

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON

SEP 05 2008

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BX8955 .A6 1842 v.6
Presbyterian Church in the
U.S.A. Board of Publication.
Series of tracts on the
doctrines, order, and polity
of the
Presbyterian church in the
United States

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. VI.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION

CONTENTS

OF THE

SIXTH VOLUME.

- I. Ruth the Moabitess, or the Power of True Religion. By the Rev. A. Alexander, D. D.
- II. Love to an unseen Saviour. By the Rev. A. Alexander, D. D.
- III. The Lord will give Grace and Glory. By the Rev. W. S. Plumer, D. D.
- IV. The Spiritual Office of the Deacon.
- V. On Backsliding.
- VI. The Duty of Family Religious Instruction. By the Rev. J. P. Carter.
- VII. The Light-House, or Jesus Christ the Light of the World.
- VIII. Soliloquy of an Injured Christian.
- IX. A Word of Counsel to Professors on Moral Honesty.
- X. Love not the World.
- XI. Sympathy with an Afflicted Christian.
- XII. How to use the Bible. By the Rev. W. S. Plumer, D. D.
- XIII. How Sinners are Accepted.
- XIV. On Union with Christ.
- XV. The Application of Redemption, or What is Effectual Calling? From Dr. Green's Lectures on the Shorter Catechism.
- XVI. On Brotherly Love. From James's Christian Professor.
- XVII. Come to Jesus. By Newman Hall, B. A.
- XVIII. It is I, or the Voice of Jesus in the Storm. By Newman Hall, B. A.
- XIX. What Presbyterians believe. By the Rev. A. G. Fairchild, D. D., author of the "Great Supper"
- XX. Plain Divinity or a brief Sketch of the Doctrines of Revelation. By James McEwen.
- XXI. The Young Convert Instructed.

RUTH THE MOABITRESS.

THE wisdom of God is often remarkably displayed in overruling the errors and sins of men so as to accomplish his own ends. Elimelech, a man of the tribe of Judah, and an inhabitant of Bethlehem, who lived in the time of the Judges, was induced by the existence or prospect of want, to emigrate from the Holy Land and settle in Moab, with his wife and two sons. The course which he pursued cannot be justified. He seems to have been a man in good circumstances, for his wife Naomi said on her return, "I went out full," and certainly his condition during the famine would not have been worse than that of many others who remained. But it was especially deserving of censure that he chose for his residence a country where the true God was not known, and where idolatry of the worst kind prevailed. The result answered to the rashness of his conduct. Death, from which he fled, overtook him in a strange land, where the usual helps and means of piety were wanting. His sons, as might have been anticipated, took wives from the daughters of Moab, by which their integrity must have been greatly endangered and their temptations increased, and by which their return to Canaan was rendered more difficult. Indeed, it was determined that they never should return, for they both died shortly, and without children.

By some means, also, the substance which Elimelech brought with him had wasted away in a foreign land, and now his own widow, and the widows of his two sons, were left poor as well as desolate. Parents often emigrate on account of some difficulties which beset them, or to increase their wealth, and imprudently take their families into places

where there are no Sabbaths observed, no sermons heard, no sacraments administered; and where their children grow up under the influence of society as corrupting as that of the Moabites, and form alliances with irreligious people, which prove their snare and vexation, if not their utter ruin. This is a frequent and deplorable folly, and such parents will have a heavy account to give for sacrificing the souls of their children for the sake of worldly advantages.

Naomi, hearing that plenty was restored in Israel, determined to return. Probably she never wished to leave her own land, and therefore, as soon as she had the opportunity, resolved to go back; for the very evil, to avoid which when distant, she had left home, had now come upon her, and made it necessary for her to throw herself upon the kindness of her own relations. She was evidently stricken with poverty, for she seems to have had neither servant nor assistant, except her daughters-in-law, and to have performed the journey on foot. "I went out full," said she to her old neighbours, "and the Lord hath brought me home again empty."

Her daughters-in-law appear to have lived with her, and the only difficulty of returning was, how to dispose of these young women, for they were greatly attached to her. However, she set off, accompanied by them, who went perhaps to aid her on the journey, until she should leave their borders; or perhaps determined to go with her all the way. She, however, unwilling that mere attachment to her should induce them to forego all their worldly prospects, begged them now to return to their mothers' houses, and prayed for a parting blessing on them: "The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that each of you may find rest in the house of her husband." Here a tender scene occurred between them. "She kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept; and they said, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." But Naomi, though no doubt very willing to have them with her,

yet knowing that by such a step they would forsake all their earthly comforts, and not wishing that they should be sufferers on her account, used many arguments to persuade them to return to their friends. The effect of the discussion was different on the two persons, although they were both greatly distressed at the thought of parting with her, for "they lifted up their voice and wept," again; "and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and returned, but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." These last words, I have no doubt, furnish the true reason of Ruth's invincible resolution. Orpah probably loved her mother-in-law as tenderly as Ruth, but she was not weaned from her gods. This seems to be intimated in what Naomi says, "she is gone back unto her people and her gods." But Ruth, by the conversation and instructions of this pious mother in Israel, had been brought to the knowledge and love of the God of Israel. The same means are not equally effectual with all. No doubt they both heard the same truths; but one was taken and the other was left. Thus often two persons hear the same sermon, and beforehand were in much the same state of mind; but to one it proves an effectual call, to the other an empty, or almost a pleasing sound; to the one a savour of life, to the other a savour of death. Thus is the election of grace manifested—brothers are distinguished—sisters are separated. Ruth the Moabitess furnishes a striking example of the power of true religion, which will more manifestly appear by the following observations:

1. The power of true religion appears in making persons willing to abandon all idolatry, and all false notions and corrupt institutions of religion, in which they have been educated,

or to which by inclination they may have been attached. The mind of man is formed to be affected by religion. Man cannot exist in a state above that of the savage without religion. If he forsakes the true, it will be to adopt a false religion; and when the mind falls under the power of any superstition it is held in bondage by a force not easily resisted; and, indeed, the mind thus enslaved has no desire to be liberated until some foreign influence is experienced. It matters not how repugnant the superstitions of any religion are to common sense, or common decency, or even the natural affections and humanity; the conscience once enslaved bows to every deformed idol, worships the meanest reptile, and does violence to all the feelings of human nature without the least resistance. False religions, however, often draw their votaries by the lure of sensual pleasure, or infatuate them with the flatteries of spiritual pride. It is difficult for us to conceive how strongly they are bound who have been educated in a superstitious worship. Montesquieu remarks that men are much more attached to irrational superstitions than to a rational religion. The power which breaks these chains must indeed be mighty. Here, then, we see the triumphs of Christianity to be glorious. At the simple preaching of a few unlearned men thousands and tens of thousands abandoned those religions in which they had been brought up, and to which they were attached by all the principles of corrupt nature and inveterate habit. They threw away their dumb idols and turned to the service of the living God. And every instance of conversion from Paganism now shows the power of true religion, which is no other than the power of God.*

* See the wonderful power of the gospel in the conversion, civilization, and exaltation, of the people of the Sandwich Islands.

See the same among the besotted inhabitants of Southern Africa, and also among the aborigines of our own country. Here are facts which cannot be denied, and to what cause can they be attributed but to the power of God accompanying the gospel?

Ruth the Moabiteess was brought up an idolater, no doubt, but sovereign grace had touched her heart. By hearing she had been brought to believe, and under the influence of this new principle she turns her back on all the false deities which she had been accustomed to revere, and says to a pious Israelite, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." But, in truth, all who ever turn to God are influenced by the same power. Though not open idolaters they have their idols. They are bound in fetters of iniquity. They are under the dominion of pride, of covetousness, of ambition, of envy, of intemperance, of the love of pleasure, of evil habits, of irregular passions, of craving appetites. They know not God, nor love him, however carefully educated. They are "by nature children of wrath even as others." If any have been converted unto God, every such person is a witness of the power of religion. The opposition in none is small. Every heart in its natural state is blind and dead, "at enmity with God, and not subject to his law;" and all those who have experienced this blessed change are ready to think and say that they, of all others, were farthest off from God, when he was pleased effectually to call them by his grace. They have also abandoned their false notions of religion: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

2. The power of religion is manifest in making persons willing to forsake their nearest and dearest earthly relatives, when their duty to their God and Saviour requires it. Those ties which bind men together are often so strong that they will lay down their lives for the preservation of those who are nearly related to them. But the love of Christ is stronger than all natural affections—stronger than the love of life itself. If our Lord had not known the power of his religion, he would never had laid down such terms of discipleship, as to forsake *father and mother, wife and children, houses and land, yea our own life for his sake*. But what he requires

he strengthens his disciples to perform. Who can tell how often the tender bonds of nature and friendship have been severed by an invincible resolution to follow Christ? This has often set the daughter against the mother, and the mother against the daughter. The religion of Christ has been the innocent occasion of sowing discord among the nearest relatives, not because it has any such tendency in itself, but because it powerfully and effectually calls poor sinners from among their friends, who, being dead in sin, are unwilling to let them go, and vainly strive by force to keep them back from following Christ. Thus parents have been found obstructing their children's way to heaven, and husbands that of their wives, by which the words of Christ are verified, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Ruth left all her friends for the sake of God and his people. Her own mother was still living, but she would not be persuaded to stay back on her account. She had formed a new connection paramount to all natural bonds. She is now in heart one of the Lord's people, and with them she is determined to go. Whether her friends attempted to hinder her we are not informed. The probability, however, is, that they neglected no persuasion, spared no pains, to detain their amiable relative. But however they might allure or threaten, her language, we may suppose, was, "Hinder me not. The love of God and his people constraineth me. I cannot part with God and his service to gratify you." And even now it is often the case, that they who will be Christians in reality, have to leave their dearest friends behind them, and not unfrequently incur their displeasure. How this comes to pass in a Christian land may be difficult to understand, but that such is often the fact is indisputable. Parents are displeased with their children for engaging in the service of the great Creator, and husbands with their wives. But the grace of God enables them to triumph. They would gladly take all their friends with them to heaven; but if they

will not go, they must bid them farewell. And Christ will, even in this world, make up their loss "an hundred fold." In matters of salvation we must not follow our friends and forefathers, unless we are convinced they were right.

3. The power of true religion is again manifest in leading its votaries to choose the service of God, and the people of God, although the choice is in direct opposition to natural inclinations and worldly interests, and even though poverty and affliction should be the inevitable consequence. This is a good description of true religion. It consists in the deliberate choice of God as our God, and of his people as our people. They who make this choice have been divinely illuminated. Of all such it may truly be said, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto them, but their Father who is in heaven." But to those who have spiritual knowledge of God's glory, and some experience of the preciousness of a Saviour, crosses, poverty, and even persecution, appear to be trifling considerations, which have no effect in hindering them from continuing steadfast in adherence to the service of God. Ruth might have had good prospects of earthly comfort in Moab—but she did not regard these. Her mother-in-law, to whom for the sake of her God she attached herself, was very poor; and in the land of Israel the inheritance of her husband had been alienated, and she had no near relatives to redeem it. She returned therefore with the full prospect of pinching poverty before her. Hard labour, and the kindness of her old neighbours, seem to have been her only earthly resources; and yet Ruth, knowing all this, consents to cast in her lot with her, to share this poverty, and this labour; not merely consents, but will not be persuaded to relinquish the object. She chooses it with all her heart, determined to live and die with her friend. Her solemn asseveration when urged to return, was, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Thus Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing

rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season!" And thus every true Christian chooses Christ and his cross, well knowing that if there is no cross, there will be no crown. We must deliberately count the cost and come to a decision, that let others do what they may, as for us we will serve the Lord.

4. The power of true religion is remarkably manifest in this, that it enables its possessor to stand firm when others turn back. When religion flourishes, there will be some who profess to follow Christ, and yet *have no root in them*. The blessed Saviour most strikingly characterizes them by the seed sown on a rock, which, though it quickly sprung up, soon withered away. During Christ's ministry, many followed him for a season,—but they were led on by low and selfish motives. And when their carnal expectations were disappointed, they would proceed no further, but "went back from him." Thus it was in the apostolic churches; some of high professions and high standing fell away. But the foundation of God is immovable, for the "Lord knoweth them that are his." "They went out from us because they were not of us." These are sifting times. Satan is ready to suggest to the sincere disciple, "you may as well follow the example," and for a moment the pious soul may be ready to slide, while he sees those apostatising of whose piety he had entertained a much more exalted opinion than of his own. But there is in him an imperishable seed, and he cannot sin deliberately. No, *his heart is fixed*, and however many may *draw back unto perdition*, his resolution becomes stronger; like the oak shaken by the storm he takes firmer root. When Orpah took her last leave of Naomi, and turned her back on Canaan and on the God of Israel, and returned to her former people, and to her gods, it was a thing well adapted to shake the resolution of Ruth, for their circumstances were alike; but she does not hesitate, she seems more determined than ever to go forward—"Entreat

me not," is her language. True grace never shines brighter than in the day of trial. If all should forsake Christ within the reach of his acquaintance the true disciple will not.

5. The power of religion appears, not only in *resolving* and *choosing*, but more especially in *acting* and *enduring*. Ruth goes to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law. The whole town is moved on their arrival, "And they said, Is this Naomi?" And she said, "Call me not Naomi, (which signifies *pleasant*) but call me Mara, (which signifies *bitter*) for the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me." Ruth is now in a strange land, and her mother-in-law being old, the burden of labour falls on her. The poor in Israel had a right by the law to the scattered stalks which the reapers left, and to every handful which they dropped, and to any sheaf which they forgot, and to what grew in the corners of the field. The poverty of these two widows is further evident, from the circumstance of Ruth's going out to glean after the reapers, from day to day. But she made no complaint. She cheerfully performed her duty, and patiently submitted to these humiliating circumstances.

True religion shows its power when it produces true contentment in indigent circumstances, especially if those who exhibit it have seen more prosperous days. Pride is clamorous, and unbelief discontented and desponding, but godliness is contented with food and raiment, and thankful for the very crumbs which others despise.

There is scarcely any situation in which piety appears more charming, than when exhibited in humble, obscure circumstances, cheerful, contented, and industrious. If such piety should be scorned by proud men, there is one who regards it with complacency, and often delights to exalt the humble. Jesus himself set the example of a life of poverty, and he will not be unmindful of those who walk in his steps, and occupy the same station which he voluntarily assumed, for he had no place to lay his head, and condescended to

subsist on the bounty of the women of Galilee, who ministered unto him.

1. The first application of this subject will be to the young. Be decided—be resolute. Determine like Mary to make choice of the one thing needful; and like Ruth, that God shall be your God, and his people your people. Especially to young women—endeavour to become truly pious and to form connections with pious people. Be willing to leave all for Christ. Venture to trust him, and he will compensate.

2. The next application will be to the poor, and especially to poor widows in reduced circumstances. Let such trust in the Lord and do good. Let them be incessant in prayer, night and day, for the importunity of such will prevail. Let them learn how to be abased and to be in want, and to bear the reverses of fortune with cheerful submission and contentment. God is honoured, and is pleased with the exercise of trust, submission and contentment.

3. God often grants great and unexpected relief to his suffering poor. He raises up friends who are able to help them, and sometimes he advances the pious from a low condition to great honour and affluence. Ruth, though obliged to glean in the field after the reapers for a scanty subsistence, was destined to fill a higher station, for God had prepared for her a husband, a rich and honourable man. And she became the ancestor of David and Solomon, and all the kings of Israel, and what was an infinitely greater honour, of the Messiah, “the desire of all nations.”

4. We see the encouragement which pious females have to be constant and faithful in their exertions to do good to their relations, who may be ignorant of God and negligent of their salvation. Their instructions may not take effect on all, but if they can be the means of converting one soul, how great the reward!

THE END.

LOVE

TO

AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

“Whom having not seen ye love.”—1 PETER i. 8.

THE strangers dispersed through Asia Minor, to whom this epistle was addressed, had never seen the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. But having been induced to attend on the ministry of the apostles and evangelists, who represented to them the facts relating to the Saviour of the world, and confirmed their testimony by miraculous signs, they, under the illumination of the Spirit, believed in him; and their faith was accompanied by love to him whom they had not seen. “Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

It is related of the great Augustine that he was wont to express his regret that he could not see three things which had occurred before his time, namely, “Christ in the flesh, Paul in the pulpit, and Rome in its glory.” As it regards the first of these, it is probable that most Christians have experienced something of the same pious curiosity. We are very naturally inclined to envy the condition of those who were contemporaneous with our Lord; and who is there among living Christians, who would not consent to perform a long pilgrimage to enjoy the sight of this divine Personage, even for an hour? Such a curiosity was felt by many who resided in distant countries, while he was upon earth. Thus, we read, that certain Greeks, no doubt proselytes, as soon as they arrived at Jerusalem to attend one of the Jewish festivals, began immediately to inquire for him, saying: “We would see Jesus;” and others said, “Where is He?” Earnest

search was therefore made for him; and when it was understood that the Lord Jesus was approaching by the way of the Mount of Olives, multitudes went out to meet him, and, for the moment, were filled with enthusiastic affection, and cried out with a loud voice, "Hosannah to the Son of David! Hosannah in the highest!"

But however natural the curiosity may be, there is reason to think that its gratification would be attended with very little benefit. When Christ tabernacled in the flesh, he was seen by unbelievers as well as believers; by bitter enemies as well as by his friends. Judas was not in the least benefited by familiar intercourse with him for several years. He was seen by the chief priests, scribes, and elders, when arraigned before the Sanhedrim; also by the soldiers who apprehended him and bound him. By Pilate, and by Herod and his men of war. By the executioners who scourged him, and then nailed him to the cross; and by the multitudes, who were witnesses of his crucifixion; but the sight of the Saviour had no beneficial effect on any of these. And if Christ should again be manifested (as he will be) to the world, not in humiliation but in glory, unless the Holy Spirit should renew the minds of the beholders, there would be no love to the Saviour generated by the external vision of his majesty. Indeed, when he shall come, "every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him," and the only effect will be that all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. The whole human race shall see Christ on the judgment seat, but only they who believed on him here, will rejoice in his appearance.

A sight of Christ's body is not at all necessary to the exercise of a true faith. This he emphatically taught after his resurrection, in the case of Thomas, who was not with the other apostles when Christ first appeared to them collectively. But eight days after, when Thomas was present, "came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." Then saith he to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God! Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed, Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

It is not even necessary to a true faith, nor auxiliary to it, that a lively image of the Saviour be formed in the imagina-

tion. Faith is no fancy. And if the sight of Christ himself, whether in his habiliments of humility, or robes of light and glory, would have no tendency to generate a true faith, then certainly, no picture or painting of Christ—which must be fictitious—ever can afford us any real aid in believing, or in spiritual worship. People are indeed affected and excited by such representations, but these effects have little or no affinity with the true spirit of devotion. They rather hinder than help by turning the attention of the worshipper to an external object, when it should by faith be contemplating the spiritual beauties of the Son of God.

Some, perhaps, may find a difficulty in conceiving how a person never seen can become the object of affection. But a little reflection will make this matter plain. Eminent benefactors are often highly esteemed and loved by those who never saw them. The blind, who never saw their nearest relatives, have as strong affection for their parents, brothers, sisters, and friends, as any others.

If a parent should conceal himself from the view of his children, and yet should often speak to them, giving them lessons of wisdom and piety, and bestowing on them daily favours, would not such a parent be loved by dutiful children? Indeed, in all cases where we do see those whom we most highly esteem, it is not the visible bodily frame which is the object of our affection, but the invisible mind which manifests its sentiments and feelings, through the countenance and actions of the body. Where there is rational affection of esteem, founded on the perception of moral worth, the body may change, and its beauty and freshness may be turned into deformity and decrepitude, and yet there shall be no diminution of our esteem. All that is most amiable in the most beautiful face, has relation to the dispositions of the heart, of which the countenance is the expressive index. A person far off and never seen may be loved—therefore a person who really lives in another world may be sincerely loved. God is necessarily invisible, because he is a pure spirit, but he is supremely loved and adored by all the heavenly hosts.

Love to an unseen Saviour includes a knowledge of his true character. We cannot truly love a being of whom we know nothing. And it will not answer to substitute our own imaginations for the true knowledge of Christ. The word, being the fountain of all truth, must be our guide in thinking of the Saviour. Here Christ is set forth in all his per-

sonal and official characters. Here his divine virtues, his discourses, and his patient sufferings are recorded. Many are for turning from the written word to some delusive light which they fancy to be within them. They turn away from the true Christ to a false one, which they have formed to themselves. Be exhorted then, to behold the character of your Lord, as portrayed in his word.

Love to an unseen Saviour is by faith. Faith works by love. Where an object is not seen it must be believed in, otherwise there can be no affection exerted.

Love to an unseen Saviour includes a high veneration and esteem for his character. The sentiment called esteem is known to all. We feel it toward men of excellence; and it is a feeling which we naturally desire to have exercised toward ourselves. When excellence superior to human, and united with great power and wisdom, is found in any person, this esteem rises to reverence. There is experienced a holy awe, and an humble sense of inferiority. This may especially be called, "the religious feeling." It is the emotion of which we are most conscious, when we obtain any clear impressive views of the character of God. Whenever God is felt to be near, this feeling predominates. It is, therefore, often put for the whole of internal religion, and becomes the characteristic of sincere worshippers. They that fear God are, in the language of the Scriptures, the truly pious.

As love to any one includes a desire to come into the presence of the beloved, so especially love to an unseen person is accompanied with an ardent desire, if he cannot be seen, yet to be near him. The believing soul, smitten with the love of Jesus, is full of desires. Like the spouse, its language is, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? I sought him but I found him not." These desires are not only after the comfortable presence of the Saviour, but after conformity to him, and after the possession of those gifts by which the person may be enabled to glorify his name. There is no surer characteristic of a sincere lover of Christ, than a habitual desire to be like Christ, and an ardent zeal to promote his glory, and this every sincere soul is conscious of, in some degree. "My soul thirsteth after God, the living God." "When shall I come and appear before God?"

Delight in God is also included in love. Indeed, this may be said to be the very essence of love. It is a holy complacency in Christ. The soul reposes in the contemplation of his charac-

ter, and enjoys a sweet pleasure. All the traits of his character are pleasing. "He is the chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely." One bright view of his excellence and beauty ravishes the soul with unspeakable delight. "Whom having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Joy and love are twin sisters, and they are very much alike, and cannot be separated. "Delight thyself in God, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart."

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

"His name is like ointment poured forth."

Another exercise of love to Christ is gratitude. The Redeemer is exhibited as a chief Benefactor. All that is said of him in the Scriptures relates to his grand work of redeeming human sinners. Here we read of his love, his eternal love, which put him on this work of salvation. Here we have the history of his deep humiliation, when he became incarnate in our nature. Here we behold the man of sorrows, the persecuted, despised Nazarene; the man whose visage was more marred than that of any man—burdened with our griefs and sorrows, and at last crucified, in circumstances of overwhelming disgrace and agony. Now, all this love, all this suffering, exhibits the benefactor of man. All other Saviours are eclipsed, when compared with the Son of God. Their services are lost in insignificance, in comparison with his work.

Now as Christ is exhibited as performing the part of a benefactor, in all his mediatorial work, of course, the feeling above all others, which corresponds with his revealed character is gratitude. Much of the exercise of true religion, therefore, consists in gratitude; and much, very much, of our sin consists in ingratitude. A thankful penitent heart is, therefore, the frame which becomes us. For such love as that of Christ's there should be an everlasting flow of gratitude from our hearts, and a continual song of praise while we have a being. And this feeling of gratitude, though often sadly deficient now, will hereafter overflow from the redeemed to all eternity, and there shall be a song of praise commenced

which shall never cease—"To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

The only inference which I would deduce from the foregoing discourse is, that if we here love a Saviour whom we have never seen, and whom we can only approach by faith, how strong will be our love when we shall see him face to face, and find ourselves not only in his real presence, but inclosed in his affectionate embrace! And when we see him, we shall be like him, both in soul and body, "for we shall see him as he is." And "beholding his glory we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

God being a Spirit cannot be seen with corporeal eyes, either in this world or the next; but his glory shines illustriously in the face of his Son. And whosoever seeth the Son seeth the Father also, for the Father and Son are one. Here our views of Christ are only by faith, but in heaven we shall see him face to face, and know as we are known. Here our love to the Saviour is feeble, on account of the dimness of our vision, and often interrupted by dark clouds, and earthly affections which draw us away from the contemplation of the character of our Redeemer; but in heaven there will be no interposing obstacles to veil his glory, or counteracting affections to enfeeble or interrupt our perfect love. Happy, happy condition of those who loved a Saviour, whom they never saw, when they shall see him as he is, and be like him. They will never be weary of gazing on his lovely face—they will never cease to give him thanks and praise for his unparalleled, unspeakable love, to which they will for ever acknowledge their indebtedness for salvation.

THE LORD WILL GIVE GRACE AND GLORY.

THESE are precious words. They are sweeter than honey, more animating than music, more refreshing than wine. They have often cheered the disconsolate, given courage to the faint, and set on fire the hearts of good men. They are right words. *The Lord will give grace and glory.* Let us weigh their import.

THE LORD. Jehovah, self-existent, independent, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, merciful, and gracious; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He is almighty, and so cannot be resisted; knows all things, and so cannot be deceived; is all-wise, and so takes the cunning in their own craftiness; is love, and so cannot be unkind; is just, and so can do no wrong; is true, and so cannot lie. He made, supports, guides, and governs all things. Of him, and by him, and to him are all things. The Lord, Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, is all our hope and all our salvation.

