



**CHRISTIANITY THE RESTORER ;**

.OR,

**MAN'S DOMINION OVER THE EARTH,—DISTURBED  
BY SIN,—RESTORED BY CHRIST :**

**A SERMON**

**PREACHED IN ZION CHURCH, MONTREAL, APRIL 17, 1859,**

**BY THE PASTOR,**

**HENRY WILKES, D.D.**

---

Montreal :

**PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, CANADA DIRECTORY OFFICE,**

**ST. NICHOLAS STREET.**

**1859.**



# CHRISTIANITY THE RESTORER ;

OR,

MAN'S DOMINION OVER THE EARTH,—DISTURBED  
BY SIN,—RESTORED BY CHRIST :

## A SERMON

PREACHED IN ZION CHURCH, MONTREAL, APRIL 17, 1859,

BY THE PASTOR,

HENRY WILKES, D.D.

---

Montreal:  
PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, CANADA DIRECTORY OFFICE,  
ST. NICOLAS STREET.  
1859.



This Discourse may be regarded rather as a few hints on the subject of which it treats than as a full discussion: that would occupy several sermons. It was written in the ordinary course of pastoral preparation for the pulpit, having in view many young members of the congregation who are paying more or less attention to Natural History, under the happy impulse thereto derived from the efficiency of our University, and especially of its distinguished Principal, Dr. Dawson. A valued friend, a member of the Church, has asked the M.S. for the press, not that it may be published, but that the congregation may have an opportunity of reading it, should they see fit to do so. The request is cheerfully granted.

H. W.

MOUNTAIN TERRACE,

*May* 3, 1859.



## S E R M O N .

---

*Isaiah* 45, 18 : " God himself that formed the earth, and made it ; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited."

Verse 13 : " I have made the earth and created man upon it."

*Psalms* 8 : " Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands : thou hast put all things under his feet."

These statements of Holy Writ are only a specimen of a large number which are fitted to impress our minds with the facts that the creation of all things is of God, that he made the earth for a human habitation, and that he gave to man dominion over these works of his hands. On these points the Bible is full and explicit, never ignoring but always maintaining them as among fundamental truths. While it gives prominence to the plan of salvation for sinners and glorifies redeeming love, it nevertheless keeps before us the works of God in creation and providence and also our relations to them. Let us give some attention to the matters thus brought before us.



## GOD MADE THE EARTH TO BE INHABITED BY MAN.

The researches of science have shown conclusively that just such a design as is stated in these ancient scriptures is apparent in the construction of our globe. For instance, there have been during ages of the past, wide-spread and vast vegetable structures, which have been so dealt with as to become our coal measures, essential to us, but of no use to the lower animals. There have been in the same or other ages not only great variety of animal formations, but some in such inconceivable numbers, and placed in such adapted relations as to form gradually masses of rock in ocean's bed, which being afterwards thrown up and brought into contact with the atmosphere and other agencies, form the basis of some of our fertile soils, and also the materials for our buildings. There have been also in those far-distant ages of the past a mingling and melting in the earth's vast crucible of various elementary parts of the rocks whence have been produced metallic ores which only man can use.

The arrangement of the earth in its continents, and islands, and mountain chains, in its seas and oceans, and in those wondrous currents by which the vast masses of northern ice are carried southward to be melted, and to convey valuable modifications of atmosphere in their voyage, and by which northern climates are softened through the proximity of the waters from the sunny south ; all these, and innumerable other points that might be mentioned, indicate that the earth was designed for such a being as man. The natural laws, moreover, under which the Creator has placed the works of his hands and in accordance with which he continually exercises

his preserving and sustaining power, are obviously for the use of man: no other creature on earth can understand or appreciate them. Truly "God hath made the earth and established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited."

The case as presented by science may be illustrated thus. You are journeying through what you suppose to be an entire wilderness, but you suddenly come upon a towering structure, beautiful to the eye, and exhibiting no little architectural skill. You enter and find its rooms furnished with elegance; its repositories filled with the usual domestic requisites, its arrangements having an obvious reference to comfort and enjoyment; but there is no one within it or near it. Have you any difficulty because of this last fact in arriving at the conclusion that the structure was created and furnished for the use of *man*? You would not for a moment suppose that it was designed as a stable for horses, or a kennel for dogs, or a lair for tigers, or a muddy reedy home for alligators, or a den for bears; on the contrary, everything within and without, though no record existed, would demonstrate that this place was for man. Just so the earth. It indeed has its place for animals of every kind, for birds of every wing, for reptiles of every species, for insects, for radiates, moluscs, articulates and vertibrates; but plainly the earth was not made for these; on the contrary, these with the earth were made for man, to be inhabited by man. He only can till the soil, dig up its minerals and use them, make its rushing waters a mechanical power, navigate its oceans, and enjoy its best products. He only can understand and use its natural laws—he only has an eye for its beauty and glory—he only has a heart to rejoice and be glad in the presence of its Creator and Lord. Yes, "He made the earth and created man upon it." "He formed it to be inhabited."

