

THE CROSS

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE BAPTIST
DENOMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES

AT ITS

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BY

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OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

AND

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“I have not enough preached Jesus; and when I have preached him, it was not enough in
the simplicity of the Gospel. – GRIFFIN’S MEN. p. 57.

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TO THE
REV. FRANCIS WAYLAND, JR. D. D.,
THIS
SECOND EDITION
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THE
AUTHOR.

This sermon was not written out before its delivery – yet the author believes that he has been able to recall almost exactly the very words spoken. He allows it to be published because the vote of the convention is with him imperative as to a discourse preached by an appointed organ. With regard to the question of general and particular Redemption the author begs to be considered as not touching it in any way. The atonement is a mystery so magnificent and stupendous, that, beyond a doubt, all our present conceptions of its design and influence will in eternity appear to us inexpressibly little, contracted, and mean.

THE CROSS.

JOHN 12: 32.

AND I, IF BE LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME.

That is a singular account given by Eusebius of the conversion of Constantine. He was marching, says the historian, at the head of his army from France, to encounter his rival Maxentius in a conflict upon the issue of which his empire depended. Oppressed with anxiety, he prayed that some God would aid him; when, in the heavens and higher than the sun, a luminous cross appeared, emblazoned with these words, “*by this sign thou shalt “conquer.*” He did conquer, and ever after the cross was displayed as the banner of the Caesars.

The truth of this narrative I, of course, shall not now examine. It is certain, Fathers and Brethren, and all important for us to realize, that, in the noble enterprise in which we are engaged, there is but one standard which can be upheld successfully – but one banner which, star-like, must sit and shine above our ranks, and lead us on to victory – and that this is the Cross, - the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How exactly to the subject in hand is the prediction uttered by a prophet, and cited by Paul in the fifteen chapter of Romans. “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek.” And although it is probable that Isaiah himself did not comprehend “what the spirit of Christ which was in him did signify” (for a cross! A gallows! – even upon the vision of that most rapt of all the Seers of Israel, could *this* have streamed as an ensign for man’s redemption, an ensign for the gathering and disenthraling of the nations?); yet we, my brethren, understand the prophecy and its fulfillment.

The very act, indeed, of the crucifixion, and the very hour, furnished remarkable proof, or rather a significant type and adumbration, of the influence which the cross would exert. On that day and witnessing that spectacle were present, in truth, the very “all men” – i.e. all classes of men – to whom the text refers; and observe the effect on them. In the Roman centurion, behold a representative of the intellectual and skeptical; and what is the effect on him? He is convinced, he “feared greatly, saying truly this was the Son of God.” In the multitude, remark the careless and thoughtless; what are their emotions? Roused and agitated, they leave the spot, smiting heavily on their breasts.”

And in that poor thief – in his conscious guilt, his penitence, his cry for help, and the answer which at once dispels his fears, and sheds joy throughout his soul, and opens to him the gates of Paradise – see there the influence of the cross upon a sinner, its power to stir, and then to hush, the guilty clamor within him.

Behold the might of the cross as exhibited in the very act of crucifixion, and on that memorable day when the Saviour was lifted up. But was this power confined to that time, and to that place? No, my brethren. As Paul said to the Galatians who had heard the Gospel, “*Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified among you,*” although Galatia was some hundreds of miles distant from Calvary, - so, wherever the gospel is now preached to a people, there the Saviour is set forth lifted up among that people, and there the same influence will be felt, the same potency exerted. Still it is true, (and I here indicate the subject and division of my whole discourse) still it is true, - that whatever the intellect of a man, there is an argument in the cross to convince him; whatever the heedlessness of a man, there is an energy in the cross to rouse him; in fine, whatever his guilt, there is in the cross a magnetism to draw, and a magic to change, and a mystery to save him. Let us resume these thoughts. I beg you, my hearers, to honor me with all your attention. And “O Thou that hearest prayer vouchsafe me the adorable succours of thy grace, and hasten the time when unto Thee shall all flesh come!” Amen.

I am going to consider the cross, in the first place, simply as an argument; and recollect, the Saviour himself declares that one object of his mission and death was the assertion and establishment of the truth. It was just before he died upon the cross that he said, “To this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.” And the apostle represents “the truth in Jesus,” as the only truth that can really master the intellect of man, and make him wise unto salvation, because this alone converts speculation into certainty, and substitutes assurance as to eternal things, for those vague and confused and unsettled conjectures which may exist in truth out of Jesus, but are wholly incompetent and ineffectual.