The Lord will. He has said so. He has sworn so. His word and his oath are "two immutable things." He has covenanted with his people and with his Son to do these things. He never breaks covenant. "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations." His honour is engaged. His truth is pledged. He has already made good his promise to myriads as poor and needy, as weak and helpless, as wicked and rebellious as sinners of the present day.

The Lord will give. He will not bargain and sell, but he will give. Nothing on earth could buy what he is willing to give. All things on earth are of no value compared with what he will give. Rivers of oil, the cattle on a thousand hills, the gold of Ophir are trash in his sight. His blessings are not for sale, but for gift. Purchase them you never can, but you may have and hold them as gratuities. Bring no money, no goodness, no merits of your own with you. "Thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money." "Al-

our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." He will *give* his good things. This suits every man. We are all poor and vile and rebellious and guilty. If we get any thing, it must be as beggars get alms. We cannot, as some of them, plead that we have been made poor by misfortune, by fire or flood or shipwreck or earthquake. Our *iniquities* have been *our* ruin. Sin is a *crime*, not a misfortune. It is *wicked* to be a sinner. Nor can we say, as some beggars, that we are poor by injustice. God has never robbed us. We have robbed him. He has been righteous in all his ways. In him is *no* iniquity. He never gathers where he has not strewed. We have loved sin and estrangement from God. We have destroyed ourselves. Beggars sometimes want but little, one loaf, one garment, one shilling. We cannot say so. We want all things. We need pardon for countless and heinous offences. We need white raiment, a righteousness in which the eye of God can see no rent, no spot, no blemish. We need holiness, strength, instruction. We are as poor as sin can make us. We need all things. Nor can we, like some beggars, promise, that if our present wants are supplied, we will ask no more, but will help ourselves. We shall need more to-morrow than we shall get to-day. We shall need more at death than we shall get in life. Yet we are like beggars, because we need favours, and can give no equivalent in return. We need gifts, alms, gratuities. It is very kind in God to say that he will *give* his blessings. But *what* will he give?

The Lord will give GRACE. That is the very thing we need. We need nothing half so much as grace. Men and angels cannot bestow that. If we can but have grace, we shall have food and raiment and health and friends and comforts, as long and as plentifully as God sees to be best for us. Christ said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He who has grace, shall have whatever else will do him real good.

But what is *grace*? It is kindness to the undeserving. It is favor to the guilty. It is love to those who merited wrath. It is pity to men perishing in sin. It is mercy to the lost. This, all this, is what we greatly need. Unless we get it, we are all dead men. Without it, there is no hope nor help for us. This grace is free. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is the grace of *God*.

It is bestowed by God alone. He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." "The LORD will give grace." It is rich grace. So we read, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." Were sweeter words ever uttered? Who would suspect that they were written by a prisoner of the bloody Nero? Paul knew not what day he might be ordered to a violent death, yet he did not spend his time in denouncing tyranny, nor in filling the ears of his friends with the story of his wrongs, but in extolling the grace of God.

This grace is rich in its storehouse. The bosom of God is an ocean of love. This grace is rich in its fruits. They are pardon of sin, acceptance with God, adoption into his family, renewal of heart, repentance, faith, hope, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, humility, courage, contentment, victory; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. When God gives grace, he gives "more grace," even "grace for grace." The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This grace is all we need for any trial. "My grace is sufficient for thee." It sustains, it restrains, it cheers, it defends. It makes the triumph sure. It is better than gifts of tongues, of teaching, of miracles, of prophecy, of healing, of casting out devils, of raising the dead, of understanding all mysteries. The least grace is better than the greatest gifts. To hunger and thirst after it, is better than to possess all wealth, all honour, all pleasure besides. Where grace works, it works efficaciously. It is lively, not dead, not dormant, not feeble. It is stronger than man's corrupt nature.

It is greatly celebrated by prophets and apostles. One cries, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Another, speaking for all his brethren, says, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." This grace is much extolled by good, though uninspired men. One says, "Nothing but free grace makes any difference between me and the vilest of sinners." Another says, "There is not a round in the ladder

to heaven, which doth not give to every one that steppeth upon it, just occasion to sing of grace." Another says, "I know no sweeter way to heaven than through free grace and hard trials together. And where grace is, hard trials are seldom wanting." Another says, "Two things I chiefly know: one is, that I am a great sinner; the other is, that Jesus Christ is a great Saviour. O the riches of divine grace." Another dying, said, "I have altered my mind about many things, but I am now of the same mind I was as to grace and salvation through Christ." When Christ shall bring forth the headstone of his living temple, all the redeemed shall "shout, Grace, grace unto it." Nor is this all. "Grace is the silver link that draws the golden chain of glory after it." So we read,

The Lord will give grace AND GLORY. "Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant. Grace is glory begun, glory is grace made perfect. Grace is the first degree of glory, glory is the highest degree of grace." Grace is worth living for, glory is worth dying for. It is the perfection of holiness and happiness, the fulness of bliss without alloy and without end.

But will the Lord give grace and glory to *sinner*s? Yes, to sinners. Christ says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

But will he give these blessings to *great* sinners? Yes, to great sinners. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," says Paul. Did he not save the chief of the publicans, the chief of the harlots, and the thief on the cross? His "blood cleanseth from all sin."

Do any ask, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered that very question thus: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

But say some, "Is it not too late?" God shall answer: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."

THE SCRIPTURAL OFFICE

OF

THE DEACON.

EVERY well organized association has a competent number of officers, wisely distributed according to the several duties which are to be discharged. The church under the Mosaic dispensation was a perfect model in this respect. Nor can we believe that amid the fulness of gifts, which she has received under the more excellent dispensation of the gospel, it was ever intended that she should present a less perfect aspect. The covenant under which she is formed is "well ordered in all things and sure;" and it would seem natural that the frame-work of her administration should correspond with the perfect and precise arrangements of this covenant. Hence we find that when our Lord "ascended up on high, and gave gifts to men," he bestowed upon his church a perfect arrangement of functions and distribution of gifts. "And God hath set (or constituted) some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." These functions and gifts were many of them specially adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the church at the time when they were given. But some were intended for the nourishment and guidance of the

church in all ages, at least until her membership shall be translated from their scenes of conflict to their triumphant reward.

Among the latter falls the office of the deaconship, which appears included in the above enumeration under the title of "helps." The same circumstances which demand the continuance of the offices of minister, pastor, and ruling elder, also require that of the deaconship, though with varied degrees of intensity according to the exigencies of the times.

During the first days of her existence the apostles were the only regularly appointed office-bearers in the church, and upon them fell the whole burden of all that was necessary for the preservation, increase, and comfort of its members. With single-hearted fidelity they gave themselves to their work, having the care of administering the word and ordinances, and providing for the temporal wants of the poor, among those thousands of disciples born in a day, by the power of the Spirit, who were cast by their prolonged stay in Jerusalem, upon the sympathy of their brethren for support.

It would seem probable that the apostles had not discharged the duty of distributing to the necessities of the poor disciples personally, but while maintaining the oversight, had committed the execution of the details to persons of their own selection, among the Jews of Palestine. We can scarcely suppose the disciples would have murmured against persons they revered so highly as they did the apostles; or that there would have been any ground for complaint, on account of partiality, had the apostles personally performed the duty. In the daily distributions from the common fund accruing from the gifts of the benevolent, the widows and destitute persons among the Hellenistic or Grecian Jews were neglected. This, or the supposition of such neglect, led to great complaints among them, against the Hebrews or Palestine Jews. This circumstance induced

the apostles to call an assembly of all the disciples and state to them as recorded in Acts vi. 2: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word." This proposition of the apostles was well received by the body of the disciples, who chose the *seven*, as it is conjectured from their names, from the Grecian Jews, with the exception of one, who was a proselyte of Antioch. These persons, thus selected, were set apart by the apostles to their office, with prayer and laying on of hands.

This is the simple and concise account which is given of the origin and institution of this office. It originated in a peculiar exigency in the history of the church. Having been once established, however, it seems evident that it was designed as a perpetual institution. The *gradual* adoption or moulding of the form, or external polity of the church by the apostles, was the most convenient mode of its establishment in their times. But when this form has been perfected through their instrumentality, it is most exactly adapted to the state of the church in every age of the world. Her wisdom will be found in giving it the whole form, which has been thus established. To say nothing of the *impropriety* of her omitting anything which her Lord has appointed, such an omission is evidently most unsafe. The least reprehensible description that can be given of it, is to call it an *irregularity*. If one irregularity be countenanced, especially in sacred things, the door is opened for numberless others, and the development of the principle, of which this is the germ, would most effectually sweep away all the bulwarks of the church. The ministers of the gospel in the present day are not clothed with apostolic authority, to form the church according to exigencies which may arise.

This work has been done for them. A form has been given to the church suitable for all circumstances and ages, and the business of her ministry is to mould the church in strict accordance with this divinely appointed model. Prudence, as well as faithfulness, requires that the particulars of this form be all adopted immediately upon the organization of a church, and if any of them have been delayed or neglected, that the defect should be remedied as speedily as possible. The sentiment of nearly the whole Christian world seems united upon this point, that the deaconship is a perpetual office. All the various denominations of Christendom, and the various sects calling themselves Christian, retain the office, at least in theory, though they may pervert the institution in practice.

The care of the poor appears to have been the direct object of their appointment, having been originally selected for this office, that they might relieve the apostles of this additional burden. This is by some regarded as their great or only business. Hence they consider the deacons as equivalent to *overseers* of the poor, and think the office unnecessary in the church, in countries where the community makes provision for the support of the poor. The influence of Christianity is strikingly seen in the attention paid to the poor in Christian lands. Where the influence of the gospel does not reach, the poor have no friends. Love to our neighbour, shown in acts of well-doing, is the direct effect of the Christian spirit. The prevalence of this benevolence throughout communities is a subject for thanksgiving on the part of the church, showing the wide-spread influence of the principles she professes.

The supposition that the church has, in this matter, left too much to the community, to our apprehension becomes a fact. She has shown herself too willing to be eased of her proper burdens, and to throw them upon the shoulders of the state. The example of the apostolic church, and the prac-

tice of the early Christians, clearly show the fact that the primitive church always supported their own poor. And those churches which adhere most strictly to the apostolic practice are particularly careful not to allow their poor members to be dependent upon "the cold charities of the world." The aid which is given by brethren, by partakers of the same Spirit, faith, love and hopes, will surely be more acceptable to the impoverished and suffering Christian, than that which is wrung from the unwilling hands of town-overseers, whose very position too often leads them to favour grudgingly and give sparingly. Aid from the former quarter, becomes not only a testimony of interest, but a strong bond of affection. The Christian feels that he is one beloved and remembered in his distress by his brethren, and his gratitude is excited both to them and their common Lord.

Picture to yourself one of the early Christians deprived of his property, if he had any, and confined within the damp walls of a gloomy dungeon, for his adherence to the faith of Christ. Subjected to cruelty and pining want, he feels that all earthly blessings are fled, and the tie which binds him to his Saviour is the only solace of his soul in the hour of its deep distress. He is startled from these and similar meditations by the fearful tread of the jailer. The dismal creak of the lock, and harsh grating of the door as it turns upon its hinges, awaken fearful forebodings of the object of this dread visit. Now he must again confront his malignant accusers, be condemned by a cruel and unjust judge, be scourged and tortured, and perhaps speedily be consigned to a violent death. But these fears are dissipated by the appearance of a familiar friend in the person of one of the deacons of the church to which he was attached, who comes bringing to the sufferer tokens of the kind remembrance of his brethren, and supplies for his wants. His heart leaps up in gratitude to God. The bond of love which binds him to the household of faith is strengthened, and when words

of encouragement, and assurances of earnest prayer being made for him by the church, are given, he feels willing to suffer the will of the Master, and glorify God thereby. The persecutions which the primitive Christians endured rendered this office an efficient instrument in ministering to the wants of the poor and suffering. Let it be remembered, however, that it was established at a time when the church was free from persecutions, and enjoyed comparative ease and prosperity.

Although particularly appropriate to the dark and suffering periods of the church, like all the other divine institutions it is equally adapted to all the circumstances which may arise in this imperfect world. This adaptation evidences that it is an expedient of divine wisdom. The poor we have always with us; to them the gospel is preached, and from their ranks are taken the great majority of its converts. The same obligation rests upon the church to take care of her poor that did in her early history. There is the same propriety in her use of the divinely appointed instrumentality for this end. God has made a division of labour in sustaining and up-building the church, and this division is most wise and happily adapted to accomplish the end in all ages and circumstances. We may go farther, and safely say, that it is better adapted than any human expedient or substitute to accomplish the design. But aside from this adaptation, it becomes not us to sit in judgment upon the divine arrangements, and decide upon the expediency of their adoption. God has decided that matter for us; and our proper business is to carry out this decision, and perfect these arrangements. Have we any more right to omit this agency, or substitute another in its place, than we have to neglect the preaching of the gospel, or to substitute the circulation of Bibles and evangelical books in place of the oral teachings of the pulpit? Some may suppose that the press might perform the work as well, if not better

than the established agency. But God has determined "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." God regards the poor, intends that his people shall care for them, and has appointed the deaconship as a proper agency to carry this intention into effect.

Those churches which care for the poor, increase in numbers and strength. This fact is understood even by the adherents of a pseudo-Christianity. One great cause of the strong hold which the church of Rome has upon the minds of her votaries, is found in her benevolent provisions for the poor, and in her charities. These are often more specious than real, yet they gain for her a reputation for benevolence; and has she not preserved herein the germ of the principle of the apostolic appointment of deacons, though she has obscured it by human inventions? The church of Christ should be eminently benevolent, not only to the souls, but also to the bodies of men, herein following the example of her Founder and Head, who went about doing good. The missionary of the cross, who with a competent knowledge of medicine, gives a portion of his time to healing physical diseases, is doing his Master's work, by which a door will be opened for his benefiting the souls of men. Why should not the church in all her branches cultivate a similar spirit, and keep constantly on hand a fund to be expended in relieving through her appointed officers the distresses of the poor and suffering? In doing this work, she might attend to the needy within her own bounds first, and then extend her beneficence according to her ability to others in her neighbourhood. An opportunity would thus be afforded the deacons as almoners of this bounty to speak a word in season which should be blessed, and many recipients of this bounty might be induced to turn their steps to the house of God, hear his word, and secure the life of their souls. The amount of influence which is lost to the church in leaving the care of the poor to the community or to

uncertain benevolence is incalculable. The church should be foremost in every good work, and lead therein in such a way as reflects honour, through her, upon the Master, instead of causing a revenue of praise to accrue, through her supineness, to some irresponsible association. The neglect of the church in this benevolence of which we are now speaking, has probably *accelerated*, if not *occasioned*, the growth of those mutual assurance associations which now exert a wide-spread influence throughout our land, whose whole tendency will be, we fear, to draw men away from Christ and his gospel. They will at least weaken the hold which the proper benevolent spirit of the church naturally possesses both over the giver and the receiver. In a day when it is sought to take from the church her proper office and glory, and present her before the world as a cold philosophic association, busied in religious abstractions, with not a chord of sympathy beating in unison with a suffering humanity, it becomes her to shake off her lethargy, gird on her armour, and boldly and faithfully assert her true position and character.

The morality derived, and too often *abstracted* from Christianity, will secure a general attention to a portion, at least, of the wants of the poor. But can the church discharge her duty to her Master and the world, while neglecting this important means of influence? She is better fitted to perform these acts than any other agency, as she has qualifications and facilities which are not possessed by others. While she gives meat to nourish the body, she proffers "the living bread" which nourishes unto eternal life. While giving drink to the thirsty, she invites them to the fountain of living waters. When giving raiment to cover the naked, she exhorts them to seek to be clothed with the unfailing robe of our Redeemer's righteousness; and when providing a house for the homeless, she points them to everlasting mansions. The almoners of her bounty offer the richest

blessings of the gospel under circumstances peculiarly favourable for their reception. And can the church afford to do without these advantages and turn them over to the hands of those, who either cannot, or will not use them aright? Such opportunities are golden seasons which she should seize with avidity and faithfully employ. She cannot let them slip without declining most appropriate and promising labour for her Lord. The commendation which is represented as bestowed upon the righteous at the day of judgment indicates not only their duty as individuals, but also that of the church in its collective capacity. Matt. xxv. 34—40.

When the question of the permanency of the deaconship was agitated in the Westminster Assembly, it was decided almost unanimously in the affirmative, Dr. Lightfoot being the only one who voted in the negative. The existence of a *civil poor-law*, instituted in the reign of Elizabeth was the great stumbling-block in the minds of many, previous to the debate, some thinking this rendered the deacon's office unnecessary, and others that it would interfere with the state arrangement. In the course of the discussion it was well remarked by Mr. Vines:—"The provision of civil officers made by the civil state for the poor, should rather slip into the office of a deacon, than the reverse, because the latter bears the badge of the Lord," (*Hetherington's Hist. of West. Assembly page 143.*) The people in Scotland have always acted in accordance with this view, the government having always assigned the care of the poor to the officers of the church.

Many urge as an apology for the disuse of this apostolic institution, that the circumstances of the church are very different in Christian countries at the present time, from what they were in the apostolic age; that our churches have very few, if any poor attached to them, and the duties appropriate to the deaconship may very well be performed by

the ruling elders and members of the church without creating an additional office. The circumstances of the church have varied since the establishment of this office, but more in the detail, than the general aspect. During the first *thirty years* of the ministry of the apostles she enjoyed toleration. Now she receives protection. The difference between a mild toleration, and a bare protection, which is all she receives in our land, is not very great. It may be enough to produce a greater degree of present security, but does not demand a change in the organization of the church. One of the great excellencies of the Christian system in its doctrines, worship and government, is that while it is most simple, it is at the same time most effective, and is susceptible of being transferred unchanged to all times and ages. There is no need of change. That will mar and weaken, rather than strengthen, and there should be none, unless directed by the same authority which gave being and form to the system.

In a country where there are poor people, we should regret to discover a church without any in her pale. Such a circumstance would be a most unfortunate indication of the spiritual state of that church. There are those in straitened circumstances, if not in absolute want, in or near all our churches. Many of God's people are among the poor of this world, and *he* has appointed the deaconship to care for them in every time and country.

The fact that the minister, ruling elders and members may individually discharge this and other duties appropriate to the deaconship is no reason why this apostolic office should be discontinued. Any one of these persons may properly perform these duties in an emergency, and they should all be encouraged to abound in such acts according to their leisure and means. But all these persons have appropriate duties connected with their respective offices, and experience proves that when the duties of various call-

ings are heaped upon one person, they are seldom all well performed. The practical effect of the disuse of the deaconship is seen among all those churches among whom it obtains. Few ruling elders take time to discharge the duties belonging to their own office, to say nothing of their going into the high-ways and hedges to look after the poor, the suffering, and the degraded, and induce them by kindness to come to the gospel feast. Were the deaconship filled and its duties faithfully performed, there would still remain enough to do to employ the time and energies of our ruling elders.

But why should they perform, in the ordinary circumstances of the church, the duties of the deaconship? As members of the church, professed followers of their benevolent Master, they may and should visit and relieve the poor; but what authority have they for doing these as the official acts of the deaconship, or how can their private actions atone for the neglect of the church in her collective and organized capacity, to become a minister of mercy?

To remedy this oversight, and meet and rebut the charge of neglecting an apostolic institution, we are referred to the principle that the greater includes the less; the inferior office is comprehended in the superior. Ruling elders possess the powers of deacons as ministers possess those of ruling elders. (See Dick's Theology, vol. 2d, p. 499.)

This principle is a most excellent expedient to rid us of a difficulty in an *extreme emergency*. But we conceive it is utterly at fault, when applied to the ordinary state of the church. If the superior office includes the inferior, the eldership the powers of the deaconship, so that there is no need of the latter, then why may not the ministry include the eldership, and this office be discontinued as useless? Our system would then indeed be simplified, and ecclesiastical power, upon the principle of absorption, be concentrated in the ministry, and the monarchical principle, against

which it is the peculiar vocation of Presbyterianism to contend, become fully developed in the church. Try this principle in its application to civil government. How soon would power be absorbed from the lower and more numerous officers, and, retreating to the highest civil functionary, concentrate in his hands an arbitrary despotism? The principle is a dangerous one, and should be regarded with extreme jealousy by the church. Order is heaven's first law, and its first development should be seen in the church, which should be a type of heaven in all that is lovely and of good report.

We have dwelt thus long upon this duty of the deaconship, because it was directly established for this end, and on account of its important bearing upon the permanency of the office, and the obligation of the church to maintain it inviolable.

In addition to this our form of government declares, chap. vi:—"To them (the deacons) also may be *properly* committed the management of the temporal affairs of the church." The more the subject is considered, the more thoroughly shall we become convinced of the propriety of emphasizing the word "*properly*," and grounding our ecclesiastical practice upon such a construction. The original intention of the appointment of deacons was to free the apostles from temporal cares. To them was committed the business of the church. This directly involved everything necessary for taking care of the poor, including the reception, safe-keeping, and disbursement of the donations made to the common fund for their support. In our day this may naturally include taking up all the collections of the people for the objects of benevolence and the welfare of the church. The collections for the poor, for the boards of the church, the offerings for the support of the pastor, and the gifts for the building and maintenance of the sanctuary, and the preservation and disbursement of these, all fall properly

within the scope of the deaconship. The words of the apostle in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, "upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," clearly intimate that the practice of the church was to take up a weekly collection for the poor, and for the peculiar exigencies of the divers parts of the church, upon the first day of the week, or the Christian Sabbath. They followed in this the practice of the synagogue, in which the Jews took up a collection for the poor every Sabbath. This practice is still continued in many parts of the church, we believe in all branches of the church in Great Britain and Europe; and one may be pardoned for expressing an opinion, that our benevolent operations would be in a higher state of prosperity, were this primitive practice universally followed. It may well be doubted whether that disposition is orthodox, which regards with cold indifference, or positive dislike, the collections in the church for benevolent and religious objects.

In our country, the management of the temporal affairs of the church, has very extensively passed into the hands of trustees appointed by the particular congregation they serve.* This ecclesiastical trusteeship, so far as we have been able to learn, is peculiar to portions of the Presbyterian Church in this country, being unknown in that of Scotland, and in the Reformed churches on the Continent. It is a congregational element which has been imported into the Presbyterian church from New England. It would be an interesting and curious object of inquiry, to ascertain and follow the rise and progress of this substitution for the deaconship! We say substitution, for is it not in reality a

* As there is a difference of opinion in reference to the propriety and expediency of such secular boards in the church, the views of the writer are submitted without any direct endorsement by the Board of Publication.

human expedient, by which a class of church officers are excluded from the house of God, and another ostensibly appointed for another purpose are really substituted in their room and discharge their functions? If this custom has been introduced inadvertently it should be subjected to the most rigid and careful scrutiny. Is the human expedient better fitted for the discharge of these duties than one which God has appointed, and is it more fitting or proper that it should be used? Neither of these will certainly be maintained. There is, therefore, no reason why we should step out of the way, and not be contented to have these duties discharged according to the apostolic plan, which has the sanction of the Head of the church. Such a practice inadvertently throws contempt upon the institution which he has established. The character requisite for the deacons, as given in 1 Tim. i. 3, seems to refer to their being entrusted with large funds, and thus being in danger of yielding to covetousness. A deacon must "not be greedy of filthy lucre," else the temptations of his station may prove too strong for him, and his sin inflict a sad wound upon the church. This, together, with the accounts given in the Acts, of the large donations made to the apostles, for the purposes which the deaconship was established to effect, render it in the highest degree probable, if not morally certain, that the practice of the primitive church, together with that of the Reformed Churches in Europe, and a goodly portion of the Presbyterian bodies in this country, in investing deacons with the care of church temporalities, is *apostolic* and *binding*. Unless their collections for the poor were larger than those taken up in the *most* of our modern churches, at any rate, there would scarcely be any need of the apostolic caution, for these alone would tempt none very strongly. But when we recollect they were invested with the care of church temporalities, we see the pertinency and force of the direction, and these will continue so long as the proper

functions are appended to the office. There is a propriety in the church having her property under her own control, which highly commends the primitive office of the deaconship. Many difficulties are avoided by this, which arise under the other system. The action of the church is made more simple, easy and harmonious, and one of the principal elements of dissension, which now so often distracts congregations, would be removed.

Some have added to the primitive office of the deaconship, and exalted it into an order of the ministry of the word. The deacons were made ministers of the *sanctuary*, but not ministers of *the word*. This is a distinction which we may properly remember when we hear men talk of the different orders of the ministry, and one which they would do well to bear in mind. This clothing the deacons with the powers of ministers of the word, arose from the fact that some of the deacons, as Stephen, are presented to us in the additional character of evangelists. "These having used the office of a deacon well, purchased to themselves a good degree (*i. e.* honour and advancement) and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." May not these words of the apostle refer to the faithfulness of Stephen, and his associates in their office as deacons, and their subsequent advancement as ministers of the word? There is at least a resemblance between their character and success in their ecclesiastical career, and the "*beau ideal*," which he holds up in respect to the deaconship.

