

THE
ANNIVERSARY SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SYDNEY DIOCESAN COMMITTEE,

AT

ST. JAMES' CHURCH, ON 6TH JANUARY, 1851,

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WILLIAM GRANT, LORD BISHOP OF SYDNEY,

AND METROPOLITAN.



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SERMON.

GALAT. VI. 9.

Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

“WELL-DOING” in this passage means doing good; and to do good is to exert oneself in the spirit of faith and love to promote the happiness of any of the creatures of God, or to advance the honor of God himself, and to make his name to be glorious. Thus, asked our blessed Lord, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath-days to do good or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy it?” By the contrast so expressed, he shows what was included in *his* notion of doing good. According to the same acceptation of the expression St. Paul enjoins us “to do good unto all men, and especially unto them that are of the household faith;” and again, “to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” And wherefore well pleased? because “the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” Whatsoever is done or attempted according to Christian principles, for the promotion of righteousness and truth, is a part of “well-doing” or “goodness.” This is the fruit which it is the province of the Holy Spirit to implant and ripen in faithful hearts. Such a pursuit and occupation when once undertaken, it might, prior to experience, be supposed, would never be allowed to languish, still less be abandoned; connected as it is with the most captivating gratification of the soul’s best and holiest feelings. Yet the apostle appears to apprehend the contrary when he thinks it necessary to offer the significant warning, “be not weary in

well-doing." As if there might be a danger, or were even some probability that, after the first novelty and excitement had passed away, the employment of endeavouring to amend the temporal or spiritual condition of our fellow-creatures would, under certain circumstances, exhaust the spirit of perseverance, even in those who had the disposition to do good most profoundly impressed upon their hearts. These, he seems to say, having put their hands to the plough, might yet be so weighed down and depressed by discouragements, as to be tempted even to look back; albeit, in the main, not unfitted for the kingdom of God.

In addressing to them this word of admonition, the apostle wrote not only under the influence of inspiration, but with a very deep insight into the properties of the human mind. He knew the danger of a perpetual craving to see some immediate tangible fruit of our exertions. He knew that the feeling most carefully to be guarded against, by those whose aims are directed to a distant object, is that of impatience and despondency, so naturally attendant on hopes deferred; so apt to spring up on the retrospect of lengthened efforts and slow advances; of much labour and little apparent fruit. Therefore, being strongly impressed with a sense of the danger of their giving way to this feeling, and losing that animation which would best support them in their work and labour of love, he addresses to them the exhortation not to be "weary in well doing." He connects it also with that which even the most strenuous labourer is the better for—a word of encouragement; a promise of ultimate success as the reward of perseverance. "In due season," says St. Paul, "we shall reap if we faint not."

I am persuaded that all the subjects of reference included in this text are applicable to the objects of our present meeting, and to the Society on behalf of which I have undertaken now to address you. There is the goodness of the object,—“well-doing.” There is the danger which does most easily beset us,—“weariness.” And, finally, there is the countervailing assurance,—“we shall reap if we faint not.”

In verification of the asserted goodness of the design, it is needless to do more than mention what its objects are:—to encourage and assist in the erection of Churches—to contribute to the maintenance of clergymen wherever their services are required—to assist in supporting schools for general religious education, in connexion with the Church, and under the inspection of the clergy—to distribute the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, the Homiles, and other authorized publications of an improving and religious character. These are the designs which at every Meeting of the Diocesan Committee we unite in calling down, by prayer, the blessing of God to prosper; imploring Him by His Holy Spirit to direct all our consultations to the advancement of his glory and the good of his Church. These purposes are such as no Christian, assuredly, will deny to be intimately connected with the design of doing good, and communicating good; and so, of offering a sacrifice with which God is well pleased. Neither will it fail, my brethren, to exalt in your estimation, the value and usefulness of the designs of this Society, to be told that they are begun and continued under an avowed acknowledgment of the necessity of Divine support; and a pledge (never yet departed from) of strict and dutiful conformity with the principles of the Church of England. Indeed the fundamental law of this Association is, that none shall be admitted except under a certificate that he is verily believed to be a well-affected member of the English Church.

