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A SERIES

OF

TRACTS

ON THE

DOCTRINES, ORDER, AND POLITY

OF THE

✓
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

EMBRACING

SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

VOL. VII.

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LETTERS TO THE AGED.

LETTER I.

THE autumn of our life has actually arrived. The scenes of our youth have fled forever; and the feelings and hopes of that period have passed away also, or are greatly changed. When we take a retrospect of the past, several weighty reflections cannot but press upon our minds and sadden our hearts. How true do we now find that trite remark, that the longest life in the retrospect appears exceedingly short, though in prospect, the same period appeared almost interminable! Old age has come upon us, (though its approaches were very gradual,) by surprise; and even now, except when feeling something of the infirmities of age, or when viewing our altered image in the mirror, we are prone to forget that we are old; and often are impelled to undertake labours to which our strength is no longer competent. Truly our life of three-score, or more, appears like a dream, when we awake from sleep. And as the past years have passed so quickly, the few that remain will not be less rapid in their flight. Indeed, to the aged, except when they are suffering protracted pain, time appears shorter than it did when they were young. Thus at least it seems to the writer: the year, when its days and weeks and months are numbered, is as long as ever, but to our *sense*, it seems to grow shorter. We are less absorbed and interested in passing scenes than the young. Life has with us become a sober reality. The enchanting visions of a youthful imagination have now entirely vanished. But it brings a solemn and tenderly melancholy feeling over the minds of the aged,

to inquire for the friends and companions of their youth. How few of these can we now find upon earth! The ministers whose labours were made useful to us, and the very sound of whose voice was sweeter than the richest music, are now lying beneath the clods of the valley. The beloved friends with whom we were wont to take sweet counsel, and to whom we could confidently open our whole hearts, have been torn from our side. Many dear relatives, loved it may be as our own life, have slept the sleep of death. Time may have healed the painful wounds made by such bereavements, but their loss often leaves a chasm which can never be supplied; and, at any rate, a scar which we shall carry to the grave. There is one reflection connected with this subject still more sad; it is, that some in whom we once delighted, and in whom we reposed strong confidence, have turned aside from the ways of truth and righteousness in which they appeared to be walking, and though they may be still walking up and down upon the earth, are dead to us, and to all those interests, which once seemed to be common to them and us. And as to those who remain steadfast, and have continued their pilgrimage without turning aside into crooked ways, what a sad change has time made upon their persons! Where is the bloom of youth, the robust strength of manhood, the eye sparkling with intelligence, and the countenance beaming with animation? Alas! they are fled; and in their place we see the decrepid body, the sunken eye, the withered countenance, and the tottering gait. All are not equally changed by the ravages of time. Indeed, to some the access of gray hairs and old age brings an addition of comeliness. There is something peculiarly lovely, as well as venerable, in the silvery locks and placid countenance of a good old man. There is in his countenance a chastened expression of benignity and sobriety, which long experience alone can produce.

But the bitterest of all reflections to the aged is that of sins committed, duties omitted, time wasted, and opportunities of doing good neglected.—Reflections of this kind, at certain times, become insufferably painful.

And although we could not wish to go a second time through such a pilgrimage; yet we cannot but wish often that with our present views, and with the aids of experience, we could enjoy again the opportunities of usefulness which were suffered to pass without improvement. But even in these painful regrets and this bitter repentance our deceitful hearts often impose upon us; and we give ourselves more credit for present good feelings than we deserve. For let us only ask ourselves, whether we now avail ourselves of all the advantages of our situation to do good. Are we not now guilty of as gross neglects, as when younger? The probability is, therefore, yea, the certainty, that if left to ourselves as much as we were, we should do no better, if we were permitted to live over our unprofitable lives a second time. But while we should lay aside all fruitless wishes, we ought certainly to reflect upon our sins and shortcomings, until our godly sorrow is so enkindled within us, as to work a repentance not to be repented of. We cannot atone for our sins by tears of penitence; for this we must have recourse to another fountain, even the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all unrighteousness; but the flow of ingenuous, godly sorrow has a tendency to soften and purify the heart; and our iniquities are rendered by this means odious; so that while we are penetrated with unfeigned gratitude to God for pardoning mercy, we are rendered more watchful against our besetting sins, and made to walk more tenderly and circumspectly, and more humbly too; for I have thought, that the reason why a covenant-keeping God sometimes permits his children to fall into shameful acts of transgression, is because nothing else but such a sight of themselves as these falls exhibit, would sufficiently humble their proud hearts. The recollection of such sins serves all their life long to convince them that they ought to place themselves among the "chief of sinners" and "the least of saints." And this view of our exceeding depravity of heart, serves to show us the faithfulness and loving kindness of God in the strongest light. According to that which he speaks in Ezek. ch. xvi. 62, 63, "And I will establish my

covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

My aged friends, permit me to counsel you not to give way to despondency, and unprofitable repining at the course of past events. Trust in the Lord, and encourage your hearts to hope in his mercy and faithfulness. Your afflictions may have been many and sore, and your present circumstances may be embarrassing, and your prospects for the future, gloomy. Providence may seem to have set you up as a mark for the arrows of adversity. Stroke upon stroke has been experienced. Billow after billow has gone over you, and almost overwhelmed you. Truly the time has come, when you can say, "My joys are gone." But though friends have been snatched from you, or have proved unfaithful—though children, once your hope and joy are numbered with the dead, or what is far worse, profligate or ungrateful ; though your property has wasted away, or your riches suddenly taken wings and flown like the eagle to heaven ; though bodily diseases and pain distress you ; still trust in the divine promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Though friends die, God forever liveth. Though your earthly comforts and supports are gone, you are heir to an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that never fadeth away." Take for your example the prophet Habakkuk, who triumphantly declares, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Learn to live by faith : no class of people need the supports of faith and hope more than the aged.—And not only believe, but act. "Work while it is called to-day." "To do good, and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased." Your work is never ended while you are in the body. It

is a sad mistake for aged persons to relinquish their usual pursuits, and resign every thing into the hands of their children. Many have dated their distressing melancholy from such a false step. The mind long accustomed to activity is miserable in a state of stagnation; or rather having lost its usual nutriment, it turns and preys upon itself. Lighten your burdens, but do not give up business or study, or whatever you have been accustomed to pursue. Imbecility and dotage are also prevented or postponed, or mitigated, by constant exercise of the mind. Keep also as much of your property if you have any, in your own hand, as is necessary for your own support, and make not yourselves dependent on the most affectionate and obedient children. They will be more affectionate and more respectful when you are not dependent. Dismiss corroding cares and anxieties about what you shall do to get a living. How strange it is, that the nearer men come to the end of their journey, the greater concern they feel as to the means of future subsistence! God's hand will provide. His command to us is, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

LETTER II.

As an aged man, I would say to my fellow-pilgrims who are also in this advanced stage of the journey of life, ENDEAVOUR TO BE USEFUL, as long as you are continued upon earth. We are, it is true, subject to many peculiar infirmities, both of body and mind, to bear up under which requires much exertion, and no small share of divine assistance; but still we have some advantages not possessed by the young. We

have received important lessons from experience, which, if they have been rightly improved, are of inestimable value. The book of divine providence, which is in a great measure sealed to them, has been unfolded to us. We can look back and contemplate all the way along which the Lord has led us.—We can now see the wise design of our Father, in many events, which, at the time, were dark and mysterious. The knowledge to be derived from studying the book of God's providence, cannot be communicated to another; the lessons are like the name upon the white stone, which none can read but he that has it. The successive events of our lives we can make known, but the connexion which these events have with our character, our sins, and our prayers, can be fully understood only by ourselves. He who neglects to study the pages of this book, deprives himself of one most important means of improvement; yet many professors of religion appear to pay little or no attention to the providence of God, in relation to themselves. If they meet with some severe judgment, or some great deliverance, their attention is arrested, and they acknowledge the hand of God in the dispensation; but as to the succession of ordinary events, they seem to have no practical belief that they are ordered by divine providence, or have any important relation to their duty or interest. I would affectionately entreat my aged brethren to make the dealings of God's providence towards themselves, a subject of careful study. There is within our reach, except in the Bible, no source of instruction more important. And to aid you in this business, permit me to recommend to your careful perusal, two little volumes on Providence, which I have found useful and comfortable to myself. The first is, Flavel's "Mystery of Providence Opened;" and the other is, Boston's "Crook in the Lot." These excellent treatises may be read over and over again with profit. Perhaps, the best method of studying such books is, not to read the whole at once, or in a short time, but to peruse a few paragraphs at a time, and then reflect upon the subject, and make application of what we

read to our own case. And while I am recommending works on this subject, I ought not to omit mentioning Charnock's treatise on "Providence." I confess I am not so familiar with this as the treatises before mentioned, but I have found his other writings, especially those on the Divine Attributes, so surpassing in excellence, that I feel willing to recommend any thing which ever proceeded from his pen.

I began this letter with an exhortation, to endeavour to be useful, while you live. To comply with this, you should, in the first place, guard vigilantly against those faults and foibles, into which old people are apt to fall. We must be careful not to mistake moroseness for seriousness, austerity for gravity, or discontent with our condition, for deadness to the world.

Why should the aged be more peevish and morose than others? If they are pious, there can be no good reason for it; but it is not difficult to account for the *fact*. In the decline of life a gradual change takes place in our physical system, by which the mind is considerably affected; and often positive disease is added to this natural change. The nervous system is debilitated and shattered; and in consequence, the spirits are apt to sink, or to become irregular. To these may be added, the afflictions and disappointments which most experience in the course of a long life, by which the temper is apt to be soured. And when men, by reason of the decay of mind and body, become disqualified for the same active services which they were long accustomed to perform, and these fall into the hands of juniors, whom they knew when children, it is very natural to feel, as if the world was turning round—as if every thing was going wrong. Old men have always been wont to laud the times long past, when they were young, and to censure all the innovations which have come in since. Sometimes, also, the aged experience a neglect from the young, and even a want of respect from their own children, which is exceedingly mortifying, and tends much to foster that acerbity of temper so frequently found in the aged. But although these and other similar things

may be truly pleaded in extenuation of the fault under consideration; yet they do by no means amount to an apology which exculpates us from blame. And that old age is not necessarily accompanied by these unamiable traits of character is proved by many happy examples. Some aged persons exhibit an uniform cheerfulness and serenity of mind; and the remarkable fact has been recorded in regard to a few, that a naturally irritable temper has been softened and mellowed, instead of being exacerbated by old age. If I recollect rightly, this is mentioned as true in relation to the Rev. Dr. Rodgers of New York, by his biographer, my respected colleague, the Rev. Dr. Miller. The late venerable Dr. Livingston of the Dutch Reformed Church, President of their College and Seminary, was distinguished by uniform cheerfulness to a very advanced age; and his cordial and affectionate manners were remarked and felt by all who approached him. The Rev. John Newton, of London, seems to have possessed, with large measures of divine grace, a very happy physical temperament. It is delightful to contemplate the old age of such a man. And while I am mentioning recorded examples of a temper in old age deserving of imitation, I would recall to the remembrance of my readers the case of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Scott, who, at a period of life when most men relinquish all severe labour, actually undertook to learn the Arabic language, that he might be able to give instruction to the missionaries going to the East. It has often been noticed, that piety is apt to decline with the decline of manly vigour. If this be really a common event, it is exceedingly to be deplored. But, perhaps, it is more in appearance than reality. It requires much stronger faith, and feelings of warmer piety to enable an old man to go forward in his course with zeal and alacrity, than for a young man, who is buoyed up and borne along by the vigour of youthful passions, to do the same. But I rejoice to know, that piety does not always even appear to grow cold, by the descent into the vale of years. In some Christians it evidently goes on advancing; and their growth in grace is much more

rapid in this period of life, than any other. As they approach nearer to heaven, their hearts and their conversation are more in heaven. O that it might be thus with us all! As these letters are intended also for my aged friends of the female sex, I would recommend to their notice and imitation the old age of Mrs. Hannah More. From her first appearance as a Christian, she seems to have gone on advancing in evangelical knowledge, and ardent piety, until she was completely superannuated. And even then, she lost nothing of the respect and affection, which by her pious and benevolent labours she had gained; for still, when her memory was so impaired that she did not remember the books she had written, the elevation of her piety and the enlargement of her benevolence remained unimpaired. And it is truly a delightful thought that when in the wreck of mind, the whole cargo of knowledge seems to be lost, and parents no longer recognize their own children, religion, where it was possessed, still remains. **JESUS CHRIST IS NEVER FORGOTTEN.** Pious sentiments are never obliterated. Cicero in his beautiful little treatise on Old Age, in which many judicious and pleasing sentiments are expressed, when speaking of the decay of the memory, says, that he never heard of a miser forgetting the place where he had buried his treasure. What the mind prizes most is longest retained in memory. It is often remarked, and justly, 'how beautiful does unaffected piety appear in youth!' But it may as truly be said, 'how amiable and venerable is exalted piety in old age!'

It has been said that avarice is peculiarly the sin of age: we often hear of an old, but scarcely ever of a young miser. This may be true in regard to those who have cherished the love of the world all their lives. They will hug their treasures with a closer grasp, and their affections will be more concentrated on them, when other objects are removed; but this vice does not originate in old age, it is only the mature fruit of the seed planted in early life; and though it becomes deeply radicated in old age, it is not now so much the desire of acquiring wealth, as of holding fast what they

have got. The folly of the miser who hoards his money without a thought of using it, is easily shown, and has often been ridiculed. But the truth is, that all ardent pursuit of worldly objects beyond what is necessary for the real wants of nature, might be demonstrated to be equally absurd. But whatever men of the world may do, let not Christians dishonour their holy profession by an inordinate love of the world. Especially, let not the aged professor bring into doubt the sincerity of his religion, by manifesting a covetous disposition. "Take heed," said the Great Teacher, "and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Many begin the world with little, and the claims of an increasing family render it necessary to exercise much diligence and economy to make a living; but thus it often happens that an avaricious disposition under the semblance of necessity, and even of duty, strikes its roots deep into the soul, ere the man is aware of any danger. Indeed, it is almost impossible to convince a man of the sin of covetousness, while he avoids open acts of injustice or fraud. Dear friends, it is time for many of you to give up the further pursuit of wealth; unless your object is to acquire the means of doing good. But beware of the deceitfulness of the heart. Covetousness will allow you to *promise* such an appropriation of your gains. But put yourselves to the test by a simple experiment. Ask yourselves whether you are now willing to make that use of the property which God has given you, that his honour and the advancement of Christ's kingdom require. If you indeed find in yourself that disposition to consecrate all that you have to the glory of God, then it may be lawful to go on to acquire further means of usefulness. But whatever you now possess, or may hereafter acquire of this world's goods, for your soul's sake, set not your affections on these perishable things. Be not proud of your wealth. Neglect not while you live, to do good and communicate. Remember that you are but the steward of the wealth which you possess, and therefore it is required

of you to be faithful in the distribution of what is put into your hands. If you have tried the plan of parsimony, lest you should lessen your estate, now try the plan of wise liberality, and see whether that saying of Christ is not verified by experience, that "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Whether in the former periods of our lives, we have had prosperity or have passed through the deep waters of affliction, it is nearly certain that in our old age we shall feel the strokes of adversity. If our friends have been preserved in life thus far, yet we know they must all die. If hitherto we have enjoyed uninterrupted health, yet now we must expect to encounter pain and disease.—Old age itself may be called the common disease of our nature, which can only be escaped by death. Mr. Newton, in one of his last letters, says that he had but one disease, but that was incurable, which was old age. Then, my dear friends, let us set an example of patience and cheerful resignation under the afflictions which may be laid upon us. The passive virtues are more difficult to be exercised than the active; and God is perhaps more honoured by quiet submission to his will under sufferings, than by the greatest achievements of zeal and exertion. But let us never forget that we have not the least strength in ourselves. We are dependent on the grace of God for every good thought and desire. But if we trust in Him we shall never be ashamed.



LETTER III.

I HAVE no doubt that you have remarked with surprise, that the impression of the reality and importance of eternal things is not increased by the nearness of your approach to the end of your course. Time glides insensibly away, and it is with us in this respect, as in relation to the globe on which we reside. While other

things appear to be in motion, our feeling is that we are stationary. The mere circumstance of being old seems to affect no one with a more lively concern about the salvation of the soul.—None appear to be more blind and stupid in regard to religious matters, than many who are tottering on the brink of the grave. This, indeed, is so commonly the fact, with those who have grown old without religion, that very little hope is entertained of the conversion of the aged, who have from their youth enjoyed the means of grace. And it is also a fact, that real Christians are not rendered more deeply sensible of the awful importance of eternal things, by becoming old and infirm. The truth is, that nothing but an increase of faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit, will be effectual to prepare us for that change which we know is rapidly approaching. Counsels and exhortations, however, are not to be neglected, as God is pleased to work by means. I have, therefore, undertaken to address to you such considerations as occur to me. Having already spoken of the infirmities and sins which are apt to cleave to us in advanced years, I propose in this letter, to inquire what are the peculiar duties incumbent on the aged. What would the Lord have us to do?—for undoubtedly, we are not privileged to fold our hands, and sit down in idleness, as if our work was ended. Indeed, it would be no privilege to be exempt from all occupation. Such a life to the aged or the young, must be a life of misery; for man never was made to be idle, and his happiness is intimately connected with activity. We may be no longer qualified for those labours which require much bodily strength—we may, indeed, be so debilitated or crippled by disease, that we can scarcely move our crazy frame—and some among us may be vexed with excruciating pain—yet still we have a work to perform for God, and for our generation. If we cannot use our hands and feet, so as to be useful in the labours which we were wont to perform, yet we may employ our tongues to speak the praises of our God and Saviour. We may drop a word of counsel to those around us; and especially, the aged owe a duty to the young, to whom

they may have access, and who are related to them. Every aged Christian must have acquired much knowledge from experience, which he should be ready to communicate as far as it is practicable. Why is it, my dear friends, that we suffer so many opportunities of usefulness to pass without improvement? Why are we so often silent, when the suggestions of our own conscience urge us to speak something for God? How is it, that we consume hours in unprofitable talk, and seldom attempt to say any thing which can profit the hearers? We may plead inability—we may excuse ourselves, because we are unlearned and not able to speak eloquently and correctly—but let us be honest; is not the true reason because our own hearts are so little affected with these things? We cannot consent to play the hypocrite, by uttering sentiments which we do not feel; and we have often been disgusted with the attempts of others, who, in a cold and constrained manner, have introduced religious conversation. It is easy to see where the fault lies; it is in the state of our own hearts. Let us never rest, then, until we find ourselves in a better state of mind. Let us get our hearts habitually under the influence of divine things, and then conversation on this subject, will be as easy as on any other. “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.” There are companies and occasions, when to obtrude remarks on religion, would be unseasonable and imprudent; for we must not cast our pearls before swine: but, in most cases, an aged person may give utterance to seasonable and solemn truths, without offence—and very often a word spoken in season, has been the means of saving a soul; and the advice and exhortation of parents and pious friends, are remembered and prove salutary, after their heads are laid low under the clods of the valley.

I have often heard aged persons, incapable any longer of active service, express surprise that their unprofitable lives were so long protracted; while the young and laborious servants of God were cut off in the midst of their years. The dispensations of God are indeed inscrutable—“his ways are past finding out”—and we

are too little acquainted with his counsels, to sit in judgment on them. But I would say to those who think that they can be of no further use in the world, that they do not form a just estimate of the nature of the service which God requires, and by which he is glorified by his creatures upon earth. All true obedience originates in the heart, and consists essentially of the affections of the heart: external duties are to be performed, but are only holy as connected with holy motives. The aged man may serve God, therefore, as sincerely and fervently as any others, if only the heart be right in the sight of God. He can glorify God in his spirit, by thinking affectionately of his glorious name, by contemplating his divine attributes, and by exercising love and gratitude towards him.—His devotion might thus approach more nearly to our conceptions of the services and exercises of the saints in heaven. But it may be that the lives of some are lengthened out, that they may offer up many prayers for the church and for the world; for, after all the activity and bustle and zeal apparent, there is no service which can be performed by mortals, so effectual as prayer.—Here there is a work to which the aged may be devoted. While Joshua and the men of war contend with the Amalekites in the battle, Moses assists by lifting up his hands in prayer; and when he is, through fatigue, no longer able to hold them up, he is assisted by Aaron on one side, and Hur on the other. If you cannot preach, you can, by prayer, hold up the hands of those who do. You can follow the missionary, who leaves all to go and labour in heathen lands, with your daily and fervent prayers. It is not in vain for you to live, while you have access to a throne of grace. Before the advent of Christ, there were some aged persons who seem to have been preserved in life, that they might pray for this event, and that they might enjoy the pleasure of seeing the answer of their prayers, and embracing Him in their arms, whom they had so often embraced by faith. While all around was spiritual death and desolation, and corruption and error had infected all classes, from the priesthood downward,

there was a little band who had taken up their residence in the temple, or often frequented this holy place, who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. Two of these were Simeon and Anna; but there were others of the same character; for we read that this very aged and pious widow, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers, night and day, "spake of Christ after she had seen him, *to all them who looked for redemption in Israel.*" The darker the times, the more closely do the truly pious adhere to each other. This little knot of praying people knew each other, and no doubt spake often one to another; and in this case, the Lord hearkened and heard; for the object of their desires and prayers was given to them. Was the life of Anna an unprofitable life, although she never left the temple, and did nothing but fast and pray? Was Simeon a useless member of the church, because he was probably too old for labour? The truth was—and the same is often verified—that the true church of God was at this time confined to a few pious souls; while the priests and the scribes and the rulers, had neither part nor lot in the matter. As God preserved Simeon, according to a promise made to him, until he saw the Lord's Christ, so he may be lengthening out the lives of some of you, my aged brethren, until you may have the opportunity of seeing the salvation of Israel come out of Zion. Do you not wish to be witnesses of the rise and glory of the church? Pray then incessantly for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. Consider it as your chief business, to pray that the kingdom of God may come.—What though the signs of the times be discouraging—what though you live in troublous times—what though the church may be shaken, and the prospects of her increase be dark, yet remember that she is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. The vessel which carries Christ, though it be buffeted by storms, is in no danger of being wrecked. But to govern and direct does not belong to you; your duty is to pray—to pray without ceasing—to wrestle with the angel

of the covenant, and not to let him go until he bless you. Give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth. You cannot offend by importunity, but by this you will be sure to prevail; for "will not God hear his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?"—Therefore, never hold your peace, but as long as you live intercede with him to fulfil his gracious promises, and to cause the earth to be filled with the knowledge of himself as the waters cover the sea, when his people shall be all righteous, and there shall be no need any longer for any one to say to his neighbour, Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

Thanksgiving is also a duty peculiarly incumbent on the aged. In the providence of God you are spared, whilst most of your coevals have been cut off in the midst of their career. Some of you have enjoyed almost uninterrupted prosperity. When you consider the dispensations of God's providence towards you, in the time and place and circumstances of your birth, in giving you pious and intelligent parents, who took care of your health and education, and in following you with goodness and mercy all the days of your life; giving you kind friends, faithful teachers, health and reason, together with abundant religious privileges, how thankful ought you to be! But that which above all other things enhances your obligations to gratitude is, that in his own good time He effectually called you from the devious paths of iniquity, and adopted you as a child into his own household and family, and perhaps has made you the instrument of much good to others; if not on a large scale, yet in your own family, and in the church of which you are a member. If now, to all these blessings, he has given you pious children, who promise, when you are gone, more than to supply your place in society; or even if they have been preserved from infidelity and disgraceful immoralities, and are disposed to pay a serious attention to the preaching of the gospel, no words can express your obligations to give thanks unto the Lord, and continu-

ally to praise his name, whose mercy endureth forever and ever. "Let us, therefore, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually—that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

LETTER IV.

THERE is one remaining subject, my dear friends, to which I wish to call your attention. I refer to the solemn event of our departure out of life. Whatever may be uncertain in the future, concerning this there cannot exist the shadow of a doubt,—“It is appointed unto men once to die.” “I know that thou wilt bring me to the house appointed for all living.” “The grave is mine house.” But we do not need the voice of revelation to assure us of our mortality: the evidence is daily before our eyes. Hundreds of our race close their eyes in death every day. The grave is never satisfied; nor says, It is enough. Of the thousands of millions who have inhabited this globe, no more than two have escaped the dissolution of the body. And we are as certain as we can be of any thing, that all future generations shall go the same way, until Christ shall suddenly make his glorious appearance, coming in the clouds of heaven, with all his mighty angels. The men who shall then be found upon the earth shall not die, but they shall undergo a transformation equivalent to the death and resurrection of the body. “Behold,” says Paul, “I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound.” If then the second coming of Christ should occur, before our departure from life, we should, indeed, escape a literal death; but we can scarcely cherish the faintest hope of this kind. Prophecy leads us to believe, that many ages of the world are still future, and that the most

glorious period of the church is to come; when the gospel shall not only be preached to all nations, but shall be embraced by all; "when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea."

DEATH, when viewed merely by the light of nature, is truly an appalling event. It is commonly preceded by disease, or the decrepitude of old age. The separation between the soul and body is usually accompanied with a convulsive struggle, and the appearance of extreme agony; so that "the pangs of death," and "the agonies of death," are familiar phrases among all people. It is manifestly an unnatural event; that is, these constituent parts of human nature do not seem willing to part, but the severance of the one from the other is brought about by the operation of some violent cause. That the soul instinctively and strongly cleaves to its tenement as long as it can, and by every possible means resists the separation, requires no proof. That in some instances this adherence to life is counteracted, so that persons voluntarily put an end to this union of soul and body, or desire to leave the body, furnishes no evidence to the contrary: it only shows that it is possible for causes to be put into operation which are even stronger than our attachment to this life. Besides the pains and agonies of dissolution, there are other circumstances which render death an object abhorrent to human feelings. It is a forcible and everlasting separation from all persons and things with which we have been conversant on earth. In it, we take a final leave of our dearest friends and beloved relatives, dear to our hearts as our own lives. Husbands are divorced from their wives; parents separated from their children; brothers and sisters must part; friends—who often stick closer than brothers—here have the tenderest bonds sundered. The scenes to which we have long been accustomed; the houses in which we have long dwelt; the churches where we have met the solemn assembly of God's people, must all be left behind. The old man's arm-chair is left vacant; his place in the house of God is empty; the social circle of which

he formed a part is broken; and the work which he was accustomed to perform stands still, or falls into other hands. And he who departs, leaving behind him numerous attached friends, cannot avoid the foresight of the deep affliction. Already, before his eyes are closed, he sees the mournful group crowding around his dying bed, to catch the last look of affection,—to hear the last broken tones of a voice soon to be silent in death. The heart-breaking and tears of affectionate relatives often form one of the most painful circumstances attending the death of a good man. He might well express his feelings in the language of Paul, on another occasion: “What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?” But if the dearest friends which the dying man has, attempt to save themselves and him from the almost intolerable pang of separation, by withdrawing from the mournful scene; this, in a very small degree, if at all, mitigates the dreaded pang. The imagination often paints the scene in more vivid colours than the reality. When the husband gasping for his last breath, observes the absence of the beloved partner of his joys and sorrows, he knows that she is gone into some secret chamber “to weep there.” And she cannot withdraw into any recess so secluded, as not to seem to hear the deep-drawn sighs and heavy groans, to see the ghastly looks and contortions of him on whom all her earthly reliance has been long placed. I would say then, take her not away from the bed-side of the dying husband. Let her hold his trembling, cold hand to the last. Let him have the comfort of casting his last look on the object of his tenderest affections. The Rev. Samuel Davies—a name so deservedly loved and revered in Virginia—has a poem, in which he describes the feelings of a husband and wife, tenderly attached, in the prospect of the dissolution of either first. But there is not much to choose between the two cases, as far as relates to the parting scene. Those, however, who are left behind are most deserving of compassion. They *who die in the Lord* are at once blessed, because they rest from their labours; but they who survive are often burdened with sorrow, and

with a desolate heart go mourning all the day, enveloped in the sombre weeds of grief, and their heads hang down as the bulrush. It seems to me, however, that the mourning on account of the decease of pious friends, ought to be very moderate, and our tears soon dried up. What better can we ask for our friends, than that they might be safely lodged in the bosom of Abraham; where they will enjoy to the full such "good things" as they could never hope to enjoy in this world? There is, however, one case of the death of dear relatives, to which the aged especially are liable, in which there is but one topic of consolation; that is, the departure from life of those in whose end there is no ground for scriptural hope. At the prospect of this judgment my soul has often trembled. May a merciful God avert it from every pious parent! If we were persuaded that we had uniformly done our duty towards our deceased friends, the stroke would not be so heavy; but when remorse for unfaithfulness mingles its bitter streams with the sorrow occasioned by bereavement, the cup must be bitter beyond conception. On this subject, however, I have met, among professing Christians, with what I consider a fault on both extremes. A venerable clergyman, who had lost a beloved son, who never gave, as far as known, any evidence of genuine repentance or faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, was unable to bear up under the reflection that his dear child was in a state of hopeless misery; he therefore sought relief to his agonized mind, by cherishing an error contrary to the analogy of his whole system of theology. He said to me, I cannot bring myself to think that a moral and amiable person, brought up under the gospel, and assenting to its doctrines, will, by a gracious God, be made eternally miserable in hell, although he may not have experienced a change of heart. O sad necessity, which drives a good man to such a resource for support and comfort! But this is the practical belief of multitudes of professors. They hold the doctrine of regeneration and its necessity as a matter of creed and theory, but in fact, they believe otherwise. A gay and blooming young

lady, who probably had never spent one half hour in serious thought, was suddenly carried off by an acute disease, which was so rapid and violent in its progress, that little or no opportunity was afforded for conversation with the pastor or pious friends.—When some serious person lamented the unprepared state of the deceased, the suggestion was received in a Christian congregation and by nominal Christians with a sort of indignation; as though it was an evidence of uncharitable bigotry, to believe one of the plainest doctrines of the Bible.—The other extreme is—peremptorily deciding upon the case of those who die without having given evidence of a change of heart. This case I will also illustrate by an anecdote which I know to be true. The brother of a zealous preacher of the gospel came to his end suddenly by the starting of his horse, by which his brains were knocked out against a tree; and it was conjectured that the young man had been indulging too freely in the use of intoxicating liquor. When the brother above mentioned came to the house, where the corpse was laid out, he raised the covering from the face, and, after a solemn pause, said, with an audible voice, “There lies the senseless body, but the soul is burning in hell:” And this, too, when the room was full of people. The true doctrine on this subject is, that friends may indulge hope in relation to these deceased friends, as far as they can consistently with the truth of God; but let no one seek healing for his wounded spirit, by “denying the faith.” Even when there is no positive evidence of a change, we may resort to the possibility that it might have taken place in the last moments; for who has a right to set limits to the mercy of God, when he has not limited himself? There is great danger, however, of expressing opinions or hopes, which may lead careless sinners to indulge in carnal security. It is much better, in such cases, to be silent. Some ministers, whom I have known, have been so solicitous to keep sinners from delaying repentance, that they have inculcated the opinion, that a death-bed repentance is not only uncertain, but absolutely ineffectual, and that no hope can

be justly entertained for those who never repented until the last hour. It is true, that many who on a sick-bed appear penitent, when they recover, soon lose all their serious impressions, and return with renewed avidity to the pursuits of the world. Their repentance is thus proved to have been spurious. But every fit of fear, produced by the near prospect of death, ought not to be called repentance; or at any rate, *that* repentance which, in scripture, is connected with the pardon of sin—which is a real change of the views and tempers of the mind—by which a man becomes a new creature, old things having passed away, and all things having become new. All repentance on a death-bed is not, however, by these instances proved to be spurious, any more than all conversions of people in health are proved to be counterfeit—because a great many such are to be met with. I have seen cases of repentance on a death-bed, as satisfactory, and in which I had as much confidence as in any that I have known among those in health, prior to the evidence of a good life. And why should it be supposed that a gracious God will never manifest his power and grace in the conversion of a sinner on a sick-bed? If this should once be admitted as a principle, it would be worse than useless for a minister of the gospel, or any other pious person, to visit an unconverted sinner when on a sick-bed; or to give any answer to his most anxious inquiry, “What shall I do to be saved?” I recollect to have heard a preacher from the pulpit, solemnly aver that there was no instance in the Bible of the conversion of an aged sinner. This is another *ultra-ism*, which has no good foundation. One of the most remarkable cases of the conversion of an exceeding great sinner, recorded in the sacred Scriptures, is of an aged man. I refer to the late repentance of king Manasseh. There is no man, of whom mention is made in the sacred volume, to whom a worse character is given, as one that exceeded the worst of the heathen in his abominable idolatries:—“Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other.” It is true, it is

not expressly said, that his repentance occurred in his old age, but it may, with strong probability, be inferred from the history. (2 Chron. xxxiii.)

If, among my readers, there should be any aged persons who are still impenitent, I would earnestly and affectionately exhort them, not to despair of God's mercy; there still may be hope in their case. My dear fellow-sinners, there is nothing in God's word, which excludes you from salvation, unless you voluntarily and obstinately exclude yourselves, by a rejection of the overture of reconciliation. Christ says to you, as much as to others, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life."

I find that I shall be under the necessity of claiming the old man's privilege of rambling from one subject to another: and, in writing to the aged, I hope I shall be excused for my prolixity in this letter. I have not fulfilled my own purpose, either as to the subject matter or length; and the consequence will be the *infliction* of another epistle. But before I conclude this, I wish to say that death, viewed in the light of Scripture, exhibits a very different aspect from what it does when viewed by the light of nature; both as it relates to the sinner and the saint. In regard to the former, we are taught in the volume of truth, "that death was introduced by the transgression of man." The penalty of the original law given to man was, "In the day thou eatest thereof (that is, of the forbidden fruit) thou shalt surely die." And when man became guilty, the sentence was denounced, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"—the execution of which penalty has been going on from that day to this, sweeping off generation after generation, until almost every part of the earth is filled with dust which once constituted the bodies of men. Even reason, when soberly consulted, would indicate that death comes as the punishment of sin; for otherwise, the transition from one state of existence to another, would not, under the government of a good God, be attended with so much pain and fear. But, what reason discovers only in dim perspective, revelation writes as with a sunbeam:

“THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.” “AS BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN; SO DEATH HATH PASSED ON ALL MEN, FOR THAT ALL HAVE SINNED.”

On the other hand, true believers are now delivered from the curse of the law, and consequently from death, as it is a curse. We may say, therefore, that the righteous shall never taste death; for Christ, the Lord, hath solemnly averred, “If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.” Accordingly, the inspired writers of the New Testament, commonly speak of the decease of Christians as a “sleep.” “Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” And of Stephen, it is said, when he “kneeled down, and said with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, HE FELL ASLEEP.” But when the word *death* is retained, it must be understood to have a new sense in relation to the children of God. It is death despoiled of his sting. It is the outward appearance of death, while its nature is entirely changed—so changed, that the curse is converted into a blessing. That which is a rich gain cannot be a curse; but to the sincere follower of Christ, “TO DIE IS GAIN.” That which may be lawfully an object of ardent desire, cannot be of the nature of a penalty or curse; but Paul had a desire to depart and be with Christ, and the same desire has been felt by thousands since. But to cut the matter short, death is placed in the category of the richest blessings. “For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or DEATH, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.” The true Christian, then, has no reason to be appalled at the necessity of entering this darkly shaded valley. Dear friends, if we only approach, holding up the torch of revelation by faith, the dismal gloom which has gathered over the tomb will be immediately dissipated. Faith looks beyond this darkness and across this valley, and beholds a celestial city, the new Jerusalem. Though much indebted to John Bunyan,—one of the most fertile geniuses the world ever produced—I can-

not easily forgive him for making the passage over Jordan to Canaan so very difficult for Christian. If he had carried out the allegory, he would have turned the swelling waves backward, and have shewn a dry path across the stream; for no sooner had the priests, who carried the ark of the testimony, dipped their feet in the brim of the river than—"all the Israelites passed over on dry ground." But, after all, perhaps, the honest tinker drew his picture from the fact; for as Christians seldom enjoy in life the comfort provided for them, so it is analogous, that in death they should want that comfort to which in Christ they are entitled.



LETTER V.

CAN we do any thing to render our death—which cannot be far off—both safe and comfortable? No doubt, by God's assistance, we can do much to accomplish these desirable ends, if we will set about the work in good earnest. I know that there is a feeling of despondency habitually existing in the minds of some aged persons of serious disposition, which leads them to conclude, that if they are not now prepared to die, they never will be. And from all the acquaintance which I have had with professors of religion, I am constrained to think that, as their near approach to the grave does not increase their impressions of the importance of eternal realities, so old age has no tendency to render the evidences of their union with Christ more clear and satisfactory. You may frequently inquire of a dozen such professors in succession, whether they have obtained a comfortable assurance of the goodness of their spiritual condition, and the probability is, that four out of five, if not nine out of ten, will answer in the negative, and will express serious doubts whether they were ever the subjects of regenerating grace. It was not, I believe, always so with those who cordially received

the doctrines of grace, and rested their souls upon them. To say nothing about the joyful confidence and assured hope of the apostles and primitive Christians, the members of the first reformed churches seem to have derived from the pure doctrines of the Bible a high degree of peace and joy. The same was the fact among the pious Puritans of Old and New England; and the Presbyterians of Scotland, in the best and purest days of the Scottish church. The question has often occurred, why does the belief of these doctrines afford less comfort now, than in former times? It is not my purpose, at present, to attempt to account for this fact. I adduce it merely to show, that most professors among us, are not *actually* prepared for death. Even if their state should be one of safety, they cannot view their approaching end with confidence and comfort. And whilst their evidences of genuine piety are so dubious, they of course cannot know that they are in a safe condition. It is, then, of the utmost importance that all professors of the above description, and especially the aged, should be importunately urged "to give diligence to make their calling and election sure." I am aware that some Christians, who enjoy very comfortable evidences of being the adopted children of God, are not willing to profess that they have arrived at full assurance. They suppose that they who have attained to this high privilege are in a state of uninterrupted joy, and that no shadow of doubt ever passes over their minds. The truth is, they do possess a solid assurance, although their frames of mind are not always equally comfortable, and although the evidence is not so great that it cannot be increased. I recollect, when very young, to have heard a judicious minister conversing with an eminently pious old lady, who had belonged to the church under the care of the Rev. Samuel Davies, in the county of Hanover. In answer to some inquiry respecting the comfort which she enjoyed in the service of her Divine Master, she said, after expressing lively feelings of faith, penitence and gratitude, "but, my dear friend, I have never yet attained to the faith of assurance; all I can say is, that I have the faith of

reliance." "Well," said the minister, "if you know that you have the faith of reliance, that is assurance." The degrees of evidence possessed by different Christians, are various, from the feeblest hope up to strong confidence, and the clearness of the evidence to the same person varies exceedingly; but in general, there seems to be in our church a sad falling below *par* in respect to this matter. It has, however, often been correctly observed, that we are not to expect *dying grace*, before the dying hour arrives. God gives strength as we need it; and when the believer is called to severe trials, or to difficult duties, he commonly receives aid proportioned to the urgency of his wants, and is surprised to find himself held up by a power not his own. Thus we have often seen the sincere humble Christian, who, during life, was subject to bondage through fear of death, triumphing in the dying hour. This expectation of special aid ought to be encouraged. It is, indeed, a part of that preparation which we should make; and if we confidently rely on the great Shepherd to meet us, and comfort us, while walking through the valley and shadow of death, he will not disappoint us.

But, in dealing with professors troubled with doubts, we are too apt to proceed on the assumed principle, that notwithstanding their sad misgivings and fears, they are at bottom sincere Christians, and have the root of the matter in them; while in regard to many, this may be an entire mistake, and we are in danger of cherishing in them a fatal delusion. Here the skill and fidelity of the spiritual watchmen are put to the test; and while they should not deviate a hair's-breadth from the rule of the divine word, it is better that the pious Christian should suffer some unnecessary pain, than that the false professor should be bolstered up with delusive hopes. I must say, therefore, that the true reason why many professors have no comfortable evidence of their religion, is because they have none. They have never experienced the new birth; and being still dead in trespasses and sins, it is no wonder that that they cannot find in themselves what does not exist.

I abhor a censorious spirit, which, upon slight grounds, judges this and that professor to be graceless; but all my experience and observation lead me to believe that, in our day as well as in former times, the "foolish virgins" constitute a full moiety of the visible church. What I would urge, therefore, on you, my aged friends, and on myself, is a more serious, impartial, and thorough examination into the foundation of our hope of heaven, than perhaps we have ever yet made.—Let us go back to the commencement of our religious course, and see whether, in our present more mature judgment, we can conclude that we were then the subjects of a saving change. I do not ask you whether you had an increase of serious feelings, or whether your sympathies were strongly excited and experienced some change from a state of terror or distress to comfort; for all these things may be experienced, and have been experienced by unregenerate persons. Let us carefully inquire whether the habitual tenor of our lives has been such as to satisfy us that a new nature was received. If we have fallen into sin, have we deeply and sincerely repented of it? Have we wept bitterly for our sin, like Peter? or have we mourned in deep sorrow, like David? Not such repentance as some experience, who, after all their convictions and confessions, return again to the same course of iniquity. But, after all examinations of past experience, the main point is, what is the present, habitual state of our hearts? Do we now love God as his character is exhibited in his word? Do we hunger and thirst after holiness, or a complete conformity to the law of God? Would we be willing that that law should be relaxed in its demands to afford us some indulgence? Do we seek our chief happiness in the favour of God, and in communion with him in his word and ordinances? Is his glory uppermost in our desires, and do we sincerely wish and determine to do all that we can to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer? Do we sincerely love the people of God, of every sect and name, because they bear his image, and are the redeemed children of God? Again: what is the ground on which we expect the pardon of sin and

the favour of God? Is it because we are better than many others? Is it because we have had what we esteem great experiences? Is it on account of our moral demeanour, or charitable benefactions? Dare we trust in any measure to our own goodness and righteousness? If we build on any of these, or on any similar grounds, then are we on a sandy foundation, and all our towering hopes must fall. But, methinks, I hear the humble penitent saying, "all these things I count loss for Christ—I feel that I deserve to die—I never was more convinced of any thing, than that it would have been perfectly just for God to send me to hell. And now, all my trust and all my hope, if I know my own heart, is in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and in his perfect righteousness and intercession; and all my confidence of being able to serve God hereafter, or to persevere for a single day, is in the grace of the Holy Spirit. The whole evidence of Christian character may be reduced to two particulars—entire trust in Christ for justification, and a sincere and universal love of holiness, with a dependence on the Holy Spirit for its existence, continuance and increase. If, my friend, you have these evidences *now*, you need not perplex yourself by a multitude of scruples. You may dismiss your doubts. God's word will never deceive any who rely upon its guidance. You may not know the day nor even the year, when spiritual life commenced in your soul; and yet, if you now feel its warm pulsations—if you breathe its genuine aspirations—if your heart's treasures are in heaven, and if the cause of God is dearer to you than any other interest—if his people are dearer to you than any other people—if your most constant and supreme desire is to glorify God your Redeemer, whether by living or dying—then may you welcome death. He is no king of terrors to you. You may say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

Perhaps some of you are afraid of the pangs of death. You have heard of the convulsive struggle—the dying groans—the difficult breathing—and the ghastly countenance! Well, it must be confessed, the scene is appalling; but it is soon over, forever. I am of opinion,

however, that often, there is the appearance of dreadful suffering where the patient is unconscious of any very acute pain; and very frequently, the departure of the immortal spirit is, at the last, like falling into a gentle sleep. And not unfrequently, while the body is racked with pain, or with what would produce pain in other circumstances, the soul is so supported and comforted by the sweet peace of God poured into it, that the disorders and convulsions of the body are scarcely thought of. And in many instances, God takes his people away by a sudden stroke;—they know nothing about it, until they awake in heaven. O! what a transition! Or, if it be necessary to let in the light of glory gradually, God, who knows our constitution, will order all things well. But I would advise you to meditate much on death. Collect, and have in memory, a number of precious promises for the occasion. Put up many prayers for grace and strength for a dying hour. Beg an interest in the intercessions of your Christian friends. Keep your minds calm, and yield not to perturbing cares. Be found at your post, when the summons comes, with your loins girded and lights burning. Settle beforehand all your worldly affairs.

THE

DANGER OF SELF-DECEPTION.



THE professors of Christianity may be divided into three classes,—the sincere, the hypocritical, and the self-deceived. Of the second class there are very few. I have rarely met with them. It is not often that any one attains to such a pitch of audacious and disgusting wickedness, as to make, for some sinister purpose, a profession which at the time he knows to be false. But while there are few that are intentionally deceiving others, there are very many who are unconsciously deceiving themselves. Alarming consideration! To be self-deceived in a matter of such tremendous importance as the salvation of the immortal soul! To suppose that we are justified before God, while we are under the condemnation of his righteous law: that we are truly regenerated while we are still in an unconverted state; that we are the children of God while we are the children of the devil; and that we are traveling to heaven, while each day, as it passes, brings us nearer to the bottomless pit! The very possibility of such a case should rouse our lukewarm souls, excite all our fears, and put us upon the most cautious and diligent examination.

PROFESSION IS NOT POSSESSION.

This common, yea hackneyed, yet true and impressive sentiment, is thus put out by itself, in bold and prominent relief, that it may attract the reader's attention, and come upon his heart and conscience with all possible emphasis.

A church member is not necessarily a real Christian; and outward communion with the members is no certain proof of vital union with the Divine Head. It is to be feared that fatal mistakes are made by many on this momentous subject. Among those who pay little or no attention to religion, it is very commonly supposed, that dying is somehow or other to fit them for heaven; that some mysterious change is to pass upon them then, by which they shall be meetened for the kingdom of glory: as if death were a converting ordinance, instead of a mere physical change; a sacrament of grace, instead of a mere dissolution of our compound nature. Others attach the same mistaken notion to the act of uniting with a Christian church, making a profession of religion, and receiving the Lord's Supper, as if it were in some way or other to effect a change in them, and by a process of which they can form no definite idea, to make them true Christians. But there are others who, better taught, attach no such incorrect opinions to church fellowship; who admit the necessity of faith and regeneration as pre-requisites to communion, but who after all deceive themselves in the supposition that they possess those qualifications.

FIRST—I shall prove that such self-deception is not only possible, but frequent.

This is evident from the many warnings against it contained in the apostolic writings. "*Be not deceived,*" is an admonition thrice repeated by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians. Chapter iii. 16; vi. 9; xv. 33. How impressive is his language to the Galatians, "If any man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Galatians vi. 3. The apostle James follows up the same subject: "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James i. 16, 22. What solemn admonitions are in other places given on the work of self-scrutiny: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Let every man prove his own work." Gal. vi. 4. But what can equal the force and impressiveness of the apostle's language and caution in reference to himself? "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means after I

have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 27. If such a man, the greatest, the holiest, the most distinguished member, minister, and apostle of the Christian church, found it necessary to exercise such caution, what must be the need of it on our part!

The danger of self-deception is also apparent from the alarming declarations of Christ. In the parable of the sower, he divided the hearers of the word into four classes, of which one only is composed of sincere believers, although two at least out of the other three, are represented as receiving the word and professing it for a while. How solemn and awakening are his words in the sermon upon the mount: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 21, 23. These persons were not only professors, but of high-standing in the church; they were confident of their safety, yet they were lost; and there were *many* of them!!

Dwell upon the *facts* recorded in the New Testament—Judas, though he ended as a dissembling hypocrite, began in all probability as a self-deceived professor. One *apostle* out of twelve a false professor! What multitudes at one time followed Christ, and in some way believed on him, among whom were many rulers of the Jews; and yet so great was the number that afterwards abandoned their profession, that our Lord put this question to the twelve,—“Will *ye* also go away?” implying that the rest had nearly all left him. Peter speaks of some who after they had known the way of righteousness, had turned from the holy commandments delivered unto them. 2 Peter ii. 21: and John, in describing the case of some in his time, says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.” 1 John ii. 19. Let any one read attentively the addresses to the seven churches of Asia Minor, contained in the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse, and observe the description of those communities

given by one who could not err. They seem to have contained, at least some of them, a great portion of merely nominal Christians. Yet these were churches under the care of an apostle.

Does not our observation confirm the fact of the danger of self-deception? To say nothing of open apostates who turn back to sin, error, or the world, and who are cast out of the church, how many are there that still remain, who though their inconsistencies are not sufficiently gross to make them the subjects of discipline, too plainly indicate by their total want of all spirituality and earnestness of piety, that they have nothing of Christianity but the name! It is no violation of the law of charity to say that persons so worldly in their spirit, so unsanctified in their temper, so little interested by the concerns of Christ's kingdom, either in their own church or in the world at large, are making but an empty and heartless profession!

However painful, then, the fact may be, it is a fact that the danger of self-deception is alarmingly great.

SECONDLY—Let us now inquire into the *causes* of this delusion.

The first and chief is, mistaking the forms and restraint of a religious education, or a little temporary excitement of the feelings, for a real change of heart. Nothing short of this change is true piety. As partakers of a fallen and corrupt nature, we must be renewed, and not merely a little altered. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The imagination may be interested, the feelings may be moved, the conduct improved, and yet the heart remain unchanged. As long as this is the case, there is no abiding principle, no root of godliness in the soul. Everything but the new nature will subside; all will fall off but this. It is to be expected that under the exciting preaching of the present day many will be impressed, seem to be converted, and walk well for a time, who are not renewed. Their opinions are scriptural, their conduct is correct, and they are admitted into the church upon a profession of their faith: and there is no reason why they should not be. After a while the novelty of religion ceases, their affections grow cold, and although they do not, perhaps, become profligate, or leave the church, they settle down into a mere formal attendance upon the means of grace, and remain in this

miserable state, till death sends them into the eternal world.

The danger arises also from the present external peace and unmolested liberty of the church. In the primitive days of Christianity, and often since, the profession of religion was attended with imminent peril of goods, liberty, or life. Persecuting laws were in force against those who believed in Jesus, and confessed their faith. They had, indeed, to take up their cross, and it was through much tribulation they entered the kingdom of God. In such circumstances it might be imagined, no man would profess himself a Christian, who was not really one. We can suppose that a prison and a stake would be a sufficient check, not only upon hypocrisy, but upon mere nominal religion. But even this was not always effectual—self-deception existed even then. How much more likely is it that it should prevail now, when a profession of piety, so far from exposing us to scorn, contempt, and suffering, is a means of procuring for us an increase of esteem and affection? Evangelical religion and an avowal of it, are become almost fashionable. There is now no fiery ordeal to pass through as a test of our sincerity; no sifting process to separate the chaff from the wheat; and as a natural, though fatal consequence, many profess religion who are strangers to its power and efficacy.

The wide and easy access to communion, which is afforded by some churches, increases the danger. It cannot be said of them, as it is of the church mentioned in the word of God, that their gates shall be open continually, and shall not be shut day nor night; for they can scarcely be said to have any gates at all; or if they have, there is no porter at the gate to ask the sign of him who enters. True it is, the entrance ought not to be made narrower than Christ has made it. No unscriptural terms of communion should be imposed; no bars nor obstacles set up to keep out those who have a right to enter in; no scaring usages adopted to frighten away timid minds: but surely somebody, either pastor or people, or both together, should with holy caution, Christian tenderness, and experienced minds, examine those who wish to be admitted to fellowship; not, indeed for the sake of indulging and showing inquisitorial authority, but for guarding the young disciple against deception; and, also, if he be not correct in his

views either of the truth or of himself, for teaching him the way of God more perfectly. If, therefore, nothing more be required, than for a person to declare himself a Christian without any examination, how great is the danger of his thinking he is something while he is nothing!

The urgent persuasions of ministers and friends have led many to make a profession of religion, before in fact they had any real religion to profess. A too eager wish to have a large church, and thus to magnify their pastoral importance, and to multiply the proofs of their usefulness, a most censurable, because an injurious kind of ministerial vanity, has made some far too hasty in introducing persons to Christian communion. Others, from feelings of false delicacy, have encouraged a profession, amidst many suspicions of its sincerity, rather than wound the minds of the candidates, by suggesting a doubt of their real conversion to God. While there are some, who acting upon the supposition that religious impressions are likely to ripen into conversion by the advantages of church fellowship, encourage the subjects of them to come forward and publicly profess Christ before they truly believe in him. Nor is the conduct of good people less injudicious sometimes towards their relations. A husband feels a pang in his heart at every sacramental season, by the wife of his bosom rising and retiring from his side, when he is about to receive the eucharistic memorials. A wife, who to all her natural affection for her husband, adds a tender solicitude for his eternal welfare, feels it a great and painful deduction from her spiritual enjoyment, that she goes without him to the supper of the Lord. Parents long to have their children with them in the fellowship of the church. Hence, in all these cases, there is sometimes much persuasion used to induce the unprofessing relative to assume the name, and make the confession of a Christian. Now where there is a firm hope, a hope founded on convincing evidence, that the subject of solicitude is truly regenerated, and made a partaker of saving grace, this is very proper:—but where this evidence is wanting, where there is no good ground for believing that a spiritual change has taken place, it is a most misplaced and mischievous anxiety to wish such persons to enter into the church. It is aiding their self-deception, and being accessory to a delusion, which places them at the farthest remove from salvation. They are much more

likely to be converted out of the church than in it. Many who have persuaded their friends to make an untimely, because an insincere profession, have lived to repent of their mistaken anxiety, by seeing accumulated evidence that their relative, though a church member, was certainly not a Christian.

The improper reliance that some professors place upon the strict mode of examination adopted by most of our churches is another source of delusion. They have been interrogated by the pastor, whose scrutiny has been aided by some of the elders or members; they have submitted either verbally, or in writing, a statement of their opinions and feelings, as well as a history of their alleged conversion to God, and on this ground have been received and approved as truly regenerated. "Can such judges," they ask themselves, "be mistaken? Such examiners, so competent, so impartial, so particular, form a wrong conclusion? No." Their piety they suppose is thus authenticated, their profession attested, and their safety undoubted. All is right. Such is their reasoning, and when in after times a doubt is raised, raised perhaps on grounds which ought to be conclusive, as to the fact of the falseness of their profession, they silence the voice of conscience, by pleading against its testimony, their admission to the church after the most rigid examination. Hence, the importance of the pastor's never giving, at the admission of a member, an opinion that he is truly converted, but throwing the whole judgment of the case upon the member's own conscience as in the sight of a heart-searching God, and thus making *him* responsible for the consequences of any wrong conclusion he may draw concerning his spiritual condition.

Look at these things, and learn whence the danger comes, and how imminent the danger is, of self-delusion as to our state before God, and our safety for eternity. It is not saying too much to affirm that *multitudes* are thus deluded. The dark memorial of the Laodicean church is a fearful proof that whole communities of professing Christians may be in this appalling condition. It is one of the cunning artifices, the deep devices, the artful machinations of Satan, to lead men into self-deception, when he can no longer hold them in careless indifference; to ruin their souls in the church, when he cannot effect it in the world; to lull them asleep by the privileges of communion, when

he cannot continue their slumber amidst the pleasures of sin. O how many is he leading captive this way! How many is he conducting to perdition, whom he has first blindfolded with the bandage of a false profession! How many are there in all our churches who are in this awful state!

THIRDLY—We now contemplate the *consequences* of this self-deception.

It corrupts the purity of the church. Members in this state are the wood, hay and stubble in the walls of the spiritual temple, which disfigure its beauty and impair its strength. They are Achans that trouble the camp of Israel, and bring down the displeasure of the Lord upon its hosts. They are the disease of the spiritual body, which swells its bulk, but destroys its health. Do they by their prayers bring down the blessing of God upon the pastor or the members? Alas! they pray not for themselves.—Do they by their piety diffuse vitality and energy through the community? They are cold, lifeless, dead. Do they by their consistency attract others to the church? On the contrary, they disgust and repel. Instead of aiding the force of that concentrated light, by which the church shines upon the dark world around, they envelope it with smoke. Instead of acting as the salt of the earth, they bring corruption into the kingdom of Christ. They are not only negatively an injury, but positively: they do harm at all times, but especially on occasions of strife they are the fuel that feeds the flames of discord.

As it respects religion, they disparage and injure it, not so much by raising against it the cry of hypocrisy on the ground of their immorality, as by lowering its standard, depreciating its value, diminishing its power, carnalising and secularising it, and reducing it to a greater conformity to the spirit of the world; so that many persons seeing no difference between such professors and themselves, except the mere circumstance of profession, think such a religion not worth their notice.

But, as to the nominal professor *himself*; how truly awful is the consequence of his delusion. He is perhaps the most hopeless character on earth. Before he assumed the name of Christ, there was hope of him that he would be impressed, convinced, and converted by some of those discriminating discourses which point out the difference be-

tween a regenerated and an unregenerated man; those pungent appeals to the conscience which are so often blessed in awakening them that are without—but now he is proof against all these. He is a professor, a church member; and with this as his shield he wards off every arrow of conviction from his heart. These things he says are for the unprofessing, not for him. Quietly his conscience sleeps amidst all the thunders that roll from the pulpit, while the lightnings, carried off by the conductor of his profession, touch not his false hopes, and leave him amidst all secure. He puts away from himself all the threatenings of the word, though they are pointed at him, and takes to himself all the privileges and consolations of the righteous, though he enjoys none of them. If at any time the power of the deception begins to be shaken by the efforts of a half-awakened conscience, and there rises up a suspicion that he is not a truly religious man, Satan aids him to regain his delusive quietude by the usual suggestion, “that he is a professor, a church member, and that though he is not perfect, he is not farther from it than many others; he only partakes of the general infirmity of the times, and if he be wrong, who is right? Besides, what is he to do? He is a church member, and would he begin again? Would he repent, believe, and be converted *now*?” Such logic is generally successful, and the poor creature lies down again to sleep on, the sleep of death. Notwithstanding the great number of professing Christians which exist, and the great numbers of unconverted ones too, how rarely do we meet with any who were converted after they became professors! How seldom do any such come to their pastor, and express a fear, and follow it up, that they have never been truly changed!

Hence it is, that some ministers feel it to be the greatest perplexity of all their pastoral avocations, to give answers to persons who come to advise with them on the subject of making a profession. If, from suspicion that the hearts of these individuals are not yet right with God, they dissuade them, they may be discouraging those whom they ought to receive and encourage; sending away a babe that ought to be laid in the bosom of the church; breaking the bruised reed, and quenching the smoking flax:—while on the other hand, if they encourage the inquirer to come forward, they may be strengthening the delusion of a self-de-

ceived soul, and become accessory to the ruin of an immortal spirit. Some conscientious men have found and felt this to be the very burden of their lives, and from which there is no way of gaining relief or ease, but by laying down the marks of true conversion, begging the querist to bring his heart to this test, stating what is implied in a Christian profession, and making him, as has been already said, responsible for the judgment of his own case, and all its consequences too.

But extend your views to another world, and anticipate if you can the consequences of self-deception as they exist, and are perpetuated through eternity. BUNYAN, in his inimitable allegory, the "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," after representing the rejection of a false professor, called Ignorance, who had knocked at the portals of heaven, and asked admission, concludes his book with these awfully impressive words, "*Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the city of destruction.*"

A professor in hell!! Tremendous idea! Horrifying thought! After spending his time on earth in the nominal communion of saints, to spend his eternity in the real fellowship of devils in hell! After belonging to the society of God's people; joining in all their services and their privileges; transacting with them the business of his kingdom; uniting with them in the expulsion as well as the reception of members—then to be sent away, into the prison of lost souls. O how dreadful would it be to be separated from the church of God now, to pass under the sentence of excommunication, to be excinded as a corrupt member of the body, and given over to Satan—but what is this to the sentence of excommunication from the church triumphant, pronounced by Jesus Christ himself at the last day? O to hear HIM say *depart!* Who does not feel the force of those impressive verses?

Thou lovely chief of all my joys,
 Thou sovereign of my heart,
 How could I bear to hear thy voice,
 Pronounce the sound depart.

The thunder of that dismal word
 Would so torment my ear,
 'T would tear my soul asunder Lord,
 With most tormenting fear.

O wretched state of deep despair,
 To see my God remove,
 And fix my doleful station where
 I could not taste his love.

FOURTHLY—Let us now consider what means are necessary and proper to adopt, in order to avoid deception.

Dwell upon the subject. *Ponder it deeply.* Let it take hold upon your mind, and your mind take hold upon it. Let it not be dismissed from you with the same ease as you send into oblivion many other subjects of a religious nature. It is unusually momentous, and has an awfulness about it far beyond the usual topics of reflection. The very idea is terrific, *a self-deceived professor!* a professor going to perdition! The frequency of it makes it still more alarming. If it were only a bare possibility, an occurrence that *might* exist, yet that rarely did exist, it would still demand our serious attention. But when it is so common, that it is to be feared there is scarcely any church in which there are not some in this situation, and no large church in which there are not many, how serious, how alarming a matter does it become!

You should bring the matter *home to yourselves*, and admit not only the possibility of the danger in the abstract, or in reference to others, but in reference to *you*. Your profession does not necessarily imply the actual possession of religion. You must not receive it as evidence that *you* are Christians. In those moments, and such it is presumed you spend, when with more than usual anxiety you ask the question, "Am I really a child of God?" it is not enough to reply "I am a professor:" for this in any state of the church, and especially the present one, is not a proof, scarcely a presumption, that you are born again of the Spirit. It is possible then, that *you* may be deceived, and you should not imagine that there is anything in *your* circumstances to render the idea inapplicable to *you*.

You should *dread the thought* of being deluded. Its fearful consequences should be solemnly meditated upon, seriously and piously revolved. It should be often said with holy trembling, "Oh, if I should be at last deceived."

You should examine your state frequently, deliberately, solemnly, and impartially. Time should be set apart, occasionally, for the special purpose of prayer and self-scrutiny. You should have times and opportunities of

more than usual length and earnestness for self-examination, when you should look again, and with greater intense-ness, into your evidences of personal religion; when your former and your present state, your supposed conversion, your conduct, and the state of your affections, shall all come under review;—when with a wish not to be deceived, you shall ask yourselves for the reasons of the hope that is in you. It is too important a matter to be taken for granted; the consequences of deception are too awful and remediless to be carelessly risked.

It will help you in this solemn business of self-examination, if I place before you a tabular view of some of the leading marks of false and true professors, arranged in opposite columns:

MARKS OF
SELF-DECEIVED PROFESSORS.

1. When deep solicitude about salvation ceased as soon as a profession was made, and an entrance into the church was gained:

2. When, after profession was made, the person soon relapsed into practices, which, though not what are called immoral, were considered to be sinful during the season of anxious concern, and as such were renounced:

3. When evil tempers, natural dispositions, and besetting sins, restrained for a season, resume their wonted power and predominance:

4. When under the consciousness of sin, there is a disposition to take comfort against the reproaches of conscience, in the thought that we are professors:

MARKS OF
TRUE SAINTS.