Only “the truth as it is in Jesus” will avail, says the apostle, and with reason. Why, just reflect for a moment – just consider, my brethren, what it is the gospel requires in calling us to be Christians. It is to immolate self – it is to be divorced from the world, to renounce the world, to be crucified to the world! ----- Renounce the world! be crucified to the world! And of whom is this required? – by no means; of men; - of beings carrying within them a thousand appetites, a thousand passions, a thousand propensities, and around whom are strewn from their cradles to their graves objects most seductive, and solicitations most refined and delicate. All these inclinations must be subdued, all these importunities repelled, all these fascinations surmounted. And for what? What does the gospel propose in their place? Things unseen, a world buried in the darkness of futurity; objects which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Now need I tell you, that against this sweepings demand of the gospel there is not a taste of affection in the natural heart but will rise up in resistance? Can any language convey more forcibly the idea of violence, of a painful and protracted struggle, than the very expression “crucified to the world”? And what more proper, then, than that the mind insist upon conclusive evidence as to these objects which are to “overcome” and displace the world? From what source, however, can this evidence be derived? From our senses? They give us no sort of information as to such things. From our reason? We feel that this

is inadequate. From the books of philosophers? But – besides that their lessons are such subtleties as the multitude could never understand* - the truth is, the philosophers themselves felt little confidence in their own reasonings. Socrates when dying, said “I am going out of the world and you remain in it, but which is better is known only to God. I hope,” continued the old man, “I hope there is something reserved for us after death.” Cicero confesses himself unable to decide anything; and introduces one complaining “that while he was reading the arguments for immortality he felt convinced, but as soon as he laid aside his books his belief was gone.” And Seneca well remarks that “the philosophers rather promised, than proved an existence beyond the tomb.”*

But if the testimony of the senses, and the decisions of reason, and the systems of philosophy are impotent for the extirpation of our earthly preferences and passions, where can we find that conviction which shall possess the ascendant power? Only in the truth as it is in Jesus. The cross is the only argument; but it is an argument all-sufficient – an argument so conclusive that no power of intellect can refute it, and so simple that there is no ignorance which cannot comprehend it.

Yes, my brethren, Jesus Christ “brings life and immortality to light.” He comes “a witness to the people” – to bear witness to the truth.” And he supports his doctrines by his life, and vindicates them by his miracles. Bring forth, he says, your sick, your blind, your lame, and your dead; and at his bidding, the sick are restored to health, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the dead are raised to life. These were sufficient attestations ample credentials, and ought to have satisfied all. These however did not satisfy the Jews. They ask another, and, as they themselves admitted, a conclusive testimony; and he gives even that. He seals his doctrines with his blood. And while evil men and angels are exulting in the seeming extinction of the truth, he bursts the bands which held him, and, rising, stamps upon that truth the broad bright signet of Deity confessed; - of a God who could not only bend to his will and at a word the hidden mysteries and ministries of nature, but could invade the pale dominions of Death himself, and grappling there, and in his grave clothes, with the tyrant, could tear the black diadem from his brow, and wrench from his cruel scepter, and shiver at a blow his skeleton empire, and plant his bruised heel in disdain upon the prostrate monster who sought to detain him captive.

O yes, dying and standing a might conqueror over the tomb, the Redeemer graves as with sunbeams the proof of his doctrine. It is impossible now to doubt. If ever incredulity was personified, and skepticism incarnate, it was in those men who witnessed the Saviour’s miracles and who crucified him; but, by his death and resurrection, Jesus in a most illustrious manner accomplished even the sign, and achieved even the argument, which they demanded. Of that death and that resurrection I will not stop here to marshal the array of evidence. They are facts incontestible. And if any man doubt, I cut the matter short with that man – he has never examined the subject. No honest mind can examine and not confess the impregnable stability of the truth. It is of great moment, however, to remark that, these facts being proved, the demonstration they furnish is precisely as conclusive to us, as to those who witnessed them; for we believe, and they could do no

* It was expressively taught by the Platonists that none but the philosopher living in meditation could attain to the spiritual knowledge of religion. To him pertained the; the people must be satisfied with the, a compound of falsehood and truth. Hence the distinction between the esoteric and exoteric religion.

*See Appendix.

more. The demonstration is the same to us, and wherever the gospel goes. The truths the Saviour preached are equally proved, the doctrines equally established.

But these truths thus certain – these doctrines thus established – what becomes of the world with all its attractions? How it is dwarfed! How are all sublunary splendors eclipsed, shined into darkness; - and all mortal glories withered, dimmed, shrunk, and spurned into contempt! Ye charms, ye flatteries, ye fascinations of earth, what are ye? Ye pleasures, ye riches, ye grandeurs, to which men crawl and before which they prostrate themselves, what are ye? Come, let me estimate you now, let me see your worth, let me institute a comparison. ----- But, my brethren, is this necessary? Ah! do not your hearts already feel the force of the argument? What, will ye compare the deceitful pleasures of sin to “the fullness of joy which is in God’s presence”! What, will ye prefer the stinted and polluted drops here to the torrents, the rivers of delight which are “at his right hand”! What, will ye lie down in hell and become prey to devils for the glorification of a vile passion! All pomps and glories of this world, are they worthy to be compared to “the glory which shall be revealed in “us”, “the exceeding,” “the more exceeding,” “the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? To see God;” – to “be changed into “the same image;” – to “go to Mount Zion, to “the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem;” – no more to know sin, and sickness, and pain, and sorrow; - to be forever united to saints, and cherubim, and seraphim, shouting “Alleluiah, “Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; while the four and twenty elders fall down and answer Alleluiah;” – to burn with their ardors; - to satiate the soul with their ecstasies; - to be with Christ; - to behold his glory; - to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; - to look into his face; - to gaze upon his glorified form, and think that every vein in that body bled for me; - to be ravished with his smiles; - to fall at his feet; - to cling there – to live there My God! where is the world now? What is it worth? Yonder, yonder is a world for which the Christian Alexander may well weep – yonder it is all radiant with the gold and glowing with the sapphire! But this world – this world which so dazzles and intoxicates us – this clay world, with its clay honours, and clay pleasures, and clay riches – Ah! Lord, how little were eternal objects worthy of the strife, if no better than such a world. And how foolish are we, my dear hearers, is there a spark of reason in us, when we love this world; when we refuse to immolate this world; when we hesitate to gather all this world contains, and trample it in the dust, that we may spring upward and heavenward and grasp the undecaying glory, honour, and immortality set before us in the gospel?