We have dwelt thus fully upon the arguments in favour of the permanency of this office, because doubts upon this subject seem to lie at the foundation of that neglect of the office, which unfortunately prevails among so many of our churches. This point might have been assumed upon the authority of our form of government which places this among the ordinary and perpetual offices in the house of God. The truth of this position is evidenced not only by

the original institution of the office, and the circumstances of the church, but also by the fact that Paul, in writing to Timothy more than *thirty* years after this event, speaks of it as highly important, and gives as full a description of the qualifications of character requisite in those who fill it, as he does in respect to those who should fill the bishopric. He places the two offices side by side, and gives no intimation that one is of inferior obligation to the other. We may fairly infer from this circumstance, that this office is as important and binding as any other, and that we have no more right to neglect the deaconship than we have to allow the bishopric to fall into disuse. The notices of the deaconship given in the New Testament are as full as those respecting the ruling eldership, and convey an equal idea of the permanent character of the office, and the duty of the church to maintain it inviolate.

When the Scriptures and our church standards, as interpreting them, both coincide in enforcing upon the church the permanent obligation of the deaconship, the neglect of it on the part of our churches is certainly most unwise. Nor can we consider ourselves innocent while continuing in this neglect. Apostolic and permanent institutions should always be maintained. The church is thus fully armed and prepared for any emergency. Her wisdom and safety will always be found in maintaining inviolate the institutions of her Lord as she received them; for if she does not maintain them, she will certainly lose efficiency and influence, and in some way receive the rebuke of her Lord.

ON BACKSLIDING.

THIS term, which is of frequent occurrence in the writings of the prophets, might, at first view, seem to allude to the act of walking up a steep hill on a slippery path, where continual vigilance and exertion would be required to maintain our standing, and where the least relaxation would lead to a retrograde and downward motion. And certainly in this view the term is very forcible, and expressive of an experimental truth. But in reality this is not the allusion when the word *backsliding* is used in the Scriptures; but it is to the running back of a heifer, or any other animal drawing under a yoke; and this will evidently appear by a reference to a single text in which the word is used. "For Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer." Hosea iv. 16. There is often in animals under the yoke, or in harness, a remarkable perverseness: instead of going forward, according to the wish and direction of their master, they run back, and thus not only refuse to proceed in the right way, but by blindly sliding back endanger the safety of those whom they draw, and run the risk of injuring themselves.

Considering this to be the figurative allusion of the prophets, the word is exceedingly forcible and expressive; for in all cases of backsliding there is much blindness and much perverseness combined with the retrograde motion.

Backsliding always begins in the heart, and the bitter

root from which it germinates is unbelief. While faith is in constant and vigorous exercise there will be no running back, but an onward march; for he who lives by faith, and walks by faith, not looking at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at those which are unseen, which are eternal, will be constantly advancing in the divine life. The Christian pilgrim forgetting those things which are behind, will imitate the racers in the games, and reach forward to those which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ. But whenever faith begins to fail, and the soul loses the spiritual apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus, and when the impression of divine truth becomes less deep and less vivid than it has been, backsliding has already commenced.

WHAT ARE THE BEST MEANS OF PRESERVATION AGAINST BACKSLIDING?

First, Every mean should be used that may stop the avenues of temptation, or prevent its coming in contact with the evil propensities of the heart. If there be nitre in our habitations, it becomes us to beware of fire. Such was the counsel of our Lord to his disciples, in a season of peculiar danger: *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* He had himself entered that field, and came out a conqueror; but he knew what was in man, and counselled them rather to avoid than court the contest. In cases where the heart begins to be seduced by temptation, it will soon become restless, solicitous and importunate; it will moan after it, and be exceedingly fruitful in devices to get into the way of it; it will persuade conscience for once at least to be silent; will blind the mind to the evil, and paint the desirableness of the good: and if all this will not do, it will promise to be only a looker-on, or that thus far it will go, and no further—but if thou hast any regard to God or his cause, or to

the welfare of thine own soul, CONSENT THOU NOT! Temptation leads to sin, and sin to death. Whatever company, amusement, occupation, or connection, has frequently *caused thee to offend*, that is the *eye* that requires to be plucked out, lest thy soul bleed in the end, beneath the stroke of God's displeasure.

Secondly, Beware of the *first stages* of departure from God. All backslidings begin with the heart. Jer. ii. 19. From hence are *the issues of life*. Private prayer, it may be, at first becomes wearisome; no communion with God in it: it is then occasionally neglected; hence public ordinances cease to afford their wonted pleasure; christian society is dropped; the world takes up your attention, and you have little or no time to spare for religion. Some carnal acquaintance, perceiving you to be coming, draws you on; recommends you to read some one of the liberal productions of the times, by which you are to learn that there is no need to be so rigid in religion, and no harm in frequenting the theatre, or in devoting a part at least of the Lord's day to visiting or amusement. These are a few of the seeds of death, from whence has sprung many a bitter harvest.

“Beware of sin, then crush it at the door;
If once 'tis in, it may go out no more!”

BUNYAN.

Thirdly, If thou hast in any degree been drawn aside, give no rest to thy soul till thy sin is crucified, and thy conscience reconciled by the blood of the cross. It is too common for sin to be worn away from the memory by time and new occurrences, instead of being washed away at the gospel fountain: but where this is the case, the stain is not removed, and its effects will sooner or later appear, perhaps, in a form that may cause the ear of every one that heareth it to tingle. *Him that honoureth me, saith the Lord, will I honour; and he that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed.*

If we care so little for the honour of God's name, as to be unconcerned for secret faults, we may expect that he will care as little for the honour of ours, and will give us up to some open vice, that shall cover us with infamy.

Fourthly, If some extraordinary temptation, or easy-besetting sin perplex thee, bend not thy attention so much to the subduing of that particular evil, as to the mortification of sin in general; and this not so much by directly opposing it, as by cherishing opposite principles. We may heal an eruption in a particular part of the body, and yet the root of the disease may remain, and even be gathering strength. We may also be employed in thinking of our sins without gaining any ascendancy over them; on the contrary, they may, by those very means, obtain an ascendancy over us. If we go about to quench a fire by directly contending with it, we shall presently be consumed by its flames; but by applying the opposite element, it is subdued before us. It is thus that the Scriptures direct us: "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*" The heart cannot be reduced to a vacuum; if spiritual things do not occupy it, carnal things will. It is by walking with God, and conversing with the doctrine of the cross, that we shall become dead to other things; and this will go to the root of the evil, while other remedies only lop off the branches.

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

THE DUTY

OF

FAMILY RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

IF the importance of a Christian duty is to be estimated by the emphasis with which it is enjoined in the word of God, then the religious instruction of the young demands a degree of attention, which, we fear, it does not ordinarily receive. Where is the considerate parent who does not readily admit the importance of this subject? And yet, if we may judge from the frequent deviations among our youth, not only from the paths of moral rectitude, but also from the faith of their fathers, how small is the number of parents who have met the obligations of this duty, in *the incessant*, self-denying, yet delightful labour of training their offspring in the knowledge and the practice of divine things!

The Holy Scriptures are explicit and emphatic in enjoining the duty of family religious instruction.

No sooner had the Lord instituted his covenant with Abraham by the rite of circumcision, (Gen. xvii. 9—14,) “to be a God unto him, and to his seed after him,” than that father of the faithful took Ishmael his son, and every male

of his household, in the self-same day, as God had said unto him, and administered unto them the token of the Lord's covenant. In the following chapter is recorded the testimony of God in regard to parental faithfulness: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Gen. xviii. 19.

At the institution of the Passover, commemorating the redemption of God's people from the servitude of Egypt, and in immediate connection with the ceremonial observances to be attended to in that impressive ordinance, the obligation is enforced: "Thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt." "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage." Ex. xiii. 8, 14.

When Moses would impress the people with a deep sense of their exalted privileges, as a nation, in having "Jehovah their God so nigh unto them, in all things that they called upon him for," and having statutes and judgments so righteous as all those which he set before them that day, he adds: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life; *but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons.*" Deut. iv. 8, 9. Again, when exhorting the people to obedience in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, he says, "And these words which I command you this day shall be in thine heart, *and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,* and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down,

and when thou risest up." The summary of parental instruction contained in this chapter concludes with these impressive words: "And it shall be *our* righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as *he* hath commanded us." Deut. vi. 20—25.

The calamities which befel the ten tribes that revolted from the house of David, do not exceed what might have been foreseen and predicted by any pious Israelite, as the consequences of the abolition of the divinely instituted worship of Jehovah, and the setting up of the idolatrous worship of the calves at Dan and Bethel—a measure, in the judgment of Jeroboam, essential to the permanence of his usurped authority, 1 Kings xii. 25—33. With this change in the national religion, family religion must have experienced a corresponding mutation. For when Jeroboam had cast off the Lord's priests from executing the priest's office, and had ordained priests for the high places, and for the calves which he had made, it cannot be supposed that the families adhering to him would be inclined or permitted to attend to the injunction of Moses: "Ye shall command your children to do all the words of this law," which sayeth, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

By the house of Judah, likewise, we infer that the duty of *parental religious instruction* was to a great extent neglected, from the prevalence of idolatry among all classes of the people. For it cannot be supposed that the Lord would have commanded "the fathers to make known his truth to the children," as a means of preventing idolatry, (see Deut. iv. 9, *ad fin.*) and then would have suffered the nation to fall into the most degrading forms of idol worship, unless those *fathers* had forgotten the covenant of the Lord their God, and hidden from their children "the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works."

Although this national sin brought upon them the threat-

ened displeasure and wrath of the Most High ; and although they endured the consequences of this guilt in the horrors of the siege, the oppression of conquerors, and finally in their captivity, yet there is reason to apprehend, even after their return from that captivity, they neglected the duty of family religious instruction, and were forgetful of the sacred obligations involved in the family constitution. The canon of the Old Testament Scriptures closes with this remarkable language :—" Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord ; and he shall turn the heart of the *fathers* to the *children*, and the heart of the *children* to the *fathers*, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Mal. iv. 5, 6.

From this brief account, drawn from the history of God's people under the old dispensation, it is obvious that the neglect of a duty so plainly enjoined, and upon the faithful performance of which so much depended, must have been a sin of no ordinary magnitude. And connected as this sin was with many of the more flagrant offences of the Jewish people, both as a nation and as individuals, it need not surprise us that, in God's dealings with them, it should have met the fearful retributions of his justice, in every age, from the time that Rebecca instructed her son in the arts of deception, to the period when his descendants rejected their Prince, madly imprecating the curse—" His blood be upon us and on our *children*."

In the New Testament, which contains the doctrines and institutions of the Christian religion, the duty of parental religious training occupies a position not less prominent. In the gospel, truly, " the hearts of the fathers are turned to the children, as well as the disobedient, to the wisdom of the just."

Our Saviour rebuked his disciples for forbidding children to be brought unto him, saying, " Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the king-

dom of heaven." Matt. xix 13. To qualify children and youth for this membership in the kingdom of heaven, so far as education and discipline can accomplish that end, they are brought into covenant relation to God on the faith of their parents, 1 Cor. vii. 14. Promises are made to them, (Acts ii. 39,) and special instructions are addressed to them, Col. iii. 20. Parents are cautioned against provoking them to wrath, and are enjoined to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They were doubtless dedicated to God in the baptism of households, (Acts xvi. 15, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16,) and instances are recorded of their walking in the truth, 2 John 4, and of their acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures from childhood. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

Thus in both the Old and New Testaments the duty of family religious instruction occupies a position of importance, which should bespeak for it the awakened attention of Christian parents and the Christian church. Its neglect cannot but prove fatal to the usefulness and happiness of families, and disastrous to the prosperity of Zion.

The subjects which should be embraced in a course of early religious instruction, are worthy of serious consideration.

As "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," the Bible should be the principal text-book in the religious teaching of the young. For this purpose, among others, was this precious volume given to the world. "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."

The adaptation of the word of God to the purpose in question, appears in the fact that the reception and contemplation of the truths of revealed religion, more than any other subjects of study, elevate and strengthen the mind. Familiarity with one truth of revelation invigorates the mind for the contemplation of others more complex and profound. If the material works of God, spread out to

our view, present a noble field of study, how much more the displays of his perfections in his moral kingdom! If truth partially revealed in the visible creation is deserving of study, how much more in its full revelation in the divine word! As the mind advances in such a study it is strengthened for the pursuit of higher attainments in knowledge. Its progress is as the light which shines more and more unto the perfect day. In contemplating the deep things of God, and acquiring the knowledge of the manifold relations of the creature to the Creator, the immortal spirit is filled with ceaseless astonishment, admiration and praise, ever approaching the eternal throne, yet never reaching it.

This invigorating and elevating influence of divine truth is not confined to the intellectual faculties alone; it powerfully develops the whole moral nature. For although in our fallen condition the law of our natural conscience is so far obliterated, as to be unavailable in ascertaining our duty to God, yet there remains the original faculty by which we distinguish right and wrong; and to this faculty, in an especial manner, are the teachings of the word of God addressed. While a wrong education may lead to its greater perversion and depravation, it is susceptible of great improvement under proper moral culture. The education of which we speak, is the aggregate result of all the influences of instruction and example which may be brought to bear until principles are settled and habits formed.

Let a child be trained under the influences of heathenism, and he will know no other deity than his false and cruel gods; he will strangle his aged father as an act of humanity, and sacrifice his own offspring to devils. The same child, educated in Romanism, will regard it as a mortal sin to think for himself on matters of faith; will yield his soul to the polluting influences of the confessional as the only medium of pardon, believe that the gift of God is to be purchased with money, and that the great and blessed God

himself is pleased with vain oblations, pomp, and parade. But the same child, trained under the influence of the gospel, and instructed in the great doctrines of the Bible, will manifest a clearness of mind, a tenderness of conscience, and a strength of moral principle, which can result from no other educational instrumentality. So peculiarly adapted is the divinely inspired word to operate upon the natural conscience.

“*The fear of the Lord*” is not only “the beginning of wisdom,” but one of the most powerful motives that can be addressed to the heart of youth. This sentiment, when once habitual, becomes the master influence of the life. Although it may not cleanse from secret faults, it strongly tends to keep back from open and presumptuous sins, such as profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, uncleanness, fraud, violence, intemperance, and the like. It inclines to the path of duty, and strengthens the sense of moral obligation. Holding its possessor in subjection and obedience to God, it is remarkably adapted to overcome the fear of man.

The existence and majesty of God, his moral government over his creatures, and the final awards of his justice, are the truths which tend to cultivate in the youthful mind the controlling sentiment of which we have spoken; and these are the doctrines recognized and inculcated throughout the Bible.

The influence of these truths is not temporary. It grows with the growth, and strengthens with the strength. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Many a young man has by this means been kept from the path of the destroyer, from which he could hardly have escaped, had his childhood and youth been uninfluenced by “*the admonition and the fear of the Lord.*”

Nor do the advantages of Scripture instruction terminate

with the restraining and moulding of the external deportment. The sacred Scriptures, through faith in Jesus Christ, are able to make wise unto salvation; and this should be the great and ceaseless aim of the parent, in teaching his child out of the lively oracles of God.

Children, at a very early age, can understand their need of a Saviour, and the great features of the plan of salvation. Their earliest remembrances should be associated with the love of God as displayed in the transactions of Calvary. They should be early familiarized with the name of Jesus, with the holiness of his character, the benevolence of his heart, his sympathy for the distressed, his special regard for children, the greatness and goodness of his miracles, and, above all, with the shedding of his precious blood in atoning for sin, proclaiming himself to be both able and willing to save to the uttermost.

Let the first great idea impressed upon the infant mind, in lines of indelible distinctness, be the idea of the God-man, Christ; the mighty God over all, the sympathizing friend of poor sinners, the pattern of their life, their Protector and help in trouble, their Redeemer, their Judge, their God!

Thus made acquainted from their youth with the holy Scriptures, they are not only kept from receiving for doctrines the commandments of men, but in the day of God's merciful visitation to their souls, when they shall be effectually called by his Spirit into the kingdom of his Son, it will not be their part to occupy the place of the ignorant, who are necessarily confined to a limited sphere of usefulness, while they are learning what are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but with sanctified affections, and enlightened minds, they are qualified to enter at once into the active and efficient service of the Master. The individual, who in youth has been thoroughly instructed from the Scriptures, and trained in the path of duty, by parental

faithfulness, needs but the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit on his soul, to introduce him at once into a sphere of usefulness, and to invest him with a maturity of Christian intelligence, to which he would have been a stranger, had his early religious training been neglected.

Besides the general principles of Christian faith and practice, children should be thoroughly indoctrinated in the peculiar views of our church, and faithfully instructed in its history.

These subjects have been unfortunately too often omitted from the early instructions of our children, in order, as is alleged, "to avoid giving undue importance to non-essentials, and that the youthful mind may not be biased by sectarian prejudices." We apprehend the Presbyterian Church has not yet suffered all the evils necessarily resulting from this error.

We deprecate as much as any the bad effects of early prejudices, and the "tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law;" but as the most efficient guard against these very evils, we earnestly recommend to the parents of our beloved Zion, that they familiarize their children with the distinctive doctrines and order of the Presbyterian Church, exhibiting them in their proper place, and showing their real importance in the system of divine truth. It will not fail to appear that the truths of the gospel, as held forth by Presbyterianism, "are like apples of gold in pictures of silver." And we need not fear that any one will be a Presbyterian *from prejudice*, who is well instructed in the Scriptural authority of that system, and in the eventful history which has distinguished its progress.

What system ever held by man, is superior to that popularly known as Calvinistic, in its power to benefit the world? What other system ascribes the same glory to the infinite Majesty of heaven, and at the same time is so calculated to

develope the highest qualities of human nature? By this system, the man of distinction and extensive usefulness is made to feel that he has nothing but what he has received; that it is God who maketh him to differ, "working in him to will and to do." So, too, his more humble fellow-servant, no less important in his appointed sphere, is encouraged to improve his single talent with the utmost diligence.

Inculcating the sovereignty of God, and his changeless purpose of justice and grace, it inspires the heart of man with high resolves for the glory of God, and for the good of his fellows, and nerves his arm with invincible prowess for the execution of noble enterprizes.

While it affords to the believer effectually called, the assurance that he shall never perish, being "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," it extends to the impenitent sinner the encouragement which he needs. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

The brightest pages of history are the records inscribed with the principles of this system. In the progressive development of liberty, knowledge, and righteousness, these principles have exercised a controlling influence; and they enroll among their advocates multitudes of the wise, and great, and good, who have arisen to bless mankind in every age.

Above all, we believe this system to be the precious truth of God, which he has revealed concerning our duty and destiny. Shall we fail, then, to impress upon the minds of our beloved offspring the proper estimation of such a system as this? Shall we not faithfully indoctrinate them in its principles, that they may imbibe its healthful and invigorating spirit, and be enriched by its priceless blessings?

To the discharge of this duty we are urged by fidelity to

our children. If we do not give them a decided inclination to what we believe to be the truth in religion, there are multitudes ready to direct them in some other way upon that subject. Above all, the world will not scruple to pervert them to its ways of error and vice, if they be allowed to pass from the parental roof without minds as clear and decided as our instructions can make them.

But why should not the lambs of our flock be retained within their own fold? The voice of the good Shepherd is as distinctly heard within our borders as elsewhere. Here are the green pastures, not less abundant, and living waters flow through all our coasts, as free and clear as gushed of old from Horeb's smitten rock!

Especially is this demanded in such a day as the present, when "*this way*" is evil spoken of by many, contradicting and blaspheming, and a fearful current of infidelity and atheism threatens to deluge the land. "We will not hide it from our children, showing to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works."

In the constitution of the family, divine Providence has invested the parental relation with peculiar authority and influence. Nothing so strengthens that authority, and augments that influence, as the assembling of a family, morning and evening, to be led in their devotions by parental piety, and to be instructed out of the law of the Lord.

We are to regard the responsibility of a father as commensurate with the near relation which he sustains to his offspring. God has, for a season, committed to parental stewardship the immortal soul of the child. How much depends upon the manner in which the duties involved in that stewardship are performed! To a great extent the success or failure of their offspring in the world—their weal or woe in eternity.

And in what terms may we define the delinquency of

that parent who fails to acknowledge God before his household, and to speak to his children of salvation? Not only does he deprive himself of one of the richest pleasures known to the sanctified heart, but he defrauds his little ones of a divine inheritance, whilst contemning the authority of heaven.

The total neglect of family religion is commonly associated with the absence of personal piety, want of interest in the cause of religion generally, derangement of secular business, feuds among brethren and sisters, the alienation of children from parents, the untimely breaking up of families, and other evidences of God's just displeasure.

The observance of a merely formal morning and evening service at the family altar, in which the children and domestics take no part, and which is accompanied by no religious instruction, accomplishes little more than to remind the household that a profession of religion is made in the family.

Should the devotions of a family be conducted even with spirit and zeal, yet still be unaccompanied by proper instruction, and "training in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," the members of the family will derive from such devotions little strength to withstand the influences which tend to divert them from the path of virtue, or to correct those false impressions made upon the minds of our youth, by which they are sometimes enticed from the faith of their fathers. On the other hand, when family religion is made to consist in mere instruction, how appropriate and orthodox soever, to the exclusion or neglect of devotional duties, and more especially if the instruction relates chiefly to outward ceremonies and forms, those under its influence may be expected to become formalists and bigots; or in disgust at all religion, to imbibe the principles of infidelity.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE,

OR

JESUS CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

AN ADDRESS TO SEAMEN.

“I am the light of the world.”—JOHN viii. 12.



THE advantages which we derive from natural light are inestimable. They are connected with every purpose of life. Without light, life would be scarcely desirable. “Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun.”

To the traveller unsheltered, in an unknown land, and benighted on his journey, the dawn of

morning is as an angel of peace; it makes him forget the terrors of night, and dissipates his fears.

To the sea-worn mariner, borne on the stormy ocean, in the darkness of night, the return of day is unutterably welcome. After a series of tempests and toils, having been

driven by adverse winds, how animating is the meridian sun, by which the weary navigator is enabled to take an observation, and calculate the circumstances of his voyage: but when his vessel is driven amidst rocks and shoals, by boisterous gales, and encompassed by darkness, the appearance of the warning and directing light is most cheering. It shows him the bearing of the harbour, and affords him an object by which he can determine what course to steer to avoid the surrounding dangers, and enter the port where he may moor his bark in safety.

If in natural life and common avocations light is so important, how much more precious is it as respects intellectual and moral objects and operations!

“I am the Light of the world!” saith the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He is God the Creator; “all things were made by him.” He is “the Father of lights.” He formed the *sun*, the great source of natural light. “In the beginning,” before the sun was set in the firmament, and when yet “the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; God said, Let there be light, and there was *light*.” As the sovereign Ruler, he continues to sustain and govern his creation; for thus saith the Lord, “I form the light and I create the darkness.”

2. The Lord Jesus Christ is the source of intellectual light. He created mind; he constituted man a rational being, capable of feeling, thinking, willing and acting; for “there is a spirit in man, and the *inspiration* of the Almighty giveth *understanding*.”

3. He is the author of spiritual light. Spiritual light in man includes the knowledge of his own moral state, and his right apprehensions of the sovereignty and perfections of his Creator. “He that followeth me,” saith Christ, “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have ‘the light of life.’” The person who is the recipient of this light, discovers his depravity of heart, and acknowledges his guilt. At God’s mercy-seat he exclaims in sorrow, “thou hast set mine iniquities before thee, my secret sins in the light of thy countenance.” Humbled in view of the degradation of his nature, and the odiousness of his character in the sight of the holy God, he cries out, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; therefore I ab-

hor myself and repent in dust and ashes!" And his state is comfortless, until in mercy "God shine into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The subject suggests a variety of interesting topics, but I shall consider but two: 1st. Man's natural moral darkness; and 2dly, The means by which he becomes enlightened.

I. *Without the knowledge of God the world is in spiritual darkness.*

"I am the light of the world." By the world, in a moral sense, we understand the race of man. Every individual of mankind, as a part of the world, being naturally destitute of the saving knowledge of God, is in spiritual darkness. For "man by wisdom knew not God." Original transgression of God's law has brought sin on every man; and where sin is, there is opposition to the government of God. This violation of the divine commandment has incurred the penalty of death; for the great Lawgiver said, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Having violated God's law, man has involved himself in the gloom of spiritual death.

That all men must inevitably suffer a temporal death, needs no other proof than our own consciousness of personal infirmity and disease, and our daily observation of the mortality of our species. It is equally certain that he who shall continue in sin, being in a state of spiritual death, will suffer eternal death, or everlasting exclusion from the joys of heaven, and be cast into endless misery, to dwell in the darkness of despair.

That man is spiritually dead is evident by his conduct. If he were alive to God, his principal desire would be to please the Giver of life. But, on the contrary, we find that every man has gone in the ways of his own heart, and "has done abominable iniquity;" for men's hearts are corrupt; they are "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" therefore, sinners "call evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness." This is deplorably the case of every unrenewed man.

If you ask for particular proofs that you are yet in the darkness of spiritual death; be assured that if you have never felt any trouble of soul on account of your sinfulness; if you have never prayed to God for mercy, from a sense

of your condemnation, and continued to implore pardon until God has enlightened your mind in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and spoken peace to your soul; if you do not read the sacred Scriptures with diligence, with pleasure, and profit, and love to draw nigh to God in prayer and the institutions of his church, you are yet, undoubtedly, "alienated from the life of God by reason of the blindness of your heart."

