

A black and white photograph of an hourglass. The hourglass is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its narrow neck pointing upwards. The top bulb is mostly empty, while the bottom bulb is filled with dark sand. The hourglass is resting on a stack of several sheets of paper, which are slightly blurred in the background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the sand and the glass of the hourglass.

Monergism

EARNEST HOURS!

WILLIAM S. PLUMER

A black and white photograph of an hourglass. The hourglass is tilted, and sand is falling from the top bulb into the bottom bulb. The hourglass is resting on a wooden surface. The background is dark and out of focus.

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by William S. Plumer

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Chapter 1.

Man, a Proof of the Truths of Natural Religion

Psalm 139:13-16 "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am

fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

In both the body and soul of man are easily discovered many surprising powers. In the human constitution is something exceedingly intricate and delicate. In a healthful state, both mind and body are admirable; in a morbid state, they bring incalculable misery.

Let us look at man's PHYSICAL constitution. At birth the human body is small, commonly weighing from six to thirteen pounds, and measuring from thirteen to twenty inches. It is exceedingly feeble, and continues dependent on parental care much longer than any other creature. For some time it can neither see, nor hear, nor taste, nor smell, nor feel with any accuracy of discrimination—its senses being quite immature. At the age of about six weeks it begins to notice the face of its mother, and gives its first smiles. As feeble as this little creature is, its powers of endurance are, in one respect, astonishing.

When fifteen or twenty months old, it begins to utter articulate sounds. From fourteen to twenty-three years of age it reaches its full stature; and from thirty to fifty it has its greatest vigor and power of enduring exertion. After that decay commences, and at the end of twenty or thirty years the body returns to its native dust.

These remarks relate to those who live to old age; but of six or seven children born, not more than one lives seventy years; not one in twenty-five lives eighty years; not one in seventy lives eighty-five years; not one in two hundred lives ninety years; not one in seven hundred lives ninety-five years; and not one in eight thousand completes a century. One fourth of all who are born, die before they

are five years old; one third die before they are ten; one half die before they are thirty-five; two thirds die before they are fifty-two; and three-fourths before they are sixty-one.

For more than two thousand years after man's creation, the ordinary length of human life ranged above nine hundred years. After the flood it was much shortened; yet Shem lived five hundred years, and Terah lived two hundred years.

In the days of Moses, seventy or eighty years marked the maximum. Since that time there has been no general variation, though there have been, and still are, astonishing exceptions. As males are more exposed to accidents than females, there are born into the world about one hundred and two males for every hundred females; and this proportion is observable the world over, if we take as many as a million of people into the estimate.

The human body consists of solid and fluid substances, variously constituted, and constantly acting on each other. All agree there are seventeen simple constituents composing the human body. These are oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur, chlorine, fluorine, potassium, sodium, calcium, magnesium, silicium, aluminum, iron, manganese, titanium, (and some add arsenic and copper). Some of these are present in a pure state; but most of them in composition with other elements. These constitute our wonderful bodies of skin, bones, muscles, nerves, blood, tendons, etc.

The human skin consists of three layers of membrane. The uses of the outermost layer are to prevent friction of the inner layer, to moderate the impression made by external objects on the delicate nerves, to preserve the undercoats of skin in a moist, flexible state, and to protect the whole system from sudden or extreme attacks of cold, heat or humidity. Even at birth this membrane is much thicker on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet than elsewhere, because they will be much more exposed to friction. Use gives it still greater thickness and toughness. The nails properly belong to this

layer of the skin, and like it are insensible, having neither blood nor nerves.

Next to this outer layer of skin is another coat, which contains the coloring matter of the skin. In most races of men it is very thin, but in the African it is much thicker. It permits other substances to pass through it, and protects the nerves and blood vessels which lie under it. This is the coat of skin, which gives such beauty to the color of many fishes and other animals.

The true skin lies next, and is both thick and heavy. It is very delicate in its structure, and is full of life and sensibility. It binds and protects the interior part of the body, and is itself the instrument of perspiration, both sensible and insensible.

It is the seat of many nerves, and of course of sensation. It is full of blood vessels, so that wherever it is cut, blood appears. Nor can a needle penetrate it without wounding one or more nerves. Its chief uses are to throw off waste matter from the body, to regulate the heat of the system, to act as an absorbent, and to be the seat of sensation. Its derangement produces the most serious consequences; not only frightful diseases and excruciating pains, but death itself.

The frame covered by this skin is composed of two hundred and six bones, varying exceedingly in size, shape and use, but admirably adapted to the ends for which they were manifestly designed. Some of these bones are hollow and some solid. Some are long and round, some are flat, and some short and thick. At birth all of them are comparatively soft and spongy, but in time most of them become hard, and some of them very much so. Some of them act as levers, as in the arm; some are combined into arches of great strength, as in the instep; some serve as braces, supports and girders to the frame; some protect the three great cavities of the body; and all of them united complete the frame. The bones are essential to motion. No less than the muscles they have life, and yet they are insensible to pain, unless they are fractured, or their texture is destroyed.

Between the skin and the bones chiefly lie the muscles, which are in number over four hundred; some of them being large, and in a full grown man weighing several pounds, and others being very small, not weighing more than a grain. All of these muscles are capable of being considerably enlarged and strengthened by use. They consist of flesh, which, when connected with bone, is held fast by fibers gathered in cartilage around the end of the bone. Their chief use is to support the frame, and to secure the motion of the parts and of the whole. They are the power which works every lever of the body. All muscles are capable of being contracted until they become somewhat rigid, and of being relaxed again, so as to be at perfect rest. The muscles are also of great use in circulating the blood, especially the blood of the veins. This they do very effectually, when we take sufficient exercise.

Closely connected with the muscles, and interwoven with them, are the nerves, of which there are many pairs, one for the nose, one for the eyes, one for the ears, one for the tongue, one for digestion, etc. Each pair is wholly useless for any other purpose, than that for which it is designed. The nerves of vision are not adapted to hearing. The nerves of the ear give no information to the taste or smell. This is well. Confusion is avoided, and we can sometimes bring two, three or more senses, as so many distinct witnesses to give us information of the state and nature of surrounding objects.

Thus we may use all our senses to examine a rose. Sight gives us its hue, size and shape; taste informs us of its flavor; the touch, of its size and smoothness; the smell, of its fragrance; and by passing it near the ear and pressing it we learn whether it is moist or dry.

It is now settled that the nerves of sensation in the whole system are not the same as the nerves of motion. The nerves of the skin are full of sensibility, and, when wounded, give pain, and if not healed sometimes cause death.

But the nerves of motion, though liable to the sensation of weariness, are not, in a healthy state, sensitive to pain. It is a striking fact that some muscles and nerves are, in a healthy condition, under the control of the will and act only by the will, while others commonly act without our will having anything to do with their motion. Thus, the will may control the winking of the eye, or the expansion of the chest; but commonly these operations are involuntary. It is well that respiration does not depend on an act of volition. If it did, whoever slept would wake no more. It is truly marvelous that the new-born infant performs the whole operation of breathing with as consummate skill and ease as the man who has practiced it for fifty years. In sound, refreshing sleep the muscles and nerves of motion are at rest.

In a calm and healthy person the balance between muscular and nervous strength is beautifully preserved; but when highly excited or seriously diseased, the nerves often have a fearful preponderance, and do not permit muscular rest. Sleep departs, and, unless by some means it can be restored, derangement and death must follow.

Except when the muscular and nervous systems are relaxed, as in sleep, one posture for a long time is both painful and injurious. Exercise is the law of our nature. This should be regular, not violent, cheerful, abundant and recreating.

In our bodies are many contrivances so wonderful that either of them might well claim the study of years. The ear, the lungs, the hand, the heart, present themselves as examples.

The lungs are the laboratory, where the blood is brought in concert with the air, and is changed both in color and chemical qualities. The ordinary weight of the lungs in a full grown man is three and a half pounds, in a female two and three-fourth pounds. They are specifically lighter than water, as is shown by them floating in it. The two lungs are not of the same size or shape; the left being narrower and lighter, has two lobes; the right, being less, but broader, has

three lobes. As they respire the air, they make a cracking noise, which, though seldom heard by him whose they are, can be heard by another when the ear is placed over the part. This wonderful little machine fits the blood for use, and by extracting from the atmosphere the right quantity of oxygen, diffuses the proper degree of heat through the system. In man the lungs are better suited to all climates than in any other creature. The reason is that he was designed to live and travel in every degree of latitude on the habitable globe. He carries his warming apparatus within him, and it produces more or less heat according to his necessities.

Closely connected with the lungs, and lying between them, is the heart, which in a full grown man weighs about nine ounces, in a female nearly an ounce less. It is not quite five inches in length, three and a half in breadth, two and a half in thickness, and has the capacity of thirty-two cubic inches. One half of the heart is for arterial blood and the other for venous blood. Although but slightly, if at all, supplied with nerves of sensation, it has to a wonderful extent muscular power, and of course nerves of motion. As a force pump it drives the blood into the extremities of all the arteries; as a sucking pump it draws the blood from the extremities of all the veins. In a healthy man it gives every minute about seventy-two strokes, which are so powerful that they are felt all over the body, and may be easily heard.