Such is our argument; an argument convincing, and, as I said, of equal power in all ages and to all men. Wherever a preacher or a missionary goes – he may be a weak man, an unlearned man – but he goes armed with this, and by this he will conquer. Christ “lifted up” will be an argument to do what no reasoning, no philosophy can do – an argument high as heaven, and deep as hell, and against which no sophistry of earth, no subtlety of the Devil can avail. The proudest intellect will confess its conclusiveness; and the feeblest, that of the African and the untutored Burman, will rejoice in its majestic simplicity. This is our first article.

But, my brethren and fathers, were it doing any thing, think you, to preach Christ crucified, if the cross were only an argument? Were it not utter ignorance of man, to suppose that any demonstration will disenchant the world? Why, the argument may be overwhelming, and the evidence establish a certainty – but what then? What is all this to

one who will not listen to the argument, who will not weigh the evidence? What in truth, my brethren, is the great difficulty we find in our hearers – and which the missionary, too, encounters in his? Is it to convince men who are awakened to eternal things? By no means; - that were easy. No, it is indifference, it is apathy. It is that men are buried in the deep repose and lethargy of nature; that they are sepulchered in the senses. It is that in the polite, we have to do with hearts turned into artificial frost-work; and in the sensual with souls stupefied and imbruted; in short, that all are earth-struck – and that is worse than being moonstruck – that the care of the passions, the dissipations of pleasure, and the more fatal dissipations of business – its ceaseless urgencies and activities – engross the mind, and leave, as to eternity, only a heedlessness and listlessness as universal as it is strange and deplorable.

This is the grand difficulty. And, now, what expedient, what engine can be effectual for salvation which does not meet this? But what can meet it? What can rouse men from this fatal unconcern and callousness? The instrumentality, my brethren, to accomplish this work is still the same – it is the cross; the power is still in the same object, the Saviour lifted up from the earth. It is idle to talk about what ought to influence us. The simple fact is, that preaching Christ crucified is God's ordinance to stir the souls of men, nor has it ever failed. Whatever the heedlessness of a man, there is in the cross an energy to rouse him, a power which ever has been, and ever will be acknowledged. This is the second proposition I advanced, and one which does not appear to me to require any proof. Who will question it? Why, look at history; - I appeal to facts; - I appeal to the thousands of nations, ages, sexes, temperaments, and conditions, who have confessed this energy of the cross, and yielded to it. And if there be, in all this uncounted assembly, one who has never felt any thing while a bleeding Jesus has been lifted before him, then I know nothing of the human heart; let him stand up, I wish to look at him; he is more or less than man.

Never felt any thing! but it is impossible, I know better. No, my brethren, hardened a man may be; he may have a heart of stone, of steel; he may glory in his obduracy; but if he has ever listened to that tale of love and sorrow, he has not been wholly unmoved. No, No, No, it cannot be. We have amongst us a class of people who are always crying out – “No excitement, we do want excitement in religion” – Very well, let them get a preacher who knows nothing of Christ crucified in the heart, and says nothing of Christ crucified in the pulpit, and he will walk at their head, and lead them quietly and comfortably enough down to hell. The cross will excite. It is the most restless and resistless of agitators. No sooner was it erected than all nature felt and confessed its instigations; the earth heaved, the veil of the temple was rent from top to the bottom, it agitated the rocks, it shook the sheeted dead from their slumbers, and disturbed the sun himself. Nor hath it lost its power. I care not what the man is; let him be ever so desperate and wrapt in marble; let him be invulnerable to the most terrifying denunciations, and inaccessible to the most touching remonstrance; let vice fix her gorgon eye upon him until he be petrified and frozen into flint – I care not. He may be proof against all else, but when this tear-compelling story is unfolded; when there is mustered before him all the tempest which beat upon that sacred head, and all the love which welcomed that tempest for poor man – O, he will not, he cannot be proof against that.

True, he may bid away the holy feeling, he may quench it and perish. But he goes down carrying with him the bitter recollection, that he had been there – in that world, that

planet – where the cross was, and had been touched by it as by a wand. He may stifle the hallowed movement, but it will cost him a struggle, and, for the moment at least, the rock will be smitten, and the heart will gush, and the unbidden tear will tell that all is not yet quite lost.