Do you flatter yourself that God is too good to punish you for being habitually profane in your language, taking God's name in vain, and having been guilty of thousands of nameless vices? Do you think that a few words of prayer, uttered with your lips, without your heart being affected by a sense of the guilt of sin, will lay God under obligations to forgive you, and bless you for ever? How often have you asked God to blast you in everlasting death! and would not the justice of God be as glorious in his answering this prayer, as would be his mercy in granting your unmeaning request of forgiveness? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked;" "he that soweth the wind shall reap the whirlwind." If you do not hate sin and desire to be holy, you are yet in the darkness of death, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

But you may have resolved to do better; to reform your life, and try to gain God's favour, by leaving off some of your sinful practices, whilst you retain others, which you endeavour to persuade yourself are but of little account. This is not enough. Jesus Christ says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You must be *changed in heart*. A mere external and partial reformation will never be the means of your arriving in heaven. This is a deception which has too frequently shipwrecked the hopes of men. "Their tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail." Death overtakes the sinner. The grave yawns to receive the desolate victim of Satan's wiles. The blackening clouds of the wrath of heaven affright the guilty spirit, which trembles at its doom,

"And shrieks and hovers o'er the dark abyss!"

Do you inquire, "How then can a man be just with God?" There is a light sufficient to direct the voyager to

the desired port. Jesus Christ affirms, "I am the Light of the world." This leads to the consideration of the second truth proposed; viz.

II. "*Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel.*"

Although light may exist, yet, from ignorance of that light, men may perish in darkness. And if an enemy exhibit false lights to facilitate our destruction, unless we have a certain test by which to determine whether the light be true or treacherous, we shall be in danger of ruin.

God has given us a revelation of himself. This is his testimony, that Jesus Christ is "the true Light." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. And for the information of all who inquire the course to heaven, Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This testimony is the gospel which is preached unto men. And therefore, "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel."

The gospel has the peculiar property, by the application of the Holy Spirit, of opening to the sinner's view his true character. It claims his confidence in its truth, by its first discovering to him his wretchedness, and utter inability to deliver himself from his state of condemnation. It penetrates the dark recesses of his soul, and makes him acquainted with his enmity against God. As a light in a dark place, it "is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The sins of the penitent soul, which, in an unenlightened state, he considered but trifles, he now beholds as billows, swelling, and threatening to dash him to pieces, and to engulf him in fathomless woe. This personal conviction of the divine authority of God's testimony against the sinner, brings him into a state of humiliation, contrition, and submission. Urged by a sense of his necessities, he cries to God for mercy. The gospel now shows him the way of life through faith in the Lord Jesus, and he is encouraged by its assurances that there is plenteous redemption in the blood of Christ. He ponders the page of divine truth, and, with increasing interest, contemplates the mystery "into which angels desire to look." The life, the obedience, the sufferings, the death of the Saviour of the lost, are subjects which occupy his thoughts and raise his admiration and gratitude. The matchless love

of his dying Lord fills his soul; and whilst by faith he looks to the cross, tears of penitence and holy affection mingle in his eyes. But, when he contemplates his gloriously exalted Mediator interceding for sinners, he adores the grace by which he is brought to experience that the gospel is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation." Thus the gospel dispels the moral darkness of the mind of man, and directs the troubled spirit to Jesus Christ, "the light of the world;" and cherishes in the bosom of the believer a hope full of a blissful immortality.

I will now close this address with a few practical remarks.

1. Man is a voyager on the ocean of this life; his destination is *eternity*; his course is through a dangerous world. In the boundless region to which he is hastening is the *haven of holy rest*; as a guide to this stormless port, Jesus Christ manifests himself. By this celestial light the spiritual mariner may steer with safety and assurance of an abundant entrance into the desired haven. This light shines with attractive lustre in the gospel. The testimony of God furnishes all that is necessary for information respecting the dangers of the voyage, and affords every facility for escaping them. The faithful ministers of Christ are his commissioned pilots, who admonish unwary men to respect the kindness and counsel of Jehovah. By these, sinners are exhorted to look to Christ "the author and finisher" of the Christian's faith; "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Reflecting the glory of their divine Master, they "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

2. In the region of *eternity* is also the *gulf of woe*. To this dismal place, they who obey not the gospel of Christ are driven by the tempests of their lusts. Their ignorance of danger is the consequence of their obstinate rejection of the warnings of the word of God, and contempt of his counsel. "They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." They will not look at the chart, lest in discovering their danger, their ignorance should be exposed. They will not "search the Scriptures." "They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd." The pilots, the ministers of the gospel, knowing the terrors which will be

the result of the presumption of ungodly men, would persuade them seriously to reflect on their condition. They strive to convince them, that now the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the meridian splendour of his grace, illuminates his word, and sheds his benign rays upon the world. Now is the time for sinners to take a correct observation, and to ascertain their state. In a moment it may be too late, when the sun of hope will have sunk below the horizon of mercy, and they be left eternally to mourn in bitterness their neglect of this great salvation. You may now be very near eternity; it is time for you to try your soundings; look out for the light which shows the entrance to the *haven of rest*. Does darkness obscure your prospect? Do gusts of temptation still baffle your efforts to make the heavenly port? Or do false lights, exhibited by the prince of darkness, decoy you to the horrid gulf? Is your course laid heavenward? Or, are your unhallowed passions and sensual propensities swiftly carrying you down to hell? O my friends, it is time for you to know in whose employ you have entered; in what trade you are engaged; what wages you are to receive; to what port you are sailing. He who has never devoted his heart to God is led captive by the devil at his will. He is the slave of lust; and "lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth *death*;" for, saith the word of truth, "*the wages of sin is death*!" Look forward—a storm is gathering; it is the storm of Jehovah's wrath. With terror and destruction it is ready to burst upon the impenitent sinner, for "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience;" and thus saith the Spirit of the Most High, "On the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup!" Listen not to the enemy, who hails you from ahead, amidst the false glare of damning delusion, and cries "All's well!" when you are near, very near eternal perdition. Already you are beating on the rocks, and your shattered bark cannot much longer live upon the foaming flood. Raise your signal of distress, and cry for deliverance to Him,

"Who rides upon the stormy wind,
And manages the seas."

He is mighty to save, even unto the uttermost. You

have been hitherto laying your course *from* the haven of rest. You may yet perceive, through the blackness of the storm, a glimmering ray of "the true light," which cheers the spiritual navigator, as

"The hope beaming-star in the desert of night."

It invites sinners who are embarked on the dangerous ocean of this mortal life, thither to bend their course, and to cast their anchor of hope "within the veil."

Thousands and tens of thousands of glorious spectators, secure of happiness in the "land of pure delights," are witnesses of your folly. Your return would occasion universal joy to the inhabitants of the celestial world. With rapture they would hail you welcome to the shores of bliss, and to the pleasures of their pure society. Jesus Christ the King of glory, "the Light of the world," the Sovereign of the universe, whose presence secures the felicity of heaven, waits to receive you, to give you eternal life and crowns of immortal glory.

SEAMAN'S PRAYER IN DANGER.

When through the torn sail the wild tempest is streaming,
When o'er the dark wave the red lightning is gleaming,
Nor hope lends a ray, the poor seaman to cherish,
We fly to our Maker; "Save, Lord, or we perish."

O Jesus, once rocked on the breast of the billow,
Aroused by the shriek of despair from thy pillow,
Now seated in glory, the mariner cherish,
Who cries in his anguish, "Save, Lord, or we perish."

And, O when the whirlwind of passion is raging,
When sin in our hearts his wild warfare is waging,
Then send down thy grace, thy redeemed to cherish,
Rebuke the destroyer; "Save, Lord, or we perish."

SOLILOQUY

OF AN INJURED CHRISTIAN.

LET me consider what dispositions the gospel requires me to exercise toward an enemy. I am to forgive him; nay, more, I am to love him. At first sight what difficult lessons do these appear to such a creature as man! Let me examine what particular duties they require.

Does the man I account my foe forget, or wilfully neglect, to intercede for me at the throne of mercy? Christ has taught me to be an advocate for him. When I am in distress, does he shut up his bowels of compassion, and triumph over my misery? Toward him I am to breathe nothing but tenderness, and with him I am to weep, whenever omniscient Providence appoints to him the day of adversity. Has he defrauded or oppressed me? I must weigh all my actions toward him in the righteous balance of equity. Has he robbed me of my good name? Against him I am to raise no prejudice: his good deeds I am cheerfully to acknowledge, and put the most candid construction upon his bad ones. Does he hate me? Though upon Christian principles he has no reason to do it; I am to beware that my conduct does not provoke him to the crime; and I am to include him in my common good-will toward human kind. Does he even implore vengeance to destroy me? With my lips, and with my heart, Christ has taught me to bless him in return. By thus overcoming evil with good, I shall display a heroism becoming my Christian character, and I shall at once overcome the devil, my adversary, and myself.

And is this the doctrine and duty of Christian forgiveness? and has Christ taught me to pray that God would

forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive those who trespass against me? And have I often found myself to be an irritable and inflammable creature, whose passions are liable to be blown into a blaze by trifling, as well as serious injuries? How can I ever attain that tranquillity and fortitude which will enable me to practise this grand Christian duty? or how can I esteem myself a disciple of Christ, if I neglect it? Difficult as this subject is to contemplate, and much more difficult as this duty is, even for a Christian to perform, I may venture to draw this conclusion: that, as the forgiveness of enemies is a noble temper of mind, which Christ expects from his disciples, it is certainly within their reach. Ardently desiring to be of that happy number, let me endeavour to attain this temper by the diligent use of those means which Scripture and reason have placed in my power.

To this end, I would never lose sight of that admirable advice given me by Paul: "If it be possible, live peaceably with all men." If I had no higher motive, the difficulty of treating an enemy with becoming temper should enforce this sacred precept. How amiable, and truly noble, was the proposal of Abraham to Lot, and how illustrious the example it exhibits! "And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren:—If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." I would often meditate upon this interesting story that I may cultivate the same lovely spirit. And as the wisest of men has told me, "by pride cometh contention," I must strive to suppress that constitutional pride of my nature, which, in the fulness of self-complacency, magnifies every injury I receive into high treason against my imaginary greatness. I must constantly view myself in the faithful mirror of the divine law, and the divine nature. There I shall see myself encompassed with innumerable imperfections; I shall appear less than nothing and vanity. In this way I may hope to become more humble and more patient. Let me also beware of an inordinate love of the world; a guilty passion which generally inspires hatred and revenge toward those who, by their misfortunes or dishonesty, leave their neighbours short of their equitable demands. I should further endeavour to palliate the first risings of anger, by supposing

the injury I received, and which I impute to malicious motives, may proceed merely from such inadvertence as I have often detected in myself. Perhaps the man, whom I consider mine enemy, feels a contrition for his conduct, which he wants humility or opportunity to acknowledge. In such a case, I should make those apologies, and offer that forgiveness, which I have wished from others, when I have found myself on the wrong side of a dispute. I often expect great allowances to be made for the frailties of our common nature. I should, then, in this, as in every other instance, do unto others as I wish them to do unto me.

Let me also settle it in my heart, that my fellow-man can do me no injury without the divine permission. From the human hand that strikes the blow which rouses my resentment, I must turn my thoughts to the omniscient Governor of the world, that I may learn to say to my foes, as Joseph to his brethren, "You thought evil against me, but God meant it for good." Perhaps my heavenly Father knows, that in the present state, I stand in need of enemies as well as friends. They make me more circumspect, wiser, and better. I desire, moreover, to keep constantly in view the direful consequences which often result from sinful anger. How does it pervert the judgment, and distort all the passions of the soul! How frequently does it do more mischief to ourselves than to the object against whom it is directed! To what dreadful and irretrievable actions has it often driven thoughtless mortals! Well might Solomon say, "The beginning of anger is as when one letteth out water:" the ungoverned element will carry all before it. How appropriate to man is the advice which follows, "therefore leave off contention before it is meddled with." Paul breathes the same amiable spirit when he says, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." But above all, if I would drink deeply into the spirit of that gospel which teaches me that to forgive, I must maintain a lively communion with the God of peace and love; let it be engraven on my heart, "Thou, God, seest me." And may he often see me upon my knees, imploring the assistance of that grace which will form me to this divine temper! Then will the fear of the Lord teach me to depart from the evil of revenge; and if angry thoughts stir within me, the divine consolations will silence the murmurs of my soul.

I must keep in view, and strive to imitate the per-

fect example of my divine Redeemer. Though he never gave the slightest offence to any man, he was in all points tempted as I am, only without sin. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not. To his disciples he says, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you." Amiable Redeemer! Methinks I hear thy gentle voice pronouncing those memorable words. Yes, thou didst bear with the infirmities of thy friends; thou didst generously forgive the aggravated offences of thine enemies; and when I was thine enemy, thou didst reconcile me to God by thy blood! Thou hast obliterated the crimson stains of that guilt, which would have polluted and tormented my soul to eternity! Give me a double portion of thy lovely spirit, and I will forgive my brother, as the Father, for thy sake, has forgiven me.

And finally, I would remember how soon I shall appear before the judgment-seat of God! My breath is in my nostrils. What if my soul should be hurried into the divine presence under the impulse of revengeful anger! If I expected it would be called for this night, the solemn thought would expel every idea of resentment from my mind. As then, I have no assurance of to-morrow, let me not indulge a temper unbecoming a dying sinner—a sinner who is just going to supplicate mercy and forgiveness at the tribunal of heaven.

"O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest!
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there."

WORD OF COUNSEL TO PROFESSORS,

ON

M O R A L H O N E S T Y.

Owe no man anything.—Rom. xiii. 8.

To afford assistance to the memory, we shall place our hints of advice on this much-neglected subject, under three leading articles.

1. *Be cautious how you get into debt.*

The general state of worldly business is such as necessarily leads men to trust each other. Without this mutual confidence, trade and commerce could not exist. Nay, the very bands of civil society themselves must soon be dissolved. Yet this needful and generous confidence ought to be strictly guarded by the rules of prudence, otherwise the consequences must prove highly detrimental both to debtor and creditor. OWE NO MAN ANYTHING should be, as far as possible, the maxim of every Christian tradesman. Therefore,

Never get into debt without some *reasonable prospect of paying*. To procure the property of others, without a design to pay at all, is downright robbery. The man who plunders his neighbour's dwelling, or applies a pistol to his breast, may expose himself to greater danger among men, but they both are chargeable with the *very same* offence in the sight of God. Nor can he stand clear of the imputation of rashness and folly, deserving of the highest censure, who, previous to his contracting debts, considers not in *what way* he is likely to discharge them. Such may talk of trust in Providence; but such a plea, under these circumstances, only aggravates the criminality of their conduct, by an attempt to make a righteous Providence answerable for the consequences of their unjust proceedings. O what extensive and foul disgrace have some splendid professors lately cast upon the good ways of the Lord, by their rash speculations and experiments with the property of others!

Make use of no *false pretences* to get into debt. The name
(1)

or friendship of a known and deserving character is often made the preface to a scene of fraud. Disappointments are pleaded which never occurred. Money, expected at a certain time, is mentioned as security to deceive the unwary. Nay, horrible to relate! conversation on religious subjects, the doctrines of the holy gospel, the dear and injured name of Jesus, are not unfrequently used, as the successful instruments of deception, by abandoned professors of religion.

The *satisfaction* felt by the upright mind in being out of debt, should operate as a reason for your endeavouring to keep unembarrassed in the world. It must greatly pain an honest man to recollect those claims which he cannot answer. Ever, then, bear in mind, that to get into debt for the relief of present distress, is almost sure in the event to plunge you into other, and perhaps greater difficulties, than those you now labour under.

Remember too how *disreputable* it is to be in debt. Unless in very special cases, it leads to a suspicion of the *industry*, *prudence*, or *principle* of a man; and that professor seems to give poor evidence of his regard to the credit of religion, who is careless of his own good name.

2. *Take heed how you behave if you are in debt.*

Much of a man's principle appears, by his spirit and conduct, when in debt. No one will trust the *avowed* deceiver. Therefore the knave approaches the person he has marked out as his prey, under the garb of honesty; but no sooner are his fraudulent designs accomplished, than he becomes another man. The vizard drops, and his real character appears.

Are you in debt? behave then with *civility* to your creditors. May not the man, who has befriended you in the hour of difficulty, at least expect to meet with that behaviour which common decency demands? Many ungrateful persons can scarcely afford a creditor a civil answer, when he ventures to inquire after his lawful property. Perhaps they resent the application as an affront, and forsake *him*, to play the same nefarious part upon another.

If you are in debt, be always *frank* and *candid*. Never attempt to disguise your situation by false glosses and wilful misrepresentations. Investigate, with impartial diligence, your own circumstances, and state to your creditors the naked truth. Suppress no part of information, which justice

calls for at your hands. In transactions which relate to God or man, this world or a future, an ingenuous disposition is particularly pleasing. “*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper : but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*” Prov. xxxviii. 13.

Never evade the claims of creditors by *false promises*. A man destitute of conscience, when pressed, will promise any thing to procure present relief; but this is adding sin to sin. He acts like the highwayman, who, having plundered the traveller, murders every one who endeavours to apprehend him. Such a character seems prepared for any enterprise of darkness. His conscience is seared as with a hot iron; and he is sure, if converting grace prevent not, to have his part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Rev. xxi. 8.

Sit not down *contented* if in debt. He that is easy, happy, and satisfied in such a situation, wears a character so nearly verging toward that of a villain, that it would require great penetration indeed to distinguish them. Therefore,

3. *Endeavour as soon as possible to discharge your debts.*

In order to this, *contrive* to pay. Lay down some prudent *plan* for the attainment of this desirable end. If you feel *yourself* incompetent to this, request some faithful friend to assist you by his counsel; and resolve to use as many contrivances to pay, as you or others have done to contract debts.

It is equally necessary that you *exert* yourselves to pay. Wishes, unaccompanied by suitable endeavours, only tend to poverty and disgrace. Let justice to your creditors be a spur to your application and industry in your calling. To be negligent when opportunities for exertion offer, or to waste your time in indolence and trifling, is indirect robbery of those whose claims upon you reach to every reasonable effort within your power.

Nor is it less incumbent that you *deny* yourselves to pay. The delicacies of the table, the superfluities of dress, &c. are glaringly inconsistent with a state of insolvency. To make entertainments for your friends or acquaintance, with what is not your own, is to defraud your creditors, and to feed others on the spoils of their property. Before you are hospitable and generous, determine to be just.

Begin this needful work *immediately*. Disinclination to

any duty will furnish many specious arguments for present neglect. Hence many suppose they could pay if circumstances were any way altered from what they are. They intend to apply themselves seriously to this concern hereafter, just as some talk of future repentance for the sins they are now committing. But we may venture to affirm, that if you do not *now* do what your opportunities admit of, your intentions to pay at all may be very justly questioned. "*Whatsoever, then, thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.*"

If you wish to succeed *persevere* in your attempts to pay. Though you may see many difficulties before you, do not despond and say, "*there is no hope.*" Though your first efforts may be baffled, look upward and try again. Much may be, and has been done by little and little. If conscientious and diligent in the path of duty, you have many encouraging declarations of Scripture on your side. "*And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not.*" Gal. vi. 9. "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" Prov. iii. 6. "*Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.*" Psa. xxxvii. 5.

Surely none will answer the foregoing plain remarks by observing, "Many lay great stress upon moral honesty for salvation; but we renounce the pharisaic sentiment, and glory in assurance of eternal life, because we trust in the finished righteousness of the Son of God." Mistake me not, friend! I have not been substituting honesty in the stead of the Saviour and his blessed work. I wish not to flatter the expectations of him, who makes integrity between man and man a reason for setting aside the gospel! But I wish to remind the professor of evangelical truth, that unless his faith lead him to the love of social justice, he is deceiving his own soul, if he suppose himself made a partaker of the faith of Christ. "For this is the will of God—that no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of such." 1 Thess. iv. 6. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. iv. 8.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD.

AN ADDRESS TO THE LOVERS OF THE WORLD.

“For the fashion of this world passeth away.”—1 Cor. vii. 31.

How inconsiderable are most of the pursuits which men eagerly follow! Of how little value are the things to which worldly men give all their hearts! Riches and honours are like the wind, which roars at a distance, blows round for an hour, passes by, and returns no more. And how soon the time comes when the rich man can no more glory in his riches, when the strong man cannot boast of his strength, when the proud man cannot rejoice in his pride, and when the men of office, the rulers of their fellow-men, have no more authority than the lowliest of their subjects!

Surely, these things seem as though designed by the Almighty to withdraw men from an evil purpose, and to hide pride from man, Job xxxiii. 17. Soon the period will come, when all the conditions in which we have been placed in our journey of life will seem of very little moment, except those conditions which have a connection with the gospel of Christ. The time will soon come when we shall

think the time which we have spent in prayer and in meditating upon the divine character and works, and which we have spent in sitting as learners of this word of divine revelation, preached and read, and in aiding the disciples of the Lord Jesus, the best portion of our life. It will seem the only portion of the passing fashion of this world, which we have improved for the world that is to come. And how little time has this been with any of us! How much of our time, when the whole is so short, has run to waste, whilst we have been regardless of our end! So teach us, O Lord, to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; "for the fashion of this world passes away."

But while this world is so changing, unstable, and disappointing, the Christian's world, the world of his hopes, the world for which he lives, is as durable as this world is changing and unsatisfactory. For, whoso doeth the will of God abideth for ever, 1 John ii. 17. The Christian's world is pure and holy; it is satisfactory in the enjoyment and affords pleasure in the retrospect; and more than this, its fashion is eternal. Nothing occurs to the Christian, not even at death, to change the nature of his hopes, or to alter the character of his desires. The friends he loved on earth he will love in heaven. And his love to them there shall be free from all imperfection; free from all alloy of sin. The pleasure which he longed for on earth he shall enjoy in heaven. The temptation which he feared on earth, he shall there for ever escape. There he has got away from trouble, because he is there out of the way of sin. He is beyond the very appearance of danger. He has not merely rest in his soul, but his soul is at rest in heaven. His Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is immutable, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; and everything connected with his kingdom is permanent and secure. Yes, when this world in its last great change, shall pass away, and the heavens, or the surrounding atmosphere, shall melt with fervent heat, and

the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, then not one jot or one tittle of the word or promises of God shall fail the Christian. The Christian is, therefore, secure for time and eternity. His world never changes; its fashion abides and does not pass away. He is secure, for his trust is in the Rock of ages, and nothing can move him from his standing. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

"Who,"—it is a question of holy triumph,—“who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. viii.

Contrasting, therefore, this world, which passeth away, with the Christian’s, which endures for ever, in which he lives and rejoices without end, who but must feel the importance of making a right choice, and renouncing this world in the love of it? for if we love the world the love of the Father is not in us, 1 John ii. 15. While, in obedience to the gospel, we act in faith in the Lord Jesus, and thus rise above the world, and set our affections on things above, we shall become inheritors of that better world, of which it is characteristic that it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, 1 Pet. i. 4.

But if this do not win you, O ye lovers of the world, and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; if this view of the Christian's world, the fashion of which is eternal, where holiness and happiness never pass away, fail to attract, to allure, and to persuade to a right choice, and to right conduct, I will open another view. I will present another prospect, and endeavour to exhibit the state and the future world of them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ. And I do this, O reader, that I may, by the divine blessing, alarm the impenitent in their fancied, and treacherous, and false security; that I may wake them out of the sleep of sin, and show them their danger whilst they are prisoners of hope. I mean your good, O bear with me, for I cannot bear to neglect to warn you, and see your ruin. O Lord, make effectual the words of this address. Here then, ye lovers of the world, let me remove the curtain which hides futurity from you; let me open the world of the damned, and look ye therein. See and mark well its fashion, for it *too* is eternal. And what is this fashion? It is a fashion of hatred to God, to Christ, and to holiness. It is a fashion of separation from happiness by the irrevocable sentence of the Almighty Judge. It is a separation from happiness by an impassable gulf; and it has anguish inexpressible, without the least intermission or mitigation. It is a fashion of suffering, more than language can describe, or mind can conceive, and *ever* existing to suffer more. O this word *forever!* Mercy's door is shut—misery's gate is wide open—and the torments of hell encompass the sufferer. Justice outraged has shut him up in the prison of the damned. Within him gnaws the worm which never dies, and without him burns the fire which shall never be quenched.

Eternity is stamped on his misery; it is *everlasting* punishment into which he goes; and the fashion of this world never, no never! passes away. Eternity is fixed to his character and his state.

He put far off the evil day, but it hath overtaken him. He had a day of grace, but he hath sinned it away. He heard the gospel preached, but he did not repent. He neglected duty, hated prayer, and loved sinning; and the long arrear of sin's wages is now, and shall be for ever given him. O how changed his condition, from that ever-varying scene in this world, where, under a dispensation of mercy, against prayer, against preaching, against providences, against the warnings of his own conscience, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit, he forced his way, as though bent on his own destruction!