## II.

## THE CREATOR GAVE TO MAN DOMINION.

The charter of dominion was announced at the creation. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and *over all the earth*, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." There was an immediate possession given in that "the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof." Our text from the 8th Psalm expresses distinctly this dominion:—"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet." In blessing man at the creation, the Lord enjoined him to subdue the earth, that is, as we understand it, to bring all its natural laws, and all its products, and all its capabilities under his enlightened control. He was to make the whole subservient to his use, that he might therewith glorify God.

As in other cases so in this, all facts are in harmony with these early grants and privileges. Man *has* dominion, the only creature on earth who possesses it. We may speak of the lion as the king of the desert, of leviathan as the monarch of the seas, of the eagle as prince among birds, but these terms simply relate to their superior strength; they have no actual dominion; they may overpower but they cannot persuade, allure, or control their fellows into a course involving plan or purpose, for such plan they are incapable of forming. Instinct may in some cases have the semblance of thought and ma-

nagement, as in the case of bees ; but after all it is not the reason which meets and controls emergencies, and which, in the proper sense of the term, governs.

The fact that God gave to man dominion appears in his ability to cultivate the soil so as to obtain from seed which he sows the precious products of the earth. Not only does he laboriously search for and obtain its mineral ores, but he puts into requisition natural laws discovered by himself in order to smelting and combining the materials, and then puts forth his skill in constructing the ponderous machine, or the beautiful ornament. He gathers electrical force and sends it along thousands of miles of wire to convey his messages to his fellows. He generates vapour from water and heat, whose explosive force he uses as a motive power to drive the most complicated and the mightiest machinery, and to propel with rapidity through ocean's waves, as a thing of life, the great steamship with its freightage of men and merchandise. He navigates the pathless ocean with unerring precision without land marks, using it as freely as the traveller the highway under his feet. By prolonged and associate observation he becomes so much a master of the earth's crust as to know where to look for its coal though far beneath the surface, and where its other mineral treasures are to be found, and how they are to be obtained. In fine, the facts of the case augmenting in number every year, strikingly illustrate and confirm the glorious charter which the Creator gave to man of dominion over the earth.

## III.

HUMAN SIN HAS PRODUCED A GRIEVOUS DISTURBANCE IN  
THIS WHOLE MATTER.

The Creator indicated this fact immediately "after the fall of our first parents." "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Afterwards the name Noah was given to the second head of the race by his father who said:—"This same shall comfort us concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Solomon referring to the existing facts on this subject exclaimed, "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun. This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." The Apostle Paul also declares that "The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; for we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

These scriptures teach that man's sin has been the occasion of physical evils having relation to the earth itself. It is of little consequence whether there was inflicted at the period of man's sin the curse of a disastrous change on the substance of the earth, so that it became the place of discipline for a sinful being, or

whether it was, as a whole built up in view of this fore-known event amid the vast ages of the past, the occasioning sin foreknown, and thus being retroactive in its influence, just as the atonement of Christ was retroactive in its benefits—the Garden of Eden being the exclusive spot of earth destined and fitted for a perfect creature\* ; we say, no matter which of these views is taken, the curse of man's sin rests upon the earth. Such labour as Eden demanded was a potent good, it was a continual pleasure—but there *is* now, and ever has been “a sore travail” which is a vexation of spirit, and often comes with crushing weight upon the sons of toil.

Another disturbance of a far more serious kind has been produced by sin, namely, on *man himself*. His qualifications for dominion have been grievously injured. This is the great cause of his gradual deterioration from the high intellectual and moral position of the early ages,

---

\* The theory here hinted is one of much interest. Rev. Dr. Hitchcock brought it out in a discourse distinguished by great perspicuity and beauty, preached in this Church August, 1857. If it can be established, it accounts satisfactorily for the prevalence of death among the various orders of animals for ages anterior to the creation of man, in harmony with the doctrine of scripture, that “by sin came death.” It is not meant to allege that the theory is necessary to harmonize scripture with fact, because death as a terror and a curse may be the result of sin, while the mere dissolution of life, painless and without evil character, may be a process of nature apart from moral considerations. But if this earth was built up by its Creator for man in view of his sinful condition, and as a place of discipline for him as well as of existence, and also in view of the mediatorial work of Christ, and of his sufferings and death upon its surface, then all death occurring in the process of building up the earth, may be, with as much propriety, regarded as a mark of judicial displeasure as all death afterwards occurring. This also happily accounts for the speciality of the Garden of Eden, fitted for and occupied by the sinless creature, from which he was banished when he had sinned, that he might occupy the earth which had been specially prepared for the sinful.

