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ACTS 5 41.

THE
INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE,

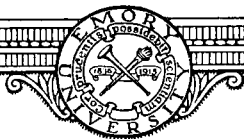
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
GEORGIA BAPTIST CONVENTION,

AT
AMERICUS, GEORGIA, APRIL, 1858.

BY
ADIEL SHERWOOD, D.D.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA:
FRANKLIN PRINTING HOUSE,
WOOD, HANFETER, RICE & CO.

1861.



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INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

“And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”—Acts 5: 41.

Among the tests of discipleship mentioned by the Saviour, none is more infallible than willingness to bear the cross. “He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” Matt. 10: 38-8. Not every professing Christian is entitled to the name of a disciple, or worthy to suffer for the Master. He must be so imbued with love for His cause as to “take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, and persecutions, for Christ’ sake”—who would be invested with the crowning honor of martyrdom. In this land of religious liberty, it is difficult for us to understand the meaning of Christ’s requirements in all their length, breadth, and profundity. So highly has God favored us, that we can not justly appreciate the “cruel mockings and scourgings” of ancient sufferers and primitive martyrs; men “of whom the world was not worthy.” We are like children brought up in the lap of luxurious ease, when foretold of the struggles and hardships which may be their lot in coming life, as they can not understand, can not fully estimate the force of our cautions and enter into our feelings and experience. Such are we when we peruse the sufferings, or contemplate the shame endured by early Christians—the *reality* of the subject is beyond our comprehension. Yet the spirit which they exhibited must be our spirit, or we are not disciples—we do not belong to the Master—we are not the sympathizing subjects of the suffering Saviour.

The religion of primitive Christians stood out in bold relief—a reality, a possession which they valued more than life and its innumerable pleasures. It differed from the sickly sentimentalism and chilling formalism of our day, as widely as does Heaven, with its seraphic enjoyments, from earth with its woes, curses, and wailings. It was a living, vigorous principle, visible and prominent in their words, actions, and spirit, “known and read of all men.”

Nor is it problematical whether the martyr spirit perished with the persecuted Apostles. History arrays before us many instances in every age, disciples harrassed for religion—their blood stains nearly every page up to the year of our Lord 1858. England and most of conti-

mental Europe are distinguished for their army of martyrs. A leaf of our own history is soiled by bigotry and stained by blood. But if ever a nation was penitent for wrong doing in intermeddling with conscientious rights, it is believed our people regret the unchristian spirit that controlled New England and Virginia from the period when the subject of *soul-freedom* was first broached among us, till every cruel edict was expunged from our *Statute Books*. "Plymouth Rock, the cradle of Religious Liberty," is about as true as that Billingsgate is the birth-place of English refinement, or the theatre is the school of morals. Let us see: Mr. Cotton cautions the people against "the back door of toleration." Dr. Mather observes that Anti-Christ "advances his kingdom by toleration of all religious persuasions." "No man can be a freeman and vote in the government except a member in some of the churches." "If any person shall openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or depart the congregation at the ministration, he shall be sentenced to banishment"† These sentiments dropped from the lips of their most distinguished ministers, and were enactments of their legislators. If they be not the very opposite of religious liberty, if they do not exhibit the true spirit of persecution, a total ignorance of soul-freedom, then language has no intelligible meaning—words are not the signs of our ideas. Most of the statesmen were ignorant of the science as afterwards taught by Roger Williams, and regarded it as a dangerous innovation, as an engine to destroy civil rights and crush true religion.

Christians now are subject to fine and imprisonment in Europe for worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences and Bible directions. The goods of parents are seized and sold by national establishments to pay expenses of *sprinkling their children* against their most solemn protest! All this, too, under, not Catholic but Protestant governments! The heroic courage exhibited by ministers in proclaiming God's truth, and the patience of disciples in taking joyfully the spoiling their goods in Germany and Sweden, render them worthy to be classed with the sufferers for Christ in Apostolic times.‡

The context shows that those suffering men of God were "threatened and imprisoned," against which they utter neither murmur nor complaint, for this was a small matter; but when the rights of speech and of conscience were assailed and trampled on, when "commanded not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus," when the privilege of doing good to the souls of men was called in question, they answer with a force that makes the rulers quail with trepidation, "We ought to obey God rather than men." This trenching upon soul-freedom aroused the Apostles to reply to their persecutors and defamers with peculiar power. The propagation of truth, the growing reputation of these despised men, was very annoying to the rulers, for they perceived that their own influence was on the wane, that they were growing very small in the estimation of the people, and the cause advocated by the ministers was rising

† Backus, Mass. Hist. Collections, Laws of Massachusetts.

