



**The Sabbath Recorder.**

WESTERN, R. I., FIFTH-DAY, OCT. 20, 1870.  
GEORGE B. UTTER, EDITOR.

**"GOD IS LOVE"**

1 John 4: 8.  
SERMON BY GEO. H. TOMLINSON.

If our minds were this day waiting for the truth, and if our hearts were in a receptive condition, these words, although so familiar, could hardly fail to thrill us with hope and joy. They would send the currents of a new life and vigor bounding through all our being. I ask you, then, to try to receive them as if they were new, while in a simple, conversational way, I shall endeavor to unfold a little of their significance. And yet there are doubtless many of you who cannot do this; they are not new, and you cannot make them seem so, and are glad you cannot; you have been permitted to drink too deeply of the fountain of salvation; you have come too near to Jesus, and felt too much of the "un-kindling power of his love in your hearts, for these words 'to come to you otherwise than as familiar and cherished ones. Others have had momentary glimpses of the truth, as of the sun breaking through the clouds for a while in a rainy day; but the skies were soon overcast again, and the light of faith went out in the darkness of despondency and habitual gloom. To all who would be Christians, but hardly dare assert a claim to the title; to all whose Christian sympathies are stronger than their Christian hopes; to any whose sense of unworthiness is so constant as to chill and depress; and even to those whose morbid minds cause them to discolour and darken life with the dismal hues of their own sickly imaginations. I come to-day with the antidote contained in the assurance that God is love.

The context declares that the love of God toward us was especially manifested in this, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And so I pass by to-day all the other evidences of the Divine love, as seen in the common and often unrecognized blessings of daily life, and take the gift of Christ as its highest possible manifestation, including or implying all the rest. There are some gifts so great, that they necessitate others. The conferring of freedom upon the American slave virtually carried with it the bestowment of suffrage; to render the gift of liberty valid; the question of suffrage was really settled on the day made ever memorable by the proclamation of freedom. And so the gift of Christ as our propitiation assures us of the bestowment of whatever else is needful to render that gift effective; and thus in the exultation of our rising faith, we can with Paul rejoicing cry, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with us also freely give us all things?" How could he, after such a grant, withhold anything necessary to make it efficacious?

Before passing further, I must linger a moment to say, that the text does not signify that the character of God is one-sided. It does not mean that he is all love, any more than when it is declared that he is angry with the wicked every day, or that he is a consuming fire, it is designed to teach that indignation holds other than its legitimate place in a symmetrical character. There is no "daring attribute." In fact, love ought hardly to be called an attribute of God. It is the basis of his character. It is, so to speak, the warp of the Divine being, while the various attributes are the woof, all woven and interwoven, forming a texture glorious and impenetrable. God possesses all virtues in the highest degree, but they are never in conflict. It is sometimes said that there are failings that lead to virtue's side. There certainly sometimes seem to be virtues that are akin to vices. At least, human virtues in their higher manifestations often shade off insensibly into those which have a kind of affinity for them. "Right, too rigid, hardens into wrong." A man of quick conscience and keen sense of justice often runs into indefensible severity, and even supposes that he is doing God service all the time. There is *misery* a self-appointed judge, who has no right to assume such a position, and no capability for discharging its functions. Goodness and mercy, on the other hand, sometimes degenerate into a leniency inconsistent with a government of sufficient vigor to be effective. In Christ these seemingly opposite virtues meet, mingle, and harmonize. He is at once a Lion and a Lamb, stern and lenient, severe and kind, "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," and yet "by no means clearing the guilty."

Should you ask me to explain to-day why it is that God loves us, I should frankly tell you that I could not do it. I do not know why he loves us. That is to me one of the greatest of mysteries. Surely, it cannot be because we are worthy of such love. It cannot be that he regards us with complacency. He is not blind to our faults, as men sometimes are to the failings of those they love the best. He looks down through the outward act into the heart, and seeing every motive, even though hidden from ourselves, knows how "deceitful and desperately wicked" the heart is. He cannot be deceived, and has no motive for regarding us other than we are. Nor can he love us, as we sometimes do our friends, not because of their faults, but in spite of them, because of their outbarring virtues; for, as we stand charged by God himself, we do not possess them. "Pity is skin to love," but surely in the Divine affection, there are other elements than those of mere compassion. Yet he *does love us*. He himself declares it repeatedly and unmistakably. All things show it. Your hearts feel it. That is the one fact that rises above all others, as the mountain above the plain. It is the axis, around which revolves the moral world. It is the great light, before which all others shall pale their ineffectual fires! Yes, all other facts be forgotten; let all other truths fade out; let the lights of science and philosophy one after another grow dim and disappear; roll back the ages of primeval darkness; but let this full-orbed truth pour forth its light into the darkness of our world, and all shall yet be well. Under its generating beams, the lights of science shall kindle as new fires, and diffuse again their light and heat; the arts, led forth by love, shall take their places in the van; the desert shall blossom like the rose; and humanity, redeemed from its thralldom of degradation, shall send to the rejoicing heavens its song of glory, until the whole earth shall ring with the strain, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Let us look, then, at the fact itself, and endeavor to realize something of its significance.