1. When the mind retains its deep solicitude about salvation, and has it increased by the idea, that a lost professor is the most awful of all characters:

2. When there is a continued and increasing dread of sins renounced during concern, and sanctification in these very particulars is carried on with vigour:

3. When besetting sins are, if not totally eradicated, yet repressed and kept under, by watchfulness and prayer:

4. When the idea of being a professor, makes the thought of sin committed more bitter, and renders us restless and uneasy, till we have obtained forgiveness, by renewed faith and repentance:

5. When we can reconcile ourselves to a low state of personal piety, or to the prevalence of corruption, or to worldly mindedness and conformity, by the idea, that we are not more inconsistent or defective than most other professors, and thus take comfort under the reproaches of an accusing conscience, by thinking we are not worse than others:

6. When our habitual frame of mind is not characterized by a sincere, anxious, and studious desire to obey God and please him; and our service is only occasional and prompted by the frowns of conscience, and not constant, from an impulse of choice and delight:

7. When our obedience is stunted, as well as compulsory, and we are trying with how little religion we can get to heaven, rather than how much holiness we can obtain:

8. When we are glad to hear of the failings of other professors, as an excuse for our own, and are ever ready to quote the misconduct of the saints, whose history is recorded in the Scriptures, in justification or palliation of our own:

9. When we feel dislike to preachers for talking so much about revivals of piety in the church, and to close searching sermons that tend

5. When the sins of others, and especially of professors, and their low state of piety, cause deep grief, and make us additionally anxious to attain to higher degrees of personal godliness, in order that we may preserve the credit of religion, and prevent dishonour from being cast on the name of Christ:

6. When we so love God as to feel that our great business and delight is to obey, serve, and please him; and to find that no *measure* of service will satisfy us, short of absolute perfection:

7. When the motive to obedience, and to all we do in religion is, so far as we can ascertain it, a prevailing desire and aim to glorify God:

8. When the sins of other professors are matter of grief, humiliation, and distress, and the failings of Scripture saints are read with awe, and regarded as beacons to warn us from the rocks on which they split:

9. When we are pleased, not only with *comforting* preaching, and such as dwells on the doctrines of grace, and privileges of believers,

to show professors their short comings, and carry them on to a higher state of personal godliness:

10. When we are much more pleased with the society and conversation of the half hearted and worldly-minded portion of the church, than with the more spiritual and heavenly-minded, and shun the latter to associate with the former:

11. When we want comforting discourses at the very time our consciences tell us we are living in sin, or the neglect of duty:

12. When we are carrying on any business in itself unlawful, or conducting a lawful one, with violations of truth, honesty, justice, and honour:

13. When we take up the idea that religion has nothing to do with trade, and that it

but also with close, pungent appeals to the conscience, and discourses that search the heart and lay open its corruptions, and are ever ready to co-operate with our pastors in promoting revivals of the church:

10. When we retire from earthly minded, fashionable, and lukewarm professors, to associate with those who are eminently holy, consistent and heavenly:

11. When no prospect of gain can induce us to engage in an unlawful occupation; or to carry on a lawful one by forbidden means; and rather than violate truth, honesty, justice and generosity, we would be content with poverty and a quiet conscience.

12. When we carry religion with us into the shop, to regulate all our business, and consider ourselves under solemn obligation to let our light shine forth before worldly men in all our transactions; to make the six days of labour, as well as the one day of rest, a time for glorifying God; and to consider ourselves his servants at all times and in all places:

13. When we feel not only an obligation, but a pleasure, in practising self-denial, and

is necessary for professors, if they would live, to do as others do; that trade, and trading days are our own, and only the Sabbath and Sabbath services belong to God:

14. When we are ever seeking to gratify, and serve, and please ourselves, and neither in matters of appetite nor feeling, nor property, are disposed to practise self-denial, but are resolved to enjoy ourselves and live at ease:

15. When we are making it our great, and apparently our main business, to accumulate property, to aggrandize our families, and live in splendour, and give little to the cause of God for the conversion of souls, and give that little also grudgingly and reluctantly:

16. When we have little or no tenderness of conscience, and, disregarding scruples of our own conscience, or the caution of others, proceed to *doubtful* actions, with as much resolute determination, as we do to the performance of others, about which there is no question:

17. When we live in the habitual indulgence of malevolent, revengeful, and envious tempers:

a willingness to give up the gratifications of appetite and feeling, for the sake of Christ.

14. When, though diligent in business and not careless about property, our chief pleasure in accumulation is that we have more to do good with; and we avoid luxuries and splendour, that we may have more to spend for God; and while not unmindful of our families, consider that God has claims upon us, as well as they:

15. When we have a tender conscience easily roused, which will not allow us to engage in doubtful actions:

16. When we are as careful to abstain from all angry, resentful and malicious feelings, as we are from licentious and dishonest ones:

17. When our religion is not the spirit of fear, and slavish dread; not the service rendered by a slave to a

18. When our religion is one of fear and dread, rather than of hope and love, and we are led on to obedience by the apprehensions of wrath to come, and not by love to God, and delight in his service:

19. When, amidst all the means and incentives to do good, which abound so much in this age, there is no desire to be useful, no impulse of the soul towards that which is going on for the cause of Christ, and the salvation of souls:

20. When there is no kind of solicitude about our eternal safety, but the matter is taken for granted, without examination, and the soul reposes upon its profession, concluding without evidence, and sometimes against it, that all is right, and that the matter need not be inquired into.

tyrant; but of power, and love, and of a sound mind; the service of a child to a father, in whom he confides, and for whom he has the strongest affection;

18. When there is a strong, steady and laborious desire to do good, especially in the way of converting sinners, by personal exertion, by property, by prayer, so that we feel it to be a part of our calling, and one great end of it to aid in saving souls from death; when we are distressed that little is doing in this way; are willing to make sacrifices to do good; are continually devising means for this purpose; and rejoice in what others are doing, even if they belong not to our party or denomination:

19. When the mind, though not slavishly, or ignorantly anxious about its state, or safety, keeps up a jealous watchfulness over itself, and frequently examines itself before God:

20. When there is in affliction more anxiety to have it sanctified than removed, and a prevailing acquiescence in the will of God in painful circumstances:

21. When the soul feels an habitual drawing to heaven, as to its native country and home:

Then in all these cases, it may be justly feared that the professor in such a state, is self-deceived, and is no true born child of God.

Then may the professor who has such evidences conclude, that he is indeed a true follower of the Lamb, and not self-deceived.

Nor is it enough to trust to your *own* examination. Aware of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and our proneness through self-love to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and at the same time recollecting how much interest we have in believing we are right, *you should beseech God to make known to you your real condition.* You should carry to him the prayer of DAVID, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. You should deal honestly with God, and tell him that you wish to know your state, and that you deprecate as the heaviest judgment that could befall you, being deceived.

If you have reason upon examination to think you have taken up a false opinion of your case, do not blind yourselves to your condition; do not conclude against evidence that you are safe; do not attempt to silence the voice of conscience or corrupt its testimony: this is worse than useless, it is most alarmingly dangerous, and is the last stage of delusion. Instead of this *begin afresh.* What is to hinder you? If you are not converted, you may be. Let not the idea of a false profession throw you into despondency. God is as willing to forgive the sin of a false profession, as the sin of no profession. The blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you from this sin. *Now* repent, now believe, now hope, now love. God waits to be gracious even yet. It is not too late to be renewed yet. The door of mercy is not closed yet. Sincerity of profession is not beyond your reach yet. Begin to be in earnest. Determine to trifle no longer. Set apart time for private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and holy meditation. Be diligent in attendance upon the public means of grace. Make a fresh and en-

tire surrender of yourself to God. But especially look by faith to Jesus Christ, for the pardon of your past insincerity, lukewarmness, and worldliness. Be humble, very humble in your own eyes, and before God: but still do not despair. Exercise dependence upon the Spirit of all grace, confide in his power, and rely upon his mercy. Be thankful that since you were in error, you have discovered it, and have not been permitted to go on in darkness, till you had stumbled over the precipice into the yawning pit of destruction below.

If, upon examination, you have good reason to think all is right, rejoice in Christ Jesus. Let the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, rule in your hearts, to which ye are called, and be ye thankful. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." This discourse is intended not to disturb the peace of God's people, but to destroy the false confidence of his disguised foes. There are two classes of professors to whom the alarming appeals of it do not apply; the first are those eminent Christians who have the fullest assurance of hope, and whose assurance is sustained by the joy of faith, the obedience of love, and the patience and purity of hope: whose religion is so vigorous and influential as to be self-evident to themselves and others. They have scarcely need to ask the question, "Am I a child of God?" for the proofs of it are ever within them. Blessed state! happy Christians! and all are invited to become such. But there is another class who are not likely to be deceived; those who are truly, and sometimes sorrowfully anxious about the matter; who are often trying themselves by the word of God; who know, if they know anything, they would not be deluded for ten thousand worlds; who, notwithstanding their many imperfections, their painful consciousness of defects, still know they do love the Lord Jesus Christ, though with too lukewarm an affection; who, notwithstanding all their doubts and fears, are conscious of a real and sometimes an intense longing after holiness. Be comforted, ye timid followers of the Lamb: self-deceivers are rarely afraid that this is their state and character. Dismiss your fears and go on your way rejoicing.

EVIDENCES BY WHICH TRUE AND FALSE IMPRESSIONS UPON THE MIND MAY BE DISTINGUISHED.

SATAN quoted Scripture in order to corrupt the mind of Christ, and draw him from the path of duty. Some carnal professors do the same, and wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. The way in which the Holy Spirit impresses the mind, is not by making any new revelation, but by a suitable application of the truths already revealed, according to our state and circumstances. Though some persons may be deceived by sudden impressions, for want of a due inquiry from whence they come, yet the suddenness itself is no proof that they are false. The Lord can, and many times in distressing cases does, help speedily and even instantaneously. He who called to Abraham at the very instant when he was about to sacrifice his son, can, if he please, instantly relieve the mind by a suitable word, when in the greatest distress.

But seeing the mind is capable of receiving false impressions from Satan, inordinate self-love, &c., to distinguish the true from the false is a matter of the greatest importance. For example: suppose the mind should be impressed with this Scripture: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Before a person can conclude that this impression is from God, he should seriously ask himself such questions as the following:

1. Do I possess that spirit to which the general tenor of Scripture promises forgiveness? Before David received a sense of divine mercy, he earnestly sued for it, and confessed the depravity of his nature, and the transgressions of his life. Nor did he merely plead for pardon, but also for renewing grace: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Under the gospel dispensation we are directed to seek mercy in the name of Christ; pleading his blood and mediation, through whom God hath promised forgiveness; for "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." What is my character with respect to these things?

2. What effect has a sense of the forgiving mercy of God produced in my mind? Do I possess a holy love to God,

who hath magnified his mercy, and to Christ through whom I enjoy the invaluable blessing? She who had "much forgiven, loved much." Luke vii. 47.

3. Am I influenced by the love of God, to devote my soul and body to him, that I may be his servant for ever? "Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Rom. vi. 22. If such be my spirit and character, I may be assured that the blessing contained in the passage of Scripture thus impressed belongs to me. The concurrence of the things impressed with the general sense of Scripture, and with the holy effects produced in the heart and life is, in all cases, a criterion by which we may distinguish the operations of the Holy Spirit from all false impressions.

Satan frequently suggests to wicked men that God is merciful. This is a glorious truth; and its proper effect is to encourage a returning sinner to hope for mercy. But as it is here suggested, its tendency is to lull the sinner asleep in security, persuading him that though he continue in sin, yet it shall be well with him at last. Again, Satan sometimes suggests to a carnal professor, that the sheep of Christ shall never perish. This is true; but the design of Satan is to persuade him that he shall get to heaven, though he hate the path which leads to it. It seems as if Satan could have access to the human mind in sleep; for some persons have a misrepresentation of their state in dreams, whereby they are strangely infatuated. A certain person at —, dreamed that she was conducted into the presence of Christ in glory, who looked on her with a smile. When she was reproved for a total neglect of all the means of grace, she replied, "I have no occasion to use any; I am sure of heaven." Yet God sometimes speaks this way, but always agreeably to his written word.

Once more: Satan frequently suggests to a person under convictions that he is the chief of sinners. But his design is to drive him to despair, and to persuade him that his sins are too great to be forgiven; whereas the tendency of the like suggestion from the Spirit of God is to lead the sinner to apply earnestly for mercy.

THE DYING PROFESSOR.

“It is appointed unto men once to die.” There is no exemption, even for believers, from this decree. They are delivered from the sting of death, but not from its stroke; still, in one sense, they conquer, like their divine Lord, in being conquered. “If ever Christianity,” says Mr. HALL, “appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the *tomb*; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.” Christ triumphed for his saints by his own death, and he is continually renewing the victory *in them*, amidst all the sufferings and decay of their own dissolution. This is beautifully illustrated in the subject of this narrative; in which we are to contemplate the Christian’s termination of her profession on earth, and see her finishing her course with joy. I shall not exhibit to my readers an ideal scene, but lay before them one of those glorious and blissful realities, which are continually occurring in the dying chamber of believers, that border land which connects the regions of earth and heaven, and where the darkest scenes of the one are frequently irradiated by the reflected glory of the other.

Mrs. P. had been a member of the church under my pastoral oversight about ten years, and was one of many who never cost her pastor’s heart a sigh till he lost her. Lovely

in person, gentle and affectionate in her disposition, she added a lustre to her consistency as a Christian, by all that usually interests us in the general character. Tried much, and often, in the furnace of affliction, her faith, more precious than gold that perisheth, was found unto the praise, and honour, and glory of Jesus Christ. At length her last sickness came on, in the form of a lingering consumption. It found her the happy wife of an affectionate and devoted husband, and the fond mother of a son of the age of twelve years, and two daughters, one ten and the other eight. Possessing such ties to life, she was called to submit, amidst these trying circumstances, to the stroke of death. Her profession, always like a clear and steady light, now shone forth with a radiance that made her departure resemble a beautiful sun-set, after a cloudless day. Amidst the alternations usually produced by the flattering illusions of her disorder, she was never elated by hope, nor depressed by fear, but smiled on her physician, whether he spoke of recovery or of death. However languishing with weakness, racked by pain, or harassed by coughing, she was instantly roused, and made happy by one word of death or Christ. Such was the charm of these themes, that I have frequently seen her countenance change in a moment, by their potency, from an expression of great suffering, to a smile that looked like a ray of the excellent glory, falling on her previously dim and languid eye. Instead, however, of speaking of her, or attempting to describe her, I will let her speak for herself. As I was about to leave home for a few days, and supposed that her end was not remote, I requested her husband to take minutes of any remarks that might drop from her lips, in order that I might be in possession of her last testimony to the truths of the gospel, and the power of religion. The following diary, extending only through ten days, is but a specimen of what occurred almost uninterruptedly for many months.

“Tell Mr. JAMES,” she said one day, “that the fear and sting of death are both taken away: the fear, because Christ died for sinners: the sting, because he fulfilled and magnified the law.” And in reply to a remark that death was hard work, “No,” she said, “sweet death, that opens heaven and shuts out earth.”

August 4.—This morning she awoke exceedingly happy, and said, “What a mercy it is to have a Father in heaven! I wake every morning more happy, with more love to God, and more deadness to the world. O my happy midnight hours! The things I most dreaded, I find most mercy in. I cannot say much, but I wish when I can say a few words only, to utter the praises of that God who is so good to me.”

At another time she said, “My bliss is too great to be endured on earth, and it is too pure for it. Oh! seek God earnestly with all the heart, and then he will comfort you on a death-bed, in the same way he now comforts me. Confess to him all your sins, make no reserve, and remember not to put off the confession of *little* sins, for they will only harden the heart, and delay will make the confession more difficult at last.”

August 6.—“I have been unspeakably happy,” she said, “to-night. Oh! seek God with all your heart; seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.”

On having her pillows adjusted and made easy, her uplifted hands and eyes spoke more than words could do, her feelings of gratitude and thankfulness; “How can I sufficiently honour and adore God, for all his mercies towards me? I feel my heart almost ready to burst, and my whole soul swallowed up in gratitude and love to him: surely, surely, heaven is begun below!”

Sunday Morning, August 7.—She observed, “Satan has been tempting me in the night, by a sense of past sins, but

I have been enabled to beat him off, by praying for faith, and looking steadily at the cross. This life is as Paul describes it, a constant fight; I have found it to be so, but the idea that it is so near a close is to me exquisite. You will (addressing me) find it so yourself, but watch and pray, and you will ultimately triumph. Sin is mixed with everything here, and remember, whatever comes between the soul and God, as a cloud to dim the lustre of his glory, is sin. I was much struck with this idea about eighteen years ago, in attending the theatre, at the particular request of a friend; for I found when I retired to bed I could not pray, which convinced me of the sinfulness of the theatre, and I never went again."

This morning she joined the whole family in singing "When I can read my title clear, &c." She did so in a peculiarly animated manner, but with so trembling and feeble a voice, that it was pleasure mixed with pain, and the circumstance will never be forgotten.

During the day, such was her patience and resignation, that in allusion to her sufferings she said, "I think I could bear a little more, if God thought fit to lay it upon me;" and looking upon her poor skeleton fingers, added, "I like to see them;" and then with an apparent smile of triumph said, "You know you cannot keep me here much longer, I shall soon be gone."

August 8.—This last night has been to her a sleepless, restless one. She appears almost worn out, and to be much engaged in prayer for waiting patience. She said, "What an unspeakable mercy it is that I've not a doubt or a fear! but pray for me, that I may so continue to the end, for many a good Christian is permitted to be much harassed by the enemy at last. I have been much distressed to-night by Satan. I found I could not pray, but the passage came to my mind, 'there is therefore now no condemnation to

them which are in Christ Jesus, &c.' and this comforted me."

Tuesday.—A few days ago she sent a message to Mr. — that she would send him Mr. JAMES'S "Anxious Inquirer," with her dying request that he would not only read it attentively, but with prayer; and if he did, she was sure it would conduct him in a safer and surer way to happiness, than he was now going. To-day she sent the book, and how much was she rejoiced at hearing that he had become so impatient for it, as to send to town to buy one, and was then engaged in reading it! May her prayer that it may be blessed to his conversion be answered.

Wednesday.—To-day she is so exceedingly feeble, that I can scarcely hear her speak; but with difficulty I caught the following words: "What a mercy it is that the work is finished, and that when in health I sought God with all my heart, in his own appointed way! I cannot talk to-day, I feel so ill: but all is sweet peace within. I die, resting simply on the righteousness of Christ."

In the evening she said, "My God, my Bible, and my Saviour, are increasing sources of happiness, to which I can turn at any moment, without disappointment, and I find them more solid as other things fade away."

Thursday.—In reply to the words "God bless you," I addressed to her this morning, she said, "Ah! God does indeed bless me with the choicest of his blessings. He supplies all my necessary wants, and

'Whatever else I think I want, 'tis right to be denied.'

This afternoon she has fatigued and weakened herself by again talking for a long time to Mrs. — as to her soul's concerns. Mrs. — at one time made a great profession of religion, and was apparently before my poor wife in the Christian race, but the world has laid fast hold upon her

and she has backslidden. My dear wife is much interested about her, and considers she is not a lost character, as she appears not only to be aware of, but to feel her sad state, and is an unhappy woman. She augurs much from what she has said to her during the two interviews. Mr. — received his present of the book, she said, with much pleasure, and was affected with the idea that there was one in the world who cared for his soul, and intimated his wish, if there was no impropriety, to see my wife, to which she assented. If he come, may God strengthen her for the interview, for she is determined, by the help of God, to be plain and faithful, and say much to him.

Saturday.—Very ill to-day and yesterday. She suffers much from great difficulty in breathing, and spasms in the chest. When a little relieved, she said—“Oh, what a mercy it is to feel patience and perfect resignation! I can say from my heart, Lord, thy time, thy will, thy way.”

Sunday morning, August 14.—Her prayers for my spiritual good, accompanied with her sincere thanks for what she termed my great kindness and affection to her as a husband, were very affecting. “Love and serve God,” she said, “with all your heart, soul, and strength, and let this be a fixed and settled principle in all the concerns of life.” In the midst of her sufferings, and they were very severe, she said—“I love God more than ever.” In the afternoon, she said—“I could not have thought that any one could have suffered so much, and yet live; and if God inflicts such sufferings upon his own children, what must the pains of hell be to the wicked? O sin! sin! Remember, all sorrow and suffering are the fruits and effects of sin. I cannot think what the wicked do on a death-bed, when the horrors of the mind are added to the pains of the body.”

Sunday night.—Her sufferings increased, and she was at a loss to reconcile the sufferings of God’s people with her

belief in his great kindness and regard towards them; and it was apparent that though she had so often said that she had no doubts, no fears, no anxieties, yet a dark cloud was coming over the mind. "This is indeed," she said, "the hour and power of darkness; it is horrible."

Mr. — called on Monday morning to talk and pray with her. His visit much consoled her, and in an hour or two after, her spirit seemed to emerge from the darkness which had for so many hours hung over her, and all was bright sunshine again. She then said—"All is sweet peace again—solid peace. I am as certain of heaven as if I were already there—not that I have merited heaven—no: I have no works, no worthiness.

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Tuesday.—The words of the Psalmist—"Thou hast brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," &c., were peculiarly expressive of her state and feelings now."

Perhaps nothing need be added to this testimony of her husband. I will, however, give the substance of only one or two conversations I had with her during the last few days of her mortal conflict. On one occasion she said, "I have lain awake night after night, examining the foundation of my hope, but I cannot find a single flaw. I depend entirely upon the sacrifice of Christ for acceptance with God, and not at all upon my own works. I have not a doubt or a fear. I have had my seasons of spiritual distress, but have been enabled by God's Spirit to be faithful."

Speaking of her children, who had been for some time removed from home, she said—"When I first saw them after their return, I felt a pang at the thought of leaving them; but I prayed for faith, and was enabled instantly to give up both them and my husband."

At another time, she exclaimed—"O that all the world knew what I enjoy. They would not then neglect religion. I now feel the advantage of a remark I met with some time since in an old author,—“It is well to lay up a good stock of prayers for a dying hour.” By which she meant, as the author did, that through her whole profession, she had been much engaged in prayer to God for his comfortable presence, and gracious support, in her dying hour. She then adverted to the answer of her prayers, which she was receiving, and said—"This state of mind is not natural to me. I used to be much afraid of dying, and this led me to be much in prayer; and now see how God is granting my request."

About the time of this interview of my own, a friend called upon her, who, upon hearing her talk beyond her strength, gently admonished her to spare herself. "Oh, it matters not," she replied "I believe I shall die to-night, and it does not signify. I wanted to pray for my minister in his presence when he was last here, but had not courage." And then lifting up her eyes to heaven, she poured forth a most fervent and appropriate prayer both for him and his wife.

At a subsequent visit, finding her, beyond expectation, alive, I said "What, still in the flesh?" and knowing the danger of her becoming impatient to be gone, I asked her if she was willing to wait in her suffering state, any time that God might see fit to detain her on earth. "Quite," she replied, "quite willing to wait and wait and suffer any time, for I am sure God will give me grace. I am a wonder to myself. I am a monument of mercy. O the mercies of God! What a mercy the work of salvation is all done! What a blessing to have the soul safe! I have nothing to do but to go. I am quite ready. When my husband reads the Scriptures to me, I now see a glory greater than I ever saw before. I see them in a new

light. No other book but the Bible will do now. I cannot bear, sir, (turning to me, she said) even your books now. Nothing but the pure truth of God will do now. Sometimes it seems as if God had direct communion with my soul."

Then speaking of the generality of professors of all denominations, she said—"O what a difference have I seen in those I have had to do with. They do not live near enough to God: they are too worldly. Tell those of our church from me to live closer to God, and to give themselves more up to his service. I love the church of which I am a member. I die in communion with every member of it, but charge them from me to be less worldly, and to live nearer to God."

She then gave utterance to a lamentation over some acquaintances who she feared had been living without spiritual religion, and charged me to speak seriously after her decease to one friend in particular on this subject. After this followed a strain of exulting hope of the heavenly world. "There I shall see the apostle Paul, and all the blessed spirits of just men made perfect: and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ, and be overshadowed with his glory."

A lady of considerable respectability and intelligence, but holding Unitarian sentiments, who had been exceedingly kind to her, visited her more than once, and was so struck with the scene, that she not only wept abundantly, but took two of her daughters with her to witness it also, and see how peacefully a Christian could die. The mind of the dying saint felt some fear, lest she should not have courage to bear her testimony on behalf of her divine Lord, or speak with propriety on those truths which then yielded her strong consolation. She prayed earnestly to God for help, and help was granted her; and it was delightful to observe with what modest thankfulness she acknowledged

the grace she had obtained to be faithful. Indeed it was one pleasing feature of her dying experience that she was anxious to do good to all around her, and scarcely any came to her dying bed, who did not carry from it some instructive admonition. Among others, her nurse was an object of most tender solicitude, and while anxious for her spiritual welfare, she did not forget her temporal comfort, as the following little incident will prove. Among the friends who visited her, was one who is in the habit of distributing garments to the poor, from whom with great diffidence she solicited a flannel gown for the poor woman, that when she herself was in her grave, she might be protected from the cold in her night watches in sick chambers, that might not be so warm as that in which she had waited upon her. Such a considerateness of the comfort of others, when flesh and heart were failing her, is a beautiful exemplification of the charity that is kind.

Among other things she uttered during the last day or two of her life, she said—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." The words "not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," seemed to give her peculiar delight. "The nearer I get to home," she continued, "the clearer I see my Father's house, and the more certain I am I shall be welcome there." On a great increase of bodily pain, she faintly said—"Spirit brighter; suffering very mysterious." Her last words in reference to her state of mind were, "Peace, peace, O sweet peace!" She died with her finger pointing up to heaven.

Behold the dying professor, and receive her testimony to the grace and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, who having put his righteousness upon her, and his Spirit within her,

has called her to join the palm-bearing multitude, in making her confession before the angels of God. "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." "I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Rev. xiv. 12, 13.

Thus ends, though not in all cases with the same degree of holy triumph, the profession of the sincere, consistent, and exemplary Christian. How bright a scene; how beautiful, and how powerful a testimony to the reality and excellence of religion! I need not ask, whether infidelity can produce, or ever did produce anything like it, or whether philosophy ever did so with her enchantments. SOCRATES, conversing so calmly with his friends on the subject of immortality, just before he drank the hemlock, is a feeble exhibition of moral grandeur, compared with this. O Christianity! this is thy triumph and trophy. What a proof is this of an immaterial and undying mind. To see reason in all its power, religion in its sublimest flights, then, when the heart is fluttering in the conflict of mortality! Then for the soul to soar with angel flight, till its expressions are so grand, its conceptions so unearthly, its joys so much above sense and reason, and even faith too, that it looks all covered with the cloud of glory, into which it has already in a measure entered; can this be the mere modification of flesh and blood? Oh no, it is mind triumphing over the weakness of matter. It is the original from which the poet has taken his beautiful copy:

The holy triumphs of my soul,
Shall death itself out-brave;
Leave dull mortality behind,
And fly beyond the grave.

And what was it that this immaterial, imperishable mind was then intent upon? On what was the eye of the soul fixed, and to what boundless object were its aspirations rising? Earth had receded, and carried with it all its kingdoms and their glory; but there was another glory rising to fill its place, in beholding the blaze of which, even husband, children, mother, friends, minister, and church, were all lost sight of. She saw as with a new sense, granted to dying saints, but unknown to most living ones, things almost as unutterable as those which Paul witnessed in the third heavens; and loosening from every terrestrial object, sprung forward to lay hold upon immortality.

I grant that it is not the privilege of all the children of God, to enjoy so large a share of heaven upon earth as did this dear saint, for it is an undoubted fact, that even some of the most eminent servants of God have been far less favoured in their dying hour than she was. I could mention names of the most distinguished divines of modern times, whose passage through the dark valley, was not irradiated with these bright coruscations of the heavenly glory. This fact has not been unnoticed by others. Can we account for it? No doubt in some cases the nature of their complaint may have had an influence, as certain disorders predispose more powerfully to the depression of the animal spirits than others. Mr. FULLER, during his last illness laboured under this to a considerable extent, and the celebrated Mr. SCOTT, the author of the Commentary, did the same; but it was in each of these cases the effect of disease. "I never recollect," said the former, "to have had such depression of animal spirits, accompanied with such calmness of mind." "I could be glad," he said, "to be favoured with some lively hopes, before I depart hence." "My hope is such, however, that I am not afraid to plunge into eternity." I have no doubt, that both in living saints

and in dying ones too, disease has much to do in preventing what is usually denominated comfort; but surely, if disease may in some cases prevent comfort, it cannot in a sane mind produce it. The experience recorded in this chapter, is unquestionably the inworking of the mighty power of God. That the humbler saints should be thus favoured, while useful preachers, and great theologians, who have served God in their own, and will continue to serve him by their works in all future generations, should be denied those bright manifestations of God's presence in death, is an arrangement that must have some ends, and teach some lessons in the divine administration. Does it not show the sovereignty of God, in the bestowment of his favours? Does it not hide pride from man, by proving that it is not even distinction in the church that can insure the brightest light of God's countenance? Does it not tend to keep humble, living Christians, and ministers, and authors of eminence, by reminding them, that persons never heard of beyond a narrow circle, may have a more glorious close of their profession than even they? Does it not prove that God holds himself no man's debtor for what he has done? Does it not manifest how inadequate all we do for Christ is to comfort us in a dying hour, and that theological giants, as well as the least child in God's family, can derive no comfort then but from a simple dependence on Jesus? Does it not illustrate the power of Christ, in raising such meek and humble saints, such seemingly weak believers, into the spiritual prowess of the greatest conquerors of death? Does it not distribute more widely the honour of doing something for God, and of bringing glory to Christ; so that while some shall do much by their living labours, others shall do it by their dying experience? Does it not encourage the less public professors, who are the greatest in number, to look forward with lively hope and joyful anticipations to the close of life? Such lessons as these

are of great consequence in the school of Christ, and we cannot wonder that God should take such methods in teaching them.

Professors, the close of your profession will come, and the nature of that close should be a matter of solicitude to you. Whether your sun shall set in clouds, or in brightness, ought not to be a subject of absolute indifference. True it is, that your chief concern should be, to maintain a consistent profession while you live; for this is the most likely way to make a happy one when you die; but still, when we consider how much it tends to edify the church, to hear of the lively faith and hope of its dying members, and how much it tends also to awaken and impress careless sinners, it ought to be a matter of desire and prayer, that we might finish our course with joy, and glorify God in death. A holy life, and a happy death, and both of them for the honour of Christ, the credit of religion, and the good of immortal souls, should be the object of every Christian's ambition. These two act upon each other. He who would be happy in death should be holy in life; and did we keep the death-bed scene in view, it would be one motive, and that not a weak one, to a life of eminent godliness. Death is a scene in which we can be found but once. We can glorify God through all time, and through all eternity, by ten thousand living acts, ten thousand times repeated, but we can honour him but once in dying; how much ought we to be concerned then, to do that well, and realize the saying—

“His God sustained him in his dying hour;
His dying hour brought glory to his God.”

For this purpose, we should, like the apostle, die daily. The whole of life should be one continued exercise and discipline for death. All days should be spent with refer-

ence to the last, and all objects looked at in connection with the sepulchre. We should never forget "to lay up a stock of prayers for a death-bed."

The prospects of death should not distress us. The fear that hath torment, the dread that brings us into bondage, should be subdued by a distinct exercise of faith, in reference to this awful event. Faith should have exercises, appropriate to every situation in which we can be found; we should have faith for life; faith for death; faith for eternity. Not only faith in a dying hour, when it is present, but faith for it, while it is yet future. All evils look greatest at a distance, not excepting death itself. There is scarcely one fact more borne out by the experience of the church, than that the fear of death diminishes in the hearts of God's people, the nearer they approach the dark valley; for in truth, the nearer they draw to that scene of gloom, the closer do they come to the heavenly glory, the light of which there breaks on the night of the tomb. Multitudes, who, during their lives, could never think of dying but with some painful solicitude, have been astonished to find how their fears all vanished, and with what peaceful hope they could lie down and expire.

Reasons may be assigned for this, which are quite sufficient to account for the encouraging fact. In those awful circumstances, the attention, hitherto divided between earth and heaven, is more concentrated, yea, is exclusively fixed on the latter. Like a pilgrim going to the Holy City, who has arrived at its very suburbs, and there loses sight of, and interest in, the things that had attracted his notice on the road, and sees only the towers, and walls, and domes of the object of his long and weary journey; so the departing saint now sees only the things that are heavenly, and is occupied in the contemplation of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. His dependence upon God's mercy in Christ Jesus is now more simple and more firm, in the

near prospect of standing in the immediate presence of a Holy God. The last remains of pride, self-righteousness, and vain glory, die within him: his fancied excellencies vanish: his sins appear in their true light; and he feels more deeply and more delightfully that Christ is all in all. With a grasp of faith, new in its power, though not in its kind, he lays hold on the cross, and finds that it can sustain him even when sinking in death. His assurance is then more confident. He finds the necessity of coming to a conclusion about his state. The question must be settled. He cannot now do with doubts and fears, but must have the point cleared up, whether he is a child of God, an heir of glory, or not; and it is cleared up. He knows and feels that he depends on Christ, and nothing else. He is peaceful in the billows of Jordan; unaffrighted amidst the shadows of the dark valley; dead in heart to the world, before he is dead in body; and hopeful in the prospect of eternity. All this is evidence to him of personal religion! He feels he is a Christian. Blessed conclusion! And it blesses *him*. Assurance, which he had sought through life, comes in death. If it was not a sun to shine upon his path through the world, it is a lamp to cheer him along the dark avenue of the grave. He can die in peace, for he now knows in whom he has believed.

But in addition to all this, God is especially near his dying saints, and loves then to grant them the strongest consolations of his Spirit. It seems to be his design and pleasure, to make grace most triumphant amidst the weakness and decays of nature, and to prove that the blessedness of an immortal soul arises from himself, since he makes it happy by his presence, when everything else conspires to make it miserable. We can imagine that the object most interesting to the heart of infinite love, is the dying martyr, and next to him, the dying Christian. It is the last time till the resurrection morning, in which God permits the

world to look upon his children; and then, when he is taking them away, he presents them with the smile of peace upon their countenance, and sometimes with the song of victory on their lips. He seems to make it a point to meet them in the dark valley, and reserves his strongest cordials for their expiring moments. It is said of those that believe in Jesus, that they shall not "see death." The grim monster is in the gloomy passage, but Christ interposing between him and the dying believer, the Christian looking only at the Saviour, passes by without noticing the terrors of the last enemy. God has promised not to forsake his people, even amidst the troubles of life, but he compasseth them with his presence amidst the sorrows of death. How rarely do we hear of a consistent Christian dying in a disconsolate state! That some who have been lukewarm and irregular, who have not been watchful and diligent, are left to inquietude and perturbation in that season, when it is most desirable there should be peace, is very true. God chastises the inconsistencies of their lives in the season of their death. Purgatory is a mere Popish delusion, but the disciplinary process of a long and cheerless approach to the tomb is sometimes employed by sovereign mercy, to meeten the backslider in heart for the realms of glory. Seldom, however, is the consistent professor left to darkness and distress in his last moments; on the contrary, he usually finds his dying chamber to be the vestibule of heaven, where the anthems of the redeemed are heard from within, inviting him to the work of everlasting praise.

Let the consistent professor, therefore, go cheerfully forward to his latter end. Let him cast away the fearful apprehensions of a dying hour. Not that all kinds and degrees of fear can be totally suppressed. Death is an awful event: and to regard it with careless indifference is the mark of a hardened heart, and not of a renewed one. Some good people have distressed their minds, and written

bitter things against themselves, because they could not altogether rise above the fear of death. But this is needless self-torment. There is an apprehensiveness of this great change, which is almost inseparable from humanity, and indeed is one of the safeguards of life, and which is greatly increased, in some cases, by physical temperament. This may co-exist with sincere, and even with eminent piety. Mr. JAY, I remember, illustrates the subject thus. A man may be in America, while his wife and family are in England. He may wish to be with them, for his heart is there: but still he may dread to cross the Atlantic ocean which lies between himself and them. So a Christian's heart may be in heaven, yet he may dread to pass through death, though it leads to glory. Nothing tends more to subdue this natural fear of the last enemy, than the habitual contemplation of the heavenly state, and the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ for the dying hour. As a dark object when seen between two resplendent ones loses its gloomy aspect, and becomes itself almost bright; so death, when viewed between the cross of Christ, and the crown of glory, receives a lustre by reflection which conceals, if it does not altogether remove, its horrors. Wherefore let us go on to meet the last enemy with the joint language of both Testaments upon our lips.—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and staff comfort me.” “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.” “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Who can lift up the veil and see the Christian in his eternal state? Who can follow him into the unapproachable light, the insufferable splendor of the divine pre-

sence? Mortality is swallowed up of life: humanity is absorbed in glory. There is one thing, among many others, which deserves a momentary attention; it is the interview of the sincere, consistent, and persevering professor, with "the Lord that bought him." Of that scene, however, little can be imagined but what is suggested by the words which his Lord will then say to him. "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Thou hast taken up my name, and hast not dishonoured it; entered my church, and not defiled it; professed my religion, and not disparaged it; borne my cross, and not added to its ignominy by inconsistency of conduct. Well done, well done." O rapturous expression! How joyful a sound does such a testimony carry from the mouth of Christ! O what can be so grateful and reviving to the heart of a good man, as to have the Lord of life and glory say to him, "Well done?" What a reward for all the labours, and self-denial, and sufferings of a life of piety, to hear God say—"I am well pleased with thee!" But this is not all; for he will add—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Thou hast laboured well in thy profession; that is all over for ever, and now enter upon thy rest and thy reward. Thou hast denied thyself, but not me, and now I confess thee as my faithful follower before my Father and his holy angels. Thou hast had fellowship with me in my suffering, and nothing now remains for me and thee, but joy unspeakable and full of glory; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This is the sum of all felicity. But who shall explain it? What does it mean? The joy of which Christ is the object, a felicity to be derived from being with him and beholding his glory? Or the joy of which he is the author; which he creates around us and within us? Or the joy of which he is the possessor? as though he had said "enter into that joy that is now to be common both to me and thee, and of

which thou shalt partake with me." It is all these united. Into this joy the faithful professor will be welcomed and introduced by Christ himself. It shall not so much enter into him, as he into it; he is not so much to possess it, as to be possessed by it; it is the atmosphere which is to surround him; the light which is to shine upon him; the glory which is to cover him; the very element which is to absorb him. Into this he is to enter, but never to depart from it.

DEATH WELCOME TO THE BELIEVER.

I WOULD not live alway: I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way;
The few lurid mornings that dawn on us here,
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer,

I would not live alway, thus fettered by sin;
Temptation without and corruption within:
E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears.

I would not live alway; no—welcome the tomb,
Since Jesus hath lain there, I dread not its gloom;
There, sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise,
To hail him in triumph descending the skies.

Who, who would live alway, away from his God;
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns:

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren, transported to greet;
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul.

COMMUNION WITH GOD

THE BEST SUCCOUR IN THE WORST SEASONS.

MR. HENRY, that sweet expositor of sacred writ, a little before his death desired his friends to notice as his dying saying, "That a life spent in the service of God, and communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that any one can live in this world." The beloved apostle John wrote his first general epistle with the kind and benevolent design of bringing its readers to have fellowship with the apostles; but not in their bonds and afflictions, if that could possibly have been avoided; no, but that like them they might have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Blessed Paul wished all men like himself in that respect. A better wish could not possibly have entered into his heart, either for a fellow-mortal, or for his own soul. Communion with God is the highest honour and happiness of which men or angels are capable. The sublimest notions of carnal minds fall infinitely short of this felicity. "It is," says Mr. Shaw in his admirable treatise entitled Immanuel, "the grand distinction

which marks the difference between true saints and all others." Dr. Owen, that great luminary of the church, whose treatise on the subject has often delighted the hearts of believers, defines it "The mutual communication of such good things as wherein the persons holding that communion are delighted, bot-tomed upon some union between them."

This communion implies acquaintance, agreement, friendship, and love. God is love. He is man's best friend, and perfectly acquainted with him in every respect. But man by nature is ignorant of God. He is an enemy to him by wicked works. His carnal mind is enmity against him. He is in a state of darkness, a child of wrath, a slave of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins. Such being the case, how is man's communion with God possible? Can two walk together unless they be agreed? What concord hath light with darkness, life with death, or enmity with love? Surely none at all. Then, if any one has fellowship with God, he must be recon-ciled unto him through the death of his Son. Yea, without true friendship there can be no good fellow-ship. Nor is there any Mediator between God and man but the man Christ Jesus. If any man have fellowship with God he is a new creature. He has passed from death to life. He is translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In a word, he is God's workmanship, who hath created him anew in his own holy and blessed image. This man knows the Lord as he is revealed in his works, his ways, and his word. He hears and obeys his voice, and that because there is none on earth, or in heaven, in whom he

so much delights. God and he love fellowship together. Herein they converse with each other. Between him and God there is a mutual giving and receiving.

In this spiritual converse God speaks in divers ways and manners. His voice is uttered forth not only in the lively and charming scenes by day, but also in the dark and solemn silence of the night. The sun, moon, and stars, together with the air, earth, and seas, and all their numerous inhabitants, declare to the saints the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the Lord. He speaks to them also by his providential dispensations; sometimes in the sunshine of prosperity, and at other times in the darkness of adversity. There are seasons when he makes them lie down in green pastures; when he prepares a table for them in this wilderness, and gives them all things richly to enjoy. Their cup runs over with blessings. By and by he speaks to them as it were out of the whirlwind. He brings them into the school of affliction, and speaks to them by the rod of correction. He saw them in danger of leaning too much on earthly props, of making too much of temporal enjoyments, and therefore determined to give wings to their wealth and to take away the desire of their eyes by the stroke of death. Perhaps a husband, a wife, or a child, a minister, or a friend, he calls away from them that he may possess more of their hearts, and be everything to them. He speaks to them also by his word and Spirit; and these always agree together. The former is made effectual by the latter. But in every way in which God speaks to his people, they no

sooner understand his language, but they find it is that of mercy. He speaks peace out of the abundance of a kind and loving heart.

In reply to the voice of God, the saint in his converse with him, gives credit to everything he speaks and complies with it. If his stubborn heart rise up against any part, he will not condemn the part against which it rises, but his heart for rising up against it. He will view it as the sad effect of the plague in his heart, and as such will loathe himself in his own sight. It will be his concern to obey the voice of the rod, and not despise the chastening of the Lord; to follow the word, and not quench the motions of the Spirit; to make suitable returns for every display of the divine perfections. He will adore infinite wisdom, and commit himself to its guidance, not leaning on his own understanding. He will confide in infinite power for his grand support and defence. He will bow to the divine sovereignty with humble resignation, well knowing that he has no right to find fault, and that his Heavenly Father orders everything for the best. He will speak to the Lord often with boldness, but not with rudeness. He will confess his sins unto him. He will plead with him in prayer for promised blessings, and not omit to praise him for those which he has already received. He can and does unbosom himself to the Lord more than to the nearest and dearest friend he has in the world. He can tell him his fears, his foes, and all his desires. He knows he cannot ask too much, nor offend by asking too often, or with too much importunity. God attends to his sighs and groans, as much as to his

finest words and sentences; and when the fit time is come he says to his pleading servant, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

In this communion there is not only a mutual converse, but also a giving and receiving. God gives to his saints, and they gratefully receive of him, again making dutiful returns to him, which he graciously accepts of. He gives himself to them, and they give themselves to him. He says, "I will be your God," and they say, "We will be thy people." He gives them a sense of his love, so that they feel it shed abroad in their hearts. They enjoy it as what it truly is, love infinitely great, sovereign, and free; without variableness or shadow of turning; ancient, boundless, and durable as eternity, the grand spring of every blessing they enjoy, or for which they hope either in this world or in that which is to come. He gives them his infinite wisdom to guide their feet in the way of peace. He bestows his mercy upon them according to their need. He lends them his powerful arm on which they lean; and with it he holds them up so that they are safe. He renews their strength, yea, perfects his strength in their weakness. They can truly say to him in the words of the Psalmist, "Thy right hand hath holden us up;" and again, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand." In a word, he offers them his all-sufficiency; so that their sufficiency is of him, and he is everything to them. He says to them as he did to Moses, "I am." Whatever you need, that I am, and will be to you. Now, what shall they render to the Lord for all his benefits? They yield themselves to him. They give him their hearts;

set their affections upon him ; yield their understandings to the guidance of his counsel, and their wills to be ruled by his in all things. They likewise present their bodies to him as living sacrifices. With their feet they will not stand in the way of sinners, much less run after the multitude of evil doers ; but they will cheerfully go to the house of God, and also visit the house of mourning. With their tongues they will not utter lies and scandal ; but the words of truth and soberness, and what will be for the glory of God and the edification of man. Their hands will not be folded together in idleness, much less employed in doing mischief ; but with them they will work that they may have for themselves, and also to give to him that needeth. Not only in devotions, but also in business and honest industry, the saints have fellowship with Deity. Whether they be hewing wood or drawing water ; navigating their ships, or digging, sowing or reaping their grounds ; minding their sheep, or their shops ; or whatever else their lawful calling may be, therein they shall enjoy the divine presence and approbation.

After what has been advanced it may be added, that there is no communion so sweet, so safe, so durable, so honourable or advantageous as communion with God. There is that in it which exactly suits, fully satisfies, and infinitely delights the sublime and capacious powers of the immortal soul. Sensual delights are momentary, and rather surfeit than satisfy, often leaving a sting behind ; but in communion with God the soul finds its centre and rest. Here the river runs into the ocean. Here the spirit

returns to God who gave it. Here all the scattered beauties in the wide creation are found collected together. Not the most exquisite painting to the limner's eye, nor the softest strains to the musician's ear, nor yet the sweetest fragrance to the smell, or most delicious food to the epicurean's palate, are worthy to be compared with the blessedness of communion with God. What can be more honourable than to visit and be visited, to walk and talk, and have a joint interest with the King of kings? Herein we need fear no evil; neither loss nor disgrace. We are safe in the wilderness, and shall not be less so in the shadow of death. The beginning of this fellowship is the beginning of heaven below, and the perfection of it will be the perfection of heaven above. It is that communion which no power, however great, which no place, however distant, can for a moment interrupt. Death itself which breaks up so many connections and fellowships, does not destroy, but rather brings this to perfection. How blessed is it to be walking with God! By so doing we shall become like him, and ere long be with him for ever and ever.

ON UNION WITH CHRIST.

THE union of a believer with Christ is so intimate, so unalterable, so rich in privilege, so powerful in influence that it cannot be fully represented by any description or similitude taken from earthly things. The mind, like the sight, is incapable of apprehending a great object without viewing it on different sides. To

help our weakness the nature of this union is illustrated in the Scripture by four comparisons, each throwing an additional light on the subject, yet all falling short of the thing signified.

In our natural state we are driven and tossed about by the changing winds of opinion, and the waves of trouble, which hourly disturb and threaten us upon the uncertain sea of human life. But faith uniting us to Christ fixes us on the Rock of Ages as a sure *foundation* where we stand immovable, though storms and floods unite their strength and violence against us.

By nature we are separated from the divine life as branches broken off, withered and fruitless; but faith ingrafts us into Christ, the living *Vine*, from whom as the root and stock of all fulness, a constant supply of sap and influence is derived by all the mystical branches, enabling them to bring forth fruit unto God, and to persevere and abound therein.

By nature we are hateful and abominable in the sight of a holy God, and full of enmity and hatred toward each other. By faith uniting us to Christ we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and joint communion amongst ourselves, even as the members of the same body have each of them union, communion, and sympathy with the *head*, and with their fellow members.

In our natural state we were cast out naked and destitute without pity and without help; but faith uniting us to Christ interests us in his righteousness, his riches, and his honours. Our Redeemer is our *husband*; our debts are paid, our settlements secured, and our names honourably changed.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

WHEN Christ made his appearance on earth, the opinions of men respecting his person and character were various. The same diversity of sentiment still prevails even among those who profess to be Christians. Some imagine that he was the most exalted character among men, but nothing more than human. Others suppose that in dignity of nature, and priority of existence, he is inconceivably superior both to men and angels, a kind of inferior Deity. Others again believe that he is independently possessed of all the essential perfections of Godhead, co-equal with the Father.

As these sentiments are so directly opposite to each other, some of them must, doubtless, be false. Many suppose it is comparatively indifferent which of them we embrace; and that if we should inadvertently entertain an erroneous idea on this subject, God will consider it as an innocent mistake. The design of this tract is to guard against that spirit of indifference which engenders the dangerous delusion, and to show that just thoughts of Christ are of the utmost importance.

1. The manifest care God has taken to give a clear and just representation of Christ is one confirmation of the fact. The principal design of God in the sacred Scriptures is to lead us into the knowledge of Christ. Therein his person, his characters, his works, his authority, &c. are described with exactness, as a matter of the utmost importance. His Godhead is therein unequivocally affirmed. Isa. ix. 6; liv. 5. John i. 1; x. 30. Rom. ix. 5. Heb. i. 8. 1 John v. 20. Divine honours are demanded as his due. John v. 23. His assumption of human nature is expressly declared,

whereby he became and continues to be God and man in one person. John i. 14. Phil. ii. 5, &c. Heb. ii. 14, &c. With equal plainness it is asserted, that this God-man is the only Mediator and Saviour. 1 Tim. ii. 5. John xiv. 6. Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 11. Now as God has taken care, in the Scriptures, to give the most clear and express revelation of Christ; so he most solemnly charges his ministers to preach Christ, to unfold the dignity of his person, the completeness of his work, the fulness of his grace, &c. as the grand design of their ministry. Eph. iii. 8. The apostles, who spoke under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, closely adhered to their charge; and woe to those ministers who do not follow their example. 2 Cor. iv. 5. 1 Cor i. 22; ii. 2.

Can we suppose that God would take such constant care, both by the Scriptures and through the medium of the gospel ministry, to give a just and clear representation of Christ, if just conceptions of him were not of the utmost importance?

2. Of such importance are just thoughts of Christ, that without them we cannot form a just conception of God. The perfections of God are indeed, in a measure, displayed in the works of creation and providence; but it is in the person and work of Christ alone that we can have a discovery of the nature, the purposes, the covenant-characters of God, as he stands related to sinners. John i. 18. He is therefore called the image of God, or that whereby God is represented unto us, and every other representation is insufficient. It is in the face of Christ, in his person and work, that the glory of God's wisdom, his justice, his goodness, his grace is discovered. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Wrong views of Christ will therefore lead us to wrong ideas of God. The truth of this remark is exemplified in those who differ in their thoughts of Christ. As a natural consequence they differ likewise in their thoughts of God. Those who have low conceptions

of the person and work of Christ, are thereby led to form low and unscriptural ideas of the strictness of God's justice, and the riches of his grace. If then, our thoughts of Christ have a necessary influence on our ideas of God, which experience proves to be a fact, surely just conceptions of Christ are very important.

3. Besides, our prevailing sentiments of Christ will necessarily influence and regulate our deportment towards him. Do not different persons act very differently with respect to Christ? Some pay him divine adoration; depend on him exclusively for salvation; love him as the chief object of their desire and delight; and submit to his authority as supreme. Others pursue an opposite line of conduct. What can be the reason of this difference? It is because they have different thoughts of Christ. If we believe him to be God over all, we shall feel it our duty to worship him as such. If we conceive him to be the alone and all-sufficient Saviour, we shall exclusively depend on him. If we esteem him as supremely amiable, we shall love him supremely. If we admit him to be our rightful sovereign, we shall yield cordial and unfeigned obedience to him. But if our thoughts be different, our conduct will be different likewise. If propriety of deportment to Christ be important, (and it must be inconceivably so,) then just thoughts of him are important.

4. So important are just conceptions of Christ, that wrong views of his person and offices if persisted in, will inevitably issue in eternal perdition. This, perhaps, may sound harsh and awful; but it is not more awful than true. John viii 24. If a proper knowledge of Christ be eternal life, which is declared, John xvii. 3, then we may infer that the want of it is eternal death. The vast importance of the question in dispute, when seriously considered, will justify the alarming idea. If he were, confessedly, only a creature, and the dispute were only respecting his scale of dignity as a

creature, a mistake herein would be comparatively of light importance: but when the matter debated is, whether he be the very God, or only a creature made by God, then the nature of the question is materially altered. A mistake in the matter then necessarily involves us, either in idolatry on the one hand, or a denial of the true God on the other. If Christ be God, it must be as ruinous to deny it, as to deny the Godhead of the Father; if he be not, it is idolatrous to profess it.

An attention to the leading idea, under the former particular, must convince us, that so wide a mistake in our conceptions of Christ will prove inevitably ruinous: for if improper thoughts of Christ produce a proportionate impropriety of deportment towards him, what can the end of this be but ruin? Not believing him to be God, you will not give him divine honours, the refusal of which is ruinous. John viii. 24. Isa. xlv. 23, 24. Psa. ii. 12. Not thinking him to be the all-sufficient Saviour, you will not depend exclusively upon him for salvation; and this is threatened with damnation. John iii. 18, 36. Not esteeming him supremely amiable, you will not love him supremely, and those who do not are marked objects of the heaviest curse. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Not admitting him to be your rightful Sovereign, you will refuse obedience to him; and the certain wages of this stubbornness is destruction. Luke xix. 27.

You see then, reader, with what propriety the apostle coveted and prized the knowledge of Christ. Phil. iii. 7, &c. Follow his example. Think much of Christ; and especially desire that you may have *just* thoughts of him: just, as to the matter of them, viz. scriptural thoughts; and just, as to their nature and properties; believing, humbling, affectionate, transforming, aspiring thoughts. To this end, look to the Spirit of God, whose office it is to take the things of Christ and show them to men.

A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE,

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

MY DEAR FRIEND.—You request the particulars of that change of which a few years ago I was the subject. You need not be told that the religious experiences of fallible creatures, like everything else that attends them, must needs be marked with imperfection; and that the account that can be given of them on paper, after a lapse of several years, must be so in a still greater degree. I am willing, however, to comply with your request; and the rather because it may serve to recall some things which, in passing over the mind, produce sensations both of pain and pleasure.

My parents were of the Calvinistic persuasion. They were engaged in husbandry, which occupation therefore I followed till the twentieth year of my age. I remember many of the sins of my childhood; among which were lying, cursing, and swearing. It is true, as to the latter, it never became habitual. I had a dread upon my spirits to such a degree, that when I uttered an oath, or an imprecation, it was by a kind

of force put upon my feelings, and merely to appear manly, like other boys with whom I associated. This being the case, when I came to be about ten years old, I entirely left it off, except that I sometimes dealt in a sort of *minced* oaths and imprecations, when my passions were inflamed.

In the practice of telling lies I continued some years longer; at length, however, I began to think this a mean vice, and accordingly left it off, except in cases where I was under some pressing temptation.

I think I must have been nearly fourteen years old before I began to have any serious thoughts about futurity. The preaching under which I attended was not adapted to awaken my conscience, as the minister had seldom anything to say except to believers; and what *believing* was I neither knew, nor greatly cared to know. I remember, however, about this time as I was walking alone, I put the question to myself, What is faith? There is much made of it, what is it? I could not tell; but satisfied myself in thinking it was not of immediate concern, and I should understand it as I grew older.

Sometimes conviction laid fast hold on me, and rendered me extremely unhappy. One winter evening, in particular, I went to a smith's shop, where a number of other boys sat round the fire. Presently they began to sing vain songs. This appeared to me so much like revelling, that I felt something within that would not suffer me to join them; and while I sat silent, in rather an unpleasant muse, those words sunk deep into my mind, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" They had such an effect upon me that I immediately left the company; yet, shocking to reflect upon, I

walked away murmuring in my heart against God, that I could not be let alone, and suffered to take my pleasure like other children!

At other times I was greatly affected by reading or thinking of the doctrines of Christianity. One day in particular I took up Mr. R. Erskine's Gospel Sonnets, and opening upon a piece called "A Gospel Catechism for young Christians, or Christ all in all in our complete redemption," I read, and as I read I wept. Indeed I was almost overcome with weeping, so interesting did the doctrine of eternal salvation appear to me: yet, there being no radical change in my heart, these thoughts passed away, and I was equally intent on the pursuits of folly as heretofore.

Sometimes I felt a strange kind of regard towards good people, such of them especially as were familiar in their behaviour to young people, and would sometimes talk with me about religion. I used to wish I had many thousand pounds, that I might give some of it to them, who were poor as to their worldly circumstances.

I was sometimes the subject of such convictions and affections that I really thought myself a converted person, and lived under that delusion for some years. The ground on which I rested this opinion was as follows: One day as I was walking alone, I began to think seriously what would become of my poor soul. I felt myself the slave of sin. Till now I did not know but that I could repent at any time; but now I perceived that my heart was wicked, and that it was not in me to turn to God, or to break off my sins by righteousness. I saw that if God would forgive me all the past, and offer me the kingdom of heaven on the con-

dition of giving up my wicked pursuits, I should not accept it. This conviction was accompanied with great depression of heart. I walked sorrowfully along, repeating these words: "Iniquity will be my ruin! Iniquity will be my ruin!" While poring over my unhappy case, those words of the apostle suddenly occurred to my mind, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Now the suggestion of a text of Scripture to the mind, and especially if it came with power, was generally considered by religious people, with whom I occasionally associated, as a promise coming immediately from God. I therefore so understood it, and thought that God had thus revealed to me that I was in a state of salvation, and that therefore iniquity should not, as I had feared, be my ruin. The effect was, I was overcome with joy and transport. I shed, I suppose, thousands of tears as I walked along, and seemed to feel myself as it were in a new world. It appeared to me that I hated my sins, and was resolved to forsake them. Thinking on my wicked courses I remember using those words of Paul, "Shall I continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!" I felt, or seemed to feel, the strongest indignation at the thought. But, strange as it may appear, though my face that morning I believe was swollen with weeping, yet before night all was gone and forgotten, and I returned to my former vices with as great a relish as ever; nor do I remember that for more than half a year after it, I had any serious thoughts about the salvation of my soul.

About a year afterwards, however, I was again walking by myself, and began to reflect upon my

course of life, particularly upon my former hopes and affections, and how I had since forgotten them all, and returned to all my wicked way. Instead of sin having no more dominion over me, I perceived that its dominion had been increased. For some minutes I was greatly dejected, but was instantly relieved by what I accounted another promise from God. These words were suggested to my mind, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." By this, as by the former, I was overcome with what I considered as God's great love to me, and shed I suppose thousands of tears, not of sorrow but of joy and gratitude. I now considered myself as having been in a backsliding state, and that God had graciously restored me; though in truth I have every reason to think that the great deep of my heart's depravity had not yet been broken up, and that all my religion was mere transient impression, without any abiding principle. Amidst it all I had lived without prayer, and was never, that I recollect, induced to deny myself of one sin, when temptations were presented. I now thought, however, surely I shall be better for the time to come. But, alas! in a few days this also was forgotten, and I returned to my evil courses with as much eagerness as ever.

I now began to draw towards sixteen years of age, and as my powers and passions strengthened, I was more and more addicted to evil. Nor was I merely prompted by my own propensities; for having formed connections with other wicked young people, my progress in the way to death was thereby greatly accelerated. Being of an athletic frame, and of a daring spirit, I was often engaged in such exercises and ex-

plots as, if the good hand of God had not preserved me, might have issued in death. I also frequently engaged in games of hazard, which, though not to any great amount, yet were very bewitching to me, and tended greatly to corrupt my mind. These with various other evil courses, had so hardened my heart that I seldom thought of religion. Nay, I recollect that on a Lord's day evening about this time, when my parents were reading in the family, I was shamefully engaged with one of the servants playing idle tricks, though I took care not to be seen in them. These things were nothing to me at that time, for my conscience, by reiterated acts of wickedness, had become seared as with a hot iron. They were heavy burdens however to me afterwards.

Thus, notwithstanding various convictions and transient affections I was pressing on in a lamentable career of wickedness; but about this time my convictions revisited me and brought on such a concern about my everlasting welfare, as issued, I trust, in real conversion.

It was my common practice after the business of the day was over, to get into bad company in the evening; and when there, I indulged in sin without restraint. But after persisting in this course for a time, I began to be very uneasy, particularly in a morning when I first awoke. It was almost as common for me to be seized with keen remorse at this hour, as it was to go into company in the evening. At first, I began to make vows of reformation, and this for the moment would afford a little ease; but as the temptations returned my vows were of no account. It was an enlightened conscience only that was on the side

of God: my heart was still averse to every thing spiritual or holy. For several weeks I went on in this way, vowing, and breaking my vows; reflecting on myself for my evil conduct, and yet continually repeating it.

It was not now as heretofore: my convictions followed me up closely. I could not, as formerly, forget these things, and was therefore a poor miserable creature; like a drunkard who carouses in the evening, but mopes about the next day like one half dead. One morning, as I was walking alone, I felt an uncommon load upon my heart. The remembrance of my sins, not only on the past evening, but for a long time back, the breach of my vows, and the shocking termination of my former hopes and affections, all uniting together, formed a burden which I knew not how to bear. The gnawing of a guilty conscience seemed to me a kind of hell within me. Nay, I really thought at the time, that this was the fire and brimstone of the bottomless pit, and that in me it was already kindled. I do not write in the language of exaggeration. I now know, that the sense which I then had of the evil of my sin, and the dreadfulness of God's righteous displeasure against me on account of it, came very far short of the truth; but yet they seemed more than I was able to sustain. When I thought of my broken vows, they served to convince me that there was no truth in me, and that I was altogether wicked. I subscribed to the justice of my doom, if I were sent to hell; and plainly saw that to hell I must go, unless I were saved by mere grace, and, as it were, in spite of myself. I sensibly perceived that if God were to forgive me all the past,

I should again destroy my soul, and that in a very little time. I never before felt myself such an odious and helpless sinner. I seemed to have nothing about me that ought to excite the pity of God, or that I could reasonably expect should do so; but everything disgusting to him, and provoking to the eyes of his glory.

And now the question would turn in my mind, What must I do? What shall I do? six or seven times over. Indeed, I felt utterly at a loss what to do. To think of amendment, and much more to make vows concerning it as heretofore, were but a mockery of God and my own soul; and to hope for forgiveness in the course that I was in, was the height of presumption. So I had no refuge. For a moment despair took hold upon me, and I even thought of returning and taking my fill of sin, let the consequences be what they might; but then again the thoughts of being lost, and lost forever, sunk into my soul like lead into the waters. While thinking on this my past hopes also recurred to mind, and aggravated the idea of eternal punishment. What, thought I, shall I at once bid adieu to Christ, and hope, and heaven, and plunge my soul into endless ruin? At this my heart revolted. What shall I do? What can I do? This was all I could say.

It is difficult at this distance of time to recollect with precision the minute workings of my mind; but as near as I can remember, I was like a man drowning, looking every way for help, or rather catching for something by which he might save his life. I tried to find out if there were any hope in divine mercy, any in the Saviour of sinners; but felt re-

pulsed in the thoughts of mercy having been so basely abused already. In this state of mind, as I was moving slowly on, I thought of the resolution of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:" and as it yielded me a faint ray of hope, I repeated the words many times over, and at each repetition seemed to gather a little strength. It excited a sort of per-adventure that the Saviour of sinners might save my life, mixed with a determination, if I might, to cast my perishing soul upon him for salvation, to be both pardoned and purified, for I felt I needed the one as much as the other.

I was not then aware that any poor sinner had a warrant to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul; but supposed there must be some kind of qualification to entitle him to do it; yet I was aware I had no qualifications. On a review of my resolution at that time, it seems to resemble that of Esther, who went into the king's presence contrary to the law, and at the hazard of her life. Like her I seemed reduced to extremities; impelled by dire necessity to run all hazards, even though I should perish in the attempt. Yet it was not altogether from a dread of wrath that I fled to this refuge; for I well remember that I perceived something attracting in the Saviour. "I must—I will—yes I will—trust my soul—my sinful lost soul—in his hands. If I perish, I perish!" Such in substance were my resolutions. In this state of mind I continued nearly an hour, weeping and supplicating mercy for the Saviour's sake; (my soul has it still in remembrance and is humbled in me!) and as the eye of my mind

was more and more fixed on him, my guilt and fears were gradually and insensibly removed.

I now found rest for my troubled soul, and I reckon that I should have found it sooner, if I had not entertained the notion of my having no warrant to come to Christ without some previous qualification. This notion was a bar that kept me back for a time, though through divine drawings I was enabled to overleap it. As near as I can remember, in the early part of these exercises, when I subscribed to the justice of God in my condemnation, and thought of the Saviour of sinners, I had then relinquished every false confidence, believed my help to be only in him, and approved of salvation by grace alone, through his death: and if at that time I had known that any poor sinner might warrantably have trusted in him for salvation, I conceive I should have done so, and have found rest to my soul sooner than I did. I mention this, because it may be the case with others who may be kept in darkness and despondency, by erroneous views of the gospel much longer than I was.