Briefly then to pass in review the four purposes, already enumerated, to which the efforts of this Committee and its resources are professedly to be applied, the first in order is the erection of Churches. Forming our judgment theoretically, and expressing it abstractedly, we might affirm, as some under the influence of a too fanciful spirit do maintain, that devotion, which is the soul of religion, is not dependent on place or outward circumstance. But this view will not be entertained by any who bring Christian feeling, and Christian experience, to bear upon their decision in matters of religion. They hold

in remembrance that, while the salvation of each individual soul is the object of the travail of Christ's, it is nevertheless not merely *as* individuals that he seeks and claims them for his own. He regards them collectively as one body in the unity of the spirit; as very members incorporate in his mystical body, the Church. Every principle of just reasoning leads to the conclusion that it must then be attended with advantage to possess some visible symbol which may remind believers of this communion, and of their conjoint collective existence in the Lord. And that which reasoning suggests, the universal experience of Christians confirms. The sensible expression of that unity, which itself is spiritual, is in the Church; whereto the heirs of salvation resort as to the one house of prayer appointed for all nations. The Church, by its very aspect, and the uses which it serves, reminds them of the solemn truth spoken by the apostle, "ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Experience, I say, confirms the justice of this view; by showing that the religious character suffers where there is no such place for the worshippers to assemble and meet together. Not only is the feeling of their mutual connexion and unity weakened, but the memory of all holy things passes away like a shadow; piety languishes; and the thought of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come is more and more erased from the fleshy tables of the heart. Very true it is, Churches are but buildings, and have no inherent or necessary connexion with spirituality of mind. When the resources of art have been lavished upon them, they may, it is undeniable, prove after all to be but the gathering places of cold hearts and formal lips. But this is not their natural or characteristic tendency. The effect of the associations connected with the Church is rather to awaken, encourage, and confirm religious feelings; to lead many to hear and think of and practise obedience unto righteousness, of which, if there were no such memorial provided, they might live and die regardless. My persuasion is that it was a wise and godly and beneficial purpose on the part of this Committee, to seek to cover the face of the earth,

which is the Lord's, with temples dedicated to his honour. More I will not say than that the decay of that liberality, and the denial of that general support, upon which we were entitled to rely for accomplishing such an object, is deeply to be regretted. We can no longer take any part in building Churches. I trust that God may not lay it to the charge of our kinsmen and friends, who in such a season of necessity have stood afar off: and humbly and earnestly I pray that this weariness in well doing may be superseded and replaced by a resumption of so good a work: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

The second of the objects contemplated by this Society is that of contributing towards the support of clergymen, wherever throughout the diocese their services may be required. In the application of the text to this, there is even a stricter and more literal propriety than in any other; because, in mentioning "well doing," the apostle was referring to that particular kind of it which consists in affording maintenance to the teacher of the word. This had been, shortly before, the subject of his discourse. "Let him that is taught in the word," he had said, "minister unto him that teacheth, in all good things." And almost immediately in succession to this, he proceeds, "and let us not be weary in well doing." What then, according to the application which he was making of the word, *is* this well doing, but continuing to sow unto the Spirit, by enabling them who preach the Gospel to live of the Gospel, which is the law of the spirit of life?

If the admonition be understood in this sense, to apply to the duty of providing for the support of the Christian ministry, it must be obvious that there can be but a very incomplete fulfilment of it, unless "every man look not on his own things, but also on the things of others." Even with relation to carnal benefits you will remember, the precept goes so far as to require that he which hath meat impart to him which hath none.* They then who sitting down at the feast of the

* Luke, iii., 2.

Gospel have bread enough for themselves, how much more ought they to bear in recollection the case of the many thousands of their fellow-servants who all the while are perishing with hunger, destitute of the bread which endureth unto eternal life. There is, I must impress upon you, this one very forcible reason why we should not decline to do so. That partial provision which has been made for the support of the ministry at the public charge, incommensurate as it is with the almost boundless extent over which the members of our Church have spread themselves in this wide territory, is altogether absorbed in providing for Public Worship within a limited *portion* of that territory: and you, my brethren, you, to whom I now address myself, are among the few, the comparatively few, reckoned by the extent of country which they occupy, who are partakers of this advantage. Who then among us but must acknowledge the duty, hence arising, that we make some personal sacrifice, in compensation, as it were, for our more favoured circumstances; or with the endeavour to place more nearly upon a level with ourselves, as to religious privileges, those whose claims, perhaps, weighed in the scale of equal justice, might not be found inferior to our own. I speak of those, multitudes, for such there are, hidden in the trackless wilderness, occupiers of the remote station, dwellers in the solitary hut, never within reach of hearing the glad summons to assemble in the house of prayer, never privileged to listen to the words of sound doctrine, and wholesome warning and advice, from those lips at which they should seek knowledge; but estranged from all the holy and consolatory ordinances of the faith, communion in which is the privilege of men in happier conditions of life. I speak of those, whom it has been my lot to behold under these calamitous privations; commiserating the trials of faith and virtue under which they and their wives and their little ones are doomed to pass their lives: strangers to those means of grace which minister comfort in afflictions, support under temptation, hope in the hour of death, and happiness in the prospect of better, that is, heavenly things, of which these are pledges.