**1. The love of God is general.**

There is in the world a vast amount of self-love and self-concern. The affection that many entertain for their family and friends is but an extension of the very warm affection with which they regard themselves. This is not meant as an endorsement of the theory that all human affections are but the love of self outbreathing and extended. Such a generalization is far too broad, as well as superficial. Yet you have known men, who appreciated their wives and their children, not because of any special qualities that they recognized in them, but simply because they were theirs. They valued them more highly than those of others, precisely as they regarded their horses or other articles of property as more valuable than similar articles belonging to others. And the measure of such valuation was their estimate of themselves. By as much as they thought of themselves more highly than of other people, did they regard as of superior value those of others, precisely as they regarded their horses or other articles of property as more valuable than similar articles belonging to others. And the measure of such valuation was their estimate of themselves. By as much as they thought of themselves more highly than of other people, did they regard as of superior value those of others, precisely as they regarded their horses or other articles of property as more valuable than similar articles belonging to others. And the measure of such valuation was their estimate of themselves. By as much as they thought of themselves more highly than of other people, did they regard as of superior value those of others, precisely as they regarded their horses or other articles of property as more valuable than similar articles belonging to others.

**2. The love of God is particular.**  
While it is easy for some, knowing that God has a general love for the race, to believe that he has a special interest in them individually,

because they regard themselves as constituting so important a part of the race, there are others who so deeply feel their own insignificance, that it is hard for them to realize that he cares for them directly and personally.

The Psalmist declares that God careth for us as a father for his children, and gives as the reason for such compassionate regard, that he knoweth our frame, remembering we are but dust. Each one, if he will, may adopt as his own the language of one old, "Thou God thinkest upon me." We often hear quoted the expression, "Thou God seest me," and it is invariably used as the language of fear, as if there were only terror and admonition in the thought, that the All-seeing eye is upon us. Why not sometimes throw the emphasis upon me, and use it as the language of comfort? "Thou God seest me. Poor I am, weak and unworthy I am, yet thou dost not overlook me. My interests, so great to myself, so small in relation to the aggregate, have received thy forethought, and now receive thy care." Is not that the way to look at it? Is there not comfort in such a thought? Shall there not be growth from such confidence? You remember how tenderly Christ prayed for his disciples, and then added, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." That includes you and me, and all who since then have believed, and all who in the ages to come shall believe in His gospel. Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Is it too much to suppose that he has also prayed for you?

**3. The love of God is spontaneous and unconditional.**  
Some of you probably do not believe this. Said D. L. Moody, the Lay Preacher, "It took me fifteen years after I gave myself to God, to learn that he really loved me all the time, notwithstanding all my failures, and however little I responded; but since I learned that, I have been a happier, and I hope a better man." God is constantly proclaiming this truth in his providence, yet many miserably and comparatively useless, when they ought to be happy and abundantly useful. I said that I would not attempt to explain the mystery of such love, nor will I yet say this much to you, with all the strength of emphasis at my command, that God loves us simply because it is his nature to love. He loves us for his own sake, or for the sake of his own nature. He declares that he forgives men for a similar reason. "I, even I, am he that bloteth out thy transgressions, for my own sake; and thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more." It is on his own account, for the pleasure that it gives himself, that he forgives. This is his selfishness. It is his highest test of love, whether human or divine—love that finds its gratification, not in what it receives, but in what it confers, loving and doing for its own sake. God loves you not merely because his love will benefit you, though it will benefit you as nothing else can. This is the very philosophy of the Christian religion, overcoming evil with good, hatred with love—changing its recipient from one degree of glory into another, as the depth of God's love is progressively sounded, and successively responded to with increasing fervency. I repeat it, you love us because it is his nature to love. He cannot help loving, any more than the sun can help shining. It is his nature to shine. Some of you always want to condition his love. You say, "If we love him, if we are faithful, then will he love us." And so he will. But that is only half the truth. I want you to feel that he loves you any way. Be ungrateful, hate him, disobey him; if you will; yet remember, that through all your ingratitude, hatred, and disobedience, he loves you, and would do you good! Shall he require us to forgive our brother seventy times seven, or, in other words, an unlimited number of times, or just as often as he sins against us, and yet not himself bear with us in a similar way? Nay, the requirement of such forgiveness on our part is the pledge of such forgiveness on his. Edwards was correct when he said, "God has no more right to injure a creature than a creature has to injure God." He is self-bound by the same ultimate laws that he imposes upon us. And he requires us to entertain no feelings toward our fellow-men, that he does not himself extend to us. Jesus said, "If ye love them only that love you, what reward have you? what special merit is there in that? Do not even publicans and sinners, the most abandoned of men, do the same? You fail utterly as my followers, unless you love them who hate you, and do good to them who do evil to you." Shall he thus teach us what is right, and not be guided himself by the same law? Shall he require such feelings of mortals, for whom it is so hard to exercise them, and not manifest them himself, for whom it is so easy? No; he demands such feelings of us, because they are right, because he does; all ways entertain them toward us. It

