, it was the consideration of their subject—its necessity, its adaptation, its infinite grace and glory, which fired the Apostles—which made them think little of life itself, when this was at stake—which made them wonder that any should suppose that persecution could affright *them* from their office—which gave them the air of ambassadors, the port of kings—which would have led them, if necessary, to contend for precedence with an angel. You go to address a nature which, however depraved, was originally pre-configured to the truth, and the message you bear is divinely adapted to the moral state which that depravity has created—and the Spirit goes with you to give it effect. You go to tell the victims of imposture of essential truth—to point the eye of the Hindoo widow from the corpse of her husband to Him who is the resurrection and the life—to tell the infanticide mother that she may save her offspring, and may press them to

her heart—to tell the followers of Boodha of a true incarnation—and the parched pilgrim of the desert, of a well of water that springeth up to everlasting life—and the devotee of the Ganges, of the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost—and the self-torturing votary of cruelty, that the name of God is love—and the self-immolating worshipper of Juggernaut, of the sacrifice offered once for all, and of the blood which cleanseth from all sin. Oh, find out the nation where guilt has been hourly accumulating ever since the time of the deluge; and the command of Christ is, "Go to it." And, having gone, challenge them to produce the one guiltiest man of their nation; and the command of Christ is, "Offer him redemption through the blood of the cross." Have they, as many of the nations have, a fabulous tradition that such or such a cavern is the mouth of hell? Ask them to lead you to it; for even there, could the dreadful spot be found, your commission would extend—to the very brink; for He whom you preach is able to save even to *that* uttermost.

Brethren, in testifying to the necessity and divinity of the gospel, you occupy higher ground than did even the apostles. Since their day, nearly eighteen hundred years have added their testimony to the fact, that man by searching cannot find out God—that spiritual deliverance, to be effectual, must come direct from heaven; and nearly eighteen hundred years have only served to demonstrate the sufficiency of the gospel remedy. Guilt, which might destroy a world, has been cancelled by it—iron chains of sin have been burst asunder—hearts filled with pollution, made habitations of God—where Satan's seat was, happy communities have been formed—earth has been blessed by it—and heaven has been hourly growing louder in its praise. In affirming its necessity, then, all history is speaking in your voice; the nations that have perished—all the lost—rise up and confirm your testimony, and urge you to repeat it with a deeper, and yet deeper, emphasis. And in proclaiming its efficacy, the thousands who, in every age, have been saved by it, urge you to speak louder in its praise—the chorus of all heaven comes to your aid, ascribing "salvation to the Lamb that was slain."

4. Again, think of the certainty that the testimony of the gospel shall ultimately and universally prevail. We do not undertake to say that the present kind of Christian instrumentality alone will cause it to prevail—that no new machinery, no miraculous agency, will come to its aid. But, whatever the means employed, the end will be gained—and gained as the result of all that had in any way been scripturally done to obtain it—the gospel, in the most enlarged sense, shall be preached as a witness to all nations.

Where now is Diana of the Ephesians? Where now are Jupiter and the gods of Greece?—and where the whole Pantheon of Rome? The first Christians testified against them, and they vanished. Witnesses for Christ came to Britain—and where now are Woden, and all the Saxon gods, Hesus, and all the more ancient and sanguinary rites of the Druids? Brethren, the idols we assail have long since been routed; and the sword we wield routed them. The gods of India are the same, under different names, which Italy and Greece adored: the sword of the Lord chased them from the west; and shall it do less now in the East? Many of them are already fallen. "Bel boweth down, and Nebo stoopeth." And the Christian missionary, approaching and standing before the most crowded temple and the firmest throne that idolatry boasts, is divinely warranted in taking up a burden against it, and saying, "Thy days are numbered, and thine end