What motive can I offer more forcible, to incline you to step forward for their relief, than the contrast between your own religious privileges, and their religious destitution? If I might appeal to *secondary* motives to influence you, it would be well to draw your attention to the *social* evils which are awaiting this community, and must at no distant time befall it, if we continue, during the term of even a single generation, to permit this evil state of things to take root downward, and bear fruit upward. Its fruit can be no other than that of ignorance and sin; destructive of every hope, now and hereafter, which can be entertained as to the unhappy victims of such a system; and pernicious to society, and the order of it, which so many seem born and brought up only to disturb. Even these considerations, directed to your love of public order, may prevail on you to unite in attempting to apply a remedy to this complication of disorders, to prevent their rising to that crisis which cannot be avoided if they be treated with further neglect. But there is yet the highest of *all* motives remaining, and to this I must appeal, that is to your sense of Christian duty and responsibility. I must enquire of you whether we can be justified before God in consigning, within the limits of a Christian country, such numbers, who have been made members of Christ, to an almost total, and really, without any offence or fault of theirs, an unavoidable ignorance of the mercy he has shown to them; of the price which he has paid for their redemption. So it is that they bear the name of Christians, yet have none to teach them what Christianity is. "How shall they hear without a preacher; and how shall any preach except they be sent?" And whence then, I must add, does it arise that support should be wanting to this Society, which would engage, if it had the means, in sending forth labourers into this uncultivated wilderness; intercessors who might stand between the living and the dead; and, as being ordained for men in things pertaining to God, might have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way.

And now, in the third place, supposing its design to have

been so far effected as to have provided a Church and occupied it with a clergyman, this Society would desire to annex the parish School, which is necessary to give completeness to the religious system. When I speak of schools, and in connexion with the Diocesan Committee, it is unnecessary to add what is the description of school intended. Its fixed constitutional principle, from which there has never been any deviation, is that instruction shall be given, to the utmost extent possible, in every description of liberal and useful knowledge; yet that the school shall also be a place in which the Holy Scriptures shall be read and explained, and the doctrines of the Church, derived from them, be inculcated. As God "commanded our forefathers to teach their children—to the intent that when *they* came up they might teach *their* children the same," even so do we: remembering the engagement made for them in their baptism, that each should learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health. The Church of England desires "to *educate* her children, as well as to instruct them; to form their character under religious influences; to train them for this world, *and* for the world to come."* Herein the school is the handmaid of the Church, which is the agent of God in this. We lay a stress, it will be observed, upon the distinction between instruction and education, by which we signify our purpose to be, not merely to impart worldly knowledge, but to form a Christian character. We adapt our means, therefore, to the ends which we desire to produce. Is it worldly learning which we have in view? Then we have recourse to the best books which human skill and application have produced upon the subject, and to the best rules which the wisdom of man has devised for conveying knowledge, or for making study profitable. Are we on the other hand engaged in endeavouring to make learners wise

* See Instructions for the Management of Church of England Schools in the Dioceses of Sydney and Newcastle.

unto salvation? In this case also we abide by the same principle—we take the best of books, the Holy Scripture: the treasure-house of heavenly knowledge; which, if known from a child, we have the assurance of God himself, is able to supply that wisdom, that acquaintance with saving truth, which we are seeking to impress upon the hearts of these inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