The Son of God reveals his state, when by sinning he has lost his soul. In hell!—ah! my readers, what is hell? It is the Lord's prison for his enemies:—and who are prisoners there? The devil and his angels, and sinners of mankind who live ungodly and die impenitent! In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments; thither he has gone—not that he sought this place, but he loved and followed the way to it; not that he loved this punishment, but he loved sinning, of which this punishment is the wages. He is now the everlasting victim of inflexible and punitive justice. Mercy, too long abused, no more entreats to spare him a little longer, but unites with justice, and acquiesces in his doom. From this awful prison, from these torments of the damned, from this eternal hell, the thread of life is all that separates every one who is not born of the Holy Spirit, and united to Christ by a living faith. By this brittle thread of a most precarious life, you, O sinners, hang suspended over everlasting burnings! And are your eyes closed? And do you sleep on and feel secure? Do you never look downward and behold that fiery pit, which, without bottom, yawns beneath you? Do you never look upward to that glorious heaven, the gate of which, on golden hinges turning, is wide open to receive the repenting sinner, who seeks admission through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

If you have never done it before, do it now. You are yet on mercy's shore; you still have the Bible to read, and you hear the gospel trumpet sound. O look to Christ, and be not faithless but believing. Fix your eye on Calvary's rugged hill! Behold yon bloody tree! Whom do you there see? Behold Christ, the anointed of God, the Saviour of sinners, the atoning priest, himself the sacrifice! Hear him pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Behold him bow his head and give up the ghost. And do you never hope your sins were there? that he bore them in his body on the tree?

Hard is the heart that can think of this without emotion! Dead, buried in sin, is that soul which can muse thereon and have no feeling. And does your heart never relent, O sinner! Does it never melt within you, that you have pierced the Lord Jesus so deep, and continued to do it so long? O sinners, sinners! let me plead with you. This is your Friend—he is your best Friend.

For you he left the courts above,
 For you he felt redeeming love,
 For you he bore accursed death!
 O live to him your every breath!

Yes, let me plead with you; by your capacity for happiness, by your need of salvation, by the forbearance of God, by the love of Jesus, by the horrors of damnation, by the glories of heaven, promised through Christ to repenting sinners. Let me plead with you. Give yourself, O sinner, to Jesus! He is worthy, he is willing, O give yourself to him. You must do it or perish; you must do it heartily, you must do it unreservedly. You cannot serve God and mammon, Jesus and the world. I conjure you to repent. I have, as God has enabled me, set before you life and death, salvation and damnation. I conjure you to choose which you will take, and whom you will serve. I conjure you that you turn to God and live; that you repent

and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. But if you do not repent of your sins, and with your heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall perish. And it is no slight thing to be damned of God and his Christ. It is no slight thing to be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But, perhaps, you are thinking, "I do not believe all this; I'll risk it; I am not ready to be religious yet; a little more time for the world; I do not think that I shall die soon, and any time before I die will do." Risk it if you dare. It is a risk indeed. In the snare of the devil you are carried captive by him at his will. And when your day of grace is past, and you are shut up in the prison of hell, remember this address—remember the writer now warns you not to presume on life and continue in sin.

You will risk it, will you? Think again. Whom are you setting at defiance? Have you an arm to contend with the Almighty? Have you a voice, that can thunder like him? Pensioner on his bounty, tenant at his will, did he but let thee go, life's thread would break, and destruction, eternal destruction, be the portion of thy soul. Therefore, to-day, after so long a time, even to-day hear his voice, and harden not your heart. But turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die

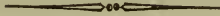
LOVE OF THE WORLD.

IT was the love of the world which left Felix no leisure to attend to better things, even those that accompany salvation. It was this that choked the good seed of the word in the thorny ground hearers. This caused a lovely youth to go away sorrowful from Christ. It led Judas to dissemble, when he talked about waste and giving to the poor. It led him to sell his Master for thirty pieces of silver, and afterwards to betray him with a kiss into the hands of his murderers. It led Pilate to condemn him, and others to cry out, Crucify him, crucify him! This self-same thing caused Demas to forsake Paul, and was a source of sorrow to the same apostle respecting many others, whom, in his letter to the Philippians, he mentions with tears, because they minded earthly things, and as such were enemies to the cross of Christ. Their god was their belly, they gloried in their shame, and would find their end to be destruction. Our Saviour himself plainly intimates that the love of the world is capable of destroying the soul, when he says—“What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” And be it remarked, that although true believers shall not so love the world as to lose their souls to all eternity, seeing whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, yet nevertheless, by the love of earthly things their soul’s happiness may be greatly injured. This world is a wilderness, and they must not think to make it their paradise. It abounds with briers, and thorns, and vales of tears. In it they have no continuing city. They are merely passengers, or sojourners, and not natives or residents. It is a place of exile, and of absence from their best home. It is an enemy’s country. Yea, it is one of the grand enemies which, under Christ’s banner, they must encounter and conquer.

SYMPATHY

WITH

THE AFFLICTED CHRISTIAN.



“Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.”

SUFFERING Christian, enduring Christian, upon whom the strokes of your Heavenly Father's chastening rod are falling fast and heavily, turn aside with me for a moment, from the desponding contemplation of your sorrows. Permit one who has suffered, to enjoy the great privilege of speaking to you a word of comfort. Perhaps you have often heard words of sympathy and comfort. You have found them in the promises of God's holy word, and yet have feared they were not designed for you, and have not been able to appropriate them as adapted to your necessity. The language of your burdened soul is, “Was ever sorrow like *my* sorrow?”

Perhaps you are a stranger to the voice of the comforter. To your afflictions, it may be, is added

this heaviest of all, to bear them *alone*; and in silence and pain to nurse the soul-sickness, that is slowly drying up the fountain of life. Suffer me then, not to *point* you to the true consolation, but to *accompany* you thither, and once more let us try to drink from that gushing spring in whose waters is life.

In the search after happiness, which is the natural pursuit of every heart, you have met with painful disappointments. Be not overwhelmed, but calmly consider whether you have been truly wise in your estimate of happiness, and in the means to be used for its attainment. You have probably looked for enjoyment from this world; from the possession of its treasures of love, honour, pleasure, or wealth. Alas! it is too much the case with all. We either fail to obtain possession of these earthly treasures, or obtain them only to have our hearts torn by their removal. The dearest object of our love; the best beloved, who has been our light and joy, is torn from our embrace. The world ceases to be a bright, happiness-giving world to us. Gloom and darkness cast a deep shadow over our prospect. Then we groan under a cross, whose weight every day increases, until we feel that it is too heavy to be borne, and, in our unbelief, question the goodness of the Father who thus afflicts, even that Father who loves us more tenderly than does the mother her infant nursling. By the "sorrow that drinks up our spirit," he would teach us, in the fulness of his love, the true object of our being! That this object is not to have our own will, in the possession of what we esteem best, but renouncing self, to glorify Him in doing his will, may be a hard lesson for the natural heart to

learn, but oh! how indispensably necessary that it should be learned, as lying at the foundation of true holiness and happiness, and as conducing to that deep submission which yields up everything at God's command, to receive afterwards, in his time, an hundred-fold reward; to be made partaker of a love of which the dearest earthly affections are only the faint types; to receive in place of a pining, yearning emptiness of spirit, long, soul-satisfying draughts from the infinite fulness.

Dear fellow-pilgrim to Zion, wearied and faint under your trials, have you fully submitted to your Father's will? Do so, I beseech you. In no dark corner of your heart let a rebellious feeling find refuge. Submit to him, and trust in him. Although your way may lie through the deep waters, and you can neither hear his voice, nor see his face, he is still with you. The arm of his power encircles your fainting form, and of his dear presence you shall perhaps be made aware when you least expect it. Above the roar of the swelling waves you will hear him say, with inexpressible love, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Ah! then you will have joy. Then will light arise in the darkness, and you will bless God that he took away your earthly love, to give you the infinitely richer portion of a heavenly one. Does this seem impossible? Trust and believe. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

But you say, "My soul is dark and sorrowful; I know not how to trust and believe. In my affliction I see not the hand of a merciful Father, but that of an offended Judge, from whose anger I shrink." Be not discouraged. If you cannot believingly trust, at

least pray for a spirit of submission to him as a justly offended Judge; pray for a true sense of that sin which separates from God, divests him of his true character, and presents him only as an angry Judge. For be assured, that this exclusive view of God is the result of our own hardness of heart and rebellious temper. He is in truth a God in Christ, reconciling the world, not imputing their sin to them.

We should pray without ceasing for true penitence; for all right emotions towards our best and truest Friend, who counted not his own life too dear to be laid down as a sacrifice for us. Who, even now, while we writhe and groan in anguish of soul, and believe him to be far off, is sitting at our side, as a "refiner and purifier of silver," watching with untiring vigilance the process of our purification. While the fiery waves roll and toss themselves in that "seven-times heated furnace," he never takes his eye off, but waits, with an interest even greater than our own, for that happy moment when the pure silver, released from its dross, shall give back the image of him who watches it so intently. Truly he is grieved when his children suffer, but he knows that without this chastisement they can never be made partakers of his holiness, or occupants of those heavenly mansions which he has gone before to prepare.

Dear fellow-pilgrim, would you not choose to be made meet for such an inheritance, even at the expense of much trial and suffering here? Ah yes! You already begin to believe that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. You are already becoming willing to suffer, as you must, in

the destruction of your carnal nature, in the renunciation of your own will and wishes. Look beyond the narrow circle of sorrow and disappointment, in which your thoughts constantly revolve. Turn your eyes resolutely towards the land on the other side of Jordan, and although all may now look impenetrably dark in that direction—still look. Soon there will be flashes of light through the gloom. Soon, if you gaze perseveringly, these flashes will become a steady brightness, and this world, with all its joys and sorrows, will be swallowed up in the all-glorious future to which we hasten.

Consider, above all, that the great “Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through suffering.” If suffering was a necessary means of his perfection, who was without sin, what must be the necessity for it in our case! The apostle of the Gentiles, in describing the point he most ardently wished to reach, says, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and *the fellowship of his sufferings*, being made conformable unto his death.” As if he had said, “As Christ suffered the *punishment* of my sin, so must I suffer in its *destruction*, and dying unto sin, be raised to spiritual life by that same power that brought our Lord Jesus Christ again from the dead.”

Christian, will you shrink from such a fellowship? No, rather bearing the cross with him, let us rejoice that we are counted worthy of such companionship, knowing that “if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” Let us not fear to follow him. Whenever, as I pass along this vale of tears, I can perceive any traces of his footsteps, then I know that I am in the right way. No matter how “waste and howling

the wilderness" may be about me, or how dark and stormy the sky above, if I can discern any evidence that he whose footsteps I follow has passed that way, I press forward with renewed courage and faith. Although the road leads towards the dark valley and shadow of death, and the rush of the swift waters of the river of death already comes faintly to my ear—still onward—onward! No darkness can be so deep as to hide the print of his foot. Where he has once been my soul is safe. The light of his promise, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also," shines above the gloom like a dazzling star. Its rays, now reflecting the light of the golden city, now illuminating the dark waters of the river of death, make its dreaded passage but a pathway of light to the presence of God.

Abandoning, then, all hope of comfort from earthly sources, let us come in meekness to the help our Father has provided for his suffering children. Let us come to the prayerful study of his word; to the throne of grace; to the great atoning sacrifice. Let us give our hearts wholly to the teachings of the Great Master, and dread not so much the burden of our affliction, as the danger that it may not accomplish the end for which it was designed. We may well fear that from his chastenings we may not draw all the precious lessons they were intended to teach; that we may not learn from them the true object and end of our being, even to glorify God by a daily, child-like obedience, trusting our salvation wholly in his hands, who has promised "never to leave nor forsake us." To be happy is not so much the object

of life as to be holy, although we know none are so truly happy as those who most diligently strive to please God, by becoming assimilated to his likeness. As our divine Lord has said, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it," let us cast all our cares and sorrows upon him, and be willing to endure whatever he, in his infinite love and wisdom, shall see necessary for us, feeling assured he will not suffer us to experience one pang that is not requisite for our sanctification.

Thus leaning upon the arm of the Beloved, it will no longer seem so hard to wait patiently, if not hopefully, for the time when he shall give us "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" when he shall make that which is now so dark and sorrowful light, and even joyful, and we shall be able to believe that "Earth has *no* sorrow which Heaven cannot cure."

"Subdued and instructed, at length to thy will,
My hopes and my longings, I fain would resign.
Oh give me a heart that can wait and be still,
Nor know of a wish nor a pleasure but thine.

There are mansions exempted from sin and from woe,
But they stand in a region by mortals untrod;
There are rivers of joy, but they roll not below;
There is rest, but it dwells in the presence of God."

“I HAVE CHOSEN THEE IN THE FURNACE
OF AFFLICTION.”

WITH what is the Divine will, as stated in these words, connected, respecting the afflictions of the believer? Is it with the circumstances of time? Is it since they were brought into existence that God determined upon the circumstances that should surround them, and the path they should tread? O no! The trying circumstance, the heavy affliction, stands connected with the great and glorious doctrine of God's eternal, sovereign, and unconditional election of his people. They were “*chosen in the furnace,*” chosen in it before all time, chosen in it from all eternity. Chosen in it when he set his heart upon them, entered into an everlasting covenant with them, and took them to be his “chosen generation, his royal priesthood, his holy nation, his peculiar people.” Thus to trace up every affliction that comes from God to his eternal choice of his people; to see it in the covenant of grace; to see it connected with his eternal purpose of salvation—with his *eternal love*, in what a soothing light does it place the darkest dispensation of his providence!

But there is another thought in the passage equally blessed: “I have chosen thee,”—in what? In prosperity? No. In the bright summer's day? No. In the smooth and flowery paths of worldly comforts? No. “I have chosen thee *in the furnace of affliction!*” Is this according to our poor finite ideas of love and tenderness? O no! Had we been left to choose our own path, to mark out our own way, it had been a far different one from this. We should never have thought of affliction as a source of blessing. But God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and his ways above our ways.—*Winslow.*

HOW TO USE THE BIBLE.



THE Bible is the profoundest book in the world. Other books contain the thoughts of men; this is full of the thoughts of God. It informs us of the nature, will, and government of God; it treats of the nature, offices, and destiny of angels; it tells us when, where, how, and for what man was made; it informs us of the original and of the end of all things. Events that have occurred in the remotest antiquity, and events that shall occur in the latest futurity, are alike familiar to inspired men. Time, in its relations to an eternity past and to an eternity to come, all the loftiest themes of human thought, all the deepest mysteries of human guilt and divine mercy, things at once the most glorious and the most terrible, are discoursed of with reverent familiarity in the sacred volume.

Nor is the Bible less practical than it is profound. There is not a duty that it does not enjoin; not a sin that it does not forbid. It always favours truth and virtue. It makes perpetual war on sin and error. To obey it perfectly is to attain all the highest ends of existence. To disobey it in the least is to court shame and misery. It is thus above all other books useful. It is the revelation of the mind of God to man for his own eternal salvation, and for the everlasting glory of the Creator of heaven and earth.

“What saith the Scripture?” “How readest thou?” are therefore most pertinent and pregnant questions,

whenever religious doctrine or duty is concerned. All contempt of the word of God is therefore foolish, dangerous, and monstrous. "If they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven?" "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him in the last day." "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." "Wisdom is too high for a fool." "Fools die for want of wisdom." To abuse or even to neglect the Bible is to covet death. To slight it is to despise our own mercies.

TRANSLATIONS.

The lawfulness of translating the Scriptures into the languages spoken by the common people is generally conceded. The church of Rome, indeed, in all her missions to the heathen for two centuries past, is said not to have produced a single translation of God's word for the use of the people, who are perishing for lack of vision; yet even she admits the lawfulness of translations. The Vulgate in Latin, the Douay in English, and Martini's Bible in Italian, are all uninspired versions of holy writ. We have also the example of Christ and his apostles, who freely quoted the Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the Scriptures in common use in their day. This example settles the question. Though in case of doubt the originals must be regarded as the very words of the Holy Ghost, yet the reason for making translations is as strong as for preaching in the language understood by the audience. Paul says: "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." When the Bible was given, it was given in languages well understood by those to whom it was addressed. When those languages are not generally understood, translations are necessary.

THE BIBLE CALLS FOR EXAMINATION.

For various reasons we are bound to examine the Scriptures. It is peculiarly pleasant to find the word of God itself so clear on this very point. The Bible is not an amulet. It works not as a charm. Nor was it intended merely to garnish a chamber or a parlour. By Moses God said: "These words, which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates." It is impossible to give any fair interpretation of this passage, which does not imply the duty of becoming well acquainted with the word of God. The ordinary method of doing this is by reading it, by hearing it, by thinking and speaking of it. David tells us what was his practice on this subject: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart;" "I will delight myself in thy statutes;" "I will not forget thy word." Jeremiah says: "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." When Jesus Christ came, he gave a clear and plain command on the subject: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." To the Colossians Paul says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Shall God speak, and man not hear? Shall he reveal his will, and we not study to know it? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the

Holy Ghost." "We thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God." The Bible is God's word to man. He has commanded us to search it. We are guilty if we obey not. Our right to do so who shall challenge? "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children."

THE FATHERS.

Nor did pious men within the first five centuries of the apostles vary in their testimony on this subject. They all held and taught that it was the right and the duty of the people to read and judge for themselves. It is refreshing to one's spirit to find how eagerly they studied God's word, and by all proper means encouraged others to do the same. Chrysostom says: "Is it not absurd, that, in money matters, men will not trust to others, but the counters are produced, and the sum cast up; yet, in their soul's affairs, men are led and drawn away by the opinions of others, and this when they have an exact scale and an exact rule, viz: the declaration of the divine laws? Therefore, I entreat and beseech you all, that, not minding what this or that man may say about these things, you would consult the holy Scriptures concerning them."

The emperor Constantine, before the Council of Nice, knew that he was appealing to the common mind of the fathers assembled, when he said: "The books of the evangelists and apostles, and the prophetic oracles, plainly inform us what opinions and sentiments to entertain concerning God; therefore, laying aside all unfriendly contention, let us proceed to debate and prove the things in question from the sacred writings."

Jerome said: "Love the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee." Both of himself and another of the fathers it is related, that when they sat at their tables, and when they lay down to sleep, they had God's word

read to them. Tertullian says; "I adore the fulness of Scripture; I do not admit what thou bringest in of thine own without Scripture." Theodoret says: "Do not offer reasons and arguments that are human, and drawn from the authority of men. I believe and obey only the holy Scripture."

Basil says: "Let the divinely inspired Scripture determine the whole controversy among us." Justin Martyr says: "We must know, by all means, that it is not lawful or possible to learn anything of God, or of right piety, save out of the prophets, who teach us by divine inspiration." Augustine says: "Take and read the Scriptures, for whatsoever is in them is high and divine: there is verily truth, and a doctrine most fit for the refreshment and renewing of men's minds, and truly so tempered that every one may draw with a devout and pious mind, as true religion requires."

So full and uniform is the testimony of the fathers on the general obligation to study God's written word, that Fenelon, in his celebrated letter to the Bishop of Arras, "On the Reading of the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular," speaks as follows: "I think that in our days persons have taken useless trouble to prove what is incontestable, to wit, that during the primitive ages of the church, lay-persons were accustomed to read the holy Scriptures. To be convinced of this, we have only to open the works of St. Chrysostom. He says, for example, in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans, that he *feels a lively sorrow*, because many of the faithful do not understand St. Paul, *as they should*, and because this ignorance in some is so great that they do not *even know the number of his epistles*. He adds, that this disorder proceeds from the fact *that they are unwilling to have his writings in their hands assiduously*; he further declares, that ignorance of the holy Scriptures *is the source of the contagion of heresies, and of the neglect in morals*. "Those," he says, "who do not turn their eyes toward the light of the Scriptures, fall necessarily into errors, and into

frequent faults." "The whole of this discourse," continues Fenelon, "regarded the lay-persons, who were accustomed to hear the sermons of this father." St. Jerome, speaking to Læta concerning the education of her granddaughter, says that when this child shall commence to be a little older, her parents must find her only in the sanctuary of the Scriptures, consulting the prophets and apostles, concerning the spiritual nuptials. He adds: "Let her every day bring to you her work in order, which shall be a bouquet of the flowers of Scripture; let her learn the number of the Greek verses, and afterwards let her be instructed in the Latin edition." He desires that this young maiden should love the holy books instead of jewelry and silken stuffs. . . . Let her learn the Psalms Let her instruct herself in the proverbs of Solomon on the rule of life; let her, in Ecclesiastes, accustom herself to trample worldly things under foot; in the book of Job, let her follow the examples of courage and patience; let her pass to the gospels, never to put them out of her hands; let her with an ardent thirst be filled with the acts of the apostles, and with their epistles. . . . Let her learn by heart the prophets, the first seven books of Scripture, those of Kings," &c. This testimony of the archbishop of Cambray is the more remarkable, as it is the first part of a letter, the object of which is to justify the church of Rome in withholding God's word from the people. To every well-ordered mind these concessions must be fatal to the main purpose. In a subsequent part of the same letter he says: "Besides, in those times all the Scriptures, and even all the liturgy, were in the vernacular language. All the West understood the Latin, in which was the ancient version of the Bible, called by St. Augustine the *old Italian version*. The West also had the liturgy in the same language, which was the language of the people. At the East it was the same thing: the people there all spoke Greek; they understood the Septuagint version, and the Greek liturgy, just as our

people understand the French translation. Thus, without entering upon any question of criticism, it is clearer than day that the people had in their natural language the Bible and liturgy, which they caused their children to read, that they might be properly educated; that the holy pastors, in their sermons afterwards explained to them the whole Scriptures; that the text was very familiar to the people; that they were exhorted to read it continually; that they were reproached for neglecting to read it; finally, that such neglect was regarded as the source of heresies, and of the relaxation of morals. This is something which no one need undertake to prove, because it is evident in the monuments of antiquity." Truly Fenelon is a good witness for us. Would that he had always spoken as truly as in what has been quoted.

GREAT STUDENTS OF THE BIBLE.

That we may see what can be done in becoming acquainted with the Bible, and that we may be awakened to imitate so good examples, let us look at a few facts. Eusebius tells us of one who had his eyes burnt out in the Dioclesian persecution, and who repeated, in a public assembly, the very words of Scripture, with as much accuracy as if he had been reading them. Jerome says of Nepotian, that by reading and meditation he had made his soul a library of Christ. Theodosius, the younger, was so familiar with the word of God, that he made it a subject of conversation with the old bishops, as if he had been one of them. Augustine says, that after his conversion, he ceased to relish even Cicero, his former favourite author, and that the Scriptures were his pure delight. Tertullian spent a great part of his time in reading the Scriptures, and committed large portions of them to memory. In his youth, Beza learned all Paul's epistles in Greek so thoroughly, that when he was eighty years old he could repeat them in that language. Cranmer is said to have been able to repeat the whole of the New Tes-

tament from memory. Luther was one of the most indefatigable students of the Bible that the world has ever seen. Ridley said: "The wall and trees of my orchard, could they speak, would bear witness that there I learned by heart almost all the epistles; of which study, although in time a greater part was lost, yet the sweet savour thereof I trust I shall carry with me to heaven." Sir John Hartop, a man of many cares, made the book of God so much his study, that it lay before him night and day. A French nobleman used to read three chapters of the Bible every day, *on his bended knees, with his head uncovered*. Joshua Barnes is said to have read a small pocket Bible a hundred and twenty times over. Mr. Roger Cotton read the whole Bible through twelve times a year. The Rev. William Romaine studied nothing but the Bible for the last thirty or forty years of his life. John Boyse, one of the translators of our Bible, had read all the Scriptures before he was five years old. His mother read them through twelve times. Some have read the Bible through many times in a year. I have read of more than one, of whom it was said, that if the Bible had been lost, the whole might have been recovered from their memories. In short, was there ever an eminent Christian who was not remarkable for his study of Scripture, as he had opportunity?

STRIKING TESTIMONIES TO THE BIBLE.

The Bible does indeed contain aliment for feeble minds. Even little children may be made wise and good by its heavenly truths. But there is nothing more idle than the flippancy of some, who speak of the Scriptures as unsuited to strong minds. The mightiest intellects of modern times have paid profound homage to the sacred writings. Lord Bacon, the father of the only sound method of philosophising, says: "There never was found, in any age of the world, either religion, or law, or discipline, that did so highly exalt the public good, as the Christian faith." Sir Robert Boyle

says: "The Bible is a matchless volume. It is impossible we can study it too much, or esteem it too highly." Sir Isaac Newton says: "We account the Scriptures of God the sublimest philosophy." John Milton says: "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion." Locke says: "The gospel has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." Selden says: "There is no book in the universe upon which we can rest our souls, in a dying moment, but the Bible." Similar testimonies might be almost indefinitely increased. Take this one additional. Byron spent his days in guilt and folly, but his conscience and his genius paid homage to Scripture. Not long before his death he wrote these lines on the blank leaf of a Bible:

" Within this awful volume lies
 The mystery of mysteries.
 \ Happiest they of human race,
 To whom their God has given grace
 To read, to hear, to hope, to pray,
 To lift the latch—to force the way;
 And better they had ne'er been born,
 Than read to doubt, or read to scorn."

At another time he said: "Indisputably the firm believers in the gospel have a great advantage over all others, for this simple reason, that, if it be true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel, in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life."

OUR ENGLISH VERSION.