No, brethren, the unparalleled phenomenon exhibited on Calvary, eighteen hundred years ago, can never die, never can grow old; and wheresoever that is proclaimed, there men's hearts will be shaken; the strings long silent will be swept by an unseen hand; the wells long sealed hermetically will be opened, and the waters stirred to their inmost depths. I know not why it was that when the body of a dead man was let down into the cave, and touched the bones of the long buried prophet, it was quickened into life. But I do know that whenever this truth descends into the bosom – the conscience may have been long dead, shrouded and entombed in adamant – yet its potency will revive at the contact, and the word, although sown in weakness, will be felt to be an active and powerful thing, instinct with vitality and vigour. Nor when I speak thus, when I affirm this so confidently, am I at all regarding the ability of the preacher, though that is important. Nor do I refer even to the invisible workings of the Spirit, though these, I am aware, are indispensable. I am well aware, my brethren, nor can we too constantly bear in mind, that it is the office of the Holy Ghost to apply the atonement. I know that, as in creation this glorious Agent brooded over the elements, and wrought out, from discord and darkness, light and harmony and loveliness, causing the shapeless mass to burst into efflorescence and beauty – so, now, it is his, to move plastically over the chaos of principles, affections, and hearts, disorganized and left in confusion and ruin by the shock of the fall, and to reduce them back, and refashion them to order and holiness, and thus become the author of the new creation. All this I know. But I allude not at present to this. The energy asserted by the text, and of which I speak, is that of the cross, and in the cross itself.

And, now, what if I were unable to account for this energy? What if I should just say, that there is an electric chain which binds our ruined race to the Wonderful Being who hangs there in our likeness? We are told that if two lutes, of the same form, and tuned exactly in unison, be in the same room, and one be struck into melody, the other, though untouched by mortal minstrelsy, will own a kindred sympathy, and give out soft and gentle murmurs. And what if I should tell you that something like this takes place; – that when Jesus Christ assumed our form, and entered this world, and was smitten for us, there was a mystery in his pangs which should forever cause the sensibilities of human hearts to vibrate, and waken the play of feelings tender and unearthly? What if I should use the idea of an apostle, and say that, in becoming man, Jesus Christ took not on him the *individual*, but the *nature*; and that – as by this assumption he finished an atonement sufficient for the whole world, and became in this sense “the Savior of all men,” and the sins of the thronged and crowded and gathered and pressed in crushing and excruciating weight upon the sufferer – so, by the same union, there goes forth, there is sent back and abroad and flung into men's souls, wherever a crucified Redeemer is preached among them, an effluence, a sensation, a sympathy, thrilling and irresistible? What if I should only say this – and the scriptures would bear me out – it were enough.

But, really, my brethren, all mystery apart, is it strange that the cross is invested with a power to rouse and shake the soul? Strange! is it not the marvel this – not that men are moved – but that all are not instantly melted and subdued by it? Why, let men be only

men, let them only have pulses that beat, and hearts that throb, and this simple announcement: "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life*" – oh, the very thought is colossal, it is overmastering, and language droops under it – tell me, can this be received with coldness and indifference? is it supposable, is it possible? And, then, the amazing consummation – the Deed! the Deed! the Deed! the tragedy of which this earth was the theatre, while angels gazed confounded, and the hierarchies of heaven bent from their seats in silent astonishment, and Deity itself, I had almost said, must for once have been absorbed, for once have had all its universal regards and expiations arrested, and fixed, and concentrated, - that deed – that spectacle – can that be viewed with apathy?

What! my brethren, that "the Word was made flesh" – that "the Ancient of days" was cradled as an infant – that He, "by whom and for whom all things were created," stooped to poverty and shame; - are *these* things to be heard and have no influence? That, for us men and our salvation, "the brightness of the Father's glory." He who "thought it no robbery to be equal with God," emptied himself, and took upon him "the form of a servant," and terminated upon a giblet, a life of pain, and tears, and blood, O Jesus! IS THIS TRUE? Can I believe *this* and be unmoved? Can *this* fail to bow my soul, and wipe out every record from my heart, and live there alone, the one, single, all-controlling impression, stamped in to the very core, and moulding every fibre to itself? Who is surprised at what a distinguished missionary relates? He was sent among the Indians, and he preached to them with all his earnestness of God, his power, his grandeur, and his glory; but they turned away and laughed at him. Why, they had heard far nobler sermons on these subjects than man could utter. They had sat down by day amid the wild pomp of their mountains, and the sublime silence of their forests; and at night had looked up at the pavement of unfading fire above their heads. They had listened to the rushing of the cataract – "deep calling unto deep," – and to the music of the tempest, and the cry of the hurricane. Before their eyes the lightning's fiery flood had rifted the sturdy oak; the hoarse and strong had thundered on beneath them the might of the earthquake. They had heard THESE preach, and they preached of God in tones which mocked the puny articulations of human eloquence. And now that the white man should come to tell them there is a God, and that this God is great, and powerful, and glorious, - they spurned at him in hardness and derision. Baffled in his first effort, the missionary changed his address, and proclaimed a crucified Jesus. He opened his bible, and read to them those words "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life*" – "*God spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all.*" Nor did he preach in vain now. The gaze of his audience was at once fastened. They were astonished at the doctrine, and their hearts were at once touched. As the speaker went on with "the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance," – as he led them from scene to scene of the Saviour's humiliation and sorrow, - from the manger to the garden, and from the garden to the judgment hall – smothered sobs and murmurs began to be heard; until at last, when he brought them to the cross, and showed them, nailed there, the abused and suffering Son of God, and said, - "All this for you, - these tears, these groans, this blood for you"! – the poor savages could refrain no longer; they had stood all else, but they could not stand this; they exclaimed "Is it true? Is it true?" and lifted up their voices and wept aloud.