was a world of sinners that he loved in the first place. It was for the "ungodly" that he died; for sinners, not for the righteous. It was the lost that he came to seek and to save.

gang of their supposed acceptance with God, and of their duty to men. Let not mere physical excitement be mistaken for the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor mere physical depression for its absence. People are at one time elated, and then they think God loves them; at another time they are dejected, and then they suppose he has hidden his face from them. That is a miserable idea. Do, pray, think better of God than that! He is not capricious nor variable. The change is in you, and is essentially a physical one only. The good old man who declared that he always enjoyed religion except when the wind was in the East, related an experience that is representative of an entire class, which should be charged to the weakness of the flesh, but should never be regarded as subtracting anything from the constancy of God's love. I think it was Sydney Smith who said, "many could not distinguish between a serious disposition and a serious indisposition." Some people suppose themselves to possess a more depraved heart than others, when they have only a more depraved stomach. And some of these experiences of the heart, so called, are nothing but experiences of the stomach. A physician may be needed more than a minister, medicine more than grace, exercise and cheerful company more than meditation and self-examination. I accept the doctrine of our moral depravity, unable to close my eyes to the fact, that there is a downward tendency in the soul; but I also believe that beyond and beside all this, there is a physical depravity that is often overlooked. There is in the best of Christians "the law in the members warring against the law in the mind." There may be "the spirit lusty against the flesh," but there is also "the flesh lusty against the spirit." Conversion is not a speedy and perfect cure. The Christian is simply convalescent. Religion is a growth. It is the gradual development of a divinely implanted germ, unfolding amid unfavorable influences. Much harm is often done because of a misconception in reference to this. We become too easily discouraged; or, we allow ourselves to be unreasonable in our expectations of others. We become uncharitable, censorious, impatient. In just so far do we destroy our influence for good, as we fail to possess and to manifest that spirit of patient hopefulness, the influence of which is so invigorating and productive. We sometimes pin our faith on a single individual, deeming him almost perfect; but when upon closer acquaintance we discern many a fault and imperfection, we rebound to the other extreme, and suppose him much worse than he is, or overlook his abundant merits. We have no right to expect such perfection, no business to condition our faith on the supposed merit of any man. We must not deal thus unreasonably. God does not with us. No man is wholly good; few, if any, are wholly bad. The fact that a man may have committed what we regard as a sin, or that an intimate acquaintance may reveal a few faults, of the existence of which we were ignorant, constitutes no evidence against the goodness of his religion. If otherwise, where could Christians be found? You and I would certainly not be among them. And if we were, how low some should be in heaven! Mrs. Stowe has somewhere written, "There are few characters in which religion does anything more than struggle with natural defects, and modify what else would be far worse." These words are literally true, though referring only, of course, to this earthly life of conflict. If we would only remember this truth, we should be much more comfortable, more charitable, more useful. The heart that does not become more charitable with age, is no more ripening for heaven, than an apple ripening that never becomes mellow. But for myself I find—and I see the same thing in others, and that is one reason why the "liberal" so often become illiberal—that it is most difficult to have charity for those who have themselves none for others. The greatest stretch and trial of my charity, is when I try to exercise it toward men who, notwithstanding Jesus is so gentle and loving and patient and forbearing, seem to think that a man is never a Christian unless he is perfect, and then talk about their own sanctification and perfection. Perfection! Meet them in business, and you will stand a chance of finding out what that means. They are like that Yankee colporteur, who sometimes traded horses as well as sold or gave away Bibles and other religious books, but who found that he couldn't prosper in both branches of his business at the same time—"in fact," he said, "he didn't want the Lord around any way, when he was trading horses." Is this a common feeling, in that or in other branches of business?