Thus, this little engine, by day and by night, from infancy until death, works continuously and never stops, giving every hour four thousand three hundred and twenty strokes; every day one hundred and three thousand six hundred and eighty strokes; every year thirty-seven million eight hundred and forty-three thousand and two hundred strokes, and in seventy years the enormous sum of two billion, six hundred and forty-eight million, and twenty-four thousand strokes.

Look, too, at the hand, so intricate, so various in its uses, and so perfect in its structure that many excellent volumes are entirely on the hand. It greatly aids us in walking, leaping, running and riding. It

is essential to us in climbing, swimming, carving, cutting, hammering, planting, sowing; in short, in almost all domestic, mechanical and agricultural pursuits. It is at once capable of robust and of delicate action. With a stroke it knocks down a man, and with a delicate motion it removes a cataract from the eye. With it we sew, we spin, we weave, we knit, we embrace a friend, repel an enemy, make, or mend, or wind a watch, wield a sledge-hammer, paint, engrave, make laces or cables, practice archery, sculpture and a thousand arts. No hundred or thousand of human inventions are capable of so many uses, and of perfection in them all, as this little machine which we carry at the end of our arms.

In like manner we might describe each part of our corporeal system. This body thus constituted is an incomparable mechanism. Professor Henry says: "The human body is itself an admirably contrived complex machine, furnished with levers, pulleys, cords, valves, and other appliances from the power derived from the food. It is, in fact, a locomotive engine, impelled by the same power which, under another form, gives activity and energy to the iron-horse of the railway. In both, the power is derived from combustion of the carbon and hydrogen of the organic matter employed for food or fuel. In both, the direction of power is under the influence of an immaterial, thinking, willing principle, called the soul. But this must not be confounded, as it frequently is, with the motive power. The soul of a man no more moves his body than the soul of the engineer moves the locomotive and its attendant train of cars. In both cases the soul is the directing, controlling, not the impelling power.

Let, for example, a locomotive engine be placed upon the track, with water in the boiler and fire in the furnace; in short, with all the potentials of motion, and it will still remain quiescent. In this state, let the engineer touch the proper valve; the machine instantly becomes instinct with life and volition; it has now a soul to govern its power and direct its operations; and, indeed, as a whole, it may be considered as an enormous animal, of which the wheels and other parts are additions to the body of the engineer."

The laws which govern the human body, are as wonderful and as stable as any other laws. An injury suddenly brought on, may often be speedily removed; but an inveterate disease commonly requires time, and care, and patience to remove it. When necessity demands it, we may violate the ordinary rules of health, perhaps with impunity, "but it is always on condition of returning to obedience the moment the necessity is over."

Thus we have had a little insight into the marvels, delicacies and powers of our physical nature. An eminent anatomist once said that if any man could see how delicately his frame is constructed, he would be afraid to leap, or run, or walk, or even breathe—lest death should ensue! Galen said it was worth a long voyage or journey to be permitted to study a human skeleton. As to those who would ally the human body to that of the monkey race, it seems strange that they did not remember that the dog, the beaver, the horse and the elephant excel the monkey in sagacity, though not in agility; and that the monkey cannot live except in warm or mild climates. The judgment which could harbor such a foolish conception, must be as base as the taste which relishes it.

Let us next contemplate man's INTELLECTUAL nature. Says one, "The intellect of Newton, which discovered the law that holds the revolving worlds together, is a nobler work of God than a universe of universes of unthinking matter." Many of man's corporeal powers he has in common with brutes. In strength, in swiftness, in power of endurance—many of them excel him. Some of them outlive him, as the eagle, which reaches one hundred years. Some of them can fly, while man is confined to the earth's surface. Some of them are amphibious, while water is destructive of man's life. Whole families of them can live for months without food; but man must eat often. Some of them have very remarkable instincts; but none of them have anything comparable to the faculties of the human mind: nor have they articulate speech or scientific acumen. For speech they have no use; because they have no ideas, conceptions, memories, or reasonings which cannot be otherwise expressed. The rabbit never

makes to her mate or her young any noise with her mouth and lungs. Her warning is given by striking her foot on the ground. Nor do any of the brutes know anything of numbers. Not one of them can count. Nor are they subject to any code of moral laws; nor have they any moral sense; nor are they accountable; nor do they know their Maker. They are all wholly destitute of the sentiment of religion.

The mind of man is an amazing product of the divine skill. Like God it is in its nature spiritual; but unlike God it is both created and finite, and is connected with a bodily material, and liable to disease and death. For although God is in all the universe, it does not follow that he is the soul of the world.

The human soul is a part of a compound of which the body is the other part; and these two act mutually on each other, as being the parts of the same whole. But God is in the universe, not as a part of the universe, but as its governor. He acts on everything, but nothing has the power of action on him. It is very humbling to man that his highest trains of thought may be broken off by bodily pain. Some diseases of the body produce delirium, mania and insanity. All mental diseases have their seat in the body, although the irregular or excessive action of the mind may have first induced the bodily disease, which causes insanity or imbecility of mind.

Among the faculties of the human mind are perception, judgment, reason, memory, imagination and taste. By these we are enabled to accomplish many great results. Without attempting any scientific description of these powers, let us see some of the results effected by them.

The PERCEPTIVE faculty of the mind operates through the five senses.

The sense giving us the least information perhaps is the taste, and yet it is in many ways very important to us. Although it may be deceived, yet it commonly informs us whether an article of food is wholesome.

It tells us whether anything is sweet, or sour, or bitter, or insipid, or nauseating.

The sense of smell often gives us information of the state of the surrounding atmosphere, and of the fragrance of a thousand objects. Were it as acute in man as it is said to be in some other creatures, his existence would be miserable; and were it as dull in man as in some other creatures, his life would be in constant peril.

By the sense of hearing we are able to enjoy conversation, oratory and music; we are warned of approaching dangers, and are made glad from infancy to old age by a thousand tones of tenderness and notes of affection.

By the sense of touch we judge the qualities and state of objects as to their size, roughness, smoothness, hardness, temperature, etc.

Vision is in some respects far the noblest of all our senses. It tells us of the love that beams in a friend's face, of the sorrow that fills his heart, and of the hope that kindles his eye. It warns us of the approach of some dangers, even when miles distant. It guides our feet over smooth or rugged paths. It takes in at a glance many of the beauties of a landscape. Leaving earth it travels millions on millions of miles to myriads of distant worlds. It sees above us a blazing universe, and around us beauty and sublimity in wonderful profuseness.

All these senses are capable of great improvement. The experienced sailor or hunter can see much farther and more keenly than one untrained to descrying distant objects.

The mind of man also perceives and embraces many scientific and moral truths, which are first principles, so plain that to apprehend them is to assent to them.

A very large part of our knowledge has its seat in intuition.

We also gain much knowledge by experience; that is, by seeing that certain effects follow certain causes. Children will venture on flame and fire until by experience they learn its power to burn.

So also we learn much from the testimony of parents, playmates, teachers, prophets, apostles and God himself. No man has ever seen half of the places which he believes to exist. By use, we learn to discriminate between true and false testimony.

Judgment is the faculty which compares one thing with another, weighs evidence, examines facts, assertions and principles, and so reaches conclusions. The judgments of most men would be good, if they had more distrust, and were less swayed by their emotions.

Reason links thoughts, facts, events and perceptions together, building its conclusions on certain probable or possible truths, and reaching results oftentimes very remote from the premises admitted. At other times its processes are exceedingly simple.

Of all the intellectual faculties, none is more remarkable than memory, by which we treasure up past experiences, perceptions and judgments. The power of memory is truly admirable. Even in childhood, how soon a language, and sometimes several languages, are learned. Where memory is highly cultivated, it often acquires an astonishing retentiveness. Some men can repeat a paragraph or short discourse from reading it twice. Auctioneers have been known to be able to name at the close of busy hours the articles sold, the order in which they were sold, the price, and the purchaser; and all without any written memorandum. Pilots on the Mississippi so rely on their memories, that they can navigate that noble stream for thousands of miles, running up or down, by day or by night, and tell at any moment, unless buried in fog, where they are, and what dangers surround them. Some men have carried the whole doctrinal and practical truths of Scripture in their memories. The memory of Adam doubtless carries him back to the first day of his going forth in Eden, just as distinctly as our memories tell us of yesterday.

The imagination carries one forward in the course of duration, until he is lost in infinity. It groups together pleasant or painful scenes, events and ideas, until the mind is satisfied, or can bear no more. Its greatest development and power are seen in the sculptor, the painter, the poet and the eloquent orator.

By the mental faculty of taste, we determine what is beautiful, lovely, majestic or symmetrical in nature or in art. Both taste and judgment are very dependent on culture and exercise for any approach they make towards perfection.

