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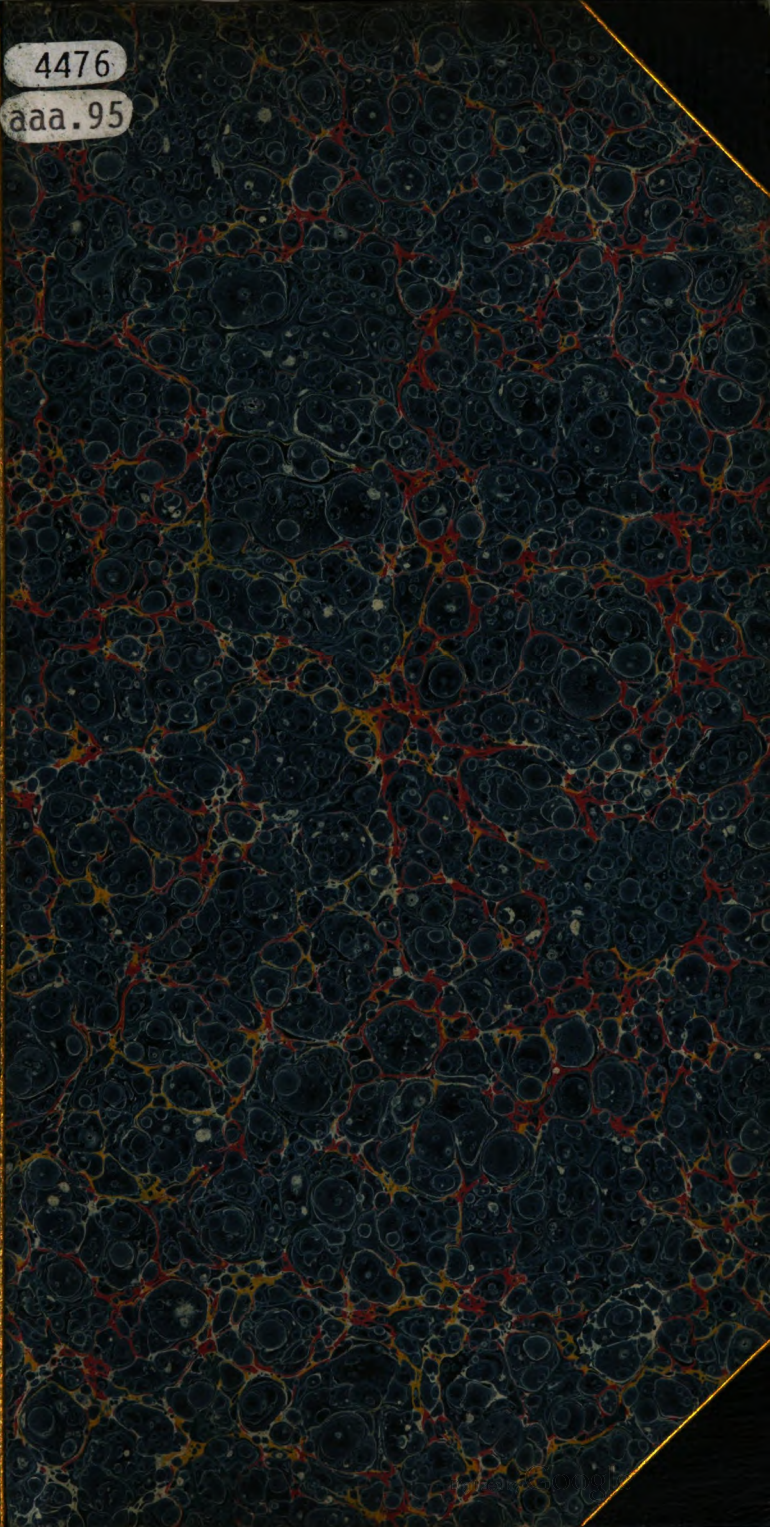
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# A SERMON