I think also I did repent of my sin in the early part of these exercises, and before I thought that Christ would accept and save my soul. I conceive that justifying God in my condemnation, and approving the way of salvation by Jesus Christ necessarily included repentance; but yet I did not think at the time that this was repentance or anything truly good. Indeed I thought nothing about the exercises of my own mind, but merely of my guilty and lost condition, and whether there were any hope of escape for me. But having found rest for my soul in the cross of Christ, I was now conscious of my being the sub-

ject of repentance, faith, and love. When I thought of my past life, I abhorred myself and repented in dust and ashes; and when I thought of the gospel way of salvation, I drank it in, as cold water to a thirsty soul. My heart felt one with Christ, and dead to every other object around me. I had thought I had found the joys of the gospel heretofore; but now I seemed to know that I had found them, and was conscious that I had passed from death unto life. Yet even now my mind was not so engaged in reflecting upon my own feelings, as upon the objects which occasioned them.

From this time my former wicked courses were forsaken. I had no manner of desire after them. They lost their influence upon me. To those evils, a glance at which before would have instantly set my passions in a flame, I now felt no inclination. My soul, said I, with joy and triumph, is as a weaned child! I now knew experimentally what it was to be dead to the world by the cross of Christ, and to feel a habitual determination to devote my future life to God my Saviour. From this time I consider the vows of God as upon me; but, ah, my friend, I have great reason for shame and bitter reflection in reviewing the manner in which they have been fulfilled! Nevertheless, by the help of God, I continue in his service to this day, and daily live in hope of eternal life, through Jesus Christ my Lord and only Saviour.

I am affectionately, yours,
A. B.

HOW AM I TO KNOW WHETHER I HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

IF you have the Holy Spirit, you have seen the evil of sin; you have repented of sin; you have forsaken sin; you hate sin; you watch and pray against sin; you have received the spirit of love. If you have the Spirit of God, you love God supremely. You love the Father, who gave his Son to suffer and die. You love the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for what he hath done and suffered on your account. You love all the sincere followers of Jesus Christ, and confine not your regards to a party. You love the human race at large, as children of the same family, and you wish them to know the things that belong to their peace. You are of a forbearing and forgiving temper; you pity and pray for sinners, who, through blindness and ignorance, oppose at present their own eternal interest; you are of a thankful spirit; you thank God for making you to differ, by his grace, from many others; and you praise him for every favour both of a temporal and spiritual nature; you are zealous for the honour of God in the world; you desire to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in all the duties of Christianity; you esteem the applause, the pleasure and the wealth of the whole world, as nothing, in comparison of the love and blessing of God, through Christ Jesus.

THE FIRST-DAY SABBATH,

OR THE

LORD'S-DAY THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

“OFFENCES must come, that they which are approved may be made manifest.” One end to be accomplished by the permission of error, is the trial of man’s faith, and the establishment of that of the truly and intelligently faithful. In this way, controversy more than compensates for any labour and anxiety to which it subjects the friends of truth. Among the topics of discussion at the present time, the claims of the Christian Sabbath occupy a justly pre-eminent place. The question has become, in all those countries with which we are most closely connected, a matter of no secondary practical moment, inasmuch as both here and in Great Britain, the friends and the enemies of the Sabbath have, of late, come into frequent collision. Indeed, it is plain that the latter are endeavouring to concentrate and organize their strength for a great effort at some future and not distant period, in opposition to the whole of that legislation with which the most enlightened Protestant States have guarded the day of rest.

Into the Sabbath question in this general aspect, we do not propose to enter. We confine ourselves at present to the question, Is the first day of the week now, the appointed day of rest, and of special religious observances? Is it the Christian Sabbath?

Before we enter on the direct examination of this question in the light of the Scriptures, by whose authority alone it can be determined, it becomes necessary to vindicate the good name of Calvin, the greatest of the Reformers, from the aspersion—for we regard it as such—that he maintained

“the abrogation of the fourth commandment as a ceremonial institution, and contended for a Sabbath or stated day of worship under the gospel only as a wise and necessary human arrangement.” That this eminent Reformer did use some expressions which give colour to these assertions, we do not deny, but this is all: he still maintained the Divine authority of the Lord's day. In speaking of this institution, among other words, he thus defines its end:*

“First, under the rest of the seventh day, the divine Law-giver meant to furnish the people of Israel with a type of the spiritual rest by which believers were to cease from their own works, and allow God to work in them. Secondly, he meant that there should be a stated day on which they should assemble to hear the law and perform religious rites, or which, at least, they should specially employ in meditating on his works, and be thereby trained to piety. Thirdly, he meant that servants, and those who lived under the authority of others, should be indulged with a day of rest, and thus have some intermission from labour.”

Having established this statement, he proceeds,

“There can be no doubt, that, on the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ceremonial part of the commandment was abolished. He is the truth, at whose presence all the emblems vanish; the body, at the sight of which the shadows disappear.

“The two other cases ought not to be classed with ancient shadows, but are adapted to every age. The Sabbath being abrogated, there is still room among us, first, to assemble on stated days for the hearing of the word, the breaking of the mystical bread, and public prayer; and, secondly, to give our servants and labourers relaxation from labour. *It cannot be doubted that the Lord provided for both in the commandment of the Sabbath.* The former is abundantly evinced by the mere practice of the Jews. The latter Moses has expressed in Deuteronomy v. 14.

“Who can deny that both are equally applicable to us as to the Jews? Religious meetings are enjoined us by the word of God; their necessity, experience itself sufficiently demonstrates. But unless these meetings are stated, and have fixed days allotted to them, how can they be held?

“But if the reason for which the Lord appointed a Sabbath to the Jews is equally applicable to us, no man can

* Inst., Book II., chap. viii. 4th Com.

assert that it is a matter with which we have nothing to do. Our most provident and indulgent Parent has been pleased to provide for our wants not less than for the wants of the Jews. Why, it may be asked, do we not hold daily meetings, and thus avoid the distinction of days? Would that we were privileged to do so! Spiritual wisdom undoubtedly deserves to have some portion of every day devoted to it. But if, owing to the weakness of many, daily meetings cannot be held, and charity will not allow us to exact more of them, why should we not adopt the rule which the will of God has obviously imposed upon us?"

In this passage, Calvin vindicates the law of the Sabbath as of perpetual obligation. He then proceeds to vindicate the church from the charge of Judaizing; and in the same connection asserts that the change was made not by "human arrangement," but by apostolic, and, of course, divine authority. But hear him again.

"I am obliged to dwell a little longer on this, because some restless spirits are now making an outcry about the observance of the Lord's day. They complain that Christian people are trained in Judaism, because some observance of days is retained. My reply is, That those days are observed by us without Judaism, because in this matter we differ widely from the Jews. We do not celebrate it with most minute formality, as a ceremony by which we imagine that a spiritual mystery is typified, but we adopt it as a necessary remedy for preserving order in the church. Paul informs us that Christians are not to be judged in respect of its observance, because it is a shadow of something to come, (Col. ii. 16;) and, accordingly, he expresses a fear lest his labour among the Galatians should prove in vain, because they still observe days, (Gal. iv. 10, 11.) And he tells the Romans that it is superstitious to make one day differ from another, (Rom. xiv. 5.) But who, except those restless men, does not see what the observance is to which the apostle refers? Those persons had no regard to that politic and ecclesiastical arrangement, but by retaining the days as types of spiritual things, they in so far obscured the glory of Christ, and the light of the gospel. They did not desist from manual labour on the ground of its interfering with sacred study and meditation, but as a kind of religious observance; because they dreamed that by their cessation from labour, they were cultivating the mysteries which had

of old been committed to them. It was, I say, against this preposterous observance of days that the apostle inveighs, and not against that legitimate selection which is subservient to the peace of Christian society. For in the churches established by him, this was the use for which the Sabbath was retained. He tells the Corinthians to set the first day apart for collecting contributions for the relief of their brethren at Jerusalem, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. If superstition is dreaded, there was more danger in keeping the Jewish Sabbath than the Lord's day, as Christians now do. It being expedient to overthrow superstition, the Jewish holy day was abolished; and as a thing necessary to retain decency, order, and peace in the church, *another day was appointed for that purpose.*"*

For the intelligent and candid reader this will suffice. Calvin needs to be studied. That the infidel should misunderstand him, we do not wonder; but we are surprised that any one taught in the truth and capable of discrimination should do so.

We now advert, as preparatory to our scriptural argument, to some statements of the earliest writers in the primitive church; in which it will be seen, whether or not the institution of the Christian Sabbath was due either to the emperors of Rome, as has been asserted, or to antichrist. We begin with *Ignatius*, a companion of the apostle John, who says: "Let us no more sabbatize, but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose." *Justin Martyr*, who lived partly in the first and partly in the second century, nearly contemporary with John, gives this testimony: "On the day called Sunday, is an assembly of all who live in the country, and the sermons of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read." *Irenæus*, a disciple of Polycarp the friend of John, says: "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keeps the Sabbath, meditating on the law, and rejoicing in the works of God." *Tertullian*, who lived at the close of the second century, says, that "the Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian church assemblies and holy worship—every eighth day is the Christian's festival." *Dionysius*, of Corinth, also in the second century, says: "To-day we cele-

* Inst., Book II., chap. viii. 4th Comm. Beza held the same views. His language is, "Therefore the observance of the Lord's day, which Justin mentions in his Apology, is of apostolic and truly divine tradition."

brate the Lord's holy day." *Irenæus* wrote an epistle in which he maintains that the Lord's supper should be administered "upon the Lord's day." At the close of the second century, a decree was drawn up by some "synods and convocations" to the same effect. We add that in the second century *Melito* wrote a treatise on the "Lord's day;" and in the next century *Dionysius*, of Alexandria, an essay on the same subject, entitled, "The Sabbath." And, finally, so well was the observance of the Lord's day known to be a distinctive characteristic of the Christian, that it was made a subject of inquiry by their heathen persecutors—"Do you keep the Lord's day?" Their replies, as recorded by historians, were in substance, "I am a Christian, I cannot omit it."

But was there no more? Did not the primitive Christians also keep the seventh day of the week? Some of them did, but by no means all; and so, for a time, some of them were circumcised. That the observance of any other than the Lord's day, was not general, is evident from the language of *Tertullian*, quoted above, "the Lord's day is the holy day," and of *Irenæus*, "on the Lord's day every one of us keeps the Sabbath." This observance of two days, whatever there was of it, gradually faded away, and was finally abolished after the empire became Christian. This whole matter is very summarily and satisfactorily presented by *Mosheim*.

"All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom which was derived from the example of the church of Jerusalem, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most credible writers.* The seventh day of the week was also observed as a festival,† not by the

* *Phil. Jac. Hartmannus, De rebus gestis Christianorum sub Apostolis*, cap. xv. p. 387. *Just. Henn. Bohmer, Dissert. i. Juris Eccles. Antiqui de stato die Christianor.*, p. 20, &c.

† *Steph. Curcellæus, Diatriba de esu Sanguinis, Operum Theolog.* p. 958. *Gab. Albaspinæus, Observat. Eccles. lib. i. Observ.* xiii. p. 53. It is in vain that many learned men have laboured to prove, that in all the primitive churches, both the first and last day of the week were observed as festivals. The

Christians in general, but by such churches only as were principally composed of Jewish converts, nor did the other Christians censure this custom as criminal and unlawful."

If in anything we have clearly marked the footsteps of the flock, it is in this branch of our Christian practice. And we have also the mind of the Spirit.

Of this, we now enter upon the proof, purposing to show, I. that the phraseology of the fourth commandment is such as to admit the change; II. that there are sufficient indications in the Scriptures that such a change was intended; III. that this change has actually been made by Divine authority. And,

I. The terms of the fourth commandment do not put the seventh day of the week beyond the possibility of change, as the Sabbath. Its terms are, "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Now, it does not say, "the first six days of *the week* shalt thou labour, &c., but the seventh day of *the week* is," &c. It fixes merely the portion of time to be devoted to labour and rest respectively, with that order in which they shall succeed each other. The very letter of the commandment is obeyed when we labour six days, as we now do, and then rest upon the seventh—although that seventh day is the first of the week. From this commandment merely, the Jews could not have known what day they were to keep. This must have been, and was, in fact, otherwise determined—either by the unbroken tradition from the creation, or as some suppose, by a fresh discovery in the wilderness. In a word, the terms of the fourth commandment are such that it would be truly observed, both in the spirit and in the letter, when any day of the week should be observed by *divine appointment* as the day of rest.

II. It is sufficiently intimated that such a change as we vindicate was in contemplation. And here we argue, 1st. From the significant phraseology of this fourth commandment. It is so drawn as to guard the reader against the inference that it was designed to fix the Sabbath unchangeably to a particular day. It begins thus, "Remember the Sabbath day;" and closes thus, "and rested on the

churches of Bithynia, of which Pliny speaks in his letter to Trajan, had only *one stated day*, for the celebration of public worship; and that was undoubtedly the first day of the week, or what we call the *Lord's day*.

seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the *Sabbath day*, and hallowed it." 2d. A change of day is clearly intimated in Isaiah lxx. 17, "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." It is clear that this passage refers to a change of dispensation—the creation of a new spiritual heaven and earth—for it is added, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;" all this being, in part, accomplished in the removal of the partition wall between Jew and Gentile in the abolition of the former ceremonial dispensation, and the consequent extension of gospel privileges to the inhabitants of all nations—its full accomplishment taking place at that period when the kingdoms of the world shall actually receive and enjoy the benefits, personal and social, of the grace and dominion of Christ. The bearing of all this upon the change of the Sabbath is easily seen. The reason, in the fourth commandment, assigned for the observance of the Sabbath is, that "God rested on the seventh day," having made, in six days, "the heavens and the earth." In other words, the Sabbath was instituted as a standing memorial of the creation of the old heavens and the old earth. But the time was even then, under the Old Testament dispensation, foretold, when this old heavens and earth should "no more be remembered, nor come into mind,"—that is, their glory should be so obscured by the greater glory of this "new creation," as that they should be comparatively forgotten. But if this be so, is it possible that the church should still be required, to the end of time, to observe a day of rest, the grand reason of whose observance is, that it is a memorial of a work which should "be no more remembered?" This argument is to us conclusive, as to the divine purpose to change the day of the Sabbath. It intimates, in language that can scarcely be misapprehended, that the entire system of worship under the new dispensation should be so arranged—including, of course, the time specially set apart for the duties of social religion—as to cast into the shade all other demonstrations of the Divine glory; so as to remind the worshipper, that the great work of God is the work of redemption—a work completed in Christ's resurrection.

3d. Not only was a change foreshadowed—the day was distinctly intimated; viz., the day of Christ's resurrection. And this, (1.) in the fact that the Jews were to keep the

seventh day as a memorial of their escape from Egypt. The fact is plainly stated in Deut. v. 14, 15, "And remember, that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." Indeed, it is nearly, if not quite certain, that this was the very day on which the Israelites came up out of the Red Sea—the day on which their redemption from Egyptian bondage was finally consummated. But whether or not, the fact remains, that they were to remember the seventh day as a memorial of this grand event in their history, by which they received, in a certain sense, new life as a people. This entire transaction was typical. Its antitype was the resurrection of Christ. The inference is very direct, that the day of Christ's resurrection—the day when he came up out of the great waters—the day he lived again, and his people in him—the day emphatically of the new creation, should be observed under another dispensation as a day of rest and rejoicing by God's spiritual Israel. (2d.) This appears, with still greater clearness, in the 118th Psalm 22, 24. The passage refers to Christ. None doubt this. His rejection—spoken of in the 22d verse—was consummated in his crucifixion. He became the "head of the corner" in his exaltation, which began in his resurrection. And hence, in verse 24, it is declared that "this is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it;" not merely in that one day in which Christ rose—we can hardly suppose the Spirit of inspiration to mean no more than this by terms so emphatic—but in that same day in its ordinary weekly returns. Nor does it avail, for the purpose of getting rid of the plain import of this prophecy, to say that Christ became "head of the corner" when he ascended from Mount Olivet. This phrase comprehends more than his mere investiture with dominion—it includes his entire right to save, as well as to seek his people—he is the corner-stone of salvation—of the building of mercy. This passage is equivalent to a direct and specific declaration that the day of the church's spiritual rest and rejoicing, should be changed at and after his resurrection.*

* The arguments, except the first, adduced under this division, are cumulative. They all exhibit, as in a series, the design of God to magnify the work of redemption by making it the prominent object in every part of New Testament worship. There is

4th. None can question the right of the Lord Jesus Christ to make this change. He claims it, Mark ii. 28, "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." Indeed, by Him the Sabbath was given to the Israelites in the re-enactment of the moral law by his authority in the wilderness. Hence, the preface to the decalogue is well paraphrased by the Westminster divines, "Because the Lord is our God, and *Redeemer*, therefore are we bound to keep all *his* commandments." Now, if we have rightly interpreted the language of the fourth precept, did he, in this re-enactment of the moral law, bind himself to the permanent establishment of the day then observed? So far from this, the terms of the law were so devised, as to leave room for a change then contemplated, and as we have endeavoured to show, not indistinctly fore-signified to the church under the former economy.

Nor can it be said that any obligation lies upon mankind, by virtue of the bond of the covenant of works, of such sort as to render this change impossible. (1.) It is by no means certain that the Sabbath was revealed to Adam before that covenant was broken. Certainly, the Sabbath—we mean the particular period and day—was not a part of the law written upon Adam's heart. These must always have been matter of positive enactment. We hear of no positive laws given to Adam, except that relating to the tree of knowledge. (2.) We cannot reason, from the covenant of works, in regard to the manner and circumstances of the worship to be observed under the new. (3.) It is absurd that we should now grope among the obscurities of a broken law and covenant for rules of duty, when we have the written word, to which we may appeal. The primitive law of magistracy—the patriarchal—was the mode of civil government contemplated, so far as we can see, in that covenant. Is this to be adopted now? or are we to take the principles and directions of the written word? "To the law and to the testimony." (4.) The change which we maintain accords with the spirit and *order* of the new covenant, and seems to be required for the complete exhibition of that order. Under the old covenant, works preceded rest in God, and this was properly illustrated in the fact that six days' labour pre-

a text, Ezekiel xliii. 27, which can hardly bear any other interpretation than that which regards it as intimating a change of the Sabbath. "And when these days are expired, it shall be on the eighth day, and so forward."

ceded a day of rest. Under the new covenant, we first find rest in Christ, and then work for him. And with this accords the order—a day of rest followed by six days' labour. Nor is it any objection to this view, that the Jews were required to observe the order of the primitive law. The development of the scheme of grace, in its entire and adequate illustration by the institutions of worship, was gradual: and besides, the former economy was, in its arrangements, comparatively burdensome. The church was then under age, and was introduced to the full enjoyment of her new covenant privileges at the erection of the present dispensation.* Of this we have a beautiful exposition in the latter part of the fourth chapter of Galatians—the allegory of Hagar and Sarah—Ishmael and Isaac—Sinai and Jerusalem that is from above.

The authority of Christ was then unrestricted by any previous enactment. His dominion over the Sabbath was ample to make the change.

III. We come now to show that this change has actually been made by His authority. This we establish, 1. By the circumstances attending his burial and resurrection. He rose the first day of the week, having lain in the tomb the seventh; and this, as every Christian will admit, according to a deliberate purpose, and with design. Can we fail to see in this a settled intent to bury the Jewish Sabbath, and to institute another day as the day of rest and rejoicing? The Sabbath was to be a "delight." Was the day when Christ lay in the grave a "delight" to the disciples? They were filled with sadness. But the next day—the first day of the ensuing week—was there ever such a day of gladness—of spiritual gladness and joy as this to the church on earth? The day before had been to the disciples a day of fasting indeed; the Bridegroom had been taken away. But now their sadness is turned into the brightest rejoicing. Could they ever forget either the one or the other? What more natural than the transfer of the emotions of holy delight, with which they formerly observed the seventh day, to this new day which "the Lord had made?" This was of itself,

* We will not be understood as intimating that the way of salvation was any other, under the former dispensation, than it now is—or that the Mosaic economy was not a dispensation of the covenant of grace. We refer to the outward aspect of that economy.

at least, almost sufficient to bring about the existing change in the season of worship.

2. Christ eminently distinguished and honoured the first day of the week. (1.) On this day he appeared to his disciples. John xx. 19: "Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, . . . came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." This is not so remarkable; but, ver. 26, "after eight days"—on the ensuing first day of the week—"again his disciples were within. . . . Then came Jesus, . . . and said, Peace be unto you." Now, in any view of the disciples assembling, this appearance of Christ signalizes the first day of the week. Did they meet every day? then why but to put singular honour upon it, as the day in which he would especially vouchsafe his presence to his people. Did he select this day to meet with his disciples?—then still more the probability is, that they met by design on this day, and that with the expectation of meeting Jesus. Mark the phraseology, "After eight days, again his disciples were within." In the language of Paley, "it has every appearance of a previous appointment." But in any event, the first day is here signally honoured, and begins in the very morning of the new dispensation to hold that place which it has since occupied, as the day of devotion and of Christian enjoyment. (2.) On this day, the Spirit was poured upon the New Testament church. We refer to the great event recorded, Acts ii.—the Pentecostal baptism of the disciples. This was on the first day, for, as we learn from Lev. xxiii. 15, 16, the Pentecost was observed on the fiftieth day after the paschal Sabbath. Now in this occurrence, the whole church, to the end of time, has a direct interest. It stands alone. It marks an era. It was a visible emblem and seal of the superior glory of the New Testament, that it was to be the ministration of the Spirit. Moreover, it constituted, at the time, as Peter afterwards declares, a visible testimony to the exaltation of Christ, that he had become the head of the corner. Christ did most eminently separate, and distinguish, and honour the first day of the week.

"It is remarkable, that the only specifications of time given of these interviews, are noticed as having occurred on "the first day of the week." Doubtless he saw them on other days, as is natural to infer from the occupations pursued on one of them, mentioned in John xxi. 1—11; but

in this the day is not mentioned. In those referred to, John xx. 19—26, the first day of the week is too distinctly noticed to leave room for doubt. In the first instance, their assembling in the evening of that day may well be accounted for by the overwhelming and joyful character of the events which had on that day transpired. That their meeting should be honoured, however, by the appearance of Christ among them, was no insignificant token of the honour that day was ever after to claim. But the second interview, on the first day of the week following, bears more marks of appointment, and design, and expectation: "The doors being shut" again, as we may well suppose also, "for fear of the Jews," to whom the meeting of the disciples of the crucified Jesus, to commemorate his resurrection and to receive his visits, would be especially hateful—"and Thomas with them." Why on "the first day of the week?" Was it a chance that brought them together, or had they been graciously informed and directed by Jesus himself to look for him on that day, and to have among them the incredulous Thomas, who was not with them when Jesus came before?"*

3. This day was observed by the apostles and the primitive church. True, the apostles frequented, when among Jews, their synagogues, but merely for the purpose of ministering to them the gospel. But among themselves, the first day of the week was their day of worship and of rest. This appears, (1.) in the meeting of the church in Troas for the dispensation of the Lord's Supper on that day. Acts xx. 7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." To "break bread" is to dispense the Supper. It is absurd to suppose that they came together to eat a common meal; or that, if they did, it would be solemnly left upon record. The day is mentioned. Why, unless to distinguish it and honour it—to hold it up as the usual season of observing the solemnities of divine worship? Moreover, Paul would not travel on that day; for it is added, "being minded to depart on the morrow."† (2.) In the

* Rev. M. Roney.

† Could the writer have read this clause, who says that this passage proves that Paul travelled on the first day of the week? The text says, "He was minded to depart on the morrow."

command given to the Corinthians and to the Galatians to make their collections for religious purposes on that day. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Why, we again ask, specify the first day? But one answer can be given, it was a day particularly devoted to the observance of gospel ordinances, of which contributing for religious ordinances is one. Nor is it any objection to this view that the apostle says, "lay by him in store;" for the following clause, "that there be no gatherings when I come," removes all obscurity, and shows that the contributions were to be put into the public stock on that day: otherwise this very thing would have necessarily followed—there would have been "gatherings" when he came. (3.) The first day of the week is called expressly the Lord's day. Rev. i. 10: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." This was evidently some particular day. Every day is, indeed, the Lord's; but here this epithet is distinctive: just as the city of the Lord is an epithet of Jerusalem—or as under the old economy, the seventh day was God's day. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." "The Lord's day" is Christ's day, as the Lord's Supper, is Christ's Supper. But how the Lord's, and why? His, inasmuch as, from his resurrection, it is made peculiarly his, to be devoted to his service. "This is the day the Lord hath made." If any doubt remains whether the first day of the week be really meant, this is dispelled, when we remember that from this very period, as we have seen in our quotations from the contemporaries and immediate followers of John, it was invariably so used in the primitive church. If the meaning of any term can be fixed by testimony, the interpretation of this epithet must be so regarded.

"Here then we have three parts of the New Testament Church widely separated, all under the observance of the first day of the week as a day of sacred services, and the assembling of themselves together for the worship of God. The churches in Corinth, (for it is well believed there were several congregations in that city,) a remote part of Greece; Troas, on the coast of the Ægean sea; Galatia, far in the northern interior of Asia Minor; all, considerable in numbers, distinguished by great diversity of character and circumstances, all subject to the same observance, and all by the most explicit indications of apostolic authority. And the argument is greatly confirmed by the circumstances of

the churches in Galatia, against whom he charges as a sin and error deeply to be deprecated—'Ye observe days,' an expression which serves to explain a warning on the like subject to the Colossians, ii. 16, exposed to the same Jewish influences—'Let no man judge you in meat or drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days.' It is perfectly plain, from the several passages we have collected, that the apostle enjoined and observed the first day of the week as sacred to religious assemblies for Christians; and as plain that he reprov'd as sinful, the observance of Jewish times. The term 'days,' therefore, in the Epistle to the Galatians, and 'holy day' and 'Sabbath days' in that to the Colossians, cannot be understood in any other light than as embracing, if they did not exclusively signify, the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath, which, as the servant of God, he disowned and forbade. If that day had not been forbidden, the churches in Galatia might safely have yielded to the weakness of their Jewish neighbours, and assembled for their collections on the seventh day of the week. But no. The apostle had enjoined another day; and from his writings and character, no impartial judge will suspect him of being actuated in this arrangement by mere opposition to his Jewish kindred and enemies, or that he had no better reason or higher ambition than merely to appear different.'*"

4. This day has ever since been observed by the Christian church. That it has been, none ever disputed. For a time, as stated by Mosheim in the extract that we have given on a former page, both days, the seventh and the first, were observed by some portions of the Christian church. And this was wink'd at, as was the observance of circumcision, for a time, in the case of Jewish converts. With this exception, the course of the church has been uniform. Doubts on this subject are of very recent origin. They date no further back than the ages subsequent to the Reformation, and then they arose chiefly among the same people who denied, because there is no command in the New Testament enjoining it, the propriety of infant baptism. Now, let it be observed, we draw no argument from any mere church authority. We lay no stress upon the canons of any council. Our faith rests upon no ecclesiastical dictum. Our

* Rev. M. Roney.

argument is, that if the first day of the week be not the Christian Sabbath, then has Christ left the church for more than eighteen hundred years without a Sabbath at all—a divinely authorized and accepted Sabbath. Our argument here is analogous to that which we use against the Jews. We say, Your system is abolished. God has abolished it: for eighteen hundred years, you have had no temple, no altar, no sacrifices of atonement: your ceremonies have been wiped out of existence by the strong and great hand of God, the Governor of the world. Now, so we argue on behalf of our Sabbath. If the first day be not the Sabbath, then has God himself wiped out this institution: there is then no longer any such day or season. Now, the infidel may adopt this alternative: the Christian will not. He cannot believe that the Most High has so bereft his church, as that he has left her for her entire course, as a church of all nations, to run counter to his will, and live in perpetual disregard of one of his express commandments.

“It may be asked, did the Jewish Christians, apostles and disciples at Jerusalem, observe the Jewish or the Christian Sabbath? It is answered by another question—From whom did the early Christians, as we have seen, so extensively learn the observation of the first and the disuse of the seventh day of the week—from Jewish or Gentile teachers? The answer to the last is too plain, and helps to determine the former. They were all Jews, and they, in the name of Him who had given them ‘commandments,’ taught the Gentiles to observe the first day of the week, and so taught them as that they have observed it now for eighteen centuries, and will to the end of time. It may be said that we are not expressly informed that they did themselves observe that day. It is quite as certain that we are not informed they observed the seventh; and the review through which we have passed, forbids the idea. And this is confirmed by a collateral circumstance of no small weight. That the Gentile churches, throughout a wide extent, observed the first day of the week, has been made so clear as to leave no doubt it was universal. That the Jewish Christians were restless in exciting frequent and various controversies on other parts of the Mosaic law, is sufficiently plain. But on this subject, so calculated to create the greatest disturbance, we have at Jerusalem not a word of complaint or discord. A striking proof that on this day,

between Jew and Gentile in Jerusalem, and throughout the whole visible church, whatever was thought of other days, was an entire agreement. Indeed there is every reason to be fully satisfied that Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Christian Sabbath of the first day of the week, constituted the first and strong lines of distinction which determined among the Hebrews at Jerusalem, as well as everywhere else, the professed disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, as the promised Messiah."* We add,

5. And lastly, God has blessed the first day of the week, and so put his seal upon it. God has not left his church without a Sabbath, nor without tokens of his approbation in her observance of the first day of the week as the day of rest and devotion. On this day his word has been preached for the conversion of sinners, and the sacraments dispensed for the edification of the faithful, for many hundreds of years. And where has religion flourished, with all the interests of morality, personal and social? Where have religion and good order declined? Any tyro can answer these questions. With Sabbath—first-day Sabbath—observance, every spiritual and moral interest has flourished: with Sabbath desecration comes in a flood of all kinds of evil. As religion revives, is not the Sabbath more strictly kept? as it declines, is it not more loosely observed? God has blessed the Sabbath—the Lord's-day—the Christian Sabbath. This argument, in connection with the preceding, amounts to a demonstration. A voice from heaven could hardly make it more evident than does the manifest blessing of God upon this day. And it proves that it is his mind and will that his church and the nations should keep, to the end of this dispensation, the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath.

* Rev. M. Roney.

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

“Jesus wept.”—JOHN xi. 35.

WHO was it that wept? That the children of men should frequently be in tears, is nothing strange: this world is a place of sin, and therefore it is no wonder that it is also a place of weeping. Sin and sorrow must be companions. But what shall we say when we read that Jesus wept? Was it not strange that he, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” should be in tears? How astonishing that he, who is truly God, should be capable of real weeping! Perhaps it was on this account, that they who divided the Bible into verses, placed these *two words* by themselves, to intimate how remarkable the expression is; and that in reading, we might not hastily pass over the wonderful fact, but that we should pause, consider, admire and adore.

Let me repeat it—“Jesus wept!” My soul, meditate on these surprising tears, and let me contemplate this weeping Saviour!

Jesus was truly and properly God and man, in one divine, mysterious person. And here I perceive a strong proof of the important doctrine. His words, his works, and his very *name*, sufficiently demonstrated that he was possessed of real Godhead. He had just signified that he would awake Lazarus from the sleep of death; and his weeping did not proceed from any doubt of his ability to perform the miracle. The event showed that he was able; for he spake, and Lazarus, that was dead, came forth. And when I read that "Jesus wept," I may equally infer that he was truly man; that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." He submitted to the frailties of human nature; he was subject to hunger and thirst, to weariness and grief; for "in all these things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." "Jesus wept," was "*a man* of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." While some will admit only the humanity of Jesus, let me not be ashamed to believe in his two-fold nature. How can any one deny his divinity? Did he not at the grave of Lazarus raise the dead as well as weep? As a man he was capable of weeping, of suffering, and dying,—as God, he could merit and save men from sin, from misery, and from death. God forbid then that I should ever be ashamed to glory in the cross of Christ!

"*Jesus wept:*" and was it not the tear of sympathy he shed? When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, "he groaned in the spirit and was troubled." On some other occasions he had forbidden weeping for the dead. He had said, "Why make ye this ado and weep?" I do not find that Jesus wept when

he first said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth"—nor when Martha met him—nor when Mary came to him; but afterwards, when he saw the tears of Mary, and her sympathizing friends, who came to comfort them concerning their brother, then he sympathized with them, and mingled his groans and troubles with theirs. When they asked him to come and see the place where Lazarus was laid, then he wept. Thus did he "weep with them that wept." Thus has he recommended, by his own example, that tender precept. He was, indeed, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He bore a part of the burden which these two affectionate sisters felt in the death of their brother. May I, may all who love his name, possess the like disposition! Then should we "bear one another's burdens," and imitate the example, as well as "fulfil the law of Christ."

"*Jesus wept:*" and was it not the tear of tenderest friendship for Lazarus? "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." Who therefore can say, that the New Testament contains nothing on the subject of friendship? The divine Redeemer has charged his disciples to love one another. By his own example he has sanctified the soft endearments of friendship; and in the beloved apostle, and in his friend Lazarus, he has fastened, as it were, its tender ties with his own hand. Bethany was a place in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, to which Jesus might retire with great conveniency. When he was despised and rejected by others, he was sure of a welcome reception at the house of Mary and her sister Martha. Happy were the little family in receiving such a guest! Happy indeed! for "Jesus loved Martha, and her

sister, and Lazarus." Was it therefore strange if Jesus wept for Lazarus? If he was capable of tears, was not this an occasion to draw them forth? He wept, as a man may weep for a departed friend: and therefore even the Jews observed, "Behold, how he loved him!" We may imitate the example of Jesus, and be grieved when our friends die. We may discover the marks of our affection, but then our tears should flow in moderation. The tears which Jesus let fall on this occasion were not mixed with any hard thoughts of divine Providence. His grief was not excessive. Never were there such tears as these. They were like the clearest water in the most transparent vessel, which, however troubled by being shaken, still remains clear. No emotion of sin ever disturbed the sacred affections of his soul. But, alas! what have our tears been. How have they been mixed with the defilement of unbelief and impatience! How often have they given an unhappy tincture to our sorrows! We have been troubled, and our hearts have been overcharged with the turbid waters of discontent and sin. Our tears need to be washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. It is well for us that Jesus wept. I had almost called his very tears the water of life. He wept and died for sinners, and his blood cleanseth from all sin.

"*Jesus wept:*" and let me recollect the scene that was then before him. A grave, the awful consequence of sin, was in his view. The grave has opened its mouth, and seems to say, Behold the cursed effects of transgression. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The people of

God have seen the evil of sin in some degree, and have been affected with it; but they do not, they cannot, in this world, have a sufficiently comprehensive view of all its deformity and horrid nature. But Jesus could view it exactly as it is. His all-comprehending mind knew its height and depth; and, as a man, when he saw its effects in the death of Lazarus, when he saw the place where he himself was shortly to be laid, he wept. He foresaw the destruction that awaited impenitent Jerusalem; he "beheld the city, and *wept* over it." We know that, in the view of approaching sufferings, he was "exceedingly sorrowful;" and we know because an apostle has informed us, that, "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears," in the discharge of his mediatorial work. Was it not on account of the cursed nature of sin that Jesus wept? In the same channel may all our sorrows run! Then shall it be a "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of."

"*Jesus wept:*" and let me admire his infinite condescension! How amazing is his love! The Lord of glory becomes a man, and submits to a capacity of weeping! He, who inhabits eternity, condescends to dwell among "skulls, and monuments, and worms;" nay, even he himself becomes "a worm and no man." He is despised and rejected; he is forsaken, shamefully treated, falsely accused, condemned, and ignominiously crucified! Why? How could this possibly be? The Lord of glory weep and die! Yes, O my soul, he wept and died for sinners—for thee. He became a man of sorrows,

that we might not weep for ever. He died, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Behold," may we well exclaim, "how he loved us!" Were there ever sorrows and love like these? O what strong cords are these to bind our souls to love and to obedience! Should not this love of Christ constrain us to form this judgment, that, if he died for us, we should live unto him?

"O! for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak."

"*Jesus wept*:" but it was in the way to glory. There was a joy set before him; and therefore was he willing to weep, to endure the cross, despising the shame; and he is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Thus should we be "looking unto Jesus," as our glorious example! In this world we must expect occasions of sorrow: but it is well for us that our tribulations are in the way to an heavenly kingdom. And is not that the blessed end of our journey? "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." They are conformed to Jesus, who was intimate with grief; and hereafter they shall be with him in glory. This is the order of these things: "Before honour is humility." Afflictions and sorrows are the royal way to heaven.

"*Jesus wept*," when he was on earth; and he has still the same affection for his people. When he went to heaven, he did not leave behind him his heart of tenderness. He is now at the Father's right hand,

as our loving Friend, and our gracious Advocate. There he pleads our cause: "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; he is full of compassion. What encouragement is this to approach the heavenly throne! "Let us, therefore," as the apostle exhorts us, "come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Unto him therefore that wept, and loved, and died, and now lives to intercede for his dear family in heaven, be ascribed the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen.

CHRIST THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

One there is, above all others
 Well deserves the name of Friend;
 His is love beyond a brother's,
 Costly, free, and knows no end.

Which of all our friends, to save us,
 Could or would have shed his blood?
 But this Saviour died to have us
 Reconciled in him to God.

When he lived on earth abased,
 Friend of sinners was his name;
 Now above all glory raised,
 He rejoices in the same.

O! for grace our hearts to soften;
 Teach us, Lord, at length to love;
 We, alas! forget too often,
 What a Friend we have above.

ON CHRIST'S PREPARING HEAVEN.

CHRIST went to glory through conflict, sufferings, and death; and so prepared the way thither for his disciples, by a complete conquest of all their spiritual enemies. He went as the church's head and representative, to take possession of what he had merited for his people; and as their High Priest, to present before the Father his perfect sacrifice in their behalf; and thus he may be considered as preparing heaven for their coming, as they could never have been admitted there, if he had not so entered. Moreover, his own presence there may be viewed as a preparation of that blissful state for his disciples, for "where should the living members rest, but with their living Head?" "Whom have I in heaven," said Asaph, "but thee? and on earth there is none that I desire besides thee!" It is heaven begun below to enjoy his presence here, and heaven complete above to see him as he is. Where love is supreme on the throne, and perfect in every subject, the government must be truly glorious, and obedience truly delightful.

WHO SHALL DWELL IN HEAVEN?

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You can have no doubt that in the course of a few years you will have terminated your earthly course, and be added to the great congregation of the dead. This truth is clearly taught in the Scriptures, and is fully confirmed to us by daily observation. Human life is often terminated suddenly; still oftener, unexpectedly; and pains and sicknesses are its ordinary premonitions. You also probably acknowledge the immortality of the soul, in conscious existence; and consequently must be persuaded that such existence must be one of happiness or misery. This also is clearly taught in the Scriptures, for they assure us of a judgment to come, from which the wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” The difference between these states is immeasurable—inconceivable. The day which ends your life on earth, will seal up your destiny for one or other of these states—“For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.”

Any uncertainty with respect to the result should fill us with great anxiety; and it would, if seriously considered. Matters of temporary moment and of small importance often do so. And yet, with respect to this subject, multitudes, who have neither an assurance nor a well founded hope of eternal happiness, are as careless as if they had a guaranty from God for the enjoyment of “eternal life.” It seems to

be taken for granted by them, without evidence, that they shall enter into heaven when they die; and this they make a sufficient warrant for the dismissal of all anxiety, and the neglect of all serious inquiry. This seems also to be almost the only subject they treat in this manner. The hope of possession of even a small earthly estate leaves them no rest till they have investigated and secured its title; while uncertainty with respect to the soul's eternal welfare scarcely moves a thought, or excites a fear in their minds. Multitudes manifest this inconsistency in yielding to every earthly influence, however trifling, and yet showing no sensibility when the eternal interests of their souls are in question. The fact that insensibility is so general makes it the more dangerous.

You, my dear reader, may be under its influence, and your welfare requires that you should be awakened from such a delusion, ere God say to you, "Sleep on now." Permit then a friend to deal plainly and affectionately with you. Your wish is to spend a happy eternity, and you have some expectation, no matter from what source it may be derived, that your wish shall be realized. Is not your want of feeling and anxiety a proof that you have never given the subject much thought or reflection—that you have taken for granted what you would find it impossible to prove? You say, you hope to enter heaven when you die. What is the ground of your hope of admission there? Have you ever asked yourself the questions—By what title shall I enter upon the inheritance? What shall be the ground of my claim? What are my qualifications for its enjoyment? Such an inheritance should be secured by a strong title; not a shadow of doubt should hang over it.

We have no natural claims to this inheritance; nor have we any natural fitness for its enjoyments. These have all been forfeited by transgression, and lost by sin. The law of God shuts out every sinner—"Cursed is every one that

continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This necessarily excludes all the guilty, They cannot be adjudged to eternal life. The law of the kingdom of heaven is explicit on this point. But you may tell me, 'My hope rests on another foundation. I look to the provision made by Christ. There is forgiveness with the Lord.' You are right. The provision is ample. It has never failed when applied. God has made it, and he will honour it. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." Pardon and justification will insure heaven. This is according to the *will* of the testator. The inheritance runs in this line, and it is sure to all the children. The Holy One of Israel will never deny his word.

But how does this affect you? What bearing has it on your case? The question is not, whether justified sinners shall enter heaven. That is an adjudged case. But are *you* justified? Have you had *your* pardon sealed by the *Holy Spirit of promise, so as to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?* This is the point to be inquired into, and here we must make no mistakes. Pardons are not issued indiscriminately. Sinners are not justified as a matter of course. God is no doubt a sovereign in the pardon of sinners. Sinners are not pardoned because they are worthy of such a distinction. Yet no sinner was ever forgiven till he mourned over his sins, with a godly sorrow; till sin was so embittered to him that he could no longer live in it; till oppressed as with a heavy burden, which he could no longer bear, and of which he could not rid himself, he cried with the publican, smiting upon his breast, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Have *you*, in a spirit of deep humiliation, and with fervent prayer, sought the divine forgiveness, and been enabled to hope that you have found it? And as an evidence that you have not deceived yourself with a *vain hope*, has sin ever since been embittered to you, so

that you could not live in its practice? and have you, from a sense of obligation, as well as inclination, been endeavouring to do the will of God?

What, upon examination, do you find to be the state of your soul? Is the prospect dark? Are you destitute of evidence? Upon what then do you found your hope of heaven? This is the way, the *only* way, in which sinners can ever obtain admission there, without a subversion of the law and government of God. He has given his only begotten Son to die as an atoning sacrifice, that he might be just in justifying every one that believeth. Christ must be received and appropriated. It seems then that all the claims of God's violated law are in full force against you; that you are living under its condemning power; that you are justly exposed to the wrath of God, and that you have only to die, to which you are every moment liable, to be lost for ever. Do not, I beseech you, turn away from this plain, scriptural view of your state. Do not suffer yourself to be deluded. Do not turn away from this faithful mirror, for that will not change your state, nor lessen your danger. Contemplate your state as it is, and suffer not yourself to believe that the danger is exaggerated. It cannot be. Language is incapable of doing it. Imagination cannot magnify the reality. Let your whole anxiety be to become experimentally acquainted with the forgiving love of God, for till justified, heaven must necessarily be shut against you.

Take another view of your case, in relation to which men are apt to deceive themselves. You think of going to heaven when you die. You think it desirable to be there. Let me ask you, with affectionate simplicity, what would you do in heaven? In what way could heaven minister to your happiness as you are? My dear friend, the elements of happiness are not local. It depends much less upon *place* than men are apt to imagine. Place men where you please, if their hearts are not in unison with the scene, they could not

be happy *there*. It would not gratify a man whose *whole head was sick, and whose whole heart was faint*, to sit down at a table covered with every species of food, substantial or delicate, which could gratify the palate of a healthy man. You would do no kindness to a person of a sad and heavy spirit to introduce him into the company of the light-hearted, trifling, and gay; nor would it promote the comfort of one of the latter class to be thrown into the society of the former.

We are essentially social beings, and no small part of our felicity depends upon the character of our associates. We choose them for the qualities which they possess, or are supposed to possess, in common with ourselves. In order to render their society agreeable to us, there must be a considerable measure of similarity of tastes, dispositions, sentiments, habits, or pursuits. When these are not well assorted, association produces unhappiness. So in order to constitute heaven a pleasant residence to us, we must drink into the very spirit of its inhabitants. We must be morally assimilated to them, or we can never be happy in their society, enjoyments, and employments. If we, therefore, desire to know whether a residence in heaven would make us happy; or in other words, whether we shall be admitted there,—for no other will be admitted—we have only to ascertain the characters, enjoyments, and employments of its inhabitants, and our own similarity or dissimilarity to them, in order to know whether we shall be received. We need no better rule of judgment to determine the point in a correct manner. We may thus prove our own selves, and ascertain our own doom.

Who then are the inhabitants of heaven? Heaven is the presence-chamber of the great and glorious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, where he holds his court, displays his glory, and dispenses his richest bounties. There is the residence of his servants, the holy angels, who have kept their first estate.

And there too dwell the redeemed descendants of Adam. All these are holy. They bear the same image. Their union and harmony are perfect. There is no discord, jarring, or strife. They are all of one heart and of one mind. The will of God is supreme, and the rest are all in unison with him, and with one another. All is love—"God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The employments of heaven are all holy. They consist essentially in loving, contemplating, admiring, praising and obeying God, and in affectionate intercourse with each other on subjects of the highest interest. Can such society and such employments be other than happy? Every faculty, and thought, and feeling of every individual is in harmony with each other, and with their fellows; and God approves and smiles. This is most delightful. Can anything add to the enjoyment? Yes, one thought, one single thought. This society is never to be broken up. This harmony is never to be destroyed. "They go no more out." Nothing which is unclean shall ever enter there. What a gulf—what an impassable gulf is there, between this scene and the corruption and carnality of earth! Well might David ask, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" Christ has answered the question—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The apostle has declared the law of the kingdom—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

No unholy being can be admitted into this fellowship. If God even should, in some unheard-of way, by a singular dispensation, pardon the guilt of a sinner's transgression, and carry him into such society, and subject him to such employments, it neither would, nor could render him happy. How could it be otherwise? We know that sinners take no delight in reading or hearing the word of God on earth. How then could they have pleasure in beholding him of whose mind and perfections that word is only a faint shadow?

They do not now love to meditate, even occasionally, on divine things. How then would they relish it to have them continually before their minds in all their perfection and glory? They have now no taste for divine ordinances. How then could they enjoy the God of ordinances? The high praises of God now grate on their ears. How then would they relish them in the perfection to which they have attained in heaven? The work of prayer is now irksome. How then could they take pleasure in holding more direct intercourse with God, the hearer of prayer? Here they are rebels against God's holy government. Their carnal hearts say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" How would they feel to stand continually in his presence, and be occupied in doing his will? Here they account it a drudgery—a very weariness, to spend even a few hours in the company of the truly pious, and witness their conversation and conduct. How would they bear it to be confined to such society for ever? Here all their enjoyments are sensual. There they would have all their desires and appetites in vigorous exercise, but be for ever separated from every object for their gratification.—To such a creature, heaven would necessarily be a strange and uncomfortable place, because he has nothing in common with the inhabitants of heaven but bare existence, nor a single taste or disposition to which its enjoyments or employments could give agreeable exercise. This sinners know, or *may* know, if they will only examine the subject with some little care and attention. They need not doubt whether they shall be received into heaven or not, if they die in their present state. They have only to ascertain in what companions, objects, employments, and enjoyments, they now take pleasure, to satisfy themselves, remaining as they are, where they shall spend their eternity. God will never mingle together discordant elements. Like will be associated with like.

And now, my dear reader, having laid before you some

plain and highly important truths, which nearly concern your best interests, allow me to take with you the liberty of a friend—Upon what ground do you stand? In the view of these truths, what is the prospect before you? What does your present state indicate? If you were *now* to die, where are you going? If you die as you *are*, where *must* you expect to spend your eternity? You seem to pause and hesitate. Have you not taken for granted what you cannot prove? Have you not been flattering yourself with a mere delusion of the imagination, and resting your hope on the idle wish of a deceived heart? Do you not clearly perceive that you must be essentially changed before you will be permitted to enter heaven, or *could* be happy there? The happiness of heaven is not local—It is founded on the perfections of God, and the conformity of his intelligent creatures to his moral image. You need, and *must* have a *new heart*. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Let this be the subject of your constant and serious meditation, your ardent desire, your anxious endeavour, your fervent prayer. Rest not till you have a divine assurance of an “inheritance among all them that are sanctified.”

COMFORTS AND COUNSELS

FOR

THE AFFLICTED.



My dear Friend:—The longer I live, the more am I drawn toward the suffering people of God. I love to weep with those who weep. I find it is better for me to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting. I would not rudely intrude upon your griefs. Your sorrow is so far a sacred thing, that none may curiously pry into its causes or its depths. Yet you are afflicted, perhaps more deeply than others may suspect. “I have a message from God for thee.”

However great your afflictions, they are not to be compared with those of the blessed Saviour. Above all others was he the “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” He bore the wrath of God against sin. No Christian was ever called to make expiation for sin, by enduring the wrath of God in his own person. But Christ was made a curse for us. The utmost that Christians suffer is the chastisement of their Heavenly Father. Toward his people God uses the rod, but toward his Son he used the sword. There never was sorrow like his sorrow. “He bore our griefs and carried

our sorrows." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He made "his soul an offering for sin." So that if we are afflicted, he was even more afflicted. His soul was sorrowful, even unto death. "It is enough for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant as his Lord." Besides, "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Never forget that Christ's sorrows were greater than yours.

Other servants of God have suffered more than you. You "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." "Others have had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Have you lost your property? Job lost all his in one day; and many of the early Christians "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." The marquis of Vico, in the 16th century, had all his estates confiscated for his love to the word of God, but he said, "Their riches perish with them, who count all the silver and gold in the world worth one hour's communion with Christ." Do men hate you without a cause? So did they all the prophets and apostles. Paul says that he and his coadjutors were despised, reviled, persecuted, defamed, and made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. Perhaps your friends have been cold to you, and not shown you pity in your affliction. Job's friends did the same, and even accused him of great crimes as the causes of his calamities. His breath was strange even unto his wife. Do you plead the suddenness of your affliction? The Shunamite had very short notice of the death of her son, and Job's afflictions came upon him like an armed man,

before he had any warning. To have let you know when, how, and how severely your trials were coming, would have made you suffer them all many times over before they actually reached you. If you are mourning some loved one, called out of time, and are very sad that you have not some evidence, or better evidence that the soul was prepared for the change; remember David lost Absalom under the most painful circumstances, and Job's children were cut down when they were not thinking of death, and had not time even to offer a prayer. Dr. Thomas Scott tells of a pious lady of eminence, whose son was for his crimes sentenced to death. He seemed dreadfully hardened, even under the gallows, until he was swung off. Then the rope broke, and he offered a short prayer before he was hung up again. Yet his mother was not heard at any time to utter a murmur. If your friends die, remember that they are in the hands of Him, who is wise, and holy, and just, and good. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He never errs. He never is unkind. Whatever your afflictions may be, the same or greater are accomplished in your brethren. He, who sustains them, can uphold you. In 1850, eight thousand Christians were condemned to death in the island of Madagascar, and forty of them were cruelly executed.

If you deserve no good thing, why should you murmur at a few evil things? Your afflictions are as nothing compared with your sins. Your griefs are not equal to your deserts. It is not of our goodness, it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. "Our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve." "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?" "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" If I deserve eternal death, and receive only temporal chastisement mingled with mercy, is it not base to have hard thoughts of God?

Nor will the afflictions of God's people last always. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Earth has no tempests, that always beat. "If your cross is heavy, you have not far to carry it." For what is your life? It is a vapour, a shadow, a tale that is told, a moment, a little moment. It flies like a weaver's shuttle. It travels like one riding post and stopping for nothing. The longest life on earth is but as a dream when one awaketh. Should all your life be sad, it will soon be over. But you "have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." Jacob once said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Yet he lived to see that all these things were for him. Were we not blind, many things, which appear crooked, would seem straight. Jesus said, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." That is enough for faith to rest upon. Sooner or later, in God's own time, every mystery in his dealings with his sorrowing ones shall be solved. Learn to trust a God that hideth himself. "Trust in the Lord and do good. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. . . . Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him." He who believes God's promises, will not quarrel with his providence.

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"It is better to be chastened than to be cast away." As no amount of prosperity can prove one a friend of God, so no amount of adversity can prove one an enemy of God. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." If it was expedient for the disciples that their Lord and Friend (what a friend!) should go away, may it not be best that you should suffer as you do, especially as all your trials are sent in love? For "the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." All our afflictions are the fruit of infinite, eternal, unchangeable love. God may let a sinner go through the world in prosperity, but he never takes a son to glory without adversity.

Some things in the work of sanctification cannot ordinarily be attained without sorrow. If you know nothing of pain on earth, you will hardly be prepared for pleasure in heaven. No one now in heaven regrets having gone thither through great tribulation. God "chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Anything is good for us, if it humbles us. It is better to be afflicted and humble, than prosperous and proud. Whatever brings us to the mercy seat is a blessing. Jonah was asleep in the ship, but in the sea he cried by reason of his affliction unto the Lord. That which effectually teaches us the vanity of this world, and leads us to set our hope in God, cannot but be a rich blessing. An hour of sanctified sorrow is better than a thousand years of sinful mirth. A needful cross is better than a needless comfort.

"If ye be without chastisement, . . . ye are not sons." It is the wicked who are not in trouble like other men, nei-

ther are plagued like other men. He who has no sorrow, has greater cause to be afflicted, than he whose tears are his meat day and night. It was Jesus who said, "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." Welcome grief.

Christ gets no higher honours from this earth than those he wins from the children of sorrow. In early times nothing more advanced his cause than the sufferings of the martyrs. When a believer rejoices in tribulation he proves that, in the forgiveness of sins, a solid foundation is laid for hope, and joy, and peace, and that sorrow can never sink him so low that the joy of the Lord cannot reach him and raise him up again.

"Without adversity, grace withers;" and we are never well, but when our souls have health and prosper. The result of God's chastisements is, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness;" and there is no fruit like that. Myriads have said with David: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Remember, that heaven will be all the sweeter for the bitterness of earth; that "if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small;" that, if God be for us, none can successfully oppose us; that to harden ourselves against God, will bring no good with it; that to hope in the Lord is ever a duty, and that he who is most like a weaned child, is the wisest sufferer.

Make up your mind to do and suffer all God's will. The real Christian is a man of peace, yet no man fights so much. Averse to strife, he lives in war. He is a soldier, and must never lay aside his armour. He has a great fight of afflictions. Satan hurls fiery darts at him. The world crosses him. Sin in his own heart is a dreadful foe. God afflicts him. His soul often dwells among lions. He comes into

deep waters. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God. Tears will flow. Conflicts must be endured. Poverty, bereavement, treachery, unkindness, the failure of hope, the wickedness of man, disease and death may make the heart sad, but to the humble believer the victory is sure. "Have faith in God." "Lord, increase our faith."

Nothing is more admirable than God's providence toward his people. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind." In the same event we often behold both his goodness and his severity. The one cheers, the other awes us. The rod and the pot of manna were kept together. In chemistry, two pungent bitters, nitrate of silver, and hyposulphate of soda, when combined, produce the sweetest substance known. But in providence, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

"Are the consolations of God small with thee?" Perhaps it is because you do not set a proper value upon spiritual comforts. Perhaps piety in your own heart is in a low state, faith is weak, love has lost its ardour, tenderness of conscience is not cultivated, or aversion to self-denial is strong. Are you living in the indulgence of any sin? If so, "why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee," saith God.

The gospel makes provision for "strong consolation." No logic is stronger than that by which inspired men argue for the comfort of the saints. Paul and Silas never had better reasons for their conduct than when in the jail of Philippi, "at midnight they prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them." God has given us exceeding great and precious promises. The Bible is full

of them. To lay hold of them is wisdom, and life, and peace.

“Wherefore lift up the hands, which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.” Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. Many a bitter bud produces delicious fruit. Be patient unto the coming of Jesus Christ. Abound in acts of charity. Beware of carnal reasonings. Cultivate heavenly-mindedness. Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you. Set the Lord always before you. Nothing can harm you, if you follow that which is good. Live, as seeing Him who is invisible. Perplex not yourself with reasonings about things too deep for you: Come what may, say, “Not my will, but thine, O God, be done.” If God takes all earthly props and comforts away, say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” So, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus, you shall have a happy issue out of all your tribulations, followed by an eternity of bliss, in which you shall consider all the way the Lord hath led you, and eternally praise him for his mercy and goodness.

SUBMISSION.

Submissive to thy will, my God,
 I all to thee resign,
 And bow before thy chastening rod;
 I mourn, but not repine.

Why should my foolish heart complain,
 When wisdom, truth and love
 Direct the stroke, inflict the pain,
 And point to joys above?

How short are all my sufferings here,
 How needful every cross!
 Away, my unbelieving fear,
 Nor call my gain, my loss.

Then give, dear Lord, or take away,
 I'll bless thy sacred name;
 My Jesus, yesterday, to-day,
 For ever is the same!

WHAT SHALL I DO?

WE put this inquiry into the mouth of the Christian, and especially of those who have just professed discipleship to Christ. When Saul of Tarsus was arrested in his career of persecution, and for the first time was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, his earnest language was, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" His first conviction of the importance of the Christian faith was accompanied by another conviction, that he was in some way to be employed in building up the faith which, in his ignorance and unbelief, he had so zealously attempted to destroy. Christ, in a remarkable manner, had called him, but for what purpose? Not merely to save his own soul from ruin, but to make him a special messenger of mercy to others. Light from heaven was shed on him, that from him it might be reflected on all around him. Grace was imparted to him, that from a happy experience he might be able to proclaim the riches of God's long-suffering and mercy to his fellow-men. How reasonable that he who had tasted that the Lord was gracious, should desire to impart some spiritual gift to the destitute! The Lord Jesus answered Saul's question, by first instructing and then sending him as a missionary to the Gentiles. From the day of his conversion until the day of his death, it was the one ruling and absorbing desire and aim of his heart and life to promote the salvation of his fellow-men. No stronger evidence of the genuineness of his conversion to God could he have furnished than he did by his unwearied labours, in proclaiming the gospel of salvation to the perishing. Two facts are here evident; that it was in all points of view peculiarly proper for Saul to ask, on his conversion, in

what particular department of service he was to engage, and that the Lord approved the question as one which was most natural under the circumstances. If so, every Christian, not only at his conversion, but at all subsequent times, should in like manner say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The question should be asked *earnestly*, as it was by Saul; for if ever he was in earnest, it was when these words were uttered by him. He was only partially enlightened, he was in doubt about his duty, he was aware of the pressing obligations resting on him, he knew it was in vain to wait until his own sagacity should solve the point of duty, and hence he went to the fountain-head of wisdom that he might be directed aright. The question shows in itself that it came from a full heart, and evinces the same urgency as that of the Philippian jailer, when he exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?"

It should be asked *sincerely*, from an honest heart, prepared not only to hear the response, but to obey it. Had the young ruler been perfectly sincere, who came to our Lord with the interesting inquiry, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he would not have gone away sorrowful, when Christ exacted from him a duty which he little anticipated. Probably he expected our Lord to applaud him for what he had done, and to encourage him in that course of outward strictness which he boasted he was then pursuing. When, however, he was told to sacrifice the idol of his heart, his worldly wealth, he went away to perish with his money. To be sincere in our inquiry in the present case, there must be a readiness of mind to comply with Christ's direction whatever it may be. Saul was not told to retire quietly from the distracting scenes of the world, that he might cultivate his personal piety, but to engage in a laborious and perilous mission for Christ, in which he should suffer many things, and there was no attempt on his part to evade the duty.

It should be asked *believingly*, under the conviction that the question is a proper one; one which God is willing to answer, and which, as the hearer of prayer, he will answer. We are not to expect an audible response, nor any supernatural appearance to guide us, but such a development of providential dispensations as will mark the path of duty, and such an inward and enlightened persuasion of mind as will satisfy us that we are not running unsent.

We might well urge the importance of proposing the question now, in this particular juncture of the church. The hosts of God's enemies are countless. They are not inactive. Every one who enlists under the banner of Satan is found ready and prompt in his obedience, doing with all his might the will of his master, and fully sustaining his character as a destroyer of much good. Wherever our eyes are turned, the servants of the devil are busily employed in resisting God, and opposing his kingdom. And where are the soldiers of the cross? Many, it is true, are valiant for the truth, and evince their readiness to spend and be spent in the cause of their divine Lord. Some are struggling, comparatively single-handed, in the dark places of paganism, and others are carrying on the war with the enemy in nominally Christian lands, but in their full amount, how few are they who are zealous for the Lord God of Hosts! How many thousands enter our churches under profession of attachment to the Lord, whose subsequent life is a comparative blank, and whose influence for good is never heard of! They profess to come forth to recruit the Lord's army; they put on the uniform of his soldiers, but who ever hears of them engaging in the warfare? They are as useless as sentinels asleep on their post. Surely, if the hundreds of thousands who are at this present moment enrolled as the disciples of the Lord, felt that they had an individual mission to perform, and were sincerely, earnestly, and *believingly* inquiring, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" a new aspect

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The gospel makes provision for "strong consolation." No logic is stronger than that by which inspired men argue for the comfort of the saints. Paul and Silas never had better reasons for their conduct than when in the jail of Philippi, "at midnight they prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them." God has given us exceeding great and precious promises. The Bible is full

of them. To lay hold of them is wisdom, and life, and peace.

“Wherefore lift up the hands, which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.” Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. Many a bitter bud produces delicious fruit. Be patient unto the coming of Jesus Christ. Abound in acts of charity. Beware of carnal reasonings. Cultivate heavenly-mindedness. Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you. Set the Lord always before you. Nothing can harm you, if you follow that which is good. Live, as seeing Him who is invisible. Perplex not yourself with reasonings about things too deep for you: Come what may, say, “Not my will, but thine, O God, be done.” If God takes all earthly props and comforts away, say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” So, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus, you shall have a happy issue out of all your tribulations, followed by an eternity of bliss, in which you shall consider all the way the Lord hath led you, and eternally praise him for his mercy and goodness.

SUBMISSION.

Submissive to thy will, my God,
I all to thee resign,
And bow before thy chastening rod;
I mourn, but not repine.

Why should my foolish heart complain,
When wisdom, truth and love
Direct the stroke, inflict the pain,
And point to joys above?

How short are all my sufferings here,
How needful every cross!
Away, my unbelieving fear,
Nor call my gain, my loss.

Then give, dear Lord, or take away,
I'll bless thy sacred name;
My Jesus, yesterday, to-day,
For ever is the same!

WHAT SHALL I DO?
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WE put this inquiry into the mouth of the Christian, and especially of those who have just professed discipleship to Christ. When Saul of Tarsus was arrested in his career of persecution, and for the first time was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, his earnest language was, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" His first conviction of the importance of the Christian faith was accompanied by another conviction, that he was in some way to be employed in building up the faith which, in his ignorance and unbelief, he had so zealously attempted to destroy. Christ, in a remarkable manner, had called him, but for what purpose? Not merely to save his own soul from ruin, but to make him a special messenger of mercy to others. Light from heaven was shed on him, that from him it might be reflected on all around him. Grace was imparted to him, that from a happy experience he might be able to proclaim the riches of God's long-suffering and mercy to his fellow-men. How reasonable that he who had tasted that the Lord was gracious, should desire to impart some spiritual gift to the destitute! The Lord Jesus answered Saul's question, by first instructing and then sending him as a missionary to the Gentiles. From the day of his conversion until the day of his death, it was the one ruling and absorbing desire and aim of his heart and life to promote the salvation of his fellow-men. No stronger evidence of the genuineness of his conversion to God could he have furnished than he did by his unwearied labours, in proclaiming the gospel of salvation to the perishing. Two facts are here evident; that it was in all points of view peculiarly proper for Saul to ask, on his conversion, in

what particular department of service he was to engage, and that the Lord approved the question as one which was most natural under the circumstances. If so, every Christian, not only at his conversion, but at all subsequent times, should in like manner say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The question should be asked *earnestly*, as it was by Saul; for if ever he was in earnest, it was when these words were uttered by him. He was only partially enlightened, he was in doubt about his duty, he was aware of the pressing obligations resting on him, he knew it was in vain to wait until his own sagacity should solve the point of duty, and hence he went to the fountain-head of wisdom that he might be directed aright. The question shows in itself that it came from a full heart, and evinces the same urgency as that of the Philippian jailer, when he exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?"