All these mental powers are at birth undeveloped; but in due time, in some sooner than others, they are drawn forth into some degree of vigor. Nor is there any evidence that any of them will ever be lost. Extravagant things may have been uttered respecting the immortality of thought; but however, frivolous things may perish from the mind, and painful things from virtuous minds, there is no reason to suppose that any truly valuable or weighty thought will so vanish and flee away as never under any circumstances again to come forth.

If we would form a just conception of the power of the human mind, let us dwell on the scope, variety and accuracy of the attainments of Solomon, whose favorite studies seem to have been zoology, botany, poetry, eloquence, government, moral science and theology. Look, too, at the vastness of the attainments of such students as Newton, Locke, Milton, Linnaeus, Cuvier, Laplace and Sir Humphrey Davy. And yet, it may well be doubted, whether the actual knowledge of every man of good mind in Christian lands does not exceed, both in value and amount, all that anyone of these has written; for none of them told us half that he knew, because mankind already were in possession of it.

Though all our faculties are liable to derangement and decay on account of neglect, passion, folly, or bodily disease; yet no one has ever been able to set any limit to the acquisitions men may make. We

know that man is finite, and that, compared with God, he is brutish in his knowledge. But that he will, in a glorified state, be making delightful and everlasting progress towards perfection, is seriously doubted by no one who seeks for glory, honor, immortality and eternal life.

Yet man will never become independent of his Maker. The hand that formed him, must guide his destiny. Surely the mind of man is the offspring of a Being of boundless wisdom, goodness and power. And to be without God in this world, is to be a poor, forlorn, forsaken thing, a leaf driven by the winds, a fool and a madman! Separated from God, angels sunk and shriveled into devils.

Therefore,

1. The foundations laid in God's works for all the truths of natural religion is broad and solid. It is perfectly clear that God is, and that he is wise, and good, and mighty. The universe has a Creator and a Sustainer. If we could find no proof of these things but in man alone, the argument would be irrefragable.

2. We have a blessed theme for grateful and adoring songs to the kind Author of our being. Well did David say, "I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows right well." "Blessed be God," said Halyburton, "that ever I was born."

3. These things being so, reigning levity is folly, is a crime; and seriousness is rational, even solemnity is wise. It is sad and vile to make no higher use of our noble powers than to glitter like the butterfly, or indulge our animal appetites like the brutes. He must be guilty, who has eyes and does not see, ears and does not hear, a mind and does not know, a heart and does not feel.

4. Prayer is reasonable. It is a natural duty. It results from man's dependence upon God. His very helplessness should make him lift up his voice to the Father of mercies who pours countless blessings

on his offspring. He feeds the young ravens, clothes the grass; and he can feed and clothe us. He gave us our being. He is perfect Master of our existence. We can of ourselves no more cease to exist, than we could in nonentity, originate our being. He who made us will not annihilate us. Let us never be ashamed to look up to his eternal and propitious throne.

Psalm 139:13-16 "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Chapter 2.

The Bible Is the Word of God

If the Bible is not the word of God, then it is certain that man has no revelation from Heaven. The books esteemed sacred by the Mohammedans and Hindus are not worthy of even a good man, much less of God. The world has no true and saving light from Heaven, unless it is found in the holy Scriptures.

It is not the object of this chapter to give even an outline of the ordinary and irrefragable course of argument employed to establish the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures. The present design is to suggest a few trains of thought, which may be useful to plain people, who have but little time for reading or learned inquiry.

None will deny that the Bible claims to be the word of God. The phrase, "Thus says the Lord?" is of very frequent occurrence. A great variety of sayings of like import is found in the sacred volume; such as, "The word of the Lord came unto me," etc.

All these things are found in a volume, which reserves its heaviest woes and maledictions for false prophets and false teachers, who corrupt God's word, add to it, or take away from it. So that if the prophets, evangelists and apostles were not divinely inspired to write the various books of the Bible, they were, by their own showing, among the worst men that ever lived, and deserving of the sorest plagues reserved for atrocious sinners.

But does the history of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John and Paul show that they were unprincipled and notorious liars and impostors?

If Christianity is not true, even its enemies admit that no delusion ever before produced so remarkably happy effects in subduing the fierceness of men, in awakening a spirit of improvement, in elevating the humble and in consoling the distressed.

One thing respecting Christianity has often and fitly been noticed. The more severe the trials and sufferings of its followers, the more abundantly have they been sustained. Many have manifested but ordinary strength and courage, until they were subjected to cruel mockings or terrible tortures. Then their heroism has been undaunted and their patience wonderful. False religions often promise well in prosperity; but in adversity their folly is commonly manifest.

Nor can it be denied that there have been no more acute and sagacious people or nations, than those who have embraced the Scriptures as the word of God. Nor has any people ever improved its civil, social or moral state by rejecting Christianity and embracing any form of infidelity. On the other hand many have arisen from a very low state by the power of God's truth made known in Scripture. It has revolutionized their entire condition and changed their prospects for time and eternity!

There are several short methods of stating the argument, which have never been fairly met. Here is one from John Wesley: "I beg permission to propose a short, clear and strong argument to prove the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures. The Bible must come either from good men or angels, from bad men or devils, or from God. It could not be the invention of good men or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, 'Thus says the Lord,' when it was their own invention. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils, for they would not and could not make a book, which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to Hell to all eternity! I therefore draw the conclusion that the Bible must have been given by divine inspiration."

Another short mode of reasoning is this. Every effect must have an adequate cause. This is as true of moral as of physical changes. On this principle we ought to seek a cause fit to produce those happy transformations of character, often witnessed where the gospel is made known. One has briefly stated the case thus: "There was a man who started from Jerusalem towards Damascus, on a mission of persecution and murder; he was proud, cruel, vindictive. He came from Damascus with a heart yearning towards all mankind, with the humility of a child, and with affections as tender as a woman's love.

He went towards Damascus with an intellect narrowed down to a rapier's point, and harder than its steel. He came from Damascus with an intellect broadened and fused with divine fire, and with a logic so invincible, and filled with the Holy Spirit, that it molded the thought of the world for eighteen centuries."

Paul always regarded, and more than once stated his conversion as a demonstration of the truth of God's word.

The challenge of Lactantius has stood for fifteen hundred years unanswered: "Give me a man of passionate, abusive, headstrong disposition; with a few only of the words of God, I will make him as

gentle as a lamb. Give me a greedy, avaricious, tenacious wretch; and I will teach him to distribute his riches with a liberal and unsparing hand. Give me a cruel and bloodthirsty monster; and all his rage shall be changed into true kindness. Give me a man addicted to injustice, full of ignorance, and immersed in wickedness; he shall soon become just, prudent and innocent."

This transforming power of God's word has been noticed and celebrated in all ages. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Its renewing energy is as great now as it ever was. The king of the Fiji Islands, once a fierce and cruel cannibal, is now a preacher of the gospel of peace and love.

The word of God was never more lively or powerful than it has proven itself to be in the history of modern missions. What miracles of mercy it has wrought in Greenland, in South Africa, in the islands of the sea, in fact, all over the earth. Just read the history of the planting and growth of Christian Churches in many places.

The gospel exerts no merely vague and general influence. It lays hold of individuals, and by renewing them, it improves society. Thus the work is thorough, and thus a little leaven leavens the whole lump. The following narrative has found its way into several publications:

"In 1787, the ship *Bounty* sailed from England to the Pacific, in quest of young fruit trees to be replanted in the West Indies. On her way home, the crew mutinied, placed the master and eighteen others in a frail open boat, with scanty provisions, and committed them to the mercy of the ocean. Strange to tell, that boat accomplished a voyage of more than four thousand miles, and reached England in safety. The mutineers, twenty-five in number, set sail for some island in the Pacific. They quarreled and separated. About half of the whole number were captured by an English vessel-of-war, carried home and hung in irons. Nine of these desperadoes went to Tahiti, took on board nineteen natives—seven men and twelve women—and sailed for some uninhabited island in the ocean. They found one, Pitcairn's

Island. Shortly after landing, the Tahitian men murdered five of the mutineers, upon which the twelve women rose at night, and killed their seven countrymen. Of the four remaining mutineers, one invented a distillery, and becoming delirious, leaped from a cliff into the sea, and was lost. Another was shot for attempting to destroy his mates. Of the two then left, one died a natural death, and the other, named John Adams, alone survived. Here their hiding place was undisturbed until 1814, when it was visited, and also in 1825. Strange alterations had taken place. The number of inhabitants had increased to seventy. There was no debauchery among them. Good order prevailed. Filial affection and brotherly love pervaded the entire society. The blessing of God was invoked on every meal. Prayer was offered every morning, noon and evening. The laws of civilized society were in force. The rights of property were respected. A simple and pure morality was prevalent.

How was this? What had made the change? Had vice wrought its own cure? Had there been some good principles combined with the mutiny and murder, the heathenism and devilish passions, which the gang had been guilty of? No. These evils never work their own cure, except by consuming, like a fire, their own materials.