PREACHED AT

**St. Mark's Church,**

**HADLOW DOWN, SUSSEX,**

**ON WEDNESDAY, THE 25<sup>TH</sup> OF APRIL, 1838,**

ON

**THE OPENING OF A NEW SCHOOL,**

**ATTACHED TO THE CHURCH,**

BY THE

**REV. EDWARD RICE, M.A.**

**HEAD MASTER OF CHRIST'S HOSPITAL, MORNING AND EVENING  
PREACHER TO THE PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY, AND  
VICAR OF HORLEY, SURREY.**

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**London.**

**1838.**





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TO

**JOHN DICKIE, Esq.**

**OF CLAPHAM RISE,**

**A LIBERAL CONTRIBUTOR TOWARDS THE BUILDING AND ENDOWMENT  
OF THE CHURCH, AND THE ERECTION OF A PARSONAGE-  
HOUSE AND SCHOOL,**

**AT HADLOW DOWN,**

**This Sermon.**

**PREACHED AT HIS REQUEST,**

**IS RESPECTFULLY**

**AND**

**(UNDER A SENSE OF MUCH KINDNESS RECEIVED FROM HIM)**

**GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED BY**

**THE AUTHOR.**

*Christ's Hospital,  
May 4th, 1838.*



## P R E F A C E.

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It may be advisable to introduce the following Discourse with a brief notice of the circumstances which gave rise to it. At Hadlow Down, in Sussex, where serious inconvenience had long been felt in consequence of its distance from any Established place of Worship, a Church, a Parsonage-house, and a School, have been erected within the last three years, through the great exertions and liberality of B. Hall, Esq. of that place, and the munificence of many other private individuals, aided by a grant from the Society for Building Churches towards the erection of the Church, and from Government and the National Society towards that of the School. An endowment also has been provided for the Minister out of the same fund of private contributions, aided by grants from the Corporation of Queen Anne's Bounty, and the annexation of upwards of £50 per annum by the Incumbents of Buxted and Mayfield. It was on the occasion of the opening of the School that the following Sermon was preached.

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## A SERMON.

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HEBREWS, vi. 1.—“Let us go on unto perfection.”

This precept was delivered by the Apostle with a reference to our progress in the general virtues and graces of the Christian life. It commands us never to rest satisfied with any attainments, which we may have made in holiness. It enjoins us to be ever looking forward towards the end of our career, and continually adding to our conquests over sin, to our acts of temperance and self-denial, and to all the practical evidences of our obedience to the faith, as it is in Jesus. The inculcation of the precept in this sense is the constant business of the Christian Minister: and accordingly it is impressed upon you Sabbath after Sabbath, under the various topics of religious edification.

I propose, on the present occasion, to give to the words a different and more limited application, with a view to the more immediate object of this address. I shall endeavour, then, in the first place, to shew you, that, according to the all-wise appointment of our heavenly Father, every thing on earth has been ordained to be progressive in its nature, not starting into completeness at once, but “going on unto perfection.” Let us carry our thoughts back to the beginning of this world. There was a time, when the earth, which we inhabit, had no existence at all. Yet the Almighty existed—existed from eternity—existed in the heavens, which he had made for his dwelling, and contemplated millions of worlds, which had been created by his hand. When he created our world, he made an *addition* to his former works: so that, we see, the universe itself was not complete at once, and, for aught we know, may not be complete at this moment, as the Almighty mind may even now be framing, and his hand even now creating other systems and other worlds. At all events we know that our own globe came forth into existence after a

lapse of time, and became a *new* specimen of the Creator's power, and an additional proof of his wisdom and goodness.—In the next place, after the Creator had made the globe, the whole globe, which we call our earth, he did not at once fill it with inhabitants. He ordained that it should be occupied *by degrees*; and accordingly, at this time, considerable portions of it are uninhabited, though the human race has been for nearly six thousand years progressively spreading itself over its surface. The occupants of a globe, which was made capable of containing thousands of millions, were ordained to spring from two original progenitors. And not only were the inhabitants of the earth ordained to *increase* in respect to number, but every thing relating to them was ordained to be progressive also. Their very apparel, the necessity for which, *commenced* in sin, began at the first point of simplicity, and proceeded through successive changes to convenience, and to comfort, and to grandeur. Their civilization was, and still is, a work of slow and gradual process. Ages had rolled away before *Literature* could be said to have even been