This reference to the Holy Scripture which the progress of my subject has required, may lead me naturally to pass on to the fourth and last of the purposes for which this Committee was formed, and still continues in operation—the distribution of books. At the head of these, serving as a test and assurance of the character of all the rest, stands the Bible. With consistency does a Society, which is the patron of schools, concern itself to provide unfailing supplies of this best of books, which, as has been said, we take in those schools, as the basis of all our teaching for eternity. No principle has our more decided and steadfast approval than that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation;” none is more invariably our guide in choosing out and tracing our course of education. But it is not our principle, the Church of Christ has never held, and therefore the Church of England does not teach, that it is every private man’s duty, or that any man indeed has the capacity, to take the Bible in hand, and to deduce from it, each for himself, a form of faith and doctrine; as if nothing had ever yet been determined, or could with certainty be known, as to the true interpretation of the Word of God. “If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.” “Whatsoever is not read in Holy Scripture, neither may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith.” In this we unfeignedly concur. Still when the Scripture is the subject of study, our guide is to be, not an unqualified reliance upon our own judgment, but the voice of the Church; testifying its approval, from the earliest age, of that one form of doctrine which the authority of Scripture finally confirms, and which

is therefore acknowledged as the faith which was once delivered to the Saints. It is in support of this as the surest and safest system of interpretation, and in acknowledgment of that authority in controversies of faith which the Church expressly claims to herself, that this Society circulates the *formularies* of the Church in connexion with the Scriptures, as the best of all commentaries upon them:—her Creeds and Articles, her Liturgy, her forms for the ministration of the Sacraments, and her Catechism. “To their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power,” its supporters “have been willing of themselves,” to provide the children in our schools with such of these manuals as they were capable of studying with advantage. They have shown their readiness to spread their labours over a still wider circuit; to supply *all* classes with information of an improving character; with books which might at one and the same time gratify a liberal curiosity, by affording solid information on a variety of subjects, and promote the prevalence of good principles by extending more widely a knowledge of Christian truth. If the means entrusted to them to dispense, in this work of charity, have fallen short of the existing want, this has but rendered more conspicuous their zeal and forwardness: when, having such difficulties to contend with, they have with so much success, comparatively, sustained the struggle against them. “Their deep,” and deeply to be regretted “poverty, has indeed abounded to the riches of their liberality,” who have unceasingly devoted their attention to the introduction of a constant supply of these judicious and improving publications. Thankful may we be for every effort to bring them into general circulation; that all classes may increase in knowledge and true godliness; and be filled, O Lord, by Thee with the spirit of Thy holy fear.

And now I have, let me trust, accomplished the object first proposed, of showing that in all the designs of this Society the principle of well doing is involved, as in all its operations it is no less in practice. Under this division of the subject then more need not be said: and we should pass on, as

promised, to the next; that is "be not weary." But previously to entering upon this, which is an admonition addressed to the fellow-helpers who are associated in the good work, it may be useful to address briefly those who are taking no part in it. To you, brethren, I would say, it must be presumed that, as members of the Church of England, you do not question the propriety of combining to effect, upon a wider scale, purposes within the sphere which the Church is called of God to occupy. It must be, as little, a subject of question with you, whether the purposes which I have now spoken of, are comprehended within that sphere. It cannot be disputed that the aim of them all is to extend the influence of grace and righteousness upon earth; and that they are therefore parts of the appointed service which the Church owes to its Redeemer. Does any one of you then doubt the existence of the evils which have been pointed out? Will it be said that we have, throughout the country, churches, clergymen, schools, Bibles, and religious books in sufficient numbers to impart that knowledge of Christ which it is not good for the soul to be without? If not, what other mound has been erected, or is it proposed to erect, to withstand and roll back that fearful torrent of impiety which must overwhelm this, and every land inhabited by a people not duly supplied with the means of grace and salvation? not brought under the influence of religious principle, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man? It is a frightful future which lies before us, if things be suffered to continue as they are. We are every day confessing "we have left undone the things which we ought to have done:" and let me ask you, whether this which I speak of be not one of the principal of those things. You encounter every day on the road of life your fellow-men and brethren in the Gospel, spiritually stript naked, wounded by the enemies of their salvation; and do you go to them and bind up their wounds? No: you continue to pass by on the other side. You leave to others the care of their recovery as a work in which you have no concern; as if you were not bound to be your brother's

keeper. I ask every serious-minded man to consider, how can this be justified? It is not on our own behalf, on behalf of this Society in particular, that I speak. There are higher interests involved than that: and you may set us, if such be your disposition, you may set us entirely aside. What I mean is, if there be ^{adjective or erroneous} anything in our way of working out the principles of the Church for the propagation of the Gospel, let not the Church therefore be the sufferer; but be ye ready to suffer all things lest ye should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Work out then the principles of the Church in some other way; in your own way; in any way, provided you abide within the covert of the Church. But for God's sake let the work somehow be done. At present you all know that they, who do not work with us, are not working at all. They are abandoning a great and solemn duty; they are continuing in a state of inaction which it is impossible for them to justify, even to themselves.

