BACCALAUREATE SERMON DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, AT THE CLOSE OF THE COLLEGIATE YEAR 1838-9 TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE

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Baccalaureate Sermon Delivered in the Chapel Wesleyan University, at the close of the collegiate year 1838-9 to the candidates for the bachelor's degree by D. D. Whedon

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D. D. WHEDON

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BACCALAUREATE SERMON:

DELIVERED

IN THE

CHAPEL OF THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,

AT THE CLOSE OF THE

COLLEGIATE YEAR, 1838—9

TO THE

CANDIDATES

FOR THE

BACHELOR'S DEGREE.

BY REV. D. D. WHEDON, A. M.,
PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE IN THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

MIDDLETOWN:
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1839.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, JULY 8, 1839.

REV. PROFESSOR WHEDON—
Dear Sir,

At a meeting of the Graduating Class, held this morning, the undersigned were appointed a Committee, to tender to you the thanks of the Class for your very able and interesting Discourse of last evening, and to request a copy for publication. By complying with this request, you will highly gratify the Class as well as the Students generally, and confer a favor upon the public.

Very respectfully yours,

JONATHAN COE,
ABIEL CONVERSE,
MEAD HOLMES.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, JULY 8, 1839.

Messrs. Jonathan Coe, Abiel Converse, Mead Holmes,
Committee of the Graduating Class.

MY DEAR SIRS—

I have received with gratified feeling, through you, the testimonial of your Class, of their kind estimate of my last evening's Address and their approval of its principles. In complying with your request for its publication, permit me to avail myself of this probably final opportunity of expressing to the Class, my cordial interest for, and sympathy with them, at this momentous period of their lives. Be assured, young gentlemen, both for yourselves and for them, of my kindest recollections of the past, and my ardent prayers for your earthly prosperity and eternal happiness.

Very truly yours,

D. D. WHEDON.

SERMON.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.
Matt. v, 8.

It is a frequent incident in the gorgeous and sometimes instructive fictions of the middle ages, that when a young candidate for earthly fortunes goes forth to seek his future destinies, the patron of his previous years binds, perhaps, about his neck, some *amulet*, charmed with a secret spell, mysteriously connected with supernatural agencies, and holding a mastering arbitration over the fates of the young adventurer. Were I to select for you, my young friends, to whom this evening I address a requested parting charge, not an amulet, touched with lunar influences over your coming vicissitudes, but—what were infinitely more valuable—a high, a holy, an eternal *principle*, pregnant with priceless truth and connected with immortal destinies; it should be a full appreciation, by deep experience of that blessedness above all other bliss—the blessedness pronounced by him who spake as never man spake, upon the genuinely pure in heart.

The imaginations even of grave commentators have glowed into an unwonted vividness, at the picture presented by the evangelic histories, of the primitive scene of the delivery of the Savior's sermon upon the mount of Beatitudes. From the gentle summit of that elevation, by this one transaction forever made a consecrated spot—situated in the midst of one of the most pictur-

esque countries upon creation's map—in the fresh morning of one of the balmiest of terrestrial climes, did the GREAT TEACHER, surrounded by the assembled multitudes, deliver to his μαθηται—*his pupils*—upon whom he was about to confer their collective Apostolic diploma, those lessons of spiritual wisdom, which he designed to promulgate through them, with a divine authority, to a listening world. In addressing you, our pupils, about to start forth into the wide world for the fulfillment of your probationary earthly mission, (for you, with every son of humanity, have your responsible life's mission,) what better can I do—what other dare I do, than sink myself from your view, and let the Great Original himself speak? Fancy's picture of the imparadised spot where Jesus preached, amid the surrounding sterility of the heaven cursed earth, cannot present a purer aspect than the moral freshness of that discourse itself amid the comparitive moral Zahara of this world's literature. Wearied and disgusted from the selfish agitations of worldly contests and ambitions, distrustful of the unauthoritative precepts and conjectural guessings of mere human philosophy, tired of the fitful, overstrained inspirations of the half frenzied spirit of profane genius, how recreating it is to turn to the calm simplicity of this one composition—this fresh, unmingled crystalline flow from the celestial fountains—this voice divine, like a strain of heaven-born music earthward straying—breathing the authority of a mild omnipotence through all its gentle syllables—beaming through its veil of human words the infinite majesty—the softened radiance of divinity.

Of this discourse as of all the teachings of our Savior and of his whole mission, the topics of our text,

viz. purity of heart and communion with the divinity, are the central and primary objects. In the views which it will be our purpose to present, we shall consider *purity of heart* in three respects: its intrinsic nature; its development in the formation of our principles; and its exhibition in practical action.

I. *Purity of heart;* they are sublime words; expressive of the height of moral and spiritual perfection. And it is before the very loftiness of their moral elevation, perhaps, that the mind stands aghast. In presenting them to you I almost hear you exclaim; "truly if this be the standard which you present us—to be at once perfectly good—your purpose defeats itself—you dismiss us with an admonition dishearteningly impracticable." Is it of any use to suggest, my friends, that in moral, as in intellectual advancement, all that man has done, man may do; nay, that goodness is that quality which heaven has placed peculiarly at our option? Fortunate life heaven has placed at the mercy of earthly vicissitudes; honorable life, at the decision of human opinion; happy life, beyond the reach, perhaps, of all attainment; but a good life—and how good a life we please, God has suspended upon the choice of our own responsible will. I have stood astonished at the sublime moral conception expressed by one of the loftiest and purest of human spirits, the illustrious christian sage of Northampton, Jonathan Edwards, when he adopted this resolution, viz. that if it be supposable fact that but one absolute specimen and model of perfect human goodness is to exist in an age, he would strive to act as if it were his dispensation, to be in his age that model. How does the lofty height of such a purpose