Our English translation has some faults, but they are few compared with its excellencies. Its faults are generally known, and, when the marginal readings of the translators are given, the remaining blemishes are so few as hardly to call for serious notice in a popular

treatise. Above most translations, ours contains a complete transcript of the ideas of the original, preserves the style and manner of the original, and yet possesses the ease of original composition. Like Luther's Bible, it fixed the language into which the translation was made, and remains a classic to this day. The clamours of men, who call for a new translation, would be entitled to more respect, if they evinced either sound scholarship or a good temper. Let them, in a Christian spirit, and without private ends clearly in view, set forth their new translation, and the world will judge of it with candour. Let them bring all the sound learning possible to their work; let them be masters of the original and of the kindred languages; let them be skilled in all kindred branches of learning, and do their task as workmen, that need not be ashamed, and we will thank them. But when men cannot defend the cause of temperance, or argue on the morality of the institutions of the country, or defend the ordinances of religion, without attacking our English translation, it may generally be inferred that they have taken some position not supported by Scripture. Even in practical preaching, some weak men display an intolerable vanity in frequently criticising the text. The learning of the age, when our translation was made, was truly prodigious. It was far in advance of the present age, as its monuments amply testify. The translators were well chosen. Due respect was had to their learning, their piety, their sound judgment, and their age. "The average age of all of them, so far as ascertained, was considerably more than sixty years." They were not striplings, but brought great maturity of mind to their task. They have won more honour than any other men ever gained in any literary work. Take a few testimonies on the subject. Lowth said: "The vulgar translation of the Bible is the best standard of our language." Horsley said: "The adherence of the translators to the Hebrew idiom is supposed at once to have enriched and

adorned our language; and as they laboured for the general benefit of the learned and the unlearned, they avoided all words of Latin original, when they could find words in their own language, even with the aid of adverbs and prepositions, which would express their meaning." Dr. White, Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford, said: "General fidelity to its original is hardly more its characteristic than sublimity itself. . . It is still considered the standard of our tongue. The English language acquired new dignity by it." Dr. Adam Clarke said: "The original, from which it is taken, is alone superior to the Bible translated by the authority of King James." Dr. James Beattie said: "It is a striking beauty in our English Bible, that though the language is always elegant and nervous, and for the most part very harmonious, the words are all plain and common; no affectation of learned terms, or of words of Greek and Latin etymology." Middleton said: "The style of our present version is incomparably superior to anything which might be expected from the finical and perverted taste of our own age. It is simple, it is harmonious, it is energetic; and, which is of no small importance, use has rendered it familiar, and time has rendered it sacred." John Taylor, of Norwich, said: "As our translation is in itself by far the most excellent book in our language, so it is a pure and plentiful fountain of divine knowledge, giving a true, clear, and full account of the divine dispensation, and of the gospel of our salvation, insomuch that whoever studies the Bible, the English Bible, is sure of gaining that knowledge and faith, which, if duly applied to the heart and conversation, will infallibly guide him to eternal life." Our own countryman, Fisher Ames, said: "In no book is there so good English, so pure and so elegant. . . The Bible will justly remain the standard of language as well as of faith." These testimonies, with many others that have been published to the world, are a solemn and sufficient reproof to those sciolists

and agitators who, on every occasion when their vanity, or extravagance, or bigotry, are rebuked, cry out against our English translation as unworthy of reliance.

THE RIGHT SPIRIT.

In all matters the spirit that actuates men has been felt and acknowledged to be important. It is so in learning any art or science. In studying God's word, the importance of a right spirit cannot be over-estimated. The want of it produces more miscarriages than all other causes united. Some minds are so full of prejudices that their progress in divine knowledge is painfully slow. Nothing is more opposed to docility, or to our advancement in learning, than a state of mind forearmed against the truth. Impartiality is difficult of attainment, but is essential to success. Prejudices sometimes lie against particular doctrines of the Bible, and men come to God's word, not to find out what it teaches, but to discover some means of getting rid of unwelcome truths. Anything favouring their errors is seized with avidity, but anything warring on their preconceived opinions is carefully avoided. The truth is, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," against all his nature, all his will, all his word, so that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." How many who give some signs of seriousness, yet reject or slight parts of Scripture, as Solomon's Song, Hosea, or the Epistles of Paul! The very books they fail to study contain, perhaps, the best correctives of their faults of character. Some profess little regard for the Old Testament, calling it the "old law," and at the same time would persuade us that they had a wonderful regard for the New Testament. But "the two Testaments, like the two cherubim, look stedfastly towards each other, and towards the mercy-seat, which they encompass." Whoever neglects the Old Testament must have very disjointed views of

truth; must be in darkness on some very important subjects; must be ready to follow many wild opinions on vital points of doctrine, and embrace a system destitute of all good proportions. If the Old Testament is not true, neither is the New. If the types of the former were not given by God, the antitypes of the latter are fallacious. He who rejects the Old Testament is already more than half an infidel, and will soon be wholly so, unless capable of some happy inconsistency of character. "The Scripture is so penned that they who have a mind to know, may know; they who have a mind to wrangle, may take occasion enough of offence, and justly perish by the rebellion of their own minds; for God never intended to satisfy men of stubborn and perverse spirits." Read the whole Scripture; read it with candour.

MAKE DILIGENT SEARCH.

"The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." The Bereans are commended for searching the Scriptures DAILY. The great law of acquisition in knowledge, as indeed, to a great extent, of wealth also, is "a little at a time, and often repeated." "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." He, whose mind dwells on divine truth, shall abound in the knowledge of God.

REVERENCE.

There is no more important qualification of a student of God's word than profound reverence for sacred things. To every one who opens the lids of this matchless, awful volume, God says: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground;" "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread;" "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and

of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Lightness of mind in any man shows a heart wholly unprepared to profit by the sacred volume. Irreverence in such study is profanity. The only way in which God's truth profits triflers is by first curing their levity, and then making them wise. Of all dispositions unfriendly to the successful study of divine truth, none is more prominent than a fondness for jesting with sacred things. Luther said: "Whom God would destroy, he first permits to sport with Scripture."

"Read and *revere* the sacred page—a page,
Which not the whole *creation* could produce,
Which not the *conflagration* shall destroy."

PRAYER.

As man's intellectual dependence on God is absolute, nothing is more proper in every student of the Bible than hearty prayer. A prayerless student of God's word never attained the wisdom of the just, never became wise unto salvation, never became mighty in the Scriptures. On the other hand, he who never opened the sacred volume but with earnest crying to God for divine illumination, never died a fool. No act that man can perform is more reasonable than offering such petitions as these: "Teach me thy statutes;" "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" "Give me understanding;" "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies." If man ever needs help from on high, it is when endeavouring to learn the will of God for his own salvation. One of the most successful students of the Bible during the last century tells us how he perused the blessed volume: "I spread the Hebrew Bible before God, and cried to the Father, that, for the sake of his Son, he would by the Spirit shine on it, unto me, give light into, and discover his mind in the word; that he would give me life, health, strength, time and inclination to the study, and a blessing thereon; that he

would teach me how to manage that work, and would pity me as to sleep, having been somewhat bereaved of sleep since I was determined to that work." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not."

MODESTY.

Such are the weakness and limits of the human mind, and such is the sublimity of the matters brought to our notice in the Scriptures, that nothing is more reasonable than unaffected modesty in every student of the Bible. The profoundest scholars in every branch of knowledge have been the brightest patterns of ingenuous self-distrust. "I seem," said Sir Isaac Newton, after his great discoveries had been made, "I seem to be walking on the shore of a boundless ocean, and only to have picked up a few pebbles." The words of Milton, at the opening of his great poem, have often been quoted as evincing the same unfeigned sense of weakness:

"And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st
. . . what in me is dark
Illumine; what is low, raise and support."

Nor are the Scriptures silent on so necessary a matter. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." Our Lord chiefly refers to this low estimate of ourselves, when he says: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Such subjects as God's nature, counsels and government; as man's dependence and freedom, his obligations and destiny; such themes as time and eternity, life and death, sin and holiness, heaven and hell, are not to be justly understood by the proud and self-sufficient.

FAITH.

One of the most essential qualifications of a Bible student is true faith, an unfaltering reliance on the testimony of God, as true and sure to be accomplished. "We walk by faith." In proportion as any human character has shone illustriously, it has been remarkable for freedom from blind credulity and from carping scepticism. There never was a truly great mind that believed without evidence, or refused to believe upon sufficient evidence. In the Bible the God who cannot lie testifies, and every wise man believes what he says, even if he cannot see the reason of all things, yea, if some things seem contrary to his past judgments of them. When Luther was at Coburg, he wrote to a friend: "I was lately looking out of my window at night, and I saw the stars in the heavens, and God's great, beautiful arch over my head, but I could not see any pillars on which the great Builder had fixed this arch; and yet the heavens fell not, and the great arch stood firmly. There are some who are always feeling for the pillars, and longing to touch them; and because they cannot touch them, they stand trembling and fearing lest the heavens should fall. If they could only grasp the pillars, then the heavens would stand fast. Just so, many seem full of doubt, forgetting that the Scripture must be all fulfilled." If you come to search the Scriptures, "have faith in God."

THE LOVE OF TRUTH.

Of all the dispositions requisite to the profitable study of Scripture, none is more important than a sincere, constant, and ardent love of the truth. Indeed it is the foremost of all qualifications. He who loves his own opinions, or those of his sect or party, more than the truth of God, is a candidate for shame. Without this love of truth no man has ever made any considerable progress in knowledge. It is indispensable. Nothing can compensate for the want of it. It has

been a prominent trait of every good man's character. Job says: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." David says: "My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy commandments at all times;" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth;" "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." Solomon says: "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Peter says: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This love of truth is God's sure pledge of guidance and enlargement in the knowledge of his will. He who has it, will "receive the engrafted word with meekness."

MEDITATION.

It is very important that we reflect much on God's word. Reading and hearing are sowing the seed; meditation is harrowing it in. The psalmist says: "I will meditate in thy precepts;" "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day;" "Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word." Such a student of the Bible will not fail to make progress. "Meditation, to the book of revelation, is like the microscope to the book of nature; it is sure to discover new beauties." It is much to be regretted that some readers of Scripture so seldom give themselves time to reflect on what they have read. They derive not half the profit from Scripture that they would by a different course.

THINK FOR YOURSELF.

Nothing that has been said was intended to impair independence of thought and freedom of inquiry. Let every man do his own thinking. Let him settle first principles cautiously, and hold them firmly. David

says: "I have stuck unto thy testimonies." He could not in stronger terms have expressed his firm adherence to known truths. An inspired apostle says: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The Bible inculcates humility, but not servility of mind. Lord Bacon well says: "Disciples do owe unto masters only a temporary belief, and a suspension of their own judgments till they be fully instructed, and not an absolute resignation, or perpetual captivity." Let every thought and imagination be brought into captivity to Christ; but call no man master. Think for yourself.

PRACTISE WHAT YOU KNOW.

The Scriptures are designed, not to fill the mind with notions, but for practical purposes. The word of God should regulate our thoughts and affections, our speech and behaviour. Thus David says: "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments;" "I will keep thy statutes;" "A young man shall cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to thy word;" "I will keep the commandments of my God." Christ said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." James says: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Practice makes sure our knowledge in a way that nothing else does. It is so in the exact sciences, in the useful and ornamental arts; above all it is so in religious truth. Practice is the very life of piety, the very end of divine teachings.

HELPS IN UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE.

In learning the will of God, it is proper to avail ourselves of all the aid we can get. Indeed we are bound to do so. Let, then, diligent use be made of the common English Bible. One of the great wants of our time is that of a thorough acquaintance, in teachers and in the taught, with the general statements of Scripture. This volume is, or ought to be, always near us. We should be familiar with its "songs and history, ethics and biography, scenes from the hearth, and episodes from national annals. . . . It tells of expeditions prior to Jason and the Argonauts. It describes martial adventures long before Achilles and Troy. Its ethical system preceded Thales and Pythagoras. Its muse was vocal before Orpheus and Hesiod. Its judges flourished before consuls and archons. Its feasts and gatherings rejoiced the tribes when the Nemean games had no existence; and it reckoned by Sabbaths and jubilees when neither Olympiad nor lustrum divided the calendar. It embodies the wish of the Athenian sage, for it 'scatters that darkness which covers our souls, and tells us how to distinguish good from evil.' By its light thousands have been led to reflection, to repentance, to wisdom, to Christ, to God, to heaven. Read, read, read your English Bible. Its epic and lyric poetry, its narratives and parables, its precepts and appeals, are incomparable, and its doctrines are heavenly truth. Dr. Chalmers says: "Many a cottage patriarch, with no other medium than his mother tongue, becomes a greater proficient in the wisdom and doctrines of the Bible, than the most accomplished linguist or grammarian."

HEBREW AND GREEK.

But let no man despise the originals. If he can read the Hebrew and Greek, or either of them, let him do it; a portion of his time could not be better spent.

How can it be accounted for that so few educated men ever turn their knowledge of Greek to the good account of gaining a better knowledge of the New Testament? If any have become rusty in their knowledge of Greek, a small portion of time every day devoted to it, will soon bring back all they ever knew of it. Laymen ought not to feel absolved from obligation to study the originals, if they are able to do so. By such studies they may render special services to religion. Luther well said: "We shall never be able to retain among us the pure gospel, unless we cultivate a knowledge of the original languages of Scripture." People ought, therefore, to encourage learning in all their religious teachers. The closing paragraph in the autobiography of Thomas Boston reads thus: "Upon the whole, I bless my God in Jesus Christ, that ever he made me a Christian, and took an early dealing with my soul; that ever he made me a minister of the gospel, and gave me some insight into the doctrine of his grace; and that ever he gave me the blessed Bible, and brought me acquainted with the originals, and especially with the Hebrew text. The world hath all along been a stepdame to me; and wheresoever I have attempted to nestle in it, there was a thorn of uneasiness laid for me. Man is born crying, lives complaining, and dies disappointed from that quarter. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.'"

A FRIEND MAY AID US.

We may often obtain much assistance, in understanding the Scriptures, from a friend, although he may not be superior to ourselves in many other things. Naaman, the Syrian, gained very important information from a little captive maid, even when the king of her own country could not have given it. The Ethiopian eunuch was greatly assisted in understanding the prophet Isaiah by Philip, the evangelist. From Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos learned the way of God "more

perfectly" than he had learned it before. Be not ashamed to learn from any man. Compare his views with Scripture, and, if sound, thankfully embrace them.

REFERENCE BIBLES.

One of the most important helps to the knowledge of God's word is a good reference Bible. We are thus able without difficulty to compare Scripture with Scripture. The man who of all others in the last generation, probably made the greatest proficiency in a knowledge of the Scriptures, has said: "Along with other means, consulting well selected marginal references, forms one of the best helps for fixing the word of God in the memory; leading the mind to a just interpretation of it, and, in many cases, rendering it most affecting to the heart. It tends powerfully to counteract all sceptical doubts, when every part of Scripture is thus found (like the stones in an arch) to support and receive support from the rest. It serves also to satisfy the mind as to the meaning of disputed passages, when one sense is found manifestly to accord with the rest of the sacred word, and other interpretations evidently run counter to them." In these thoughts many will recognize the serious and judicious style of Dr. Thomas Scott. Bishop Horsley also says: "Particular diligence should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and New Testaments. It is incredible to any one who has not made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, by studying the Scriptures in this manner, without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the sacred volume furnish for each other. Let the most illiterate Christian study them in this manner, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by which these books were dictated, and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history, shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian's faith."

CONCORDANCES.

“A concordance is an index to the Bible, wherein all the words used through the inspired writings are arranged alphabetically, and the various places where they occur are referred to, to assist us in finding out passages, and comparing the several significations of the same word. A work of this kind, which tends so much to render the study of the holy Scriptures more easy to all Christians, must be acknowledged to be very useful; for if a good index to any other book is to be valued, much more ought one to the Bible, which is a revelation from God, given as the only rule of our faith and practice, to discover to us the way to eternal life through Jesus Christ.” Besides the use commonly made of the concordance, it often furnishes admirable facilities for finding out all the Bible says on a given subject, or at least so much of it as may be necessary for a comprehensive view. Let any man read all the texts given in the best concordances, under these words and their cognates, viz. : prayer, praise, humility, fear, hope, faith, love, patience, and many others, and he will have a fund of knowledge on these subjects which he will find of great use. Many of the best sermons may be composed in this way. In English, Brown’s concordance is too brief to be of much service; Butterworth’s has been mutilated and greatly injured; Cruden’s is by far the best.

COMMENTARIES.

Commentaries are also very useful helps, some of them very much so. Among commentaries on the whole Bible, you will find none better than those of Scott and Henry. Though the latter did not live to complete his work, yet he left some notes on the last part of Scripture, which several friends filled up. Henry is remarkable for sprightliness, ingenuity, and the practical application of divine truth. His commentary contains by far the best collection of striking sayings in our language. On the historical parts of

the Scripture, and on the parables, he is admirable. His early acquaintance with law enabled him to draw many useful illustrations from that noble science. Dr. Scott is remarkable for gravity, clearness and judiciousness. Like Henry, he is thoroughly evangelical. Into the hands of one asking what commentary I would recommend, I have often put a volume of each of these authors, and told him to judge for himself. The result has been that about as many have chosen one as the other. The commentary of Dr. Gill, though voluminous, and to some extent a translation of Poole, is not esteemed as much as it deserves to be. The commentary of Dr. Clarke is learned, but is often fanciful, and sometimes very unsound in doctrine. On the New Testament it is pleasing to see that the public still highly values Doddridge's Exposition. The expositions of particular books of Scripture are too numerous to mention. Many of them are worthless, and some of them are of the highest value. Of all these, my favourite is Leighton's Practical Commentary on the First Epistle of Peter. It is sufficiently learned, and has the sweetest savour of piety throughout. No good man can read it without finding his resolutions to lead a holy life greatly strengthened; and no bad man will be apt to read it through, for its appeals to the conscience are so pungent, that any one not utterly stupid will either cease to read it attentively, or fall under deep conviction of sin.

ANTIQUITIES.

It is a great help to the right understanding of God's word to have an acquaintance with the geography, manners, customs, laws and history, of the countries and people mentioned in the Bible. The facilities for obtaining this kind of knowledge are so numerous, that it is not necessary to name particular works. The truth is, all sound knowledge expands the mind, and is useful. Any science, truly so called, may furnish illustrations of Scripture that will give them vividness in our minds, and fix them in our memory.

GOOD DEFINITIONS.

A good definition is a rare thing, and yet it should be sought, in every science, at as early a stage as possible. Such definitions are often found in catechisms. They abound in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly. Any solid objection to catechetical instruction must lie against the particular book used. Any objection urged against this mode of instruction, lies with equal force against all our schools of every grade, for all of them that are valuable do much practise catechizing as a mode of instruction. Of the utility of catechisms in teaching divine truth, the world has had ample proof. Archbishop Tillotson says he thinks it a true observation, "That catechizing, and the history of the martyrs, have been the two main pillars of the Protestant religion." Milk for babes, and strong meat for men, is the Bible rule. He who has in his mind no definition of God, of his attributes, or great works of creation and providence, of sin, of justification, of sanctification, &c., will be comparatively ill prepared to make solid or systematic attainments in divine knowledge.

ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING THE BIBLE.

The Scriptures not only enjoin the study of the sacred volume, but they give us weighty reasons for doing so. The highest reason for any act is that it is agreeable to the will of God. In this matter his command is clear and decisive. This binds the conscience of the regenerate. But there are good reasons for all God's commands, and sometimes, as in this case, he makes them known to us. To search the Scriptures is in many ways profitable.

The study of God's word greatly enlarges our minds, and gives them extended views on the most sublime and important subjects. However much one's mind is inclined to driveling, the evil disposition must to a great extent be counteracted by the serious study of God's word. Thus that gross ignorance, which is the shame of many, would be to a pleasing extent removed,

and, in lieu of it, the light of divine truth would shine abroad. The mind of man, under divine guidance, is capable of indefinite improvement. Who can set bounds to knowledge, when the immortal mind of man is the learner, God's word the text-book, and God's Spirit the teacher? "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." One who had bent his mind in this direction, has left us this delightful testimony: "Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." The whole creation has no such store-houses of wisdom as the sacred volume. "Thy testimonies are wonderful." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." The Bible is the only sure safeguard against heresy, fanaticism, and all the wild disorders of mind and of society. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures," is the brief history of religious errorists of every age. Without this anchor, men will be driven about with every wind of doctrine. A taste for the word of God expels a taste for vain pursuits.

GOD'S WORD ABIDETH FOR EVER.

"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." Men and mountains, seas and systems may change, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. "The Scripture cannot be broken." Its teachings are not yea and nay, but yea and amen. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise." His counsels are of old, faithfulness and truth. Even "the word spoken by angels was stedfast." The covenant of his peace shall stand. "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise." No change of place, no lapse of time, no march of science, no reverse of fortune, no progress of revolution, can change one whit of all that God has spoken.

THE SCRIPTURES ARE MIGHTY.

The sayings of great and wise men have been useful, but what thoughts of mere men ever had such power as the word of God? "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." "Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

THE BIBLE FOR THE AFFLICTED.

"Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction," said one, and thousands have felt as much. "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me." "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me; yet thy commandments are my delights." Millions have had the same experience. One of the most mournful sights on earth is a human being overwhelmed in sorrow, yet leaning on no divine promise. To such all seasonable truth is strange. On the other hand earth presents no spectacle more full of the moral sublime, than that of a child of God in deep distress, yet embracing the promises, and staying himself on God.

IT HELPS THE TEMPTED.

One of the sorest kinds of affliction to a virtuous mind is temptation; nor is there any successful mode of repelling the assaults of the great adversary, but by replying, as did our Lord, "It is written, it is written, it is written." Accordingly Paul taught the Ephe-

sians to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Such is the heavenly temper of this blade, that even devils cannot resist it. Therefore constancy in the Christian profession is not to be expected in those who are ignorant of God's word; for "knowledge shall be the stability of thy times." The great nourisher of good hopes and just principles in man is God's word; for "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." When all men shall know what this meaneth, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," then the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and his glory shall lighten the earth.

THE BIBLE SHOWS THE WAY OF SALVATION.

The crowning excellence of Scripture is that it teaches us the way of salvation. The gospel is called "the word of this salvation," and "the word of reconciliation." "Search the Scriptures," said Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Faith comes by hearing the word of God. The very highest end of existence is to glorify God in the salvation of the soul. He who is infallibly taught the true and only method of deliverance from sin, from guilt, and from misery, and the true method of obtaining pardon, acceptance, and purity, has learned at once the hardest and the sublimest lesson that God ever teaches to man. Salvation secured, a blissful eternity follows; the soul lost, all is lost. By holding up Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life; by pointing us to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; by denying access to God in any other way than through atoning blood, and by assuring us of all blessings in the name of Jesus, the word of God removes an amount of uncertainty and perplexity, which otherwise must be our ruin. Nor is the Scripture a dead letter. It is life, and it is spirit. In the

hands of the Holy Ghost its energy is resistless. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" "The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light;" "Every word of God is pure;" "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth;" "Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips have I kept myself from the paths of the destroyer;" "Moreover by them [thy commandments] is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them is great reward." Christ himself said: "My mother and my brethren are these, which hear the word of God and do it." Paul parting with the elders of Ephesus, could say no kinder thing than this: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

CONCLUSION.

We live in a remarkable age. In the 13th century, in England, two arches of London Bridge cost £25. At the same time a copy of the Bible, with a few explanatory notes, cost £30. Then the wages of a labourer, if found, amounted to but nine pence a week. How different our circumstances, and how vast our responsibilities! Having so great a treasure as God's word, we are bound both to study it and to scatter it abroad. If the Bible Society does not deserve our support, nothing does. Dr. Johnson has well said: "If obedience to the will of God be necessary to happiness, and knowledge of his will be necessary to obedience, I know not how he that withholds this knowledge, or delays it, can be said to love his neighbour as himself. He that voluntarily perpetuates ignorance, is guilty of all that ignorance produces; as to him that should extinguish the tapers of a light-house, might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwreck." "Hold forth the word of life." "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

HOW SINNERS ARE ACCEPTED.

“Oh, how I should like to write an article on being ‘accepted in the Beloved!’ What a theme! ‘Accepted in the Beloved!’ ‘Accepted in the Beloved!’”—*Nevins's Memoir*, p. 56.

“ACCEPTED.” If we are accepted, then we are not outcasts, not rejected, not condemned. “There is, therefore, now *no* condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” If we are accepted, then we are owned, adopted into God’s family—not merely absolved from guilt, and our sin pardoned, but we are restored to the divine favour. If we are accepted, we are not mere servants, but sons and heirs of God. Acceptance implies pardon, but it is more than pardon. The former is never separated, though it is distinct from the latter. Both are by Christ’s atoning blood and righteousness. He “was made under the law.” In dying, he obeyed; in obeying, he died. He obeyed *until* death; he obeyed *in* death. *In* him was no sin, but *on* him were laid the iniquities of us all. He bore mercies in his hands, but he bore the sins of many in his person. He died that we might live; and he lives that we may not die. He shed tears. He shed his blood. He poured out his life. “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” This fountain is always open. Happy for us that it is so. We need to wash daily, for we sin daily. As the scarlet thread in the window of Rahab; as the mark put on the forehead of the righteous by an angel having an inkhorn at his side; and as the blood of the lamb on the two side-posts and the upper door-post of Israel in Egypt, so the blood of Christ only and alone can avert the righteous vengeance of God.