It should be asked *sincerely*, from an honest heart, prepared not only to hear the response, but to obey it. Had the young ruler been perfectly sincere, who came to our Lord with the interesting inquiry, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he would not have gone away sorrowful, when Christ exacted from him a duty which he little anticipated. Probably he expected our Lord to applaud him for what he had done, and to encourage him in that course of outward strictness which he boasted he was then pursuing. When, however, he was told to sacrifice the idol of his heart, his worldly wealth, he went away to perish with his money. To be sincere in our inquiry in the present case, there must be a readiness of mind to comply with Christ's direction whatever it may be. Saul was not told to retire quietly from the distracting scenes of the world, that he might cultivate his personal piety, but to engage in a laborious and perilous mission for Christ, in which he should suffer many things, and there was no attempt on his part to evade the duty.

It should be asked *believingly*, under the conviction that the question is a proper one; one which God is willing to answer, and which, as the hearer of prayer, he will answer. We are not to expect an audible response, nor any supernatural appearance to guide us, but such a development of providential dispensations as will mark the path of duty, and such an inward and enlightened persuasion of mind as will satisfy us that we are not running unsest.

We might well urge the importance of proposing the question now, in this particular juncture of the church. The hosts of God's enemies are countless. They are not inactive. Every one who enlists under the banner of Satan is found ready and prompt in his obedience, doing with all his might the will of his master, and fully sustaining his character as a destroyer of much good. Wherever our eyes are turned, the servants of the devil are busily employed in resisting God, and opposing his kingdom. And where are the soldiers of the cross? Many, it is true, are valiant for the truth, and evince their readiness to spend and be spent in the cause of their divine Lord. Some are struggling, comparatively single-handed, in the dark places of paganism, and others are carrying on the war with the enemy in nominally Christian lands, but in their full amount, how few are they who are zealous for the Lord God of Hosts! How many thousands enter our churches under profession of attachment to the Lord, whose subsequent life is a comparative blank, and whose influence for good is never heard of! They profess to come forth to recruit the Lord's army; they put on the uniform of his soldiers, but who ever hears of them engaging in the warfare? They are as useless as sentinels asleep on their post. Surely, if the hundreds of thousands who are at this present moment enrolled as the disciples of the Lord, felt that they had an individual mission to perform, and were sincerely, earnestly, and believingly inquiring, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" a new aspect

would soon be put on the affairs of the church and the world. If each one was doing what he or she could, we should see ten thousand new streams of holy influence opened, which would penetrate every quarter of the globe, and make each desolate place flourish as the garden of the Lord. Inspired by the word and power of the Lord, our metropolitan cities would furnish their well appointed legions, and every rural village would send forth willing recruits. United, what force could withstand them? Would they not have Christ for their leader, and is not he that is for them, greater than all that can be against them? And O! what a warfare! It is not to kill and destroy, but to save alive. It is to redeem the lawful captive, to break off the chains of those who are led blindfold by Satan, and who, while in his service, know not what they do. Could sinners be enlightened to see their condition, could they be made to feel the desperateness of their present career, they would desert by thousands the camp of their tyrant master, and return to that merciful and gracious Lord from whom they have basely revolted.

Christians! many of these enemies of your Lord are bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh; born in your houses, fed at your tables; your acquaintance and neighbours, and at the furthest remove your fellow creatures. Can you do nothing to save them? Are you willing that they should finish, as they have commenced their career, in rebellion against God? Can you remain indifferent while the doom of eternal death stands recorded against them?

We shall hope that a sense of your personal obligation is stirring within you, and that now in sober earnest you are disposed to ask the question, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Although we cannot answer the inquiry specifically for each of you, God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and the circumstances of each one's condition, can give a certain and precise response. Still, we may possibly help your inquiries and assist you in settling the question of duty.

Perhaps you are a young man, and you ask, "What shall I do?" You may possess competent abilities, and have the means of obtaining a good education. The world is before you. Learned professions may invite you to their association, or lucrative employments may lure you by their rewards; but pause, ask God's counsel before you proceed. It may possibly be your duty, as a professor of Christ's religion, to engage more directly in his service, and to sacrifice all selfish aims. Are you willing, should he speak the word, to forego the world's honours and wealth, and become his humble and devoted minister, consecrating all your talents to this end, and esteeming it the best proof of your affection to him to spend your life in reclaiming his wandering children. Shut not your eyes to your duty when made plain, neither employ any artful sophistries to obscure the path to which the finger of the Lord is directing you. You may prefer worldly aggrandizement; God may permit you to choose your own path, but in the great day of reckoning you may find to your dismay that you have run in vain, and expended your strength for nought. Infinitely better would it be for you to be found in God's way, although that might be toilsome for the flesh, and promise no great temporal reward. We judge imperfectly when we judge a pursuit by its mere temporal bearings. Its end is to be considered. Its final results are to be regarded; not how it may affect our condition here, but how it may shape our eternal destiny. Many look upon the work of the ministry with repugnance, as promising to those who engage in it little worldly advantage. It is unquestionably not an office of ease or emolument, and those who would pervert it to these ends are not to be envied. Yet to those who are moved by the Holy Ghost to undertake it, it is a high calling of God, more honourable than the most lucrative employment, superior to all others in point of benevolence, and unspeakably happier in its results. If threescore and ten years were the bounds of our

existence as they are of our natural life, the labours, privations, and poverty of the humble pastor might appear unenviable, and the missionary toiling in discouragement among the heathen, and dying prematurely in his distant and solitary station, might seem to be an object of pity; but there is an eternity, and multitudes who have satiated themselves with the honours and pleasures of this life, would gladly, in the dying hour, exchange places, and welcome all the labours to which the servants of God are called, that they might enjoy their blessed hope. He that desires the office of a minister of Christ desires a good work, and when God points the way to it, let no one dare refuse.

The case may be that you have already chosen your profession, and you ask, What can I do for the Lord? Every particular employment in life is regarded by the Lord in connection with the opportunities it affords for usefulness. Nothing is more alien from the genuine spirit of Christianity than mere selfishness. No Christian is his own property, for he is bought with a price, he is forbidden to live to himself. Christ has claims on his service; the world has claims on his sympathy. No matter what may be his position in society, the Lord has a work for him to perform.

To the successful *lawyer* a thousand avenues of usefulness are thrown open, by taking advantage of which he may direct the course of justice, defeat the malignant purposes of the wicked, afford protection to the oppressed, and defend the right of the widow, the fatherless, and those who have no helper. There is no legitimate duty of his profession upon which he may not cast the lustre of genuine piety, and in which he may not honour his divine Master. If he would undertake no case without first inquiring, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" his influence on the community would be most happy, while he would enjoy the approving smiles of his own conscience. The bench and

the bar would, indeed, be a blessing to the community if pervaded by the spirit of true Christianity.

The *physician*, independently of his skill in relieving the numerous pains to which our flesh is subject, occupies a position, next to the minister of God, for exerting an influence on the higher spiritual interests of his patients. As a Christian, can he be satisfied with merely ministering to their bodily ailments? Can he suffer the confidence which his skill inspires to remain unimproved, in suggesting such counsels as may prove saving to their souls. No offensive obtrusion of such counsels is intended. Time, place, and circumstances are to be considered, and then the earnest supplication to God for guidance will prepare the opportunity for judicious and seasonable advice and instruction. The sick and dying are often wholly ignorant of their moral condition, they may be unwilling to admit the visits of a clergyman, but the physician is ever welcome, and although he comes to minister to the body, he may be listened to when expressing his solicitude for the soul.

The *farmer* has his opportunities, and if he has a just sense of his obligations, he may diffuse a religious influence around him. Those dependent on him, and associated with him in his useful pursuits, have undying souls, and the Lord would have him to use all proper means for bringing them to the knowledge of the truth.

The *mechanic* is similarly situated, and the workshop may become the sphere for usefulness to him, in which, by his example, his kind advice, and friendly instructions, he may bring others to Christ.

The *mother*, with her tender charge around her, may well ask counsel of the Lord to direct her in training up her children for eternity. There is no earthly influence like that of a mother, for good or evil. She may give a direction to the minds of her children which may guide them to heaven or precipitate them to hell. Many, alas! how many mothers



are regardless of their own salvation, and hence unfitted to promote the eternal well being of their children. Christian mothers, however, should feel deep solicitude on this subject, and if they fervently ask the Lord, he will not only tell them what they are to do, but in what way they may be strengthened for their duty.

The *unmarried woman* also, with perhaps less incumbrance, and still more frequent opportunities may cause her light to shine through a whole neighbourhood.

There is no one, in short, however humble and obscure their station, who may not aid in erecting and extending the kingdom of Christ. The means and opportunities are innumerable, when the heart is right. If each one shall begin by cultivating a deep and fervent piety in their own hearts; if they make it their aim to maintain daily communion with God, by prayer, self-examination, reading, and meditation, they will be at no loss to know what the Lord would have them to do. They will find ignorant children to instruct, ungodly families to introduce to an acquaintance with God's word; they will know where to dispose of tracts, religious books, and above all the Bible; they will be at no loss for good objects which may be promoted by their contributions. It should be their settled aim that the world should be better for their having been born into it, and they should not be willing to be cumberers of the ground. God will be glorified; his church shall be built up, and blessed will be all they who shall actively contribute to these objects.

**A PLEA FOR SABBATH AFTERNOON.**

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A RELIGIOUS Establishment forms no part of the New Testament Economy: it passed away with the Theocracy. But Christianity has its sacred season and its ordinances of worship, and the obligation to respect them is no less imperative upon us, than was the obligation to conform to the temple services upon the ancient Hebrews. There has been no repeal of the fourth commandment. It is as much our duty to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” as it was that of the Jews who heard these words from the mouth of Jehovah at Mount Sinai. We are admonished not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together for worship. This practice is commended to us by the Saviour’s own example and that of his apostles. The institution of an order of men to preach the gospel, implies a correlative obligation on the part of the people to hear them. And God has so linked his own glory and the best interests of mankind both for time and eternity, with the Sabbath and the sanctuary, as to leave us no room to doubt, that to “despise his holy things and profane his Sabbaths,” must be just as offensive to him now as it was in the days of old.

There are many ways in which this sin may be committed. All those are chargeable with it who turn the

Sabbath into a day of labour or a day of pleasure. This comprises a large class in every city, and there are cities where it includes nearly the entire population.

Nor are they guiltless of this sin who satisfy themselves with a mere formal worship on the Sabbath—who substitute a lifeless ritualism for the devotion of the heart. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” If we attempt to compound with God and with conscience, by rendering him a pompous lip-service instead of the spiritual homage he demands, we must prepare to take our place with the hypocritical city to which he said, “Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths.”

On these points all who recognize the Divine authority of the Bible will agree. But there is another form of this sin deserving of serious consideration, the nature of which is suggested by the title of this tract—A PLEA FOR SABBATH AFTERNOON.

The subject is one on which very many hints have been given, both from the pulpit and the press; but the conscience of the church seems to be in too torpid a condition to be reached by mere hints. A large proportion even of the professing Christians of our day, appear to stand in need of some formal and argumentative appeal to convince them that, wherever it is practicable, it is just as much their duty to be in their places in the house of God, and to have their families with them, on the afternoon as on the morning of the Sabbath. There are few churches which do not disclose a tendency more or less decided, to slide into the fashionable vice of mere Sunday-morning devotion. That this disparity

between the forenoon and afternoon congregations is owing, in some measure, to providential causes, is readily admitted. There would be neither religion nor justice in pronouncing an indiscriminate censure upon all persons who may come to the house of God but one part of the day. Some may be doing the work of missionaries among the ignorant and destitute. Many are disabled for more than a single service by feeble health. There are always a considerable number who are detained at home to minister to the sick. Mothers, especially those in indigent circumstances, may have to remain on account of young children: this office, however, is one in which they should be, from time to time, relieved by their husbands and their older children; for no one not engaged in imperative benevolent labours, should be continuously absent from the sanctuary for a long period, for any cause except ill health. Remoteness of residence may interfere in other cases, with a regular attendance at the sanctuary:—but it is a matter of common observation among pastors, that the families who live the farthest off are usually among the most punctual of their hearers, and that they are certain to be present in rain-storms and snow-storms, which keep many of their people who live near the church at home. The unavoidable domestic arrangements also of some families may be such as to preclude the attendance of all the members on both parts of the day.

These and other hindrances are to be regarded as providential, and submitted to as we submit to other trials, and improved, as we are instructed to improve all chastisements. It is not persons who would attend church in the afternoon, but cannot, to whom this appeal

is addressed ; but those who might attend and do not ; or who, if they do, are not found in their own church. Let such persons reflect upon the following, as a few only of the evils incident to an habitual neglect of the sanctuary on Sabbath afternoons.

1. *This practice indicates a want of reverence for the Divine authority.*

It must not be forgotten that the ordinances of the sanctuary are of Divine institution. They rest on the same basis and are protected by the same sanctions as the Sabbath itself. It would be a serious error to confound them in this respect with meetings for political, literary, or social purposes. These meetings we may attend at our discretion. Some of them may have a positive claim upon us which we are not at liberty to slight ; but in general we may or may not countenance them according to our taste or convenience. There may be a monthly convocation of the voters of your district for some municipal or national object. As a good citizen it may become you to be present ; but no one would class these assemblages, in respect of authority, with the three great annual feasts of the Jews, at which all the males of the nation were required to attend. A course of literary or scientific lectures may be announced, and a variety of considerations may dispose you to subscribe to them ; but you might stay away without committing any sin. Not so, however, with the services of the sanctuary. They rest upon other and far higher ground. They are not of man's appointment, but God's. He has set apart a specific time for them, and ordained an order of men to conduct them. And these men are simply ministerial officers, ambassadors,

whose business it is not to speak for themselves, but for him; to deliver and expound his instructions, and make known to their fellow-men his will. The Christian minister, then, in the faithful discharge of his duties, is clothed with a character which attaches to no statesman as such, to no teacher of law or medicine, nor indeed, to any other human teacher whatever. Nature may not have endowed him with any remarkable gifts; he may lack entirely that profound and diversified learning, and that splendour of eloquence which sometimes adorn the senate and the bar; but he has a claim upon the attention of the world beyond that of the most accomplished and popular secular orators. Commissioned to

————— “negotiate between God and man,  
As God’s ambassador, the grand concerns  
Of judgment and of mercy,”

his right to be heard, and that with reverence, is so sacred, that our Saviour himself has put on record these pregnant words concerning it: “He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.”

If this is a correct representation, it puts a very serious aspect upon that question so often asked and answered with a feeling approaching to levity, “Shall I go to church this afternoon, or stay at home?” It is common to dispose of this question on grounds of mere convenience or caprice, as one would decide upon going to hear a lecture on literature or the arts; and only two parties are recognized in considering it, to wit, the querist and his pastor. But, in truth, his pastor is a party to the matter only in a very subordinate sense.

He is simply a messenger; and your errand at the sanctuary is not to hear him, but to hear what God will say to you through his lips. The actual parties to the question are yourself and God. Had the Ninevites, when Jonah entered their city, shut themselves up in their dwellings and refused him all access to them, every one must perceive that the indignity would have been offered, not so much to the prophet, as to that glorious Being whose commission he bore. And when individuals voluntarily absent themselves from the sanctuary, it is a slight put upon the authority of God, not upon the "earthen vessel" to which he has confided the gospel treasure. The real nature of the act would be seen at once, if an individual, having the opportunity, should refuse on trivial grounds to go and hear the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer would be very far from making the two cases identical; but he hopes he does not unduly magnify the office of the ministry, by citing again those solemn words, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." Even affixing to this language the lowest sense it will bear, it can be no light offence to refuse to listen to Christ's ministers.

A similar train of remark might be made in respect to the other exercises of public worship. But enough has been said to show that habitual and voluntary absence from the house of God for a part of the Sabbath, indicates a great want of reverence for the Divine authority.

2. *No less clearly does this habit betray a want of gratitude for the Divine goodness.*

We have spoken only of the authority which appertains to these Sabbath ordinances; they are also fragrant

with the love and mercy of our Father in heaven. They are designed not merely as a perpetual and ubiquitous memorial of the cross—to keep all men in remembrance of the great love wherewith God hath loved us ; but as means of grace, as the channels through which the manifold blessings of redemption are conveyed to our lost race. How admirably they are adapted to this end, and how largely they have been made subservient to it, must be known to every one who has been taught the rudiments of Christianity. It is certainly a signal instance of the goodness of God, that after sending his beloved Son into the world to die for our sins, he should have instituted the Sabbath, and the ministry, and the ordinances of his house, and superadded to these the mission of the Holy Spirit, that men, to the latest generations, might be admonished of their sins, and called to repentance, and guided into the way of salvation. How few would be saved without the Sabbath and the sanctuary ! And our choicest temporal blessings also come to us indirectly through the same medium : for it will be found that the intelligence, the freedom, security, and substantial thrift and comfort of nations, may ordinarily be gauged by the character of their Sabbath-services, and the spirit with which they are supported.

To neglect the house of God, then, indicates a lamentable insensibility to the munificent bounty which pours itself upon us in this profusion of mercies. Wherever there is any due appreciation of this goodness, there will be a disposition to cherish and sustain the sanctuary and its worship, with the utmost efficiency. Everything that may impair its dignity or its usefulness will be carefully avoided, and efforts will be made to bring as many



as possible within its hallowed influence. It will not be pretended that this is done by those who habitually absent themselves without adequate cause on Sunday afternoons. The interpretation which must be put upon this practice, is, that the parties concerned do not set a proper value even upon the services of the morning—that their whole estimate of the day and its duties is far below the scriptural standard. A becoming gratitude to God would soon heal this pernicious and growing propensity in the churches to spend but a half day in his worship.

3. *The effect of this habit upon those who indulge in it is evil, and only evil.*

It fosters, as was just intimated, a disparaging view of the ordinances of God's house. Its subtle tendency is to degrade these services to the level of mere human appointments, and to generate the feeling that there is no more harm and no more sin in neglecting them, than there is in neglecting any other public or social observance. This sentiment is not simply derogatory to God; it is positively injurious to every man who imbibes it.

Then the practice deprives one of very many of the advantages the Sabbath is adapted to confer. There are no influences brought to bear upon our characters, more important to our comfort and usefulness, than the influences of the sanctuary. We cannot afford to dispense with them. For six days together a tide of worldliness is sweeping over us, with an almost unbroken current. If it were not for the Sabbath, we should all be carried off into the fathomless abyss. The sanctuary is to us what the fountain and the palm-trees are to the traveller in the desert; what the tranquil haven is to

the tempest-tost mariner. We go there to renew our strength by waiting upon God—to revive the impressions of spiritual things, which our secularities are constantly tending to efface—to correct our illusive estimates of temporal objects—to be instructed, warned, sanctified, comforted—to be made wiser and to be made better by the teachings of God's word, and by communion with the Father of our spirits. The time usually appropriated to these exercises is quite little enough, considering how vitally they are connected with our highest interests. Three hours in the sanctuary to one hundred and sixty-five in the world, or one hour to God and fifty-five to the world, will not be deemed a very exorbitant draught upon our time, for the purposes of public worship, by any one who acknowledges the being of a God, and our obligation to honour him. Yet many would abridge this one half. They would content themselves with spending an hour and a half a week in the worship of God. He needs to have attained a rare eminence in the spiritual life, who can get on with this. And he needs to be well furnished in all that pertains to the Christian character, who can stately forego, without injury, the instruction and the devotional opportunities pertaining to one of the regular Sabbath services.

It must not unfrequently happen, in the experience of persons who pursue this course, that they miss the discussion of subjects peculiarly appropriate to their own characters or circumstances. The passage of Scripture expounded may be one which has occasioned them peculiar difficulty; or the sermon may have been precisely adapted to their case; or in answer to the prayers

of his people, the Spirit of God may have been present in a signal manner, silently dispensing his gracious gifts among the waiting congregation. Thomas lost a view of the risen Saviour, in consequence of his absence from a single meeting of his brethren ; and we can have no assurance that absence from the sanctuary will, in our case, as in his, be overruled for good.

It is no sufficient reply to this, that the ministrations of pastors are apt to be less elaborate in the afternoon than in the morning. Even allowing that this is the case, they may be no less adapted to do good ; and to the mass of a congregation they may be more useful. It is well worthy of inquiry how far the lack of interest, which is implied in this objection, may depend upon the hearers themselves ; and whether the current preaching of evangelical ministers of all denominations, is not quite as good as the average *hearing* among their people. Whether persons are satisfied or not with the discourses to which they listen, will depend very much on the motives and the spirit with which they go to the sanctuary. It was the characteristic remark of a lady of distinguished piety, well known to the writer of this "Plea,"—a remark elicited by some criticisms made in her presence upon a sermon just preached—"For my own part, I never hear a sermon that has not something in it which I can profit by." People whose appetites are always whetted for something new, something original, something brilliant—people who are thrown into ecstasies by a beautiful trope, while the doctrine of the cross produces no more impression upon them than if they were made of adamant—people who have no relish either for the pure milk or the strong meat of the word,

unless it is presented in a service of gold—people who exalt the rhetoric of a discourse above its theology, or the manner of a preacher above his matter—all these and many other classes of hearers must lay their account to hear very often to little purpose either of pleasure or profit. But the observation is made with confidence, that those who frequent the sanctuary (any sanctuary where the gospel is faithfully preached,) with a conscientious desire to be benefited by the exercises, seldom, if ever, fail of finding a blessing there.

There is another mode of repelling the argument, that individuals deprive themselves of important advantages by the habit we are considering; to wit, by alleging that “they can spend the afternoon of the Sabbath more profitably at home.” And if the afternoon, why not the forenoon? You may, not improbably, be able to find in your library more eloquent sermons, more luminous expositions, and more comprehensive and fervent prayers, than those which make a part of the public exercises in which you are wont to participate. Why, then, come to the house of God at all, except to celebrate the Lord’s Supper? If you venture to answer this question, you cannot fail to detect the fallacy of the pretext which would keep you at home of a Sabbath afternoon. It will remind you that these are divine ordinances—that God’s “way is in the sanctuary”—that to slight the house of God is to slight God—that to maintain that it is, on the whole, better to spend one half the Sabbath in private, than in those public services which he has appointed, is to assume to be wiser than he is. Besides, if this is a sound principle in your case, it must be sound for others. The bearing

of it in this view will be adverted to presently: a mere hint of it here may suffice to show how indefensible it is as an apology for neglecting the sanctuary.

And aside from these considerations, is it true, as a matter of fact, that those whose seats are, from no providential impediment, habitually vacant on a Sabbath afternoon, are spending the time more profitably elsewhere? Is it true that they are engaged the while in the patient and earnest study of the Scriptures, in self-examination, prayer, and other religious exercises? Are they employed in the culture of personal holiness, in qualifying themselves for a closer walk with God, and for greater exertions in behalf of their perishing fellow creatures? These questions can be answered only in the way of conjecture; but those who can answer them, must, it is believed, if they speak at all, answer them in the negative. For the disposition which would put individuals upon spending their time in this devout way at home, is the very disposition which would make them love the sanctuary and hasten to it whenever its doors were thrown open. Such persons would say with David, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." They would feel that while the private exercises of religion are on no account to be neglected, they could expect to derive but little profit from them, if they allowed them to supplant the claims of public worship. And they would set too high a value upon those ordinances in which God specially reveals him-

self to his people, and through which he is accustomed to bestow his choicest mercies upon them, to forsake them on a visionary presumption that they could obtain an ampler blessing in some other way.

On the other hand, if the Sabbath afternoon is not spent in the manner indicated; if it is passed in idleness, in sleep, in desultory conversation, in miscellaneous reading, in the merely critical study of the Bible, in letter-writing, in walking, riding, visiting, in going from church to church; surely, no one can seriously believe that he is consulting his own improvement, or his own usefulness, by absenting himself from the house of God. A careful observation would show him that his moral character, so far from improving, was gradually deteriorating; and that even his mornings in the sanctuary, however they might afford him a transient pleasure, were well nigh neutralized as to any sanctifying influence upon his heart and life, by his ill-spent afternoons.

4. The habit of neglecting the sanctuary in the afternoon, *has a very pernicious effect upon families.* It cannot be otherwise. If we neglect the house of God, we must expect our children and dependents to do the same. They will not be likely to hold in esteem what they see us despise. Hence it has come to pass in our own day and country, that so many young persons are separated from their parents in religious matters. Allowed to wander at will on the Sabbath, they have strayed off into other folds; and it will be well if they have not strayed beyond the sound of the gospel. This rarely happens in families where the parents have made it a point always to be in their places on the Sabbath, and

to have their household with them. Children trained in this way have no desire to wander. The instinctive reverence for a parent which the Creator has implanted in the breasts of children, makes them feel that what their parents do is right, and is to be imitated by them. You may find examples of young men in the highest social circles, and exposed, therefore, to all the enticements which are apt to render domestic restraint irksome, who, although destitute of religious principle, never allow their seats to be vacant on either part of the Sabbath. This is the result of good training. And it is both for themselves and their parents a very happy result. There is no coercion in it—no hardship. Duty and pleasure are linked together: and their parents have the happiness of going up to the sanctuary the year round, followed by a united and affectionate household. It is not asserted that parents can, in all cases, secure this end; but as a general thing, it is believed they might. It is their own truancy in the afternoons which, in a multitude of instances, brings about the permanent alienation of their children from the church of their fathers; which leaves the aged trunk to decay and die in the ancient forest, while the branches are one by one lopped off and grafted upon other and very different stocks.

This is one evil of the practice. Another is, that families thus trained, not unfrequently lose all reverence for religion and become habitual Sabbath-breakers. If there is any one point settled by the social experience of great cities, it is, that the only effectual method to preserve the young from sliding into the manifold sins and perils of Sabbath desecration, is, to

bring them stately to the house of God, and to foster in their hearts an affectionate veneration for its ordinances. Even this, of course, will be of no avail without the Divine blessing; but if this is neglected, no other means can, with an equal probability of success, be substituted for it. The downward course of young men very commonly begins in their absenting themselves from the sanctuary on Sabbath afternoons. This slight deviation, as too many regard it, from the line of duty, proves very often the divergence of a path which leads to disgrace and ruin here, and to endless woe hereafter. It would be a needless consumption of time to delineate the stages by which this consummation is usually reached; for no one can inquire into the subject without perceiving that the connection between the regular profanation of the Lord's day and the ultimate perdition of the soul, is so close and so natural, that it is absolutely startling to contemplate it. And if this be so, what more cogent or affecting remonstrance than the one supplied by this fact, could be pressed upon the consciences of those who, of preference and not of necessity content themselves with a Sabbath morning service!

There are many other domestic bearings of this practice which will readily occur to any reflecting mind. The habit in question, *has a very untoward aspect towards those with whom we are associated in the sanctuary.*

It is an admitted principle, that we are bound to consider the consequences of our conduct as regards others. In weighing the question whether to attend church in the afternoons, we must remember that we are not isolated individuals, but members of a congregation, all



of whom are more or less concerned in our decision. If we stay away, we encourage others to do the same. Evil examples are much more contagious than good ones. If one family absent themselves, some other family will allow a slight pretext to keep them at home. Young persons will plead the absence of some of their companions and school-mates, as an argument why their parents should extend to them a similar license. And the greater the number of vacant pews in a church of an afternoon, the less heinous will the sin of voluntary absence appear to the parties implicated, and to others who are beginning to falter in their steadfastness. The effect, meanwhile, upon the more conscientious portion of the church, is very discouraging; while the unconverted either disappear from the sanctuary, or attend in a torpid manner to exercises from which, as they perceive, many professors of religion withhold their countenance. Every one knows the difference as to sympathy, interest, comfort, and spiritual edification, between a full church and a church only half filled. The advantages in the one case as compared with the other, are not imaginary, but real and substantial. It is a question of casuistry well worthy the attention of churchgoers, whether an individual has a *right* to deprive his fellow-worshippers of these advantages, or to abate their interest in them, by needlessly absenting himself from the house of God. It will not do to reply to this, that your example binds no one to follow it. It will have its influence. It will tell upon your fellow-worshippers: and the tendency of it, if wrong, will be to dishearten your brethren and to put fresh hindrances in the way of the impenitent.

Nor is the aspect of this practice less untoward as regards the ministers of the gospel. It would be too harsh to apply to it the epithet disrespectful, because no disrespect is intended. But it is discouraging; and it indicates a somewhat low and inadequate view of the reciprocal obligations of pastors and their congregations. A pastor is expected to be always in his place, in cold and heat, in sunshine and storm. It is easy to conceive what astonishment would be excited among a congregation if they should assemble in the afternoon and find the pulpit vacant. But if it is allowable for the third or the half of his people, without any adequate cause, to vacate their pews frequently of an afternoon, why may not a pastor occasionally claim the same indulgence? Is there any obligation resting upon him to preach, which does not bind them to hear?

Again, we may take the case of a pastor who is faithfully discharging his duties; who, desiring above all things the spiritual well-being of his flock, not only visits them from house to house, but studies hard and long that he may feed them with knowledge and with understanding, and rightly divide to them the word of truth. What do you think the effect upon his spirits must be, if he finds, Sabbath after Sabbath, that his people feel too little interest in his ministrations to come to the sanctuary? As regards his responsibility to the great Head of the church, it may be all one to him, whether a hundred or a thousand come to listen to him; but something surely is due to a pastor's feelings. The office has unavoidable trials and difficulties enough; it is inconsiderate in a congregation to augment them by voluntarily leaving him to preach to a handful of people.

Nor is it exclusively a matter of feeling: this is one of the surest ways to abridge a minister's usefulness. For not only does the truth reach fewer minds, but it is less likely to benefit them. The Spirit alone can give effect to the word, and his influences are bestowed in answer to prayer. If it is important that we come to the house of God to receive the counsels of his word, it is no less important that we here unite our prayers for his blessing upon the truth. By a voluntary absence, we preclude a pastor from the opportunity of benefiting ourselves, and indirectly prevent a measure of the good which others might derive from his ministrations.

There is still another very grave aspect in which the habit we have been considering should be contemplated, to wit: *its bearings upon the public morals and on the general interests of the Church.* If it were proper to extend this paper, it would be easy to show that the habit of deserting the sanctuary on Sabbath afternoons, tends to substitute a ceremonial worship for real devotion; to bring the church into bondage to the luxury and the artificial refinements of the gay world; to make religion a mere thing of fashion; and to extinguish all vital piety. It could be shown that it contributes to strip the church of its moral power, and especially of its power of rebuke, to abridge its capacity for benevolent action, to degrade the Sabbath into a day of secularity and pastime, to impair the reverence due to sacred things, to weaken the restraints of virtue, and open upon society the sluices of infidelity and licentiousness. Such, it is charged, is the legitimate tendency of this practice; and such has been the actual result in some countries where the practice has become universal. But the argument on this point must be waived.

The writer would be sorry to have it supposed that a single word of censure in this tract was designed for those whom Providence shuts up to a single service on the Sabbath: they deserve sympathy, not censure. And of those who have slid into the practice of a voluntary absence on Sabbath afternoons, a large proportion, it is probable, have done it thoughtlessly, and without any mature consideration of the evils inseparable from the habit. But these evils have now been partially pointed out; and no conscientious person can ponder them, without perceiving that there is a very grave responsibility attached to the question of his being always in his place of a Sabbath afternoon. I say, "*always* in his place." This discussion will not have been worth either your time or the author's, if all the fruit it produces is to perish in the course of two or three weeks. It is a permanent, not a temporary reform, it is designed to promote; one that shall stamp your character as A CHURCH-GOER OF A SABBATH AFTERNOON, as strongly as that of multitudes is stamped for mere Sabbath morning worshippers. This will not only be an honourable distinction, but it will bring upon you the blessings promised to them who "dwell in the house of the Lord," and make you feel that "a day in his courts is better than a thousand." Much that has been said might be used to enforce a proper attendance also upon the weekly lecture and prayer-meetings of the churches; but the writer has deemed it expedient to confine himself to the single topic presented in this appeal. May the God of the Sabbath and the sanctuary so bless the truth, that all who read what is herein written may love his ordinances with a warmer affection, and attend upon them with ever increasing profit and delight.



## NOAH'S CARPENTERS.

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IT was a late hour at night. The city of N——, with its many turrets and spires, was sleeping under the shadow of those rocky sentinels which have guarded the plain since the flood. The waves of the ocean fell gently and soothingly on the beach. The moon waded through the fleecy autumn clouds, now playing with the waters and lighting up the scene, and then concealing her glory, as if to make its revelations more prized. It was a night for pious thoughts and conversation.

Two persons were leaving the city, and passing along the water-side to a beautiful valley, where one was a resident, and the other a guest. The taller, the elder of the two, was actively engaged in a work of benevolence, in the blessings of which the people of N—— and the students of —— College mutually shared. The work was *too heavy* for him, and he had invited his young friend, an impenitent lad, of whom we will speak as Henry, to aid him. Together they had spent many a weary day in supplying the Christian labourers who co-operated with them with the choicest means of usefulness, as they crowded the depository of truth. Exhausted by their toils, they were now returning for a night's repose. Hitherto, not a word had been addressed to the obliging lad about his soul. The fitting occasion seemed to have arrived. A quaint, but fitting manner was chosen.

“Henry,” asked the elder of the younger, “do you know what became of Noah’s carpenters?”

“Noah’s carpenters!” exclaimed Henry; “I didn’t know that Noah had any carpenters.”

“Certainly he must have had help in building one of the largest and best-proportioned ships ever put upon the stocks. There must have been many ship-carpenters at work for a long time, to have constructed such a vessel in such an age. What became of them, think you, when all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened?”

“What do you mean by such a queer question?” Henry replied.

“No matter what, just now. Please answer the inquiry. And you may also tell me if you will, what you would have done in that dreadful hour, when the storm came in its fury, and Noah’s prophecies were all fulfilled, and all but the family of the preacher of righteousness were ready to be engulfed in those black waters.”

“I don’t know,” said Henry, in a half-thoughtful, half-trifling manner; “perhaps I should have got on the rudder?”

“This is human nature exactly, Henry. It would ‘climb up some other way,’ rather than enter the fold by the only door. It would ‘get on the rudder,’ in its pride and shortsightedness, rather than go into the ark of safety. It would ‘save itself,’ by hanging on at the hazard of being swept into the gulf of despair, instead of being saved by the provision of infinite love.

“But I’ll tell you plainly what I mean, Henry, by Noah’s carpenters. You have kindly and generously given me your aid day after day, in building an ark in N——, by which many, I trust, will be saved. I feel grateful for your help. But I greatly fear that while others will be rejoicing in the fruits of our labours, you will be swept away in the storm of wrath which will by and by beat on the heads of those who enter not the ark of Jesus Christ. No human device will avail for you. ‘Getting on the rudder’ will not answer; you must be in Christ, or you are lost. Remember Noah’s carpenters, and flee to the ark without delay.”

We reached the house and parted. The winter came. The lad was placed at a boarding-school in ———. He visited home during the winter vacation, and presented himself to the church for admission to its communion. He then stated that the conversation detailed above had never passed from his memory. It led him to serious reflections, and ultimately, we trust, to the ark of safety. He is now entering a career of wide-spread public usefulness. He will never forget Noah's carpenters.

Though Noah's carpenters were all drowned, there are a great many of the same stock now alive; of those who contribute to promote the spiritual good of others, and aid in the up-building of the Redeemer's kingdom, but personally neglect the great salvation.

Sabbath-school children, who gather in the poor, or contribute their money to send tracts and books to the destitute, or to aid the work of missions, and yet remain unconverted, are like Noah's carpenters.

Teachers in Bible-classes and Sabbath-schools, who point their pupils to the Lamb of God, but do not lead the way, are like guide-boards that tell the road, but are not travellers on it; or like Noah's carpenters, who built an ark, and were overwhelmed in the waters that bore it aloft in safety.

Careless parents, who instruct their children and servants, as every parent should, in the great doctrines of the gospel, yet fail to illustrate these doctrines in their lives, and seek not a personal interest in the blood of Christ, are like Noah's carpenters, and must expect their doom.

Printers, sewers, folders, and binders, engaged in making Bibles and religious books; booksellers and publishers of religious newspapers, who are doing much to increase the knowledge of the gospel and to save souls, but are careless about their own salvation, will have the mortification of knowing, that while their toils have been instrumental of spiritual good to thousands, they were only like the pack-

mules that carried a load to market without tasting it, or like Noah's carpenters, who built a ship in which they never sailed.

Wealthy and liberal, but unconverted men, who help to build churches and sustain the institutions of the gospel, but who "will not come unto Christ that they may have life," are hewing the timbers and driving the nails of the ark which they are too proud or too careless to enter. Perhaps they think they will be safe on the "rudder;" but they may find too late that when they would ride they must swim—that when they would float they must sink, with all their good deeds unmixed with faith as a millstone about their necks.

Moralists who attend church and support the ministry, but who do not receive into their hearts the gospel they thus sustain, are like Noah's carpenters.

Perhaps the Christian reader will be encouraged by this narrative to speak a word in season to some of these ark-builders. Their kindness should be acknowledged. "These things ought they to have done." The danger is, that the great thing will be left undone. Run, speak to that young man. Tell him that the storm of wrath will come. Tell him that "getting on the rudder" of the ark, and all other human devices for salvation, are vain refuges of lies. Tell him that the ark is open, that it is safe, that it waits for him. The dove and the olive-branch are in this ark. The bow of mercy spans the heavens above it. Peace, and hope, and salvation are there. But, if scorned or neglected, when once the door is shut, they only that are in the ark will "remain alive." Who can abide that storm? Who can buffet those waves? Who will survive the deluge?

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works! And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 22, 23.

ARE YOU HOLY?



“HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD.”—
Heb. xii. 14.

READER—I offer you this passage of Scripture as a subject for self-inquiry; and I invite you to think over the question before your eyes, “Are you holy?”

It is a question that can never be out of season. The wise man tells us, “There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;” (Eccles. iii. 4, 7.) but there is no time, no, not a day, in which a man ought not to be holy. Reader, are you?

It is a question that concerns all ranks and conditions of men. Some are rich, and some are poor, some learned, and some unlearned, some masters, and some servants; but there is no rank or condition in life in which a man ought not to be holy. Reader, are you?

I ask to be heard to-day about this question. How stands the account between your souls and God? Stay a little, I beseech you, while I reason with you about holiness. I believe I might have chosen a subject more popular and pleasant. I am sure I might have found one more easy to handle. But I feel deeply I could not have chosen one more important and more profitable to your soul. It is a solemn thing to hear God saying, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Heb. xii. 14.

I shall endeavour, by God’s help, to set before you what

true holiness is, the reasons why it is so needful, and the way in which alone it can be attained. The Lord grant you may see and feel the importance of the subject, and lay down this paper, when you have read it, wiser and better men.

I. First then, let me try to show you *what true holiness is, and what sort of persons are those whom God calls holy?*

A man may go great lengths, and yet never reach true holiness. It is not knowledge, Balaam had that: nor great profession, Judas Iscariot had that: nor doing many things, Herod had that: nor zeal for certain matters in religion, Jehu had that: nor morality and outward respectability of conduct, the young ruler had that: nor taking pleasure in hearing preachers, the Jews in Ezekiel's time had that: nor keeping company with godly people, Joab, and Gehazi, and Demas had that. Yet none of these were holy. These things alone are not holiness. A man may have any one of them, and yet never see the Lord.

What then is true holiness? It is a hard question to answer. I do not mean that I find a want of matter on the subject. But I fear lest I should give a defective view of holiness, and not say all that ought to be said; or lest I should speak things about it that ought not to be spoken, and so do harm. Suffer me, however, to say a few words that may help to clear your mind. Remember only, when I have said all, that my account is but a poor imperfect outline at the best.

Holiness is *the habit of being of one mind with God*, according as we find his mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment, hating what he hates, loving what he loves, and measuring everything in this world by the standard of his word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man.

A holy man will *endeavour to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment*. He will have a decided

bent of mind towards God, a hearty desire to do his will, a greater fear of displeasing him than of displeasing the world, and a love to all his ways. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," (Rom. vii. 22.) and what David felt when he said, "I esteem *all* thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate *every* false way." Psalm cxix. 128.

A holy man will *strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ*; to have the mind that was in him, and to be conformed to his image. It will be his aim to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us; to be unselfish, even as Christ pleased not himself; to walk in love, even as Christ loved us; to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made himself of no reputation and humbled himself. He will remember that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth, that he came not to do his own will, that it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will, that he would stoop to any work in order to minister to others, that he was meek and patient under undeserved insults, that he thought more of godly poor men than of kings, that he was full of love and compassion to sinners, that he was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin, that he sought not the praise of men, when he might have had it, that he went about doing good, that he was separate from worldly people, that he continued instant in prayer, that he would not let even his nearest relations stand in his way when God's work was to be done. These things a holy man will try to remember. By them he will endeavour to show his course in life. He will lay to heart the saying of John, "He that saith he abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked;" (1 John ii. 6.) and the saying of Peter, that "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." 1 Peter ii. 21. Much time would be saved, and much sin prevented, if men would oftener ask

themselves the question, "What would Christ say and do, if he were in my place?"

But time would fail me if I were to mention all the things which go to make up holiness of character. Still I must ask you to bear with me while I name a few things which come uppermost in my thoughts. The days we live in make me anxious that there should be no mistake upon this subject. How can we know whether we are holy, unless we have a clear view of what holiness takes in?

A holy man will follow after *meekness*, long-suffering, gentleness, kind temper, government of his tongue. He will bear much, forbear much, overlook much, and be slow to talk of standing on his rights. You see a bright example of this in the behaviour of David when Shimei cursed him, and of Moses when Aaron and Miriam spake against him.

A holy man will follow after *temperance and self-denial*. He will labour to mortify the desires of his body, to crucify his flesh with its affections and lusts, to curb his passions, to restrain his carnal inclinations, lest at any time they break loose. Oh! what a word is that of the Lord Jesus to the apostles, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life;" (Luke xxi. 34.) and that of the apostle Paul, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 27.

A holy man will follow after *charity and brotherly-kindness*. He will endeavour to observe the golden rule, of doing as he would have men do to him, and speaking as he would have men speak to him. He will be full of affection towards his brethren, their bodies, their property, their characters, their feelings, their souls. "He that loveth another," says Paul, "hath fulfilled the law." Rom. xiii. 8. He will abhor all lying, slandering, backbiting, cheating, dishonesty, and unfair dealing, even in the least things.

The shekel and cubit of the sanctuary were larger than those in common use. Alas! what condemning words are the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and the Sermon on the Mount, when laid alongside the conduct of many professing Christians!

A holy man will follow after a spirit of *mercy and benevolence towards others*. He will not stand all the day idle. He will not be content with doing no harm, he will try to do good. He will strive to be useful in his day and generation, and to lessen the spiritual wants and misery around him as far as he can. Such was Dorcas, full of good works and almsdeeds, which she did; not merely purposed and talked about, but *did*. Such an one was Paul, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you," he says "though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." 2 Cor. xvi. 12, 15.

A holy man will follow after *purity of heart*. He will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it. He knows his own heart is like tinder, and will diligently keep clear of the sparks of temptation. Who shall dare to talk of strength, when David can fall? There is many a hint to be gleaned from the ceremonial law. Under it the man who only touched a bone, or a dead body, or a grave, or a diseased person, became at once unclean in the sight of God. And these things were emblems and figures. Few Christians are ever too watchful and too particular about this point.

A holy man will follow after *the fear of God*. I do not mean the fear of a slave, who only works because he is afraid of punishment, and would be idle if he did not dread discovery. I mean rather the fear of a child, who wishes to live and move as if he was always before his father's face, because he loves him. What a noble example Nehemiah gives us of this! When he became governor at Jerusalem

he might have been chargeable to the Jews, and required of them money for his support. The former governors had done so. There was none to blame him if he did. But he says, "So did not I, because of the fear of God." Nehem. v. 15.

A holy man will follow after *humility*. He will desire in lowliness of mind to esteem all others better than himself. He will see more evil in his own heart than in any other in the world. He will understand something of Abraham's feeling, when he says, "I am dust and ashes;" and Jacob's when he says, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies;" and Job's when he says, "I am vile;" and Paul's when he says, "I am chief of sinners." Holy Bradford, that faithful martyr of Christ, would sometimes finish his letters with these words, "A most miserable sinner, John Bradford." Good old Mr. Grimshawe's last words, when he lay on his death-bed, were these, "Here goes an unprofitable servant."

A holy man will follow after *faithfulness* in all the duties and relations in life. He will try, not merely to fill his place as well as others, but even better, because he has higher motives and more help than they. Those words of Paul should never be forgotten, "Whatever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord." "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Holy persons should aim at doing everything well, and should be ashamed of allowing themselves to do anything ill, if they can help it. Like Daniel, they should seek to give no occasion against themselves, except as concerning the law of their God. They should strive to be good husbands, and good wives, good parents, and good children; good masters, and good servants; good neighbours, good friends, and good subjects. Holiness is worth little indeed, if it does not bear this kind of fruit. The Lord Jesus puts a searching question to his people, when he says, "What do ye more than others?"

Last, but not least, a holy man will follow after *spiritual*

mindfulness. He will endeavour to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand. He will not neglect the business of the life that now is, but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim travelling to his home. To commune with God in prayer, in the Bible, and in the assembly of his people, these things will be the holy man's chiefest enjoyments. He will value everything, and place, and company, just in proportion as it draws him nearer to God. He will enter into something of David's feeling, when he says, "My soul followeth hard after thee." "Thou art my portion." Psalm lxiii. 8—cxix. 57.

Such is the outline of holiness, which I set before you; such is the character which those who are called holy follow after.

But here let me say, I trust no man will misunderstand me. I am not without fear that my meaning will be mistaken, and the description I have given of holiness will discourage some tender conscience. I would not willingly make one righteous heart sad, or throw a stumbling-block in any believer's way.

I do not tell you for a moment that holiness shuts out the presence of *indwelling sin*. No! far from it. It is the greatest misery of a holy man that he carries about with him a body of death, that often when he would do good evil is present with him; that the old man is clogging all his movements, and, as it were, trying to draw him back at every step he takes. But it is the excellence of a holy man that he is not at peace with indwelling sin, as others are. He hates it, mourns over it, and longs to be free from its company. The work of sanctification within him is like the wall of Jerusalem, the building goes forward, "even in troublous times." Dan. ix. 25.

Neither do I tell you that holiness comes to ripeness and perfection all at once, or that these graces I have touched on must be found in full bloom and vigour before you can call a man holy. No! far from it. Sanctification is always a *progressive work*. Some men's graces are in the blade, some in the ear, and some are like full corn in the ear. All must have a beginning. We must never despise the day of small things. And sanctification in the very best is an *imperfect work*. The history of the brightest saints that ever lived will contain many a "but," and howbeit," and "notwithstanding," before you reach the end. The gold will never be without some dross, the light will never shine without some clouds, until we reach the heavenly Jerusalem. The sun himself hath spots upon his face. The holiest men have many a blemish and defect when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Their life is a continual warfare with sin, the world, and the devil; and sometimes you will see them not overcoming, but overcome. The flesh is ever lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and in many things they offend.

But still, for all this, I am sure that to have such a character as I have faintly drawn, is the heart's desire and prayer of all true Christians. They press towards it, if they do not reach it. They may not attain to it, but they always aim at it. It is what they fain would be, if it is not what they are.

And this I do mean to say, that true holiness is a great reality. It is something in a man that can be seen, and known, and marked, and felt, by all around him. It is light: if it exists it will show itself. It is salt: if it exists its savour will be perceived. It is a precious ointment: if it exists, its presence cannot be hid.

I am sure the little I know of my own heart makes me ready to make allowance for much backsliding, for much occasional deadness. I know a road may lead from one

point to another, and yet have many a winding and turn; and a man may be truly holy, and yet be drawn aside by many an infirmity. Gold is not the less gold because mingled with alloy; nor light the less light because faint and dim; nor grace the less grace because young and weak. But, after every allowance, I cannot see how any man deserves to be called holy, who wilfully allows himself in sins, and is not humbled and ashamed because of them. I dare not call any one holy who makes a habit of wilfully neglecting known duties, and wilfully doing what he knows God has commanded him not to do. Well says Owen, "I do not understand how a man can be a true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble."

Reader, such is holiness. Examine yourself whether you are acquainted with it. Prove your own self.

II. Let me try in the next place *to show you some reasons why holiness is so important.*

Can holiness save us? Can holiness put away sin, cover iniquities, make satisfaction for transgressions, pay our debt to God? No! not a whit. God forbid that I should ever tell you so. Holiness can do none of these things. The brightest saints are all unprofitable servants. Our purest works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God's holy law. The white robe which Jesus offers, and faith puts on, must be our only righteousness, the name of Christ our only confidence, the Lamb's book of life our only title to heaven. With all our holiness we are no better than sinners. Our best things are stained and tainted with imperfection. They are all more or less incomplete, wrong in the motive, or defective in the performance. By the deeds of the law shall no child of Adam ever be justified. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

Why then is holiness so important? Why does the

apostle say without it no man shall see the Lord? Let me set before you a few reasons.

For one thing, we must be holy because *the voice of God in Scripture plainly commands it*. The Lord Jesus says to his people, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 20. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. v. 48. Paul tells the Thessalonians, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. iv. 3. And Peter says, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter i. 15, 16. "In this," says Leighton, "law and gospel agree."

We must be holy, because this is one grand *end and purpose for which Christ came into the world*. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. v. 15. And to the Ephesians, "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." Ephes. v. 25, 26. And to Titus, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 14. In short, to talk of men being saved from the guilt of sin, without being at the same time saved from its dominion in their hearts, is to contradict the witness of all Scripture. Are believers said to be elect?—it is "through sanctification of the Spirit." Are they predestinated?—it is "to be conformed to the image of God's Son." Are they chosen?—it is "that they may be holy." Are they called?—it is "with a holy calling." Are they afflicted?—it is that they may be "partakers of holiness." Jesus is a complete Saviour. He does not merely take away the guilt of a believer's sin, he does more, he breaks its power.

We must be holy, because this is the *only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. Although good works cannot put away our sins, nor endure the severity of God's judgment; yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring necessarily out of a true and lively faith; inasmuch as by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by its fruits. James warns us there is such a thing as a dead faith, a faith which goes no further than the profession of the lips, and has no influence on a man's character. True saving faith is a very different kind of thing. True faith will always show itself by its fruits; it will sanctify, it will work by love, it will overcome the world, it will purify the heart. I know that people are fond of talking about death-bed evidences. They will rest on words spoken in the hours of fear, and pain, and weakness, as if they might take comfort in them about the friends they lose. But I am afraid in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred such evidences are not to be depended on. I suspect men generally die just as they have lived. The only safe evidence that you are one with Christ, and Christ in you, is a holy life. They that live unto the Lord are generally the only people who die in the Lord. If we would die the death of the righteous, let us not rest in slothful desires only; let us seek to live his life. It is a true saying of Traill's, "That man's state is naught, and his faith unsound, that finds not his hopes of glory purifying to his heart and life."

We must be holy, because this is the *only proof that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*. This is a point on which he has spoken himself most plainly in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John. "If ye love me keep my commandments." He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me he will keep my saying." "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Plainer words than these it

would be difficult to find, and woe to those who neglect them! Surely that man must be in an unhealthy state of soul who can think of all that Jesus suffered, and yet cling to those sins for which that suffering was undergone. It was sin that wove the crown of thorns; it was sin that pierced our Lord's hands, and feet, and side; it was sin that brought him to Gethsemane and Calvary, to the cross and to the grave. Cold must our hearts be if we do not hate sin, and labour to get rid of it, though we may have to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye in doing it.

We must be holy, because this is the *only sound evidence that we are true children of God*. Children in this world are generally like their parents. Some, doubtless, are more so, and some less, but it is seldom indeed that you cannot trace a kind of family likeness. And it is much the same with the children of God. If men have no likeness to the Father in heaven, it is vain to talk of their being his sons. If we know nothing of holiness we may flatter ourselves as we please, but we have not got the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; we are dead, and must be brought to life again; we are lost, and must be found. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they, and they only, are the sons of God. We must show by our lives the family we belong to; we must let men see by our good conversation that we are indeed the children of the Holy One, or our sonship is but an empty name. "Say not," says Gurnall, "that thou hast royal blood in thy veins, and art born of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by daring to be holy."

We must be holy because this is the *most likely way to do good to others*. We cannot live to ourselves only in this world. Our lives will always be doing either good or harm to those who see them. They are a silent sermon which all can read. It is sad indeed when they are a sermon for the devil's cause, and not for God's. I believe that far more is done for Christ's kingdom by the holy living of believers,

than we are at all aware. There is a reality about such living which makes men feel, and obliges them to think. It carries a weight and influence with it which nothing else can give. It makes religion beautiful, and draws men to consider it, like a light-house seen afar off. The day of judgment will prove that many besides husbands have been won "*without the word*" by a holy life. You may talk to people about the doctrines of the gospel, and few will listen, and still fewer understand. But your life is an argument that none can escape. There is a meaning about holiness which not even the most unlearned can help taking in. They may not understand justification, but they can understand charity.

And I believe there is far more harm done by unholy and inconsistent Christians than we are at all aware. Such men are among Satan's best allies. They pull down by their lives what ministers build with their lips. They cause the chariot wheels of the gospel to drive heavily. They supply the children of this world with a never ending excuse for remaining as they are. "I cannot see the use of so much religion," said an irreligious tradesman not long ago. "I observe that some of my customers are always talking about the gospel, and faith, and election, and the blessed promises, and so forth; and yet these very people think nothing of cheating me of pence and half-pence, when they have an opportunity. Now if religious persons can do such things, I do not see what good there is in religion." Oh! reader, I blush to be obliged to write such things; I fear that Christ's name is too often blasphemed because of the lives of Christians. Let us take heed lest the blood of souls should be required at our hands. Oh! for the sake of others, if for no other reason, let us strive to be holy!

We must be holy *because our present comfort depends much upon it*. We cannot be too often reminded of this. We are sadly apt to forget that there is a close connection

between sin and sorrow, holiness and happiness, sanctification and consolation. God has so wisely ordered it, that our well-being and our well-doing are linked together. He has mercifully provided, that even in this world it shall be man's *interest* to be holy. Our justification is not by works; our calling and election are not according to our works; but it is vain for any one to suppose that he will have a lively *sense* of his justification, or an *assurance* of his calling, so long as he does not strive to live a holy life. A believer may as soon expect to feel the sun's rays upon a dark and cloudy day, as to feel strong consolation in Christ, while he does not follow him fully. When the disciples forsook the Lord and fled, they thought they escaped danger, but they were miserable and sad: when shortly after they confessed him boldly before men, they were cast into prison and beaten, but we are told, "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts v. 41. Oh! for our own sakes, if there were no other reason, let us strive to be holy! He that follows Jesus most fully, will always follow him most comfortably.

Lastly, we must be holy, *because without holiness on earth we shall never be prepared to enjoy heaven*. Heaven is a holy place. The Lord of heaven is a holy Being. The angels are holy creatures. Holiness is written on everything in heaven. The book of Revelation says expressly, "there shall in nowise enter into it, anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Rev. xxi. 27.

Reader, how shall we ever find a place in heaven, if we die unholy? Death works no change. The grave makes no alteration. Each will rise again with the same character in which he breathed his last breath. Where will our place be if we are strangers to holiness now?

Suppose for a moment that you were allowed to enter heaven without holiness. What would you do? What

possible enjoyment could you feel there? To which of all the saints would you join yourself, and by whose side would you sit down? Their pleasures are not your pleasures; their tastes not your tastes; their character not your character. How could you possibly be happy, if you had not been holy on earth?

Now perhaps you love the company of the light and the careless, the worldly-minded and the covetous, the reveller and the pleasure-seeker, the ungodly and the profane. There will be none such in heaven.

Now perhaps you think the saints of God too strict, and particular, and serious. You rather avoid them. You have no delight in their society. There will be no other company in heaven.

Now perhaps you think praying, and Scripture reading, and hymn singing, dull, and melancholy, and stupid work, a thing to be tolerated now and then, but not enjoyed. You reckon the Sabbath a burden and a weariness; you could not possibly spend more than a small part of it in worshipping God. But remember, heaven is a never-ending Sabbath. The inhabitants thereof rest not day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," and singing the praise of the Lamb. How could an unholy man find pleasure in occupation such as this?

Think you that such an one would delight to meet David, and Paul, and John, after a life spent in doing the very things they spoke against? Would he take sweet counsel with them, and find that he and they had much in common? Think you, above all, that he would rejoice to meet Jesus, the crucified one, face to face, after cleaving to the sins for which he died; after loving his enemies, and despising his friends? Think you not rather that the tongue of an unholy man would cleave to the roof of his mouth with shame, and his only desire would be to be cast out? He would feel a stranger in a land he knew not, a black sheep amidst Christ's

holy flock. The voice of cherubim and seraphim, the song of angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, would be a language he could not understand. The very air would seem an air he could not breathe.

Reader, I know not what you may think, but to me it does seem clear, that heaven would be a miserable place to an unholy man. It cannot be otherwise. People may say, in a vague way, "they hope to go to heaven," but they do not consider what they say. There must be a certain meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Our hearts must be somewhat in tune. To reach the holiday of glory, we must pass through the training-school of grace. Reader, you must be heavenly-minded, and have heavenly tastes, in the life that now is, or else you will never find yourself in heaven, in the life to come.

And now let me wind up all with a few words, by way of application.

1. For one thing, let me ask every one who may read this address, *Are you holy?* Listen, I pray you, to the question I put to you this day. Do you know anything of the holiness of which I have been writing?

I do not ask whether you attend your church regularly; whether you have been baptized, and received the Lord's Supper; whether you have the name of Christian; I ask something more than all this, *Are you holy, or are you not?*

I do not ask whether you approve of holiness in others; whether you like to read the lives of holy people, and to talk of holy things, and to have on your table holy books; whether you mean to be holy, and hope you will be holy some day; I ask something further, *Are you yourself holy this very day, or are you not?*

And why do I ask so straitly, and press the question so strongly? I do it because, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is written, it is not my fancy, it is

the Bible, not my private opinion; it is the word of God, not of man, "*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*"

Oh reader, what words are these! What thoughts come across my mind, as I write them down! I look at the world, and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness. I look at professing Christians, and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity but the name. I turn to the Bible, and I hear the Spirit saying, "*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*"

Surely it is a text that ought to make you consider your ways, and search your hearts. Surely it should raise within you solemn thoughts, and send you to prayer.

You may try and put me off, by saying, you feel much, and think much, about these things, far more than many suppose. I answer, This is not the point. The poor lost souls in hell do as much as this. The great question is, not what you *think*, and what you *feel*, but what you *do*.

You may say, It was never meant that all Christians should be holy, and that holiness, such as I have described, is only for great saints, and people of uncommon gifts. I answer, I cannot see that in Scripture. I read that "*every man* who has hope in Christ, purifieth himself." 1 John iii. 3. "*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*"

You may say, It is impossible to be so holy, and to do our duty in this life at the same time: the thing cannot be done. I answer, you are mistaken. It *can* be done. With God on your side nothing is impossible. It *has* been done by many. David, and Obadiah, and Daniel, and the servants of Nero's household, are all examples that go to prove it.

You may say, If you were so holy, you would be unlike other people. I answer, I know it well. It is just what I want you to be. Christ's true servants always were unlike the world around them; a separate nation, a peculiar people, and you must be so too, if you would be saved.

You may say, At this rate very few will be saved. I answer, I know it. Jesus said so 1800 years ago. Few will be saved, because few will take the trouble to seek salvation. Men will not deny themselves the pleasures of sin and their own way for a season. For this they turn their backs on an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. "Ye will not come unto me," says Jesus, "that ye might have life." John v. 40.

You may say, these are hard sayings, the way is very narrow. I answer, I know it. Jesus said so 1800 years ago. He always said that men must take up the cross daily; that they must be ready to cut off hand or foot, if they would be his disciples. It is in religion as it is in other things; "there are no gains without pains." That which costs nothing is worth nothing.

Reader, whatever you may think fit to say, you must be holy, if you would see the Lord. Where is your Christianity, if you are not? Show it to me without holiness, if you can. You must not merely have a Christian name, and Christian knowledge, you must have a Christian *character* also. You must be a saint on earth, if ever you mean to be a saint in heaven. God has said it, and he will not go back. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "The Pope's calendar," says Jenkyn, "only makes saints of the *dead*; but Scripture requires sanctity in the *living*." "Let not men deceive themselves;" says Owen, "sanctification is a qualification indispensably necessary unto those who will be under the conduct of the Lord Christ unto salvation. He leads none to heaven, but whom he sanctifies on the earth. This living head will not admit of dead members."

Surely you will not wonder that Scripture says, "Ye must be born again." John iii. 7. Surely it is clear as noon-day that many of you need a complete change, new hearts and new natures, if ever you are to be saved. Old

things must pass away; you must become new creatures. Without holiness no man, be he who he may, no man shall see the Lord.

2. Let me, for another thing, speak a little to believers: I ask you this question, "*Do you think you feel the importance of holiness as much as you should?*"

I own I fear the temper of the times about this subject. I doubt exceedingly whether it holds that place which it deserves in the thoughts and attention of some of the Lord's people. I would humbly suggest that we are apt to overlook the doctrine of growth in grace, and that we do not sufficiently consider how very far a person may go in a profession of religion, and yet have no grace, and be dead in God's sight after all. I believe that Judas Iscariot seemed very like the other apostles. When the Lord warned them one should betray him, no one said, "Is it Judas?" We had better think more about Sardis and Laodicea than we do.

I have no desire to make an idol of holiness. I do not wish to dethrone Christ, and put holiness in his place, But I must candidly say, I wish sanctification was more thought of in this day than it seems to be, and I therefore take occasion to press the subject on all believers into whose hands this paper may fall.

I fear it is sometimes forgotten, that God has married together justification and sanctification. They are distinct and different things beyond question, but one is never found without the other. All justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God has joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification, unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ's work *for you*, unless you can show us the Spirit's work *in you*. Think not that Christ and the Spirit can ever be divided.

Reader, I doubt not you know these things, but I think

it good to put you in remembrance of them. Prove that you know them by your life. Try to keep in view this text more continually, "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

I must frankly say, I wish there was not such an excessive *sensitiveness* on the subject of holiness as I sometimes perceive in the minds of believers. A man might really think it was a dangerous subject to handle, so cautiously is it touched. Yet surely when we have exalted Christ as the way, the truth, and the life, we cannot err in speaking strongly about what should be the character of his people. Well says Rutherford, "The way that crieth down duties and sanctification, is not the way of grace. Believing and doing are blood-friends."

Reader, I would say it with reverence, but say it I must, I sometimes fear if Christ were on earth now, there are not a few who would think his preaching legal; and if Paul were writing his Epistles, there are those who would think he had better not write the latter part of most of them as he did. But let us remember that the Lord Jesus *did* speak the sermon on the Mount, and that the Epistle to the Ephesians contains six chapters and not four. I grieve to feel obliged to speak in this way, but I am sure there is a cause.

That great divine, Owen, said some two hundred years ago, that there were people whose whole religion seemed to consist in going about complaining of their own corruptions, and telling every one they could do nothing of themselves.

Reader, I put it to yourself, might not the same thing be said with truth of some of Christ's professing people in this day?

I know there are texts in Scripture which warrant such complaints. I do not object to them when they come from men who walk in the steps of the apostle Paul, and fight a good fight, as he did, against sin, the devil, and the world.