‡ See Reports of Onken from Hamburg.

rapidly towards its zenith of glory. If they had announced what was false or erroneous, it is clear God would not have interposed in their behalf and rescued them in a miraculous manner. Nor if truth had been valueless, if it were not vital in the saving of the soul, would His servants experience divine interposition. These threatened men exulted in the treatment received, as they discovered God approved their course. The dungeon and flagellation are hard to bear, but the finger of scorn, the sneering gibe, the flouts of bigotry, when it dare not employ the lash or pillory, give an edge to reproach so keen that without much grace the Christian can not endure them. The slow burning embers of inquisitorial vengeance on the writhing bodies of its victims, do not produce pain more acute, do not sting more keenly than the reproaches of the scurrilous tongue, for obedience to commands of the Master

THE APOSTLES SUFFERED,

1. *For proclaiming the Gospel.*
2. *For insisting on the peculiarities in the Christian system.*

1. *For proclaiming the Gospel.*—On the day of Pentecost, when the good news of salvation was announced, the Apostles were charged with intoxication in order to weaken their influence and deceive the people. They were excited and spoke fluently, filled, however, with a better spirit than the products of Palestine could yield. The rulers, the professed friends of God, though the bitterest enemies, were “grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead”; they were enraged because they had filled Jerusalem with the doctrine of salvation through a risen and exalted Saviour. The same persecuting Jews gnashed on Stephen with their teeth when they could not answer his arguments, nor resist the truth in which their bloody crimes were portrayed; stopping their ears, they prostrated him with stones. No sooner had Saul become a proclaimer of Gospel truth than the rulers took counsel to kill him, and for years he was hunted from city to city, with a vindictiveness that befits a fiend. All the Apostles and most of the primitive preachers were the victims of severe persecution, and suffered shame for their adherence to truth and bold proclamation of it on every suitable occasion. The Jews not only would not embrace the Gospel themselves, but tried to prohibit its publication to the Gentiles. But on this simple proposition I will not enlarge.

2. *For insisting on the peculiarities in the Christian system.*—Latitudinarian preaching—sermons from which you can not ascertain whether they are Christian or Jewish, Romish or Protestant, orthodox or heterodox, law or gospel, seldom displease, excite animosity or the elements of persecution. If Peter and John had proclaimed the effete forms of Judaism, they would have escaped threatening and imprisonment. “If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.” If they had not given the encouragements which the Gospel holds out to “every one that believeth,” Jew

or Gentile; if they narrowed down the broad scheme of recovering mercy so as to save only the descendants of the Patriarchs, persecution had not shook over them its bloody lash. Gal. 5: 11.

1. *Justification by faith.*—This doctrine, so vital to the Christian system, was announced by the Apostles in contradistinction to that of justification by law, or ceremonial religion. The Jews supposed that relation to Abraham and the practice of certain rites, would render their acceptance with God sure, and their hopes of heaven bright and permanent. In belief of this fatal error, Saul had lived “in all good conscience,” some 34 years, though ignorant of his own depraved nature and of the way of salvation through faith. Though educated by one of the most distinguished scholars of the age, he was so blind in regard to the Christian scheme, that he supposed he “ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazereth,” and lay waste the interests of his cause. A mighty moral change passes over him on the way to Damascus, and teaches him most clearly that reliance on ancestral piety is of no avail, that “by deeds of law, no flesh,” no human being “can be justified” in God’s sight. To all that believe in Jesus, God becomes the justifier, since they partake of the righteousness “which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe,” that is, the faith enjoined in the Gospel, exercised by all believers, like Abraham’s, “is counted for righteousness.” Acts 26: 9. Rom. 3: 20–22–26. All such are treated by the Father, the justifier, as righteous, in as much as they rely alone on the merit of Jesus, who becomes “their righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” “This,” says Bengel, “is the great evangelical paradox; for in the *Law*, God is seen just in *condemning*—in the *Gospel* He is just, yet *justifying* sinners.”