as exhibited in Enoch and Noah, and doubtless many others among the antediluvians, and Abraham, Job, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and their contemporaries afterwards, to the gross ignorance and corruption of paganism, and to the grievous darkness of such a period as the middle ages. Sin has brought man under the control of his animal nature, immersed him in sensuality, stultified his intellect, sunk him in ignorance and superstition, and thus disqualified him for understanding the laws by which the earth is governed, or for exercising his appointed dominion. We shall have to speak presently of his recovery from this disqualification, but now we look simply at the effect of sin. It obviously degrades him from his dignity, enslaves him to lust, and deafens him to the many voices of nature that call him to study, to work and to enjoyment. True it has not been permitted to disqualify him totally. The great principles of his nature are not destroyed. Though in ruin, he is a noble ruin, the materials being around with which he may be rebuilt and made glorious. But the injury done to him in this department by sin is immense, and in proportion as it has dominion over him does he lose his control of nature and becomes a slave instead of a monarch.

There is further disturbance most sad in its influence, and withal disastrous. Sin robs the dominion which man continues to exercise of that one element by which it is dignified and purified, namely, that *all should be done for the glory of God*. He who "made the earth to be inhabited, created man upon it, and gave him dominion," acted throughout for the highest object,—His own glory. This was his own great purpose, and this he established as the true purpose of the dominion which he granted to man. In its exercise, man was required in all things to seek the promotion of God's glory, "to glorify God with

his body and spirit which are His." A design like this, and a course based upon it, are ennobling to the human ruler, investing his dominion with the grandeur of an intelligent consecration to Him. But alas! sin has turned him entirely aside from this course. Instead of the gifts of God being used for His glory, they are actually perverted into weapons to oppose His authority. Men under the influence of sin, pervert the dominion they gain to pervert the Divine goodness, and to set at defiance Divine authority.

#### IV.

##### THE LOST DOMINION IS REGAINED BY THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

When a man receives Christ he becomes a new creature in him. Restless, dissatisfied with the past, convinced of his guilt and persuaded of his helpless condition, he has cast himself at the feet of Jesus, and seeking pardon and life there, has obtained the infinite boon. Henceforward he hates sin itself—abandons it, repents of it, and seeks to be conformed to God's image. Feeling his imperfections, he yet desires in all things to please God. Conscientious of defective measures of love, he yet acts under its guidance and impulse as a controlling principle. He is set free from the slavery of sin. His mind and heart ascend to higher good than what is sensual. He desires to know more of God whom he loves and serves, and hence His works become his delight. He opens the volume of nature as well as that of revelation, and reads with delight therein. He becomes gradually qualified fully for that dominion which it was originally intended he should wield. The Christian is the highest style of man. And just in proportion as christianity obtains



sway in the general community, are the chains of ignorance and superstition broken, and the reins of dominion over the creation again put into the hands of men.

That so it should be is the teaching of the passage already quoted from the Epistle to the Romans (8 : 20). "The creature" or creation "itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." They to whom this glorious liberty belongs through grace, have free access to creation, and exercise in it a legitimate dominion. It has been well remarked that the Scriptures we have quoted teach "that man's hard-fought and hard-won triumphs over nature on the land and on the sea,—those triumphs of material civilization which nations and continents celebrate with an enthusiasm that the triumphs of war could never kindle,—those bloodless victories over earth, and air, and sea, and space, and time, which assert the dominion of the spiritual over the material,—instead of marking man's self-improvement upon his original, as is sometimes boastingly said, *do but mark his approximation towards that original which Jehovah crowned with glory and honour, and invested with dominion over the works of his hands.* They teach us that this material progress, which man boasts as the fruit of his invention and the perfectibility of his nature, if not of his present and absolute independence—this material progress, which is to man wealth, and power, and glory,—is, after all, but an incidental result of the appearing in human flesh of Jesus Christ our Lord : \*

"In him the tribes of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost."

It is observable that parallel with the spread of Christianity in the earth, and subservient thereto, is the

---

\* *New York Independent.*

enlargement of scientific discovery and the acquisition of dominion by the spiritual over the material; teaching us that the religion of Jesus Christ is the grand restorer of man to his original dignity and glory; yea more, that it is putting into his hand powers far higher and nobler than belonged to Adam in his primeval innocence. If sin has degraded and ruined man—if it has bereft him of dominion and made him a slave—the salvation of the gospel not only rescues him from the drear thralldom, but raises him to a higher position of dignity, and crowns him with surpassing glory and honour.