But I never like such complaints when I see grounds for suspecting, as I often do, that they are only a cloak to cover spiritual laziness, and an excuse for spiritual sloth. If we say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am," let us also be able to say with him, "I press toward the mark." Let us not quote his example in one thing, while we do not follow him in another.

Reader, I do not set up myself to be better than other people, and if any one asks, "What are you, that you write in this way?" I answer, "I am a very poor creature indeed." But I tell you that I cannot read the Bible without desiring to see many believers more spiritual, more holy, more single-eyed, more heavenly-minded, more whole-hearted than they are. I want to see among us more of a pilgrim spirit, a more decided separation from the world, a conversation more evidently in heaven, a closer walk with God, and therefore I have written as I have.

Is it not true that we need a higher standard of personal holiness in this day? Where is our patience? Where is our zeal? Where is our love? Where are our works? Where is the power of religion to be seen, as it was in times gone by? Where is that unmistakable tone which used to distinguish the saints of old, and shake the world? Verily our silver has become dross, our wine mixed with water. We are all more than half asleep. The night is far spent and the day is at hand. Let us awake and sleep no more. Let us open our eyes more widely than we have done hitherto. Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. "Did Christ die," says Owen, "and shall sin live? Was he crucified in the world, and shall our affections to the world be quick and lively? Oh! where is the spirit of him, who by the cross of Christ was crucified to the world and the world to him?"

3. Let me, in the last place, offer a *word of advice to all who desire to be holy.*

Would you be holy? Would you become new creatures? Then *begin with Christ.* You will do just nothing till you feel your sin and weakness, and flee to him. He is the beginning of all holiness. He is not wisdom and righteousness only to his people, but sanctification also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first of all, and sad work they make of it. They toil and labour, and turn over many new leaves, and make many changes, and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood before she came to Christ, they feel nothing bettered, but rather worse. They run in vain, and labour in vain, and little wonder, for they are beginning at the wrong end. They are building up a wall of sand; their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are bailing water out of a leaky vessel; the leak gains on them, not they on the leak. Other foundation of holiness can no man lay than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus. Without Christ we can do nothing. It is a strong but true saying of Traill's, "Wisdom out of Christ is damning folly; righteousness out of Christ is guilt and condemnation; sanctification out of Christ is filth and sin; redemption out of Christ is bondage and slavery."

Would you be holy? Would you be partakers of the divine nature? Then *go to Christ.* Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Linger not. Think not to make yourself ready. Go and say to him, in the words of that beautiful hymn,—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, flee to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace."

There is not a brick nor a stone laid in the work of our sanctification, till we go to Christ. Holiness is his special

gift to his believing people. Holiness is the work he carries on in their hearts by the Spirit whom he puts within them. He is appointed a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance as well as remission of sins. To as many as receive him he gives power to become sons of God. Holiness comes not of blood, parents cannot give it to their children: nor yet of the will of the flesh, man cannot produce it in himself: nor yet of the will of man, ministers cannot give it you by baptism. Holiness comes from Christ. It is the result of vital union with him. It is the fruit of being a living branch of the true vine. Go then to Christ and say, "Lord, not only save me from the guilt of sin, but send the Spirit, whom thou didst promise, and save me from its power. Make me holy. Teach me to do thy will."

Would you continue holy? Then *abide in Christ*. He says himself, "Abide in me and I in you; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." John xv. 4, 5. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; a full supply for all a believer's wants. He is the Physician to whom you must daily go, if you would keep well. He is the manna which you must daily eat, and the rock of which you must daily drink. His arm is the arm on which you must daily lean, as you come up out of the wilderness of this world. You must not only be rooted, you must also be *built up* in him. Paul was a man of God indeed—a holy man—a growing, thriving Christian—and what was the secret of it all? He was one to whom Christ was "all in all." He was ever "looking unto Jesus." "I can do all things," he says, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Go thou and do likewise.

Reader, may you and I know these things by experience, and not by hearsay only. May we all feel the importance of holiness, far more than we have ever done yet. May our

years be holy years with our souls, and then I know they will be happy ones. Whether we live, may we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, may we die unto the Lord: or if he come for us, may we be found in peace, without spot, and blameless.

And now, if I have erred in anything that I have written, may the good Lord pardon me, and show me what is the mind of the Spirit. But if, as I believe, I have told you the truth, may the Lord open your hearts, and make it a word in season to all who read it.

A QUESTION FOR ALL.

“VERILY I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?” Matt. xxvi. 21, 22. Doubtless Judas must have sometimes been suspected among the disciples. Yet the mournful warning is taken by each to his own heart; they ask not, *Lord, is it Judas?* but, *Lord, is it I?*

Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. There are other characters besides Judas held up to us in Scripture, concerning whom it would be well for us to ask the same question, Lord, is it I? May the lamp of the word be lighted by the Spirit from on high, while we seek to hold it to our hearts. May we be enabled, discerning our true characters, not only to *ask*, but to answer the question, and to say, Lord, it is I. For is there not cause to fear, in these days of the general profession among us, not merely of Christian doctrine, but of the highest Christian experience, that many talk of the narrow way who have never entered at the strait gate?—that many are taking for granted that all is well, who have never begun at the beginning, and if grace do not save, shall never enter the kingdom of God? When we think how perfect an imitation Satan can make of a work of grace in the soul, by means of Bible knowledge, combined with some knowledge of human nature, and some little tact in applying them the one to the other; and when we see

with how many the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful, we have good cause to be often examining ourselves, and to ponder the words, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

I. "GALLIO cared for none of those things." Acts xviii. 17.

Such is a description of senseless, easy minded ungodliness. Such was Gallio's character. Reader, is it yours?

You have a Christian profession. You got it from your parents, who brought you up in the fear of God. But as for any authority over your life, you will not, in any material respect, suffer the word of God to interfere with your interest, your pleasure, or your convenience.

If home truths be pressed upon you, regarding the great salvation, you will assent to all that is said, rather than take the trouble to oppose it. But you have no heart-relish for spiritual things. From habit, or for the sake of decency, you attend the worship of God. You perhaps even go to the Lord's table, and would be angry were a faithful friend to throw doubt on your fitness to be there. You claim your "privileges," and you will not be hindered by the danger of eating and drinking judgment to your soul. But with you, the Sabbath is a day to be endured rather than enjoyed. *Enjoyment* is a thought you never associate with godliness, and you cannot understand how others should do so. And as for prayer-meetings, somehow you never can get them attended. Indeed, when an hour is spent in public or secret devotion, beyond the stated service acknowledged by formalists as necessary, perhaps you have a lurking feeling that God is getting so much more than he is entitled to.

If a poor dumb beast had wandered into the tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness, perhaps it might have been seen staring around,—more taken up with some pin of the tabernacle, or some blade of grass on the floor, than with that

blood which alone could fix the eye of a sinner in drawing near. So with you. In prayer, in the house of God, that open, wandering eye, tells of a wandering heart, which feels not its need of a mercy-seat for a meeting with God. That listless look, equally interested in the message of Christ as in watching a fly upon the window, makes it too plain that it is a matter of perfect indifference to you whether the Lord the Spirit speak to you or not.

Is not this the truth, that *you care for none of these things?*

II. THE PHARISEE. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." The words may remind us of two different classes of characters.

1. Those who are dead, while they think they are alive. Such were the Laodiceans. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Such, perhaps, make a high profession. They have no small intelligence on subjects connected with religion. They can prove any doctrine, and even make nice distinctions in Scriptural truth. Their names are to be seen in subscription-lists; and they are even to be found putting out a hand in the way of personal work for the cause of Christ. But somehow they are never found doing anything but they manage to get full credit for it. The left hand never fails to know all that the right hand doeth. Nobody feels sure of them. They are disliked and suspected in their dealings with men of the world. They are noted, perhaps, for their meanness of spirit. Their selfish and unamiable temper makes their profession of religion despised. They pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, but they neglect the weightier matters of the law. With all their skill in doctrine, they give cause to fear that the lesson is all yet to learn,—“to

do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God." Micah vi. 8.

The dead have no hunger, no thirst, no sorrow, no pain. Put a weight upon a dead man, he feels not—put the strongest aromatics to his nostrils, he shrinks not,—put a red hot iron on his hand, he does not move: for he is dead. Is it thus with your soul? You have no spiritual hunger nor thirst. You see the true children of God melted to tears under the word, or feeding upon it, as the strength and joy of their hearts. But you have no such experience. Why? Because the dead feel no need of bread or water. You have no sense of weariness. Why? Because the dead feel no burthens. No word of God can move you, be it love or be it wrath. And whence all this? Can it be accounted for in any other way than that you are yet dead in trespasses and sins?

2. Those who have a name to live, but *know* they are dead. Dear reader! is this your character? Do you know that your Christian profession, from beginning to end, has been only one long-continued lie? Do you know that which perhaps even some of the true children of God regard as a work of God in your soul, to be only a deep and cunning work of the devil? O will ye not turn from this desperate wickedness? Can you impose upon God? "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" Ezek. xxii. 4. "But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." John v. 42.

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

III. JUDAS. Matt. xxiv. 15. Let us look at so much of the character of Judas as represents those who, after having had some thought about their souls, and made some profession, deliberately part with Christ for the sake of the world.

It is likely that Judas had at first some measure of con-

viction. There is no evidence that the love of money was the motive which made him at the first join himself to the disciples. But whatever began his profession of Christ, it is too plain that the love of money carried it on, and that upon this he made shipwreck at last.

Judas had heard, by the hearing of the ear, of the difference between light and darkness. He had been the witness to many conversions, and doubtless had more opportunity than any child of perdition ever had, of beholding the beauty of holiness, in the secret life of the Saviour. Yet not only *temptation* sought *him*, but *he* sought *temptation*. With calm deliberateness he offered himself to the fearful bargain, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." And how fearful the doom! As if anticipating the day of judgment, Jesus said, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born!"

And, dear reader, what say you to this? Though not in the company of Christ, perhaps you have been much in the company of Christians. Perhaps, like Judas, you have seen many conversions, so that you *know* that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Perhaps your mind has been stored with Bible truth from your childhood, and you know well what is meant by betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Have you ever been brought deliberately to choose, whether you would part with some sin, some darling lust, some dishonest practise in trade, or part with your hope for eternity? And what has your decision been? We have seen a man, *to save parting with a shilling*, tell a deliberate lie,—risk the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Rev. xxi. 8. Awful thought!

IV. FELIX. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts xxiv. 25.

Another character. "Go thy way for this time." Reader, do you answer to the name? We believe there are few who do not, excepting those who have truly given themselves to Christ.

Conscience made a coward of Felix. "Righteousness, temperance, judgment to come,"—made even a Roman tremble. Conscience was pointing at him, and saying. "Thou art the man!"

Apart from all saving fruit, a great result of the abundant preaching and Sabbath-school teaching of our day is, that the natural conscience is enlightened with Bible truth, and the memory stored with the claims of the authority of God over the sinner. And so when Christ, as it were, comes to the door, conscience recognizes the knock. It knows well what conversion means, though itself a stranger to the saving change. It knows that "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 5. It knows that "he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. It will not be bribed to silence, and yet it dare not say,—“Go away; I will not let thee in.” But the answer is given, with mingled enmity and fear,—“Go thy way *for this time.*” We believe there are few gospel-hearers but have, at one time or other, heard that knock, and had, more or less, some measure of awakening. Some, perhaps, there are, who for many a day have been carrying about with them the thorns of conviction,—vainly striving to heal the wound with this soul-destroying delusion.

And who is it that speaks? and to whom is it spoken? It is a worm of the dust contending with its Maker. It is guilt trying to get rid of grace. It is a child of wrath sending away the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death. It is a brand in the burning, saying to the Almighty hand that is offering to pluck it out,—“When I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”

Rebel sinner! your God and King, to whom you belong, and in whose power you are, whether you will or no, comes

to you even now, commanding you to be reconciled. Will you treat him as if he were your servant, telling him to wait till it be convenient, and then you will listen to what he has to say? Will you put him off with a promise? Will a father suffer himself so to be mocked, if a child answers, when called upon to cease from some act of disobedience, "*Tomorrow I will cease from disobeying you?*" Remember, the *intention* to submit, even if it were honest, is not *submission*. Whatever your sorrow, your tears, your promises may be, you are an enemy to God *up to the moment* of your casting yourself, as a lost and hell-deserving sinner, on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Oh wondrous grace, that God hath so joined our duty and our blessedness together! Oh wondrous, mysterious grace, that it should be a CRIME in a sinner to be LOST! For the last act on earth of a lost soul is a *refusing to accept God's Unspeakable Gift!*

A young man in Manchester, of the name of B——, long a profligate, had three several times been laid on what seemed a bed of death. Each of these times he had solemnly declared his repentance, and that if spared he would be a new creature. Three times he was spared by a long-suffering God, and each time as truly he returned to his wallowing in the mire.

Once more the hand of disease was upon him. Dreadful anguish took possession of his mind. No prayer, no conversation, seemed to give a moment's hope. One day, in an agony of despair, he asked the Rev. J. N——, who was by his bedside, to request every member of the family to pray for him in secret. They quitted him for this purpose, and he was left alone. While all engaged in prayer, and, as it afterwards appeared, *at the same moment*, these awful words were brought to the mind of each,—"*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity;*

I will mock when your fear cometh." Prov. i. 24--27. Instantly, and as they expressed it, almost *irresistibly*, they arose from their knees, and returned to the young man's room. As the door opened, the same fearful words, "*I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh,*" were shrieked out, rather than spoken, by the dying man. In an instant all was over. The silence of death followed the scream of agony, and the spirit had gone to its account!

Dear reader, there *is* such a thing as being given over to a reprobate mind. Let the words of Felix be a warning.

V. AGRIPPA. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts xxvi. 28.

Of all these characters, this perhaps is the furthest advanced. "Almost persuaded" includes anxious sinners of every degree, up to the moment of their entering the kingdom of God.

Reader! are you *almost persuaded*? Perhaps you can remember when first your peace was broken,—the word came home,—brought, perhaps, by some heavy providence. Your earthly idol was taken from you, and you felt you were without a portion,—without God in the world. You saw, in the light of an eternal world, that to be carnally-minded is death. You saw the handwriting, in letters of fire, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting!"

And you have had many sleepings and wakings since then. You have tried to get away from your convictions. You would fain tear from the book of memory the sentence of death against you, read to you by the Spirit in the day of your awakening,—"**He that believeth not is CONDEMNED ALREADY.**" John iii. 18. You try sometimes to enjoy the vanities that were once your delight. But the arrow is rankling in your soul. You can never have the same heart for worldly joys again.

Or perhaps you are further advanced. You have turned your back on the world, and perhaps the world has turned its back on *you*. You have as many slights and scorns to bear as if you were a decided and happy Christian. You seek to be faithful in duty, and you are diligent in the use of the public and private means of grace. Perhaps He who seeth in secret hears from you in secret the heart-broken cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

And yet for all this, you are *almost* persuaded, and *nothing more*. Reader, you are not far from the kingdom of God. But why do you linger? Why, like the Ethiopian, go mourning with the Bible before you,—when like that same Ethiopian, you might be going on your way rejoicing? Search and see that on the one hand the cause do not lie in some sin still hid in your heart, and which you know you must part with, if you are to give yourself up to the Lord. And see on the other that you be not looking in a wrong direction for pardon and peace. Remember the words of the African chief, "I tried to change my own heart, but it grew worse and worse, and *in despair I came to Christ*, pleaded the promises, and obtained relief." Remember it is written, not "this man receiveth *saints*," but "this man receiveth **SINNERS**." Luke xv. 2.

Reader, almost persuaded! Remember, to be only *almost saved* is to be *altogether lost*!

VI. MARY. "A sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."—"One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." Luke viii. 39, 42.

Happy Mary! and happy they who, like her, have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Of all the six characters, this alone, in the light of Scripture, has been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated

into the kingdom of God's dear Son, in whom she has redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. Col. i. 13, 14. Taught by the Spirit her undone condition, she has been brought as a poor, perishing sinner, to cast herself upon Christ. She has tasted that word of life, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt. xi. 28, 29. She has now a relief and gladness, a lightening of heart, though small, perhaps, in degree, and broken by darkness and corruption,—which, up to the time of being enabled to receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, she had never known.

She sits at his feet, and hears his words, and hides them in her heart, that she sin not against him. And while thus growing in knowledge, she is growing in grace and in strength of soul, to an extent which perhaps she does not know, till it comes to be put to the proof in fighting the good fight of faith. And beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, she is changed into the same image from glory to glory. All her springs are in him,—her life, her nourishment, her holiness. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Rev. R. M. M'Cheyne.)

Reader, is this, or anything like this, your experience? Do you think you have any Scriptural ground to believe, that in any measure, however small, you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and that blessed is the man that trusteth in him? Have you ever known that thrill of heavenly gladness which enters the heart of a poor mourning sinner, when for the first time it is felt that God is answering prayer, and that the Comforter is come? Has the Lord

Jesus Christ become all your salvation, and all your desire?
Are thoughts like these often in your mind,—

“ Chosen not for good in me,
Wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Saviour’s side,
By the Spirit sanctified,—
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,
By my love, how much I owe.”

And now, reader, what is your name? Among these six characters have you recognized your own? Are you Gallio, —or Judas,—or the Pharisee,—or Felix,—or Agrippa,—or Mary? Or do you feel as a poor blind girl once said, when asked the same question, “I think I’m them all but the last one?” Or are you worse than any of them? Is your case so bad that you cannot give it a name? Well, supposing it to be so, you cannot be worse than Christ knows you to be; and he who says, “I know thy works,” puts all on the same level. If all these sinners had been standing around him on the streets of Jerusalem,—Gallio, Judas, the Pharisee, Felix, Agrippa, Mary, and you among them, the chief of sinners, he still would have said to them all, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” John vi. 37. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Luke v. 32.

We are about to part. Have you, in this glance at the words of the Searcher of hearts, felt like the man beholding his natural face in a glass? And now, are you about to go your way, and straightway to forget what manner of person you are? If a thought of your danger has flashed upon your soul, beware how you stifle it. Beware lest this prove your deeper condemnation, that the light has come, not only into the world, but into your conscience, and you have loved the darkness rather than the light, because your deeds were evil. Learn from the case of that dying man, that while salvation is offered to you now, it is only *now*. God is not

obliged to give us his grace at all, much less to wait for our convenient season. "Remember Lot's wife." Are you fleeing for refuge? Is your heart in some measure melted because of sin? Remember, one backward look may turn it again into a stone. "Twice dead" is a fearful word. An old Sabbath-scholar, who once seemed looking to Christ, but went back to the world, said to one who had been his teacher, "When I was in your class, I was an anxious sinner, but now I'm a careless sinner." Reader, are you anxious? It is not likely that you will long remain so. You will soon likely either go forward or backward,—either come to Christ and be saved, or draw back unto perdition.

In ancient times, Syria had begun to invade Egypt, then an ally of Rome. An ambassador was sent from Rome to the king of Syria, requiring him immediately to cease. The king hesitated, and attempted to put off the demand; when the Roman drew a ring around him on the sand where they were standing, and sternly told him that if he crossed that line without first commanding the removal of his troops, he should thereby declare himself the enemy of the Roman people, and an army should be sent to destroy his kingdom. Reader! let this remind you of your own situation. God sends you, in this little book, another ambassador, beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled. The offer of salvation it brings you, draws a line, as it were, across the broad road down which you are walking. It says, "TO-DAY, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart!" Heb. iii. 15. And you cannot cross that line,—you cannot refuse that offer,—without once more declaring yourself an enemy,—trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Heb. x. 29.

Have you made up your mind for this? The end of these things is death. And he "that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke xii. 47.

TIME LOST.



MANY years ago, a minister of Christ, when about to address his people, leaned over the pulpit, and said with a solemn air,—“ Friends, before I begin, I have a question to ask you. I cannot answer it. If an angel from heaven were here, he could not answer it. If a devil from hell were here, he could not answer it. The great God himself cannot answer it. Can any of *you* answer it? The question is this:—‘ How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?’ ”

Dear reader, we would ask you, with an earnest wish to do good to your precious soul, can YOU answer that question?

We bring you a message of kindness. We would tell you once more of the only way to lasting gladness, in this sorrowful and dying world. We do not know you; we are only sure of one thing concerning you, that if you are yet unconverted to God, you are walking “ according to the course of this world,—a child of wrath even as others.” See Ephesians ii. 3. Had not this been true of all, the Son of Man would not have come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The redemption of the soul is precious. Because of this, ministers have laboured, and martyrs have died; because of this, missionaries have taken their lives in their hands, and gone far hence to the Gentiles. “ They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are

after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Reader, which are *you* minding? Which of the two is your heart taken up with,—the things of the flesh, or the things of the Spirit? It is written, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." See Romans viii. 13 and 6. Have you ever felt sin to be your greatest misery, and Christ to be your greatest mercy? "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." See Matthew xvi. 26. If for the sake of this truth, many have spent their lives, has it ever cost *you* one hour's calm and sober thought? Have you ever *believed* it,—in such a way at least as to produce any lasting effect on your life and conversation?

But with whatever feelings you read this message, *our* concern in it is small, compared with *your own*. Dear fellow-sinner, we have nothing to gain by disturbing you. Yet do not think you are therefore at liberty to refuse to listen. Do not think by remaining ungodly you are wronging none but yourself. We affectionately warn you that in destroying your own soul, you are doing what you can to dishonour God. Perhaps you think, because you make no profession of Christianity, that therefore a godly life is not to be required of you; that your soul is your own, and surely you may do what you like with your own. But be not deceived. Whether you are a saint or a sinner, you are *the property of God*, and under the authority of God; and this is true, whether you acknowledge it or no. See Psalm xxiv. 1. God commands you to repent, believe, and be saved. See Acts xvii. 30, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."—1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Friend and fellow-sinner, remember, *God leaves you no liberty to be lost!*

We must die one by one ; be judged one by one ; be awakened one by one ; be convinced one by one ; be converted one by one ; be *saved* one by one,—or be *lost* one by one. And so now, to *you* is the word of this salvation sent. We would ask you, in all kindness, to look back on your life. If you are not a child of God,—if you are yet a stranger to the blood which cleanseth from sin, and have never known the renewing of the Holy Ghost,—ARE YOU NOT LOSING TIME? There are three things we would seek to put you in mind of,

- I. Your time is shorter than it ever was.
- II. Your heart is harder.
- III. Your guilt is greater.

I. *Your time is shorter.* To the children of God, now is their salvation nearer than when they believed. To you, continuing such, now is your damnation nearer than when first you heard and refused a gospel call. Time past is gone, and all the voices in heaven, and earth, and hell, could not recall it, or give you back one moment of it, to live over a second time. How fast it has fled! And yet you sometimes perhaps tried to hasten it away; time hung heavy on your hands; you were glad when you succeeded in “killing the time,” though you knew you had the work of eternity all to begin. Travelling lately by railway, we were looking at our watch, when a young man beside us lightly inquired, “How goes *the enemy*?” O unpardoned soul, if *time* be your enemy, what will *eternity* be?

Much of your time is past; and what has it left you? A little more money? A little more ease? A few more earthly enjoyments? Whatever it has left, it has been *lost* time, if your soul is unsaved. “For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Old men and women! whose failing eyesight can scarce

make out our message; whose gray hairs, and wrinkled faces, and unsteady hands, tell you that very soon you will have no more years to lose. *All* your years have been lost years, if you are still in your sins. Remember it is a true saying, "The young *may* die, but the old *must* die." Perhaps you are in poverty, or sickness, or pain; perhaps you are weary of your life, because everything that sweetened it has been taken away. Dear friend, it is true, death will put an end to your worldly sorrow; but if you are yet without Christ, it will not put an end to your sin. You have outlived your comforts, but you have not outlived the curse of God, that rests on your unforgiven soul. See John iii. 36, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John viii. 24, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Isaiah lxx. 20, "The sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." And oh what a curse! the load of a lifetime,—not a sin forgiven you since you were born! "O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!"

Young men and maidens! your time is passing away. Perhaps you cannot remember a year in which, at the beginning of it, you did not resolve to seek the salvation of your soul. You see how last year has ended. Has it left you the same,—a sinner *intending* to be saved? God has given you life, and health, and strength; and these, the property of God, you have been spending in the service of God's enemies,—the devil, the world, and the flesh. Is this true? Think of the risk you are running. *Can you give any reason why God should spare you another moment?* Remember, when following hard after the world, that mere sparing mercy is all the hold you have of life. *Can you afford to be losing time?* See Ecclesiastes xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart,

and in the sight of thine eyes; but KNOW THOU, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment."

Children readers! *Your* time is shorter. How often have you been warned during the time that is past—by the voice of a minister—by words you have read in the Bible—by warnings you have heard in the Sabbath-school! And has not God in his providence been warning you? Have you had a father, a mother, a brother, a sister—a companion, perhaps younger than yourself—taken away in the year that is past? Was not that a voice to *you*, that "now is the day of salvation."

II. *Your heart is harder.* Scripture, and experience, and conscience, tell us that to refuse the call of salvation, hardens the heart. Reader, is it not so? Can the time that is past bear witness against you? Had you some anxious thoughts? Did a sermon on a Sabbath—a word from a stranger—a verse from the Bible—startle you from your sleep, and make you feel your danger? A while you read—a while you prayed. You felt what was wrong—you were *without God in the world*. You saw death and life before you—blessing and cursing—heaven and hell. But now came the test—to turn from the ways of a present evil world. The Spirit strove with your soul. A broken law was crying for blood—and the gospel was pointing to the blood of Jesus Christ. You counted the cost—and you would not pay it. You stopped your ears, and said you could not hear. You shut your eyes, and said you could not see—and the Devil commended you for your courage and prudence. For a while, conviction haunted you; conscience refused to sleep. You avoided the company of godly friends, lest they should remind you of your danger. You were afraid to look into your Bible. You sought the company of ungodly men, for you thought they would not disturb you, nor bring you to the light which you hated. See your case in John iii. 20,

“Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.”

And now, it may be, you have gotten your wish. The Spirit seems to have let you alone. Perhaps your heart is so hardened that now you can face without flinching the most terrible warnings of wrath—the most melting offers of grace and salvation. Perhaps you have got so accustomed to refuse the gospel call, that it does not now cost you even an effort of your mind. Perhaps your very natural disposition is changed—your feelings, once tender, being seared alike towards God and man. Sermons, tracts, and providences, in vain give knock after knock at your stony heart. You appear to those who care for your soul—and it cannot, perhaps, but sometimes flash across your own mind—an awful example of a sinner “twice dead.”

Dear fellow-sinner—do not count us your enemy, because we tell you the truth. Where, do you think, is all this to end? To you, dying as you are, death will be “a plunge in the dark.” But your heart will yet be broken. See Proverbs xxix. 1, “He that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” “There is the end of us all,” was once the remark of an infidel to a fellow-traveller, on observing a funeral pass. “No,” said the other, “for it is appointed to men once to die—but *after this the judgment.*” You would fain flee from God—the God with whom you felt you had to do, when first the cry of conviction arose in your heart. But God and you will yet meet. Will ye meet him *now*, at a throne of grace, or meet him *then*, at a throne of judgment?

III. *Your guilt is greater.* All your past life you have been treasuring up wrath, Rom. ii. 5. Not that you have been openly wicked. Touching the righteousness that is in the law, your life in the eye of man may have been blameless. You may be a dutiful child, a kind parent, a faithful

servant—honest, sober, truthful, diligent in business; and yet the damning charge may still be standing against you, that you are *without God in the world*. You may not be living without religion, and yet you may be living without God. And the wrath of God is to be revealed against all *ungodliness* of men. See Romans i. 18. Your progress has been onward and onward; but all in one direction—*further and further from God*. Your burthen of guilt is heavier this moment than it has ever been since you had a being. In the sight of God, if not in the sight of man, you are waxing worse and worse, adding iniquity unto iniquity. You have done more to earn the wages of sin, and “the wages of sin is death,” Romans vi. 23. You are of the works of the law, and under the curse, Galatians iii. 10. The wrath of God abideth on you, John iii. 36.

And it is *righteous* wrath. Remember your danger is not only that God *may* punish you, of his mere good pleasure. If you are found without Christ, God *cannot* but cast you into hell. God would forswear himself, and set at nought his holy justice, if one impenitent and Christless soul were to escape. Grace cannot reign through unrighteousness. It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Without shedding of blood is no remission. God has said it. See Hebrews x. 22. Do you deny it? If you do, are you not making God a liar? O dying man, will you peril your eternity on the hope of GOD turning out to be a liar?

You will yet have to do with God about his broken law. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked,” Gal. vi. 7, 8. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” Ezekiel xviii. 4. Read over, one by one, the ten commandments, and remember how Christ expounded them in the fifth chapter of Matthew; and then say, to which of them are you trusting for salvation? God is in earnest. Sin is not a trifle. Your guilt is deepening every day. Flee now to the city of

refuge, to Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth." See Romans x. 4.

But your guilt is greater, not only for a broken law, but for a rejected gospel. Reader! how many times, have you heard Christ's knock? And how often, when you heard it, have you not deliberately said, "Go thy way for this time?" Think on Hebrews x. 28, 29, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" With God we have to do about a broken law. God had been just, and every mouth stopt, had he never held out to sinners anything but a sentence of death for sin. But that same God, against whom we have sinned, has been holding out, not a death-warrant—but a full, free, *immediate* pardon—written with his hand, and sealed with the blood of his Son. "This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 11. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name," John xx. 31. It would have been wondrous grace if God had made to us but *one* offer of Christ, and then, when refused, withdrawn it for ever. But how marvellous is his loving-kindness! Reader, how many offers has he made to *you*? Has he not been pleading with you all your days? Have you not often heard his voice behind you saying, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help?" Hosea xiii. 9. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim! Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man." Hosea xi. 8, 9. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my command-

ments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Isaiah xlviii. 18. And all this when you were going on in worldliness, and saying in your heart, "What have I done?" Oh what words of grace are these, "I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have *not* sinned." Jeremiah ii. 35.

And has not his Providence been pleading with you? Have afflictions—disappointments—losses and crosses—momentary checks of conscience and convictions of sin, never, in your solitary moments, whispered in your ear that, "if in this world only you have hope, you are of all men most miserable?" Have you never felt these placed like a hedge of thorns across your path, to turn you out of the way of destruction and misery in which you are walking? Has a sense of weariness—a sense of the unsatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments—a sense of hunger in the far country—never awakened the cry in your heart, "I will arise, and go to my Father?" Reader, is this the grace and love you have been trampling under your feet? Oh "how shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation?"

These are the true sayings of God. Dear friend, we have neither any right nor any desire to alarm you about your danger, if such danger do not exist. And we have as little right or desire to exaggerate the extent of that danger. But if all this be not the truth of God, we ask you not to believe it. We wonder not if you are slow to believe your danger. The Bible leads us to expect it. Christ said to the Laodiceans, what he is now saying to you, "I know thy works—Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and *knowest not* that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation iii. 17, 18.

And if such be your state, it will serve you nothing to *forget* it. The fearful account is running up against you, whether you think of it or no. Who can dwell with devour-

ing fire? The avenger of blood will soon be upon you. Time is running on, and a terrible eternity is closing you in. What will you do when you have to go alone into that dark eternity? If to *live* without God be lonely, who can tell how insupportably lonely, to *die* without God! Not many months ago, a young man, who had neglected the great salvation, was brought to a bed of death. He was attended, during his dying hours, by a brother, a child of God. As he felt death drawing on, his constant wish was that his brother should be near him; and when asked why, he only answered by weeping, and repeating his desire that his brother should keep close beside him. His brother asked, "Do you feel as if it were death?" The answer was, "Yes, J——, this is *death*; *death temporal—spiritual—and eternal!*" His brother tried, as well as he could, to point him to the Lamb of God; but he only replied, "It's too late—it's no use now—*death—death!*"

Reader, if the light of Christ's word thrown upon your condition *now*, makes it appear so fearful, how will it look in the light of Christ's countenance, when he is "revealed from heaven with flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God!"

Has this tract met you fleeing from God? Has it found you out, and described your character, and has every line of guilt that has been drawn, but made the picture more like to your own soul? If so, how dark are your prospects for eternity! If you believe what we have written to be the truths of God, your only season of relief must be when you can get God and eternity out of your thoughts. What a weary, forlorn condition! Contrast it with the hopes of the children of God, set forth in such words as these:—

"Now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Ephesians ii. 13. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Coloss. i. 12—14. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans v. 1—7. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12.

Blessed inheritance! Why may it not be *yours*? Satan says, "It is too late; it is vain to seek it *now*." Christ says, "Yet there is room." Reader, there is still a hope set before you, for you are still in the place of hope. We affectionately ask you, before we part, to fix this truth in your mind, that *it is not impossible for you yet to become a child of God*. "Seek, and ye shall find."

A great multitude, now before the throne, have obtained the blessed inheritance. And no one of them had a better right to it than *you*. They came, *as sinners*, to Christ; and as a sinner you are as welcome to come. Their title to come was no greater—and yours is no less; "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." O wondrous grace! God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts. Man's thought is, heaven for the heaven-deserving. God's thought is, heaven for the *hell*-deserving. Here is hope for the hopeless—help for the helpless—**SALVATION FOR THE LOST**—salvation for *you*!

Anxious inquirer! Has the Spirit convinced you of sin,

and shown your past hope to be delusion? But do you feel as if now you had sinned beyond mercy—that there is hope for all others, but none for you? The objection, like every other made by a willing sinner to his immediate closing with Christ, is a difficulty in your sight, but none in the sight of God. You have seen little more than the surface of your heart, and you are ready to give up all for lost. If you saw *to the bottom*, then you might well be driven to despair of being saved. God has seen to the bottom of your heart. No discovery of your guilt or vileness can ever take *him* by surprise. And yet, knowing your case *at the worst*, *he* does not say that you are beyond the reach of salvation. He saw from the first to what sinners his gospel would come; and yet he made no exception. He knew that to you, dear reader, his gospel should come—you, who are holding this tract in your hand—chief of sinners though you may be—and yet he has said, “*Whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely.” Dear reader, this is the glorious gospel of the blessed God! “*Able to save to the uttermost.*” Here is a cord of love that reaches down even to *you*—sunk though you be in the very depths of despair.

Careless sinner! “Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness.” Isaiah xlv. 12, 13. Remember, O dying man, that it is a *brought-near* righteousness you are rejecting—a salvation finished, and accepted, and ready to be enjoyed; a salvation as near to you at this moment, as it was that night to the Philippian jailor, when he cried, for the first time, “What must I do to be saved!”

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will *abundantly pardon.*” Isa. lv. 7.

A DREAM OF THE DYING.

LET not the reader turn away from the mention of "a dream;" for it is as likely that there may, as that there may not, be something worth considering in a dream. Have we not all our dreams? And have we not all dreamt? And who will say there can be nothing in such things? The great God, in his goodness, may speak to us in dreams; causing "coming events to cast their shadows before," giving us warning and counsel thereby. It hath often been so with those of olden time.

The dream now to be related, we may justly conclude was of the latter character. We may believe that it was sent in goodness, for it led to the greatest good. It showed to a sinner sinking into the grave, what was his waking delusion—that he was approaching to the hour when he must appear before his Judge, yet being unprepared to meet him.

Charles MacFederen, a Highlander, was in a decline, and one night dreamt he heard the summons of the great Judge, the Lord Christ, whom he saw on the summit of the highest hill at Lochgoilhead. He felt in consternation, and implored for two hours' delay. "Not a moment," was the awful reply. In agony he implored again, "Only one hour." "Not a moment," was still the dreadful answer. The terror-stricken man looked, and he saw multitudes ascending, in obedience to the Judge's call. He observed in the hand of each one who passed by him a white ticket.

He moved on, but he had no ticket. He searched every part of his dress for one, always expecting to find it about himself. On reaching the summit he ceased to search for it on himself, and cried unto the Lord, and immediately, behold a white ticket lay in his hand!

He awoke disturbed in mind. Dark clouds came between him and his God. He trusted in himself, and for three weeks all was deep distress of soul, his poor body getting weaker and weaker.

One night, when under sore chastenings, he begged them all to leave him quite alone, when he lifted up his soul in strong wrestling and earnest prayer for pardon, grace, and the Holy Spirit's aid. Suddenly, he thought the little cottage he inhabited (near Inverary, on the banks of Loch-Fyne) shook, and a voice sounded in his ears, "Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 28.

A peace stole over his agonized mind. His heart rose in thankful adoring love; and from that moment he felt a mighty power within him overcoming all self-dependence. He felt himself a new creature in Christ. He had joy and peace in believing. When his anxious family returned to him in the morning, oh what a change was wrought in that sick man! His countenance, so full of anguish and trouble before, now all radiant with heavenly peace. He told them of his Maker giving him "songs in the night," in the night of his deep trouble. The Lord heard his cry. The Lord lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, and spoke peace unto his soul; and, by the grace of God in Christ, he was enabled, during the brief period of his remaining life, to testify to his beloved sister—herself a child of God, humbly clinging to the cross—the wonderful love and long-suffering manifested to him; and when Christ, in compassionate mercy to his earnest cries for help, enabled him to come

“without money and without price,” then, and not till then, did the Lord bring into his very heart that peace which is bound up in the love of Christ, to all who come unto him as “little children.” All was joy and peace with this renewed man to the last moment of his life, and longing desire to be with the Lord.*

Such was the dream, and such was the sequel thereof. It was like a message of mercy to this young man’s soul. It is surely not too much to say that it was a message from above.

And now let us gather together a few fragments of thought, by way of improvement to ourselves.

The great Judge appeared in this dream as though on the summit of a high mountain, and multitudes were summoned before him.

And behold! high and lifted up, beyond the loftiest mountains of earth, the Son of Man appears in the heavens! He cometh with clouds. Every eye shall see him; those who would rather not see him. All must now look upon him; yea, and more than this, all must appear before him. Rev. i. 7. 2 Cor. v. 10. “Marvel not at this; the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” “What, then, shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth what shall I answer him?”

He felt in consternation, and implored for two hours’ delay.

And what consternation shall there be in that day! what astonishment! what surprisals! what horrible awakening out of sleep! what sweeping away of idle dreams, as with the breath of the hurricane! like cobwebs they shall be swept away, as with the besom of destruction. “And at mid-

* The incidents here recorded are perfectly true.

night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Whose lamps shall be found trimmed and burning? and who shall have wisely provided oil for their vessels? and who shall be aroused in that awful hour to find their lamps just gone out?

There was consternation in the dream, but there will be a thousand-fold more consternation in the reality—in that day which "brings to light the hidden things of darkness," and "reveals the secrets of all hearts." Shall there not be on all sides horrid confusion, and ghastly looks, and wild shrieks of despair in that day? Where is the confidence I placed in my fine gold? cries one. And where are my houses and lands? cries another? And where are my pleasures, my lovers, and friends? cries another. Gone! all gone! in this day of consternation. And where is my religion? perhaps others will cry. The religion in which we made ourselves so comfortable, is that gone too? We will knock at the door, at any rate, and see. "Lord, Lord, open unto us!—we were not scoffers, or mockers, or without religion." But the cry is vain, for the door is shut. It has shut with a tremendous clap, that seemed to say, "Depart, I know you not!"

Yes, there shall be consternation. "The heavens passing away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat." Everything wrapt in fire! The graves opening—the sea restoring—the mightiest fabrics of man crumbling to cinders. Then woe to those who have long raised the cry, "The temple of the Lord are we." And woe to those who have worshipped the circumstances of religion more than the Author thereof; and have caused "the Church to cast a shadow upon Christ the Saviour." Men's hearts shall be failing them. And well they may, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

And how many in that day will wish that day delayed ! O spare, spare but a little longer ! Let the fruitless tree be let alone another year—another Sabbath—another hour ! but, Not another moment ! was the stern reply.

Many and merciful are the admonitions of Holy Scripture. All will be left without excuse. “Be ye therefore ready, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” When men say peace and safety, “sudden destruction shall burst upon them;” therefore, “say not in thine heart, My Lord delayeth his coming.” “The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.” “Boast not thyself of to-morrow.” “The night cometh when no man can work.” “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.” “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him.” “Prepare to meet thy God.”

In agony he implored again only one hour ! But again, Not a moment ! was the unchanging reply.

He implored in agony; but it was too late. The great white throne was set, and the great assize must proceed; yea, without one moment's delay. Reader, does conscience say—Thou art not ready? Now is the accepted time; now is the day to make your calling and election sure; now, while this paper is in your hand; while these words of friendly admonition are before your eyes; and now, while there is a throne of grace to go to, a mercy-seat for the guilty, and a Saviour to plead for the penitent at the right hand of God. Agonize now to enter in at the strait gate, for I say unto thee, that many shall strive and agonize to enter in at that day, and shall not be able. To defer is to be in danger. Say only, To-morrow will do as well; and then to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, and peradventure thy soul shall be past all recovery—thine heart shall

be like stone within thee,—thy conscience seared,—thine immortal spirit for ever let alone!

May not a reference to common things be borrowed, to suggest a thought concerning the things to come? Did you, then, reader, ever happen to be travelling on an errand of great importance; and did you ever get to the pier-head just a moment or two *too late*,—just in time to see the vessel dashing away, which could not or would not put back? Or did you ever, on business of great emergency, reach, in breathless haste, the station, just as the *train* was rapidly gliding away? and have you not been reminded of the old proverb, that “time and tide wait for no man?” And certainly this might be forced upon the attention of many travellers in these our days of “*steam*.” I have often witnessed the annoyance depicted in the faces of those left behind; nay, I have been thus annoyed myself. But these are trifling things. They are not without remedy. Another tide or another train *may* overtake the disappointment. But not so when we are “too late” in the things pertaining to another world. Or did you ever bend over the dying, and mark, with a bursting heart, their labouring effort after breath, and the convulsive struggle of the features; and has fond affection, urged by busy memory, never said,—“O for a little respite,—a little longer,—a few more accents of forgiveness spoken; or a little time to show that kindness which may have been too sparingly, perhaps, doled out before?” But an answer has been returned to the wish of thine heart, in the shadow of death that has wrapped all in sullen silence! There is then felt to be an imperious power at work,—a voice that says “*Away* ;” and all that human skill, affection, or entreaty can achieve, is just “lighter than vanity itself.” Ah! reader, ponder these things; leave nothing to be done when “not another moment” may be had.

But we now come to a very important feature of “the

dream.” In the hand of each one who passed this young man, on their way to the Judge, there was observed to be

A WHITE TICKET.

Our friend who saw this in his dream, also moved on with the company; but he found no such passport for himself: he made diligent search, but no such *white ticket* was in his possession; and what was he to do? He felt, that in order to be accepted, this significant token must be forthcoming; nevertheless, *it was not!*

Now, we are here reminded, as we read of this “*white ticket*,” of a certain “*white stone*,” of which we read in Rev. ii. 17, which was granted, along with other privileges, to those who overcame; this “white stone” signifying *acquittal*, and being a sure token that the possessor had obtained favour. In this dream, the “*white ticket*” which appeared in the hands of those who were prepared for the call of the Judge, may be taken to have the same signification.

No “white stone,” no acquittal; no “white ticket,” no acceptance. And what a moment to make the discovery that this white ticket was wanting! The summit of the hill was almost reached. There stood the great and glorious Judge;—the balances of judgment are trembling;—what is there for the sinner’s scale?

He searched every part of his dress, still expecting to find it about himself.

He had not yet been taught to look unto Christ for “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Like thousands more, he was vainly hoping to be his own saviour. Reader, are you doing the same? Perhaps you say, “Oh no,” at once to such a question. “I know far better.” But many who disclaim this folly when laid to their charge, are all the while secretly guilty of it. I will show you how it may be done. “Now for my passport,—my recommendation to the Judge,” cries the soul, when it

is brought to feel that it must surely die; "let me search my dress for the white ticket. I have never injured any one,—no, not by word or deed, that I remember. I have paid my way, and lived respectably,—said my prayers, and gone to my church;—surely, with such a recommendation, I shall 'get through' into heaven." Folly! vain babbler, a condemning voice will cry, a voice never heard perhaps before. "To have done no harm," is commendation for a stone, not for a Christian. The "white ticket" is not here; look again. "Then I will call to my aid all the good works I have done. I will go over them;—I have done this, and I have done that,—given here, and given there; surely my meritorious works and many charities will commend me; may I not trust in them, and be safe? if not, why should I have done so much?" "Folly!" again the reproving voice will cry. "Thy good works are bad works, because rotten at the root. The 'white ticket' is not found in this part of thy dress; look again."

"Then I will send for the minister, and he shall pray for my soul; and surely that must be an unfailing passport to heaven." Wretched soul, all wrong! The "white ticket" is not found in any part of thy dress, nor in any such things as these; for thou hast not followed these truly needful things rightly, or thou wouldst not now take refuge in them. Looking to these things for help shows ignorance of the one true way; and they would not, all together, nor ten thousand times increased, make up for the want of the one "white ticket." Thou art weighed, and art found wanting.

And at this point, it is to be feared, many and many more will be left at the last. They wake from their day-dream too late. Many drop into their graves fast locked in delusion, dreaming of heaven, and lifting up their eyes in hell!

But it was happily otherwise with our Highland friend. It appeared in this vision, that he had ceased to look for the needful passport in himself, and began at the eleventh hour

to cry unto the Lord. Happy for him that grace was given him to cry. And so it is written, "And it shall come to pass (in that notable day,) that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But all will not call upon the Lord in that day, any more than they do now. Many will be confounded, taken as in a snare, awfully overtaken. Many will call upon the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them. It is well when the cry is made while it may be heard. It was so here. The Lord was supplicated in faith, and there was an answer given to the request. The white ticket was found in the hand of the alarmed man immediately. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me." Peter is sinking in the waves; but when he cries, "Save, Lord, or I perish," immediately Jesus puts forth his hand to save him.

Such is our simple comment upon this strange dream. And God may, if it please him, bless it to others as well as to the one to whom it was first sent. And so, if it please him, a few further observations, on the state of mind which followed this dream, may not be unprofitable.

This young man was disturbed by what he dreamt.

Like one we read of in the book of Daniel, who dreamt, and "whose thoughts troubled him." It is well to be troubled by warnings sent to us; and it is better still, when the troubled mind gets no rest till it finds rest in God. For, doubtless, there are many now in outer darkness, who have been troubled while on their way to eternity, by warnings of various kinds, all sent in mercy, but which have not been improved. Unwelcome impressions have been laughed away; or the still small voice has been drowned in dissipation and vain pleasures, among light and giddy companions. "I have called, and ye refused.....Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." "There-

fore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

But it was mercifully otherwise in the case before us. The disturbed state of mind which followed the warning, led to earnest knockings at the door of mercy. Our friend knew what he wanted,—pardon, and grace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit: and in the disposition of a very famous dreamer in olden time, he was ready to say in his wrestlings, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” He wrestled in prayer for the blessing, and he obtained it.

And mark, he begged at this season to be left alone.

And as our great spiritual conflicts are generally when we are alone, so must our great spiritual victories be achieved when alone also. It is one thing to appear much affected when moved thereto by others; it is quite another thing to have earnest wrestlings when alone; and it is when alone that the real and lasting work is done. Frequent, fervent, and secret prayer is the surest test of sincerity. It is in proportion to what we know of God in solitude, that we really know of God at all.

He sought pardon: for his sins were now felt to be very many and very great, though before they were regarded perhaps as few and trifling. Perhaps, like most unconverted moral men, he deemed himself to be “only a little sinner:” one of those little sinners who, never feeling the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and never realizing their pressing need of a great and mighty Saviour, never come to Christ, and are never saved.

He wrestled in prayer for grace—that favour of God which he had sinned away; that smile of acceptance which he had forfeited, and which he now felt no merits or deservings of his own could ever restore. He needed “the free gift of God.” And he felt that he needed the Holy Spirit’s aid. He needed the work of the Holy Spirit to enlighten where all before was dark; to enliven where all be-

fore was cold and dead ; to sanctify and raise where all before was impure and grovelling ; and to cheer and comfort where all before was disconsolate and sorrowful. And this we all need equally with him who now wrestled for it in prayer.

Once on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost entered the place where the disciples were assembled, there was a great sound, as of a rushing mighty wind which filled the house. And here we are told in the little narrative, "something seemed to shake the very dwelling." How this was we pretend not to say, nor does it signify ; the voice that followed was everything ; a voice truly from heaven. "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord." How condescending in the mighty God, thus to stoop to the low estate of a prostrate sinner ! And what says the voice ? O it comes with a message of peace ! it comes with gracious relief to the guilt-burthened soul : "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Why, this is just what I wanted." I have found it, I have found it, the distressed conscience would exclaim. This is the "white ticket," signed and countersigned ! Pardon and purity. It meets my need exactly. I can read on the one side, "I justify thee,"—and I can read on the other, "I sanctify thee." On the one, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression." On the other, "I clothe thee with a garment of salvation. I am the Lord thy righteousness, thou art complete in me."

Now, dear reader, have you got this "white ticket," or in other words, have you obtained pardon, grace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit ? And I pray you to remember, every "white ticket," issued by the King of heaven, has two sides to it must, as it were, be signed and countersigned ; pardon for the guilt of sin, and deliverance from the power and practice of sin ;—interest in a work done for

you, and participation of a work done in you. Whom He justifies, he also glorifies. A title to the inheritance purchased for you and a meetness for the inheritance wrought in you. On one side you must see "justified by faith." On the other you must be able to read "fruitful in good works." The root and the fruit both must be there. Half a ticket will in no case answer. And if thou hast indeed obtained, "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," (Rev. iii. 11.) Travellers, you know, are careful not to lose the tickets they purchase for their journey, for if lost they must pay their fare a second time. But as for this "white ticket" of which we speak, O it is not so soon replaced if lost, if indeed it can be at all. I do not forget that it is written, "My sheep shall never perish;" and again, "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus." And I know it is also written, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" "hold fast that which thou hast." Keep the ticket clean, let it indeed be always white, unsullied, unspotted by the world, that the characters thereon may be easily discerned, so that he who runs may read, read at a glance, "living epistles." There are two sides, I said, to each "white ticket." And so there are two sides to the doctrine of salvation. Take the word as you find it, and take all you find; take all the comfort, and take all the caution.

And if you have truly obtained this token of acceptance and favour with God, may I ask, when did you obtain it? When were you shaken in your old dwelling-place, disturbed in mind, and wrestling in prayer for pardon, and grace, and the Holy Spirit? Or, not to define the time, under what circumstances did you first seriously ask, "Am I, or am I not, justified in the sight of God?" "Am I, or am I not in a state of salvation?"—how stands the case between my soul and my Judge? Is Christ my friend, as well as my judge, or my judge alone? When he calls me before

him, shall I be accepted? Will he say of me, "This is one of the brands I have plucked from the fire; this is one whom I have washed in my blood, and endued with my Spirit, and whose name I have written in my book of life?" Do you indeed possess "the white ticket!" Search and see.

He who happily obtained it in the narrative, found, with his pardon, a blessed peace steal over his soul. All was distress before, all was serenity now. It was the blood of the Lamb that spoke peace to his troubled conscience. Have you obtained a like calm, after a like tumult, and from a like source? And do you too feel as he did that you are a new creature? Then can you mention what "old things have passed away;" what old opinions, customs, pleasures, prospects, hopes or fears, and what are the things which have become new? Can you fasten upon real, and substantial, and manifest tokens of the mighty change, called in Scripture "life from the dead, being born from above, born of God, brought out of darkness into marvellous light?" Oh, my friend, old or young, high or low, rich or poor, as the case may be, if this have come to pass, thou art sure to know something about it.

And has it since been with you as with this happy man? has a new song been given thee? Canst thou sing, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

And is there peace and joy in believing? And can your friends take knowledge of you by any change of disposition, or any change of countenance, that you have been with Jesus? And are your lips ready to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul?"

It was thus with Charles MacFederen. His soul was now renewed and happy; he had a foretaste of heaven while he yet lingered on earth: and at last "his sun went down in a peaceful and hopeful horizon, to rise again in a world of unclouded glory and unfading joy, where all is peaceful, and pure, and holy, and happy for ever. Such is the end of the perfect man,—and we are made perfect in Christ,—and the memory of the just is blessed.

“STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.”

[AN EXTRACT FROM THE LIFE OF MAJOR GEN. BURN.]

“ABOUT a fortnight or more after my brother’s death, while I continued in a mournfully disconsolate state of mind, because I could not love Christ, I dreamed a very distinct and remarkable dream, which had such a happy effect upon my heart, that I have ever since looked upon it as the principal means the Almighty was pleased to employ in bringing about my thorough conversion. I thought I was sitting a little before daylight in the morning, with my deceased brother, on the wall of the parish church-yard, where we had lived many years together. We remained silent for some time, and then he asked me if I would not go with him into the church. I readily consented, and immediately rising up, walked with him towards the porch, or outer gate, which I thought was very large and spacious; but when we had passed through it, and came to the inner door that led directly into the body of the church, some way or other, but how I could not well conceive, my brother slipt in before me; and when I attempted to follow, which I was all eagerness to do, the door, which slid from the top to the bottom, like those in some fortified towns on the continent, was instantly let down more than half way, so that I now found it requisite to bend myself almost double before I could possibly enter. But as I stooped to try, the door continued fall-

ing lower and lower, and consequently the passage became so narrow that I found it altogether impracticable in that posture. Grieved to be left behind, and determined to get in, if possible, I fell down on my hands, and tried to squeeze my head and shoulders through; but finding myself still too high, I then kneeled down, crept, wrestled, and pushed more eagerly, but all to no purpose. Vexed to the last degree, yet unwilling to be left outside, I came to the resolution of throwing off all my clothes, and crawling like a worm; but being very desirous to preserve a fine silk embroidered waistcoat which I had brought from France, I kept that on in hopes of being able to carry it with me. Then laying myself flat on my face, I toiled and pushed, and strove, soiled my embroidered waistcoat, but could not get in, after all. At last driven almost to despair, I stripped myself entirely, and forced my body between the door and the ground, till the rough stones and gravel tore all the skin and flesh upon my breast, and (as I thought) covered me with blood. Indifferent, however, about this, and perceiving I advanced a little, I continued to strive and squeeze with more violence than ever, till at last I got safely through. As soon as I stood upon my feet on the inside, an invisible hand clothed me in a long white robe; and as I turned round to view the place, I saw a goodly company of saints, among whom was my brother, all dressed in the same manner, partaking of the Lord's supper. I sat down in the midst of them, and the bread and wine being administered to me, I felt such seraphic joy, such celestial ecstacy, as no mortal can express. I heard a voice call me three times by name, saying I was wanted at home. My joy was so great and overcoming, that it soon broke asunder the silken bands of sleep, and made me start up in bed, singing the high praises of God.

“So much was I impressed by this remarkable dream, that from this day I was enabled to begin an entirely new life, which (as I advanced in the saving knowledge of divine

things) proved as different from the life I had led for several years back, as it is possible any two opposites can be. Old things were now done away, and all things became new. Not that I obtained a complete victory over my domineering sins all at once, or renounced all my false opinions in one day; but a bitter and eternal war was instantly declared against the one, and as God made the discovery to me, I let go the other. My mind was gradually enlightened to comprehend the glorious and important truths of the everlasting gospel, and the eyes of my understanding were so opened, to discern spiritual things, that I now read my Bible with wonder and astonishment. I paused almost at every sentence, ruminating within myself; and could hardly be persuaded whether or not I had ever read many of the passages before, so amazingly were they opened, and so very different did the meaning of them appear to be from what I had previously apprehended. The sweet and comfortable impression which this dream left upon my mind for many days, encouraged and inspired me with fresh vigour in the pursuit of heavenly things. I now plainly saw that I had long strayed in the wilderness of error, and was fully and delightfully convinced the good Shepherd had found me out, and was determined to carry me back again to his fold. But what is very astonishing, I did not yet perceive any sensible drawings of affection after him, or feel in my heart that love and delight which, blessed be his name! I humbly trust, I have at times since sweetly experienced. Nor, till nearly a year afterwards, did I rightly conceive in any adequate degree what was meant by the intolerable burden of sin. But as the Lord increased and strengthened my faith, and shed abroad his love in my heart, sin, that accursed thing, grew blacker and blacker, till at last the sight became so odious, that had not he first very tenderly comforted me, I never could have borne what I felt of it in my own breast."

TO A YOUNG MAN.

MY YOUNG FRIEND—Though I am past your period of life, I have not forgotten how young men feel. I sympathize with you, and wish you well. I have high hopes of you, and yet I confess I have fears also. Let not this candor offend you, but hear a few friendly words. If you pursue a right course, you may do a vast amount of good; but if you follow a wrong path, you will but heap up treasures of misery. Many eyes are upon you, nor should you be surprised at the solicitude felt for you. Your road is beset with perils.

You have a treacherous foe in your own bosom. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" A belief of this truth is essential to your safety and happiness. If you think your heart good, you will not closely watch it, and so it will betray you; and if you think it good enough, you will not ask for a better. He who knows how evil his heart is, is far more likely to be wise and happy than he who flatters himself in his iniquity till it is found to be hateful. With the lowly is wisdom. Self-distrust and deep humility are essential qualities in a virtuous character. "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool."

Another danger to which you are exposed is a corrupt world. "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Human nature is deeply sunk in sin. On this point God's word is

clear. "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable : there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways ; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Jesus Christ never used rash or harsh language, yet he said to his disciples, "Beware of men ;" and to the unregenerate he said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and his works will ye do." He who rejects the scriptural account of human nature, may boast of his freedom from vulgar prejudices, but he is denying the truth of God, and will one day rue his folly. The example, the spirit, the maxims of carnal men are all hostile to virtue. This world is a foe to goodness. It hinders but never helps any one to do right. A lamb amongst wolves is an apt emblem of a youth thrown out into the world. None but God can save him from either temporal or eternal ruin.

Satan, too, the great adversary, is very busy, and has vast cunning and power in enticing men from the right ways of God. He is an adept in all artifice and wickedness. He sometimes comes as an angel of light to seduce, and then as a roaring lion to terrify. He is not omnipotent, yet he is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." He is not omnipresent, yet he continually "goeth about seeking whom he may devour." It is foolish to think or speak lightly of so dreadful a foe. He has ruined millions. He who jests at the power of this wicked one, shows that he is already "led captive by the devil at his will." He is sporting himself with his own deceivings.

When a man's own heart, a corrupt world, and Satan combine, their power is fearful. However varied their modes of assault, their object and tendency is always the same, the ruin of the soul. One such adversary might well alarm a wise man, but when all rise up against us, we have the greatest need of watchfulness and prayer. This is the more manifest, as it is of the nature of sin to blind the mind, harden the heart, and lull apprehensions of danger. He who has the fewest fears is often in the most peril. In all men, but especially in young men, it is an evil token to refuse to be afraid, when danger is or may be imminent. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Nor have young men laid up rich stores of experience. They practically know but little of the depths of Satan, the wickedness of men, or the deceitfulness of their own hearts. With them all is gold that glitters; all is true that is plausible; all is good that is fair. How few young men have learned that the wounds of a friend are faithful, and that stern rebukes are better than the kisses of deceit! To them life, duty, society—all appear in false lights. They have seen but one shade of the picture, and that is bright.

Young men are also subject to occasional and sometimes to deep despondency, than which nothing is a more severe trial of one's principles. Separated from the charities of life, often held in anxious suspense, disconcerted in all their plans, forsaken by those in whom they had trusted, or betrayed into the power of malignant men, their hearts are often smitten with sorrow, and withered like grass. Then evil, like an armed man, comes in upon them when they are lame and broken, and incapable of playing the man. A virtuous character was never formed under the prevailing influence of dejection and discouragement.

At all times young men are in danger from the influence

of evil companions. Perils from this quarter are indeed extreme. "May you live in bad company," was among the ancient Greeks a form of the bitterest imprecation. Nor was this without reason, for "the companion of fools shall be destroyed." None can tell how many young men have their principles poisoned, their characters debased, and their prospects blighted, by those whose trade it is to sin, and to teach others their pernicious ways. This is an appalling subject.

Bad company often leads to drunkenness, a vice which destroys its thousands of young men. It carries with it almost all other evils. It steals upon men in the most specious manner. It sings syren songs, while it binds its victims in fetters of iron. "Wine is a mocker." It mocks the poor, the feeble, the simple, by making them think that they are wise, and strong, and rich. It consumes time, estate, character, credit, soul and body. Hell follows in its train. In the end "it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder."

Another danger to which young men are exposed, is the sin of Sabbath-breaking. When a man, who has enjoyed a Christian education, can, without compunction, deliberately violate the law of the Sabbath-day, he is unquestionably on the highway to ruin, both temporal and eternal. God may put forth his hand and save him; but, left to himself, his destruction is inevitable. The day intended for a solemn revision of his life and conduct, is by him given up to sin and folly, and so he is hardened in wickedness. The pleas urged for misspending holy time are utterly vain, and will not be adduced when men shall give up their last account. How can men expect to bid a cheerful farewell to earth, and go in peace to spend an eternal Sabbath with saints in glory, when they find themselves indisposed to the appropriate duties of an earthly Sabbath? If holy time is not a delight here, what shall keep it from being a burden hereafter?

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” This is the law. He who disregards it invites the vile and the abandoned to be his companions, and proclaims himself an unscrupulous contemner of God. It has long been the opinion of pious men that this sin has an unusual power in hardening the heart. Dr. Dwight said—“Few men accustomed to profane swearing ever turn to God, or express a wish to do so.” Thomas Boston said: “Many are very extravagant otherwise in youth, who afterwards take up themselves; but oftentimes swearing grows gray-headed with men.” None but foolish men both swear and pray. Swearing manifestly makes prayer a mockery. It is a sin that carries with it vulgarity; it is in open contempt of good breeding; it is without any excuse. God has often punished it even in this life with terrible judgments.

These vices naturally, and almost inevitably, lead to general licentiousness, and especially to the violation of the seventh commandment. Commonly the doom of a young man is sealed when he becomes the victim of the “strange woman.” “For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.” She is “a deep pit; the abhorred of the Lord falleth into it.”

These vices are usually accompanied with heavy expenses, and so bring temptations to dishonesty. At first money is taken from an employer or partner with an intention of soon refunding it; but a wicked life consumes it all, and he who secretly borrowed begins to steal, to lie, to obtain money from friends under false pretences, and perhaps even to think of forgery; or perhaps he hastens to the lottery office or the gaming-house, and there steps his soul in the vices of “a hell.” Bankruptcy in estate and character soon follows, and prudent men avoid the recently gay and popular youth as if he had the plague.

It shall be for a lamentation that so many young men live in idleness. Too proud to work, they squander their patrimony, or abjectly depend on the charity of some relative who has means. No vice more exposes men to every form of evil than incurable laziness. "The devil tempts all men, but the idle man tempts the devil." He who so lives as to let it be known that he has no regular employment, advertises himself as a target for all the archers to shoot at.

Ambition also brings young men into many perils. This is the Moloch of America. To it thousands sacrifice their all. Whatever their success, plans of ambition jeopard every thing. David knew, and Uriah found, that the forefront of the battle was a post of danger. The leader meets the foe before his host. "The higher towers are, the more terrible is their fall, and the mountain tops are most exposed to thunderbolts." God is kind when he says—"Seekest thou great things? Seek them not. Mind not high things." There is one appendage to ambition that has filled many a house with wailing. I mean duelling. It is not possible to give any correct definition of murder that does not embrace death inflicted in a duel. The highest legal authorities so pronounce. The practice also includes the guilt of self-murder. The code which governs this murderous usage is full of absurdity, and is more bloody than the code of Draco. Yet ambition knows no limits, and defies all restraints, human and divine, and calls its laws "the code of honour."