*born.* The art of communicating ideas by writing took its rise in the rude hieroglyphics of Egypt: and that of printing, which is so near akin to writing, that we wonder now how it could possibly have lain so long undiscovered after the invention of the other, was not invented till more than five thousand years had passed over our globe.—How progressive has been the formation of national associations and national governments! The first inhabitants of a land have been generally barbarians. Self-preservation has led them to form themselves into some kind of union, and laws for the maintenance of that union, and rulers to enforce obedience to those laws, have subsequently been adopted: and hence by successive alterations and additions have arisen Legislatures, and Kingdoms, and Empires. The Roman Empire, which was destined to be so efficacious in the diffusion of civilization, and even of Christianity, was formed by gradual enlargement. Our own England was once divided into a variety of small states, each having its own separate and independant ruler: in after-ages it became one kingdom:

and it was only in modern and recent times that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland became cemented, as it is at this day, into one legislative union.

But let us look at holier things than these. *Revelation* has been a *gradual* work. In the first ages the Church of God consisted only of individual members—then of families—afterwards of a single people, and, though many nations have since been successively called into it, yet can we not assert that more than a third of mankind are as yet acquainted with the God who made them. The grand *subject* of Revelation, the redemption of mankind, was not effected as soon as it became necessary. The price of it was not paid—the Son of God was not lifted up upon the cross, till the debt had been due for four thousand years. Nor was even the knowledge, that it would be paid at some future time, disseminated generally or at once. It was *intimated* to the two trembling offenders, as they stood listening to their sentence. It was pointed out in the distance of time to the eye of Abraham.

It was indicated in types, and announced, yet with a necessary obscurity, in prophecies: but the *world* knew not of it, till the atonement was paid on the hill of Calvary. Nor did the knowledge of it then become universal. It was *gradually*, though at first through miraculous agency rapidly, disseminated. It is now gradually spreading. But, as there was a fulness of time appointed by God, on the arrival of which he would send forth his Son; so is there a fulness of time fixed in the counsels of the same Almighty Being, when *all* shall know, and *all* shall adore the Redeemer of mankind.

And as the light of the Gospel has been disseminated *successively* to nations, so has it been *progressive* in the effects which it has produced upon each nation, that it has enlightened by its rays. The progress of improvement may be traced by the historian, advancing slowly indeed in some, and with a happy rapidity in others, but more or less certainly in all. Yet not a single instance can be found, where a people has been at once visited by the rays of Revelation, and has

at once started into moral and religious excellence. Any such instantaneous effect of the Gospel would have been inconsistent with the other ways of God in his government of the world, and was therefore neither promised nor to be expected.

Lastly, my brethren, let me request you to look into and consider yourselves. Have you not become what you are *by degrees*? In regard to your stature, you have had to pass through the gradations of infancy, youth, and manhood. Your minds also have been growing with the growth of your bodies: your understandings have been enlarged from time to time: your habits, both of acting and thinking, have, or ought to have, partaken of the influence of *time*. You are, or ought to be, better men and better Christians than you were. It is in the regular course of the Christian life, that you should have relinquished some evil propensities which you once cherished, and that you should have cultivated good ones in their room. In short, as in every bodily and mental faculty, as in every

thing which forms the useful and valuable member of society, you have, or ought to have, been making gradual advances towards perfection, according to the will of that God who gave to each of you his sphere of action: so in that renovation of your souls, which Religion was intended to produce, must you proceed from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, till you shall have perfected holiness in the fear of God. Thus, whether you regard yourselves as men or Christians, your condition is, or should be, one of gradual advancement. Otherwise your end will be dishonour upon earth, and condemnation in the world to come.