“The doctrine of justification by works,” says the celebrated Dr. Buchanan, many years Episcopal missionary in India, “is, in substance, also, the doctrine of the Romish Church, and it will always be the popular doctrine among Christians who have *little true religion*, by whatever denomination they may be called. It is the doctrine of the world—it is the spirit of every false religion and superstition upon earth,” while the Bible doctrine of justification is opposed and held in derision by the self-righteous in every age. Whitfield, for preaching this scheme of salvation, was held up as an errorist in New England by the President of Harvard College, and in old England by mitred bishops.

The Jews, “ignorant of God’s righteousness, that which is by faith of Jesus Christ,” labored to establish their own by observance of ceremonies enjoined in the law; whereas, the plan of salvation for condemned criminals is, that they abandon all hope in themselves, submit to Bible requirements, believe in Jesus, and their “faith shall be accounted for the righteousness” which is enjoined. Most circumspectly had Paul observed the Law, but its tendency was to swell him with pride and Phariseism, which is as “filthy rags”; but when he submits to the Gospel scheme of justifying sinners, all former attainments he counts as loss and the filth of the streets; he casts aside the robe woven in nature’s loom, and is graciously enveloped in that “which is through the

faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Rom. 3: 22. "For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect" Rom. 4: 14, by observance of law in order to justification, for God intends to honor his own scheme by pardoning, gratuitously, every penitent believer, Jew or Gentile. Justification by faith, when put in contrast with the stale rite of circumcision, always excited in the descendants of the patriarch the most bitter opposition. Peter was the first victim of persecution for having lost confidence in the efficacy of Judaism; a miraculous vision is before his eyes, and he is convinced that the distinction between certain kinds of food prescribed for the Jews, is rendered nugatory by a clearer and better dispensation.

The Judaising teachers, professing Christianity, yet regarding Christ about equal to Moses, were the most troublesome pests that infested the Churches. So long had they practiced ceremonies, that they supposed could save, aside from justification by faith; and as such persons are very fond of proselyting, they go up to Antioch with a lie in their mouth, affirming that Gentile Christians must be circumcised in order to be saved. The council investigate this, and put in their disclaimer, Acts 15: 24, avering "to whom we gave no such command"; but it had been reported at Antioch as an Apostolic decree! It was a fabrication from first to last—a falsehood engendered to keep waning Judaism in countenance, to magnify the value of rites, and cast into the shade the New Testament doctrine of justification by faith. It is sagely imagined by some, that as Paul left his parchments at Troas, so the Scribe of this council left out some part of the minutes—that part is omitted which says "Baptism has come in lieu of circumcision"; hence it was not decreed that that rite must be continued. But, in proportion as we multiply ceremonies, we rely on them and ignore the truth of salvation by grace—specially justification by faith.

2. *Another peculiarity is, that religion is a personal matter.*—The Jews had imbibed the fatal delusion, that religion was a kind of family or national affair, that if the father conducted family worship, or the monarch acknowledged the existence of the true God, all was well, the family or nation was on the road to heaven, all might have hope of future happiness by efficacy of the prayers and example of their spiritual head. John first lifted the veil from their blinded vision by announcing that relation to Abraham had no saving efficacy unless connected with fruits of righteousness. "The children of the flesh are not the children of God; if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise, Gal. 3: 29, for ye are all the children of God by *faith*," not by circumcision or baptism.

Religion is an individual matter like consciousness, breathing or thinking. Our relations to God are of so high and holy a nature, of such immense importance, that we must individually attend to the concerns of the soul—a matter too sacred and priceless to be intrusted to another. It is not sufficient that we live in a Christian nation, or are born of Christian parents, each for himself must have experimental ac-

quaintance with heart religion. "Except a man (some one) be born again." John 3: 3—8: 51. "If a man keep my sayings." "Whosoever (*pas*) confesseth me." "Whosoever denieth me." "He that loveth father or mother more than me." Matthew 10: 32—3. "If thou confess with thy mouth." As disease, as violation of law, as consciousness, as worship, is an individual affair, so is religion. Jesus cured the diseases of individuals, so he forgave sin—not to a nation, neighborhood, or family, but to such as felt their maladies, and prayed the interposition of the great Physician of souls. As the Judgment is to take cognizance of individuals, "as every one must give account of himself to God," "as every knee shall bow and every tongue confess"; such is religion—each, for himself, must be acquainted with God; the heart of *each* must be changed, for no proxy work can stand the dreadful ordeal before us. "If any man (or person) be my disciple"—not any family or neighborhood, or nation—no such expression dropped from inspired lips. These peculiarities always displeased the Jews, and became the occasion of their bitter hostility against the Apostles.