"The cause of the change was this. Adams had saved, hid and preserved a Bible, and, when his comrades were dead, he studied it, embraced its promises, believed God's testimony concerning his Son, was converted; read and taught its truths to his family and neighbors; and God blessed his own word to their conversion also. That very Bible is now in this country. It is a small volume, printed in 1765. The salt sea and the salt tears of old Adams, have taken away its gloss, and dimmed its print; but it contains God's testimony of Jesus. That was the secret of its power. The worm has eaten it through and through; but the glad tidings to sinners can still be read in it. That Bible has traveled round the globe, has been the means of reforming a whole community of criminals, and still lives to proclaim its divine original and its life-giving power. When Adams was brought to his death, he was old in years, but strong in faith. The

friends of the old man collected around him and asked, 'Well, John, what cheer? "Land ahead!' was his characteristic reply. After a few days, they again gathered around him and said, 'Well, John, how are you now?' 'Rounding the point into the harbor!' he replied. At last he lay upon his dying pillow, and his relatives were standing all around in tears, and yet in hope. One said, 'Brother, how are you now?' 'Let go the anchor!' was his dying exclamation, and he fell asleep in Jesus."

This amazing power in a book to renew and reform, to sanctify and bless men, is confined to the Bible, and to books whose doctrines and principles are drawn from God's word.

Cicero wrote eloquently, and often justly, respecting the nature of God, and our moral duties. But who was ever thereby converted from sin to holiness, from Satan unto God—by Cicero?

Nor is the transforming power of the truth confined to any one doctrine, text, chapter or book of Scripture. You may live a half century, and you will hardly find two men, whose awakening, conviction or conversion, seems to have been by the divine blessing on precisely the same truth. Paul never knew himself until he saw the spiritual meaning of the tenth commandment. Romans 7:7. The Ethiopian treasurer found saving light in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. "Poor Joseph's" creed was very short, nor could he be persuaded to lengthen it. It was long enough to give him hope and peace: "It is a faithful saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief."

Nor does the efficacy of Scripture depend on the greatness of him who utters it. A little child has often repeated a truth of God's word with irresistible power. Paul, the prisoner, clanking his chains, made Felix tremble. In the early part of this century, there was a mission school at Cornwall, Connecticut. Among the heathen youth brought to it, was Thomas Hoopoo, of the South Sea Islands.

When he had been in this country about two years, he took a journey with a friend, and spent an evening in a select company, where many questions were proposed to him by an impious lawyer to get his amusing answers. At length Thomas said, "I am a poor heathen boy. It is not strange that my blunders in English should amuse you. But soon there will be a larger meeting than this. We shall all be there. They will ask us all one question, namely, 'Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, sir, I think I can say, Yes. What will you say, sir?"

The lawyer ceased, and a solemn silence prevailed. The stillness was awful. At length the lawyer proposed that the evening be closed with suitable devotions, in which Thomas should lead. He did so, in a meek and affectionate manner. Soon he prayed for the lawyer, alluding to his talents and learning, and besought God to teach him the way of salvation by the Redeemer. At length the lawyer sobbed aloud. Soon the company dispersed. But there was no sleep for that lawyer. The question of this poor boy from the sea-girt island, "What will you say, sir?" had pierced his soul. He paced his room in anguish. Before long he was led to cast himself at the feet of the Redeemer. So out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God's word has strength, and stills the voice of the gainsayer, and renews the temper of his mind and heart.

The general nature of the argument from miracles is, that none but God can work miracles; and that a God of truth will not work a miracle to establish a falsehood. The evidence that miracles have been wrought in attestation of the teachings of Scripture is as clear and as abundant as that in ancient times there were such men as Cyrus, Alexander and Caesar, or that there were such cities as Rome, Carthage and Corinth. To us the evidence is historical in all these cases. There are extant more historical monuments of the miracles of Christ and of his apostles, than there are that Cyrus captured Babylon, or that Caesar conquered Gaul. Nor is there one scrap of history for three hundred years after the birth of Christ denying or tending to disprove his miracles.

The general nature of the argument from prophecy may be thus stated. None but God foreknows all things. A good God will not lend his prescience to deceive mankind into the belief of a lie. The prophecies are of three kinds:

first, such as are completely fulfilled, as the death of Christ, the destruction of Babylon, of Tyre and of Jerusalem;
secondly, such as are now in a course of fulfillment, as those respecting the dispersion of the Jews, the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles, and the spread of the gospel;
thirdly, prophecies, no part of which is fulfilled, as the resurrection of all the dead and a general judgment.

It is only the first two classes of the prophetic writings that are to us proofs of the divinity of Scripture. Even if there were room for doubt respecting the authorship of particular prophetic books, or the precise manner of their transmission to us, that would no more invalidate the argument drawn from them than the same doubts would weaken the testimony of history respecting Cataline or Pompey. The fact of certain predictions, and of their dire or glorious fulfillment cannot be denied, without defying all the laws of evidence.

I conclude this line of hints of argument, by stating that in support of the truth that the Bible is God's word we have every appropriate kind of evidence.

We have miracles;
we have prophecies;
we have a matchless and perfect code of morals;
we have the only system that teaches the true nature of God, the true principles of his government, and the only way of salvation by a Redeemer;
we have holiness to the Lord written on every book;
we have the perfect agreement of all the parts;
we have the incomparable character of Christ;

we have the faithful history of his disciples and apostles;
and we have the continued power of the gospel over those who
truly and humbly receive and obey it.

It is incredible that all these kinds of evidence should unite to
support a falsehood and encourage us to believe a lie.

Chapter 3.

The Scripture Is Unchanging and Unfailing

In man meet the strangest opposites. He is both mortal and immortal. A creature of yesterday, he shall henceforth have an existence parallel with that of God. He is finite, yet has boundless desires within him, and boundless prospects before him. Capable of communion with the God of Heaven, he spends much of his life in base pursuits. Destined to a changeless state beyond the grave, he is now liable to sudden and serious changes. He is born, he weeps, he grows, he sleeps, he eats, he drinks, he rejoices, he mourns, he is sick, he is well, he lives and he dies. His life is sure of nothing but sin, and pain, and change. The infant, the boy, the youth, the man and the aged sire, though the same person, frequently cannot be recognized, even by maternal love.

All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field. We all do fade as a leaf. Our foundation is in the dust. Our days are as an handbreadth. Seconds, minutes, hours and days, yes, months, years, centuries and cycles are passing with incredible speed. The fact that we have lived long, tells us that we must die soon. "Life is all expenditure. We have it, but as continually losing it." Men count since the creation, one hundred and ninety-four generations, who have already passed through time into eternity.

Man's knowledge is almost as variable as his life. None was ever more than once a man, but many a one has been twice a child. Every man at fifty has forgotten more than he knows.

Man's judgments of a thousand things vary with his age, his experience, his instruction and his temperament. In youth he believes almost everything told him by respectable people. In middle age he suspects the truth of half he hears. In old age he believes hardly anything unless he is a Christian and believes God's word. All merely human knowledge is fleeting.

Even the greatest material structures of mortals vanish away. Where is the tower of Babel? To whom or of what are the pyramids of Egypt a monument? The ever-shifting sands of Africa threaten to bury them up. Where are Tyre and Sodom and Gomorrah? Shortly all these material structures and the everlasting mountains and the perpetual hills shall melt like wax and consume into smoke before the all-dissolving heat of the last conflagration!

Nor are earthly political fabrics more stable. Four universal monarchies have risen, and crumbled, and disappeared. Not a vestige of them remains! The world is this day as quiet, as if it had never felt the footsteps, nor feared the stroke of Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Sennacherib, Alexander, Caesar, or Charlemagne. No man cares for them now. No man fears them now. Once they smote the earth with a continual stroke. They ruled the nations in anger; but where are they now?

Moreover, the heavens and the earth are transitory. They shall perish and vanish like smoke. All nature shall be dissolved, and time shall be no longer.

In the midst of these changes, decays and revolutions—the mind eagerly looks around for something solid, stable, permanent. And what does it find? It hears a voice saying: "I am the Lord; I never change!" It looks further and finds this unchangeable Jehovah

saying, "My counsel, it shall stand." Then one inspired writer says: "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in Heaven!" "The word of our God shall stand forever!" "The word of the Lord endures forever!" From the lips of the Son of God comes forth the blessed assurance: "My words shall never pass away!" Blessed be God! there is something fixed, something reliable. Let us look at a few particulars.

1. The rule of duty is, and ever will be, unchangeable. Jesus himself said: "Until Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled." The context shows that Christ was speaking of the moral law. Being perfect, it could not be changed but for the worse. It is, and was, and ever shall be the duty of all rational creatures to love God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, and their fellows as themselves. This is the law in Heaven and on earth. To disregard it anywhere is sin. To obey it everywhere is a duty. Blessed be God! His law is eternal.

2. And his gospel is everlasting. (Revelation 4:6.) It is unchangeably true, that the soul that sins shall die. It is as unalterably certain that he who looks to Jesus, and believes and rests on him alone for salvation, shall be saved. The blood of the lamb or bullock offered in sacrifice must be used for sprinkling, while it was warm, else it was unfit for the service. But . . .

the blood of Christ shall never lose its sin-atonement power,
his merits never lose their value,
his intercession never lose its prevalence.