Let me now, in the second place, proceed to draw the inference, which I proposed to deduce from these reflexions, and apply it to the immediate object of this discourse. Since every thing, in the natural and moral and religious world, has been ordained by our heavenly Father to be progressive, we must be prepared to welcome, and not to reject, any improvement in the state of

things around us. Nothing must be despised by us, merely because it is *new*. We have seen, that if *novelty* had been a tenable ground of objection, every thing, that is great and valuable and holy amongst us, would have been still unknown to us or unenjoyed by us. As the arts, which add to the embellishment or convenience of life, are daily advancing; so must we look for additions to those means, by which man is rendered more estimable as a member of society and more worthy of the name of Christian. Our heavenly Father has evidently willed that it should be so. He has not yet given any sign to this nation, more than to any other, to intimate that we had arrived at the goal of perfection, and that any additional exertion would be superfluous. On the contrary, we have abundant evidence, that there is yet much, very much, to be done. Through the increase of our numbers, the progress of crime has kept pace at least (if not, as some think, more than kept pace) with the progress of improvement. And, notwithstanding all that may have been done, the necessity for doing more forces itself upon our notice. Should you,

then, be disposed to meet me at the outset by observing, that the Establishment, which is the object of our assembling here this day, is *new* and was unknown to your forefathers, and therefore must be unnecessary in these days, I would reply that the same objection would have obstructed every thing that has been done in the improvement of the world. Every great and beneficial change in civil society—every important revolution in the religious belief of nations, has been more or less liable to the charge of novelty. Redemption was new. Creation itself was new. So far, therefore, from meeting with objections any additional exertion that may be made to benefit and improve mankind, we should hail such things as indications that we are conforming to the will of our heavenly Ruler, and going forward in the road to national perfection. One generation corrects the errors and fills up the omissions of those that have gone before. Institutions, of which preceding ages never conceived the necessity, have been found to be necessary now, and have therefore been adopted. So will it doubtless be in the next age, and in

every succeeding one, till the consummation of all things. Changes in society will from time to time suggest the idea either of improving old establishments, or of instituting new ones. Nor can this be regarded in any other light than as a most favorable state of things: for, in looking around upon mankind, it cannot escape our notice, that the nations of the earth are proportionally low or elevated in the scale of social happiness and national greatness, as they are more or less stationary in their systems. Those that are seen clinging to old corruptions, and making no effort, perhaps not even thinking of additions to their institutions, are also found to be at the lowest point of degradation in all that is honourable to man or acceptable to his Maker. The result then of these considerations should be, that, whenever our attention may be called to any new undertaking in the cause of humanity or social improvement, we should proceed to consider it without prejudice, and weigh it exclusively by its own merits.

On this ground then, my brethren, I would



rest the appeal, which I am to make to you this day. The Institution, for which I am to plead, is *new*; and its novelty gives it a most beautiful and powerful attraction. Delightful is it to reflect, that the flame of Christian philanthropy, which has been so happily kindled in our truly Christian land, has reached this spot also. Here, where, during the revolution of age after age, no voices were ever raised in social harmony to the God of heaven; here, where the glad tidings of salvation had never been heard flowing from the lips of a minister of Christ; here, where generation after generation had been going down into their graves, ignorant of much that should interest them, as *rational*, and alas! (it is to be feared) of every thing that should interest them, as *accountable and immortal beings*; in this, which, in regard to spiritual things, could only be described as a dry and barren land, where the spark of intelligence but dimly glimmered, and the waters of life never flowed; *here* have arisen establishments, which delight the eye, and gladden the heart, of every benevolent, every patriotic, every Christian spectator. *New* are the *walls*\*

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\* The Church.

within which we are now assembled. Alas! that it should have been so. Far more pleasing must it have been to any minister of Christ, to feel, when speaking here in his Master's name, that he was speaking within walls which centuries had hallowed—within which he might be assured, that thousands, in the ages that are passed, had heard that word of truth, which cheered them in their passage through life, and strengthened and consoled them in their downward journey to the tomb. Far more pleasing would it have been to think, that many, very many, an heir of glory had been trained on this spot, and had passed hence to swell the number of the blessed spirits of eternity. But let us not look back with unnecessary gloom. Doubtless during the barren period that has passed over this region, the eye of the common Creator and Father of all has looked down in compassion upon its unblessed inhabitants; and that Judge, who is to take the account of our doings according to the talents that he has given us to work with, will doubtless in the great day have mercy upon them, to whom so little was