A man may be a Christian, it may be the general and leading aim of his life to serve God, and yet, because of bodily condition, in connection with wrong indoctrination, he may be thus unpleasantly variable in his feelings. But it is greatly desirable to get out, and to keep out of such a condition. The love of God is general and special, spontaneous and unconditional; and it is also abiding. With what sweet simplicity John tells of Jesus, that having loved his disciples, "he loved them to the end." We may rely upon his constancy.

words to the Philadelphia Church? "Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it!" What is the reason for such an assurance? "Because thou hast yet a little strength." And what a reason that is for such a promise! "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

But you are discouraged because you have so little faith. Have you less faith than Thomas had? Notwithstanding the Saviour's instructions and predictions concerning his death and resurrection, notwithstanding all the evidences that Thomas had seen of his Divinity, he declared that he would not believe the statement that Jesus had risen from the grave, no matter upon what testimony, until he had himself seen and felt of the wounds that had caused his death. Did Jesus rebuke him for his obduracy? Very mildly indeed; "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." If there be in the heart the germ of faith, God is ready to cherish it and promote its growth. The soul that can truly say, "Lord, I believe—help thou my unbelief," making the simultaneous profession of faith and confession of weakness with the prayer for help, is pronounced blessed, and is accepted as a child of the covenant. "He will not break the bruised reed." Nothing is so fragile as the reed; a bruised one is the very symbol of weakness. Could anything be more significant of compassionate care? "The smoking flax he will not quench." The flame of Christian love may not be visible in the life, but if there be any outward evidence of fire within, the Spirit is ready to breathe upon the smouldering embers with all its enkindling power. A specified amount of faith is not required as a condition of acceptance. Is there enough to create an affinity between your heart and God, a sympathy in character and purpose? Affinities depend not upon quantity, but quality. The amount of faith developed will depend very much upon temperament, education, and habit. But if there be any shown, you may feel confident that it is not a native graft, but a germ of heavenly origin.

But what are the facts? Let them be our oracles now. The China Mission was established in 1847, twenty-three years since. During the first nine years of its progress, the untold cry of the four on the field was ever, "Come over and help us." Why was there in all those years no response? Then the number was reduced to three, and still the cry came up, and no reply. Why was there none? After a while there came another reduction, and only two were left to utter the Maledonian cry, and it was still unheeded; and so, until 1864, seventeen long years, with missionaries actually on the field, was that great word proclaimed; yet there were none to hear, none to reply. And now that they are all at home, those four missionaries, and have been for almost six years out of the twenty-three (almost twenty-four), can these six years be made to answer for the whole?

feelings toward you. The mind is in a morbid condition when it is much inclined to investigate its own emotions. When a man is in perfect bodily health, he scarcely thinks of his physical condition at all. Let him begin steadily to feel of his pulse and examine every symptom, and he is in a fair way to be sick. It is not until the dyspepsia gets hold of a man, that he really comes to understand that he has such a thing as a stomach. Then begins the work of self-examination. But it is unnatural. The healthiest Christian thinks the least of his own condition. He has little time, and less inclination, for such work; there are too many needing his help. But aside from this, it is really unsafe for some to enter upon the work of self-questioning. I am constantly finding a class of minds—a class that has drawn largely upon my sympathy, and that has been my especial study—to whom, in the discharge of my duty, I must say, both publicly and privately, no self-examination for you; cease thinking about yourselves; stop studying your own condition; leave yourselves entirely in the hands of the Saviour, whose love for you is tender, and true, and abiding. He will provide for you. You cannot do it for yourselves. Why make the useless attempt? "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

**CHINA MISSION.**

On taking up the RECORDER of October 6th, my eye first rested upon the 28th Annual Report of the Missionary Society, and its first item, "China Mission." The reason for its non-reinforcement, and the remarks which followed, sank deep into my soul, namely, these: "It may be best to mention one difficulty that the Board has had constantly to meet, in its efforts for reinforcement, a difficulty, the force of which is not, perhaps, fully realized by those who have been hoping long and vainly for success. We allude to the fact, that after thousands of dollars have been expended upon this Mission, after so much has been accomplished, buildings secured, a church organized, four missionaries should be living here, year after year, away from the scene of their labors."

thought a foreign teacher indispensable to continue, and believed that without such aid ours would also fall after a while. The wonder was they continued so long.