From age to age, to the end of the world, and forever, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; the surety of his people, the one shepherd, the sole and sufficient author of salvation, the only and the sure foundation on which a sinner may build his hopes for eternity!

3. In like manner all the promises of God are unchangeable. Whatever God freely engaged to do or to give to believers under former dispensations, he fulfills to his people under the gospel. And all the covenant engagements with believers made personally by

Christ, and through his apostles, shall also stand forever; for God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:17, 18.)

The amazing fullness and unchanging stability of the promises render doubt unreasonable and despondency sinful; for they are as fixed as the throne of God, and the believer may shout and make his boast in the Lord forever; for he has spoken good concerning his saints, and peace concerning all the meek of the earth.

4. Nor are God's threatenings variable. They speak a terrible language, the more terrible because perfectly righteous and just. The fulfilling of God's threatenings is necessary in many ways to the comfort of the saints. One of them is that the "wicked shall be turned into Hell." If God executes not this awful sentence, we can have no certainty that even in a future state the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at rest. Read the warning clauses that God has uttered against idolatry, Sabbath breaking and filial impiety; against profaneness, murder, adultery, lying, covetousness and unbelief—and know that they are righteous, and will surely be executed! And then judge if it is wise to live like a beast, and sin like a devil.

5. Nor are the doctrines of Scripture variable. Some books of the Bible are more full and satisfactory than others on particular matters; but there is no contradiction, and there is no variation. From first to last the sacred writers maintain the unity of God, subsisting in a Trinity of persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They as clearly teach the infinitude of his being and perfections. They assert not only his freedom from human passions and bodily parts—but his absolute and uncreated spirituality, his immensity, eternity, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, holiness, love, sovereignty and righteousness. They declare that he is gracious,

merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; hating evil, loving purity, rewarding the upright, punishing the guilty, self-existent, and consequently absolutely independent—an infallible and glorious God.

They as clearly assert that he governs the world, and that by a plan wise and perfect. They clearly assert that he controls everything for the good of his people, and the glory of his name; that saints and angels, men and devils, all causes and all agents, yes, and even what we call chance—are under his control.

They also teach, without variation, that man is by nature a sinner, lost, guilty and helpless; and that his recovery is entirely by the mediation and finished work of Christ the Mediator, and by the power of the Holy Spirit; that justification is free, by grace alone; that regeneration is renewal by the efficiency of the Holy Spirit; that the only standard of holiness is the moral law. They also teach that he who hates not and shuns not sin, is an enemy of God; and that perseverance in holiness is essential to salvation.

In like manner all the doctrines of Scripture are unvarying.

6. So also the prophecies of Scripture are always fulfilled. Appearances may deceive some; but when did an inspired prediction fail?

Yonder is Tyre, the emporium of Phoenicia, and mistress of the commerce between the oriental and western world. She sits like a queen on the sea. She is proud and defiant. She exults at the downfall of Jerusalem. A prophet of Jehovah, in 588, in the name of Jehovah, cries, "Tyre shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." (Ezekiel 26:5, 14.) The doom of Tyre is sealed. Down she goes, and no power can save her. For centuries down to this day, travelers who have visited the site of this former mistress of

commerce, have seen nothing more inviting than a few wretched fishermen's huts, with a few fish and nets spread out to dry.

"Look at Babylon," says President Hopkins, "Who is it that stands before its walls and utters its doom? It is a despised Jew. And who is he who walks in pride upon these walls, and as he points to that mighty city as the center of civilization and power, as combining every advantage of climate and of commerce—mocks at that doom? It is a politician of those days. The voice of the prophet is uttered and it seems to pass idly upon the wind. The eye of sense sees no effect. No clouds gather, no lightnings descend.

But that voice was not in vain. The waters of desolation heard it in their distant caves, and never ceased to rise until they had overwhelmed palace, and tower, and temple in one undistinguished ruin. Even now that voice abides there, and hangs as a spirit of the air over the desolation, and the Arabian hears it, warning him not to pitch his tent there; and the wild beast of the desert, and the owl and the satyr hear it, and come up and dwell and dance there.

Then we have prophecies partly fulfilled, yet to be followed in due time by great enlargement. Such are those concerning the calling of the nations to embrace the gospel. Such is the prediction of our Savior respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, an event so dreadful that it finds its antitype only in the end of the world, into which Christ merges it. The first has been fulfilled to a jot and tittle. The latter shall be.

So true is every inspired prediction that one may as reasonably expect the throne of God to crumble and fall, as for one word of good or evil foretold ever to vary, ever to fail. "God cannot lie."

The reason of this stability in the Scriptures is found in three great facts.

One is, that God himself is the same. In God is nothing varying. "You are the same!" is a great truth and a great fact. With the Most High is

no variableness nor shadow of turning.

Another is, that truth is ever the same. Error and falsehood are ever shifting like sands in the desert, like clouds in the sky. But truth is immutable. Fashions may change, governments be remodeled, and empires waste away; but truth, simple and candid, bold and upright, is subject to no mutations. To state of case, who can ever make two and two five. Do what you will, it is of the very nature of fire to burn. It is no less certain that the nature of sin is to kill the soul, and of obedience to God to be the highest wisdom, as well as a binding duty.

The third is, that God's honor is at stake. His whole nature stands pledged to fulfill all he has spoken. His glory lies very near his heart. He can never be indifferent to the just judgment formed of him by his creatures. He is able to do all he has promised or threatened. He has perfect wisdom to subvert all the devices of his enemies. He has inflexible justice, and so he can never swerve from what is right. His mercy is as large as his holiness is spotless. All his attributes are all perfections; all support his throne; all maintain his word. "God CANNOT LIE."

REMARKS.

1. Base is the sin and frightful is the power of unbelief. We receive the witness of men, yet the witness of God is greater. He can neither deceive nor be deceived. Yet how slow are men to credit his words. Lord, increase our faith. For Jesus' sake by the power of your spirit, break the strength of our wicked unbelief. "Power to conform the understanding, will, and heart to Scripture, is as much a gift from Heaven as Scripture itself."

2. If such are the facts of the case, then unbelief is as dangerous as it is sinful. That lord of Samaria, who would not believe the word of Jehovah, was trodden down in the gate and terribly perished for his sin. God will not excuse or connive at any questioning of his veracity. To doubt his word is to impeach his truth. To disbelieve his oath is to

accuse him of perjury. O, let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe to him that strives with his Maker.

3. It is ever and unfalteringly wise to trust God, and rely on his word. He never deceives. To faith lie always gives what it asks, or something better. On his dying bed Payson said to his daughter: "You will avoid much pain and anxiety, if you will learn to trust all your concerns in God's hands." Cast all your care upon him, for he cares for you. But if you merely go and say that you cast your care upon him, you will come away with the load on your shoulders." How can a worm carry mountains, unless God holds him up and girds him with strength?

4. Eternal things may well rest with a vast weight on the mind of a wise man. What are the fleeting vanities of earth, compared with the durable realities of the world to come? This life is a dream. The next, so clearly revealed in Scripture, has the attribute of eternity.

The past, where is it? It has fled.
The future? It may never come.
We are fast hastening to the tomb!

"What are earth's joys? The dews of morn.
Its honors? Ocean's wreathing foam.
Where's peace? In trials meekly borne.
And joy? In Heaven, the Christian's home."

Chapter 4.

God's Nature and Ways Are Unsearchable!

Because the nature of God is the foundation of all true religion, and his will is the rule of all acceptable worship—the knowledge of him is of the greatest importance. Without the knowledge of God the people

perish. Total ignorance here is total ruin. But to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he sent, is eternal life. To see and acknowledge God in all our ways, is an essential part of genuine piety. To fail in so doing is no small part of human wickedness. Our thoughts cannot be too devoutly turned to him, who is in all, and through all, and above all, and over all, God blessed forever.

Nor is the mysteriousness of the divine nature and government any reason why we should not seek to learn what may be known concerning them. To the carnal and unbelieving, the darkness around the nature and ways of God is an occasion of stumbling; but to those who are taught from above, it brings pious confidence, deep humility and adoring reverence. Give one the spirit of adoption and self-renunciation, and he cannot be frightened from the presence of his Maker, either by the luster or the darkness round about his throne. Sages have explored this subject until wisdom fell asleep over her lesson, and pride rose up and uttered great swelling words of vanity and blasphemy; but the humble child of God, thirsting for divine knowledge and sitting at the feet of Jesus, has learned more than the ancients, and has become wise unto salvation.

1. In the nature and ways of God, there is much that is incomprehensible.

This ought neither to be denied nor doubted; For,

It is agreed on all hands that the adorable first person of the Trinity, the Father, is, and must ever be beyond the grasp of our senses and faculties. He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible. No man has seen God at any time. No man can see his face and live. He makes darkness his pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies.