entrusted.—Let us look forward, my brethren, let us look forward with hope. The generation, that now inhabits this spot, is *not* unblessed. They shall all know the God who created, who protects, who supports them: they shall all know the Lord that bought them with his blood: they shall all know that there is a heavenly Spirit, which sends its stimulating, its enlightening, its strengthening graces into the hearts of the faithful; aiding them in their combat with the world, with satan, and with themselves,—upholding them in danger—consoling them in weakness—purifying and sanctifying them for the realms of unspotted holiness. They shall see before their eyes the crown of immortal glory, that is to reward their earthly labours: and in the last painful struggles of mortality, they shall be enabled to look in faith on the cross, upon which their Saviour bled, to the contemplation of which they were led within these walls: and when their bodies are consigned to their kindred dust, it shall be said of many amongst them, that they fell asleep in Jesus, and will probably be numbered amongst his followers in the resurrection of the last day.

These things, my brethren, (I speak now to the inhabitants of this district) these joys, consolations, and hopes, are yours, through the enlightened, the benevolent, the pious zeal of those, into whose hearts the God of heaven inspired the thought, the wish, the energetic impulse and resolution, to do you good. They saw the necessity—they supplied it. They thought not, that, as there had been no church amongst you in past ages, there was therefore no occasion for one now. “Let us go on”—“go on unto perfection,” was the animating feeling: let the future be bright with hope, though the past has been dark and gloomy. They raised for you, therefore, this hallowed house, that here yourselves, your children, and your children’s children, in ages and generations yet to come, may know in whom they should believe—may rejoice in the hope of the Christian calling—and may be gathered finally into the number of the redeemed.—Honour, then, as you are bound to honour, those, who have thus befriended you in your most important concerns: view them with gratitude and respect: but, above all, be mindful to feel and to express

your boundless obligation to the God who has thus poured his mercies upon you, and cherish in your hearts and lives the Saviour, who has thus, in all his fulness of redeeming grace, been made known to you.

But, my brethren, that zeal for the promotion of God's glory and of man's salvation, of which I have now been speaking, did not rest here. It had given you a church : it had given you a resident minister to guide you in holy things, and to direct you to eternity. It felt not that it had yet done enough. The breast, which was animated with Christian love, was filled also with Christian light and intelligence. The same benevolent eyes were cast upon the *children* of this extensive district ; and the thought occurred " What manner of children shall these be ? Shall they grow up, like the generations that have preceded them, ignorant of the things that would make them useful members of society ? shall they roam about in their early days, whilst their parents are engaged in labour, in a listless and almost brutal apathy ; wasting in an unprofitable

idleness the hopeful hours of childhood; and perhaps picking up words of blasphemy, and imbibing habits of guilt? No—they shall be taken from the danger and the snare—for *them* also walls shall be raised, within which they shall learn things which cannot but make them wiser and better: they shall be made rational, as well as Christian members of the community: they shall be led not to be ashamed of themselves when they grow up, but to respect themselves as men, as well as to cherish hopes of immortality. They shall be taught what is *good now*, that they may reject what is *evil in after-life*." These are the views, which have given rise to the Institution for which I am now pleading;—a school for the children of the poor of this district. True—it is a *new* thing—your fathers had it not—but is it, therefore, unnecessary now? What? when education is spreading its light into every corner of our country, should this district be left still in darkness? Surely there is no one amongst you that would wish it to be so. But if there be such a person, let me remind him, that the great cause which has laid our working classes open in times

past to the delusions of the religious fanatic or the political seducer, has been their ignorance. The great majority of those, who, within the last few years, were enticed into insurrection, and consequently into trouble and sorrow, could neither read nor write. Reflect upon the scene that in the course of the present year occurred at Hertford. Two youths, who were there consigned to a premature and ignominious death, pleaded most truly on their behalf, that they had never been taught anything: that they had grown up in ignorance, and consequently in vice. We hope, that such instances as these will not occur in the generation that is now coming on. We hope, that a growing improvement in the minds of the lower orders of society will enable our Legislature to carry into complete effect its paternal views in mitigating the sanguinary severity of our penal code. Who amongst us will not rejoice, should he live to see the *gallows* disappear from our land; disappear, not merely from a legislative enactment, but because it shall be no longer necessary; because our lower orders shall have ceased to be brutes—because they