From this doctrine naturally arises that of *personal holiness*. If God deal with us as individuals, each of us, every one of us, and holds us responsible in life for our conduct, all accountable at the Judgment, it is clear every man and woman, all capable of moral action, must see to his own eternal interests and prepare for that great day. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12: 14. "Except your righteousness shall exceed," &c. Matt. 5: 20. "Created in Christ Jesus and true holiness." Ephesians 4: 24. Such are regenerated by the Spirit of righteousness—hence, excel all formalists and hypocrites.—Some teachers insisted that they could live in sin and yet reach heaven; hence they misrepresented and opposed the Apostles.

3. *That believers are the true children of Abraham and materials for a Gospel Church.*—Relation to pious progenitors has no power to qualify for the Gospel dispensation and New Testament Churches. "Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit," meaning every man that does not exhibit the evidences of piety in his life and temper, sorrow for sin, and the graces named in the Bible that belong to the Christian character, can not be a disciple of Christ. The New Testament recognizes as disciples none *but believers*. Belief, or its synonym faith, is mentioned in every book of the New Testament as indicating that state of heart which is acceptable to God and evidence of being in Christ. Instances: Matt. 8: 10; John 6: 29; 1 Cor. 2: 5; Phil. 1: 29; Tim. 1: 16; James 1: 3; Mark 1: 15; Acts 2: 44; 2 Cor. 6: 15; Col. 1: 4; 1 Timothy 4: 3—10; 1 Peter 1: 5, 7, 8; Luke 7: 50; Rom. 3: 22; Gal. 2: 16; Col. 2: 5; 2d Tim. 1: 5—12—13; 2d Pet. 1: 5; Eph. 1: 1—13; 1 Thess. 1: 3; Titus 3: 8; 1 John 5: 10; Heb. 11: to tidem Jude 1: 20; Revelation 2: 13.

Such a person as an unbeliever was unknown in the primitive Churches—he had no spiritual connection with God's people. Let us look at a few passages: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he

that *believeth* not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3: 36. The believer enjoys God's favor, spiritual life, "has passed from death unto life," while the unbeliever is under wrath, an enemy and alien: "these shall go away into everlasting (*αιωνιον*) punishment, but the righteous unto life (*αιωνιον*) eternal." "Believers were the more added unto the Lord, multitudes both men and women." Acts 5: 14. "Believed Philip—baptized both men and women." Acts 12: 37. "If thou believest with all thy heart," &c. Acts 18: 6.—"Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." "Believe to saving the soul." Heb. 10: 37 "If thou confess with thy mouth and *believe* in thy heart," &c. From the above passages the following propositions are logical deductions: That from *belief* results the difference between the *saved* and the *lost*; that faith is counted for righteousness; that in belief and obedience men are saved; that such only were baptized. Acts 5: 14—8: 12—37—18: 6. If Christ's, by faith and obedience, then we are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3: 29. Or this: Believers only, not descendants by flesh, are the children of Abraham and spiritual seed. All others are enemies, hence not in covenant with God, and unsuitable persons to use the ordinances.—Believers only are suitable subjects for Gospel Churches.

If we build Churches of any other material in order to be preserved from suffering shame, if we knowingly admit one not begotten of the Spirit, we may admit all, and the Churches would deteriorate into nationality and corruption—into worse than Judaism. It is recorded in Gal. 2: 18, just after Paul's reproof of the mighty St. Peter, "If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor," that is, I have preached that the Gospel method of justification by faith, is the true doctrine of salvation; but if I preach otherwise, and try to weave in the rotten threads of a ceremonial law, if I build up works as the foundation of a sinner's hope, I become the occasion of evil and the means of vitiating the purity of the Churches.

Faith, as a mark of discipleship, is a *peculiarity*, when contrasted with the materials of the Old Testament congregations, where parents, children and servants, were all admitted in circumcision; *peculiar*, too, in the sermons under the Gospel and those under the directions of law. If human authority be worth any thing on this subject, the recently expressed opinion of Prof. Hoge, of Princeton, will not be unacceptable: "In no part of the New Testament is any other condition of membership prescribed than that contained in the answer of Phillip to the Eunuch, who desired baptism, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." The Church, therefore, is, in its essential nature, a *company of believers*." "The children of the flesh, mere descendants, these are not the children of God," Rom. 9: 6, 7, 8, "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3: 6—26—29. "Children and seed" of Abraham, in this connexion, are synonymous—they are children of God by faith.