It is alike true that the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, is, and ever will be beyond the direct and immediate notice of all creatures. "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound

thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He broods over the face of nature; garnishes the heavens; converts the soul; opens our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of God's word; sanctifies our affections; fills the saints with joy; fits God's people for glory; divides his gifts severally as he will—and yet we "know not the way of the Spirit." We never saw him, and we never shall see him, as disembodied spirits see each other. We may know him by his word and works, by his enlightening, sanctifying and comforting influences—but never by sight or sense. He is far beyond the grasp of both our bodily and mental faculties.

The brightest manifestation of the Godhead ever yet made, or ever to be made, is in and by the incarnation of the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity. We may behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But we can go no further. For all practical purposes this manifestation is sufficient. It is clear and glorious, yet not intolerable by reason of excessive brightness. Christ said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." Thus he taught us that the best possible discovery we could make of the divinity, was through the veil of his own flesh. But even in Christ the Godhead shone forth under great obscurity. The transfiguration, the ascension in a bright cloud, his appearance to Saul of Tarsus after his ascension, and the glory in which John the divine saw him many years later, may give us some faint conception of the effulgence of his everlasting person. But mortals know him chiefly by his works, teachings and sufferings. Thousands saw him with their bodily eyes, and knew no more of God than before.

So that we may safely say that God is, and ever shall be, wholly unperceivable by any of our senses or faculties. If any object that it is promised that the pure in heart "shall see God;" but that does not teach that they shall meet God face to face, and behold his unveiled divinity; but that they shall enjoy God as revealed in his word, and works, and ordinances, in the person of his Son, and by the power of his Spirit.

In Scripture, to "See good days," is to enjoy them; and to "See life," is to enjoy life. Now whatever eludes all our senses and faculties, is to us necessarily clad with mysteriousness. Whatever is concealed from every perceptive power, excludes the possibility of original knowledge. In such case, learning without instruction is impossible. The difficulty increases every step we take towards that which is in its nature boundless. But when our thoughts go out after him, who is absolutely infinite, we are soon wrapped in an obscurity which no created faculties can penetrate.

2. The unsearchableness of God's nature and ways is often asserted in Scripture. A short selection of pertinent texts is sufficient to establish this point: "Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as Heaven; what can you do? deeper than Hell; what can you know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. God does great and unsearchable things, marvelous things without number! He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. He does great things past finding out, yes, and wonders without number. How little a portion is heard of him. He gives not account of any of his matters. With God is terrible majesty. Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out. He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. Behold God is great, and we know him not. Great things he does, which we cannot comprehend. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God. Your judgments are a great deep. Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known. Great is our Lord, and of great power, His understanding is infinite! No man can find out the work that God does from the beginning to the end. You know not the works of God who makes all. The Heaven of heavens cannot contain you. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing. Truly you are a God who hidest yourself. There is no searching of his understanding. Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? No man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whoever the Son shall reveal him. The things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counselor? Great and

marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, O King of saints."

Here we have the words of Moses, David, Asaph, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Lord Jesus, Paul and John. From the beginning to the close of Scripture, the doctrine is the same. The coming of Christ did not remove the mysteriousness of Jehovah's nature and ways, but rather established it. It opened to our vision amazing fields of thought, and gave us new and everlasting themes of adoring wonder.

God manifest in the flesh was, and is, and ever shall be, the sublimest of all mysteries. "Nothing but itself is its parallel."

Yet nowhere in Scripture is the incomprehensibility of God spoken of as cause of sorrow to the pious. On the contrary, inspired men exult in it and give thanks. Nor can the doctrine alarm or distress one whose hope is set on high, and whose mind has learned to bow in true humility before the divine majesty.

One of the passages cited shows that our inability to find out the Almighty to perfection, is not merely moral, but natural. The same would have been true if man had never sinned. The text from the Apocalypse is part of a song sung in Heaven. This proves that even the perfection of heavenly bliss does not require the comprehension of God's nature and ways. A part of celestial happiness consists in worshiping him who makes darkness his secret place.

3. So very wonderful are the perfections of God, that his nature and ways must always be mysterious in proportion to our knowledge of their extent. God is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and so he is perfect in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. All men and angels are finite, of yesterday, liable to change, and of themselves—without God—have neither wisdom, nor virtue, nor strength. Man is the lowest order of rational beings, and has by sin greatly debased himself. He is sadly blinded by passion and prejudice. "Everyman is brutish in his knowledge." How then should

man have much or accurate acquaintance with anything that is so inscrutable as the divine nature?

Our elder and nobler brethren, the elect angels, who have for thousands of years stood around the throne of the Eternal, and drunk of the river of truth as it flows fresh from its fountain, are yet, as compared with God, foolish and ignorant. "He charges his angels with folly."

"Though glorious and holy creatures, they are fallible and mutable, except as upheld and confirmed by the Lord. They execute his wise and righteous counsels; but would soon show their want of wisdom, if trusted to manage any part of the government of the world according to their own mind. Compared with the infinite knowledge and wisdom of God, they are chargeable with ignorance, being utterly unable to comprehend the vast designs of the great Creator and Lord of the universe—except as he pleases to unfold them. How much less then may man be trusted."

God's plans embrace all creatures and all worlds. They comprehend the whole universe. The greatest stretch of the human mind never embraced all the affairs of an empire, a province, a city, a family, or even of a person. God's plans are founded on the most perfect knowledge of all things. Man's information is, both in scope and degree, very imperfect. It would be prodigious if a little child should understand all the measures of a wise king. Yet this would be but one finite creature comprehending the measures of another. But for any creature to know God's entire plans would be for finite to understand infinite. Until man can hold the sea in the hollow of his hand, measure the azure vault of Heaven with a carpenter's rule, sweep the outskirts of creation with a compass of his own making, and count all the worlds, and tally their number, weight and measure—let not his arrogance swell to the monstrous bloating of imagining that he can comprehend God. If he does not know all things formed, how can he search out him who formed them?

Man may follow Methuselah through his long career, but at last he dies. Man may compute the number of seconds in a myriad of millions of centuries, but that is not eternity. God's life time has neither beginning nor end. "The number of his years cannot be searched out." "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and world, even from everlasting to everlasting you are God!" "Your years are throughout all generations. Of old have you laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of your hands. They shall perish, but you shall endure; yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall you change them, and they shall be changed; but you are the same, and your years shall have no end." "One day is with the Lord is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

A late writer says: "While the spirituality of God's nature places him beyond the reach of our direct cognizance, there are certain other essential properties of his nature, which place him beyond the reach of our possible comprehension. Let me instance the past eternity of the Godhead. One might figure a futurity that never ceases to flow, and which has no termination, but who can climb his ascending way among the obscurities of that infinite which is behind him? Who can travel in thought along the track of generations gone by, until he has overtaken the Eternity which lies in that direction? Who can look across the millions of ages which have elapsed, and from an ulterior post of observation look again to another and another succession of centuries; and at each further extremity in this series of retrospects, stretch backward his regards on an antiquity as remote and indefinite as ever? Could we by any number of successive strides over these mighty intervals, at length reach the fountain-head of duration, our spirits might be at rest. But to think of duration as having no fountain-head; to think of time with no beginning; to uplift the imagination along the heights of an antiquity, which has positively no summit; to soar these upward steps until, dizzied by the altitude, we can keep no longer on the wing; for the mind to make these repeated flights from one pinnacle to another; and, instead of scaling the mysterious elevation, to lie baffled at its feet, or lose itself among

the far, the long withdrawing recesses of that primeval distance, which at length merges away into a fathomless unknown—this is an exercise utterly discomfiting to the puny faculties of man.

We are called on to stir ourselves up that we may take hold of God, but the clouds and darkness which are round about him seem to repel the enterprise as hopeless; and man, as if overborne by a sense of littleness, feels as if nothing can be done but to make prostrate obeisance of all his faculties before him."

If man cannot compute the lifetime of God, how can he comprehend God's plans? If he cannot take the dimensions of that Eternity, which is Jehovah's habitation, how can he search out him who dwells therein? "An eternity past puzzles all human comprehension."

Yet an eternity to come, if duly considered, no less completely eludes our grasp. It is an important truth that though we cannot comprehend eternity, yet we can comprehend that there is an eternity. At this plain truth we must stop.

Think, too, of God's omnipresence. He is everywhere. He fills immensity. He is a spirit, and so cannot be divided; yet he is always present in every part of the universe with the whole of his being and nature. He is an infinite spirit, and so no limits can bound him. 'He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.' "He is a very present help in time of trouble." "Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill Heaven and earth, says the Lord?" "Where shall I go from your Spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Hell, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

The sun is distant from the earth ninety-five million miles; but ninety-five million of miles beyond the sun, and in every other

direction, God is as truly present as in Heaven itself. Light travels at the rate of more than one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles every second; yet there are stars so distant that if a ray of light had left them on the morning that the Israelites went out of Egypt, it would not yet have reached our world. Over the vast blazing universe above us and around us, Jehovah presides. There may be points beyond which there are no inhabited worlds, yet who dare measure them? Space has no limits. Immensity has no walls, outside of which nonentity has her kingdom. "Who is like unto the Lord our God who dwells on high, who humbles himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in the earth?"