shall have become men and Christians—because they shall have been so humanized, so softened, so enlightened, by an education grounded on the principles of Christ, as to leave to the beasts that perish the ferocity that becomes their nature, and be led to love one another and “live peaceably with all men.” We hope too, that the lesser vices will disappear from amongst the lower orders in the rising generation, under the influence of greater light and better feelings : we hope that the public-house will cease to have its attractions—will cease to draw away the young man from his parental roof, and the husband from the society of his wife and children : that the poor will know, that there is no wit in swearing or in obscenity : that the useful book, or the innocent and rational conversation, or the page of scripture and religious reading, may, after the humble but useful labours of the day, cheer the cottage of the lowly, as well as the mansion of the great. Yes, it may be said, “but the poor, if educated, will not work.” My brethren, it is written by the finger of God on this globe of ours, that the poor *must* work ; and, as long as the morning



sun shall arise upon the earth, bringing with it the necessities and cravings of the day, so long the poor *will* work. What the wise man said three thousand years ago, is true now, and, while the globe lasts, will be for ever true, in its application to the poor—"Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening."—But "they will be discontented; they will not work willingly." Not so: if the apostolical precepts are duly inculcated, as they are in the schools established by our Church: "I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content:" and again—"If any one will not work, neither should he eat." The education, my brethren, which I am speaking of, is one built upon the principles of the Gospel: in *it* religion runs side by side with secular instruction, and purifies, and corrects it. The child, trained in the mere common elements of knowledge, unsanctified by the solemn truths of religion, might, and probably would, become vain, conceited, and consequently discontented. I am not advocating—I should not dare to advocate (as I value my own immortal soul, as well as the souls of those for

whom I am pleading) such a fruitless,—I may say, such an evil course of instruction. We do not ask you to assist in making scholars, still less in making politicians of the poor: we ask you to assist in making them rational beings, pious Christians, and consequently useful and quiet members of the community. Nevertheless we will not disguise the fact, that through the secular instruction which is to be imparted to the poor, we are giving them the power of rising from the ground, instead of being chained to it, as by ignorance they must ever be. And should we occasionally see one amongst them, on whom the Creator may have been pleased to bestow more than usual ability, or an uncommon energy of character, availing himself of the instruction he may have received to raise himself in the scale of society, we will hail with congratulations the rise of such an one—we will cheer him in his path of successful industry and enterprize—and rejoice over him as one, who has peculiarly evinced, that the instruction, imparted to him in his younger days, was not *indeed* imparted in vain. Such instances, however, must and will

be rare, from the very constitution of the human mind and character. The course of society will still go on in England, as it has done in Scotland, where all have long been educated: but it will flow, we trust, more evenly, more purely, more peaceably, with more of public and individual virtue and happiness, than it has hitherto done. We may see the signs of this improved state of things in the general appearance of our country. The whole nation is improving together — one class need not be jealous of another—for all are advancing in one simultaneous progress, from the highest to the lowest. Our Universities, our Public Schools, our Institutions of every kind, have for some time past been renovating themselves in vigour and usefulness, casting off what was objectionable or worthless, and adopting what is good and profitable. The very Institution\*, with which the individual, who now addresses you, is connected, has so altered and improved, in late years, its course of instruction, discipline, and general care of its youthful members, that it may be said to have been completely remodelled,

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\* Christ's Hospital.

retaining at the same time, and cherishing with increased ardour and tenacity, every thing holy, just, and good, in the principles on which it was founded, and the objects for which it was established.—I speak in the presence of some, who know that the younger members of our nobility are emulating at our Universities, without any stimulus of necessity, and from the unmixed desire of honourable distinction, the diligent exertions of those, who in seeking literary and scientific honours may be said to be *labouring for their bread*, as they are providing the means of success in after-life.