Sirs, Sirs, all men call me an enthusiast, but I ask you is not enthusiasm cold common sense here? “What a pity” cried the Roman, “that we have but one life for our country.” Which of you but exclaims this night, what a pity we have not a thousand hearts for such a Saviour – a thousand hearts, and every one of them a holocaust, a whole burnt offering, a sacred conflagration of gratitude and devotion.

Nor is it only the overcoming fact of the humiliation and crucifixion of the Son of God that gives such power to the cross. From it what overwhelming truths flash out on a guilty world, as from a blazing, focal, radiating central-point. The cross! what an exhibition does it give of the value of the soul. The cross! what an admonition there of the miseries of the damned. Devouring flames, chains of darkness, howlings of despair, I need you not – the cross where Jesus bleeds to save us gives me a more terrific idea of hell than you can. The cross! what an awful lustre does it pour upon justice, the holiness, and the serenity of God. Above all, the love of God – how dazzling, with what surpassing brightness, does not that shine there – sending a heavenly effulgence all over this dark world, down even to the gates of hell. I ask again, can this cross be viewed with indifference? Is it strange that the cross has power to rouse and stir the heart? Is not this the wonder, not that men are shaken, but that all are not melted and mastered by the very first announcement of a crucified Redeemer; and that whenever and wherever this truth is proclaimed, the scenes of Pentecost are not renewed, and the place is not a Bochim drenched with bursting tears rained quickly out of full hearts? A Philosopher, and not of the worst school either, has declared “it is impossible to love God.” For my part, when I look at the cross, I saw how it is possible not to love God; not to call, with the Psalmist, upon heaven and earth, upon our souls and all within us to love and praise HIM; and with old Andrew Fuller^{*}, to find our hearts forever breaking out into unknown strains of love, and our lips – go where we will – singing

“O for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour’s praises speak!”

I ought now, my brethren, to enter upon our last article, and, having exhibited the cross as an argument, and a motive, to present it in its most glorious aspect, as the wonder-working power of God in converting and saving the vilest. I am not ashamed, however, to confess that I have undertaken too much. Ashamed! if Paul, if Gabriel were in this pulpit, they would make the same confession. I have no ability to execute what I proposed, and were I foolish enough to make the attempt, a failure would not only be inevitable, but I should glory in it. “Young man” replied a great poet to one who asked him, “What is genius?” “young man, if you have never felt it, I cannot tell you what it is.” But if this be true of the inspirations of genius, with how much greater truth may I affirm, as to the transforming omnipotence of the cross, that those of you who know it not by experience, can never comprehend it by explanation. Say what I might, Christ crucified, while it is “unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” will be “to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness;” and, after all, you would not only

^{*} See Memoirs prefixed to his Works, page 48.

exclaim, “Ah Lord God, doth he not speak parables?” Any terms I might use, although the very phraseology of the Bible, would be to the men of the world among you only a mystical and unintelligible jargon. And to you, my brethren, what could I say which you would not feel had been better left unsaid? I was much affected not long since, in a distant city, by the words of a humble individual. We were receiving him into the Church, and he was telling us, as well as he could, in his homely but strong language, of the change wrought in him. At length he stopped, and, looking at me with a countenance expressive of the deepest emotion, observed, “Sir, I cannot speak what I feel; God, Sir, has not given a poor man like me the power to talk of this thing.” My brethren, this is all I can say on our present article, God has not given a poor man like me the power to talk of this thing. It is this, my hearers, which makes the cross what it is – this which gives it an efficacy imperial and peerless – this, that it is not only a demonstration to convince the mind, and a talisman to kind the heart, but “the power of God” to the salvation of the soul. Here is the great thing, the grand attraction, the might, the majesty, the sweet though awful mystery of the cross. But here is just the thing that passeth man and angel. I say again, and the more I think the more I repeat it, what can mortal utterance do here? Where among you is the Christian who has not anticipated my remark, that this topic must be felt, and is matter for faith, not speculation.

That for a lost world there is but one remedy, and this a specific, we know. We know that where Christ crucified is not preached, nothing is done for eternity. Much there may be of sublimity and beauty in the orations of the pulpit; but if Christ crucified by not there – while the imagination may be entertained – all will be to the soul only the beauty of frost, and the sublimity of the desert. This we know. But how the cross exerts this power in conversion who can explain? The emblem of the brazen serpent teaches us that the influence is inscrutable; and what can we say but this, that the cross is God’s appointment to do this thing, - it is God’s ordinance to do this thing. Look at Saul of Tarsus! What aileth him there at the gate of Damascus? What is this internal and spiritual revelation of a crucified Savior, (“*in me*” as he says^{*}) which in a moment transfixes that proud and haughty fire-soul, and beats him to the ground, and wrings from him the cry “Lord what wilt thou have me to do;” and, riveting his gaze on a single object, sends him through the world exclaiming, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;” – who can tell what this is? Go to Corinth! What is this power at work in the church there, which, while the cross is lifted up, cleaves the bosom of that stranger who has come into the assembly, perhaps through curiosity, perhaps to scoff, and causes that unbelieving man to fall upon his face, awed, struck down by the manifestation to himself of the secrets of his heart, and there to worship, and adore, and, departing thence, to proclaim the presence of Jehovah in the congregation?[†] Who can explain this? And who can say what is that mystery which, at a single look, can soften and disarm the most inveterate enmity; can unlock, as with a key, a spell, the soul, and untwist all the links which chain it in icy hardness, and break up all the spring and deep fountains of tenderness, and penitence, and love, and cause men to “look on him who they have pierced and mourn as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness as one who is in bitterness for his first-born.” What is all this? I know not. It is a subject, not for discussion, but adoration. My brethren, I know not; I only know (hosannas to God for