The other natural perfections of God are no less admirable and incomprehensible than those already noticed.

But the moral character of God presents, if possible, still greater wonders. At the close of a long and lucid argument respecting it, even blessed Paul could do no more than say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

Jesus Christ, when on earth, was actuated by very similar sentiments. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank you Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight."

Now, if the contemplation of God's moral character produced such exclamations from the man Christ Jesus, and from his servant Paul, it must be a theme of the most exalted nature. It is while speaking of his own moral character, and, especially of his amazing mercy, that God says: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

The same remark is as true of God's holiness, justice, goodness, truth and faithfulness. Indeed, all God's moral character is presented to our admiration in the person and work of Jesus Christ, in such a glorious manner, as to have filled Heaven and earth with joy ever since the plan of redemption was known. The angels have long desired to look into these things. The regenerate on earth are delighted with them, and the redeemed in glory celebrate them forever and ever.

God's love is as unfathomable as his understanding. Nothing is more unsearchable than the riches of Christ. None but divinity can comprehend them.

There is often a pleasing harmony in music. There is always an admirable harmony in the plans and works of God. But the most delightful and wonderful harmony is that of the divine attributes displayed in man's salvation:

inflexible justice and incomparable mercy,
terrible severity and infinite goodness,
eternal truth and everlasting kindness,
spotless holiness and undying faithfulness
—all meet around the cross of Christ, and kiss and embrace each other! No such glorious concord is seen elsewhere but in Jehovah himself.

4. God has shown himself to be incomprehensible in his works of CREATION. He doubtless might have made more worlds and more orders of being than he has; yet who knows all the works that God has made? There are known to be more than eight thousand species of the beetles alone. The tribes of creatures in our world, which are invisible to the naked eye, are said to be far more numerous than all those which we can see. If the tribes are more numerous, the individuals are probably as hundreds of millions to one. There are supposed to be perceptible by powerful telescopes as many as three or four hundred millions of fixed stars. If each of these is a sun and

the center of a system of worlds like our own—then how vast is the universe! It consists of matter organized and unorganized, and of beings mortal and immortal.

The Bible does not deny that brutes have something in their nature which may be called soul. But then it teaches that the spirit of a beast goes downward to the earth, and the spirit of man goes upward. At death it returns to God who gave it. All these organisms, animate and inanimate, and all these spirits, mortal and immortal, were before called out of nonentity by the Almighty.

It is impossible to conceive of any exertion of power greater than that by which something is made out of nothing. Yet out of nothing God made all things, our bodies and our souls, all we are, all we see, all that is within us, above us, beneath us, around us. Nor did any part of the work of creation cost him any labor. "He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." "He stretches out the north over the empty place, and hangs the earth upon nothing." "He binds up the water in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them." "The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof." Nothing is too hard for him. He neither grows faint nor is weary.

Indeed so inscrutable is God in all his ways that perhaps no heathen ever spoke so wisely concerning the divine nature as Simonides, who being asked by Hiero, "What is God?" demanded one day for deliberation. When again asked the same question, he desired two days. As often as the question was repeated he doubled the time. When asked the reason of his conduct, he replied, "The longer I consider the question, the greater is the darkness in which I am enveloped."

Our positive knowledge of God is very limited. Most of our knowledge of him is negative—what God is not like. Each of his perfections will be a study forever. We shall never rise to the full

elevation of this theme. There will ever be topless heights in divine science, to which the saints will look up with inquiring awe.

5. In God's government are many things inscrutably mysterious to us. God commonly moves on the course of his providence in grand and awesome silence. The motion of the solar system does not produce as much noise as the motion of a clock. Then when he chooses he thunders in the heavens and makes the earth to tremble under his footsteps. Commonly he goes forth to his work unobserved, but by the eye of faith. Then again he arrays himself in robes of awesome majesty, and the most brutish say: Here is the finger of God. In a thousand cases who can tell why one is taken and another left, except that so it seemed good to the Lord?

Who can tell when a new cause or influence goes forth, what will be the result, and when it will cease to operate? Of two causes or instruments in God's empire, who can tell which will be most potent for good or evil, until history decides?

Then God's ways of proceeding are so amazingly diversified; some times working so slowly; then again cutting short his work in righteousness; sometimes threshing the mountains with the worm Jacob; then again making the stars fight against Sisera. Then many an influence is put forth, and we suppose it has spent its force, when as yet the terrible rebound has not begun. Let the cause which God has put to work, like the boomerang, return before you make up a final judgment upon its power.

Truly God's ways are past finding out. He works, he hides himself, he forbears, he punishes, he pardons and he delivers like a God. Jehovah is Lord of all. He is King and Governor! He reigns in wisdom, love, power and majesty. It is not necessary for us to know as God knows. We are servants. To us belong obedience, submission, acquiescence, adoration—not control, revision, or even scrutiny.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Chapter 5.

Practical Remarks on Chapter 4

All really valuable truths in religion have their practical uses. This is certainly true in regard to the being, nature and ways of God. Let us look at some of the truths suggested by the discussion in the preceding chapter:

1. The Christian lives and walks by faith, not by sight. Even apostles and prophets did but see through a glass darkly. Paul himself says, "The life which I now live, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." As, "without faith, it is impossible to please God," so, without faith, it is impossible to be pleased with God. Every approved act of the Christian's life is, in some sense, a committing of his affairs to the Almighty. One inspired apostle, speaking of faith, calls it "precious faith." Another says that the trial of it is "much more precious than gold." No marvel that such commendations are bestowed on this great grace of faith. It is of rare excellence. Gold perishes. But faith shall be changed into the beatific vision! Gold is held alike by God's friends and enemies. Faith is a gift bestowed on none but the elect. Gold is gathered from the earth. Faith is a gift descending from Heaven. Gold assists us only when it is well with us. Faith enables us to walk in darkness, having no light, and yet to trust in the Lord. "I had fainted unless I had believed."

There is a sense in which "gold answers all things. In the same way, faith gives the soul propriety in all the rich consolations of the gospel, in all the promises of life and salvation, in all needful blessings; it draws virtue from Christ to strengthen itself, and all other graces."

Behold the man of faith pressed by temporal and spiritual distresses. See him in the furnace made seven times hotter than it is accustomed. Those who stand round about, are scorched by the intensity of the heat. Cry to him and say, Brother, how is it with you now? If faith is in lively exercise, he replies, "When I am tried I shall come forth as gold seven times purified. I know who it is that has said, I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction."

With gold we can buy what we need, if it is in the market; but faith supplies all our lack when universal want prevails. When earth does not own what we need, the man with his bags of gold is on a level with the beggar; but at such a time the believer sings, "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign LORD is my strength!" Habakkuk 3:17-19

Our faith is often sorely tried, but God's word says, "The trial of your faith is found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ." What we need is not less labor or less suffering, burdens less heavy or less numerous, trials less sharp or less lasting. No. What we need is stronger faith. The disciples never offered a better prayer than this: "Lord, increase our faith!" Faith, like the club of Hercules, beats down all before it. "Faith makes all evil good to us, and all good better."

"All the precepts in the law and in the gospel hang upon this, Believe!" All the comforts and supports of the Christian life depend upon faith. Faint believing produces doubtful walking. Be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Never question his truth, nor doubt his faithfulness. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." "Have faith in God."

2. As the object of God in all his dealings with his people is his own glory and their eternal good, so they ought heartily to concur in these ends, and labor to promote them. God's glory is more important than the lives of all his creatures. He has made all things for himself. Not an event occurs, but for his glory. The death of Lazarus, of Bethany, was to that end. To the same intent is every pang of his suffering people. Nor does he less surely propose the welfare of his hidden ones in their greatest afflictions. "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." Let us then concur and co-operate with God in seeking our good and his glory. We ought to be more anxious to get good out of an affliction than to get rid of it. The kindest wish that any can indulge respecting their grieving brethren, is not that they be tempted no more, but that in all their trials they may not sin, nor charge God foolishly.

With these views predominant in us, how many powerful temptations would become powerless. Sometimes the afflicted look upon their trials merely as tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins. No doubt God has good ground of controversy with us all. But hear the voice from Heaven, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." As God did not give us friends, or health, or property, or reputation, chiefly to please us—so neither does he take them away chiefly to afflict or punish us. His ends are high and holy, wise and benevolent. We should remember that what is loss to us, is often gain to others. This is always true when one of our friends dies in the Lord. Therefore let us gird up the loins of our minds and seek, above all things, to glorify God in every visitation, whether grievous or joyous. Let us rejoice in all that he does.

"As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him." The pious Mr. Jay has explained the allusions here made to natural history. The eaglets are fond of the nest; they love to eat, sleep and grow fat, and are reluctant to exert themselves until their mother renders the nest so uncomfortable that they can occupy

it no longer. Then they go out upon the rocks or the branches of the trees, and learn to walk. By example, she teaches them to exercise their wings, fluttering over them. Then she bears them on her back to great heights, darts from under them, and compels them to use their wings. Then she makes short circuits in the air, and they follow her. She enlarges the range of her flight, and still they imitate her until they can rival her, soaring high in the heavens.