What the primitive Churches recognized as suitable materials for membership, is to be our exemplar. They recognized, not the *natural* seed of the Patriarch, but penitent believers. Hence, if we are his spiritual descendants, if we retain the faith delivered to Gospel Churches, we shall admit no others.

The Galatian Churches had been bewitched by the erroneous dogmas of Judaising teachers, who had mingled with Gospel truth the contaminating elements of superstition. If false brethren, imitating their example, creep into our Churches, sowing the seeds of traditional Judaism, our duty is plain—we must cast out the bondwoman and her depraved posterity.

THEY REJOICE IN SUFFERING,

1. *Because it humbles the heart, and assimilates to Christ.*

One distinguishing feature of Christ's religion is *humility*, said by some old divine to be the door into the favor and school of the Saviour. As the parent is apt to love that child most which bears the strongest resemblance to him, so Christ those most assimilated to His likeness. "He was made perfect through sufferings." Think you, He did not love His suffering disciples more than their persecutors, and yet He was able to rescue? Why not? He knew the uses of suffering and the blessings that ensued. He loves in proportion as His image is drawn upon our character, and suffering shame for His cause, is one of the crucibles where the metal is so purified as to reflect the likeness of the great Refiner in all its loveliest linaments.

It seemed a herculean task to extirpate from the minds of the disciples, their preconceived notions of the pomp and regal splendor that were to signalize Messiah's princely reign on earth. "Whosoever, therefore, shall *humble* himself as this little child, the same is *the greatest* in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18: 4. What a withering rebuke to their inquiry, "Who shall be greatest?" Not the haughty monarch, not the learned Scribe, not the subtle disputer, not the self-righteous Pharisee, but *the little child* is greatest, because he is the *humblest*, because he furnishes the best emblem of that religion which is to subdue the nations, and inaugurate one universal brotherhood, all on the platform of equality. See Isaiah 23: 9. Just before his bloody passion, the Master could discover, fitting before their eyes, offices and honors, and crowns and diadems, when he selects the most expressive symbol of humility, by stooping down "to wash their feet." John 13. This puts a quietus upon their aspirations for dignified stations—we hear no more of "*greatest*."

Was ever there a more assiduous Teacher? Have we learned the lessons proposed? Or need we, like the early disciples, "to suffer shame" for His cause, or to pass the fiery ordeal that others have endured in later days? the stocks, pillory, filthy jail, the whipping-post, such as were familiar to our fathers in New England and Virginia? In Boston 1651, for holding a meeting in Lynn, Clarke and Holmes were fined, one twenty the other thirty pounds. Clarke's was paid and he was released from

prison, but Holmes, conscious he had done no wrong, would not allow his price to be paid, he was whipped thirty lashes with a three corded whip; and two persons that sympathized with him by giving their hands, were fined forty shillings, or to be whipped. Backus, another, was cruelly treated for refusing to present his child to be sprinkled. Some 30 or 40 ministers, in Virginia, were arrested, tried, whipt, imprisoned, knocked down, and suffered other indignities. Have our growing numbers, our position in society, our vantage ground on Truth's impregnable mountain, induced us to forget our low estate forty years ago, when our membership, all told, was 18,000; and to feel like Nebuchadnezzar gloating over his mighty works? The Lord preserve us from such a state of heart. It is better for us to suffer all the reproach that wicked men and a fashionable religion can cast upon us—better to endure the old odium of "Illiterate Baptists," than to be bloated with pride at our advancement.

Look at the emblems that Inspiration has been pleased to select in order to exhibit the most valuable traits of Christian character, not the sturdy oak, the tall cedar, nor the stately pine, but the tiny "bush" was the resting place of the angel, and lambent flame on which Moses gazed—the creeping vine, the grape with its slender tendrils, clinging to the neighboring sapling with more than Christian tenacity; nor was it the panoplied warrior, the eagle, proud monarch of the feathered tribes, but the little child and timid lamb, these commend the acquisition of those lovely graces which assimilate to Christ, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God of great price—very grateful and pleasing. Christ was "meek and lowly," or humble of heart.—That which humbles the heart assimilates to Christ; but suffering shame for him, humbles and subdues. Therefore, suffering assimilates to Christ.