It is of the nature of law to be rigorous. Law may be broken, but it will not bend. We must conform to it; it will not conform to us. God’s law is holy, just, and good,

both in its precept and in its penalty. It is indeed perfect. It could not be changed but for the worse. It is, and ever shall be, the bond of society among angels and redeemed men in heaven. Its demands are enforced by the principles of eternal justice, which could demand no less than spotless obedience, and be satisfied with no less terrible penalty than death. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Thus pardon flows to us through him.

"*Accepted IN the Beloved.*" We must be *in* him as the branch is *in* the vine, as the arm is *in* the body, as the stone is *in* the building, as the man-slayer was *in* the city of refuge. In vain shall we hope for any saving mercy, unless by union with Christ. As all lines terminating in a common centre are one in it, so all believers are one in Christ. And as those lines, the nearer they approach the centre, are nearer to one another, so all believers, the closer their union with Christ, the nearer they are to each other. The Author of this union is God himself. "None can make a Christian, but He that made the world." This union is vital. As the arm, severed from the body, withers and dies, so a saint, severed from Christ, would perish. We can have no solid peace, can bear no good fruit, can do nothing without him. Well did Luther say, "All the prayings, teachings, and actings of men are, out of Christ, idolatry and sin in the sight of God." So Paul says, "I count all things but loss and dung, that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

"*Accepted in THE BELOVED.*"—"Beloved" is a title given to Christ more than a dozen times in half as many chapters in one short book. It is given elsewhere in the Scriptures. He well deserves it. But of whom is he the Beloved?

He is the Beloved of *God*. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," says the Father. Christ says, "I was by him as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Yea, God sent a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And Christ in his last intercessory prayer on earth says, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Christ is the Beloved of God.

He is also the Beloved of *angels*. "When he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." True worship has real love in it. Angelic worship has fervent love in it. Christ is not the Redeemer of angels, but he is their Head and Lord, and as such they love him.

He is also the Beloved of *saints in glory*. They unceasingly cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." They are perfected in love. They love him with all their heart.

He is the Beloved of *just men on earth*. "Whom, having not seen, ye love," says Peter. "We love him, because he first loved us," says John. This love of Christ's people is sincere, holy, strong, supreme. They love none more than him. To them "he is altogether lovely." They love to read of him, hear of him, think of him, and speak of him. They love his yoke, his word, his ministers, his Sabbaths, his worship. To them his name is as ointment poured forth. His will is their law; his reproach is their grief; his people are their companions; his success is their joy; his glory is their end. He is their Beloved—their "well beloved."

O that all men loved him! He is worthy of it. Shall we not love—ought we not to love him whom the Father loves? If he can satisfy the infinite mind, he can satisfy our minds. If God is well pleased in him, ought not all men to be pleased in him? Our first great duty on earth is to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We do not begin to live till we do that. Not to love him is rebellion, ingratitude, wickedness. He must have a bad heart who loves not this blessed Saviour. None can compare with him. You had better be out of house and home, out of money and credit, than out of Christ. You had better be out of existence than die out of Christ, for out of him "our God is a consuming fire."

O that those who love him, loved him more, and made him the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, at all times, and in all places. Live, pray, do, suffer, hope, and walk, as in Christ. Think more of your sins, and of Christ's grace; of your ill deserts, and of his merits; of your pride, and of his humility; of your weakness, and of his strength; of your guilt, and of his blood; of your wants, and of his

fulness; of your wretchedness, and of his righteousness. Never grow weary of such a theme. No man's heart is so bad as his who has no desires for Christ. No man's heart is so good as his who loves Christ above all things. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."

If we are "accepted in the Beloved," we shall be saved. "If God be for us, who shall be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The strongest reasoning I ever saw was in the Bible; but even in that blessed volume, I never found any stronger than this. It shuts us up to confidence and hope, unless we are given over to unbelief.

What glorious prospects believers have! "The Christian hath such a harvest of glory and happiness coming, as will never be fully got in. It will be always reaping-time in heaven." Every redeemed soul that has got safe to glory, has been ready to say, as the queen of Sheba on visiting Solomon, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land. * * * Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me."

O! could I speak the matchless worth,
 O! could I sound the glories forth,
 Which in my Saviour shine.
 I'd soar and touch the heavenly strings,
 And vie with Gabriel, while he sings,
 In notes almost divine.

UNION WITH CHRIST.

THE best writers of the last three centuries have said much of the believer's union with Christ. Inspired men did the same. All grace and mercy flow to sinners through this union, which in the divine purpose existed eternally, but is actually formed when the Holy Spirit leads the soul by faith to embrace Christ. Once formed, this union shall never be broken. Grace will complete what it begins, and glory will crown what grace has done. The purpose of God according to election shall stand. Every redeemed man shall be an eternal monument of the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God. In Scripture, union with Christ is chiefly taught by figures of blessed import. These hold forth a sweet and heavenly doctrine, which has been the stay and rejoicing of myriads of God's dear children in their pilgrimage through earth to heaven.

A prophet, speaking for God, says: "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." An apostle takes up the figure, points to Christ, and says: "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Another says to his brethren, "ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly joined together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded for a habitation of God through the Spirit." No wonder that men having such views should exult even in martyrdom. The sooner dead, the sooner are they crowned. Believers rest their whole weight on Christ. This foundation cannot fail. The deluge of wrath, which shall melt the mountains, dissolve the elements, burn up the sea, and sweep away every

monument of human greatness, shall not shake this Rock. Lot in Zoar, Noah in the ark, Elijah in the chariot of fire, were not more safe than are all those who have built on Christ. They are parts of a building the most stupendous and glorious ever reared. It shall stand for ever. The pledge of final salvation to believers is that they are now "lively stones," "an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Sometimes union with Christ is compared to the union of the members in a living body. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit; ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so is Christ." If this be so, how we should watch and pray, that there be no schism in the body; that the hand say not to the foot, I have no need of thee; that we dwell together in love, and seek each other's good! Christ is the head of the body, the church. Then she is sure of his sympathy; as no man ever hated his own flesh, so Christ never hated one of his own members, but loves and cherishes them all. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." He has loved his church of old, from everlasting; he loved her unto death; he loves her still; he shall love her for ever.

Christ is also the husband of his church, and she is his spouse, his love, his dove, his undefiled. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved also the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." If the union of Christ and his people be so close and tender, she is safe. His power is supreme in heaven and in earth. He is the wisdom of God; none can deceive or circumvent him. His love to his church is infinite, eternal, unchangeable. None can turn his heart away from his people. None can pluck them out of his hand. He is mighty to save and strong to deliver. Though his church in every member is weak, yet she comes up safely from the wilderness, "leaning on the arm of her Beloved."

Sometimes union with Christ is taught by figures drawn from plants and trees. "I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit: I am the vine, ye are the branches; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Abide in me, and I in you." Wondrous vine! How sweet is its fruit to the taste of all who have been born again! From union with Christ believers draw sap and nourishment, and thus become fruitful. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." All things come from Christ. "Without me ye can do nothing." And all is made sure by love. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

When inspired writers mention this subject, they seem to be all on fire; and no wonder, for it is their life. Union with Christ secures every blessing to lost men, such as pardon by his blood, acceptance by his righteousness, sanctification by his Spirit, a holy and useful life by his grace, divine sympathy in every sorrow, support in death, a glorious resurrection, a public acquittal in the day of judgment, and everlasting life. If men make light of this matter, it is because they are terribly blind. They err, not knowing the Scriptures, and are sensual, having not the Spirit. To him, who is taught of God, and born from above, union with Christ is a fountain of joy. He has felt, and the longer he lives the more he feels, that Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Author and Finisher of salvation. Separated from Christ no man is strong, or wise, or righteous, or holy, or safe; apart from Christ every man is a poor, dry, withered, useless thing, whose end is to be burned; but united with him any man becomes a "vessel of mercy, prepared unto glory;" "a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord;" "an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ." If these things be so, then it follows:

1. That the true child of God ought not to faint, nor be discouraged. The Saviour himself was tempted, afflicted, tormented, forsaken. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us." Hear him; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set

down with my Father in his throne." Therefore, "if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God on this behalf."

2. It also follows that real though feeble Christians are as truly and as tenderly beloved as their more experienced brethren. The Good Shepherd loves his sheep, and he "gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young." Christ's heart is full of all tenderness, and pity, and mercy. "The weak in faith shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand."—

"When weaker Christians we despise,
We do the gospel mighty wrong."

3. It is plain that the doctrine of the communion of saints is as well-founded as it is precious. Union with Christ, the head, secures the communion of all the members. We are one in him. So that true brotherly love is a bond that can never be broken, because real union with Christ is never sundered. There is "one family named in heaven and in earth." Unless we find our hearts knit to the godly of the earth, and feel a sympathy with them, we are not in Christ. If we love him that beget, we will love them that are begotten of him. No hand ever refused aid to a suffering foot belonging to the same body.

4. What sinners need in order to salvation, is union with Christ by a living faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Come, sinner, come to Christ, just as you are, poor, polluted, wretched, guilty, lost, and perishing. As you come, say:

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Vile, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

Come thus, and Christ shall be yours, and you shall be his for ever. Come, come, O come and welcome to Jesus Christ!

THE

APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.



IN our natural state, we are all connected with our first covenant head, Adam, and are subjected with him to the penalty of the broken covenant of works. We are interested savingly in the redemption of Christ, by the Holy Spirit taking us away from our former covenant state, and bringing us under the covenant of grace, in which the Saviour, as our new covenant head, has completely answered all the demands of the first covenant in behalf of all his people. Now, this is done by uniting us to Christ the second Adam, who repairs and restores the ruins of the first. This union with Christ does, as it were, identify the soul of every believer with him; so that in virtue of this union, the believer is entitled to all that Christ has merited, purchased, and promised. This union is no technical fiction of theology. It is often mentioned and dwelt on in Scripture in the most interesting manner. The blessed Redeemer himself appeared to dwell on it with delight, in his last intercessory prayer; to dwell with delight on the *oneness* of himself and his redeemed people. It is compared in Scrip-

ture to the union between husband and wife, between the head and the members, between the root and the branches, between the foundation and the superstructure.

The bond of this union on our part is *faith*. Faith is that grace which instrumentally links the believing soul to the Saviour, or ingrafts it into him, or makes it a part of his mystical body. This faith is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit; it is a grace of his production. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." In a word then, the bonds of this union are *the Spirit*, on Christ's part, and *faith* on our part; both these concur in their order. Christ, in the language of the apostle Paul, *first* apprehends the sinner by his Spirit, and the sinner *then* apprehends Christ by faith. It is in the great work of our *effectual calling*, that the Spirit thus apprehends, or takes an effectual hold on the soul of a sinner, unites it to Christ, and thus insures its salvation.

"Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." Here you have an account of that great inward work, which must take place in your heart, if you ever enter the kingdom of heaven.

I have a few preliminary observations to offer, which may serve to shorten the subsequent discussion; and which to me appear of great practical importance in themselves. I remark then, that it is difficult to preserve almost any truth from being abused. It may be abused, not only by design, but by negligence and inattention. We slide into the abuse; and in this manner I suspect that an abuse has been, and now is, practised by a great many, on the following undoubted truths, namely: that effectual calling, or true conversion, (which is the same thing) is a great work; that a marvelous change then takes place in the mind; that

there are cases in which it takes place suddenly, and almost miraculously; that these cases happen frequently at those seasons which are called revivals of religion, when almost every body is affected, and converts are wonderfully multiplied. All these I firmly believe to be truths, important truths; and God forbid that I should say a word to disparage them. But I really think they are often abused, and that unconsciously, by those who hold them. Pious people themselves may abuse them, so as not to look for the conversion of their children, but in some striking manner, or at some remarkable season of the outpouring of the Spirit of grace. And if this be so, youth, who have received a Christian education, and who have some seriousness of mind without practical piety, are still more likely to practise this abuse. I believe they do practise it among ourselves. They think that regeneration is a supernatural change; that it must take place in a marvelous manner, and that all they can do, in an ordinary way, has so little connection with it, that they may even give it up, as a hopeless thing to themselves, till some time of general awakening comes; when, as they suppose, they shall be taken hold of powerfully (they know not how,) and become pious Christians along with the multitude. Now here is a great abuse of the truths which have been specified. Regeneration is indeed a great and supernatural change; but the effectual calling which issues in it, often takes place so gradually, and is so mingled with the effects of natural conscience, of increasing light and good education, that the most undoubted subjects of it, oftentimes cannot trace distinctly in their own minds, the steps by which they have arrived at it. Revivals of religion are glorious periods, in which great additions are, in a short time, made to the church. Yet, take all those additions together, and probably many more have hitherto been effectually called, at times when there were no special or general revivals, than in all the times at which such revivals

have existed. The practical use, therefore, which I wish you to make of these remarks is this: not so to conceive of effectual calling, or true conversion, as to suppose that you are not to seek it, look for it, and hope for it, but in some wonderful way, or at some extraordinary time. God works on different minds in different methods. When persons have received a religious education, have been preserved from outbreking sins, have always possessed tenderness of conscience, have not neglected prayer, have carefully attended on public ordinances, and been familiar with their Bibles, they are often effectually called, and soundly converted, without any great convulsion of the soul. There is, no doubt, a period when divine grace is first implanted, but the subject of it cannot tell when. To his apprehension it seems only as if his seriousness and light have gradually increased, till at length, and after a good deal of doubt, he can say, that whereas he was once blind now he sees. And I have long remarked that Christians who can give only this account of themselves, are frequently among those who are most exemplary, most humble, most improving, most steadfast, and most fruitful in their Christian profession. My children, you have been religiously educated; many of you I trust, have never lost your tenderness of conscience, nor wholly neglected prayer to God. Cherish the sensibility of your consciences; beg God to enlighten you more and more; beg him to impart his grace to change your hearts, that you may be regenerated, although there should be no general revival of religion. But, indeed, what have I said? If you would all take this advice, it would make a revival, and one too of the most hopeful kind. Happy will be those individuals, who shall take the advice, let the number who reject it be what it may.

Let us now consider the first clause of the answer before us, which stands thus: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit."

There is a difference between an *act* and a *work*. An act is a *single* exertion or operation, and takes place and is finished *at once*. A work is a *series*, or continuation of acts or operations, and continues for some length of time. Now, as effectual calling consists of several progressive steps, it is, of course, a *work*. It should, however, be observed and recollected, that the several steps or gradations of advance in this work, although capable of being separately considered, are not so separated in experience, as that one is always completed before another is begun. In discourse we can distinguish them, and it is useful to do so. But when they take place in the mind of an individual, the exercises which constitute them, are often, to a certain degree, mingled together. The subjects of these exercises are not like persons making advances in science. They do not make one finished attainment, and then pass on to another, in a regular and unvaried course. On the contrary, he who is effectually called, seldom, perhaps, thinks of the several parts or steps of his calling, till the whole is completed; when, by reflection, he may perceive that he has shared in all.

The word *calling* deserves your particular notice. Men are outwardly called to repentance and newness of life, by providential dispensations, and especially by the preaching of the gospel. These calls however are often not effectual. Alas! how few regard them as they ought! But the calling which we here contemplate is never disregarded. It may be, and usually is, effected by outward means, and yet it sometimes seems to take place without them. It is however inward in its nature, reaching to all the powers and recesses of the soul, and engaging them most earnestly in the great work of turning from sin to holiness, from the power of Satan unto God. Hence it is denominated an *effectual call*; and is very frequently mentioned in sacred Scripture, where the people of God are said to be "called

according to his purpose;" and "called to be saints;" and to be "partakers of the heavenly calling;" and are exhorted to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure;" and of whom it is said, "Who [i. e. God] hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." It is the special office of the holy and blessed Spirit of God, to give this inward and effectual call to the soul; and his sacred influences are constantly to be sought in prayer, for this purpose.

In effectual calling, the first step is to convince us suitably "of our sin and misery." There are very few who will not acknowledge that they are sinners. Sometimes, when natural conscience is wounded by the commission of enormous and disgraceful sins, the sense of guilt may be exceedingly pungent. But all this is, too often, transient in its duration, and imperfect in its nature. It is quite another matter when the Holy Spirit performs this work, as a part of effectual calling. Then a conviction of guilt is bound on the conscience, and an abiding sense of misery is felt, under the apprehension of the divine displeasure. In some, and especially in those who have been great and flagitious offenders, the pain arising from this conviction of sin, and consequent apprehension of the divine wrath, is awful indeed. The knowledge of this, and the dread of it in their own case, sometimes makes unsanctified sinners stifle the conviction of sin, when it begins to take place. A fear of the pain which may attend on true repentance, is, I am persuaded, often the reason why serious impressions are banished and dissipated. But this is unspeakably foolish, in every view. Suppose it the most painful that is ever realized, and it is still infinitely rather to be chosen than the eternal pains of hell. But the apprehension is, in most cases, imaginary altogether. Even in great prodigals,

true repentance is often a gentle work, although it is ever a deep one. The account which the eminent John Newton has published of himself, furnishes a remarkable instance of this: and the narrative which Bishop Burnet has given of the repentance of the profligate Earl of Rochester, is not much different. Oftentimes, indeed, pious people have wished that their convictions of sin had been far more keen and painful than they have ever felt. The Holy Spirit deals with each individual in this respect, in a wise and sovereign manner. Some are convinced suddenly, and others gradually; some more, and others less painfully. In some, the whole process seems like the natural effect of reflection and consideration, and a degree of hope is mingled with conviction from the very first.

But in whatever way genuine conviction of sin takes place, the essence of it is this:—The sinner is made thoroughly sensible that he is, by nature and by practice, a guilty, polluted, inexcusable offender, before his God; and that he is in a truly miserable state, from having lost the friendship of his Maker, and being exposed to his just and endless displeasure. These perceptions, resting and abiding with weight on the mind, constitute the essence of this part of the work. And these are necessary, not because there is any merit in them, for there is none; nor because by themselves they constitute true religion, for they do not. If any rest here, they rest short of the kingdom of heaven. But a sense of guilt and misery is necessary to make the sinner loath himself, and abhor his sin; and to render him earnest in seeking a Saviour, and ready to accept him as he is offered.

Accordingly, the next step in effectual calling is, “enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ.” “What must I do to be saved?” will be the importunate demand of every sinner, convinced of his guilt in the manner just described. This inquiry, indeed, may not be always uttered

to others, but it will always be felt by the individual concerned, in all its force. You will now see him reading the word of God (if he be able to read it) with a care and an attention to which he had before been unaccustomed; and seeking for instruction from the pulpit, from books, or from conversation, with the deepest interest.

Making use of these means, the Holy Spirit, either more suddenly or more gradually, (for there is as much diversity here as in the former particular) enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ. The understanding is opened to understand the Scriptures; to discern with some clearness the gospel plan of salvation by Christ; to perceive the practical use of his offices; to receive the knowledge of his atonement, righteousness, and fulness; to see, in a word, that he is a Saviour of matchless excellence, inexhaustible sufficiency, and unspeakable suitableness. Much may have heretofore been heard about Christ by the anxious sinner; but now, feeling as he does a deep interest in his inquiries, and being enlightened by the Spirit of unerring truth, he sees with an impression never known before, that Christ Jesus is indeed a Saviour, exactly fitted to his state and necessities; able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by him; and willing to save, without money and without price. He sees too, that Christ is freely tendered, sincerely offered, with all his benefits, to every one who is willing to accept him.

Some have much clearer and fuller views of the kind here described than others. But it is essential to all, that they come to understand and be persuaded, that there is really "no salvation in any other" but in Christ alone; and that he is able and willing to save all those who truly commit their souls into his hands. There must be such an understanding and persuasion of these great and glorious truths, as shall produce a real, engaged, and pressing desire, to obtain a personal interest in, and union with Christ.

The "renewing of the will" is the next step in effectual calling. In this the very essence of regeneration consists. The will is the seat, so to speak, of the moral action of the soul. Here lies our depravity in our natural state. The will and affections have taken a wrong bias: they are obstinately set on sin, and opposed to holiness. You cannot force them to change that bias. It is the bias of nature, of corrupt nature, and it requires the interposition of the God of nature, of him who can give us a new nature, to change this bias. You may reason as you will, you may be fully convinced yourself that the course of sin is wrong and ruinous; but still there is that wretched, prevalent, unchanged, sinful propensity, remaining in all its force. Persons under those exercises which are included in effectual calling, sometimes get to see this truth in a very clear and strong light. I once conversed with a sensible female, in this state of mind, who told me that she was satisfied of all that I have stated in the preceding part of this discussion; satisfied that it must be a supernatural agent that had engaged her attention to the state of her soul; satisfied that she was a guilty and perishing sinner; satisfied too, that Christ was both able and willing to save her soul. "But, ah! (said she) I have no will to choose and commit my soul to him for salvation, in the way he requires. I have no affection for him at all; and without this I certainly perish. What shall I do?" The answer was, "The same God who has brought you thus far, can carry you through; can powerfully and sweetly dispose you to embrace the Saviour." Then I saw exemplified, what I before well knew to be a fact, that the doctrine of our dependence on God for his grace (against which some quarrel so bitterly) is the most encouraging doctrine in the world, to a mind truly enlightened, and rightly exercised. The thought that God might, and perhaps would, do for her, what she clearly saw she would never do for herself, saved this woman from despair.

And very shortly afterwards, what she looked for was realized. Her will and affections did, in the most full and delightful manner, choose and centre in Christ, as all her salvation and all her desire. This however was, I know, a case in which the party concerned had uncommonly clear views of the state of her own soul. In hundreds and thousands of instances, where the change is as real and as genuine as that I have mentioned, the progress of the mind is not observed or seen, with any such distinctness. The will and affections are found to be changed; but, for a time at least, it is not known by the party how, or when it was done. President Edwards states this to have been the case with himself. He was always a close thinker. He was anxious about the state of his soul, and was praying and examining divine truth. He had quarrelled, long and ardently, with the doctrines of divine grace and sovereignty. At length, he says, he seemed to understand and see a glory in them, that made him love them. But he thought, at the time, that he only happened to get the true view of them, which he had not been able to take before. A true view indeed it was; but he afterwards discovered that the change was in his heart—in his will and affections—and not in any new intellectual perceptions of the subject itself.

This change of the will and affections is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. It is done, in the *view* of divine truth, but the Spirit is the agent. *How* he does it, we know not. It is expressly likened, in Scripture, to the influence of the wind—a powerful but an invisible agent. We know, however, that no violence or compulsive influence is used. The creature acts, all the time, with the most perfect freedom. All we can say is—“He is made willing in a day of God’s power.”

After the renovation of the will, the soul, under the same sacred influence by which the renewal was effected, is “persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ, freely

offered to us in the gospel." This has been so much anticipated, that it will not be necessary to detain you long with it. The embracing of Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel, or the exercise of saving faith, is the act of a new nature. The old man is corrupt, and never puts forth a holy exercise; and it is evident that the new nature must exist before it can act. But it always acts faith in Christ, when it does exist. The same blessed Spirit who changes the heart, certainly, and in all instances, leads it to Jesus Christ, and in the language of the answer, "persuades and enables it to embrace him." This is most happily expressed. The soul sees such an excellence, amiableness, and suitableness in Christ, under the Spirit's influence, that it is ready to say—"How can I possibly refuse to obey, trust, and love such a Saviour! He is altogether lovely; he is the chief among ten thousands!" Thus, it is *persuaded*. And aided by the same blessed Agent, it is also *enabled*, in the truest and most unreserved manner, to embrace Christ; to receive him with open arms, and to lay hold of him as emphatically *the Saviour* of the soul—placing all its dependence, truly and delightfully, on him alone, for a complete salvation; for pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation and eternal life.

Here again, it is to be noted, that the clearness and sensibility with which different true believers close with Christ, is very various. With some it is done with rapture and ecstasy. By others it is done with great calmness. And by many, I doubt not, who do it truly, it is done so feebly and faintly, or rather, with such indistinct perceptions of their own real acts, that they long doubt and fear whether they have done it at all. But what is essential is, really, practically, and heartily to approve of the way of salvation by Christ, and rest and trust in him, as the "all in all" of the soul. Those who do this, embrace him in a saving manner.

PRAYER FOR THE GRACES OF THE SPIRIT.

Love divine, all love excelling,
 Joy of heaven, to earth come down ;
 Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
 All thy faithful mercies crown.
 Jesus, thou art all compassion ;
 Pure, unbounded love thou art ;
 Visit us with thy salvation,
 Enter every longing heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit,
 Into every troubled breast ;
 Let us all in thee inherit,
 Let us find thy promised rest :
 Take away the love of sinning,
 Alpha and Omega be,
 End of faith, as its beginning,
 Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, almighty to deliver,
 Let us now thy life receive,
 Suddenly return, and never,
 Never more thy temples leave.
 Thee we would be always blessing,
 Serve thee as thine hosts above ;
 Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
 Glory in thy precious love.