Another dear friend, writing about them, says of the native pastor of that little church, (Chan, Chang Lan, whom you will remember, and of his standing in the foreign community, "He is a real good man; all I know are pleased with him; he does you great honor.")

What a help would this man have been to the four missionaries absent there, in acquiring the language, and explaining customs, as well as in a thousand other ways; for he now understands the English language sufficient for all mission wants. Can not our young men see here an inducement to go where there would be such help for them? L. M. CARPENTER, Milton, Wis., Oct. 10, 1870.

**ASHAWAY CORRESPONDENCE.**  
A State Temperance Convention was held in Academy Hall, Ashaway, Wednesday, Oct. 12. The day commenced with clouds and rain, so that but very few people of this vicinity attended the morning session, although there was quite a delegation from abroad—Providence, Woonsocket, Kingston, Wakefield, and other places, being well represented. But the sun shone out profusely bright in the afternoon. A very strong attraction was the music by the Hutchinson family, who were here through the day, but left at the close of the afternoon session, to meet an evening engagement at Hope Valley.

The convention opened with solemn invocation by the Hutchinsons. Then the opening prayer was offered by the chairman, Rev. J. Haggard Wells, of Kingston, followed by a temperance prayer-and-conference meeting, which continued perhaps thirty or forty minutes. Rev. Mr. Conant presented as subjects of prayer, not only then and there, but afterward, and to all Christian hearts who might hear of them, some men and women at the State farm, with whom he has recently conversed and prayed—persons who had become common drunkards, but were anxious to reform.

After the conference meeting, the convention was duly organized, and a committee appointed who were to decide upon the order of business. While this committee were preparing their report, the convention listened to remarks from delegates, detailing the condition of the temperance cause in their respective towns.

The business committee duly reported the following resolutions:

1. Resolved, That as temperance workers we seek more and more the Divine aid in our great work, and that we invoke the prayers and cooperation of all Christians and Christian churches, in suppressing the liquor traffic, and in saving the inebriate from ruin.
2. Resolved, That in the opinion of this committee, the liquor system is a curse to the State of Rhode Island, because it throws the shield of law around that traffic which undermines the morals of our youth, and fills our criminal and charitable institutions with men, women, and children, who are its unfortunate or criminal victims.
3. Resolved, That, as the mothers and daughters of our State are the greatest sufferers from the liquor traffic, it becomes the privilege as well as the duty of woman to identify herself with this movement, as to make her influence a power to counter the demoralizing customs which find their protection under the shield of fashionable drinking and a legalized traffic.
4. Resolved, That druggists should be temperance men, in practice as well as profession, and that they should be required to dispense intoxicating liquors only on prescription of regular practicing physicians.
5. Resolved, That the use of tobacco is such a stepping-stone to the use of rum, as such an ally to its continuance, that the final recovery of the inebriate and the young, demands an earnest and increasing effort on the part of reformers to abate so terrible an evil.

The remainder of the session, until 4 o'clock P. M., was occupied in discussing these resolutions, which were severally adopted. The discussions were able, spirited, and strongly imbued with true Christian feeling; but a full report of the world, undoubtedly, be quite too lengthy. The last resolution elicited a most graphic and laughable tirade against tobacco, which all tobacco consumers ought to be obliged to hear.

The hour from 4 to 5 P. M. was given up to the children, of whom a large number were present. Song "Drink, drink, but don't drink rum." Address by Rev. J. R. Irish—danger of using tobacco—leads to rum drinking.—Remarks by Rev. S. Griswold, on a cider barrel—gets boys to promise they will never be drunken husbands, and girls that they will never have drunken husbands. "Have any of you boys ever staked cider out of a barrel through a straw?" (Cries of "yes.") "Well, unless you leave off that, you will be drunken husbands. What would you think to see Elder So-and-so sitting astride a cider barrel, sucking cider out of the bung-hole through a straw?" (Laughter.) "As many of you as will never suck cider through a straw, hold up your hands." (Up go a good many little hands.) "And as many of you as will promise never to drink cider, hold up your hands." (Up go the hands again.)

In the evening we listened to a very pathetic address from Col. Elias M. Jenks, of Providence. Washing to give a more detailed report of this than present time and space will allow, we defer a report thereof for a future communication. GENEVAV.

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