

nation were shrouded in gloom. We had been for two or three years at war with the mightiest nation on earth, and, as she had now concluded a peace with the continent of Europe, we were obliged to cope with her single-handed. Our harbors were blockaded. Communication coast-wise, between our ports, was cut off. Our ships were rotting in every creek and cove where they could find a place of security. Our immense annual products were moulding in our warehouses. The sources of profitable labor were dried up. Our currency was reduced to irredeemable paper. The extreme portions of our country were becoming hostile to each other, and differences of political opinion were embittering the peace of every household. The credit of the government was exhausted. No one could predict when the contest would terminate, or discover the means by which it could much longer be protracted.

It happened that on a Saturday afternoon in February, a ship was discovered in the offing, which was supposed to be a cartel, bringing home our commissioners at Ghent, from their unsuccessful mission. The sun had set gloomily, before any intelligence from the vessel had reached the city. Expectation became painfully intense, as the hours of darkness drew on. At length a boat reached the wharf, announcing the fact that a treaty of peace had been signed, and was waiting for nothing but the action of our government to become a law. The men on whose ears these words first fell, rushed in breathless haste into the city, to repeat them to their friends, shouting, as they ran through the street, peace! peace! peace! Every one who heard the sound repeated it. From house to house, from street to street, the news spread with electric rapidity. The whole city was in commotion. Men bearing lighted torches were flying to and fro, shouting like madmen, peace! peace! peace! When the rapture had partially subsided, one idea occupied every mind. But few men slept that night. In groups they were gathered in street and by the fire-side, beguiling the hours of midnight by reminding each other that the agony of war was over, and that a worn out and distracted country was about to enter again upon its wonted career of prosperity. Thus, every one becoming a herald, the news soon reached every man, woman and child in the city and in this sense, the city was evangelized. All this you see was reasonable and proper. But when Jehovah has offered to our world a treaty of peace, when men doomed to hell may be raised to seats at the right hand of God, why is not a similar zeal displayed in proclaiming the good news? Why are men perishing all around us, and no one has ever personally offered to them salvation through a crucified Redeemer.

This then is, I think, the generic idea of preaching conveyed in the new Testament. It is the proclamation to every creature, of the love of God to men through Christ Jesus. This is the main idea. To this our Lord adds, according to the other evangelists, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The duty then enjoined in our Lord's last command is two fold: First, to invite men to avail themselves of the offer of salvation; and, secondly, to teach them to obey the commands of Christ, so that they may become meet for the kingdom of heaven. In so far as we do these, we preach the gospel. When we do anything else, it may, or it may not be very good; but in the sense here considered, it is not preaching the gospel.

Hence we see that we may deliver discourses on subjects associated with religion, without preaching the gospel. A discourse is not preaching because it is delivered by a minister, or spoken from the pulpit, or appended to a text. Nothing is I think, properly preaching, except the explaining the teachings, or enforcing the commands of Christ and his apostles. To hold forth our own inferences, or the inferences of

other men, drawn from the gospel; to construct intellectual discourses which effect not the conscience, to show the importance of religion to the temporal well-being of men, or the tendency of the religion of Christ to uphold republican institutions, and a hundred topics of a similar character, may or may not be well; but to do either or all of them certainly falls short of the idea of the apostle, when he "determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

And moreover, the command of Christ supposes our appeal to be made *directly* to the consciences of men; relying for success *wholly* on the promised aid of the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour gives us no directions concerning any indirect or preparatory labor. The preparation of the heart is a work which the Lord has reserved for himself. We are not to go about making men think well of religion in general, with the intention of afterwards directing them to Christ, and urging them to obey God. The Son of God has left us no directions for civilizing the heathen, and then Christianizing them. We are not commanded to teach schools in order to undermine paganism, and then, on its ruins, to build up Christianity. If this is our duty, the command must be found in another gospel; it is not found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are, at once and always, to set before all men their sin and danger, and point them to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." And here I would ask, are we not liable to err in these respects? For instance, when we profess to preach the gospel, is it right to take as a text the words of inspiration, and then discourse on something which inspiration never taught? Is it not enough that what we say is true; so is geometry, or chemistry, or metaphysics: but is it the truth which Christ came from heaven to reveal? Again, is not our object frequently far too low in preaching? Do we not sometimes preach with the direct design merely of creating in men a respect for religion; and of inducing them to aid us in promoting the objects of religious benevolence, instead of striving to make them, by means of this very sermon, new creatures in Christ Jesus? Do not we labor, as it is called, to build up a good society: that is to collect around us the rich and the well-conditioned, instead of laboring to save their souls from perdition? The Almighty God sends us to make know his offer of salvation to sinful men; and we instead of delivering his message, content ourselves with teaching them to pay a decent respect to us, and to our services. In the mean time, we allow their immortal souls to go unwarned to eternal perdition. On whose conscience will the blood of these souls rest?

Such, then, is the preaching of the gospel; it is the proclamation of the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. It may be in public or in private, to one or to many, from the pulpit or at the fire-side. Whenever we set before men the message of mercy, and urge them to obey the commands of Christ, then we preach the gospel in obedience to the precept in the text.

III. But who is thus to preach the gospel?

What could be the answer to this question, if we listened to the voice of common humanity? When the brazen serpent was lifted up, who was to carry the good news throughout the camp? When the glad tidings of peace arrived in the city, who was to proclaim it to his fellow-citizens? When the news of peace with God, through the blood of the covenant, is proclaimed to us, who shall make it known to those perishing in sin? The answer in each case is, *every one*. Where no command given, the common principles of our nature would teach us that nothing but the grossest selfishness would claim to be exempted from the joyful duty of extending to others the blessing which we have received ourselves.

But, besides this we have, in the text, the command of Christ. "Go ye into all the world and preach the