It may be objected to these views that men have all through their history exercised dominion over the earth, a fact which has not been dependent on their moral condition. The reply is that this proves nothing against the disturbance of dominion alleged. Just as in morals man is not wholly and irreclaimably bad, but is susceptible of the highest improvement; so in the matter of his dominion over the creature, all was not lost. He retained his humanity and did not become a mere beast. But of most serious disturbance of his dominion there can be no doubt. And just in proportion as he has lived in ignorance of God and amid the grovellings of his lower nature has his incapacity increased.

It may be further objected that there have been greater and lesser lights in science and in such knowledge as fits man to govern nature, throughout the darkness of past ages; that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle lived in Greece from four and a half to three and a half centuries before Christ; and that in the middle ages there was light in Arabia while darkness overspread European Christendom. But 1st, it will be found on examination that the speculations of these sages were rather proofs of their distinguished genius and untiring industry, than any

real contributions to the stock of human knowledge. They did little indeed in aid of man's triumphs over material existences—little to help him to exercise a wise dominion over the earth. Then 2nd, there is sufficient ground to believe that these men were indebted for their most valuable thoughts to Divine revelation. The Jewish nation, as the repository of the Sacred Oracles, had not lived in vain. They had already been brought into contact with surrounding nations, and there can be no doubt that the facts of the Pentateuch, the Psalmody of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, and the Prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, had sent forth at least some rays of light—perhaps many—into regions in which the manuscripts had no entrance. These great thoughts could be conveyed and carried afar without the aid of the written roll. 3rd. The book of Job is obviously an exhibition of patriarchism, wherein we see great enlightenment on many points of science, regarding which, in after and darker ages, there was much confusion and gloom. Traditionary rays from this source would shine for ages from one superior mind to another, while the masses, being sunk in ignorance, would lose all trace of them. It will be understood that when we speak of Christianity as the great restorer, the whole of Divine Revelation and the several economies of religion are included.

There is further confirmation of the general course of thought before us in the fact that man's triumphs and dominion are most striking in those communities wherein there is an open Bible, an unsuperstitious Evangelism, and a robust, manly piety. Precisely where Christianity appears in her true simplicity and purity, not as an appendage to a hierarchy, or a name for semi-infidelity, but as an earnest life for God and truth and for the sal-

vation of men, have we the great benefit of an increasing dominion of the spiritual over the material. It is not meant that every scientific man is a devout believer, nor that the men who apply the discoveries of science to the various arts of life are all new creatures in Christ Jesus; but it is meant that there is a mighty pervading influence emanating from any large amount of this character in the community, which proves a great stirrer-up of faculties, an awakening of dormant aspirations, a release from the dominion of the flesh, and, in fine, a restorer of man's government over the earth.

In conclusion, we note three points that may be inferred from this discussion :

1. *Our indebtedness to God for salvation is unspeakable.*

It is for both worlds — the present and the future. How greatly it blesses man on earth! Not only does it console him in trouble and strengthen his moral weakness, but it also elevates and ennobles him. This dominion over the creature which it restores ever greatens him, placing in his hands instruments with which to glorify God and to promote the weal of his fellow-men. Moreover the real acquisitions of mind and heart under Divine teaching on earth, are for eternity. They are never, never lost! They are the start-point of a progress which is endless. How can men refuse to avail themselves of this great salvation! How greatly are they their own enemies who so neglect! and how ungrateful and insulting to the ever-blessed God is such neglect!

2. *The Religion of the Bible is not the thing which many suppose.*

It is not ignorance, or superstition, or monkery, or a foe to knowledge, or a friend of mystery and darkness.

No ; it is an enlightened, vigorous, manly life, sanctified by the word of God, the faith of Christ, and loving, trusting prayer. It is favourable to all honest investigation ; it smiles on efforts to obtain knowledge ; it regulates the application of such knowledge ; and, in fine, is a great practical good, in harmony with all our interests for time and for eternity.

3. *The propagation of the Gospel is the true civilizing agency.*

It involves not merely a message of God's love to sinners exhibited in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a command to repent, believe, and live ; but it meddles with every relation of life,—it acts upon all the interests of man,—it deals with every question by which those interests are effected ; and therefore, as facts abundantly show, it transforms communities from lazy, filthy savages, into industrious and enlightened communities. It is well that the Missionary should be a well-informed man of enterprize and skill. It is appropriate that in the evangelization of Central Africa the natives should be induced to cultivate the cotton-plant, and other valuable articles of commerce. Religion points to this course. But they will never do this to any purpose as heathen ; the earth's people must have the Gospel in order to a restoration of their authority over it. In proportion to their evangelical enlightenment will they be found subduing the earth and exercising over it their chartered dominion.