* Gal. i. 16.

† 1 Corinthians 14: 24, 25.

this! O cross, cross of my bleeding Lord, may I meditate on thee more, may I feel thee more, may I resolve to know nothing but thee,) I only know it is so. "Then he stood awhile, and looked, and wondered, for it seemed surprising that the sight of a cross should so affect him. He looked, therefore, and looked again, until the spring in his head sent the waters down his cheeks." Such is the simple, but beautiful language of Bunyan, and it finds an echo in many a heart here. And I have only to wave my hand thus, and hundreds in this house would stand up and tell, with starting tears, of this mystery, this unsearchable wonder of the cross. Nor only you. Thousands in other lands, thousands of the heathen, who were yesterday enveloped in guilt and wretchedness, and to-day telling of this power of the cross, and looking, and wondering, and looking again, until their swelling hearts run over, and the floods roll down their cheeks. Yes, O yes, thou wonderful cross! and might a sinner who cannot preach of thee, be permitted to testify, I too, O my God, ("my soul hath it still in remembrance and is humbled in me") I too, unworthy as I am, could speak.

"In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
'Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw one hanging on a tree
In agony and blood,
Who fixed his dying eyes on me
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never 'till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look,
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And filled me with despair,
I saw my sins his blood had spilt
And helped to nail him there.

Alas, I knew not what I did,
But now my tears are vain,
Where can my trembling soul be hid,
For the Lord I have slain.

Another look he gave which said
I freely all forgive,
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou mayest live."

My Fathers, and Brethren, and Friends, I have finished, though all feebly, the discussion of the text. I am afraid I have detained you too long. I cannot help it, however, on such a theme as the cross of Jesus. In eternity we shall wonder how we could ever have begun to talk of any thing else, or have ceased talking of this after we had begun. It rests now with ourselves not to allow the subject to be without fruit, but to derive from it the lesson it imparts. The words upon which we have been meditating are not isolated. They are selected from a passage which portrays as formidable indeed the engagement before us, the struggle to which as a body we are pledged and enlisted. "Now," says the Saviour, "is the judgment of this world." What a conflict! Wherever, then, superstition, and sin, and darkness reign, the gospel is to confront and assail them, and that, too, in a war of extermination. We wage with "the rulers of the darkness of this world" a contest glorious indeed, but how arduous! Let us gird ourselves with a courage worthy of such a cause; and wrestle, and strive, and strike, like men who feel within them celestial promptings, and in whose ears are ringing the acclamations of heaven, and the shout of the King himself, "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It was said of Julius Caesar, "*eodem animo scripsit quo bellavit*," – "*He wrote with as much spirit as he fought*." Let the reverse of this be true as to us. Let us fight with as much spirit as we write, and speak, and pass resolutions, and what shall we not accomplish. Nor is the warfare a doubtful one. "Now," the Redeemer adds, "shall the prince of this world be cast out." Where this gospel goes Satan's throne is broken, his kingdom subverted and a blow dealt which resounds throughout the borders of his dominions. How much has already been accomplished, and how swiftly, even while I speak, prophecy is leaping into fulfilment, you require not me to say. What hath not God already wrought! Beneath the stormy tides and agitated elements of passion, how, age after age, hath a strong and pure under-current been silently propelling the enterprize of heaven. What changes have not been already effected by the simple ministry of truth – changes more astonishing than all the revolutions achieved by fleets and armies. And now, this day, every wave rolls and every wind wafts us the news of fresh and glorious conquests by our Emmanuel "riding prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness." This is one lesson to be derived from our subjects.

But, my brethren-while by the whole passage we are taught this lesson, while we are instructed there as to the combat to which we are championed, and hear there the cry to battle pealing out from the gospel of peace, to battle for truth and man and God, and hail there the certain triumph-let us fix our eyes intently upon the text as the cynosure of our hopes, and learn from that what is the only engine by which we can conquer, the only weapon which is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," – I mean the cross – Christ lifted up from the earth to draw all men unto him. "Every battle of the warrior," says Isaiah, "is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." Only the silent melting, subduing energy of the cross can succeed. Forget this, - employ man's wisdom, - and defeat awaits us, confusion will overwhelm us. But use this instrumentally, and before its almightiness Satan shall fall from heaven like lightning, and there can stand no resistance, there shall avail no enchantment of earth, no stratagem, no divination of hell, against Israel. "Let the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed" – they "imagine a vain thing," if the cross be there. Let the banded might of numbers oppose – God is in the midst of us, we shall not

be moved if the cross be there; “the Lord of hosts is with us, he will be exalted among the heathen, he will be exalted in the earth.” In a word, let the night which like a pall covers a nation be ever so thick and palpable – let idolatry overshadow a people until it sweeps, in its dismal train, every star from out their sky – if the cross goes there, its radiance will pierce the gloom, its beams will dissipate the darkness. This is another lesson taught by the subject. Do we not need it, my brethren? Has the preaching Christ crucified the prominence in our modern scheme of missionary operations, which it had in the system of the Apostles? I ask, with humility, are we sufficiently imbued with the lesson?