Finish then thy new creation,
 Pure, unspotted may we be :
 Let us see our whole salvation
 Perfectly secured by thee :
 Changed from glory into glory,
 Till in heaven we take our place ;
 Till we cast our crowns before thee,
 Lost in wonder, love and praise.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

~~~~~

IT is a beautiful remark of Mr. Beverley, "that if a well instructed physiologist were to lose his way in the pathless tracts of the earth, he would nevertheless be able to divine the country through which he was wandering, by attentively considering the productions of the soil, and the appearance of animal life surrounding him." The flowers that grew in his path, or the living creatures that crossed it, would announce to him in what zone or empire he was bending his course. "So it is in the land of Emmanuel; the delightful fruit found there and nowhere else, is love, Christian love, love in Christ, the divine *agapé* of the word of God, the fruit of the Spirit, the evidence of the twice-born and redeemed people." Yes, it is indeed true, that love, in the Christian sense of the term, is found nowhere else beyond the kingdom of the Redeemer, for it grows in no soil but that of Christianity; so that when it is found, we may assuredly pronounce that we have reached holy land. But is this plant, which is indigenious to the church of Christ, found even *there* in profusion, in all its bloom and beauty? Ah, no! but stunted in its growth, dismantled in its beauty, and of diminished fragrance. I join with the above-mentioned writer, in acknowledging and lamenting, that there is far too little of this heavenly disposition among the members of Christ's church upon earth; but I am persuaded that there is more of it than Mr. B. is prepared to admit. "Let us suppose," he remarks, "that by some unwonted tribulation you are bowed down with a weight of sorrow, and the cup of tears were given you to drink in great measure—would

(1)



you think of turning to that religious society of which you are a member for counsel and sympathy? Do you feel so bound to your nominal brethren, and are you so confident of the strength of their Christian love, that you have no doubt of their affectionate commiseration and tender support? And do you believe they are so anxious to fulfil the law of Christ according to the epitome of that law, Gal. vi. 2, that you feel confident they will gladly bear your burden? Let every one answer this question according to his experience, his knowledge, and his serious belief." And if they *were* so to answer the question, myriads and myriads, by tears of gratitude and smiles of joy, would testify to the kindness of their brethren in Christ, during the dark and dreary season of their sore affliction. But a few hours before this page was written, I saw the gloom of the poor man's sick chamber lighted up, and the burden of his suffering alleviated with the sunshine of his countenance, as he threw over the scene of his sorrow, his willing, grateful, and emphatic testimony to the love and sympathy of his fellow members. "And am I," he exclaimed, as the tear sparkled in his eye, "under the protection of the church?" feeling surprised, not at the unfrequency, but at the greatness of this precious privilege. And it is, blessed be the God of love, who has breathed his own nature into the hearts of his own people, no uncommon reward of a pastor's labour, as he holds his official walks among the people of his charge, often to listen to the report they make of each other's love in the Spirit. O what blessed scenes have I witnessed of brotherly kindness within the wide circle of my own church, and rejoiced over them with thankfulness, as sweet and sacred proofs that I had not preached in vain the doctrine of redeeming love, nor inculcated in vain the necessary fruit of it, the love of the brethren.

Still, however, I sorrowfully confess, that among professors of every denomination, and my own among the rest, there is far, very far, too little of this God-like temper. We are all verily guilty concerning our brother. We all need to go again to the cross of our dying Lord, to learn how he has loved us, and how we ought to love one another. The measure of tender affection with which Christians should regard each other, is so great, that what they have done in this way, seems as nothing.

See what is said, and how much, concerning this disposi-

tion in the word of God. Scarcely any duty is enjoined with such great frequency, or in so great a variety of forms. It is the peculiar law of Christ's kingdom, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12. It is the identifying mark of Christ's disciples, the sign of their caste, the necessary and certain token of their discipleship; "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 35. It is the fruit and evidence of our regeneration. 1 Peter i. 22, 23. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14. It is the mark of spiritual prosperity in a church. Eph. i. 15. It is the ground of apostolic eulogium on individual character: "I thank God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints." Philemon 5. It is the subject of frequent and emphatic apostolic admonition: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. vi. 2. Nearly the whole of the three epistles of John were written to enforce this duty. It is dignified with the appellation of the *new commandment*:—new in its kind, its model, its strength, its motives: "*as I have loved you.*" Moses enjoined us to love our neighbour as ourselves; Christ has commanded us to love our neighbour in one respect, more than ourselves; for we are, if need be, "to lay down our lives for our brethren." 1 John iii. 16. This love is made the test of character at the judgment day; the want of it, the ground of condemnation to the wicked, and the possession of it the ground of justification and approbation to the righteous: "Inasmuch as ye did it, or did it not, to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it, or did it not to me." Matt. xxv. Let any man read and study all these passages, and mark the vast importance which is attached to brotherly love, and then let him look round upon the church of Christ, and say if it is not yet lamentably deficient in this duty.

We should attentively consider the grounds on which this love is to be exercised. It is love to the *brethren*, as such; love to them for God's sake and Christ's sake; love to them as the objects of the Father's eternal, infinite and unchangeable affection; the purchase of the Son's agonies and blood; the workmanship of the Spirit's grace. How dear the saints are to the heart of Christ and of God, none can

know but the infinite mind of God. This is the ground of genuine love to Christians; this is the *agapé* of the New Testament, not an affection based on sectarian distinctions, or party names; for a Jew, a Mahometan, a Pagan may have this. If we can love only Christians of our own denomination or party; if our love be founded on the Book of Common Prayer, or on John Wesley's works, or on the Assembly's Catechism, or on adult baptism, it is not the love of the brethren, but the love of party; and much of this love of party there is, where there is not one particle of love to Christ's followers. The ground of Christian love is this, "*ye are Christ's*;" anything substituted for this or added to it, turns our affection into quite another thing. If this single idea be not of itself enough to engage our heart to any one, then we have not the love of the brethren. If his relation to Christ as one of his redeemed people, one of the members of his body, and one who bears his image, be not sufficient to attract our regards, except also he be one of our own church or denomination; or if, though we admit that he is all this, we feel an instant damp upon our affection, and an alienation of heart, when we are told that he is a Dissenter, or a Churchman, a Calvinist, or a Methodist, we are either altogether wanting or very weak in brotherly love. We may not love, indeed cannot, it would not be right to love true Christians *because* they differ from us, but we ought to love them in spite of their differences.

The moral likeness of Christ is that one object the contemplation of which excites this holy emotion. Wherever we discover the image of Jesus, or see a course of action, which evinces the possession of his Spirit, there will all the sympathies be awakened, the sensibilities set in motion, and the feelings cluster which may be the elements of brotherly love. Let me see an individual of any colour, or clime, or sect, who calls himself a Christian, and who in his conduct is manifestly governed by a love to Jesus, who is cultivating the heavenly dispositions and holy habits of the gospel, who has embarked his heart in the high interests in which God is engaged, and if I have any brotherly love in me, I see a man who has higher claims on my regard and my sympathy than the mere natural relations of life can command; "loving him that begat, I love him that is begotten of him." Bound to the throne of God by those moral excellences which brighten the Divine character, and make him an ob-

ject of delightful complacency, I am also bound in affection to every son and daughter of Adam, who, beholding the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, has been changed into the same image. And as he is the centre of attraction to them all, and they all alike love to sit at his feet, and imbibe his heavenly spirit, so also do they love to contemplate the faintest reflections of his glory wherever visible. If I were in a foreign country, surrounded by strangers, and saw in different situations, and among different people, portraits of a beloved and honoured father, I should be intuitively and strongly drawn towards them, in whose house or hands soever they might be found : and that would be the picture which would have most attraction for my heart which bore the strongest resemblance to my beloved parent, although its frame might not be so elegant as some others, and it might be in the possession of one whom I did not value so much as my more intimate friends. So let me see the image of God my Father, and Christ my Saviour, whether in the communion of the Church of England or of Rome ; in the Methodist, Baptist, or Independent : I love it for the sake of the divine original, and that portrait I love best which is *most like* the original.

No one who is in the possession of the New Testament, and has made himself well acquainted with its contents, can be ignorant of the manner in which love should and does operate where it is really possessed. There can exist no mystery here. Affection needs no schooling and lecturing as to modes of action, seasons of manifestation, and means of benefit. It is all heart to feel, all mind to invent, all foot to move, and hand to administer. It may not be amiss however to put Christians in remembrance of what they owe to their brethren ; to those especially with whom they are associated in the bonds of immediate intercourse and fellowship. They should *avoid all occasions of offence* ; repress every look, word, or action, that is in the remotest degree calculated to give pain, and consider their brother's peace of mind as sacred as their own. They should be ever willing, ready, and even forward, *to exercise the most sincere and tender forgiveness*. To be implacable is to be like the devil ; to be forgiving is to be like Him who prayed for his enemies, and who was no sooner taken down from the cross, than in a manner he seemed to be contriving to save them that nailed him to it. But what is this to the consideration how

much *he* has forgiven *us*? To forgive a brother his offences ought to be the easiest and most delightful work which a Christian has to perform, considering what an example he has to copy from, and what a motive he professes to feel. It is beautifully said by an American preacher, "As the little children of one family, who often in the course of the day look angrily and feel soured towards one another, yet say 'good night,' with an affectionate kiss, and in the morning meet again in love, so should it be the care of the dear children of God to love one another with a pure heart fervently, and from the heart to forgive every one his brother their trespasses." Another operation of brotherly love is *forbearance* with each other's differences of opinion, infirmities of temper, and weakness of faith. Allied to this, is *a disposition to avoid all rash judgments*. Love is not censorious, but is inclined to think well of its object; to diminish rather than magnify its faults, and to conceal rather than to publish them. Brotherly love will induce a person to *speak the language of admonition, and to administer reproof*; but in a manner so gentle, so tender, and so humble, that the object of it, unless he be more of a brute than a Christian or a man, in his temper, shall feel that a kindness is done to him, for which there is a demand upon his gratitude and affection. *A tender sympathy* which leads us to bear one another's burdens of care and sorrow, is essential to this love:—a sympathy which, not with impertinent curiosity, but with genuine pity, inquires into the cause of another's grief, to relieve it; a sympathy which invites the confidence of the mourner, and draws to his own bosom from his oppressed heart, the secret of the cloud that hangs upon his brow. "Oh! there is something that is wanting in the church here," says the American preacher, whose expressions I have already quoted, "something which shall so bind us together, that when one member suffers, all the members shall suffer with it; when any are in bonds, shall be bound with them: something which shall bring us into a dearer union, and wake up within us a more pure, refined, pervading sympathy, which shall be touched with the feeling of one another's infirmities, and vibrate to the chord of woe, which is strung in a brother's heart." Love will make us *regardful of the wants of our poorer brethren!* "For whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how

dwelleth the love of God in him?" In these, and in every other way in which we can show our interest in the members of Christ, and our tender regard for their happiness, will brotherly love operate, where it exists in reality and in vigour. We may now contemplate for our edification and quickening, one or two bright specimens of this lovely virtue.

Read the account preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, of the scenes which followed the day of Pentecost. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted to all men as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with the people." Acts ii. 41, 47. Beautiful scene! Surprising effects! Where, in all the history of our world was anything like it, before or since? This *was* love. It seemed intended to show forth, at the very origin of Christianity, its mighty power to subdue the selfishness of our nature, and to set before all ages and all countries, an illustrious example of this heavenly virtue. I need not ask where is anything like this now.

Consult the history of the church in subsequent times, and even amidst growing corruption in other things, and you will find some bright and lovely exhibitions of this spirit of primitive Christianity. In the time of Tertullian, charity was proverbial, and it was said of believers, "See how these Christians love one another;" insomuch, that the heathens, surprised to see a union so affectionate, ascribed it to supernatural causes, and imagined that some mysterious characters, imprinted on their bodies, operated as a charm, and inspired them with love for each other. There *were* mysterious characters, but they were imprinted on the soul, not on the body, and the name and image of Jesus were the charm. Lucian, a satirical Greek writer of the second century, in satirising them, passed the highest possible encomiums upon them when he said, "It is incredible what pains and diligence they use by all means to succour one another. They have an extreme contempt of the things of

this world. Their legislator made them believe that they are all brethren, and since they have renounced our religion, and worshipped their crucified leader, they live according to his laws, and all their riches are common." This is paganism, bearing its testimony at the shrine of Christianity, to the superior excellence of the religion of the gospel. Julian the apostate, as he is called, paid a fine tribute to Christianity, and its professors of his own times, when in writing to a heathen priest, he says, "Let us consider that nothing has contributed so much to the progress of the superstition of Christians, as their charity to strangers. I think we ought to discharge this obligation ourselves. Establish hospitals in every place, for it would be a shame in us to abandon our poor, while the Jews have none, and the impious Galileans (thus he calls the Christians) provide not only for their own poor, but also for ours." O Christianity! it is one of thy brightest triumphs, that this malignant and subtle foe could find no better way of attacking thee, than by imitating thy virtues! Eusebius, an ecclesiastical historian of the fourth century, gives a striking proof of the love of the brethren in his time, when speaking of a plague which ravaged Egypt: he says, "Many of our brethren, neglecting their own health, through an excess of charity, have brought upon themselves the misfortunes and maladies of others. After they had held in their arms the dying saints, after they had closed their mouths and their eyes, after they had embraced, kissed, washed, and adorned them with their best habits, and carried them on their shoulders to the grave, they have been glad themselves to receive the same kind offices from others, who have imitated their zeal and charity." The acts were indeed imprudent and improper, as Eusebius admits; but O, the power of love which induced those acts! And then, of the care of these early Christians of their poor, we have a famous example in the conduct of the church of Rome, in the earlier and better period of her history. The emperor Decius demanded their treasure. A deacon answered for the whole church, and required one day to comply with the order of the tyrant. When the term was expired, he assembled all the blind, and the lame, and the sick that were supported by the church, and pointing to them, told the emperor, "These are the riches of the church, these its revenue and treasure." Such were Christians once, in brotherly love. We have purified ourselves, happily, from

many of their errors and superstitions, but have we not, in rubbing off the tinsel of their gaudy decorations, rasped away also some of the more substantial parts of their piety? Is there much, I say, of *this* kind of love in the church now?

In urging this divine love upon you, I call upon you to dwell upon your own peculiar principles, as *voluntary societies of Christians, united upon the ground of mutual knowledge*. You are not a church formed by law, or associated by the mere circumstance of geographical boundaries, but on the principle of free consent, and on an acquaintance with each other; as those who, in the judgment of charity, are partakers of the like precious faith, and the common salvation. Scarcely any churches in existence have such means or motives for brotherly love as yours. But still you have far, far too little. Weigh all the particulars I have enumerated, and say if there is not yet a criminal deficiency amongst us. And what are the causes of this want of love?

The external prosperity of the church, its worldly ease, and unrestricted religious liberty, is one cause. In times of persecution the sheep run together; but when the dogs cease to bark at, to chase, and to worry them, then they separate and quarrel with one another. Shall we, then, suffer our love to each other to grow cool, because we are at ease in Zion? Is this the way we improve our liberty, and tempt God to bind us together by the iron fetters of intolerance?

Professors do not properly consider the subject, nor dwell enough upon the ends of Christian fellowship. It is too little thought of, and too little studied. They do not stir up their hearts to love one another, because they do not properly consider how much they are called to the exercise of this holy and tender affection.

The largeness of some of our churches might be thought by some to be a cause of the deficiency, and I should think so, if it did not exist in an equal degree in smaller ones. Still, however, it must be admitted, that a body of four, five, or six hundred members, scattered over the whole expanse of a large town and neighbourhood, cannot have much opportunity for personal acquaintance, and for the interchange of Christian sympathy. To meet this case, there should be a more numerous eldership than usually exists,



and district associations and meetings of the members should be promoted.

I am inclined to think, that the deficiency is in many cases, and in no small measure, to be traced to the pulpit. If the pastor be not a man of love, and a preacher of love; if he do not, both by his sermons and his example, breathe a spirit of affection into his people, and labour to the uttermost to do so, there will be a visible want of this essential feature of church prosperity. It has not been with many ministers, perhaps, sufficiently an object to promote the love of the brethren. We have preached doctrines, experience, and morality; we have insisted upon faith and hope; but has charity, the greatest of the three graces, been sufficiently inculcated?

But after all, the chief causes of the deficiency of love are still to be mentioned; and these are, *the want of strong love to Christ, and a selfish worldly-mindedness*. If we loved Christ more, we should inevitably love one another more, since we love them for his sake. If we felt, as we ought, his amazing love to us, we should love him more fervently in return: and then, as a necessary consequence, we should be more tenderly attached to his people; nor would less worldly-mindedness, more spirituality of mind, fail to be followed with the same effect. The most eminent Christians are most tenderly disposed towards God's dear children, and Christ's dear saints. A love of riches or of grandeur is a cold and selfish temper: it concentrates a man's attention upon himself, and of course withdraws his affection from the church. The present divided and alienated state of the Christian world in this country, is a plain proof that, notwithstanding the prevalence of evangelical sentiment, love to Christ is by no means so ardent as it appears to be. The rancorous feeling, amounting almost to malignity, with which some professing Christians treat others, cannot comport with a high degree of pure affection to the Lord Jesus.

Permit me, then, to enjoin very earnestly, an attention to this interesting and most important duty, a duty which, above many, brings in the performance its own reward. Love is happiness, hatred is misery, and selfish indifference at best midway between both. And while on this subject, alluding to sentiments already touched upon, I would dwell upon the singular emphasis which Christ lays on this

duty in the following injunction, "*This is MY commandment that ye love one another.*" Every leader of a sect, both among the Jews and heathen, it has been said, had appointed some rite or speculative opinion, the belief or observance of which was the badge of distinction of his followers, and by which they were known to be his disciples. Thus Pharisees, Sadducees, Platonists, Pythagoreans, and Epicureans, were distinguished from each other. Each had his leading principle, his favourite opinion, to which he was warmly attached, and by which his party was easily known. With allusion to this custom, the Saviour of the world, the head of the heavenly sect, says to *his* followers, "*This is my commandment, that ye love one another; and by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*" "I am incarnate love: none have loved like me: I am the type and pattern of love; and you are the objects of my love. If, therefore, ye would prove yourselves the disciples of him who came to teach love, and who taught by his example, you must love as I have loved, and must love whom I love." Now this injunction and description of our duty is Christ's law, and no wonder that he should attach such emphasis to it, considering the state of his own mind. The laws of an absolute monarch are always expressive of his character: emanating from his own disposition, they bear the impress of his heart, discover the tyrant or the friend, and are manifestations of cruelty or kindness. What, then, might be looked for from Christ, but a law of love? *his* laws for his church came from his heart, and that heart was love. What other king ever gave it as the badge of his subjects, or philosopher of his disciples, that they should love one another? But Christ has.

There is much even in the Christian himself, as the object of our affection, both in what he is, and what he will be, to kindle, call forth, and sustain a pure and exalted flame. That man, amidst all his imperfections, has germs of immortal excellence in his nature, which in the paradise above will grow and thrive for ever. He is an infant seraph, displaying at present the ignorance, and wilfulness, and waywardness of childhood. He thinks as a child, he speaks as a child, he acts as a child; but he is to rise to the manhood of perfect and heavenly virtue, and put away all childish things. He is to be holy as an angel, and to run an endless career of spotless purity. You will see him a per-

fect saint; yea, a perfect, living, everlasting resemblance of Christ; as perfect as a mirror is of the sun, whose dazzling image is reflected from its polished and speckless surface. You will love that man for ever, and see in him everything worthy of your love. But this is nothing to the other consideration of loving him for God's sake, and Christ's sake. On that man the mind of God was fixed from everlasting ages; towards him the thoughts and affections of the great God were moving from eternity. In him the heart of Jehovah finds its resting-place. That man was in the view of Jesus, when he was contemplating his death, and his salvation was part of the joy that was set before Christ, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. Out of love to him the Son of God became incarnate, and it was love which sustained him amidst the scenes of his humiliation. Yes, Christ loved him unto the death of the cross, and loved him *in* death, and loves him *beyond* death, and by all his own love, and all his agonizing method of expressing it, commends him to *our* love. Next to Christ himself, there is not an object in creation we should love as we do a Christian, for he is not only Christ's representative, but he is the object of Christ's love. In that Christian our heart meets Christ's heart. O, what depth of meaning, and cogency of argument, and force of persuasion is there in that rule and motive of our affection, for it is both, "As I have loved you." Who but himself can tell how that is? Who can say how Christ has loved his people? We can see the expression, the outward manifestation of it; we can look at the cross; but who can look into the heart? Who can see or understand the love itself? "Jesus Christ was an incarnation of love in our world. He was love living, breathing, speaking, acting amongst men. His birth was the nativity of love; his sermons the words of love; his miracles the wonders of love; his tears the meltings of love; his crucifixion the agonies of love; his resurrection the triumph of love." And yet we are to love one another *as* Christ has loved us. We cannot now feel the full force of this; if we did, we should be unfit for the present world; the love of kin and of country would die away, like culinary flames in the blaze of the orb of day. But this full force will be felt in heaven. All the love of kin and of country will have died with the world in which it existed; and we shall see before us not husbands and wives, parents and children,

brothers and sisters, fellow church members, and fellow subjects; but simply objects of Christ's love, who were washed from their sins in his blood, and redeemed by his grace from hell, and who are to be ever loved for his sake. And thus we *shall* love them. Every look of complacency we see him dart upon them, instead of kindling envy, so perfect shall we be in love, will be fresh fuel to the flame of our own pure affection for them. My God, where is this love now? Where do we see anything like it? Among a thousand other reasons for a Christian's desiring to depart and be with Christ, one is that he might feel what it is to love, and be loved for his sake: to have the mystery developed, what it is to love Christ perfectly, and perfectly to love all his saints for his sake.

Professors, if there be any truth in all this, and it be not fiction or rhapsody, yield to the force of it, and open your heart afresh to the brethren. You have never loved them as you ought, nor have you ever been beloved as you have a claim to be. O what a beauty and a power of spiritual excellence lie hidden in the pages of the New Testament, waiting to be developed in some better age of the church, when the Spirit of God shall be poured out from on high!

Christians, for the credit of religion, for the honour of your Redeemer, and for the good of the world, seek to recover in full beauty this feature of Christianity, *the love of the brethren*.

I close this chapter with a passage from Mr. Beverley, which I recommend to the serious consideration of all who may read these pages.

“The effects of Messiah's reign are to be something more than decent and comely in society; they are to be wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous. ‘The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.’ The changes that shall take place shall be fundamental. ‘Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.’

“But if we think that the church has done her duty when she has established a standard of sobriety, courtesy, and honesty amongst men, we are grievously mistaken. She has to exhibit to the world all her children as one family, united as one close-knit and vital body, having one spirit and one life; bound together not in the ties of politeness, but of blood; not in a treaty of civility, but in a family

compact of kindred affection. What then are the effects of this mystical union? Precisely that which is now wanting in the churches—that all Christians should find their brethren in Christ really and substantially their friends, protectors, and counsellors, in time of need, distress, and apprehension; and that the church should be a port and refuge to the weary pilgrims, who are sore beset and buffeted with the tempest of adversity.

“Christians are endowed with mighty privileges, and are made partakers of the divine nature, that they might, by the resplendent and godlike virtues of their society, bring back the glory of God upon earth, manifesting him as he has manifested himself to them—the God of love. For if we look upon the earth, out of the precincts of the church, we find it a desolation of selfishness, cruelty, and hardness of heart; a waste howling wilderness of sin and death: a habitation of miserable beings, who, without any choice of their own, have been thrust into life for labour and sorrow, for vanity and vexation of spirit, and whose sad unfriended condition has led many to entertain hard thoughts of the Creator and Ruler of such a world, as if he was, indeed, the evil demiurge of Manichean theology. But Christians, the body of Christ, have received a commission to display the Creator in the majesty and beauty of his second creation; to exalt, by their faith and conversation, the Redeemer, the holy one of Israel, and to show that the earth may be a second paradise in the light and glory of the Sun of Righteousness. They have to prove by the lovely operations of the church, that the second creation is the work of the same God, who, being himself essential goodness and benevolence, did, at the first, suffer the plenitude of his felicity to overflow in thousands of channels, receiving from none, but imparting to all, the joys and wonders of the first creation; and though an enemy has embittered the channels, and introduced a curse where there was a blessing, and sorrow where there was joy, and sin where there was innocence, and death where there was life; and though the earth is filled with wicked men, who, by their active crimes, plunge their fellow-creatures into distress, or with pitiless apathy pass them by unheeded, when distress is breaking their hearts; yet the church, the nation of ransomed saints, have, in the gospel, and through the unction that teaches all things, received so excellent a plan for a universal restitution, that if they

did but exactly follow that plan, and hearken to the instructions they have received, all evils, excepting disease and death, would disappear from among men, and the astonished world, in an acclamation of surprise and gratitude, would cry out, 'Behold! again, the God that made all things, and pronounced them to be good.'

"First of all, then, harmony, peace, and perfect friendship must be conspicuous in the church: it must be seen Christians love one another; that their union is a wonder-working phenomenon, which no wisdom of the world can counterfeit; that the gates of the Christian enclosure open into the sanctuary of love; that a man—that is, Christ in his human nature joined to his brethren, and they in him—is a 'hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest;' that when the storm is raging in all the world besides, there is peace there; that every believer is the brother of every believer; that they are all concerned in the temporal welfare of their brethren, and all deeply interested in their final and everlasting salvation.

"But is it so at present? alas! let any one who is thoroughly acquainted with the churches give the melancholy answer! There are, indeed, Christian societies wherein the poor are treated with kindness and sympathy; or, in some places, a few of the church members are united in a pious friendship; and brotherly love, *as far as it extends*, produces happy effects; but, generally speaking, there is a sad distance between the brethren. They know not one another in the bonds of the gospel; they are estranged by the cold and distant formalities of the ceremonious world; they are either too intent on the pursuit of their own interest, or too deeply imbedded in the well-lined nest of opulent selfishness, to care for the labour and the sorrows, the beauty and edification of the church."