To all young men dangers arise from the readiness of the carnal heart to embrace loose opinions on moral and religious subjects. The world is full of the grossest religious errors. The men who make it their business to propagates them, are often gifted and plausible, addicted to flattery, and full of zeal. There are in our day atheists, who, by speech and by the press, labour to sunder all the bonds of moral obligation,

and to root out every just and noble sentiment. "They that deny a God destroy man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts as to his body, and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit he is a base and ignoble creature." Infidelity, too, with her cup of death, stands ready to poison every soul of man, and is especially seductive to the young. Although infidels have been defeated on every field of argument, yet their malice still rages, and they are ever changing the mode of attack. But their folly shall be manifest. To his church God has said—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise in judgment against thee shalt thou condemn." Unitarianism is also busy sowing its deadly seeds. It boldly attacks the fundamental truths of Christianity, denies the divinity of Jesus Christ, the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, the total depravity of man, and regeneration by the power of God. It professes to receive the Bible; but as a system of religion for a sinner, it is really no better than infidelity. One of its greatest champions has confessed as much. In his letter, dated Northumberland, April 23, 1802, Dr. Priestley says of Mr. Jefferson: "He is generally considered as an unbeliever; if so, however, he cannot be far from us, and I hope in the way to be not only almost but altogether what we are." There, too, is Universalism, which promises eternal life to the blasphemer, the liar, the thief, the murderer. This is one of the most pleasing forms of delusion. It opens wide the door to corruption. Most of the hardened criminals I have ever conversed with were staunch Universalists.

These, and almost all other errorists, are violent in their attacks upon what they call Calvinistic doctrines. They constantly labor to prejudice the minds of the young against these precious truths. That they are of God the Scriptures clearly teach. That they are of good moral tendency is manifest from all their history. Sir James McIntosh says:

“The Calvinistic people of Scotland, of Switzerland, of Holland, and of New England, have been more moral than the same class in other nations. Those who preached faith, or in other words, a pure mind, have always produced more popular virtue than those who preached good works or the mere regulation of outward acts.” And Jesus Christ has said—“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” The amiable and venerable John Newton once wrote—“As to the doctrines which are stigmatized by the name of Calvinism, I cannot well avoid the epithet rigid, while I believe them; for there seems to be no medium between ascribing salvation to the will of man or the power of God; between grace and works; between being found in the righteousness of Christ or my own. Did the hard consequences often charged upon the doctrines entitled Calvinism really belong to it, I should have much to answer for if I had invented it myself, or taken it upon trust from Calvin; but as I find it in the Scriptures I cheerfully embrace it, and leave it to the Lord to vindicate his own truth, and his own ways, from all imputations which have been cast upon them.” When men renounce these doctrines they depart from the truth and life of religion.

The foregoing are some of the dangers of young men. The list might easily be much extended. Each one’s observation can supply any deficiency. He who has such enemies as these needs a perfect panoply.

Yet ruin is not inevitable. Young men *may* escape vice and rise to virtue, usefulness, and happiness. Thousands have done it, and obtained eternal glory. But such a result is not reached by the careless, the vain, the self-sufficient. He who would be crowned with glory must submit to wholesome rules. The ancients built the temple of honour in the rear of the temple of virtue, so that no man could reach the former without passing through the latter.

Be persuaded, then, to employ your leisure hours in the improvement of your minds by solid reading and profitable study. Beware of poor and corrupt books. "Few men have been sufficiently sensible of the importance of that economy in reading, which selects almost exclusively the very first order of books. Why should a man, except for some special reason, read a very inferior book, at the very time he might be reading one of the highest order?" Indulge not the miserable vanity of pretending to an originality which needs no aid from others. Be willing to learn from the wise and good of all ages. A thought obtained from another, and made yours by reflection, is as fairly your own as if you had first entertained it. "They who say that our thoughts are not our own because they resemble the ancients, might as well say our faces are not our own because they are like our fathers." "Cry after knowledge, lift up your voice for understanding, seek wisdom." "That the heart be without knowledge is not good."

No wise man would wish to see you a recluse, but would advise you to seek improving society. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." Seclusion from mankind is no friend to virtue. The life of a monk is not of God's ordaining. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone?—and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a three-fold cord is not easily broken." The elements of good society are intelligence, gentleness, benevolence, magnanimity, and true piety. Where these are, the manners, the mind, and the heart will be improved.

Labour to acquire moral courage. Learn to say no! and stick to it. A facility of temper which complies with every urgent solicitation will ruin any man. It has destroyed

thousands. Never permit yourself to be frowned or laughed out of a good conscience. "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." "The fear of man bringeth a snare." "Say not a confederacy to all who say a confederacy to you, neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid." The derision of wicked men should but strengthen us in our good purposes. Their laughter is mad. "When a blind man comes against you in the street, you are not angry at him; you say, 'he is blind, poor man, or he would not have hurt me.' So you may say of wicked men reviling goodness. They are blind, and know not what they do." "It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord." If you can please God, man's displeasure is but a puff of wind.

Never engage in any thing, the lawfulness of which is doubtful. Beware of the first wrong step. The only guaranty against a wicked life is not to do a wicked act. The first sin opens the door to many. He who steals a pin is on the highway to horse-stealing. He who is merry over his wine once a year will probably die a drunkard. Maintain your principles at all hazards.

If engaged in trade, be satisfied with small regular gains, rather than seek much at a great risk. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." Human virtue is seldom more severely tried than when embarrassment succeeds over-trading. Very few are able to stop payment without some loss of reputation, or some wound to virtue. He who prays, "Lead us not into temptation," and then deals rashly, is disregarding his own most solemn judgments of what is safe and right.

Learn to curb all your passions. "Do nothing with over-eagerness of mind." The art of self-government is invaluable. Let not even gross slander enrage you. "A great lie is like a great fish on dry land; it may fret, and fling, and make a frightful bother, but it cannot hurt you.

You have only to keep still, and it will die of itself." I like the story of the blacksmith in Alabama, who being advised to bring an action for damages against a slanderer, said—"I can go into my shop and hammer out a better character in six months, than all the courts in christendom can give me." The divine law of forgiving enemies, and of blessing those who curse us, is as safe as it is holy. Basil the Great said—"Has any one permitted himself to make use of injurious expressions respecting you? Reply to him by blessings. Does he treat you ill? Be patient. Does he reproach you? Is the reproach just? If it be, condemn yourself; if not, it is but a breath of air. Flattery really could not impart a merit to you if you have it not; nor can calumny give you faults that you do not actually possess. Does he tax you with ignorance? In shewing yourself angry, you justify the charge. Does he persecute you? Think of Jesus Christ. Can you ever suffer as he suffered?" In fine, keep cool, conquer yourself, restrain your passions, be benevolent, and you will be a happy man. "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

Find out the weak points of your character, and try to strengthen them. It is as true of character as of fortifications, that "the whole is no stronger than the weakest part." If peculiarly accessible to flattery, think of the vanity of human applause, even when sincere, and of its baseness when it is a lie. If very anxious to acquire property, resist your covetousness by repeated acts of generosity. In short, be always on your guard against the enemy, but doubly so when his suggestions coincide with the evil desires of your own mind.

Keep some ennobling object always before you, such as the good of your family, your country, or your race. Every man "should be like a river that fertilizes while it flows, carrying ships and all that floats upon its bosom along with it to the ocean." "Life without a purpose is dull and

unsteady;" and life without a noble purpose is low and grovelling. You are not too young to do much good. Alexander, Cæsar, and Bonaparte, won nearly all their fame before they were thirty years old. The younger Pitt was high in power at twenty-two. Washington was but twenty-five when he safely carried the remnant of the army off Braddock's field. Spencer, Summerfield, and McCheyne were a blessing to thousands though they all died young.

If what has been said is likely to do you any good, you will not be offended when you are told that you cannot too highly prize the privilege of prayer. "A calm hour with God is worth a whole life-time with man." The secret spring of all real strength is in God. He who does not know it is to be pitied; and he who knows it, and does not profit by it, is a madman. Cry to God day and night. Whatever concerns you is proper matter for prayer. Nothing so puts us on our guard; nothing so fortifies us against the hour of trial; nothing brings such peace into the soul as hearty prayer to God in the name of Christ.

Always attend, when you can, the public worship of God. Do this from principle, and be not ashamed to own that you make it a matter of conscience. If you love God you will find both profit and delight in such services; and if you love him not, they may restrain you from many evil courses, and finally lead you to Christ. Never despise a preached gospel. "Faith cometh by hearing."

Nor can you too carefully study God's word. That blessed volume is a better guide to wisdom and peace than all other books beside. It has an incomparable energy for good. "The gospel is a powerful magnet to attract men upwards. Where it does not lift them to heaven, it at least raises them to the high places of the earth." The testimony of great men in favor of the Scriptures should secure for them a careful perusal. Patrick Henry said—"The Bible is a book worth more than all the other books ever

printed." Dr. Johnson said—"Young man, attend to the voice of one who has possessed some fame in the world, and who will shortly appear before his Maker: read the Bible every day of your life." Dr. Marryatt is said to have committed to memory more than half the books of the Old and New Testaments, and to have repeated them at least once a year to the end of his life. Who has ever walked safely whose path has not been lighted by this lamp of truth? The Bible suits all, and has words of counsel and of peace for the humblest classes. The poor shepherd of Salisbury Plain said—"Blessed be God! through his mercy I learned to read when I was a boy. I believe there is no day for the last thirty years that I have not peeped at my Bible. If we can't find time to read a chapter, I defy any man to say he can't find time to read a verse; and a single text, well followed, and put in practice every day, would make no bad figure at the year's end. Three hundred and sixty-five texts, without the loss of a moment's time, would make a pretty stock, a golden treasury, as one may say, from new-year's day to new-year's day; and if children were brought up to it, they would come to look for their text as naturally as they do for their breakfast. I can say the greatest part of the Bible by heart." Could all young men be persuaded to follow such an example what a world we should soon have!

As you live, and move, and have your being in God, nothing is more reasonable than that you should set the Lord always before you, and learn to do all to his glory. His favor is life; seek that and death shall have no power over you. Live to his honour, delight in his law, and frame all your doings for the advancement of his cause. The highest religious motives are always the safest. Whatever is done should be done with right motives, and to a right end. Let God be in all your thoughts. There can be no proper state of heart where God is utterly forgotten.

But remember your entire dependence on God's Holy

Spirit for illumination, strength, wisdom, and consolation. He is the true oil of gladness; he is the only effectual Comforter; he can teach, so that the simple shall become wiser than their teachers. Without his influence all our good purposes vanish like a cloud.

And make Christ all in all. Without him you can do nothing. You are all sin, guilt, and misery; he is all righteousness and worthiness. Salvation is wholly free, gratuitous, undeserved. Christ died the just for the unjust. Trust in him alone. "He who, with a consciousness and acknowledgment of great imperfections, trusts in the righteousness of Christ, is a better Christian than a more perfect man who trusts in his own." A good man once said—"I find it difficult to believe that God can forgive me, because I cannot forgive myself. But I find great comfort in Isaiah lv. 7—9. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" Blessed be God, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." However sinful you may be, come to Christ and he will prove himself both able and willing to save you. Look to Jesus and live. We are *complete in him*. He is called the Saviour, Redeemer, Deliverer, Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, Prophet, Priest, King, Captain, Shepherd, Governor, Prince of Peace, Prince of Life, Sun of Righteousness, the True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, the Bright and Morning Star, Ransom, Sacrifice, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, Physician, Friend, Brother, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Door, the true Bread that cometh down from heaven, the Wonderful, Counsellor, the

Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Son of God, the Son of Man.

He is "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." To be in him is salvation begun, to walk in him is salvation carried on, to be like him and to be with him is salvation completed. It is better to suffer with him than to reign without him. His name is as ointment poured forth. He sincerely offers grace to kings and great men, but loves to show the greatness of his tender mercy in teaching the ignorant, and visiting the poor and afflicted. He is the Lord our righteousness. He is all our salvation. He is Head over all things to the church. He has the keys of death and of hell. He is Heir of all things, and has been appointed Judge of the world, so that we all must appear before him, and from his lips hear our final sentence.

You cannot make Christ too prominent in all your thoughts. You may easily love and trust the world too much; but there is no danger of excess in your attachment to Christ, or in your confidence in him. Every man is blind till Christ opens his eyes. Every man is dead till Christ gives him life. He is the only covert from the storm, the only perfect pattern of holiness ever shown to man, the only medium of reconciliation with God. No man ever loved God or holiness, no sinner ever escaped perdition, or reached glory but through Christ. To every holy being he is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. The virgins love him, the saints praise him, the angels adore him; in him the Father is well pleased. He is the centre of attraction to all the redeemed. He is drawing all his chosen to himself. Take Christ out of the gospel, and we have no glad tidings of great joy to publish to men. Love to him is the inspiration of every song of hearty praise that ever ascends from earth to heaven. Without his name prayer is wasted breath. By the death of Christ is the death of sin.

We nail our sins to his cross. Take a guilty man to the foot of Sinai. Bid him behold its lightnings and smoke; bid him listen to its awful voices and thunderings; and he may turn pale and exceedingly fear and quake, but he will hold fast his idols. But take him to Calvary, and let him there learn the evil of sin and God's love to the ill-deserving, and his heart will break, his pride will be abased, he will bow his neck and take Christ's yoke upon him, and he will crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, yea more, he will rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and henceforth the love of Christ will constrain him. No sinner ever found pardon and acceptance but in Christ. None ever came to Christ and desired any other Saviour. To be found in him is all we need. His grace is all sufficient. His truth can never fail. His power none can resist. He bears our nature, and so his work and sufferings are adapted to our wants. He counts it not robbery to be equal with God, and so his mediation is full of efficacy with God. Paul calls his blood the blood of God. Acts xx. 28. He has a true body and a rational soul, with all the tender sympathies of our nature. He is full of love and pity. He never trampled on a broken heart. The poorest, guiltiest sinner on earth, may approach him and be sure of his love. He is also God, and so cannot err, cannot be mistaken, cannot be defeated. He retains both his natures united for ever.

O that young men loved him as they should. He loves them. He says very kind things to them. Hear him: "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

THE NEW JERUSALEM;

OR,

THE SOUL'S BREATHING AFTER HER HEAVENLY COUNTRY.

BY THE REV. DAVID DICKSON, OF SCOTLAND.

DIED A.D. 1664, AGED 73.