2. *It draws the sufferer nearer the Savior.*

When husband and wife suffer in the same cause, or when he bears his bosom in the hour of danger, and receives the blow intended for her, or exposes himself to the assassin or wild beast, their attachment is strengthened; so the obedient Christian, the martyr spirit, is dear to Christ and Christ is precious to the sufferer. Those men that suffered in the prison-ships in the Revolution, contracted attachments that lasted all through life. It is true, all Christians are dear to Christ, but much more so the suffering ones, as is the afflicted, weakly child to its sleepless mother. The 300 Spartans under Leonidas were dearer to Greece than the rest of the army, because they threw themselves into that narrow defile, determined to sell their lives to the invaders *at the highest* price, crush as many as possible of the Persians and drive Xerxes out of their free country. This was a noble sacrifice on the altar of Liberty. But in so far as Christ's cause is more valuable than Grecian or American freedom, in so far will suffering disciples be dearer to the Master than the memory of suffering patriots to those who enjoy the rights purchased by their blood and sufferings.

The Christian soldier never yields to fear,
 He battles nobly in the cause of Truth;
 In death he conquers for his Saviour's near,
 Whom age and wrinkles changes to immortal youth.
 Humbled and chastened by reproach and shame,
 He bears his Leader's image more and more;
 The summons comes in whirl-wind and in flame;
 From earth's dark winter, see him mount and soar
 Where Spring and blooming flowers perfume the fragrant shore,
 Where saint and angel voices heavenly music pour.

3. *It promotes his usefulness.*

Religion never flourished more vigorously than under the ten memorable persecutions of early times, when it exhibited its power in so wonderful a manner as to astonish all. Cowardice is converted into courage—timid females put on the boldness of the lion—attack and conquer the sturdiest foes. See Hebrews 11. The holy resignation of the sufferers, the humble expressions that drop from their lips, carry conviction of the truth of their cause to the stoutest hearts; their sufferings and eloquent language, because under the influence of the Spirit, are irresistible, and may be denominated “logic set on fire.” They sweep down the sophistry, the cob-web arguments of infidelity and prejudice as does the whirlwind the rotten trees of the forest; they are omnipotent. Who can stand before the resistless discourse of a man like Stephen, persecuted and reproached for the promulgation or practice of truth? None of the nations assembled in Jerusalem, nor the prejudiced Jews, could resist his speech nor shake off the impression made on their minds.

Great suffering is generally connected with eminent usefulness—it is the highway to renown. The non-conformists of England, during the reign of James and the Charleses, were distinguished for their learning and fruitful labors. Cambridge and Oxford boast of their scholars and men of celebrity, whose writings have enriched the treasures of literature—cast a halo of glory over our language, and erected imperishable monuments of their eminence. One famous among them, not honored, however, by those Colleges, was a *prince* among authors, the only graduate of his Alma Mater, where he studied 12 years instead of four, before he received his diploma. As the writings of Prophets and Apostles, translated into nearly all languages, are scattered broad-cast over earth's surface, so those of this lone graduate into every European and many Asiatic tongues. His *Prize Essay* has been rendered and is perused to-day by hundreds of millions of human beings. What is the fame of Addison, Goldsmith, Johnson, Shakespear, Scott, Bulwer, and Dickens, who have charmed the masses with the beauty and wit of their compositions, when contrasted with one work of this suffering disciple, this humble scholar in the school of Christ? *His* will he read, and loved, and wept over, exciting the highest intellectual delight, the sweetest spiritual comfort, when their's shall be buried under the accumulated strata of a thousand centuries. As the frosts of winter never affect our stately evergreen, so those of Time shall never fade the wreath with which his brow is adorned.

“Ingenius dreamer, in whose well-told tale,
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail,
I name thee not, lest so despised a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame.”

If suffering produced the “Pilgrim’s Progress” and “Holy War,” works which College men have been laboring near two centuries to imitate and equal, and yet failed, we may learn the lesson so frequently inculcated in the Bible, that humility is the royal road to distinction and usefulness, for it draws the sufferer near to Christ.

“Cambridge and Oxford in the strife for fame
Struggle like Grecian wrestlers for a mighty name;
In race they flag, to mightiest *Prince* they quail.
Who took his royal honors fresh from Bedford jail.”