And are we sufficiently mindful of another, and the last lesson I notice as to be gathered from our subject, and which more particularly regards ourselves? I allude to the necessity of our lives always near the cross, and drinking deeply and perpetually its hallowing inspirations. Brethren, that Christians in these days are what, alas, most of them are – that the atonement affects them so feebly – is owing, not to that atonement’s being now too common a topic, but to our contemplating it too little. How intense – still and soft – yet severely, sublimely intense, is the efficacy of the cross of Christ, where its entire, unmitigated influence is permitted. For my part, says the Apostle, “I am crucified by it to the world, and the world to me.” It “constrains me.” O, let it crucify us; let it constrain us. The word “*constrain*” is, in the original, so powerfully energetical, so rich in expressiveness, that it is difficult to decide between several meanings, all equally just and beautiful. Nor am I going to decide. I choose rather to unite them all, and on them found my closing exhortation.

Does the term often signify “*transport*?” Let us adopt this meaning, and then let the cross transport us. Hear Paul, in a sort of ecstasy, crying out “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.” Listen to one of the early Christians who says, “to me it is much more bitter to offend Christ than to be tormented in hell;” and to another who declares “I say the truth, if on one hand I saw the pains of hell, and on the other the horror of sinning against the love of Jesus, and I must be plunged in one, I would choose the pains of hell, I could never sin against this love.” My brethren, you are perhaps staggered at these exclamations; but these men spake just what they felt. They were being transported, they were ravished, they were “beside themselves unto God.” And what they felt we should feel; there are holy ecstasies of love which we should know. If the word signify “transport,” then let the cross transport us.

But the terms also mean “*surround and urge on every side*.” Let us adopt this meaning, and then let the love of a crucified Saviour surround us. Let it be the circumambient atmosphere we breathe, and in which our souls are steeped; the all-penetrating, all-pervading, all-animating, all-inflaming motive. What motive like this to kindle our languid affections; much forgiven and yet but little love! My soul, can this be possible? What motive like this to deracinate the wretched selfishness of our nature: - why does he die? Why but that “they who live should live no more to themselves, but to him who gave himself for them?” Where such a motive to fortify us with holy endurance of hardness? Have the members of any thing to do with rose, while the head is crowned with thorns? In short, what an incentive here to the noblest charity. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich.” Do ye know this grace my brethren? do ye study this grace? Then you need nothing else to preach charity to you. Look at the cross! behold how he loves you! there, there is a charity sermon for you! Ah, listen to it, listen

to it. Give him love for love; charity for charity; sacrifice for sacrifice; heart for heart; give him every thing, for he gave more than every thing for you. Yes, if the word means “surround,” let the love of Christ surround us; let it compass and press us on every side with a sweet but resistless violence.

Lastly, the import of the term may be, and literally, is “*Unite*.” Let us adopt this meaning, and then let, oh! let the love of Christ unite us. “Who,” asks the Apostle, “shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” And I – I exclaim, with equal confidence, who, what, shall separate us from each other, united as we are by this love? What shall separate us? Shall persecution? No, that will only bind us closer. Shall the feuds by which in this world society is torn, and even members of the same family armed and exasperated against each other – sectional jealousies and political rancor, and party malignity? No, the cross which lifted the Saviour from the earth lifts us high above – what shall separate us? Internal strife, intestine dissention? God forbid. No, my brethren, I am persuaded better things of you. No, never, never, never; it cannot be. No, by our common toils and suffering as Baptists; by the venerable men who sang together over the cradle of this convention – those who reverend forms I still see lingering fondly there – and those who this night, it is no presumption to believe, are beholding us with ineffable concern even from their thrones in glory: by the blood which cements us, and by the new commandment written in that blood: by the memory and love of Him who hath bound us together with ties indissoluble and eternal, and who is now in our midst shewing his wounds, his hands, his feet, his side, his head, and saying “as I have loved you even so ought ye to love one another:” by all the glorious recollections of the past, and by all the more glorious anticipation of the future – this must not, will not, shall not, cannot be.