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"Since Christ's fair truth needs no man's art,  
Take this rude song in better part."  
~~~~~

O mother dear, Jerusalem,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbour of God's saints!
O sweet and pleasant soil!
In thee no sorrows can be found,
No grief, no care, no toil.

In thee no sickness is at all,
No hurt nor any sore;
There is no death nor ugly sight,
But life for evermore.

No dimming cloud o'ershadows thee,
Nor dull nor darksome night;
But every soul shines as the sun,
For God himself gives light.

There lust and lucre cannot dwell,
There envy bears no sway;
There is no hunger, thirst, nor heat,
But pleasures every way.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

Would God I were in thee!
O that my sorrows had an end,
Thy joys that I might see!

No pain, no pang, no bitter grief,
No woeful night is there;
No sigh, no sob, no cry is heard—
No well-away, no fear.

Jerusalem the city is
Of God our King alone;
The Lamb of God, the light thereof,
Sits there upon his throne.

O God! that I Jerusalem
With speed may go behold!
For why? the pleasures there abound
Which here cannot be told.

Thy turrets and thy pinnacles
With carbuncles do shine,
With jasper, pearl, and chrysolite,
Surpassing pure and fine.

Thy houses are of ivory,
Thy windows crystal clear,
Thy streets are laid with beaten gold;
There angels do appear.

Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamonds square,
Thy gates are made of Orient pearls—
O God, if I were there!

Within thy gates nothing can come
That is not passing clean;
No spider's web, no dirt, nor dust,
No filth may there be seen.

Jehovah, Lord, now come, I pray,
And end my griefs and plaints;
Take me to thy Jerusalem,
And place me with thy saints,

Who there are crowned with glory great,
And see God face to face;
They triumph still and aye rejoice—
Most happy is their case.

But we that are in banishment,
Continually do moan;
We sigh, we mourn, we sob, we weep—
Perpetually we groan.

Our sweetness mixèd is with gall,
Our pleasures are but pain,
Our joys not worth the looking on—
Our sorrows aye remain.

But there they live in such delight,
Such pleasure and such play,
That unto them a thousand years
Seem but as yesterday.

O my sweet home, Jerusalem!
Thy joys when shall I see?
Thy King in glory on his throne,
And thy felicity?

Thy vineyards and thy orchards too,
So wonderfully rare,
Are furnished with all kinds of fruit,
Most beautiful and fair.

Thy gardens and thy goodly walks
Continually are green;
There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers,
As no where else are seen.

There cinnamon and sugar grow,
There nard* and balm abound;
No tongue can tell, no heart can think,
What pleasures there are found.

There nectar and ambrosia spring—
There musk and civet sweet;

* Spikenard.

There many a fair and dainty thing
Is trod down under feet.

Quite through the streets, with pleasant sound,
The stream of life doth flow;
Upon the banks on every side,
The tree of life doth grow.

These trees each month yield ripened fruit—
For evermore they spring;
And all the nations of the world
To thee their honours bring.

Jerusalem, God's dwelling place,
Full sore I long to see,
O that my sorrows had an end,
That I might dwell in thee!

There David stands, with harp in hand,
Among the heavenly choir;
A thousand times that man were blest,
That might their music hear.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Thy joys fain would I see;
Come quickly, Lord, and end my grief,
And take me home to thee!

O write thy name on my forehead,
And take me hence away,
That I may dwell with thee in bliss,
And sing thy praises aye!

Jerusalem, the happy seat—
Jehovah's throne on high!
O sacred city, queen, and wife
Of Christ eternally!

O comely queen, with glory clad,
With honour and degree,
All fair thou art, exceeding bright—
No spot is found in thee.

I long to see Jerusalem,
The comfort of us all;

For thou art fair and beautiful—
None ill can thee befall.

In thee, Jerusalem, I say,
No darkness dare appear;
No night, no shade, no winter foul—
No time doth alter there.

No candle needs, no moon to shine,
No glittering star to light;
For Christ, the Sun of Righteousness,
For ever shineth bright.

A Lamb unspotted, white and pure,
To thee doth stand in lieu
Of light—so great the glory is
Thine heavenly King to view.

He is the King of kings, beset
In midst his servants' sight;
And they his happy household all
Do serve him day and night;

There, there the choir of angels sing:
There the supernal sort
Of citizens, which hence are rid
From dangers deep, do sport.

There be the prudent prophets all,
The apostles six and six,
The glorious martyrs in a row,
And confessors betwixt.

There doth the crew of righteous men
And matrons all consist;
Young men and maids that here on earth
Their pleasures did resist.

These sheep and lambs that hardly 'scaped
The snares of death and hell,
Triumph in joy eternally,
Whereof no tongue can tell;
And though the glory of each one
Doth differ in degree,

Yet are the joys of all alike
And common, as we see.

There love and charity do reign,
And Christ is all in all,
Whom they most perfectly behold
In joy celestial.

They love, they praise—they praise, they love;
They “Holy, holy,” cry;
They neither toil, nor faint, nor end;
But laud continually.

O happy thousand times were I,
If, after wretched days,
I might with listening ears conceive
Those heavenly songs of praise,
Which to the eternal King are sung
By happy wights above—
By saved souls and angels sweet,
To praise the God of love.

O passing happy were my state,
Might I be worthy found
To wait upon my God and King,
His praises there to sound;

And to enjoy my Christ above,
His favour and his grace,
According to his promise made,
Which here I interlace.

“O Father dear,” quoth he, “let them
Whom thou hast giv’n of old
To me, be there where’er I am
My glory to behold;

Which I with thee before the world
Was made, in perfect wise,
Have had; from whence the fountain great
Of glory doth arise.”

Again: “If any man will serve
Then let him follow me;

For where I am, be thou right sure,
There shall my servant be."

And still: "If any man loves me,
Him loves my Father dear,
Whom I do love: to him myself
In glory shall appear."

Lord, take away my misery,
That then I may be bold
With thee in thy Jerusalem,
Thy glory to behold;

And so in Zion see my King,
My love, my Lord, my all,
Whom now as in a glass I see,
There face to face I shall.

Oh! blessed are the pure in heart,
Their Sovereign they shall see;
O ye most happy, heavenly wights,
Who of God's household be!

O Lord, with speed dissolve my bonds,
These gins and fetters strong;
For I have dwelt within the tents
Of Kedar over long!

Yet search me, Lord, and find me out,
Fetch me thy fold unto,
That all thy angels may rejoice,
While all thy will I do.

O mother dear! Jerusalem!
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joys when shall I see?

Yet once again I pray thee, Lord,
To quit me from all strife,
That to thy hill I may attain,
And dwell there all my life,

With cherubim and seraphim
And holy souls of men,
To sing thy praise, O Lord of hosts!
For evermore. Amen.

A N E C D O T E .

A PRESBYTERIAN minister, American by birth, but of Scottish parentage, happening to be in New Orleans some years ago, was asked to visit an old Scottish soldier who had wandered to New Orleans, sickened, and was conveyed to the hospital. On his entrance, and on announcing his errand, the Scotsman told him, in a surly tone, that he desired none of his visits—that he knew how to die without the aid of a priest. In vain he informed him that he was no priest, but a Presbyterian minister, come to read to him a portion of the word of God, and to speak to him of eternity. The Scotsman doggedly refused to hold any conversation with him, and he was obliged to take his leave. Next day, however, he called again, thinking that the reflection of the man on his own rudeness would prepare the way for a better reception. But his tone and manner were equally rude and repulsive; and at length he turned himself in bed, with his face to the wall, as if determined to hear nothing and relent nothing. The minister bethought himself, as a last resource, of the hymn well known in Scotland, the composition of David Dickson, minister of Irvine, beginning, “O mother dear, Jerusalem, when shall I come to thee?” which his Scottish mother had taught him to sing to the tune of “Dundee.” He began to sing his mother’s hymn. The soldier listened for a few moments in silence, but gradually turned himself round, with a relaxed countenance, and the tear in his eye, to inquire, “Wha learned ye that?” “My mother,” replied the minister. “And so did mine,” rejoined the now softened soldier, whose heart was opened by the recollection of infancy and of country, and now gave a willing ear to the man that had found the Scottish key to his heart.

REV. GEO. LEWIS.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

SALVATION is by grace from beginning to end.

1. It is a matter of grace that there has been *any provision made* for the salvation of sinners, for God might justly have left our whole race to perish in their apostacy. This is clear from the very meaning of the terms. For since desert of punishment is included in the very idea of sin, to say that a man is a sinner is to say that he may in justice be punished; or that pardon is to him an undeserved favour. What is true of every sinner is of course true of all. It is therefore true of the whole human family, since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It was then an act of grace to devise a plan of redemption for man, or to make any provision for the salvation of the guilty. This is a truth which is impressed on the whole surface of Scripture. From the beginning to the end of the word of God, and in every form of assertion and implication, we are taught that it was an unmerited favour that God should interpose to save apostate men. It is represented as a matter of wonder to angels, and to the redeemed themselves, that God should deliver

those whom justice condemned to death ; that he should provide a ransom for sinners, and announce to a guilty world the possibility of pardon.

Plainly as this is revealed in the word of God, men not only forget it in its application to themselves, but they construct whole systems of theology, founded on the assumption that providing a way of salvation for sinners was an act of justice. As the fall of Adam has, beyond all controversy, entailed great evils on his race ; as men are not only surrounded by temptation, but are frail and prone to sin, it is assumed that it would have been unjust in God to leave them in this condition without providing a way of escape.

In replying to this statement it may be freely admitted, that as the purpose of redemption was connected with the purpose to admit the fall of man and the continuance of his race, we must not contemplate the permission of the fall, without taking the purpose of redemption into view. But this admission does not meet the difficulty ; because the Scriptures clearly teach that on the hypothesis of the fall and the continuance of the race, the gift of Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit are still acts of sovereign mercy. They are represented as the greatest possible displays of the grace and love of God. The Bible contemplates man as a fallen being ; it addresses him as belonging to a race of sinners ; it announces salvation to him as an undeserved favour, and it calls upon man to adore the love of God in sending his own Son to die for their redemption. " God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." " Herein is love, not that we loved

God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This truth gives character to the whole economy under which we live. It is recognized and implied in the love of every Christian. He knows that salvation is to him a favour, and not to him only, but to all who are saved. To assume that the mission of Christ was an act of justice would require an entire modification of the Bible from beginning to end; it would require that every Christian's feelings should be the reverse of what they are; it would make silence in heaven. The redeemed could no longer ascribe glory, dominion and majesty to the Lamb, for having washed them in his blood, if his death were a mere act of justice. It must therefore be considered as a fixed point in Christian doctrine, that salvation is a matter of grace; that God was not bound to redeem apostate man; that the gift of his Son, the mission of his Holy Spirit, the institution of the Church, are all proofs of wonderful and infinite love.

2. If it be a matter of grace that salvation is provided for fallen man, the *application* of that salvation is also a matter of grace. If God was under no obligation to save any, he may surely determine whom he will save. When, therefore, it is said that salvation is of grace, it means that its application, no less than its provision, is an unmerited favour. God has from the beginning acted as a sovereign in this matter. He has sent the knowledge of salvation to some nations, and has withheld it from others. For ages this knowledge was confined to one people. Since the advent it has been extended to many. After having been enjoyed by one age and people, it has been

withdrawn and given to another. In all this we can only say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

What is true of nations is no less true of individuals. If it is a matter of grace that the Jews and not the Greeks, that Europe and not China, has received the knowledge of redemption, it is no less a matter of grace that Paul and not Judas, that you and not your neighbour, that one man and not another, is made a partaker of this salvation. This is a truth sustained by every kind of evidence of which it is susceptible. The right of God to make this discrimination is included in the admission that the gift of Christ is an act of love. If God is under no obligation to save any sinner, he is under none to save you. I have no right to complain, should he allow me to reap the full recompense of my sins, though he pardons others around me. Favours never can be claimed as matters of right. And we must either maintain, that the death of Christ is no favour, or admit that its benefits may be dispensed when and where a sovereign God sees fit. He goes forth among the children of men, and says to one, Live! and he lives; to another he is silent, and he dies. Having forfeited our lives by transgression, we cannot but be at his mercy. "Salvation is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Every passage in the Bible which speaks of regeneration, repentance, or faith, as the gift of God; every declaration that it is not for works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saveth us; every assertion that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; every time it is said that salvation is of grace, lest any

man should boast ; every thanksgiving of believers for their conversion, and every echo that has ever reached our world from the songs of the redeemed in heaven, expresses or implies the same great truth.

Though we are less competent to trace the dealings of God with individuals, than with nations, yet as far as our own observation can extend, it confirms the doctrine that the application of salvation is a matter of grace. We every day see the careless arrested, and those who are afar off brought nigh, so suddenly, so unexpectedly to themselves and others, as to make it impossible to account for the change on any other ground than the sovereignty of divine grace.

If we appeal to the experience of the believer himself, we find there the intimations of the same truth. When he looks back upon his life, he finds that it has been ordered of God ; that the place of his birth and education, the various and complicated circumstances which combined to influence his character and decide his destiny, were beyond his own control ; that in many cases some apparently trivial circumstance has determined his whole subsequent career. If he looks within his own breast he finds that the thoughts of God and eternity have come and gone, he knows not how ; that sometimes the Bible would have to him a meaning and power that it never had before ; that sermons, with nothing to distinguish them from other discourses, would rivet his attention and fasten on his conscience. He sees that he has been selected from a crowd of associates whom he wished to be like, restrained, excited, and guided by an influence which he is sure was not from himself, so that he remains a wonder to himself, and a monument of the distinguish-

ing mercy of God. His whole external and internal experience forces him to say from the heart, "By the grace of God I am what I am." In no one respect does the experience of all Christians so perfectly agree, as in the conviction that their conversion was not of themselves. This conviction is expressed in their confessions, their prayers, and their praises, whatever may be their speculative opinions on the subject. "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be all the praise."

3. If the providing a way of salvation at all, and if the application of that salvation to some and not to others be of grace, so also are the *terms* on which salvation is offered. That is, our justification is no less of grace than our regeneration. The gospel teaches us that all that is necessary for the justification of sinners has been already performed by Christ. He has fully satisfied the demands of the law, by his obedience and death. The ground of justification is therefore fully laid; nothing more need be done, or can be done, for his righteousness is perfect and infinite in value. If this is so, then we have nothing to do, and are required to do nothing, as the ground of our pardon and reconciliation with God. This the Scriptures teach, when they say we are "justified freely by his grace," we are justified "without works," or that God "justifies the ungodly." In these and similar passages they deny that any merit or excellence in the sinner is either in whole or in part the ground of his acceptance with God. And when they state affirmatively what that ground is, they say it is the death, the righteousness, the obedience of Christ. Such are the declarations of Scripture; and the more any man is

enlightened to know his own heart, and the spirituality of the law of God, the more distinctly does he see that it must be so. He sees that if anything in the way of merit were required of him, it never could be rendered. He feels therefore that unless justification be perfectly free, at least as far as the meritorious ground of acceptance is concerned, he never can be justified.

But besides this, which is generally admitted, at least in words, our justification is further of grace, inasmuch as there is no preparation necessary; nothing which the sinner has to do to authorize him to accept the offered righteousness. This is a point with regard to which there is almost always more or less misapprehension in the mind of the inquirer. He can understand that the ground of justification which, according to Scripture, can be nothing less than a perfect righteousness, must be sought out of himself, but he cannot understand that this righteousness is freely offered to all who will accept it. He supposes that there must be some preparation on his part, something done or experienced, before he has a right to accept the offer. What this something is, he may himself be at a loss to determine. Sometimes he thinks it is a due impression of the evil of sin; or a greater degree of tenderness or sorrow than he has yet felt; or a more lively desire after holiness; or some more decisive evidence that it is not a mere dread of punishment, or desire of happiness that influences his conduct. All these misgivings and difficulties arise from ignorance of the grace of the gospel. There is no such condition as these difficulties suppose, connected with its offer of salvation. Christ has performed all that the law of God demands. If we

refuse to put our trust in him we perish; if we confide in his righteousness we are saved. There is no restriction or limitation to the declaration, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." It is very true that no one will thus believe, unless he has some apprehension of the evil of sin, of his own guilt and danger, and some desire to be delivered from the guilt and power of his sins. But this is very different from making these desires and convictions any part of our warrant for accepting the offer of the gospel. A thing may be necessary to induce a man to accept a favour, which is not at all the condition on which that favour is bestowed. A man may offer food to all who ask for it, and it may be true that none will ask for it but the poor and hungry, but neither poverty nor hunger is the condition of the gift. This is not a useless distinction. There is a very great difference between a perfectly generous and gratuitous offer, and one that is coupled with the condition, provided you feel thus, or so. So long as a man considers certain feelings as a necessary preparation for coming to Christ, he considers Christ as offered to none but those who have these feelings. But when he sees that the offer is perfectly gratuitous; that it is no matter whether he have these feelings or not, provided he is willing to be saved by Christ; that the only use of these feelings is to produce this willingness, then the great barrier is taken out of his way. He sees that no matter how hard his heart may be, how cold, or insensible, or ungodly he may at that very moment be, still the infinite riches of Christ's merits and Spirit are at his offer. Men are not saved against their will, but if they are willing to be saved by the righteousness of

Christ, they have nothing more to do or to experience as a preparation for believing. Justification therefore is entirely of grace. Not only because the price of our redemption has been paid entirely by Christ, but because we have nothing to do but to submit to his righteousness, and consent to be saved through him.

4. Many are apt to believe that the grace of God is somehow specially manifested in the conversion of men, and in their justification, who do not so readily perceive that we are indebted to this same grace for the *preservation and increase of the divine life* in the soul. We still however remember that we are as dependent for the continuance as for the commencement of spiritual life; that for the sins of every day we need as much the perfect righteousness of Christ as when we first believed. Theologians are accustomed to say that the preservation of the external world is a continued creation. In much the same sense it may be said that sanctification is a continued conversion. If the sinner in conversion, under a sense of sin, throws himself on the arms of Christ, the believer must do it every day. If the sinner, feeling himself polluted and helpless, falls at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" the believer must do it every day. If the sinner, feeling, after all his attempted reformations and all his struggles against his sins, that they are far too powerful to be conquered in his own strength, lays hold on the promises of God as presented in the covenant of grace; the believer must do it every day. Spiritual life therefore is not maintained by the strength of any principle of grace communicated in regeneration; much less by any means of moral culture which the

wisdom of men can prescribe, or their own power enable them to practice. It is a work of grace inasmuch as it is maintained by an influence from above.

Now this spirit by which the believer thus lives, is the free gift of God. In that covenant whose conditions Christ has fulfilled, the great pre-eminent blessing secured for his people, is the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Hence it is said, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, in order that we may receive the promise of the Spirit. And in all the prophetic delineations of the times of the Messiah, the gift of the Holy Ghost is set forth as the great distinguishing blessing of that period. Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, all foretold that when Christ came God would fulfil his standing promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

A truth thus prominently held forth in the Old Testament in the form of a promise, and in the New Testament so constantly presented as the peculiar blessing of the gospel, must be of great practical importance. We are too apt to forget it. It is the tendency of the age to forget it. Christians are too much disposed to act on the mere principles of natural duty; as though a sense of obligation were the great motive and means of spiritual improvement. They would draw the waters of salvation from empty cisterns. Our privilege is to have access to the very fountain of life; to plead the promise of our Father to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. If then we would learn the secret of a holy life, we must learn that our life is hid with Christ in God; that it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us; that of ourselves we can do nothing, but that the source of all

strength, excellence and joy is opened by the death of Christ; that in the covenant which we have embraced, the gift of the Holy Spirit is secured to all that seek it, and that we really live, only so far as we live by him.

5. *Our admission into heaven* will be an act of grace. That those whom the Bible describes as poor, and blind, and naked, as full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores, should be made kings and priests unto God, crowned with glory and clothed in white; that they should be introduced into the society and fellowship of God, and Christ, and angels, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, is the crowning miracle of grace. All this is done for the very purpose of showing the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Seeing then that it is the great object of redemption to manifest the grace of God, we need not wonder that grace reigns through the whole economy, from its inception in the eternal purpose of God, to its consummation amidst the exulting gratulations of the assembled universe. It is the economy of grace. It is of grace that there is any salvation for fallen man; it is of grace that one is saved rather than another. We are justified freely by his grace, we are sanctified by grace, we enter heaven by grace, amid the voices of many angels round about the throne, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

THE MERCY OF THE LORD.

1. It is the mercy of THE LORD. The mercy of man is always finite and feeble, often blind and foolish, and sometimes cruel. Even the mercy of angels is limited by their finite natures. "It is of *the Lord's* mercies that we are not consumed." Our sins, and miseries, and wants are in an important sense infinite. The mercies of the Lord alone meet our case.

2. "The mercy of the Lord is *from everlasting to everlasting* upon them that fear him." This view of truth has ever rejoiced the hearts of the redeemed. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Having loved his own he loved them to the end." "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "His mercy endureth forever."

3. The Lord is "*plenteous in mercy.*" When he pardons, he pardons like a God. He "abundantly pardons." He "renders double for all our sins;" our sins and our iniquities he remembers no more for ever. The Lord is rich in mercy. He is rich in wisdom, and truth, and power, and has made very glorious displays of these perfections, but in nothing are the riches of his glory more wonderfully manifested than in his pity to the lost. Redemption is the great theatre on which all the fulness of the Divine character is most strikingly displayed.

ARE INFANTS SAVED?

“It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”—MATT. xviii. 14.

INFANTS, or little children, are objects of very special interest and concern. They are so, in anticipation, before they are born. None but she to whom the consciousness in this case belongs, can know the vicissitudes of painful apprehension and of fond expectation which visit the mind of her who is soon to be a mother. Sometimes it is at the expense of her own life, as in the case of Rachel when she gave birth to Benjamin, and called him Benoni. But independently of this comparatively rare result, and the ordinary and inevitable forerunners and concomitants of that eventful hour, how many anxious anticipations will there be? Will it be complete in bodily form and endowments, and will it possess the ordinary attributes and faculties of mind? The expectation of offspring is, in all cases, a matter of deep and solemn interest. The birth of human beings is a momentous event, nor are they less interesting in actual possession and enjoyment. He who perfectly knows the human heart, recognizes it as most rare and unnatural that “a mother should forget her sucking child, and cease to have compassion on the son of her womb.” How tenderly are they caressed! what yearnings of affection move a mother’s heart! what surpassing endearment and anxious concern are felt! Care expended augments interest. Dangers apprehended increase affectionate estimation. Watchfulness and toils only give greater vehemence to ardent and solicitous concern for

the object beloved. Nor is the father's heart without its devotion and attachment, though its emotions may not be so vivid, or its tenderness so deep and constraining. Even relatives and friends share the sympathy and interest: and they are strangers to the promptings of nature who can regard with indifference the tender and endearing claims of infancy. Its smiles, and even its tears, its comparative innocence and helpless dependence, its germs of intellect and affection, what it is, and what it may yet be, elicit deep solicitude and present claims to the sympathy of every benevolent heart.—I add that they are objects of very special interest *prospectively*. Their character as intelligent, moral and immortal beings gives to them importance beyond all the present and immediate interest felt. They may now present many reasons of affectionate regard; but the developments which their progressive years may exhibit are of paramount concern and importance. We admire the flower so sweet and beautiful, but on its future fruits depends its chief importance. Its eminence of interest results not from what it now is, but from what it will be in its maturity. It is not only a living creature, but one which is destined to responsibility. It is to form a character which is to last for ever, sustain a place among men—if it live—be a benefactor or curse to the world, and receive in eternity the retribution which an unerring Judge will award. What unutterable interest results from these facts! To every considerate mind what deep solemnity is in the question—what is this child to be?—If life be prolonged, and its bodily, mental, and moral powers be developed and brought into operation, what will be its character and influence? will it bring joy to its parents, or anguish?—will it be to the world useful, or useless and noxious? will it be honoured, or despised? will it be happy, or wretched?

There is another anxious question—will their lives be prolonged, or will they die in infancy? will they live to mature years, or be cut down as a flower? How often is this matter of painful apprehension!—how often of sad reality, of most poignant grief, of hopes blasted, and of fondly cherished expecta-

tions utterly disappointed!—and there is, in this case, still another most tender and serious question—If they thus early die, what will be their future allotment and condition? As to the future condition of those who die in infancy, there has been much conjecture and conflicting opinions. I will not enumerate nor examine them. One opinion only can be true. What God teaches must be true. Christ, the faithful and true witness, as the expounder of his Father's will, affirms—"It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

In attempting to present a correct view of this most interesting case, I make the following remarks:—

1st. Infants in their original character and condition are liable to perish. There are no testimonies of scripture, nor are there any facts in their actual condition and character, which warrant the opinion that they are exempt from "original guilt and depravity." In Adam all descending from him by ordinary generation, die. They inherit depravity, and are liable to death and other penal evils. That they are the subjects of sufferings and death is a matter of notorious and indisputable fact; and the first and continuous developments of their moral character are no less proofs of connate depravity, and that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart "from their youth is only evil, continually." The whole human race, infants not excepted, are "by nature children of wrath." "There is none righteous: no; not one." If they remain in this condition they must inevitably perish. Death, already, has dominion over them. In, or by themselves, from this ruin there is no possibility of escape; and no created power can effect their redemption. By the righteous judgment of God this ruin has befallen them, and nothing less than his own gracious purpose and power can avert the disastrous result. But if he so wills, "not one of these little ones will perish," but they will be "saved to the praise of the glory of his grace."

I remark, 2dly, That infants, just like all other human beings, if saved, are saved only through the mediation of Christ.

“There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, neither is there salvation in any other.” Of the righteousness of that dispensation by which the whole race was lost in Adam it would be impious to doubt. It is a fact. To its full vindication we may be incompetent; but the all-wise God had good and sufficient reasons for ordering it thus; and in this as ever, he is “righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works.” So the issue will certainly and clearly show; and grace will reign through righteousness in all who are saved. If the condemnation and ruin of all in Adam be righteous,—and who in defiance of facts and the testimony of scripture will deny it?—the moral government of God must have its full vindication when that condemnation and ruin are averted. He must be just when he saves sinners; and if, as some allege, infants and all men were restored by Christ to a salvable state or opportunity of salvation, they must antecedently have been guilty and perishing. Christ did not die to save those who were in no danger, or whose perdition could not have been just. If Christ died to save men, without his death they had perished, and that justly. God did not require of him a ransom price for what had not been justly forfeited and lost. His death for sinners justice indispensably required, or for them he had never died. Redemption through Christ is a distinct recognition of the righteousness of the Adamic dispensation. The interposition of Christ was a sovereign and gracious dispensation in behalf of those who might have justly been left to perish. Scripture and facts prove that infants need salvation. In Christ there is salvation, but not in any other. If saved it must be through his mediation, and in him there is all that salvation which their case requires. Such as die in infancy have no actual sins to be pardoned, but they need a removal of original guilt, or that liability to penal evils under which they are. They need a righteousness which will entitle them to the glory and felicity of heaven, which can be conferred only on account of the righteousness of Christ reckoned to them as their meritorious title to eternal life. And no less do they necessarily require the “washing of regeneration, and the renew-

ing of the Holy Ghost." Without the removal of their depravity and the positive impartation of a holy character, they cannot be admitted to heaven, or enjoy happiness there. This needful salvation Christ alone bestows. He can bestow it, and if he does, infants thus become "fit for the inheritance of the saints in light." They are thus prepared to be inhabitants of that kingdom of heaven where God, their Saviour, and all his redeemed, are in the possession of "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

I remark, 3dly, That redemption by Christ, as respects moral government, in this case, has removed all hindrances to their salvation. By his holy life, his perfect obedience to the law under which man is, and by his full endurance of the penalty as incurred by man's transgression, he has brought in a righteousness which will fully avail for salvation to all to whom God graciously reckons it. In the case of infants their personal acceptance and appropriation of Christ for their salvation is impossible; but if God so wills, the benefit in all its fulness may be bestowed on them. The everlasting righteousness is brought in and the whole law is magnified and made honourable. According to my understanding of the Scripture, Christ, as the second Adam, assumed the responsibility which rested on man as to the law which he had violated, which responsibility and obligation were, to render the perfect obedience which fallen man could not now render, and endure its penalty, which would have consigned the whole race to utter and endless ruin. To this obligation he fully responded. The justice of God by his obedience unto death is fully satisfied, and the honour and requirements of the law, as they respect man, are vindicated in full measure. God can now be just in bestowing salvation on all, or as many as may accord with his infinite wisdom and sovereign good pleasure. The demands of the divine law and justice interpose no impediment to the salvation of infants.

I remark, 4thly, That the salvation of infants is a case which wholly depends on the will of God. Whatever opinions may be entertained as to the ability of man, when adult, to "work out his

own salvation," or whatever concurrence he may be supposed to exert with divine grace, this case wholly excludes them all. Infants are not moral agents, in such measure, as to be capable of any efficiency, voluntary agency, or co-operation. If they be saved, it must be entirely by the sovereign mercy and positive operation of God. If it be his will that not one of them should perish, they will be certainly saved. Independently of his will, this result can never be. No other will can here interpose. None else has the right or power. Salvation is of God only; will he not save them? In this connexion I add, that, in so far as I am aware, actual sin, or the rejection of offered mercy, is always, in scripture, assigned as the reason why any perish. I have asserted the liability of infants to perish, unless grace through the mediation of Christ interpose; but I allege that scripture always recognizes voluntary agency, and the consequent responsibility, as reasons of condemnation;—that they who perish knew their duty and did it not. On perdition for original guilt and depravity, without actual sin, the scriptures are silent. We of course have no authority to affirm it: but may not this silence encourage the opinion that they are of those who are saved by the grace of God abounding through his Son? Erskine, in his "Gospel Sonnets," representing the redeemed of every class as alleging their special and pre-eminent reasons to give glory to God for his saving grace, concludes—

Babes thither caught from womb and breast,
 Claim right to sing above the rest;
 Because they found the happy shore,
 They neither saw nor sought before.

All redeemed sinners owe their salvation to sovereign grace, and have reason for holy wonder and for everlasting praise; but the salvation of infants is with peculiar circumstances of favour. They are exempted from the tedious, toilsome, dangerous journey of life, which is the allotment of those whose years are prolonged. Without a knowledge of their fall and ruin, they are rescued from danger and from sin. Without repentance, faith, or hope,

or effort, they inherit "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore." Like tender plants, the natives of bleak and chilling climes, they are transplanted to grow and bloom, and produce their precious fruits, under the genial warmth and propitious influences of the heavenly paradise. The process of their eradication may be with violence and momentary injury, but that will be fully compensated by the more favoured condition in which they will attain their beauty and maturity, where no adverse causes will ever interpose.

There is another consideration which is worthy of notice. I refer to the manner in which the sacred record speaks of the death of infants. It never suggests the notion of their death being accompanied with the wrath of God against them specially and individually. Their death is sometimes mentioned as constituting a part of the calamity where guilty cities or nations are visited by the signal judgments of God. They are cut off by death in common with their parents who had provoked the divine displeasure, and as an aggravation of the general calamity. Elsewhere, they die as trials of the faith and resignation of their parents; sometimes as the chastisement of their unfaithfulness, or as a judgment for their sins. But they were not the actual offenders, nor are they recognized as the direct objects of the divine displeasure thus manifested. The death of wicked and unbelieving men is represented as wrathful and utterly ruinous. "They are driven away in their wickedness"—"they die in their sins"—"their hopes perish"—"they are cast into hell where their worm dieth not." No such wrathful declarations are connected with the death of infants; but wherever any thing seems to be implied as to their future state, it is peaceful and soothing. Such I judge to be the fact always. I will refer to a few cases which now occur to me, as of special import in this respect. The first is the death of the first child of David, king of Israel, by Bathsheba. During the child's illness he fasted and wept;—on its death he ceased from his grief and said, "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Did

he mean, merely, that he would at his death follow him to the tomb? That presented no ground of consolation. It might be understood as a recognition of his own mortality, and of his humble acquiescence in the bereavement which he had experienced, but not of sustaining faith, fond anticipation and soothing hope. That would imply the expectation of a reunion with him in that better world, in which he himself hoped to dwell after he had completed his pilgrimage and finished the work which was assigned him, of serving his generation according to the will of God. He sorrowed not as those who have no hope, but cherished cheerful anticipation as well as peaceful submission to the will of God.

Another case is that of the pious Shunammite, recorded in 2 Kings, ch. iv. When her son had suddenly died, she hastened to visit the prophet Elisha. On her near approach, the prophet sent his servant to meet her, and to ask, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well." How could she so answer in relation to her child who was dead, and for aught she knew irrecoverably? If no future existence nor future bliss awaited the recently living object of her fond affections, how was it well with it? Such a fact might claim humble acquiescence, but presented no consolation, no fond anticipation nor soothing hope; but with good reason she might say, "It is well," if she believed that her departed son was removed to heaven, and was then an heir of immortal life. Parental affection cannot find the needful consolation in the waste, the dreariness and silence of the grave. It looks and longs and hopes for the continued conscious existence and happier condition of those whom they had so fondly caressed and so dearly loved. Is not this desire, so natural, an earnest of what is the will and purpose of God? Over the death of infants the sacred record casts no appalling gloom, but rather irradiates it with promises of peace and earnestness of immortality.

The unnatural and horrid crime of the people of Israel in sacrificing their children to Moloch, is thus denounced by the prophet Jeremiah; "And in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls

of the innocents." This phrase, "the innocents," is twice used by the prophet to denote the death of infants. This is not designed to affirm their innocence in the sight of God, but to denote the cruelty of this conduct as the act of man; and that their death was not the infliction of the wrath of God, but a murderous deed of vile idolatry which God abhorred and condemned. Their age and condition render them comparatively innocent. They have not the guilt of actual transgressors, and their death is never represented with those circumstances of divine displeasure and vengeance which are associated with the death of wilful and actual sinners.

5th. The declarations of Christ in relation to infants or little children imply that they will be heirs of everlasting life. Condescension and kindness characterised all his intercourse with men. Obscurity of rank or humility of condition he did not overlook. "To the poor the gospel was preached;" and the afflicted, and such as worldly pride disdained, were the objects of his special notice and kindness. Little children he treated with distinguishing favour and peculiar regard. This fact is full of tenderness, and has much instructive meaning. His language and actions are most explicit and affectionate. On different occasions children are incidentally noticed; but one case deserves distinct consideration. It is minutely and almost in the same words recorded by three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke.—Matthew thus records it, xix. 15: "Then there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." What is the meaning of this express declaration? On this phrase, George Campbell, an eminent critic, remarks: "It is often rightly translated 'the kingdom of heaven,' as it is, manifestly, often applied to the state of perfect felicity to be enjoyed in the world to come." If we so understand it here,—and I know of no reason which forbids,—it is an explicit affirmation, by him who not only knows what will be, but himself "holds the keys of death, and of the unseen world," that of

them, and of those who by renewing grace are made like to them, will the inhabitants of the heavenly world consist. Henry on this case remarks, "Little children are welcome to Christ as respects themselves, for whom he has upon all occasions expressed a concern; and who having participated of the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace; else, what would come of the apostles' parallel in 1 Cor. xv. 22, and in Rom. v. 14, 15, &c.? Doddridge says, "Let parents view this sight with pleasure and thankfulness; let it encourage them to bring their children to Christ by faith, and to commit them to him in baptism and by prayer; and if he who 'has the keys of death and of the unseen world' see fit to remove those dear creatures from us in their early days, let the remembrance of this story comfort us, and teach us to hope that he who so graciously received these children has not forgotten ours; but that they are sweetly fallen asleep in him, and will be the everlasting objects of his care and love; 'for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" On this affirmation, Dr. Scott remarks, "Indeed, the expression may also intimate that the kingdom of heavenly glory is greatly constituted of such as die in infancy. Infants are as capable of regeneration as grown persons; and there is abundant ground to conclude that all those who have not lived to commit actual transgressions, though they share in the effects of the first Adam's offence, will also share in the blessings of the second Adam's gracious covenant, without their personal faith and obedience, but not without the regenerating influence of the Spirit of Christ."

By "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God," in scripture language, is sometimes meant the gospel church; and it may be alleged that the import of Christ's declaration is that children may be recognized as members of the church. That believers as members of the church are entitled to claim the same privilege for their children, is a fact under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations. This, as respects the visible church, entitles them to its watchful care, prayers, and means of religious education and training; and when they arrive at years of reason

and moral responsibility it is their duty and privilege to assume for themselves the obligations and privileges of believing men and women. If they refuse, and live in disobedience and unbelief, they forfeit the blessings and hopes of the believing and obedient; and these can be regained only by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus. But the question here is respecting those who die in infancy. Does not their recognition as members of Christ's church on earth imply that they will be recognized as such in heaven? It is on Christ's authority that they are now acknowledged as the lambs of his flock;—will he not own them as such when, being yet little children, they are in his providence called to the world of spirits? Men may mistake as to those who are entitled to the privileges of divine grace: Christ cannot. Will he exclude from the company of the redeemed those to whom he had assigned a place among his people here? Called away by death before they had reached a condition of moral agency, will they not be transferred from the church on earth to the church in heaven? The church in heaven is only the highest department of the same gracious system. All who, in truth and in the judgment of God, are members of the church on earth, will be admitted to the church in heaven.

As to the relation of the children of believers to the visible church, what is the import and matter of fact? That relation in itself does not imply, as a matter of certainty, their actual salvation. Many baptized children, and even the children of pious parents, live and die impenitent and unbelieving. In how far this may follow from the want of faith and faithfulness on the part of the parents, I undertake not to decide. As respects those who die in infancy, pious parents can never suppose that their salvation is the reward of their parents' faith and holiness. They are saved wholly by grace; and by the same sovereign grace alone can their children be saved. But if their children live to years of discretion or maturity, to them, as moral and accountable beings, it is of the utmost importance to have the means of religious knowledge and a pious education. And by pious parents it must be regarded as a precious privilege to have

the means of training up their children for God, and holiness, and heaven. The influence of the church and the gospel dispensation is designed to have its effect specially, in forming men to wisdom and holiness by a process of education assigned by God and made effectual by his blessing. Of its saving effect in any other way I am not aware. Human beings who do not live here to become moral agents are under a different dispensation.

6th. The consideration of the benevolence of God favours the belief that children dying in infancy will be saved and be heirs of heaven. I am aware that we may entertain unwarranted and presumptuous expectations from the divine benevolence. Unbelieving and even profligate sinners often do. They overlook the fact that God is just, and holy, and true, as well as merciful. All we know of his mercy is from his own revelation, which asserts his perfect righteousness no less strongly and clearly than his mercy. He is always represented as a just God, even when he is a Saviour. Divine revelation does not any where give intimations of mercy to fallen man unless through mediation and atonement. In this way grace and mercy abound. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish but have everlasting life." "In this was manifested the love of God, that he gave his only begotten Son, that we might live through him." "God is love."—I take it as a fact, that divine benevolence does not in any case inflict penal evil upon any intelligent creature, nor withhold from them appropriate happiness, unless where the penalty has been incurred and the forfeiture made by sin;—in that case divine law and justice must be vindicated. In the case of infants, the vindication has been made, and through Christ they may be saved. That believers may and will be saved is absolutely certain. Infants cannot believe; but will they for that reason perish? May not—will not divine benevolence impart to them the prepared salvation which they need, but which through natural incompetency they cannot seek and accept? Under the moral government of God it is a recognized fact, that responsibility is always proportional to the opportunities and means which he has given

to men to know and do his will. "The servant who knew his master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not his master's will and committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few." Absolute and invincible ignorance of duty can involve no responsibility;—as many as have sinned without the revealed law will be dealt with accordingly; and they who sin under and with a knowledge of the law will be judged by the law. The heathen will not be condemned for not believing the gospel which they had never heard, and of which they had no knowledge. No more will be required of them, nor of any, than a faithful improvement of the means of knowledge and obedience which they had. It is their unfaithfulness to what they knew, or might and ought to have known, that leaves them guilty and without excuse. Will infants perish because of their non-acceptance of a Saviour, although their natural imbecility renders such acceptance an absolute impossibility? I admit and believe that they "are by nature children of wrath;" but, as they do not live to years of moral agency to resist and reject either natural or revealed religion, will they not be saved by grace? Will they not be the objects of the benevolence and mercy of him who has sworn that he has no pleasure even in the death of those who defy his authority, reject his grace, and die in their sins? God's vindictive displeasure is exercised against wilful sinners only. Where there is no crime he delights in showing favour and conferring happiness. This is true as to holy angels and all other upright and intelligent creatures; and even on fallen man he delights to bestow happiness where his justice is recognized and his mercy sought, and the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, does not will that one of these little ones should perish.

My remarks on this very tender and interesting case imply that all children dying in infancy are heirs of salvation. I know of nothing in the teachings of the scriptures, or in the circumstances of this case, which requires a different opinion. They all are involved in the same ruin by the operation of the same causes.

“In Adam all die.” The mediation of Christ has, as respects the law and government of God, made provision for the exercise of mercy to them, in common with all the race. “By the righteousness of one (Christ, the second Adam) the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.” Their salvation depends entirely on the pleasure of God. They cannot have any agency in the case. No other creature can. God alone has the right or power to save. If he wills it, it cannot fail of accomplishment. Their case and condition as respects themselves, severally and individually, is the same, be they the offspring of Christians or heathen. God, as a sovereign, may justly make a difference; but there is no evidence that, in this case, he will. The punishment of wilful rebels and unbelievers is indisputably just. The salvation of the penitent and believing is certain in the way which God has assigned. They who die in infancy are in circumstances different from both; they are all in the same undistinguished ruin, and may all be the objects of the same indiscriminating and abounding grace. Their parentage, in so far as they are concerned, makes them neither better nor worse.

Presbyterians are charged with entertaining very harsh opinions on this subject, and with pronouncing a sentence of perdition at least on a part of those who die in infancy. I can truly say that, in all my intercourse with ministers and intelligent private Christians of our denomination, I never heard an avowal of such a belief. If not clear in affirming the salvation of all such, they left them at the disposal of Him who gave them existence, and who can inflict no cruelty or injustice on any of his creatures; and who as moral governor of the world can do only what is wise and right. Our Confession of Faith, which we recognize as a faithful and scriptural summary of Bible doctrines, refers but once explicitly to this subject, where it says — “Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.” In accordance with scripture, and with the very nature

and reason of the case, we believe that all men are not saved; and that they who are saved are saved according to the purpose and by the grace of God;—that fallen man would not and could not devise and effect his own salvation, and that God alone can. This every truly converted and saved sinner feels, and believes, and confesses. This is the sum and substance of what we mean by election. Though a full and free salvation be provided and offered; yet such is the indifference, pride, and wickedness of man, that not one would embrace this salvation if God did not enlighten, dispose, and enable them to accept of the offered mercy. He must be ignorant of himself, and still in ruinous delusion and error, who arrogates to himself the purpose, wisdom, and efficiency by which he is saved. By grace men are saved, through faith; and that not of themselves: it is the gift of God. The disposition and moral power to return to God by repentance and faith no sinful man has, until the Spirit of God awakens him to see his danger, and believe in Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. All the race, without exception, are lost, and would be for ever lost, unless God in mercy quickens them from their death in trespasses and sins. The phrase “elect infants” does not necessarily suppose and imply that some are lost. They may all be included among the saved, as a part of the ruined race, together with the exceeding great multitude whom God will raise to life, and holiness, and heaven. And no doubt it is true that, “It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”

Admitting as true and scriptural the doctrine now advanced, it follows, 1st. That the redeemed infants and little children will constitute a large number. What proportion that number may bear, more or less, to the number of adults who will be saved, is known to God only; and all is wise and right. The Judge of all the earth ever does that which is right — and “his tender mercies are over all his works.” The past history of our race, even of those who enjoyed a divine revelation, presents, indeed, a saddening array of facts. But we remember the desponding complaint of Elias in the case of Israel, and find some

consolation. The prophet judged the apostacy to be universal, himself excepted;—but what saith the answer of God unto him? “I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee unto the image of Baal!” Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. If *then*, no doubt at all other times there have been many partakers of divine grace and mercy known to God, though disowned by the imperfect knowledge and unkind judgment of man. Besides, we anticipate millennial times of glory for the church, when Christ,—not by a personal reign on earth, but in the power of his Spirit,—shall subdue the nations to the obedience of faith, and send from all kindreds and people very many to augment “the assembly and church of the first-born in heaven.” We are sad in thinking of the comparatively few accessions to the world of glory from the generations that are gone; but have hope and consolation in the prospect of the exceeding great multitude which will throng heaven when all ends of the earth shall hear of and accept the salvation of God. To this joy immense interest is given, by the consideration of the myriads of infant spirits which from all countries and generations have entered on the light, and love, and joy of a glorious immortality.

2d. This doctrine of the salvation of all who die in infancy presents no reason against the baptism and religious education of children.

What may be the wise and sovereign pleasure of God as to the disposal of their lives is known to him alone. Parents cannot foresee whether they will die early, or live for many years. In either result the way of duty and of privilege is one and the same. If it should be the will of God that their children die in infancy or in childhood, in the revelation of divine mercy through Christ, pious parents will find the best preparation for acquiescence in the will of God, and for enjoying the most available consolations. This is the only hope for themselves or for their children. To commit them in believing prayer to his wise and merciful disposal is privilege and duty: and as he has instituted the ordinance of baptism as emblematical and significant

of the needed salvation, the use and observance of it will be considered a precious privilege. Parents thus recognize the necessity of salvation, and make express reference to the manner in which it is obtained, while at the same time they manifest their humble desire and hope that their children may be thus saved, to the praise of the glory of God's grace. With such a hope, the dedication of their children to God in baptism is a reasonable service, an act of faith, and a means of peaceful trust and intelligent consolation.

If it should be the good pleasure of God to prolong the lives of their children to years of accountability and of participation in the duties of life, that early consecration of them is a matter of special privilege and of sacred obligation. And all that is fairly implied in their baptism is no less privilege and duty. It is a privilege and duty to commend them to the grace of God in confiding, fervent prayer; to secure for them in God's assigned way the benefit of divine ordinances; and to employ their own prayers and faithful efforts to make them wise, holy, and happy. As said before, "The church or gospel dispensation is designed and adapted to have its special effect in forming men to wisdom and holiness, by a process of education assigned by God and made effectual by his blessing;" and by pious parents it must be regarded as a precious privilege to have divinely-appointed means of training up their children for God, and holiness, and heaven. In the faithful use of those means there is great and special reason to hope for that all-important result. In the neglect of those means there is no warrant to hope. So God teaches:—"Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The contrary is no less true, that "a child left to himself" will probably become the grief and shame of his parents, and do little good, if not much harm, to himself and to the world. This the nature of the case forebodes, and facts generally furnish the sad illustration and proof. Intelligent and moral beings, that they may act virtuously, must have a knowledge of their duty and appropriate motives to fulfil it.

These they can have only by religious instruction and training. In the want of these there will be ignorance, folly, and sin.

3d. Baptism, though a duty and a privilege, where the divine appointment is known, is not essential to salvation; nor does it, in itself, insure salvation.

Abraham was in a state of justification and acceptance with God before he was circumcised. Simon, the sorcerer, though baptized, was in the "gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;" and so it is with all ungodly and unbelieving men. Baptism is not, nor does it necessarily, or even by divine appointment, involve in it spiritual regeneration. It would then be essentially necessary; because, "except a man be born again, or spiritually regenerated, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If it were regeneration, it would always be followed by evidences of spiritual life, which is very far from being matter of fact. Many baptized persons are infidels, and impious and profligate men. If it were real regeneration, it would be imperishable. The spiritual life which God communicates he will never permit to die: having begun a good work he will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. Baptism is merely emblematical of that gracious change which is effected by the Holy Spirit in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ. This gracious change may be, and no doubt is often effected without the external ordinance. The salvation of those who die in infancy cannot depend on the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of their parents; it depends wholly on the gracious will and sovereign pleasure of God. Their being baptized or not, is a matter in which they can have no choice nor agency, and consequently neither praise nor blame. In this case, parents have a responsibility which infants cannot have. It is one of those external means which pertain to the visible church, ordained by God to encourage the faith of pious parents in hoping for the salvation of their children, and to be the means of expressing their trust in the mercy of God, and recognizing their obligations to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, if life be prolonged.

4th. The fact that so great a number of the human race die

in infancy or early childhood, is one of the dispensations of Providence which is involved in no little obscurity. All the reasons of it we pretend not to explain or assign. That it is proof of their connate guilt and depravity the scriptures assert. But there are questions which the case seems to suggest, which, perhaps, it may not be presumptuous in us to ask and humbly seek for some solution. As they live not to years of moral agency, nor to act a part in the scenes of life, why are they born or brought into life?—It is manifest that this was indispensable to their being of the human race. They make a part of that number of human beings which God purposed to create. Had they not been thus born, they would not have been in fact of that particular order of creatures. Their non-existence would have left the predestined number incomplete, and if called into life in any other way they had not been of the race of man. That their continuance on earth is so short, is according to the divine purpose and pleasure. But may He not, in his sovereign good pleasure, design to exempt them from the cares, dangers, and ills of the present world, and favour them with an early entrance on an immortal existence to be the heirs of an interminable but progressive knowledge and happiness?—The life bestowed and begun he would not annihilate, nor would he perpetuate in endless woe. “It is not his will that they should perish.” “They belong to the kingdom of heaven.” They constitute a part of “the travail of the Redeemer’s soul”—“the exceeding great multitude of his redeemed which no man can number.” In order to their being of the human race they must derive their existence in the ordinary way. That they may be partakers with Adam in his fall, they must be his natural descendants. If not the children of wrath they could not be the objects of mercy. If not of the human race they could not partake in the redemption through Christ. He came to save men only;—“He took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.” Those who die in infancy are a numerous portion of the generations of men. As to all the rest of men, they are fallen and perishing. They need salvation and may be the trophies of a Redeemer’s

gracious power, and "the travail of his soul." For such purposes of wisdom and sovereign benevolence, and such manifestations of the power and grace of Christ, may they not well exist? And if these be some of the facts and reasons, do they not shed some light upon these obscure dispensations of the all-wise and righteous God? What appears to us as a premature departure from life, in the case of infants, is not more unsearchable and strange than many other cases, in which God's way is in the sea and his footsteps in the deep waters. How many are cut off in the morning of life and in all the vigour and hopes of youth!—how many are wisely, yet to us mysteriously, called away from places of usefulness, and from promises and prospects of accomplishing great good!—"What we know not now we will know hereafter." In the administration of the world by God there is no error. "He is wise in counsel as well as mighty in working." Nothing comes too soon—nothing occurs too late. He who notices the fall of a sparrow, orders well the issues of man's life;—by him the days of our life are numbered no less than the hairs of our head.

THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

THE Scriptural doctrine on this subject is, that in the divine nature there is a threefold distinction—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each of whom is equally divine, and who together constitute essentially only one living and true God.

This doctrine is established and illustrated by the following considerations:—

I. The Scriptures ascribe Divinity to the Father. This is not denied nor disputed, and therefore needs no proof.

II. The Scriptures ascribe Divinity to the Son—of this the proof is easy and complete.

1. Those *names* and *attributes* are given and ascribed to him, which certainly belong to none but God. In both the Old and New Testaments he is often expressly denominated God. In Psalm xlv. 6, he is thus addressed: “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” This the apostle, writing to the Hebrews i. 8, expressly affirms was addressed to Christ. And God the Father is distinguished from God the Son. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” The name Jehovah, which in Scripture is

never given to any but the living and true God, is given to him in Jer. xxiii. 5, 6, where he is called "Jehovah our righteousness." That the prophecy refers to him admits of no doubt, and it explicitly assigns to him this peculiar name of God. In Numbers, chapter xxv. the people, after the fiery serpents had been sent among them, confessed that they had sinned against Jehovah. This the apostle, writing to the Corinthians, Cor. x. 9, applies to Christ. He says, "Let us not tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed of serpents." Christ is recognized as that Jehovah. The affirmation of John the Evangelist, John i. 1, beyond doubt refers to Christ, and is most explicit. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This affirms his Divinity and his co-eternity with the Father. The apostle Paul writing to Timothy, 1 Tim. iii. 16, affirms that Christ is God, when he says, "God was manifest in the flesh." He who was manifest in the flesh—that is, in human nature, was God. It can mean no less, and is of the same import with John i. 14: "The Word," that is Christ who was God, "was made flesh," assumed human nature in unity with his divine person.

We find Jesus Christ in many places not only called God absolutely and expressly, but this title accompanied with such heightening attributes as these—"The great God," Titus ii. 13. "The true God," 1 John v. 20. "The only wise God, our Saviour." Jude 25. "The Lord of glory." James ii. 1, and 2 Cor. ii. 8. Acts x. 36, "He is Lord of all." "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." Rev. xix. 16. "Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, amen." Rom. ix. 5. Now, the names of God being thus ascribed to him properly, singularly, and absolutely, cannot apply to any creature, and consequently the Son, to whom they are ascribed, must be the true and eternal God.

2. Accordingly we find those *perfections* of Deity which are not communicable to any creature expressly ascribed to

him. He claimed *Eternity*, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty," Rev. i. 8, which is repeated verse 11th. The prophet Micah foretold that his birth should be at Bethlehem; that he should be ruler in Israel; and affirmed that "his goings forth have been of old from everlasting," which is of the same import with the declaration of John, that he was "in the beginning with God," co-existent and co-eternal. His *almighty* power he manifested by the miracles which he performed in his own name, and by his own authority. He is *omniscient*. He knows the secret thoughts of men, and what is in man. So Peter confessed, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." John iv. 17. In Rev. ii. 23, Christ affirms of himself—"and all the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to your works." He is *omnipresent*—"where two or three are met together in his name he is in the midst of them;" and is with his disciples "always, even unto the end of the world." He is *immutable*—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Without these perfections he would be utterly inadequate to the work of a Saviour, who must know the hearts and all the circumstances of those he saves, and be ever present and able to direct, support, defend, comfort, and save to the uttermost. Such is God, our Saviour, and none else could deserve the confidence which we must repose in him.

If the sacred writers did not design to teach that Christ is indeed a divine person, it is impossible to justify their manner of speaking on this subject, or to acquit them of the charge of designing to perplex and mislead. Christ has every name of Deity given to him except Father, and under such circumstances that they cannot possibly denote less than real Divinity; and with such adjuncts and qualifying terms as necessarily require this conclusion.

3. In perfect accordance with the names given, and perfections ascribed to him, are the *works* which he is declared to have performed.

All effects must have proportionate and sufficient causes. Highly difficult and great actions necessarily require correspondent greatness of power in the agent. If, therefore, infinite effects are ascribed to Christ, he must be possessed of infinite power, which would be the only adequate cause. But such effects are undeniably attributed to him—such are the creation, preservation, and government of all things, both matter and mind, in heaven and in earth. “By him,” says the apostle to the Colossians, (Col. i. 16,) “were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Can this be said of any but the Almighty and Eternal God? The same thing is affirmed of him by John, (John i. 3,) “All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”

The Deity frequently and always claims creation as his own peculiar work, and as that which distinguishes him from the vanities of the Gentiles, and all the idol gods of the nations. “Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.” Isaiah xlii. 5. And again, (Isa. xliv. 24,) “I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” The Scriptures everywhere recognize only the living and true God as Creator.

Inasmuch then as the title of Creator is thus magnificently and sublimely exhibited in Scripture as a distinguishing mark of eminence, and the certain characteristic of Divinity;

if nothing higher or stronger can be suggested to raise in us the most sublime and exalted notion of the Supreme God of Israel; and if the Son of God be plainly and undeniably exhibited to us under this character; if he "created all things visible and invisible," and "without him was not anything made;" if "he laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands," (Hebrews i. 10,) the conclusion is inevitable, that he being Creator is the true and eternal God.

To affirm of him that he is the Creator of the world and of all things therein, is to say as much and speak as highly of him as it is possible to say or conceive of any being, however he may be named; because the whole that we, by unassisted reason, can know of God, of his power, wisdom and other perfections, is only what we can infer from his works of creation, as also from his efficient support and management of them, which is virtually a continuance of that wisdom and power which gave them existence. But this also is attributed to the Son of God. By him all created things consist, are continued, directed and governed. The apostle to the Hebrews, (Heb. i. 3,) not only affirms that he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," but that he "upholds all things by the word of his power." "All power is his in heaven and on earth." Of this he gave indisputable proof in his miracles, in which by his own power and authority he exercised absolute control over the world of nature, over tempests and seas, over diseases and death, and no less over the invisible demons of the world of darkness. Of these mighty works, and also of the ordinary dispensations of Providence, he asserted to the Jews—"My Father worketh hitherto and I work." The Jews understood it as claiming equality with God. So Christ meant it; but they charged it upon him as blasphemy. They ought to have believed "for the very works' sake." Those

works were proofs, illustrative of what the Scriptures assert of his all-upholding and all-controlling power.

To the moral world also his power and authority extend. He forgives sins, "quickeneth those that are dead in trespasses and sins," imparts mercy and bestows grace for every time of need, prepares for his followers mansions in the heavens, and gives them there "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore." Are not these the peculiar and characteristic works of God?

He will be the final Judge. He now "searches the hearts and reins," and will then "render to every one according to their works." Infinite knowledge and infinite justice are indispensable qualifications in Him who will judge the secrets of all hearts, and distribute with unerring equity the retributions due to all in their various characters, circumstances, and responsibilities. "Our God shall come"—"he shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth that he may judge his people." God, even the Son of God, will be that omniscient Judge—"God manifest in the flesh."

4. In perfect accordance with the names, perfections, and works ascribed to Christ are the divine *honours* paid to him, and accepted by him. There is no principle more unalterable and clear in revealed religion, than that the only proper object of worship and adoration is the one living and true God. One great design of the Mosaic revelation and institutions, was to banish idolatry and polytheism from the minds of the Jews, and to lead them to recognize one God and one object of worship. The Christian dispensation pursues the same design. All idolatry is there forbidden; and to worship the Lord our God, and to serve him only, is the positive injunction of all divine revelation. No other sin was more expressly forbidden than idolatry, nor was any other more severely punished.

The heathen converts to Christianity are, by the apostles, often reminded of their former folly and crime, in "doing

service to," and worshipping those things "that by nature were not gods." But that Christ must be worshipped we ascertain from both precept and example; therefore, as the acknowledged object of our religious homage he must be God. "When he," the Father, "bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." John v. 22, 23. Accordingly we find from the best examples that divine worship and honour were paid to him. His disciples worshipped him before his ascension, (Luke xxiv. 52); and Thomas, who had before doubted, on a conviction of his Divinity devoutly exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." Not only did the martyr Stephen close his life by committing his departing spirit into the hands of Jesus, (Acts vii. 59,) but it was the common practice with the primitive Christians to invoke his name in acts of worship and prayer. Ananias, speaking of Saul, said, "He hath authority to bind all that call on thy name." Acts ix. 14. This was addressed to Christ as Lord, and recognized him as the object of worship and prayer by his disciples. One part of the Christian mission was to declare that "whosoever should call upon the name of the Lord," would be saved; even of that Lord Jesus of whom the Gentiles had not heard. Paul in his epistles addressed himself to "all that in every place called upon the name of Jesus Christ." These modes of expression can denote nothing less than divine worship, and fully prove that it was the uniform and distinguishing practice of the primitive Christians to invoke the name of Christ. This was the fact by which they were distinguished as Christians.

The angels and heavenly hosts pay divine worship and honour to him equally with the Father. John in vision saw them, and heard their celestial strains. Rev. v. 12, 13.

“With a loud voice they said, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.” If it is unreasonable to suppose that the saints and angels in heaven, and indeed the whole creation, are guilty of idolatry in worshipping one that “by nature is no God,” then it is unreasonable to deny that Jesus Christ is true God, inasmuch as they worship *him*. If it is reasonable to believe that the apostles and primitive Christians were, and that holy angels are, obedient to that divine command, to worship the true God Jehovah only, then the conclusion is certain and inevitable, that Jesus Christ is “God over all, blessed for ever.”

Jesus Christ claimed and accepted religious worship and divine honours. If he was even the most exalted angel he was guilty of gross impiety. If he was a mere man, he was the worst and most impious of all men. But the testimony of Scripture renders it certain that he was not a mere man, but that being “God manifest in the flesh,” he was worthy, as God, of all the honour which he claimed, and which was given to him and accepted by him. God alone is to be worshipped.

5. In accordance with all the preceding facts is the manner in which the love of the Father, and the love of the Son, are described in the sacred Scriptures.

If Christ was in truth only a man, or even the most excellent of created beings, the language of Scripture, in very many instances, is unmeaning and extravagant. The love of God the Father to men in their redemption is represented in the New Testament as consisting, not in his overlooking their frailties, nor so much even in forgiving their sins, as

in giving his only begotten Son to die for them. Repeatedly is it mentioned as the most amazing expression of the Father's love. Life and its various common blessings are evidences of the goodness of God; but the sacred writers appear to consider them as incomparably less than God's love in giving his Son. "Herein is love," as though there had been no other expression of divine love, or that the mention of this one instance were sufficient to present the most convincing evidence, and the most commanding view of the love of God. "God is love," said the apostle John. 1 John iv. 9. In proof of this he thinks it sufficient to say, "In this was manifested the love of God, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." If there be any meaning in words, the phraseology, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," conveys a notion of the highest worth in the object bestowed. So great was this gift, that the love of God in bestowing it is considered inexpressible and inestimable. We are not told how much he loved the world, but that he so loved it as to give "his only begotten Son." If Jesus Christ be of more worth than the world for which he was given, then was the language of John proper; and then was the gift of him truly great, and worthy to be made a consideration involving transcendent claims on our acceptance, gratitude, and devotedness. But if he was a mere creature, sent to instruct us by his doctrines and example, there is nothing inexpressibly great in the gift of him; nothing that will exempt from the charge of extravagance the eminently strong language of Scripture.

The sacred Scriptures represent Christ's coming into the world, not only as a most illustrious evidence of the Father's love, but also as an evidence of unparalleled love and wonderful condescension on the part of Christ. "Ye know the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. For the Ephesians the apostle prays, that "they may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." But why all this parade and labour of expression? If Jesus Christ was no more than man, or even an angelic creature, his love was not incomprehensible or wonderful. In this view his love and his death were nothing more extraordinary than of other martyrs, who sacrificed their lives to maintain their doctrines, and furnish an example of devoted constancy. If this be all, what was there in his death more strange or gracious? or why should not we be as much indebted, in point of gratitude, to Stephen, or Paul, or Peter, or others who died as witnesses for the truth, and examples of faithfulness, as to Jesus Christ? And why is there not the same reason for their death being proposed as a motive for us to live to them, as for his that we might live to him? Such a thing is not once suggested. No. To him all the apostles pay their best and most grateful honours. With them "Christ is all and in all." To him they refer the honour of all the good they do, and his grace is all their confidence, and their most delightful and enrapturing theme. Let any impartial mind consider the terms in which apostles and primitive Christians speak on this subject, and let them say whether such love as they express to Christ, and the honour they pay him, and the trust which they repose in him, could consist with his being a fellow-creature, and their regarding him as such only. On that supposition, the manner in which they expressed that love and honour, instead of being acceptable to God, must have been accounted the height of impiety and the essence of idolatry.

Besides, if Christ was a mere man, his possessing our na-

ture, and coming into the world, were matters in which he had no choice. The language of Scripture, in order to have any force or meaning, must imply his pre-existence, and that the assumption of human nature, and submission to humiliation, sufferings and death were voluntary, and his own previous choice, from a condition of riches and glory in which he was before. What less can be the meaning—"though rich, yet for your sakes he became poor?" When was he rich? Not at his birth, nor at any time whilst he dwelt on earth. But to it he expressly refers in his prayer, (John xvii. 5): "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Of this also the apostle, (Philippians ii. 6,) speaks, when he says of Christ, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." All these expressions denote wonderful humiliation, voluntarily submitted to, for the redemption of lost men. If a creature, or a mere man, how could he have been "in the form of God?" That language means that he was really God, as his taking upon himself "the form of a servant" denotes that he was greatly humbled; and his being made in the likeness of men, means that he was really and truly man. The fact of its being his own choice is that which illustrates his grace and condescension. The proof is full and clear that the Scriptures teach the Divinity of the Son of God.

III. The Scriptures also teach the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The proof of this is sustained by similar arguments, and no less conclusive than those which prove the Divinity of the Son. The names and attributes, the works and worship, which can be predicated of God only, are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The only question is as to the personality of the Holy Spirit. If that be admitted, his Divinity cannot

be denied. The language of Scripture, by fair and necessary interpretation, assigns personality to the Holy Spirit. Not only is he expressly and repeatedly called God, but also is called by names which distinguish him from the Father and the Son; as "the Comforter," "the Holy Ghost," "the Spirit of truth," and such like. In John xvi. 13, 14, &c., Christ speaks of *himself*, *the Father*, and *the Comforter*, and of each as performing different acts; and the Comforter is, by the often repeated use of the personal pronoun, characterized as a person. "I will send him," and "when he is come, he will reprove, and he will guide you into all truth;" "he will show you things to come;" "he shall glorify me." Would it ever occur to any unprejudiced mind that anything else than a person was here spoken of? Baptism is in the name of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." That the Father is a person, and that the Son is a person, none can doubt; nothing less then can be intended by "the Holy Spirit." Matt. xxviii. 19. So must be understood by all fair interpretation the apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

"The Holy Ghost is by Unitarians denied to be a person, and is commonly asserted to be no other than the *power* of God; the name Spirit being, in their view, always figurative. According to what rules of construction are we, on this plan, to interpret the following passages, in which I shall substitute the word *power* for *Ghost* or *Spirit*; always intending by it, however, the divine power? 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy (Power) shall not be forgiven unto men.' Matt. xii. 31. 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy (Power).' Matt. xxviii. 19. 'Why has Satan filled thy heart, to lie unto the Holy (Power)?' Acts v. 3. 'God anointed Jesus with the Holy (Power), and with power.' Acts x. 38. Rom. xv. 13, 'That ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy (Power).' Rom. xv. 19,

‘Through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the (Power) of God.’ In demonstration of the (Power) and of power. ‘Howbeit when he the (Power) of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth; for *he* shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever *he* shall hear, that will he speak.’ John xvi. 13. To interpret these and other texts which refer to the Holy Spirit as meaning anything different from and less than personality renders them absurd.”—*Dr. Dwight.*

We have seen that the sacred Scriptures ascribe Divinity to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit separately and unequivocally.. How shall we understand this exhibition which the Scriptures make of Divinity in this threefold application?

Are there three Gods? This both Scripture and reason expressly deny.

The unity of God is a prominent uniform doctrine of Scripture, and of every rational system of religion. It is a conclusion to which all sound reasoning directly leads. Every argument which proves the divine existence proves that there is only one living and true God. Enlightened reason adopts and reiterates the important truth announced to Israel of old: “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah thy God is one Jehovah.”

One God is an adequate cause for all those effects which require infinite wisdom and power, because these perfections necessarily belong to him, and render him competent to all those effects in creation or providence which require such causes. If they are thus fully accounted for, it is not needful, nor is it admissible, to ask or assign any other cause. And it also follows—

That all the arguments which prove the existence of a God only prove the existence of one God. No being is entitled to be recognized and owned as God whose contrivance, design, and efficiency are not fully adequate to all the evidences which we see of wisdom and power. These

effects prove infinite wisdom and power, but they can prove nothing more. They are evidences of the existence and operation of one omniscient and omnipotent mind, but not of two or more.

The uniformity of design and harmony of operation which characterize all things with which we are acquainted, are proofs of their proceeding from and being under the direction and control of one and the same infinite mind. In all the different regions of the earth, the world of nature is governed by the same general laws, and exhibits a prevailing analogous plan and mode of execution. Matter and mind, severally, possess everywhere the same distinguishing attributes, are subject to appropriate influences, and governed by their own peculiar laws, which they ever and in all places obey. Attraction of gravitation everywhere governs matter, and motive everywhere directs the active operation of mind. This uniformity of plan and operation which prevails to all that vast extent, and in all that variety of condition in which creation is known, warrants us to regard it as one vast harmonious system, the result of one undivided intelligence. Relations, adaptations, and reciprocal dependence and influence, are manifestations of a system which originated in unity of counsel and individuality of wisdom and efficiency.

“These are thy works, Parent of good;
Thine this universal frame.”

It may be added, that those perfections which necessarily belong to the true God, and are ascribed to Jehovah in Scripture, can be predicated of one being only in the universe. “The Most High” can admit of no equal. “The only living and true God” is God to the exclusion of all others. Infinity in all perfections would involve unity, and could not co-exist in two or more.

If there are not three Gods, are the *names* Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit expressive only of peculiar and different attributes of this one Jehovah?

This cannot be the fact, for many reasons. With each of those names all the attributes and evidences of divinity are associated. The same perfections, works, and worship are ascribed to each, severally and specially. The names cannot denote merely attributes, but persons to which all divine perfections belong, equally and in common as constituting only one divine essence.

Their different *relations* to each other, as implied in their different names, cannot denote merely or only some special attribute, but some real, distinct, though by us undefinable relation. A father cannot sustain the relation of a father to himself, but to a son, and these correlative terms necessarily imply the existence of both, and their separate and distinct personality; and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whom the Son speaks of as to come when he should go away, cannot be the Father, nor the Son.

Their different *offices* lead to the same conclusion. They are represented as sustaining at all times, and exercising at the same time their respective offices. "Through him, (the Son,) we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father." The object of access is *the Father*: the Son is the *medium of access*: the *Spirit* is the efficient cause of this disposition and power of access. They sustain official relations, not only to men but to each other. The Son is the Father's servant, obeys the Father, propitiates the Father, "glorifies the Father," &c.; and in like manner the Holy Spirit fulfils official duties to the Father and the Son. The form of baptism presents this distinction very manifestly. It is administered in the name of "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here is a special divinely instituted act of worship including faith and devotedness. It implies equal honour and devotedness to each. Would it naturally occur to any one that these several names denote only one

and the same person? Is the Father the same identical person as the Son? and is the *Holy Ghost* in no respect different from the Father and the Son? If there be no personal distinction, why these different correlative names? And if not equally proper objects of divine worship, why in this equal manner demand for them the faith, confidence, and devotedness of Christians? In 2 Cor. xiii. 14, we have this inspired doxology: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen." Here salvation in its peculiar blessings is invoked specially and distinguishingly from each as competent to bestow them. If there be no distinct persons, why are they thus separately and distinguishingly named? If they sustain not different relations to the work of man's salvation, why thus refer to them severally and as severally yet jointly contributing to its completion? If not equally divine, why honour them thus equally as objects of worship and authors of salvation?

Again, are these names Father, Son and Holy Ghost, designed merely to denote and describe different manifestations of this one Jehovah, and different relations which he sustains to men? This cannot be their import, because they are spoken of together, and distinguished from each other in such a manner as to show that in some respects they are not one and the same. So it is 1 Peter i. 2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and this threefold personality and official agency is reiterated through the following verses. The Son of God is uniformly in Scripture recognized in the character of a Mediator. This supposes parties at variance, neither of which *he* is, but whose reconciliation he designs. These parties must be co-existent and distinct from each other. The same person, in the same official view, cannot be the offended and the mediator. That the same person

should sustain a threefold office, and manifest himself in a threefold way, in the same work, and at the same time, is inconceivable. That he should be a father, and at the same time a son of that father; offended, and at the same time a mediator between himself and those by whom he is offended, is absurd.

How then shall we understand this exhibition which the Scriptures make of Divinity in this threefold application? The conclusion, the only intelligible and consistent conclusion is, that in the divine nature there is a threefold distinction, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that each is equally divine, and that together they constitute *essentially* only one living and true God.

This view of the subject is not inconsistent with the unity of God, or the individuality and oneness of the Godhead. Oneness, as affirmed of God in Scripture, respects number, not the essence of the Deity, nor the constitution of his nature, nor the mode of his existence. This is comprehensible only by an infinite understanding. It is a matter infinitely vast and profound. The Spirit of inspiration in the Scriptures never proposes to define and explain the divine nature, but merely asserts that there is only one God as distinguished from the polytheism of the heathen. This does not deny essential distinctions in the divine nature. The affirmation that any particular man is one, does not deny that he consists of distinct parts, soul and body. He is but one man, though in the constitution of his nature he is twofold. There is individuality and yet complexity. In one respect God is *one*, and in another *three*. In essence, he is *one*, in personality *three*.

This view of the character of God does not distract our minds, nor divide our affections. There is but one God to whom all divine perfections are ascribed, to whom alone all divine honours are paid; and by whom all divine works are performed. On every other system we are perplexed by

the language of Scripture. The Scriptures call the Son God, and ascribe to him divine works, attributes, and honours. If he is not the true God, what kind of a God is he? How do such attributes belong to him? What is the kind and degree of religious honour and homage which should be paid to him? We know not definitely what to believe; and when we proceed to the exercise of love, trust, devotedness and hope, we are bewildered, and know not what is due, nor in what manner it should be paid, nor in how far we may repose confidence or render obedience. On the Scriptural system all is plain. There is only one God. In his nature there is a threefold distinction which he has not explained, and which we need not and cannot. All God has revealed is the fact. All we have to believe is what God has revealed. How he subsists in his own infinite essence it is not our business to know; and were it revealed we could not comprehend it unless our capacities were infinite.

If Father, Son and Holy Ghost be one Jehovah, to him *alone* as the object of religious regard our minds are confined. To him alone we render a faith in his Divinity. To him alone we give supreme affection, trust, obedience, and other divine honours. But if the Son and the Holy Spirit be not God, and yet demand, and deserve, and receive divine honours, this divides and distracts our minds, and we know not what measure of honour and affection should be given; nor how we are to understand what is said of them as though they were divine. The Scriptural view now taken of this subject does not ascribe to Jesus Christ any thing absurd or incredible. It does not teach that "*the man Christ Jesus*" is God, but that he is united to God by some special and peculiar relation. The man Christ Jesus is not an object of religious worship, but the Deity to whom he is united. In his mysterious person, comprehending the divine and human natures, he is the object of special and appropriate regards, and capable of those various doings and sufferings

which are ascribed to him. He is "the Son of Man" and "the Son of God,"—"David's Son and David's Lord,"—descended from the Jewish fathers "according to the flesh," and yet "God over all, blessed for ever." "God was manifest in the flesh," and "redeemed the Church with his own blood." That the divine and human natures of Christ in their union constitute only one person is manifestly the doctrine of Scripture. The reasons of that union God has revealed; its nature and manner he has not revealed. The fact is revealed. We cannot comprehend nor explain it. This affects not its truth nor credibility. There are innumerable facts in creation, providence, and the world of nature, of the truth and reality of which we cannot doubt; but of their intrinsic character, mode of existence, and manner of operation we have no knowledge, and can give no explanation.

If man had not been created angels probably could not have conceived how body and spirit could be united in one individual person, as is the fact in man; or that even now they fully understand the nature of that union, communion, and sympathy, is not certain, nor probable. Their knowledge or their ignorance affects not the reality, truth, and credibility of the facts. These are obvious, certain, and undeniable.

The doctrine of the Trinity, or that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory, is fully and clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, and is essentially involved in the plan of redemption.

This truth is not designed to be a matter of speculation, but a means of faith, hope, and holy obedience. It is only when thus used that its value can be appreciated, or its truth be really understood. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. xii. 3. It is accordingly found that saving convictions of sin never fail

to dissipate those prejudices which pride and worldly wisdom entertain against the doctrines of the cross.

In proportion as men become acquainted with God's true character and their own condition as sinners, they will understand the import of, see the necessity of, and desire to experience "the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

THE TRINITY.

There is one God, and only one,
 No rivals can his essence share;
 He is Jehovah, He alone,
 And with the Lord none can compare.
 His works, through all this wondrous frame,
 Express the Maker's vast designs:
 They bear the impress of his name;
 In every part his wisdom shines.
 If in his works such wonders rise,
 How much more wonderful is He,
 Whose nature's filled with mysteries;
 In being One, in persons Three!
 What finite power, with ceaseless toil,
 Can comprehend the eternal Mind?
 Or who the almighty Three in One,
 By searching to perfection find?
 Angels and men may strive to raise,
 Harmonious, their adoring songs;
 But who can fully speak his praise,
 From human or angelic tongues?
 Yet would I lift my trembling voice,
 The eternal Three in One to sing;
 And mingling faith, while I rejoice,
 My humble, grateful tribute bring.
 All glory to the eternal Three,
 The sacred, undivided One:
 To Father, Son, and Spirit be
 Co-equal praise and honours done.

ON FAMILY GOVERNMENT.

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THE human infant is extremely helpless and dependent. With equal truth and beauty an inspired penman has declared, "He cometh forth like a flower." He is among the most frail of all living creatures, possessing neither the bodily strength nor mental sagacity of most orders of inferior animals. More elements of power and action are indeed inherent in him, but these being as yet undeveloped, are of consequence unavailable. Hence, he must be cared for and educated. He needs also authoritative direction and control, since his moral nature, through an innate perversity, is sure to put forth acts inconsistent with his condition and relations in life. Some friendly hand must bring him the food befitting his delicate taste and feeble digestion, provide the warm vestment and the sheltering roof. The sweet tones of sympathy and love must drive away his fears, and light up the smile of confiding hope. As his capabilities are successively unfolded, they need some well taught guide to lead them along the pathway of truth and virtue. His passions, fitful and violent, must be held in check, and the kindlier feelings of his nature encouraged. His strength is for many months unequal to his weight; nor has he skill to employ his limbs to any useful purpose. The very exist-

ence of his physical system, or of an external world, is wholly beyond his comprehension. By slow degrees his dormant energies are awakened, and his little experience teaches him one simple lesson after another. He becomes familiar with the objects around him, acquires the use of his limbs, administers in part to his own necessities, and some twenty years or more of tutelage and discipline are thought necessary to prepare him for the judicious management of his secular interests, and for taking rank as a member of the civil community.

Such being the order of Providence in bringing forward the full grown man through the progressive stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, we naturally presume on the existence somewhere of a corresponding provision to meet the varied exigencies inseparably connected with these respective stages of advancement. The means of nurture and admonition will surely be afforded to the little stranger in a strange land, possessed of such feeble powers, and yet susceptible of incalculable improvement in knowledge and virtue, through an interminable existence of activity and consciousness, and whose happiness or misery is to depend on the moral culture it receives in this short initiatory life.

A fearful responsibility attaches to the agency of moulding such a character for so high a destination. And yet this agency is solemnly imposed on fathers and mothers, guardians and teachers. To their culture the immortal germ is committed, and by them it is to be developed. The dawn of its existence is characterized by extreme feebleness and exposure. For a limited period, food and protection constitute almost the entire sum of the infant's wants. Authoritative control is soon called in requisition; and still further on, instruction, properly so called, begins to impart to the budding intellect, in its simplest lessons, the elements of an increasing knowledge. The duties enjoined are mainly comprehended in supplying the appetites, educating the in-

telleet, and controlling the will. Unless some friendly hand administers to his physical necessities, the infant will hardly survive the day of his birth; and this attention must be unremitted, and prolonged from year to year, till his own hands shall have acquired the strength and skill to procure the needful supply. Unless some early and continuous restraints be kindly and firmly imposed on the will, all the lessons of virtue are liable to prove unavailing. And if the mind be not stored with knowledge, it will remain in comparative imbecility.

At a very early stage in life, much earlier than the dawn of reason, indications of insubordination are distinctly manifested. It breaks forth in freaks of petulance, in fitful cries, and angry motions. These tokens of passion ordinarily appear before the child has completed his first year; and in reference to this prime mental development, as well as those which succeed, his constituted guardians are enjoined to train him up. A subduing process, more or less strict, according to circumstances, is to be instituted, at the very beginning of the evil; with great caution and kindness, indeed, but with systematic and persevering faithfulness. Moral suasion can as yet have no significance, since there is nothing to which it can appeal; and yet the moulding of the will is not on that account to be delayed. In truth, this process is not so intimately connected with appeals to reason as is often supposed. When the all-wise Creator would test the submissiveness of our first parents, he gave them a peremptory order, implicitly forbidding the use of a certain fruit, though its fair appearance indicated that it was good for food; but gave not the shadow of an intimation of his reason for so doing, while he added the sanction of an awful penalty for disobedience. This feature of the prohibition was by no means incidental.<sup>1</sup>

It was eminently the *prominent* feature, and was to subserve a highly important end. The dependent creature



man, an infant in knowledge and strength, must take his first lesson in obedience. Without knowing the reason of the divine injunction, or questioning its propriety, it became him to say, "Thy will be done." That he did not say this, evinced his want of submission and trustfulness, and was in fact *the sin* that "brought death into the world, and all our woe;" and to restore the ruins of this fatal fall, a second Adam must needs come in a spirit that could say, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." As man's insubordination to the divine will is the very essence of impiety towards God, so the child's insubordination to the parent's will is filial impiety. And as rebellion against the Supreme Ruler is necessarily attended with unhappiness, so likewise filial disobedience robs a child of his sweetest enjoyment. And it is no less true, on the other hand, that a cheerful acquiescence in the requisitions of the rightfully constituted authorities is, in its very nature, peaceful and happy.

This brings us to the main proposition, which we wish to illustrate and enforce, viz. *that a wise and faithful exercise of parental government is a most urgent Christian duty.*<sup>1</sup>

We regard this as prominent among the divine injunctions for the improvement of the young, and, when properly exercised, admirably adapted to promote their present comfort, and tending directly to secure their compliance with the requirements of the civil law, and ultimately leading to a cordial submission of the heart to the will of God. Other branches of parental duty, I am aware, are oftener urged; but whether they are of more intrinsic importance, or are more liable to be neglected than this, may be seriously doubted.

It is not my purpose to propound a system of rules, either general or specific, for the most successful performance of the duty in question; but to present some of the more prominent considerations which are thought to enforce it, leaving to the judgment and conscience of those properly

concerned all questions relating to the fitting occasions and modes of its exercise. Let it be premised, however, that calmness and deliberation must, in all instances, characterize an act of correction. Irritability of temper is never more untimely, since a spirit perturbed with anger must be incapable of subduing effectually the turbulence of others. Whoever would control the will of a child must have his own will in due subjection. Love and tenderness prompting and guiding will secure consistency, and render the faithful and conscientious parent like the great Father of us all; for "whom the Lord loveth he correcteth."

In the Lord's prayer occurs this very significant expression, "Lead us not into temptation;" by which we are taught that all persons need restraints, and that it becomes them to ask their Heavenly Father to impose them. All find it difficult to resist temptations, and feel the need of aid from some source to do it effectually. Children, especially, whose resolution is not confirmed by experience, must depend very much on some kind of restraints. And if those persons who have the care and management of them, whether parents or guardians, or teachers, withhold the restraining influence which their relations require them to impose, overtaking the moral powers of the young probationers, they thus destroy their solemn trust in an affair involving the most serious consequences. A child is an intelligent and immortal mind in the forming period of its existence, growing up to maturity under a variety of influences with which it daily comes in contact. If the evil influences are suffered to predominate, the character is vitiated, and the life becomes corrupt. That children are to be trained up by those of riper years is equally the dictate of Scripture and of reason, and is recognised by the laws of all enlightened nations. But it is clearly demonstrable that the faithful exercise of this training is to the young a present relief, a real blessing for the time being, as well as an earnest of

good things to come. To this point we invite particular attention. Unaided self-government is a task to which a child is unequal. While it may be conceded that some children make nearer approaches to it than others, by reason of an original preponderance of a sense of propriety over the appetites and passions, still they are not fully competent to it, and there is a manifest impropriety in imposing the burden. The parent, as the constituted guardian, is divinely enjoined to apply to the feeble resolution the aid of his authority, and thus secure the performance of what is right. A disregard of this injunction is a sad dereliction of duty, and cannot fail to be attended with results deeply injurious to the character and happiness of the child, both for time and eternity. Examples illustrative of this remark are every where to be found, for this is emphatically an age of insubordination and filial impiety; and one must be exceedingly inobservant not to be able to recall instances of greater or less aggravation within the circle of his own acquaintance. At what period in life, think you, commenced that irritability of temper which in manhood brooks no control, and towers to such a vehemence of passion as to deal the fatal blow to a neighbour, a friend, a benefactor, or a brother? Read the voluntary confession, deliberately written out for public inspection and warning, by one in the near prospect of death by public execution, for having smitten down, in an evil hour, the very man to whose interested exertions he owed his high station, and whose lenity as a creditor he had well nigh exhausted. These are his words,—“A quick-handed and brief violence of temper has been the besetting sin of my life. I was an only child, *much indulged*, and I have never acquired the control over my passions that I ought to have acquired early, and the consequence is all this.” These honest words, forced out by the pressure of the terrible occasion, not only involve enough of personal guilt to justify the extreme act of the law, but throw back

upon a misguided parental tenderness a fearful responsibility. And no reasonable doubt can be entertained that the grave charge here implied is applicable, in its full extent, to the early license given to the passions, not only of those who afterwards become state criminals, but of multitudes also who fortunately yield to checks from other sources.

The faithful and conscientious exercise of authority is to the affectionate parent a most unwelcome duty; and to this cause, rather than to any want of convictions of obligation, we must attribute its imperfect performance or total neglect. Now we affirm that this omission imposes a burden on the child which his feeble resolution is unable to sustain. His inclinations will overpower his sense of right. When conscience begins to reprove, a feeling of compunction and mortification renders him unhappy. Could he now settle down upon a positive and authoritative injunction, the perplexing difficulty would be dismissed from his mind. I would not be understood to mean that the first prohibitory mandate will meet a cordial acquiescence. This is to be secured by a subduing process more or less protracted; and when secured, it will induce a heart-felt satisfaction, accompanied with a manifest good-will towards him whose authoritative word put the matter in hand beyond all debate. I am no advocate for arbitrary rule. I would have every act of authority based on good and sufficient reasons. No one is at all competent to govern a child, who has not a large share of discretion in connection with a control of his own spirit.

The desires of children are ardent, and too impetuous to be held in check by their own immature judgments. Hence they are often hurried into mischiefs by the first impulse of feeling, without a moment's reflection on the unhappy consequences; and when the excitement has subsided, and the season of calm reflection returns (as it always will), the thought of the misdeeds actually committed awakens the

self-torturing feelings of compunction and remorse. To say nothing of the paralyzing effect upon the conscience, of a frequent repetition of small misdemeanors, the sadness and self-accusations so surely consequent upon their commission, appeal strongly to parental sympathy, and should secure the prompt exercise of authority in wholesome restraint. It must not be forgotten that the object is but half accomplished where the decision is not absolute and final. That imbecile mockery of authority which perpetually interposes restrictions, without ever enforcing them, only exchanges one evil for another of far greater magnitude. The child soon becomes aware of his parent's irresolution, and with great adroitness resorts to expedients to effect a repeal of orders in each individual instance. Success encourages his efforts, and he becomes expert in the art of circumventing authority. With an importunity not to be denied, he either makes his appeals to sympathy in the language of earnest entreaty, or else, with a sullen moroseness, resorts to compulsory measures, hoping, that for the sake of peace he will be permitted to have his own way. Neither of these processes will be persisted in and become a habit without encouragement. Take away at once and effectually the hope of success, and the restless advocate for independence will soon relinquish the contest, and become more than content in a cheerful acquiescence. And who needs be told of what a burden he is relieved? Instead of waging a perpetual warfare against the constituted authorities, he finds he has simply to do as he is bidden. Besides, he is now in a suitable mood to appreciate the reasonableness of parental requirements, and to hold in due estimation the many innocent enjoyments that lie within the prescribed limits. The amiable qualities find encouragement, which would otherwise lie smothered beneath the turbulence of insubordination.