Are *you* afraid of reproach in your Master’s cause? Do you apprehend it will lessen your dignity—kill your reputation as a scholar, injure you in the estimation of those versed in Bible truth, or curtail your usefulness? Your fears are groundless. Suppose you have preached old fashioned doctrines, or administered unpopular ordinances, or contended for the faith and practice of early Christians, or instructed and encouraged the ignorant in the paths of virtue, and scorn has pointed his finger at you? Will this kill? Have you done any thing which would redden the cheek of primitive sufferers, or of which you should be ashamed?—The more it depletes the plethora of pride, all the better; for it is patient you need humbling. A temporizing policy is more to be dreaded as the ruin of your slender reputation than faithfulness in the cause of truth and duty. What have the angry waves done in 6,000 years on the pillars of Hercules? But Truth’s pillars are less movable, less subject to be worn by friction; these, too, are guarded with an inspection intense in proportion to their value. If you would be eminently useful, give fears to the winds, go forth preaching the truth, whole truth, and nothing but the truth, “in love” and humility, not in hate and arrogance.

4. *It produces the most intense interest for human salvation.*

Who cared and labored for our ruined race as Jesus and his Apostles? A religion that is worth suffering for, becomes in proportion highly valuable; it indicates the preciousness of the soul. Those willing to suffer that others may enjoy the Gospel with its rich consolations, though they die in proclaiming its truths, are such as have a just estimation of man’s undying interests. Formal religion, fashionable Christianity connected with establishments, as it has no suitable appreciation of the soul’s relation to its maker, could not subject its advocates to shame in order to advance its cause. The sacrifice might be offered in money, but not in body or reputation; the object is not high enough to pay. No herald would venture out in the danger of suffering. Vital, Apostolical religion alone can feel and suffer to save others.

IV *Is religion shameful?*

How then can Christians suffer reproach for proclaiming its truth or practising its duties? What was there in the conduct of Peter and

John to suffuse the cheek of modesty, or soil the robe of virtue? Erroneous public opinion, woven by tradition, superstition, and bigotry—sustained by men who disliked the humbling truths of the cross and despised the ordinances of the Gospel, had infused among the people the idea of shame. In this way, good men in all ages are held up to ridicule and obloquy, and the rabble ever associate in their minds, disgrace and opprobrium in all that is connected with the salvation of the soul; hence the shame endured by the Apostles. They were “the offscouring” of the earth, because it was the interest of the rulers so to represent them, in order to retain their own influence. But it was a false estimate—they were the benefactors of mankind, and sought their true happiness and felicity, feeling that the mere observance of forms could not save the soul nor bring the sinner back to God.

During our Revolutionary struggle, it was the interest of the mother country to render the efforts of our patriot fathers *shameful*, because they would urge the people to shake off an oppressive yoke and be free. But this nation regard their conduct as worthy of all praise and honor. The scars and limbless bodies of the old soldiers that used to hobble among us on great occasions, were objects of the highest veneration.—There are men in this land to-day, who would give thousands if they bore those scars, and had been disabled in fighting the battles of their country; if possible, they would manufacture old soldiers as do humbuggers Egyptian mummies, and for gain, expose them to view. Or they would forge wooden legs and scars, dress up old men and pass them off for Revolutionary soldiers. Hence their shame then becomes an honor, a mark of distinction, a precious legacy to their descendants. But as a tory could not exult in such a transformation, so with a mere professor, he might covet the honor of a suffering disciple, he could not enjoy the reality.

There is, let it be observed, a difference between suffering for Christ and our own whim: “If any man suffer as a Christian,” 1 Pet. 3: 14, and 4: 14 not as a fanatic—“if ye be reproached for the name of Christ”—“not for the worshipping of angels”—happy are ye”; you may rejoice that you are counted worthy of such an honor; but for any notion of your own, not contained in the Scriptures, for adherence to any dogma not enjoined by inspiration, though clung to with the tenacity of Pagan superstition, Jewish stubbornness, or Mormon credulity, it is but a show of wisdom in will-worship, “after the tradition of men and not after Christ.” Col. 2: 8-18-23.

REFLECTIONS.

1. *Our usefulness will be in proportion to our humility.*

The great bene to usefulness in all ages, have been “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” which suffering is designed to destroy. While we cultivate the grace of humility, the hardest lesson it seems for the Apostles to learn, we are weakening pride of its strength, and overcoming the evil passions of our heart.