But my heart is too full. I must stop. My tears will not allow me to say many things I had wished to say. My feelings choke my utterance. Let me only repeat the Apostle’s words – “The love of Christ constraineth us.” Let me only renew the exhortation, Get nearer the cross, Live nearer the cross. Then no discord can interrupt our union, no troublesome birds of prey disconcert our sacrifice. “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.” Let us take our stand there too, and we shall never want zeal, we can never lack devotion to the Saviour, and love for each other. Nor is it long that we have to be here, and to do for Jesus. Where is Crawford? I seek in vain for his familiar face among you. Where is Knowles? It seems to me but yesterday that I was addressing many of you, and he was there – his countenance beaming with intelligence and affection. Where is he now? I look around, but I miss him to-night. And to-morrow, my Brothers and Fathers, where shall you and I be? To-morrow we, too, shall be missed. To-morrow the place that knows us shall know us no more. To-morrow we shall die, and the throne be piled up for judgment, and we ourselves standing at the foot of the awful tribunal. Let us act in view of that hour. Let us listen to the voice which comes to each of us this night from heaven, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” My brethren, my very dear brethren, have we been faithful? Each of us can say “I know whom I have believed, and that he will keep that which I have committed to him against that day.” Can Jesus say, as to each of us, I know who I have believed, and that he has been faithful to the trust which I have committed to him? O, let not the sin of perfidy rest longer upon us. Let no

neglected duties and broken vows cry longer to heaven against us. Let not our works be longer “found unperfected before God.”

“Christians, view the day
Of Retribution! Think how ye will hear
From your Redeemer’s lips the fearful words,
“Thy brother, perishing in his own blood,
Thou saw’st. – Thy brother hungered, was athirst,
Was naked, - and thou saw’st it. He was sick,
Though didst withhold the healing; was in prison
To vice and ignorance – nor didst thou send
To set him free. Oh! ere that hour of doom,
Whence there is no reprieve, brethren, awake
From this dark dream.

This time of hope
And of probation speeds on rapid wings
Swift and returnless. What thou hast to do
Do with thy might. Haste, lift aloud thy voice,
And publish to the borders of the pit
The resurrection Then, when the ransomed come
With gladness unto Zion, thou shalt joy
To hear the vallies and the hills break forth
Before them into singing; thou shalt join
The raptured strain, exulting that the Lord
Jehovah, God omnipotent, doth reign
O’er all the earth.”

Even so, Amen. O God the Father, hasten that time! O Holy Ghost, inspire us with something worthy of the name of zeal in such a cause! O Glorious Shiloh, unto thee let “the gathering of the people be”! Let thy kingdom come! “For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty – all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine – thine is the kingdom O Lord, and thou art exalted as head over all – and blessed by thy holy name, and let the whole earth be filled with thy glory. Amen, and Amen.”

A P P E N D I X

MANY members of the late Convention will remember the very interesting history, given by the Chinese convert Avung, of the painful conflicts of his mind even while he was a most bigoted idolater of the shrine of Guadama – his doubts, and fears, and restless religious desires, and undefined yearnings after truth, and overwhelming perplexities. In the following passage they will recognize almost an exact repetition of Avung's account, indeed many of his very words. It is an extract given by Neander from a work of some antiquity which sketches vividly the exercises of a mind earnestly inquiring after truth, and seeking in vain to find tranquility in the strife of human opinion and the contending systems of philosophy. The work is called the Clementine; and Clemens, a Roman of noble family, who lived at the period of the first promulgation of Christianity, thus describes himself –

“From the earliest days of my youth, doubts, like the following, which have come into my mind, I know not how, have constantly exercised my thoughts. After death shall I exist no longer, and will no one ever remember me? does infinite time thus drown all human affairs in oblivion? Then will it be, as if I had never been born? When was the world created, and what was before the world was? If it has existed from eternity, it will last to all eternity: if it had a beginning, it must have an end. And what will again exist after the world, unless it be a death-like stillness? Or, perhaps, something may then exist, which now it is impossible to conceive. Whilst I,” continues he, “incessantly bore about with me thoughts like these, I know not whence, I was constantly tormented, so that I grew pale and wasted away – and what was most dreadful of all, when I endeavoured to free myself from this anxiety as being useless, these sufferings only awakened again in my heart with stronger violence, and inflicted on me more severe vexation. I knew not that in these tormenting thoughts I had a good companion, which was leading me to eternal life, as I afterwards found by experience, and I thank God, who rules all things for this, because by these thoughts, which at first so tortured me, I was obliged to search out the truth. And when this had taken place, I pitied as wretched creatures the very men, whom at first in my ignorance I was in danger of considering happy. As I found myself harassed by these thoughts from my very childhood, I visited the schools of the philosophers, in order that I might have something certain to repose upon, and I saw there nothing but building up and pulling down of systems, strife and contradiction; and sometimes, for instance, the doctrine that the soul is immortal gained the victory; sometimes the notion that it is mortal: when the first carried the day, I was glad, if the latter triumphed, I was again cast down. Thus was I driven backwards and forwards by different arguments, and I was obliged to suppose that things appear not as they really are, but as they are represented from this side or from that. I was hence seized with far stronger dizziness, and I signed from the bottom of my heart.”

He at first resolves to visit Egypt, and seek to quench this thirst after truth by the study of magic, but calmer counsels deter him; and while thus tossed, and agitated, and

distressed, he hears the Glorious Gospel of the Son of God, and rejoices in its light. True philosophy led the ancient wise men to expect and long for a revelation from heaven. How different are the views of our modern infidels, who, nevertheless, arrogate all the philosophy in the world, “They loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil,” says the Saviour, and this is at once the real source of all their doubts, and just epitome of all their systems.