In my somewhat extended experience as a governor of

children, I have learned to calculate on nothing more confidently than that the folly which is bound up in the heart of a child will be effectually driven far from him by the rod of correction. However plausible may be the language of ingenious argument in favour of some opposing theory, the fact is indisputable, that personal infliction, at the proper time, duly proportioned to the offence, carefully adapted to the circumstances of the case, and with the open manifestation of sincere love, united with firmness and fixedness of purpose, effectually subdues the will, actually displacing from the mind all opposition of feeling, and leading to voluntary confessions of the wrong, and professions the most sincere and heartfelt of approbation and affection. Whether mental science can or cannot assign the reason, facts abundantly prove that the young and tender mind readily yields an unconditional obedience to the will of another, accompanied with feelings of attachment, the warmest of which its nature is susceptible. Hence it is found that children love that parent best who most carefully controls their wills. And permit me to ask if this is not a prompt and pleasing reward of faithfulness? A father of considerable experience has often remarked that he invariably finds himself thus happily requited, in the very hour in which he has performed an act of correction.

It may fairly be questioned whether there ever was a human disposition so incorrigibly perverse originally as to maintain, under a proper discipline judiciously and perseveringly applied, a predominance of unsocial qualities. No child needs be despaired of. Assume the control of his will at the earliest practical moment, and never allow the impression to be entertained that in this you can possibly be thwarted. When the silken cords of filial attachment prove an ineffectual restraint, let those of parental authority be promptly applied. This must, of course, be done with discretion. Two children can rarely be managed in all respects

alike. Peculiarities of temperament claim to be well considered, and in each individual instance the least possible pain or inconvenience should be occasioned in securing the all-important end—cordial submission. Many Christian parents, who are by no means wanting in love for their children, and in anxiety for their future respectability and well-being, never interpose authority, however much it may seem to be needed. Some of these affect to regard compulsory measures as degrading, especially if corporeal punishment in any of its forms is in the account; subversive of what they please to call a manly independence, and attended with a depressing sense of mortification and discouragement. All this is exceedingly ill founded, as it rests on the false assumption that the *punishment*, and not the *fault*, degrades the offender. It is a serious and culpable perversion, tending, wherever entertained, to the most ruinous consequences. In the family and the school its influence is exceedingly disastrous. Who has been so fortunate as never to have been pained with a spectacle of household misrule, where the inclinations of the younger members, however capricious, were their only rule of action, and where every attempt at interference was repelled by petulance and disrespectful replies? The thwarted parent, though wedded to his notions of childhood independence, is keenly alive to the embarrassments of his false position, and he hardly knows what he would not sacrifice to have his children regardful of his counsels and lessons of experience, paying respectful deference to his years, and by a becoming demeanour towards all, winning for themselves golden opinions and affectionate regard.

A distinguished gentleman, in committing to my care and instruction a lad of ten years, imposed the condition that nothing more cogent than moral suasion should be employed with him, and added, that the boy also had signified his determination to insist on the same restriction. To an

arrangement so unwise, so sure to give myself annoyance, and frustrate my every effort for his improvement, I had for once the folly to accede. I however derived a lesson from it which has not been wholly barren of good fruits. As might have been anticipated, the lad boasted of his privilege, and set all rules at defiance. His aversion to study and restraint, strengthened by long indulgence, was not to be overcome by any influence that was allowed to bear upon him. Persuasion was powerless; reproof only awakened resentment, and he morosely entrenched himself behind his peculiar exemption from compulsion. After a protracted effort, painfully unsuccessful, he was excluded from school, and returned home to be perfected in that system in which at his early age he had made no little progress. In justice to the boy, it should be said that his natural temperament was not unamiable, and with proper management he would have been a desirable member of any little community. That which he most needed for his comfort and improvement was carefully denied him, and he reaped the bitter fruits of such denial. His passions, unrebuked, brought him into needless collisions, and his self-conceit disdained the proprieties and refinements of the circle in which he moved.

Many parents are governed by a short-sighted, inconsiderate tenderness, that cannot give a child a momentary inconvenience, though confident that a paramount future good would thereby accrue to him. And thus the little inexperienced mariner on the troubled ocean of life, is robbed of his safest anchor by the very persons commissioned of heaven to supply him. And what is stranger still, the act is prompted by a misguided affection. Truly "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel!" Follow in imagination the ill-fated child thus deprived of the strongest ligament that binds the young to virtue. He goes forth amidst a sea of temptations. His feeble resolutions fail him, and



leave him an easy prey to the ruinous influences of vicious associates. It matters not how much good counsel he may have received at home; if the word of his parents is not law, he has no security against the rude encroachments of vice. It is not in the power of moral suasion alone so to fortify the conscience of the unrenewed as to enable them to sustain the conflict with sin in its thousand insidious modes of attack. To send forth a soldier to wage an unequal war, unfurnished with the means for repelling the foe, would evince neither wisdom nor humanity. What then shall be thought of the practice, far too common at this day, of abandoning *children* to the mercy of their own perverse inclinations, and the enticements of wicked associates? What shall be said of the overweening tenderness that withholds the authoritative mandate, and the needful chastisement, in full prospect of the certain demoralization consequent on such neglect? Is the exercise of a little firmness so unwelcome a task, that, rather than assume it, and impose imperative restraints when the nature of the case demands it, the parent will abandon his child, the object of his fondest affections, to the buffetings of every merciless storm that threatens the ruin of his morals, and the wreck of his hopes?

Dr. Scudder, the American missionary in Madras, who has reared a large family of sons and daughters, said to me during his recent visit to this country, "I broke all their wills while in their cradle. I always began by simply holding down their little hands, and in this way the subduing process was so easy and gradual as scarcely to be felt." That faithful father has had much occasion to approve the wisdom of his course. One of those sons I knew to be a resolute, energetic boy, but an effectually subdued one. He had learned, at a period earlier than his recollection, the sweet pleasure of entire acquiescence in a parent's will. Had the little hands of the infant Webster been thus kindly pressed in parental faithfulness till he ceased to

struggle for the mastery, they would never have been pinioned by the stern executioner, till he ceased to struggle for life. The secret of that mournful catastrophe lay in a misguided indulgence, nourishing unwittingly the viper passion, that "grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength," till it became a desolating, murderous monster, that earth could not endure. In view of an example of so painful a character, no considerate person will charge the following Scripture expressions with unkindness. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chastiseth him betimes." "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die; thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." These are not the words of an enemy. They are the expressions of wisdom and affection, in view of the known tendencies of systematic discipline, to fill the mind with quietness and peace. Far more reliable are they than if they were mere deductions from human experiment. They rest not on the presumptive evidence that what has proved true in a limited number of instances will probably apply to every individual of the race. Nothing short of a perfect knowledge of the structure and tendencies of every human mind has given forth these unqualified injunctions and promises; and whosoever has acted upon them, in good faith, has seen with gratified surprise their wonderful adaptedness, and become convinced of the certainty with which a heartfelt cheerfulness springs up in full tide when the will yields to control.

An intelligent Christian gentleman, in one of the learned professions, recently expostulated with a teacher for acting upon what he pleased to call these unpopular views, and expressing serious fears that, without their abandonment, the confidence of the community could not be retained for his school. He, however, entrusted to him a wayward son,

with whom his own mild persuasions were as powerless as the idle wind; and during a very limited trial, a perceptible advantage was gained upon his moroseness, despite the father's neglect and known distrust of the system pursued, and also a confidential correspondence with the mother, in which were made exaggerated and untruthful representations, tending to heighten an unfounded prejudice.

Such instances of parental indiscretion are by no means rare. It is manifestly one of the worst features of the age in which we live, that a vast many children leave the home circle for the school without having tasted the sweet enjoyments of cheerful submission. As the work is not begun by the parent at home, the teacher assumes it at a great disadvantage, arising both from a confirmed habit of insubordination, and a vague impression that none but their parents have a right to control their actions. Is there not cruelty in the tender mercy that places a child, much indulged, and but partially controlled, if at all, away from home to be educated in schools, where the first law is order, and where no diligence can be secured, and no progress made without obedience? Nothing can be more certain than that such a change will excite repugnance and angry feeling, if not downright rebellion, banishing from the mind every pleasing emotion, and rendering it unhappy in the extreme. The fact that parental government has never taught him to settle down unconditionally upon an authoritative injunction, proves to him an irreparable loss. The rich boon of which he has been deprived can never be fully recovered. Even though grace cause him to bow submissively to the will of God, it will not to his dying day wholly eradicate the evil that has from infancy been indulged and cherished.

Unpopular as it has indeed become to govern our children, it is impossible to close our eyes against the fact, that an extreme restiveness and impatience of restraint are rife

every where, both at the fireside and through all the ranks of society. Nor is it difficult to assign the cause. The spirit of independence that is allowed to trample on all domestic arrangements cannot reasonably be expected to yield quietly to the demands of the civil power; nor will a regard for the decencies of life secure a demeanour at all decorous and respectful. What is probably the domestic history of those persons whose desperate deeds so frequently astound us? Is it fair to presume that a temper, which for twenty years kept quietly within the very circumscribed limits of a rigid and vigilant tutelage, will at manhood become restive and turbulent under the more liberal system of civil government? But we are not left to conjecture. Our own observation furnishes a satisfactory reply. Besides, we have the humiliating confessions of some, that speak trumpet-toned the tendencies of juvenile depravity unrebuked. There are multitudes of families, both in high stations and low stations, where misrule and indecision are bringing forward an army of successors to these disturbers of the public peace. If we would contribute our limited influence to erect barriers against this spirit of recklessness and contempt of law, we must do something more than say to those committed to our nurture and discipline, "why do ye so?" Reproof cannot do the needful work alone. The language of inspiration is, "the *rod* and reproof give wisdom." Receive this implied injunction in the fulness of its import. The duty it enjoins is prominent among the constituted agencies for preparing the unhumbled will to yield obedience to the sovereign will of God. The kingdom of grace gathers its readiest trophies from households where good counsel is enforced by good government. As the wilful child, when sick, refuses the remedial potion, and dies—so, when convicted of sin, he spurns the offers of grace, assumes a malignant attitude, blasphemes, and becomes reprobate. The son of Christian parents becomes the son of Belial, entrenching himself in his

madness against every redeeming influence, and hurries on to destruction. This is not fancy. It is a faithful portraiture, often verified in the families of the church.

A beacon of awful warning is on sacred record, in the mournful example of Eli and his sons. Nothing in the form of entreaty can be more tender and affecting than his impressive and urgent expostulations with them. "Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" Here is no want of pious anxiety. There is an earnestness and a warning in the language that is truly affecting. It certainly possessed *elements* of faithfulness. But as other elements were wanting, it was unavailing, and therefore faulty; hence the divine displeasure, and the following awful annunciation: "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

This venerable priest in Israel, an undoubted friend of God, who had ministered at the altar with pious devotion to an advanced age, irreproachable in example, with a single exception, is now stricken in spirit by a prophetic message, the most appalling imaginable to a father's heart. Prompt to his official duties in the house of God, he had unfortunately neglected the commanding of his own house; and now he must live only to hear of the violent death in one day of both of those profligate sons, whom, though he warned and entreated, he did not restrain. Fully aware, as

he must have been, of the nature and extent of a father's responsibilities, he saw from day to day their increasing waywardness, hurrying them into scenes of folly and dissipation, and for the demerit which attaches to his own delinquency in the matter, he must see their sun go down at noon and set in eternal night. This was, indeed, an affliction. What Christian parent can contemplate, without the most painful emotions, the sudden removal of irreligious children in divine displeasure, and the extinguishment of all their hopes of heaven? Under circumstances so affecting, it requires a genuine and fervent piety to say with resignation, as did Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

This mournful example utters the voice of admonition and warning to many fathers and mothers in the church, whose sons and daughters are subjected to authoritative control. The strong defences with which they should invest their households are thrown down by their own hands, and the insidious foe to domestic quiet is trampling in the dust all that is sacred and salutary. The spoiler defaces every social virtue, and riots on bleeding hopes and ruined characters. Call this not declamation. Listen to the notes of warning that come to us on every breeze. The heart sickens at the daily recitals of outrages, personal rencontres, and high-handed brutality, perpetrated in the heat of exasperated passion. At how early an age in life shall we date the beginning of that "quick-handed violence of temper" which now characterizes so many adults, and which in its paroxysms rends asunder the ties of kindred and affection, defies the sanctions of law, and prostrates its breathless victim at its feet? Be assured, the stubborn wills that thus ruthlessly tear asunder the ligaments of social harmony were never broken in the cradle. Nor can we reasonably hope that the present occupants of the nursery will become law-abiding citizens, unless their occasional impatience of control is met

by something more decisive than caresses. "Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." Let the years of his legal minority be characterized by filial piety, and chief among the blessings of your future life shall be the happy fruits of your own faithful culture. In stations of trust and influence he will do you honour. His merited renown shall be to your ear like strains of sweetest harmony, and shall pour into your bosom a tide of real joy. You shall witness his life of religious devotion, and exult in his prospects of a blessed immortality.

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### A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

THE mother of the well-known Richard Cecil was a woman of real piety.

Richard, when but a young man, had pursued a bold and determined career, till sunk in sin, hardening himself in infidelity, and instilling the same principles into others, there seemed no prospect of any change. His excellent mother, however, had performed her part, and still remembered that it was good, not only to pray always, but not to faint or desist upon any account. At last, one night he lay contemplating the case of his mother.

"I see," said he within himself, "two unquestionable facts—*First*, My mother is greatly afflicted in circumstances, body and mind; and yet I see that she cheerfully bears up under all, by the support she derives from constantly repairing to her closet and her Bible. *Secondly*, That she has a secret spring of comfort, of which I know nothing; while I who give an unbounded loose to my appetites, and seek pleasure by every means, seldom or ever find it. If,

however, there is such a secret in religion, why may I not find it as well as my mother?" He instantly rose and began to pray, but was soon discouraged, by recollecting that much of his mother's comfort seemed to arise from her faith in Christ. Now, thought he, "this Christ I have ridiculed; he stands much in my way, and can form no part of my prayers." In utter confusion he lay down again; but, in process of time, conviction of sin continuing, his difficulties were gradually removed, his objections answered. He now listened to those admonitions of his mother, which he had before affected to receive with pride and scorn; yet they had fixed themselves in his heart like a barbed arrow; and though the effects were concealed from her observation, yet tears would fall from his eyes, as he passed along the street, from the impression she had made on his mind. Now he would discourse with her, and hear her without outrage, which revived her hopes, especially as he then attended the public worship of God. Thus he made some progress, but felt no small difficulty in separating from his favourite connections. Light, however, broke into his mind, till at last he discovered that Christ Jesus, so far from "standing in the way," as he once thought, was indeed the way, the truth, and the life, to all who come unto God by him."

After such a change, it is not wonderful that Mr. Cecil should have written and spoken with so much pathos on the influence of the parental character. "Where parental influence does not convert," he would say, "it hampers—it hangs on the wheels of evil. I had a pious mother who dropped things in my way. I could never rid myself of them; I was a professed infidel; but then I liked to be an infidel in company, rather than when alone—I was wretched when by myself. These principles, and maxims, and data, spoiled my jollity." Again he says: "I find in myself another evidence of the greatness of parental influence. I



detect myself to this day in laying down maxims in my family, which I took up at three or four years of age, before I could possibly know the reason of them. Besides, parental influence must be great, because God has said it shall be so. The parent is not to stand reasoning and calculating. God has said, that his character shall have influence, and so this appointment of Providence becomes often the punishment of a wicked man. Such a man is a complete selfist. I am weary of hearing such men talk about their 'family,' and their 'family,' they 'must provide for their family.' Their family has no place in their real regard—they push for themselves. But God says: 'No! you think your children shall be so and so, but they shall be rods for your own backs. They shall be your curse. They shall rise up against you.' The most common of all human complaints is—parents groaning under the vices of their children! This is all the effect of parental influence."

## SINS OF THE TONGUE.



“HE that lives not by rule, lives not at all,” has grown into a proverb; yet many have no settled plan and no fixed principles. They are at sea without a compass, and know not whither they go, but are borne along with every wind and current. This may be an easy mode of life, but can it be safe? Blinded by self-love, such may hope that all is well, but is there cause for such expectations? It may be as mischievous to have *no* principles as *bad* ones. A rule not followed is a mere notion, and governs no one.

These remarks apply to the use and abuse of the tongue. There is often a criminal carelessness about the moral quality of words. The subject is vast, and not well understood. Few know as well as they ought, and still fewer do as well as they know. Yet God’s word is plain. There are but ten commandments; yet two of them, one in each table, relate to our speech, and all the Scriptures give instruction on the same subject. True, the word of God does not determine the precise amount of speech to be used, leaving much to natural disposition, and to circumstances of time and place. But God has clearly told us what kind of words he approves, and what kind he condemns.

Mere reserve does not evince good principles. Some have learned somewhat to restrain their tongues, and yet have no right motives in doing so. Their propensities are

the same as before. They fear man, but not God. They dread trouble, but not iniquity.

The pen is subject to the same laws which are made for the tongue. What a man may not speak, he should not write. Indeed, writing evil things often does more harm than speaking them.

We may sin, not only by the words used, but also by the tones with which they are spoken, and by looks and gestures. The language of pantomime is universal, vigorous, and easily perverted. "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers." Prov. vi. 12, 13.

Whenever we speak of sin or duty, levity is out of place. To avoid the former and do the latter is the highest end of learning. In such a subject mere curiosity is worse than idle. Here malignity may find a remark to condemn others, but wisdom will gain its chief end in amending one's own faults and avoiding wicked courses.

In many ways we may sin with our tongues. Laurentius enumerates as many sins of the tongue as there are letters in the alphabet. In his *Christian Directory*, Richard Baxter gives a list of thirty sins of speech, beginning with blasphemy. In expounding the *third* and *ninth* commandments, the Westminster Assembly make the number still larger. There is, therefore, no want of matter on such a theme.

Some speak too fast. Merely rapid articulation is not here intended. But statements made without reflection, though not designed to mislead, are a great evil. "Seest thou a man hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him." Prov. xxix. 20. The intellect of such is in a state unfriendly to accuracy of knowledge or statement. He seldom improves in mind or manners. He jumps at conclusions, and wishes others to do the same.

Others speak too often. When awake and in company they are seldom silent. "From morn to night the ceaseless larum rings." In the absence of things weighty, wise or true; trifles, folly, or falsehood serve their turn. It is a mark of intolerable self-conceit to be continually offering unsolicited opinions. Even the oracles of the heathen were sometimes silent, though paid for speaking.

Others say too much. Not content with stating what is called for, they proceed to tiresome and sinful lengths. They are neither "swift to hear," nor "slow to speak."

Others speak too soon. They do not inquire, listen and consider, but are ready to deliver their views at all times, and often in dashing style. "A wise man regardeth time and judgment," but they disregard both. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." Prov. xviii. 13.

As "there is a time to speak," so "there is a time to keep silence." Eccles. iii. 7. One of these times is when you have nothing pertinent to say. Another is, when others are speaking. Did any family ever come to much good, where the young were not taught to be silent when the old were speaking, or where all the children were allowed to speak at once? Another such time is when we first visit a friend overwhelmed with affliction. Some sympathies are best expressed by silence. Thus, Job's friends "sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great." Job ii. 13. When others are greatly heated by passion, it is usually best to be silent. A very good man wrote down this rule, "I will never talk to an angry man."

In general, men probably speak too much. The Scriptures warn us on this point. "A fool's voice is known by multitude of words." Eccles. v. 3. "A fool also is full of words." Eccles. x. 14. "In the multitude of words there

wanteth not sin." Prov. x. 19. Garrulity is not always innocent. Even good and wise men censure it. One of our proverbs is, "The fool's tongue is long enough to cut his throat." Babblers were never held in high esteem among a virtuous people. "Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment, and a babbler is no better." Eccles. x. 11. This odious character is often more or less acquired by those who suppose themselves unsuspected of it. Of many a man it is said, "He is not worth minding, he is always talking." This is a sign that all is not right. One may plead that he is a licensed character, and that he always was allowed to say just what he pleased. But it may be asked, Who signed and gave the license? Can it be produced? It never came from God, and good men would not dare to sanction what God condemns. If any man has such license, he forged it. By excessive talking professors of religion make sad the hearts of their brethren, and all men are less esteemed for it. The judgment of mankind is with Solomon, that "a fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards," Prov. xxix. 11; and that "even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." Prov. xvii. 28. Some one has well said: "He is not a fool that hath unwise thoughts, but he that utters them." Yet some can never be cured of this folly. To them silence is torture. Like one of the ancients they might say, "If I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost." Job xiii. 19. They know little of the peace and quiet of one who follows them not. "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." Prov. xxi. 23. The troubles brought on by an unbridled tongue in this life are but a prelude to far worse in the next.

Excessive talking is frequently attended by loud speaking. The former betrays self-conceit; the latter impudence. One feature of as bad a character as is sketched in Scripture is

that "she is loud." Prov. vii. 11. "A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple and knoweth nothing." Prov. ix. 13. It was a bright ornament of the character of the divine Redeemer that he was gentle and quiet, and did "not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." Isa. xlii. 2. He was not a clamorous person, but meek and lowly.

Is the following a fancy sketch? When others were speaking, he was restless, and if ruled to entire silence, he was miserable. Ordinarily he seemed to have some amiable traits, but when others had the good sense to listen to his wit or wisdom, he was in a specially good temper. The more you attended to him, the louder and more emphatic he was. On nearly *all* subjects he knew something; on *many*, he knew much; on *some*, he was an oracle in his own esteem. When doomed to spend some time with those whose dignity restrained him, he might well have adopted the words of one who bears a part in the oldest epic poem extant: "I am full of matter, the spirit within constraineth me. Behold my belly is as wine, which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak that I may be refreshed." Job xxxii. 18—20. Our hero wished to pass for a benevolent man. He was great at a public meeting. He commonly said something, and was full of promises in aid of the cause. To fulfil them was far from him. His children caught his spirit, though in his presence they were sometimes forced to keep silence. But when they had a chance, they lost no time. Even on his death-bed the same propensity was sometimes manifest, and he left the world without seeming to know that he bore the character of a babler.

One of his townsmen was little like him. He was a man of few words. When he did speak he was heard with marked respect. If others were impatient, it was because he was slow to utter his mind. His maxim was, "The

fewer words, the less sin." He thought much and weighed his words well. Far removed from sourness, he was given to self-communion. His prayers were brief, but fervent and comprehensive. His words were well ordered. He was not hasty to utter anything, especially before God. His sincerity was apparent. His word was as good as his bond or his oath. He was rarely required to explain or retract any of his statements; but if he had been mistaken, he frankly said so. His children, though sprightly and joyous, were neither pert nor impudent. They honoured gray hairs. In him "the effect of righteousness was quietness and assurance for ever." Isa. xxxii. 17. His end was peace. Survivors generally mentioned his name with honour. His family never blushed to own him as their former guide and head.

Would it not be wise for every man to say with a servant of God of the *seventeenth* century, "I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to speak much, lest I often speak too much, and not to speak at all, rather than to no purpose."

Our words should also be pure and chaste. How many narratives, anecdotes, songs, riddles, and questions are indelicate, and therefore unchristian! How many hints, allusions, inuendos, insinuations, and surmises are of this description! Nearly every thing in the form of double *entendre* falls under the same condemnation. Whatever pollutes the mind is wicked, and never without necessity to be repeated. This class of evils is vastly sustained by the stage, by works of wit and fiction, and by many popular ballads. Tradition also shows both fidelity and industry in transmitting impure sayings from age to age. Those who thus sin sometimes excuse their conduct by saying that "unto the pure all things are pure," but they seem to forget that "unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Tit. i. 15. This latter class constitutes no small

portion of mankind. The sow washes more frequently than the sheep, and yet is not clean. The nature of the flock is to avoid the mire. Shun those who are foul-mouthed. Never smile at their impurity. Never imitate them. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Eph. iv. 29. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, blasphemy, *filthy communications* out of your mouth." Col. iii. 8. "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners." 1 Cor. xv. 33. Many who greatly offend against these laws of speech, would be both surprised and displeased if their sin was charged upon them.

Another grievous sin of the tongue is flattery, which consists in undue or unseasonable praise. Few things are more ensnaring. Riches, talents, family, office, person, attainments, deeds of distinction, and even vices furnish occasions for it. Husbands flatter their wives, and wives their husbands; parents their children, and children their parents; ministers their people, and people their ministers, and all under the pretence of manifesting esteem. The poor flatter the rich, and demagogues the people. Yet all commendation is not flattery; but that which exceeds the truth is always sinful, and untimely praise, even when true, disgusts wise men and puffs up the minds of the simple. It was a good purpose of Bishop Beveridge, "I am resolved, by the grace of God, to speak of other men's sins only before their faces, and of their virtues only behind their backs." The only exception to this rule is that of necessity. Properly observed, it would banish a large part of social misery. Flattery is always an unkindness. "A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet." Prov. xxix. 5. Those are good words of Elihu—"Let me not accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto men. For I know not to give flattering



titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." Job xxxii. 21, 22. Paul says—"Neither at any time used we flattering words." 1 Thess. ii. 5. Courtly manners may require such words, but the truth, even bluntly spoken, is more pleasing to God. Almost all flatterers have some wicked design in view. "Discretion shall preserve thee from the stranger, that flattereth with her words." Proverbs ii. 16.

This is a great evil under the sun. Kings have their courtiers, and few are sunk so low as not at times to have their sycophants. Yet if a man is really displeased with flattery, it will seldom be offered. To be pleased with it is to become a candidate for shame, perhaps for ruin. Every human being is entitled to some respect. Even the guilty felon on his way to execution should not be mocked or rudely gazed at. Every well-meaning person is entitled to such treatment as will express approbation of his good character. But fawning servility is due to no mortal. "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips." Psa. xii. 3. Among some "to be agreeable" is to be adulatory. This sin is one of the most degrading to him who practises it, and tempting to him who is flattered. It greatly hinders the proper giving and receiving of reproof. One who was famous in his day said, "I will do my best to cross any man in his sins; if I have not thanks of him, yet I shall of my own conscience."

Flatterers are quite sure to be backbiters. This is neither conjecture, nor the mere fruit of observation. The Bible so teaches. "He that goeth about as a tale-bearer, revealeth secrets; therefore meddle not with him, that flattereth with his lips." Prov. xx. 19. A defeated flatterer is a malicious slanderer. His principles are bad. He who will lie in your favour will upon a turn lie against you. He who will unduly praise, will unduly censure. Flattery and slander are branches of the same trade, and

are carried on by the same people. Those called in the Bible, "whisperers," belong to the same class. They go about their work by stealth. They often enjoin secrecy on their dupes. To them an evil report is music. They are often very cunning in avoiding responsibility before men, but God knows the filthiness of their hearts. Their career is sometimes long, but generally ends in open shame. They have sometimes poisoned the minds of many with their falsehoods. They often speak well of a man to his friends, but evil of him to his enemies. "He that uttereth a slander, is a fool." Prov. x. 18. A heathen once said, "The most dangerous of wild beasts is a slanderer; of tame ones, a flatterer."

Men sometimes pretend to know some great evil of another, but will not tell what it is. They know that the human imagination, appealed to mysteriously, can soon outrun any common scale of enormity, and so they set it to work. That such conduct is mean, cruel, and indefensible, few will deny. Yet how many practise it! And if, instead of going abroad with such or other charges against their neighbours men would go directly to them, how much evil would be prevented! "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, and discover not a secret to another, lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away." Prov. xxv. 9, 10.

The law of love to man may be violated in speech without uttering a word that is not true. That no man is any better than he ought to be, is literally true, yet to say as much of any particular person is often slanderous in its effect, and may tear a good name to pieces.

Tale-bearing and news-carrying are species of slander, and are very mischievous. In this more than in most ways, one man may produce deep and extensive distress. Like the incendiary, who has fired a city and fled to an eminence to ravish his eyes with the progress of the ruin he has wrought,

the tale-bearer loves to embroil families and communities, and then, if possible, escape unnoticed and unhurt. Often he is found out in time to receive the frowns of the virtuous, but commonly not till he has engendered strife. Paul says such persons were found in his day, "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies speaking things which they ought not." 1 Tim. v. 13. In the law of Moses is this statute, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." Lev. xix. 16. "A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Prov. xi. 13. Every man, family, and firm have secrets, which it does not concern others to know. If by accident, or in confidence, they come to your knowledge, reveal them not. To be a spy upon your neighbour is a low occupation, and he to whom confidence is not sacred, is truly debased. None but the imprudent are in the habit of telling their secrets. "If you would teach secresy to others, begin with yourself. How can you expect another to keep a secret when you yourself cannot?" It was a wise determination of a good man of the last generation, "In general, I will deal in secrets as little as possible."

Much social misery is owing to tale-bearing. "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth." Prov. xxvi. 20. The dreadful effects of this vile practice are clearly stated in Scripture. "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds; and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Prov. xviii. 8. Among the seven abominations which the Lord hates, four of them are, "a lying tongue, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Prov. vi. 17—19. Lying in some form is a common attendant on tale-bearing. Useless strife always follows it. It argues a low mind, and a meddlesome disposition. And "he that passeth by and

meddleth with strife not belonging to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." Prov. xxvi. 17. To others he gives trouble, while he has a large share himself. Very few men openly declare themselves candidates for contempt, but tale-bearers gain it without direct seeking.

If such persons met with no encouragement, they would cease their evil work. If none will dance, they will not pipe. Pity it is that they are not made ashamed of their evil course. He who listens to them is partaker of their sins. A good man "taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour." Prov. xv. 3. Tale-hearing is twin-sister to tale-bearing. "Where the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together." And where evil report is rifest, there will gather foul birds, which prey upon ruined character. How court-houses are crowded by this sort of persons, when matters of a scandalous nature are to be investigated! Their dolorous notes of regret do not even conceal their hypocrisy. Like sepulchres, their memories are full of dead men's bones and all corruption. If none would hear evil reports, none would be made. "The north-wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." Prov. xxv. 23. "It is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sticketh in and settleth in the mind, that doth the hurt." Cowper says:

"Whoever keeps an open ear  
For tattlers, will be sure to hear  
The trumpet of contention;  
Aspersion is the babblers' trade,  
To listen is to lend him aid,  
And rush into dissension.

Bishop Hall says, "As 'there would be no thieves, if there were no receivers,' so there would not be so many open mouths to detract and slander, if there were not so many open ears to entertain them. If I cannot stop other

men's mouths from speaking ill, I will either open my mouth to reprove it, or else I will stop my ears from hearing it; and let him see in my face that he hath no room in my heart."

"A good name is better than precious ointment." Eccles. vii. 1. Yea, "a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Prov. xxii. 1. Character is all the estate many have. To any man it is of great value. Everywhere and always human happiness much depends upon it. Compared with it, other possessions are paltry :

"Who steals my purse steals trash, 'tis something, nothing;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;  
But he that filches from me my good name,  
Robs me of that, which not enriches him,  
But makes me poor indeed."

Who is the gainer by tattling or slander? He who utters either is greatly polluted. He who listens to either is an "eater of calumnies," as the Syriac calls Satan. He of whom either is uttered, does not thereby lose a good conscience, but he sometimes loses his temper, which is the source of much of his enjoyment; and sometimes he loses his good name, which is the best legacy he can leave his children. Both tattling and slander are commonly malignant, and always wanton. Nor is any one safe from these robbers. No lock and key, no armed sentinel, no life of usefulness, no solid worth can secure a good name from their attacks.

"No might, nor greatness in mortality,  
Can censure 'scape; back-wounding calumny  
The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong  
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?"

Well does the word of God describe such, "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used

deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." Rom. iii. 13. "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword." Prov. xii. 18. One asked a Spartan if his sword was sharp. He replied, "Sharper than calumny." The good of all ages have testified against these sins. One said, "The most abandoned and sordid minds have the least abhorrence of calumny. He who is but moderately wicked, dares not venture upon it. He who has the least particle of ingenuousness in his nature disdains it." Another said, "The malice of ill tongues cast upon a good man is only like a mouthful of smoke blown upon a diamond, which, though it clouds its beauty for the present, yet it is easily rubbed off, and the gem restored with little trouble to its owner." Were this the proper place, it might be well to consider at length how we should behave under such wrongs. One said, "The sparks of calumny will be presently extinct of themselves unless you blow them." In some cases this is true, but in all cases imitate Christ, and commit yourself to Him that judgeth righteously.

Detraction is a species of slander. It consists in taking away *something* from the character of another. It denies not *all* his merits, but it puts in many abatements, exceptions, and insinuations. It is a common sin with rivals, sectaries, and partisans. Sallust explains to us the motives of such; "By casting down others, they hope to rise to honour." But to prove that one man is base will not prove another noble or virtuous.

One of the meanest ways of sinning with the tongue is so to attack character that no fair defence can be made. Some will give no names, others will avoid all particulars, but yet both will so describe things as to give cruel thrusts. If called to an account, they meanly enough put you to the proof of their having said ought against you, and show the cunning of a fox in eluding a pursuit which is becoming hot.

The great difficulty in all evil speaking is that so soon as a man utters it, his pride and self-love pledge him to make it good. Unless compelled, he seldom retracts. To injure a man is the surest way to hate him, and to wish to have ground of justification in such a case is quite natural. Passion, once enlisted, is blind and obstinate. Most of the hard and cruel things said, would, but for this cause, be taken back. Detraction is seldom followed by retraction.

A fondness for the strange and marvellous is one of the sins of every age, and shows itself in speech. To forge a chain out of a gossamer film, to make a mountain out of a mole-hill, and to abound in the wonderful may make fools gape, but will cause wise men to fear. When such men speak soberly, they fail of gaining credit. Some of the most painful scenes witnessed in social intercourse arise from the love of big stories. Asseverations, and even oaths, do not secure belief in them. He who duly fears God, will take care neither to invent, retail, nor even listen to them. It is to be regretted that superlatives are so commonly in use. How many speak of others as the meanest, the cleverest, the wisest, or the kindest people they ever knew! How often do we hear such expressions as these: "This is the hottest or the coldest, or the darkest day I ever saw!" Perhaps these very people have said the same things oftentimes, and do not really mean what they say. They may not so much wish to deceive as to be impressive. True, all hyperbole is not unlawful. John xxi. 25. But this habitual use of it is out of place, weakens respect for our sobriety of mind, if not for our love of truth, and utterly fails of any good object. Exaggeration is said to run in some families. In giving solemn testimony there is often no little lying of this kind. President Edwards, the elder, wisely "*resolved*, in narrations, never to speak any thing but the pure and simple verity."

The spirit which leads men to the marvellous, often

guides them to boasting. As formerly, so now, "most men will proclaim every one his own goodness." Prov. xx. 8. So they boast of their exploits, property, influence, talents, charity, family, friends, and correspondents. Those "whose glory is in their shame," go further, and proudly tell of things which should crimson their cheeks. They seem to have one pleasure in committing a sin, and two in speaking of it. Men sometimes unwittingly let others know that they are knaves. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." Prov. xx. 14. Perhaps there are commonly too many words used in buying and selling. Many assert their large possession of qualities, of which they have little or none. And "whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." Prov. xxv. 14. Such a man is sometimes said to be *windy*, and he is a mere puff. "All such boasting is evil." James iv. 16. "Boasters" do not bear a high character for truth in other respects, and Paul enrols them among "backbiters, haters of God, inventors of evil things, blasphemers," and such like vicious characters. Rom. i. 30, and 2 Tim. iii. 2.

It is very important that we should avoid the extremes of excessive confidence or doubtfulness in our statements. Some men *conjecture, think, suppose, presume, guess, are not sure but* that things are or were thus and so, when they know it. On the other hand some *know, aver, declare most positively, are ready to make oath* about trifles and things in their nature doubtful. The first class is certain of nothing; the latter, of every thing. The one by seeming doubtful of plain facts well known to them, would hang an innocent man; the other would bring about the same result by speaking so confidently of things doubtful as to destroy their own credibility in other things. The rule is, obtain correct views, if you can, and express them modestly, but clearly;



but if there is room for rational doubt be not positive. If you know a thing, say so ; if you know it not, say so.

There is much sin committed respecting promises. Some promises are wicked, and should be neither made nor kept. If made, they are to be repented of. Some are rash, yet not wicked ; such are to be kept. Rashness is always a folly and commonly a sin, and so should be mourned over. But "he that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not," is the man that shall never be moved. *Psa. xv. 4, 5.* But even in lawful and prudent promises, what slackness of fulfilment ! How few men keep all their engagements ! How little punctuality and promptness do we see ! If a man would be confided in by none, let him promise much, and perform little. There is no surer mark of general corruption than want of fidelity. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?"

Thomas Boston says, "Lies are of four sorts :

"1. Jesting lies, that is, when a person speaks that, which is contrary to the known truth, in a jesting or ludicrous way ; and embellishes his discourse with his own fictions, designing thereby to impose on others.

"2. Officious lies, that is, when one speaks that which is contrary to the truth, and the dictates of his conscience, to do good to himself or others thereby. *Job xiii. 7. Rom. iii. 8.*

"3. Pernicious lies, that is, when a person raises and spreads a false report, with a design to do mischief to another.

"4. Rash lies, that is, when a person utters that which is false through surprise, inadvertency, and customary looseness. *2 Sam. xiii. 30.*"

It is not necessary to be able to classify every kind of lying. The essence of the sin consists in an intention to deceive where we are under obligation to speak. If any thing is spoken, it should be the truth. Of every species

of this sin the old sayings are true, "A liar should have a good memory." "A liar is brave towards God, and a coward towards man." "A lie has no legs," and so cannot stand. Blessed is the man "that speaketh the truth in his heart." Psa. xv. 2. Downright lying, without an object, is perhaps not very common, though some such cases do appear. But equivocation, prevarication, Gen. xx. 9—16, wresting men's words, Psa. lvi. 5, and Matt. xxvi. 60, 61, disparagement of others, Luke xviii. 11, undue-praise of others, Acts xii. 22, 23, untrue commendation of ourselves, Luke xviii. 11, denying our own gifts, Exodus iv. 10, 14, exaggerating the faults of others, and making "a man an offender for a word," Isa. xxix. 20, 21, are kinds of falsehood, always having some guilt in them. In short, whatever is contrary to candor, fairness, and sincerity, should be avoided. It is to the great reproach of human nature that there should so often seem to be manifest pleasure in falsehood. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8.

Passing judgment before hearing evidence or argument, is a common sin. "All are not thieves that the dogs bark at." Many an innocent man is clamorously and falsely accused. To come out against the innocent or for the guilty is a great sin. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." Prov. xvii. 15. A tumult or an uproar for or against a man is no proof. Nor are we innocent in justifying, when we should condemn ourselves. Luke xvi. 15. Confessions of sin in prayer, if not true, are very shocking to pious ears, and must be offensive to God. Making merry with the miseries of others is a great sin of the tongue and heart. "He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." Prov. xvii. 5. We should be sorry both at the sorrows and sins even of our worst foe. "Rejoice not when thine

enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth; lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him." Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. None but men of fiendish dispositions allow the violation of this law.

Railing, reviling, and scornful words are also condemned in Scripture. "Render not railing for railing." 1 Pet. iii. 9. If another reviles you, set him an example of patience. Paul puts "railers" among "fornicators, covetous, idolaters, drunkards, and extortioners." 1 Cor. v. 11. When Jesus "was reviled, he reviled not again." 1 Pet. ii. 23. Of the early Christians Paul says, "being reviled we bless." 1 Cor. iv. 12. Our rulers in church and in state are to be spoken of respectfully. We read of some who "are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord." 2 Pet. ii. 10, 11. Even "Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Jude 9. Let those who indulge in scornful language consider well the import of Matt. v. 22. "A soft tongue breaketh the bone." Prov. xxv. 15. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Prov. xv. 1. Quarrelling is one of the lowest vices, and "recrimination is the last resort of guilt." The late Dr Ebenezer Porter entered it among his solemn purposes, "When I am angry I will never speak, till I have taken at least as much time for reflection as Athenodorus prescribed to Cæsar." This was, "Always repeat the twenty-four letters of the alphabet before you give way to the impulse of anger."

Those in authority often sin by using tones and words of threatening. "And ye, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in

heaven; neither is there respect of persons with God." Eph. vi. 9. While others sin by impudent and impertinent replies to their superiors. "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again." Tit. ii. 9.

Scolding is a kind of threatening without the power, or at least without the intention of punishing. It is finding fault in a surly manner. It is one of the most unamiable of domestic vices. It banishes peace, spoils the temper, and makes many a house the miniature of hell. Many "hard speeches" are uttered in this way. The effect on children and servants is so discouraging that they often become desperate, thinking it is of no use to try to please. Any unnecessary exposure and repetition of the faults of others is a sin. Prov. xvii. 9. It was a resolution of one of the greatest men of his day, "Never to say any thing at all against any body, but when it is perfectly agreeable to the highest degree of Christian honour, and of love to mankind, agreeable to the lowest humility, and sense of my own faults and failings, and agreeable to the golden rule; and when I have said any thing against any one, to bring it to, and try it strictly by the test of this resolution."

"Foolish talking and jesting are not convenient." Eph. v. 4. That is, they do not become Christians. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. xii. 36. "Idle words" are words without effect, and are "frothy, unsavoury stuff, tending to no purpose, nor good at all." When Latimer, on his first examination, heard the pen of the notary who was writing behind a curtain, he was careful what he said, because he knew it might be brought against him at his trial. All our words will meet us at the tribunal of Christ.

The question is often asked, What rules should guide us in the use of pleasantry, humour, wit, satire, irony, sar-

casm, and ridicule? The following seem to cover all cases :

1. It is certain that all use of these things is not unlawful. The examples of Elijah, David, and Isaiah prove this. 1 Kings xviii. 27 ; Psa. cxv. 4—8 ; and Isa. xlv. 9—17.

2. Yet they are dangerous talents. They are edge-tools, and sometimes cut terribly. "Wit is folly unless a wise man has the keeping of it." It is, therefore, better to err in making a spare rather than a free use of them. To make a trade of any of them is contemptible.

3. They should never be employed to effect malignant or mischievous purposes, nor to put down truth, nor to defeat justice, nor to uphold wickedness. They should never be wielded against the serious misfortunes or afflictions of men, nor against the good name of any, nor on sacred subjects.

4. They should not be used unseasonably. To some minds they are always unpleasant. Unfitly employed, they sunder friendships. "He is not a wise man who will lose his friend for his wit ; but he is less a wise man who will lose his friend for another man's wit." Discretion is better than a *bon mot* ; and friendship is more valuable than fun.

5. In this, as in all things, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Whatever is not benevolent is not wise or right.

6. Their chief use should be to enliven the mind, to promote cheerfulness, to expose absurdities, to lash popular vices, to reprove self-conceit, and to show the enemies of God's word that these things are not solid tests of truth and righteousness.

7. "The wisdom of man lies not in satirizing the vices and follies of others, but in correcting his own." A deep sense of our true characters will commonly prevent us from too much severity against others, and from allowing our pleasantries to sink into buffoonery.

The Scriptures also condemn undue and untimely conver-

sation on worldly affairs, John iii. 31, and Isa. lviii. 13; all ill-natured, censorious remarks, though they be but surmises, Matt. vii. 1, 2; Rom. xiv. 4—13; and 1 Tim. vi. 4; all fiery, bitter wars of words, Prov. xviii. 6; Rom. xiv. 1; Phil. ii. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5; and 2 Tim. ii. 23—26. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." James i. 20. They also forbid all murmurings and complainings against God, Num. xiv. 27, and 1 Cor. x. 10; all seductive, tempting speeches, Rom. xvi. 18; all defence and propagation of false doctrine, Matt. v. 19; xxiii. 16; Isa. ix. 14—16; Ezek. xiii. 18; Col. ii. 8, 18, 22; 1 Tim. iv. 1—6; 2 Tim. ii. 18; iii. 6, 8, 13; Tit. i. 10; Rev. xviii. 19; and all scoffing at sacred things. 2 Pet. iii. 3.

All profane oaths, speeches, and exclamations are forbidden in many parts of Scripture. From Sinai God said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Exodus xx. 7. In the sermon on the mount Christ said, "Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea, Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Matt. v. 34—37. God's name was never intended to be used as an expletive in conversation. It is a great evil that it is so often used in exclamations of surprise, grief, or joy.

But there may be sinful silence as well as sinful speaking. A dumb devil is an evil possession. Ambrose says, "As we must render an account of every idle word, so must we likewise of our idle silence." Another says, "Strange is the disorder that sin has brought into the world; as in the tongue, which is often going when it should be quiet, and

often quiet when it should speak. Our tongues are our glory; but they are often found wrapt up in a dark cloud of silence, when they should be shining forth."

Our tongues should be used in acknowledging, adoring, praising, thanking, blessing, extolling, justifying, and supplicating God. We should honour him with our tongues in prayer, in sacred songs, in solemn vows, in humble confessions of sin, in solemn oaths judicially administered, and in professing the true religion. On all these points the Bible is full and clear.

We should also use our vocal powers in giving honour to whom it is due, Rom. xiii. 7; in charitable expressions concerning others, Heb. vi. 9; in readily acknowledging their good qualities, Rom. i. 8; 1 Cor. i. 4—7, and 2 Tim. i. 5, 6; in hearty and timely expressions of sorrow for the sins and infirmities of others, 2 Cor. xii. 21; 1 Cor. xiii. 7; in giving proper warning to the erring, Ezek. iii. 17—21; Col. i. 28; in pleading the cause of the poor and needy, Prov. xxxi. 9; 1 Sam. xxii. 14; in advocating truth, Jer. ix. 3; in speaking truth, Eph. iv. 25; in speaking the whole truth, when properly called to do it, Jer. xlii. 4; Acts xx. 20; and in confessing our sins and errors known to men, or committed against them. James v. 16.

Self is a poor theme of conversation, yet indifference to character is no fruit of piety. If unjustly accused we may like Job, David, Jeremiah, Paul, and Christ, defend ourselves. But no wise man says much of himself unless compelled, and then with modesty and a sacred regard to truth.

According to our station it is also our duty to give reproof, admonition, rebuke, and advice. Prov. xvii. 10; Psa. cxli. 5. True, every man is not to be reprovèd. "He that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee." Prov. ix. 7, 8. Silence is often the best reproof, and the only wisdom. "I

will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence. I held my peace even from good." Psa. xxxix. 1, 2.

"But if some proper hour appear,  
I'll not be overawed;  
But let the scoffing sinners hear  
That I can speak for God."

The most essential quality in a reprover is meekness; next to this are love and humility. Even "sin may be sinfully reprov'd." Advice is often the best charity; yet "to advise much is a sign that we need advice." In giving advice, do not try to please, but to do real good. An adviser fills a very responsible post. "The greatest trust between man and man is the trust of giving counsel." Beware of the vanity of affecting to know things beyond your reach. Admonition and rebuke must not be untimely, unjust, severe, or bitter. "To him that is afflicted pity should be shown by his friend." Job vi. 14. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Prov. xxv. 11.

And can any thing be more important than that our speech be such as to please God? "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. xii. 37. "What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." Psa. cxx. 3, 4. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." Prov. xv. 4. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Prov. xviii. 21. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad." Prov. xii. 25. "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good is it." Prov. xv. 23. "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." Prov. xxv. 12. One of the heathen



said, "Tongues cut deeper than swords, because they reach even to the soul." A religion which leaves the tongue uncontrolled is mere pretence. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." James i. 26. After such representations, where is any thing to be added to convince men that here is a most weighty matter? If men will not be moved by arguments drawn from human happiness and human misery on earth, from the august scenes of the last day, from the miseries of future punishment, and the rewards of a life of piety, their case is beyond the reach of human skill.

Thus we get some just views of the number and heinousness of our sins, and of the necessity of divine grace both to pardon and to reform us. Left to ourselves we are undone and helpless. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." James iii. 2—10. He who thinks he

needs not amazing mercy to blot out the sins of his tongue, is indeed blind; and he who thinks he shall easily cease to sin by word, knows nothing of the strength of an evil nature, confirmed by evil habits. If we have nothing else to repent of, surely our lips may well abase us. If we have nothing else to confess and bewail, surely each of us has reason to say with Isaiah, "I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." If in nothing else we are called to make restitution, have we wronged no one in words? If we can reform nothing else, can we not amend our habits of speech?

Yet, as Archbishop Leighton says, the conquest of these evils of the tongue "must be done in the heart; otherwise it will be but a mountebank cure, a false imagined conquest. The weights and wheels are *there*, and the clock strikes according to their motion. Even he that speaks contrary to what is within him, guilefully contrary to his inward convictions and knowledge, yet speaks conformably to what is within him in temper and frame of his heart, which is double, *a heart and a heart*, as the Psalmist hath it. Psa. xii. 2. A guileful heart makes guileful tongue and lips. It is the workhouse, where is the forge of deceits and slanders, and other evil speakings; and the tongue is only the outer shop where they are vended, and the lips the door of it; so that such ware as is made within, such and no other can be set out. From evil thoughts, evil speakings; from a profane heart, profane words; and from a malicious heart, bitter or calumnious words; and from a deceitful heart, guileful words, well varnished, but lined with rottenness. And so in general, *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, as our Saviour teaches. That which the heart is full of, runs over by the tongue; if the heart be full of God, the tongue will delight to speak of him; much of heavenly things within will sweetly breathe forth something of their smell by the mouth; and if nothing but earth is there, all that man's discourse will have an earthly

smell; and if nothing but wind, vanity, and folly, the speech will be airy, and vain, and purposeless. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom; the law of his God is in his heart.*" Psa. xxxvii. 30, 31.

Nor is it possible for us to effect a thorough change without diligence, watchfulness, and prayer. An unguarded mouth will pour forth folly and wickedness. Therefore after all David's resolutions and efforts he comes to God in earnest prayer and cries, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Psa. cxli. 3.

If you go on sinning with your lips, you either *will* repent or *not*. If you shall repent, you will have more anguish than all the vile pleasure of sin is worth. If you never shall truly repent, how sad your state for ever! And are we not all guilty enough already? Are not our iniquities fearfully multiplied? They are more than the hairs of our head. We cannot answer for one of a thousand of our offences. Even now our only hope is in the infinite mercy of God. How sweet are the words of Scripture to those who rightly feel their sinfulness! "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Wonderful, wonderful are the compassions of the Lord. O that we may no longer abuse them, but by them be won to God, to love, to holiness in thought, word, and deed!

Would it not, therefore, be right for you to make these solemn resolutions?

1. I will steadily keep in view my latter end, and remember that soon I must stand before my Judge. I would not live a day or an hour in forgetfulness of the truth that all my thoughts, *words* and deeds are to undergo the scrutiny of Him, who is so holy as to hate all sin, and so great as to know all things, and so just as never to clear the guilty.

2. I will endeavour often to ask myself, How would Jesus

Christ speak were he in my circumstances? He has left me an example that I should follow his steps. His life is the law of God put in practice. If I walk in his steps I shall not err.

3. I will rely more and more on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to preserve me from sins of the tongue. I have too much relied on the strength of my own virtue and perseverance, and so I have failed. "O Lord, undertake for me."

4. I will constantly strive to have a deep sense of the importance of making a right use of my tongue. I will endeavour to avoid levity of mind, and so escape levity of speech and behaviour. By God's grace I will be serious.

5. I will often call myself to an account for my words during the day, and when I have erred, I will not spare myself from these severe, yet salutary answers, which my sins deserve. I will not justify, excuse, or extenuate the sins of my lips.

6. I will labour to have my mind stored with valuable information and reflections, that I may not be tempted to deal in gossip, and scandal, and idle news, and that my words may be instructive to those with whom I mingle.

7. I will endeavour to be more impressed with a sense of the amazing grace and mercy of God to me a sinner, in bidding me hope for his favour, notwithstanding all my offences. Thus I shall have alacrity and joy in resisting evil and seeking holiness.

8. I will labour to have a proper view, not only of the meanness, mischief and troubles of a loose tongue, but also of its great sinfulness in the sight of God. As an unbridled speech is a wickedness, I would avoid it, even if it brought me no temporal evil.

9. Above all things, I will seek to be thoroughly renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost. If he will make his abode with me, I shall be able to resist all sin, and overcome all

evil habits. To change my nature is beyond my power, but not beyond the power of the Sanctifier. My power is but another name for feebleness : his energy is irresistible.

10. I will strive to practise the wise rules which Dr. Watts so well suggests in his version of the xxxix. Psalm.

Thus I resolved before the Lord,  
 Now will I watch my tongue,  
 Lest I let slip one sinful word,  
 Or do my neighbour wrong.

Whene'er constrained awhile to stay  
 With men of lives profane,  
 I'll set a double watch that day,  
 Nor let my talk be vain.

I'll scarce allow my lips to speak  
 The pious thoughts I feel,  
 Lest scoffers should occasion take  
 To mock my holy zeal.

Yet if some proper hour appear,  
 I'll not be overawed,  
 But let the scoffing sinner hear  
 That I can speak for God.

HOW STANDS MY CASE WITH GOD?  

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THE most famous sentence ever said to have been uttered by a heathen oracle was this, "*Know thyself.*" It well merited the distinction it received, for while self-knowledge brings many advantages, ignorance of ourselves is a fruitful source of folly, sin, and misery. Indeed, it is one of the greatest blots upon our nature. It is the parent of nearly all that is preposterous and ridiculous in human conduct. Nor is this its worst effect. It begets low ideas of sin, and of the love of God in Christ, and so breeds contempt of God's everlasting mercies.

Nor is this all. Not knowing our sins, we do not feel our wants, and so we restrain prayer before God. If we have not a proper view of our faults, pride fills the place of humility, and thus brings many a fall which covers us with disgrace. Did we clearly see our ill-desert we should not be unthankful and fretful, when we have more mercies and fewer trials than we have any right to expect. Our self-conceit will not listen to good counsel, just reproof, or wholesome restraint, and so we are untractable, self-willed, and peevish. Hypocrisy has its seat here, for men never attempt to impose on others till they have first deceived themselves. The flattery of others could not hurt us if we did not first flatter ourselves, and thus help to spread a net

for our own feet. The most affecting events of providence seem to have little or no salutary effect on him, who is ignorant of his own deficiencies and sins. Such a one will hardly be very useful to his neighbour, for not knowing himself, he is not in the right mood to influence others to that which is good. His reproofs will be ill-timed, or given in a wrong spirit. Secret sins, which are the bane of piety, are greatly nourished in the same way. False hopes and foolish fears, spurious joys and carnal sorrows spring very much from the same source. Men in this sad condition are boastful and careless, and walk not circumspectly nor wisely. Ignorance of ourselves perverts truth, reason, conscience, and all our mercies. It makes us call evil good, and good evil. It hides our faults, or makes us esteem them virtues. It puts an excessive value upon mean things, and a low estimate upon the most precious things. In fine, so great are its evils that sober men, not professing Christianity, have often felt the necessity of calling themselves to an account that they might not be given over to utter folly. Listen to the words of one such. Though a heathen, he may both shame and instruct some professed Christians.

#### WHAT SENECA THOUGHT.

In his treatise on anger he says, "The soul is daily to be called to an account. It was the custom of Sextius, when the day was past, and he betook himself to his rest at night, to ask his soul, 'What evil of thine hast thou healed to-day? What vice hast thou resisted? In what respect art thou better?' Anger will cease and become more moderate when it knows it must come every day before the judge. What practice is more excellent than thus to sift or examine the whole day? How quiet, and sound, and sweet a sleep must follow this reckoning with ourselves, when the soul is either commended or admonished, and, as a secret observer and judge of itself, is acquainted with its own

ways! I use this power myself, and daily accuse myself, or plead my cause before myself. When the candle is taken out of my sight, and my wife becomes silent, then, according to my custom, I search over the whole day with myself; I measure over again my doings and my sayings; I hide nothing from myself; I pass over nothing; for why should I fear any of my errors, when I can say, 'See that thou do so no more; I now forgive thee; in such a disputation thou spakest too contentiously; engage not therefore in disputes with them that are ignorant. They that have not learned will not learn. Such a man thou didst admonish more freely than thou oughtest; and therefore didst not amend him, but offend him. Hereafter see, not only whether it be truth which thou speakest, but also whether he to whom it is spoken can bear the truth.' " While this paragraph manifests sad ignorance of the heinous nature of sin, both as to its guilt and defilement, and while it evinces that Seneca neither knew nor loved the true method of purifying the heart by faith, of being sanctified by the word and Spirit of God, or of obtaining forgiveness by the precious blood of Christ, it yet shows the usefulness for this life of a serious and close inspection of our tempers, words and ways. Let us look for a moment into the life of that servant of God,

PRESIDENT EDWARDS, THE ELDER.

He thus resolved, "To examine carefully and constantly what that one thing in me is, which causes me in the least to doubt of the love of God, and to direct all my force against it. To inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent,—what sin I have committed,—and wherein I have denied myself;—also, at the end of every week, month, and year. To inquire every night before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking. To



ask myself, at the end of every day, week, month, and year, wherein I could possibly, in any respect, have done better. Constantly, with the utmost niceness and diligence, and the strictest scrutiny, to be looking into the state of my soul, that I may know whether I have truly an interest in Christ or not; that when I come to die, I may not have any negligence respecting this to repent of. Whenever my feelings begin to appear in the least out of order, when I am conscious of the least uneasiness within, or the least irregularity without, I will then subject myself to the strictest examination. Very much to exercise myself in this, all my life long, viz., with the greatest openness of which I am capable, to declare my ways to God, and lay open my soul to him, all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, and every thing, and every circumstance, according to Dr. Manton's sermon on the cxix. Psalm. After afflictions, to inquire, What I am the better for them? what good I have got by them? and what I might have got by them?" The life and writings of this great and good man abundantly prove that these purposes were sincerely carried out. The result was unusual unction, honour and usefulness. Indeed we may learn the same from

#### THE HISTORY OF MANY OTHERS.

Almost every page of the diary of David Brainerd gives proof of the earnestness with which he sought to know his own heart, and to understand his own errors. The same is more or less evinced in the accounts we have of Luther, Calvin, Halyburton, Rutherford, Leighton, Usher, Bunyan, Thomas Boston, John Brown of Haddington, John Newton, Zinzendorf, Henry Martyn, Pliny Fisk, Dr. Thomas Scott, the Commentator; Drs. Payson, Rice, Nevins, Porter, Nettleton, and Green; Mrs. Isabella Graham, Mrs. Winslow, Lady Colquhoun, and Mary Lundie Duncan. In short, valuable religious biography in all ages is proof of the utility of habits of self-examination. But

## WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

For after all this is the only rule of life which cannot err. To the law and to the testimony let us go. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Gal. vi. 4. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Ps. iv. 4. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Lam. iii. 40. Here are four commands or exhortations, all agreeing with each other and with the scope of Scripture. They are plain and direct. They clearly bind the conscience. So Asaph thought: "I call to mind my song in the night; I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search." Ps. lxxvii. 6. So David practised: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Ps. cxix. 59. Self-examination is, therefore, not a superstition, nor a human invention. We have a divine warrant for it in the word of God: It is as wicked as it is dangerous to neglect this weighty duty. Yet it is but fair to say that

## SELF-EXAMINATION IS A DIFFICULT DUTY.

It is not easy to search and find out our true characters. The Scriptures teach as much. For, "who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Ps. xix. 12. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. This divine teaching well agrees with experience, and with the reason of the case. What is more common than to hear the best men say, "If I know my own heart;" thus confessing that it often deceives them. The soul, like the eye of man, seems better adapted to examine other things than itself. Had man never sinned, his great study would have been

not himself, but the works and perfections of God. How slow and uncertain has been the progress of mental science, although the human mind has always been the same thing that it is now! It is only by some process of *reflection* that the eye can discover its own size, shape, or colour; and it is only when we look into the mirror of truth that we perceive the real qualities of the heart. The mind loves to go forth and gaze on external objects, but self-inspection is a task. Nor is this the worst of our case. Sin has disordered all our powers. It has obscured our view of every spiritual object. It has covered the soul with thick clouds of smoke and darkness, so that it often cannot see what otherwise would be plain enough. There is a veil over the heart, and till that is taken away, we shall neither see the true nature of sin nor the beauty of Him who is altogether lovely. The Bible says that men are blinded, are bewitched, and have the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Sin has also made our self-love very inordinate, so that we do not naturally wish to know our own faults. Nothing so abases and mortifies us as to discover our own hateful corruptions. Men flatter themselves that however wicked their lives may be, their hearts are good. Some complain of bad memories, but how few bewail the plague of an evil nature! "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord pondereth the hearts." Prov. xxi. 2. Let us take

#### SOME ILLUSTRATIONS.

When our first parents were called to an account for sin, were they ready to admit its enormity? The fact of transgressing a plain and reasonable command was undeniable; yet not an expression of humiliation or sorrow escaped the lips of either. Adam lays the blame not on himself, but on his wife, and even on his God. Eve excuses herself by

pointing to the serpent. Yet these persons had committed an offence strongly marked by ingratitude, unbelief, rebellion, and recklessness. Nor were they old offenders. They had never sinned till that day. Look, too, at the Israelites in the days of Malachi. They were dreadfully sunk in sin, and yet they had no right views of their guilt. God says to them, "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words, yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment? . . . Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. . . . Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and, What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" To the Pharisees, Christ said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts." Those hardened hypocrites "trusted in themselves that they were righteous." In fact, the worse men are, the better do they commonly think themselves to be. Saul of Tarsus breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and persecuting the church of God, esteemed himself one of the favourites of heaven, and a model of righteousness. But converted Paul tells a different story. He cries out, "I am not meet to be called an apostle;" "I am less than the least of all saints;" and just before he leaves the world, "I am the chief of sinners." No delusions seem to take a stronger hold of the human mind than those which beget vain self-esteem. John Newton maintains that "lunatics are as reasonable as any persons on earth who glory in themselves." Our Lord tells us that some self-deceptions will be kept up till the judgment day. "Many will

say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matthew vii. 22, 23. Difficult as this duty is, it may yet be performed. Though it is not easy, yet

#### IT IS POSSIBLE.

It is hard to run a race or fight a battle, to acquire a foreign tongue, or learn a new science, yet all these things have been done, well done, and can be done again. We may learn enough concerning ourselves to avoid fatal mistakes. It is a great advantage, that the rules given us to judge ourselves by are the same that will be applied to us in the last day, and are so plain that any honest mind need not mistake their import. Thus when we look into our Lord's sermon on the mount, we are told with the utmost clearness what sort of persons shall win and wear the crown. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart; blessed are the peacemakers; blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Matt. v. 3—10. How simple and how clear! Look too at Paul's enumeration of the qualities of a pious heart. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. v. 22, 23. No one of these qualities in their genuine nature ever belonged to a wicked man; but no unsanctified heart ever had such a semblance of them all, as could have deceived any one who really wished to know the truth concerning himself. The word of God abounds with marks of piety as clear and decisive as these. Nor is this all. It very clearly tells us what characters are odious

to God, and what sort of persons shall never see his face in peace. They are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, and fornicators, and effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners, and backbiters, and tale-bearers, and tale-hearers, and usurers, and those who take bribes, and those who are guilty of adultery, uncleanness, lasciviousness, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, revellings, and such like. Rev. xxii. 15; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Ps. xv., and Gal. v. 19—21. Sometimes the whole of a character is described, and its destiny declared in one short and striking sentence. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "He that loveth is born of God." Sometimes the righteous and wicked are put in contrast thus: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous; he that committeth sin is of the devil." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." So that all the points on which our destiny will be finally decided, are now clearly stated in God's word. More than this, the whole of

#### LIFE IS A TEST OF CHARACTER.

A wicked man utters a profane or obscene expression in your presence: your behaviour will show the state of your mind at that time. A poor man asks alms: your treatment of him is a test of your principles. There is to be a meeting for prayer, and at the same hour a concert is to be given: now you can see where your heart is. God gives Hezekiah great substance, so that he makes himself treasures for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels, and for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil. In time, the

ministers of a foreign court visit him. Here he has a test of his character. Will he indulge, or will he repress his pride and ostentation? The record is brief and sad, but instructive. "Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. . . . God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Do false teachers, showing signs, arise to draw men from truth and from God? You shall not hearken to them, "For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul." Deut. xiii. 3. So that prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, times of judgment and times of mercy, all are tests of our real principles; and if the heart is hidden, the life is open. If you cannot look directly at your desires and principles, yet what are your overt acts? Would you approve of the conduct of an enemy, whose life was the counterpart of your own? Nay, would you bear in a friend some things which you practise yourself? If your heart is good, your life is good. If your life is evil, your heart is bad. So that by comparing your conduct in secret and in public with God's word, you may learn much of your own heart. Moreover, God's Spirit is promised to all who sincerely ask for so great a gift. He enlightens the mind, he convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, he makes manifest the recesses of the soul. In his hand the word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He can, and if you wish it he will show you enough of your sins, and weaknesses, and wants, to make you humble and wise. There is no teacher like this blessed Spirit. He can give you a clear discernment of all you are, and all you need to be. He has guided thousands to a correct knowledge of themselves, and to a saving knowledge of God and of Christ.

#### HOW SHALL WE EXAMINE OURSELVES?

The manner of doing any religious duty is as important as the matter. Indeed, a large part of the miscarriages of

men in spiritual affairs is in this very point. Balaam spoke the truth, but not willingly. Just before his fall Peter declared his love to Christ, but he did it boastfully. Jehu showed great zeal for the Lord of hosts, but he did it ostentatiously. A man may "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," but if he does it bitterly he will have no reward. "Let not your good be evil spoken of." Self-examination may be so conducted as to rivet gross deceptions on the mind. In such case it wholly fails of its object, and ends in shame. It is therefore of great importance that when we enter upon it, we should do it

#### WITH SOLEMNITY.

In such a work carelessness is shocking, and even seriousness is not the word that expresses the right state of mind. Here, if ever, deep solemnity is called for. The nature of the duty is such, the questions to be asked are so weighty, and any conclusion reached will so certainly be reviewed at the last day, and be followed by everlasting consequences, that a mind must be fearfully given over to levity and trifling before it can consent to enter upon such a work without calling home its wandering thoughts and being still. God has no pleasure in fools.

#### IT SHOULD BE DONE FREQUENTLY.

It is too much the practice of men to confine this work to some few occasions. Some think it will be time enough at death. Not a few, perhaps, restrict it to the approach of a communion season. Truly it is a solemn duty to prepare for the Lord's supper by searching our own hearts. "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." 1 Cor. xi. 28. But he who limits the performance of it to such times, will find it irksome then, and so will probably hurry over it and be little profited by it. But he who does something of it daily, and then embraces fit opportunities of specially engaging in it, will find it no wearisome task, but pleasant and profitable.



## LET IT BE DONE THOROUGHLY.

The subjects of inquiry are neither few nor light. They embrace our conformity to or transgression of the whole law of God, our likeness or unlikeness to Christ, and the whole circle of Christian experience, temper, speech and behaviour. We may not seem guilty of violating the whole or the half of the law; but are our hearts or our lives set against any one of its precepts? "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James ii. 10. It seems that Paul went over nine commandments, and never found out his own wickedness till he compared his heart with the tenth. Rom. vii. 7. Let the whole ground be gone over. Let a man search and find out whether in humility he surpasses Ahab; in joy, the stony-ground hearers; in reformation, Herod under John's preaching; in constancy, Demas, who adhered to his profession during a persecution, and then gave it up; in morality, the young ruler; and in faith, the devils, who believe and tremble. Leave no stone unturned. We must not be scared at painful discoveries, nor flattered by finding some things encouraging, and so cut short the work.

## EXAMINE YOURSELF WITH IMPARTIALITY.

This is perhaps the most difficult part of the matter. When a man is to be tried for his life he is not allowed to be his own judge, or witness, or juror, or prosecutor, though he may sometimes be his own advocate. But in self-examination it is different. Here the culprit is the court and decides upon the law; the culprit gives the testimony, frames the charges, pleads both for and against himself, gives the verdict, and pronounces the sentence. If he favours himself there is no one at the time to charge him with error. It is true, his decisions will undergo revision in the last day, and were he wise, he would desire above all things to be approved of God, but the carnal nature of man greatly prefers

security to safety—present ease to future bliss. And yet what is the use of examining any matter, if we are determined before-hand to decide, not according to the law and the evidence, but according to our prejudices or selfish blindness? “Rather think too ill of your soul’s case before God, and of your conduct in life, than too well.”

#### USE SCRIPTURAL TESTS.

The work of self-examination is often marred by introducing tests not found in God’s word. This was the grand error of the pharisees in Christ’s day. The ultraists, fanatics, and hypocrites of every generation, invent rules for judging of character, always taking care to insist much on those which will be favourable to themselves. Thus in all ages we find them straining at gnats and swallowing camels, pronouncing lawful things sinful, curtailing Christian liberty, and standing on punctilios, while they pull down the pillars of truth, justice and mercy. So also in judging of Christian character, one man says you must have a remarkable dream or vision; another, you must hear a voice saying, “Thy sins are forgiven thee;” another, you must be willing to be damned before you can be saved; another has no confidence in a conversion not attended with great terrors; another takes popular notions around him for his guide, and another exalts some whim of his own into a rule of judgment. To such we may well say: “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.” Men should not be surprised that, when they ignore God’s word, they fall into the most dangerous mistakes. “The word that I have spoken, it shall judge him at the last day,” says Christ. A wise man thus resolved: “I will regard the Bible as the only infallible test of character. With this in my hands, if I am deceived as to my spiritual state, it is my own fault.”

#### SELF-EXAMINATION MUST BE ACCOMPANIED WITH PRAYER.

Nature is too weak without help from God rightly to perform any duty. This is so even in the plainest and commonest

affairs of life. How much more then do we need assistance in one of the most difficult of all duties ! Indeed, so impossible is it to do any thing effectual for gaining sound knowledge of our own spiritual maladies and deficiencies without help from God, that if a man should say that he had examined himself without prayer, it would be proclaiming his own folly. In nothing do the truly pious feel need of divine aid more than in this work. It is to them not a terrifying, but a delightful truth that God is omniscient, and tries the reins and the hearts of men. When undergoing that searching examination this was Peter's last resource, "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee." Hear David also, "Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. And again, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ; try my reins and my heart." Ps. xxvi. 2. Such testing of our motives and characters by the illumination and providence of God is of excellent use. Peter tells his brethren, that the trial of their faith was more precious than the most refined gold, and should be "found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

#### BE PARTICULAR.

"Deceit lies in generals." "Am I in the way of duty ? Am I a christian ? Do I sin with my tongue ?" are questions too vague and general to be put to any man's conscience, unless they lead to inquiries respecting the particular ways in which men offend with their lips, or the special marks of a renewed nature, or the several precepts which should govern our lives. It is therefore well in reading the Scriptures to form the habit of often pausing, and asking how our characters stand, compared with God's word. Others have found it very useful to draw up for their own use a list of questions, of a discriminating and

searching character. Others keep by them some little manual to aid them, and if this tract shall be found useful to any one in this respect, it will not have been written in vain. The order of nature would suggest that all scrutiny of the heart be begun by comparing it with

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

“By the law is the knowledge of sin.” No man will cease to seek acceptance with God by his own works, until he is satisfied that he is a sinner, and so cannot be saved in that way. And no Christian can maintain deep humility, and a proper sense of his wants, except as he discovers his short-comings and sins by a knowledge of the law. Luther said that if he failed for one day to meditate on the law, he was sensible of a decline in his pious affections. So that the law, which is holy, just, and good, is a proper study for all classes of people. It is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It is the rule by which we are to walk. To aid those who have not a better help, the following questions are presented.

#### ON THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Do I take and declare the Lord Jehovah to be the only living and true God, and my God? Am I chargeable with ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, or unworthy and wicked thoughts of him? Do I ever boldly and curiously search into his secrets? Am I guilty of any profaneness, hatred of God, vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, or carnal security? Do I love myself more than I love God? Do I seek my own honour more than the glory of God? Do I prefer any thing to God's favour? Do I love communion with him more than the riches, honours, pleasures, and friendship of the world? Do I tempt God? Do I use unlawful means? Do I trust in lawful means? Have I any zeal in his cause, and

is it corrupt, blind, indiscreet, or temporary? Am I lukewarm and dead in the things of God? Am I a backslider or an apostate in my heart? Do I prefer any one before God? Do I worship any one but God, or with God? Do I pray to saints or angels, and so worship them? Do I put my trust in any creature? Do I practise witchcraft, sorcery, magic, or any form of the black art? Do I follow any of Satan's suggestions, or give them any entertainment? Do I make any man, or body of men, the lords of my faith or conscience? Do I slight, neglect, or despise God, his commands, his worship, or his people? Do I resist or grieve his Spirit in anything? Am I impatient or rebellious under any trials? Do I charge God foolishly for the evils he sends on me? Do I ascribe any good which is in me, or which I have or do, to fortune, idols, myself, or any creature? Do I worship God secretly and openly? Do I pray to him, and praise him often and fervently? Do I love to think on his name? Do I fear and delight in him? Is his will my will? Do I walk humbly with him?

## ON THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Do I devise, counsel, command, use, encourage, or approve any worship not instituted by God himself? Do I make, worship, or approve of any representation of God, or of either or all of the three persons of the Godhead, either in my mind, or in any kind of image or likeness? Do I pretend thus to honour God? Do I practise any superstition or will-worship? Do I corrupt, add to, or take from God's worship? Do I hinder or discourage others from duly worshipping God? Do I fast? Do I pay my vows? Do I hate all idolatry?

## ON THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

Do I ever use the name or the word of God in a vain, ignorant, irreverent, profane, or superstitious manner? Do I ever speak or think lightly of his titles, attributes, or

ordinances? What sins am I guilty of in regard to oaths, curses, vows, and lots? Do I ever speak rashly or reproachfully of God? Do I ever jest with sacred things? Do I ever discuss or entertain idle, curious, or perverted views of God, his word, or his providence? Do I ever revile, malign, scorn, or oppose God's truth, grace, or ways? Is my profession of his religion sincere, open, consistent, and holy?

## ON THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

Do I love, remember, and keep holy the Sabbath-day? Are its duties pleasant and profitable? Do I omit or carelessly perform any of them? Am I weary of them or of it? Do I ever spend the day in idleness, in needless sleep, in doing any thing sinful, or in any unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, of a worldly nature? Is holy time a delight to me?

## ON THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

Do I neglect any duty, honour, or love, which should be paid to my parents, teachers, guardians, or rulers? Do I indulge towards them envy, contempt, rebellion, malignity, or scorn? Is my conduct towards them respectful and kind? Do I often and heartily pray for them? Am I reasonable, just, and benevolent towards my inferiors, not unduly seeking my own honour, profit, ease, or pleasure? Do I by precept and example counsel and encourage them in all that is good? Do I guard them against injustice, oppression, fraud, and temptation? Am I bitter towards them? Do I reprove harshly or excessively? Is my conduct just and noble to my equals? Do I decry or envy their worth? Do I usurp authority over them? Do I keep my place?

## ON THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

Have I always taken proper care of my own life, and of the lives of others? Am I guilty of sinful anger, of hatred,

envy, the desire of revenge, excessive passions, distracting cares, or intemperance in the use of meat, drink, labour, or recreations? Do I encourage these things in others? Do I use peevish or provoking words? Do I oppress, quarrel, strike, or wound? Are my thoughts, feelings, words and actions kind, compassionate, meek, gentle, charitable, peaceable, mild, courteous, forbearing and forgiving? Do I give my support to laws which duly punish murder, duelling, fighting and quarrelling? Do I ask the same blessings for my enemies as for myself? Am I glad at calamities befalling my enemies? Am I cruel to brutes?

## ON THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

Do I cherish and encourage all chaste and pure thoughts, purposes, affections, imaginations, words, looks, gestures and actions? and do I hate, resist and discourage all that is contrary thereto? Is my apparel modest? Is my behaviour light or impudent? Do I put all due honour on marriage? Am I guilty of excess in eating, drinking or sleeping? Do I abhor all unchaste company, all lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage-plays, and whatever is impure? Do I control my senses, and hold them back from all that is indelicate?

## ON THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Do I in any way practise, favour, or uphold theft, robbery, man-stealing, fraud, unconscionable prices, the use of false weights or measures, oppression, usury, bribery, vexatious law-suits, idleness, prodigality, gaming, lotteries, cheating or inordinate prizing of worldly goods? Do I remove landmarks? Is my calling lawful? Ought I not to make restitution in some case? Do I lend freely? Am I careful of things borrowed? Am I industrious? Do I beg when I might earn my own bread?

## ON THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

Do I always speak the truth in my heart? Do I promote the good name of all men as I can? Do I abhor perjury,

the suborning of witnesses, untruth, lying, slander, backbiting, detraction, tale-bearing, whispering, flattery, scoffing, reviling, vain boasting, censoriousness, exaggeration and equivocation? Do I listen to false reports? Do I patiently hear a just defence? Do I pronounce unjust sentence? Do I grieve at the good name of any? Do I needlessly mention the faults of any? Do I fairly construe the acts, words and intentions of men? Do I indulge unfounded prejudices against any man? Am I ever silent when I ought to speak? Am I a brawler? Do I keep my promises?

#### ON THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Am I contented with my lot? Do I envy my more prosperous neighbours? Do I grieve at their success? Do I desire any thing belonging to another without giving a fair equivalent? Do I love to show kindness to all, and increase their thrift? Am I fair in making bargains? Are my desires about my worldly estate rational, lawful, sober and moderate?

It will not offend any wise man to know that the foregoing questions have been chiefly framed from the brief exposition of the Decalogue given by the Westminster Assembly; and surely such inquiries must be profitable to all but the careless, and the hardened. Honestly answered, they will cut us off from all hope of salvation by our own innocence, doings or deservings. They will shut us up to the faith of Christ. Thus we shall find it necessary to make new inquiries. I am dead by the law. Have I been made alive by the gospel? In other words

#### AM I A TRUE CHRISTIAN?

Not merely, was I born in a Christian land, or of Christian parents, or educated in Christian doctrine? But have I been ingrafted into Christ, so as to partake of his fatness and fulness? Am I pardoned, accepted and so justified, and



brought into a state of salvation by Christ? This must be confessed to be as important a question as can be framed. It is to be truly and safely answered by comparing our experience, sentiments, habits and lives with the tests of Christian character given in God's word. In this work great discrimination and patience of inquiry are requisite. The rules and marks are plain. The danger is that we will misapply them. From such perversion God's grace will preserve the humble. It is true that there is often a great similarity between the common and special operations of the Spirit; between the meltings of nature and the meltings of grace; between the wise and the foolish virgins; but the difference can be detected and the truth disclosed. Let not the inquiry be, Am I a perfect or an eminent Christian? but am I a real, sincere Christian? A little child is as truly a human being as a grown man. A dollar may be of as pure gold as an eagle. Our inquiry should first be rather for the quality than the quantity of our gracious affections. And as there is little or no coin without some alloy, so there is no man whose heart is always and purely right. The tenor of the life, and not single acts, the bent of the mind, and not its unusual thoughts, the current of the affections, and not a fit of the heart, must determine the character. Self-deceivers often seem like God's people, but they are really very different in several particulars. No self-deceiver has any deep and abiding sense of his own guilt, depravity, ignorance, helplessness and misery, so as to strip him of all hope of ever doing anything effectual for his own salvation. He is wedded to his own doings, thinks he knows something to the purpose, and hopes to do better and to be better. But the real convert knows that he is nothing, knows nothing, can do nothing of himself, and feels that he is a vile, lost sinner, who has no claims on God, no cloak for his sins, no strength to resist evil and no merit of his own. Again, no spurious convert is so pleased with Christ as to take him alone as his Saviour,

Prophet, Priest and King. He may be willing to divide the work and honours of his salvation with Christ, but never relies on Christ solely and joyfully. He always has some other hope, or help, or merit besides Jesus. But the real child of God desires no other way of access to God, nor any righteousness but that of Christ. Christ is enough. In him the renewed soul finds life, and light, and joy, and peace, and wisdom, and pardon, and acceptance, and victory. Besides, no self-deceiver likes the whole law of God. He always feels that some precepts are too strict, that too much is required, and that close conformity to all is not reasonable. Whereas the true convert consents to the law that it is holy, just and good; delights in it after the inner man, and esteems all its precepts concerning all things to be right. If he comes short of its requirements, he still loves the law, and blames himself. Moreover, no self-deceiver grows in conformity to God, in proper tempers, in habits of devotion, or in deadness to the world. He appears as well at the outset of his profession as he ever does afterwards. But the real Christian grows in grace, and knowledge, and humility, and holiness. In him the work is progressive. His "path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But as a truly pious soul has various exercises which are called by different names, let us look at them more in detail.

#### A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

Let us begin with *faith*. A genuine faith rests upon Christ as the Saviour, awakens longing desires after holiness, makes duties pleasant by giving us a love for them, and gives us strength to overcome the world, and to esteem it a base thing in comparison with Christ and his cause. Is my faith of this sort?

Another grace is *repentance*, which is pious sorrow for sin itself, rather than for the punishment it brings with it.

It blushes at a consciousness of any wickedness. It lays the sinner in the dust, and fills him with self-abhorrence. It draws the soul towards God, leads it to hope in his mercy, and sets it against all forms of wickedness. It always has a reforming power. Is my repentance of this kind?

Then comes *love*, which manifests itself in gratitude to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in delight in the whole character of God, in a sincere desire that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done in earth as it is in heaven. True love goes forth to all that is like God, or belongs to God, as his word, his people, his ordinances. Do I thus love?

There, too, is *hope*, which is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and enters within the veil. It animates the soul when in darkness, nerves it to vigorous efforts to please God, looks beyond the bounds of time for a great and gracious reward, and rests assured that through God all will end well. "We are saved by hope." Have I a good hope through grace, and does my hope make me better?

And why should there not be *joy*, even joy unspeakable and full of glory? True, holy joy is not vain, and does not puff up the mind. It makes one bold, but it makes him meek also. It draws its supplies from the existence, perfections, providence, word and ordinances of God. It is strength to the soul. It exhilarates but does not intoxicate the mind. Do I joy in the God of my salvation? Do I rejoice even in tribulation for Christ's sake?

But a mind rightly affected also *fears God*. His majesty and glory awe and hush it into quiet. "Be still, and know that I am God." This fear is not that of a culprit, which has torment in it, but that of a child, which reveres the exalted excellence of its father. It strongly determines the will against sin. It is "clean," and "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." Am I in the fear of the Lord all the day long?

And have I the *peace of God* which passeth all understanding? Do I find that when I have the deepest sense of my sins, I can go to God through Christ, and by *his blood* secure peace of conscience and reconciliation with God my Judge? And is this accompanied with peaceable and forgiving feelings towards all men, even my traducers, persecutors and enemies?

*Do I hate sin?* Do I hate all kinds and degrees of sin in myself, in my friends, and in my enemies, even when it diminishes their power to harm me? Do I rejoice in any iniquity, though it may be ingenious, or popular, or profitable? Do I make it my great business to subdue sin in my own soul? Is the thought of heaven pleasant to me, because once there I shall sin no more?

As to *knowledge*, do I know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent? Do I understand and approve the plan of salvation? Do I study and meditate upon God's word, and pray to be instructed in all his will? Do all my religious sentiments accord with scripture? Do I hate all false doctrine, and love all God's truth, however it may make war on my pride, prejudices, or practice? Do I cry after knowledge, and lift up my voice for understanding? Do I seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures?

As to my *tempers*, are they amiable, gentle, sweet, benevolent, generous, charitable, quiet, placable, forgiving, submissive, patient, obliging, sincere, candid, contented, humble, grateful, and uniform? Are they like the tempers shown by Christ? Do I often and earnestly pray that they may be like his? Am I gaining the victory over any of my evil feelings or sentiments?

As to my *practice*, how would I regard a neighbour whose life I knew to be no better than my own? While I profess to know God, do I in works deny him? Is my conduct consistent with God's word? Do I live in any indulgence, the lawfulness of which is doubtful to myself or to

any good man of my acquaintance? Is holiness to the Lord inscribed on my deportment before my family and before all men? When absent from home do I give a loose to any sin? Is my life marked by tenderness of conscience?

These questions may perhaps meet most cases. Should any desire a longer series, they can easily add to those given above. Your calling, your relations in life, your afflictions, your easily besetting sins, your reading and reflection, will suggest many things. And now the great question is,

#### WILL YOU EXAMINE YOURSELF?

I hope you will. You cannot do a more necessary work. God's word makes it a duty. Rightly performed it brings great blessings with it. It shows us danger which might have swallowed us up. It begets salutary fears and deep humility. It awakens penitence. It puts us upon our guard against temptation. It prepares us for the hour of affliction. It clears up our title to heaven. It makes Christ precious to us. It takes away the terrors of death. On the other hand, reluctance to this duty is one of the worst signs in the case of many. Judas was the last to say, "Lord, is it I?" Instead of using any vehement exhortations to the performance of this duty, I shall simply add a few extracts from the writings of men whose praise is in all the churches. If their testimony will not prevail, my persuasions would be vain.

"Think how much better it will be to discern the mistakes relative to your state, or relative to your thoughts, words and actions now, when sovereign grace may rectify them, than to have them discovered when it is too late to obtain a happy change."—*John Brown of Haddington*.

"When others are censuring and backbiting their neighbours, be you searching and censuring yourselves. Self-examination is a most necessary duty. . . Let conscience bring in the reckonings of every day before you lie down; mourn

over the sins of every day, and apply the blood of Christ for washing them away. Thus keep short reckonings with God and conscience, that you may not have old scores to clear up when you come to a death-bed.”—*John Willison of Dundee.*

“Solitude, silence, and the strict keeping of the heart, are the foundations and grounds of a spiritual life. . . Descant not on other men’s deeds, but consider thine own; forget other men’s faults and remember thine own.”—*Archbishop Leighton.*

“In watchfulness and diligence we sooner meet with comfort, than in idle complaining; our care, therefore, should be to get sound evidence of a good state, and then to keep those evidences clear.”—*Dr. Richard Sibbes.*

As “all must go into the furnace, let every man try his own works; examine yourselves, professors, search your hearts, commune with your own reins: nothing will more encourage you in all the world than this doth.”—*John Flavel.*

“The frequent discussion of conscience, and reviewing our ways, is necessary to our comfortable appearing before our Judge. This is a duty of constant revolution. . . There must be a mournful sight and serious acknowledgment of our daily sins.”—*Dr. W. Bates.*

“Be not afraid to *know the plague of your heart*; the worst of your case, and whatever is amiss in your spirits. Our Saviour observes, (John iii. 20,) that every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. To be averse to bring ourselves to the light, is at once a very bad symptom, and of dangerous tendency. It must either shut us up in a fatal self-ignorance, or prevent our being impartial in our searches.”—*Dr. John Evans.*

“Multitudes of the godly are like idle beggars, who will rather make a practice of begging and bewailing their misery, than to set themselves to labour for their relief;

so do many spend days and years in sad complaints and doubtings, that will not be brought to spend a few hours in examination."—*Richard Baxter*.

"That the Christian life may flourish abundantly, let us be often engaged to *examine ourselves*; since it will be so great a scandal and so great a snare to be strangers at home. Do we not indeed after all *know ourselves*? Let us search, whether *Jesus Christ be in us*."—*Dr. P. Doddridge*.

"Diligence in self-examination is necessary, because, to be deceived in this is the *most stinging consideration*. To drop into hell, when a man takes it for granted that he is in heaven; to dream of a crown on the head, when the fetters are upon the feet, will double the anguish. It is better for a rich man to dream that he is a beggar, for when he awakes his fears vanish, than for a beggar to dream that he is rich, for when his dream ends his sorrow begins. The higher men's expectations of heaven are without ground, the more stinging is their loss of it."—*Charnock*.

"I am satisfied that one great reason why so many real Christians live doubting and die trembling, is the neglect of self-examination. As my comfort in death must depend on my hope of heaven, I will often examine this hope."—*Dr. Ebenezer Porter*.

"'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' This question concerns us, and admits of solution. Indeed, the inquiry would be absurd, if an answer were impossible.

"How then is an answer to be returned? Three evidences may be adduced of our believing on the Son of God. First. Much anxiousness and uneasiness concerning it, in distinction from the temper of those who can readily and easily take it for granted. It is not true, as it is often said, that it is easy to believe what we wish. In proportion as we love and value a thing, we become the more apprehensive, and require every kind of proof and assurance concern-

ing its safety. And here the case is interesting beyond all comparison. It is to ascertain my claims to everlasting life. What if I should be mistaken! And what if I am informed, but not enlightened! convinced, but not converted! almost, but not altogether a Christian!

“Secondly. The estimation in which we hold the Saviour. Hence, says the apostle, ‘To you, therefore, that believe, he is precious.’ He does not say how precious—this would have been impossible. But faith makes him more precious to the soul than sight is to the eye, or melody to the ear, or food to the hungry, or health and life to the sick and the dying. ‘Oh!’ says the believer, ‘when I see him as he is revealed in the word; when I see in him all I want; when I see how he becomes my Saviour; that when he was rich, for my sake he became poor, and died, that I might live; when I know that he is remembering me still, now he is come into his kingdom, appearing in the presence of God for me, and making all things to work together for my good, how can I but exclaim, Thou art fairer than the children of men! His name must be as ointment poured forth.’

“Thirdly. A life of obedience. Without this, an orthodox creed, clear knowledge, high confidence, much talking of divine things, great zeal for a party, will all in vain be called in to denominate you believers in Christ. He is not wise who calls himself so, while all his conduct proclaims him a fool. He is not a benefactor who never does acts of kindness. So he is not a believer who thinks and professes himself to be such, but he who acts and lives as such. ‘As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.’ Though faith can alone justify the soul, works can alone justify faith, and prove it to be of the operation of God.”—*Rev. W. Jay.*

And what am I?—My soul awake,  
And an impartial survey take;  
Does no dark sign, no ground of fear,  
In practice or in heart appear?



What image does my spirit bear?  
Is Jesus formed, and living there?  
Say, do his lineaments divine  
In thought, and word, and action shine?

Searcher of hearts, O! search me still;  
The secrets of my soul reveal;  
My fears remove; let me appear  
To God, and my own conscience clear.

May I, consistent with thy word,  
Approach thy table, O my Lord?  
May I among thy saints appear?  
Shall I a welcome guest be there?

Have I the wedding garment on?  
Or do I naked, stand alone?  
O! quicken, clothe and feed my soul;  
Forgive my sins, and make me whole.