2. *Fellowship with disciples suffering for the truth, is evidence of our interest in Christ's cause.*

If Saul's cruelty in persecuting Christians was the index of his feelings in regard to Christ, then all who dislike them and hate their Master, are enemies, and *vice versa*. If we sympathize with the suffering, we may rest assured that we have the spirit of the Redeemer. But if our love is not strong enough to sustain us in suffering, we fail in one important trait of primitive Christianity. If dread of reproach is so powerful as to make us shun the promulgation of unpopular truths, we have lost the Apostolic spirit. Show us a sentence in the New Testament, touching doctrine or duty, that was softened down to smooth the asperity of the one, or altered to hide the indecorousness of the other.* We may suffer from the sneers of adversaries as from the magistrate's lash; we must make up our minds to endure the flouts of the reproachful—to be denominated “dippers” and bear the ignominy of perpetuating an *indecent ordinance*.

3. *Reproach gives efficacy to ministerial prayer and labor.*

Who ever labored like the Apostles, and with so much success?—Whose prayers received immediate answer like those of Peter and Paul? Who suffered as much? So it was in New England and Virginia among the sufferers; God infused into those illiterate men, ability to preach “as with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” with an *unction* that made their discourses irresistible, and convinced the bitterest

*NOTE.—“Bring,” says Mr. Collins, one of the ejected non-conformists of 1662, “all doctrine and all practices to the Scriptures—try them there” When Paul would redress the abuse of the Lord's supper, he does not carry the Corinthians to these and those fathers, “but” brings that, How was it delivered from the Lord? “*What I received of the Lord, that I have delivered unto you.*” 1 Cor. 11: 23–26. The reasons for this rule are obvious: Inspired language is our guide; for commentators, reporters, and scribes, interested to deceive, might change the meaning, or make sad mistakes. If my Lord Saint Peter, the head of Christendom, had issued any new directions on the subject, Paul was not pliant enough to bow to his directions—he would refer to the *original institution*. Yes, let us have that, *subjects and all*, with scrupulous exactness; if all the membership took the elements, all, every one, let us adhere to primitive practice, even if we have to employ nurses to wait upon the infant brotherhood, to *chew the bread and hand the wine*.

Again, Mr. Collins: “Try the ways and forms of Christ's House by the word of Christ.” “Whatever you worship without a warrant from the word of God, you worship you know not what—tis will worship.” “Never did any invent false doctrines, but to put *up* them when they put *down* the Scripture.” “Their great work is to darken the Light of the Truth, and in the room of the Scripture, to be your ruler, they set up other rules.” “It was the plea of the Popish party in the Marian days, What, will you not believe the Church? Hath not the Church power to make institutions and canons about this and that and the other?” “But the Church must shine by a Scripture light; if that be a *rule*, it must be *ruled* by Scripture. The Church's power is not so *authoritative* as to give laws against the laws of Christ; 'tis only *ministerial*.” “It is not what a Church *practices*, but what *she is warranted to practice*. Where they would hold forth that which the Scripture is *short in*, they will send us to *such and such customs*.” “Many have little ground for their faith—only the *tradition* of the elders, the *custom of the place*, such a party of men say so—*no body denies it, ministers commonly preach it.*”

Some of the above cautions may be applicable to our age, though preached 190 years ago.

opposers. Men reproached for obedience to Christ, while they bear it patiently may expect divine assistance. Why were the speeches in the old Congress so full of pathos and power? Why did they talk so eloquently? They had been reproached as rebels and traitors, when they were conscious of seeking the highest interests, both civil and social, of the people; their sufferings and abuse produced so deep feeling in the cause they advocated, that it became an element of eloquence. All would be pardoned except Hancock and Adams. Such proscribed and persecuted men, in so good a cause, would speak with effect if they had no tongues. The scorn of the world brings a good man to his knees where he lays the case before his Saviour, and prays that he may see the wrong and find pardon. But if slandered, if reproached for Christ's cause, he submits without murmuring, and rejoices that it is "given to him not only to *believe* in his name but to *suffer for his sake*." Phil. 1: 29.

4. *Suffering disciples shall reign with their exalted Savior, while persecutors must be punished.*

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him"; "if so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Tim. 2: 12—Rom. 8: 17 Not worthy to be compared with the future glory. If any want better security or stronger encouragement in the performance of duty in the midst of reproach and ridicule, he needs a book of stronger veracity than the Bible, and a pledge of a more faithful Being than its Author, with whom falsification is impossible.

If God protect his friends He must punish His enemies—such are all persecutors. If you have no sympathy for the cause of Christ, no interest in its prosperity, no desire for its advancement, the spirit of enmity is in your heart. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."