Whilst individuals and classes are thus improving, our Church, my brethren, our Church has arisen in her might: and it requires not much political sagacity to foresee, that, gifted as she is with Gospel-strength, enlightened as she is with Gospel-truth, lovely as she is in her spirit of real liberality, she will triumph over all her opponents in her onward movements towards perfection, and will continue to stand as the brightest ornament of our country, as well

as the strongest bulwark of our national happiness, national glory, and national piety.

There is no end, my brethren, to the course of *Christian improvement*. We know, we know from Scripture, that there is a millennial period to come upon earth, in which the Gospel of Christ shall prevail in its purity throughout every nation of the globe, and its divine precepts and principles shall influence the hearts of mankind: and we know that that period will finally terminate in the glories of the Church Triumphant in the realms above. May we not hope that our country is beginning to see the dawn of that blessed period—that the first streaks of its early rising are at least faintly to be discerned amongst us? May we not hope that we shall be the first nation, that shall partake of its noonday brightness, and rejoice in the fully developed rays of the everlasting Gospel?

I speak to some amongst you, my brethren, who have, in the instances immediately before us, been promoting the progress of Christian

light. Rejoice in the work of your hands. View with delight (for well ye may) the effects of your Christian liberality. And "be not weary with well-doing." Carry forwards the pious work. Increase yet more and more your Saviour's honour, and the real good of your fellow-men. "Go on unto perfection : " look to the end, to which these, and such-like labours of love are tending,—the ushering in of that kingdom of righteousness, which, after having flourished awhile on earth, shall be transferred to the heavens to exist eternally around the throne of God. How grateful *then*, and through endless ages, will be the reflexion of your bosoms, that you, when on earth, were the zealous, though humble instruments, of so much addition to the glory of your Creator!

Let me add a few words in conclusion to those who are the interesting objects of this day's commemoration. To you, my young friends, I would briefly speak, reminding you how much has been done for you by your older Christian brethren. They have built the school, within

which you are going to be taught, in order that you may be led to grow, as your Saviour did before you, in wisdom, as well as in stature—in true wisdom, in the knowledge and fear of God, —and that you may at the same time learn such earthly things, as will make you more useful to others, and more happy in yourselves. Your Benefactors (for true benefactors they are) have no other object. Do you, then, be anxious for your own good, and you will give pleasure and shew your gratitude to them. Be obedient to your teacher—listen attentively to the instructions which may be given you—be clean in your persons and orderly in your conduct—as you pass backwards and forwards to and from school, let those, who see you, be convinced by your behaviour, that going to school has improved you and done you good. Be dutiful and affectionate to your parents at home, peaceful and kind towards your brothers and sisters; and never let any neighbour hear a bad word from your lips. On your appearance from Sabbath to Sabbath in this holy place, remember always that you are in God's house; and therefore be serious

and devout in your demeanour—join with earnestness in the prayers and praises that are offered here, and listen with attention to the addresses of the minister of Christ, in order that you may become Christians in the days of your youth, and, should you be destined to descend into your graves before you shall have reached the years of manhood, (which is the lot of many a child, as strong and as healthy as you may now be,) may be admitted into the presence of that gracious Redeemer, who loved little children, desired that they should be brought to him, and reproved those that would have kept them from him.—And let me warn, and advise, and entreat the *parents* of these children, that they endeavour by precept, and still more by their *example* at home, to strengthen the good impressions, which their children will be receiving at school and at church. Let them reflect, how dreadful will be their own condition in the last day, if they shall then feel, that through *them*, through their evil example, their children have been lost for ever, in spite of all the efforts that were made by benevolent and pious Christians, to



save them from destruction : but oh ! how blessed will be your lot, ye parents, if, whilst you shall yourselves be admitted into the everlasting kingdom of Christ, your children also shall join you there, and, in a happy communion with you through the ages of eternity, praise God for all the mercies that you jointly received on earth, and bless him for all the glories that you shall jointly partake in heaven.

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