And now my friends and brethren, who have persisted year after year in your devotion to this work of Christian charity, to you I specially address the words which seem so applicable to your case—"be not weary in well doing." Indifference, we well know, is contagious. The spectacle of a partial languor tends naturally and unavoidably to make the feeling general. Even wise and good men, without changing their opinion as to the character of an enterprise, may be led to *abandon* it when, after long continued trial, they find their own solitary earnestness failing to kindle in others a corresponding warmth of sympathy, or disposition to take part with them in the work of piety. But let me offer this suggestion. Think *why* it was that the apostle discountenanced weariness in well doing. He may have seen that it is not always the hopelessness of an undertaking which makes men weary of supporting it, but exactly the reverse; it may be their readiness to wax weary, which renders it hopeless. We may blush at the backwardness of others; but instead of being provoked to imitate it, the true principle will be to go

on more earnestly with the work, as if to obliterate by our diligence the offence of others' remissness.

To this decision the strongest encouragement is given in the words which follow : " in due season we shall reap if we faint not." All depends upon that word *not*. For if we faint, if in pursuing those great purposes for which this Society exists, we drive heavily, as if our chariot wheels were off, if we cease our labour, our care and diligence, until we have done all that lieth in us according to our bounden duty to give God's word free course, then all is lost. I say not to the clergy only but to you all, then will a free unbridled scope be afforded, throughout the country, both to error in religion and to viciousness of life. Can you doubt, that perseverance, with God's blessing, is the true secret of success ? It is like godliness, profitable unto all things ; having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. In this lower world, in the discovery of its resources, and of their proper application to the service of mankind, what harvests has not perseverance reaped ; all of which, it may be said, would have been snatched from the grasp of men, if they had allowed themselves to be discouraged by difficulties, and to be soon weary and faint in their minds. And if, in those undertakings which require but the exercise of the human faculties under the direction of God's ordinary providence, inflexible perseverance be the path which conducts to ultimate success, how much more shall your heavenly Father lead you by the same way to the attainment of *your* object, when it is the increase of his glory which is your aim ; and his Holy Spirit is sought, at every step, to point the way, and to guide and support you in it. The trials which provoke despondency, arising from the feeling of a want of extended support, have been common to God's servants in every age. Few were they who walked with Noah when Noah walked with God. Behold, said Elijah, in his jealousy for the Lord God, " I alone am left." And the glorious apostle avows, " at my first answer no man stood with me." " Demas hath forsaken me." " This thou knowest, that all they which

are in Asia be turned away." And what is there in this sense of abandonment in any Christian effort, which should create surprise or weariness, when even the Lord of Life, in the moment of his most earnest devotion of himself to the salvation of the world, had to bear up against the desertion of his own disciples, who in that hour of trial, "all forsook him and fled." We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who all have had to contend against that feeling, too natural and oftentimes too feebly resisted, which suggests a renunciation of what seems to be a fruitless effort, as the readiest way of escape from a thankless toil. But these were *not* weary in well doing—they fainted *not*; and in due season they reaped the promised reward. And so shall we if we are followers of them; and mark those which walk so as ye have them for an ensample. Let us work together as they did in faith and hopeful expectation. Even now there are encouraging appearances arising: for the returns of the past year show a reviving sense of the value of our exertions, and a disposition on the part of the members of the Church, who have this world's good, not to shut up their bowels of compassion against the brethren, who, they see, have need. Our endeavour must be to keep them always duly informed of the continued existence of that need, that none may find excuse for omitting to combine with us, by saying that they knew it not. We must not ourselves give way to weariness in well doing; but by the example of *our* diligence stir up others to love and to good works. We must be careful to apply discreetly whatsoever is entrusted to our distribution, that none may urge, as a plea for *not* contributing, that what they give may not be well expended. Let us be doing good; and, the while, be seeking peace at any sacrifice, short of a sacrifice of principles. Thus walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the peace and comfort of the Holy Ghost, shall our Churches be multiplied, and in the same proportion edified. And thus, the ample harvest which, if we faint not, we shall reap on earth, will but prelude

the abundant glory of that future harvest, which is the end of the world. Then, when the fruit of the kingdom of God is ripe, behold upon the cloud One like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle, which immediately he putteth in, because the harvest is come. And every one that laboureth in his service, every one who reapeth with him, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.

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