

**DISCOURSES:
DOCTRINAL
AND PRACTICAL**

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Discourses: doctrinal and practical by Jonathan Cogswell

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JONATHAN COGSWELL

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BY

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P R E F A C E .



The author of the following Discourses, feeling deeply interested in the religious welfare of our New States, and unable to visit them as a missionary, has prepared this volume to be presented by the Presbyterian Board, to such Christian families, as may be disposed to receive and read it, with his sincere desire and earnest prayer that it may in some degree aid in the promotion of the cause of truth.

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DISCOURSE I.



THE CHURCH THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Ye are the light of the world.—*MATT. v. 14.*

This address of Christ to his disciples was not intended for them alone, but for all Christians in all countries and in all succeeding ages of the world. Christ is himself in the highest sense the light of the world; for he is the head of the church, and all spiritual life and light are derived from him. Ministers of the gospel are with peculiar propriety denominated the light of the world, because they not only make known the will of God to the impenitent, but instruct and guide his professed friends. Communications made to them are intended for the benefit of all, with whom they are connected and for all among whom they labor. God speaks by them to his church and also to the world. And by them the wants of the church and the world are spread before him, whose goodness is infinite.

In the following discourse I shall endeavor,

I. To show in what sense the church is the light of the world.

II. To give Christians a view of their obligation to fill the world with light.

I. I am to show in what sense the church is the light of the world.

Christians are denominated the light of the world because their *lives* are illustrations of the doctrines of revelation and the precepts of the divine law.

In them as in a glass, the world may see how the truths and precepts of the gospel are understood, and what fruits they produce. It is indeed to be lamented that in too many instances it is hardly possible to perceive any difference between the conduct of professed believers and men of the world. Did we not know some to be members of the visible church; we should never from their conversation suspect them to be Christians. Such persons can hardly be considered lights in the world—much less safe lights. It is certainly dangerous to follow them. Men of the world will be more ready to embrace their errors than to imitate their virtues. They do not clearly point out the way to heaven. Many are misled by them, who desire an excuse for a life of transgression. Among real Christians there is a great diversity of character.

Some are greater and brighter lights than others. Such is the clear and powerful light of the most pious as to disturb and alarm those around them, who remain impenitent. Though this is not an age of violence, there are individuals, who possess a martyr's spirit. Such are some, who have gone to distant lands to spend their days among pagans. And such are some, who have gone to the remote parts of our own country to preach the gospel, where they have submitted to great hardships and privations. The sufferings of

our home missionaries are greater, it is believed, than those endured by our missionaries in foreign lands.

The time is coming when the distinction between the church and the world will be more clearly seen and more universally acknowledged. The time is coming, when every branch of the true church will be visible to every one, and when believers will enjoy a perpetual revival. When the Lord of glory will thus address the daughter of Zion. 'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah; comely as Jerusalem; terrible as an army with banners.

Though we discover different degrees of holiness in Christians, yet all, who are such in reality, do tremble at God's word and have respect to all his commandments. Their life is a life of faith, not that faith, which is produced by human reason, but which is wrought in the heart by the power of God.—Worldly men are not governed by the principles of Christianity; but by selfish considerations. The volume of revelation is the supreme law of the Christian.

Those, who have been most gay, when they become Christians, forsake places of amusement. They live in some degree as strangers and pilgrims in the world. True religion produces a great change in all, who embrace it. This change is most striking when it is effected in the young.

Behold a young man devoted to all the amusements of the gay and fashionable—profane and otherwise immoral—accustomed to make light of the gospel, the church and the most pious members. An arrow at length pierces his heart—he trembles—he cries, God be merciful to me a sinner. No sooner is he made a subject of grace than he bids farewell to all places of