Sir Humphrey Davy describes the completion of this training: "I once saw a very interesting sight above one of the crags: Two parent eagles were teaching their offspring—two young birds—the maneuvers of flight. They began by rising from the top of a mountain, in the eye of the sun: it was about mid-day, and bright for this climate. They at first made small circles, and the young birds imitated them; they paused on their wings, waiting until they had made their first flight, and then took a second and larger circle, always rising towards the sun, and enlarging their circle of flight, so as to make a gradual extended spiral. The young ones still slowly followed, apparently flying better as they mounted; and they continued this sublime kind of exercise, always rising, until they became mere points in the air, and the young ones were lost, and afterwards their parents, to our aching sight."

In the same way, "those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

3. Let us put a watch upon our hearts and lips, lest we should think or say more about God's nature and ways, than befits our ignorance and our selfishness. Shall not God do what he will with his own? To us he is not accountable, and it is fearful wickedness to think or speak as if he were. If our reasonings concerning his nature or ways perplex us—it is proof that we have gone too far, and uttered things too wonderful for us. Let us not wade beyond our depth. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." There is much wickedness in indulging in bold speculations and confident reasons on the nature

and government of God. On such subjects, preconceived and rash opinions are too often allowed to set aside the teachings of Scripture. This is always sinful. To every student of divine things, God seems to say: "Take off your shoes off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

There is too much occasion given by men for the challenge, "Who are you that replies against God?" In the book of Job we see to what fearful lengths even good men may go in proud reasonings on Jehovah's ways. For indulging in this sin God gave a terrible rebuke even to the great patriarch. Would that the folly had ended with the man of Uz. Let us take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongues. Yes, let us keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. "Pride is increased by ignorance: those assume the most, who know the least." And "to be proud of learning is the greatest ignorance." "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." "With the lowly is wisdom." Be teachable!

"Most men take least notice of what is plain, as if that were of no use; but puzzle their thoughts, and lose themselves in those vast depths and abysses, which no human understanding can fathom." Utter not words without knowledge. Think not as the fools. "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in Heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:1-2

4. How excellent are divine things. "Divinity is the haven and Sabbath of all man's contemplations." The subjects of which it treats, surpass all others in dignity and practical usefulness. It opens to us the glorious fountain of all being and of all blessedness. It tells us whence all creatures came. It gives the true theory of human nature, and teaches man correct views of himself and of his neighbors. It settles the doctrine of an endless life beyond the bounds of time. Its truths have a sovereign efficacy to cheer, guide, and cleanse the soul.

For purity, for power, for sublimity, for refreshment, nothing can compare with them. They humble without debasing. They elevate without puffing up. They beget modesty without cowardice. They embolden without impudence. They inspire beneficial fear and animating confidence. They give joy without levity. They make men to sorrow after a godly sort, and yet greatly increase their happiness.

To these ends they have a fitness in themselves.

Truth is in its very nature excellent. Religious truth is as far above all other verity as mind is above matter, as eternity is more lasting than time, as God is superior to his works. The words of God are spirit and life. They are wisdom. Their entrance gives light. To those who seek him with all the heart, God makes his truth efficacious by special divine influences. Even a heart dead in sin will revive under the energies of truth in the hands of the great Sanctifier.

If the study of divine things is not a blessing to any, it is because they are "sensual, having not the Spirit." They are blind and cannot see afar off, and yet are too proud to seek the Spirit's unction that teaches all things. They do not in their hearts believe what they know to be true. They restrain prayer before God, even when they hear his servant saying, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not."

They obey not, though Christ says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." They resist not their passions, though the promise is, "The meek will he guide in judgment." Nor do such make proof of the principle: "The hand of the diligent makes rich." If in this land any man shall not become wise unto salvation, the fault will be his own.

If these things are so, every honest effort to spread the knowledge of God is praiseworthy. A good pious book is worth all it costs. To give such a volume is often the noblest charity. To read it with eagerness is to dig after hid treasure.

The two great sources of light on divine things are God's works and God's word. Some err by rejecting the volume of nature, and some err by rejecting the volume of inspiration. He who rejects either plays the fool. A pious mind loves to learn lessons concerning God from any source. He who asserts that God teaches nothing by what he does, is as blind and perverse as he who holds that God teaches nothing by what he says. For "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handy-work. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge."

Yet the highest source of divine knowledge is Scripture revelation. In it are found all the saving truths of religion. Scripture speaks clearly of the most vital things. How glorious, and yet how free, is the truth: "The things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children."

Of himself how excellent is the revelation God has made: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty." These few words give us more true knowledge of God's moral character than all the wise men of old acquired from the whole volume of nature!

Revelation is no less clear concerning man's sin and guilt, misery and helplessness. It leaves no doubt respecting either of these. By scores of types, prophecies and promises, it points to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It assures the conscience of peace by Jesus' sin-atonement blood.

Scripture explains the mystery of sanctification. It pours floods of light on all that needs to be known, in order that we may do our duty or maintain solid peace of mind.

On the whole subject of God's moral government Scripture is luminous. It goes still further. "Some things which could not

otherwise be read in the book of nature, are legible enough when the lamp of revelation is held up to it." Thus it makes all plain concerning the death both of holy and wicked men. In the phrase, "death comes by sin," we have the cause of all death in the human family. In the words, "I am the resurrection and the life," we have opened to all the pious a door of hope which shall never be shut.

God's word is complete as to our duty and destiny, our privileges and prospects! "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb" Psalm 19:7-10

5. We ought not to reject the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead because of its mysteriousness. It is not offensive to pious minds. It is for rejoicing that he who made us, he who redeemed us, and he who sanctifies us—is the one eternal, unchangeable, indivisible Jehovah, subsisting in three persons. The favorite objection urged against this doctrine, from the days of Celsus and Lucian, down to this hour is, its mysteriousness.

That everything pertaining to God is, in some points, inscrutable, is not denied. Were it otherwise, who could adore him? "When I perfectly understand all about a being, I know that he is either my inferior, or my equal, and so I cannot pay him religious worship."

The pious Hervey well says: "I am no more surprised that some revealed truths should amaze my understanding, than that the blazing sun should dazzle my eyes."

Robert Hall, speaking of inscrutable things in religion, says: "We rejoice that they are mysterious, so far from being ashamed of them

on that account; since the principal reason why they are, and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their unsearchable riches and indefinable grandeur!"

Dr. Leonard Woods of Andover, says: "The end of our being does not require that we should completely comprehend either the Creator, or his creation. Were we called to exercise dominion over the universe, it would indeed be necessary that we should be omniscient. But for those whose business it is to obey and submit, omniscience is not necessary. On inquiry, it will appear that all the most momentous and useful truths relate to objects which are pre-eminently incomprehensible."

Bishop Waterland says: "No just objection can be made against the importance of any doctrine, from its mysterious nature. The most mysterious of all are, in reality, the most important; not because they are mysterious, but because they relate to things divine, which must, of course, be mysterious to weak mortals, and, perhaps, to all creatures whatever. But even mysterious doctrines have a bright side, as well as a dark one; and they are clear to look upon, though too deep to be seen through."

Calvin says: "We mistake, if we measure God by our own understanding, and we must mount above the earth, yes, above Heaven itself when we think of him."

Richard Baxter says: "The mystery of the incarnation alone may find you work to search and admire many ages."

John Newton says: "If I did not find many things in the Bible proposed rather to my faith than to my reason, I could not receive it as a revelation from God, because it would lack the grand characteristic of his majesty."

Dr. Scott says: "The mystery of godliness continued a great mystery after the fullest revelation of it. The revelation and belief of it have always been, and are, the beginning and spring of all pious

dispositions and affections in the hearts of fallen men, and of all the spiritual worship of God in the world."

Bishop Sherlock, no less pertinently observes, that "So far is it from being an objection against the Gospel of Christ, that it contains many wonderful mysteries of the hidden wisdom of God, that, as our case stands, without a mystery, it is impossible for us to be saved: for, since reason and nature cannot find the means of rescuing sinners from punishment, and of making atonement to the justice of God; since they cannot prescribe a proper satisfaction for sin, in which the honor of God and the salvation of men shall be at once consulted; since they cannot remedy the corruption that has spread through the race of mankind, or infuse new principles of virtue and holiness into the souls already subdued to the lust and power of sin; since, if they could procure our pardon for what is past, they cannot secure us for the future from the same temptations, which by fatal experience we know we cannot withstand. Since, I say, these things cannot be done by the means of reason and nature, they must be done by such means as reason and nature know nothing of; that is, in other words, they must be done by mysterious means, of the propriety of which we can have no adequate notion or conception.

"If you stand in need of no new favor, if you aim not so high as eternal life, religion without mysteries may well serve your turn. The principles of natural religion tend to procure the peace and tranquility of this life; and the not distinguishing between religion as a rule of life for our present use and well-being here, and as the means of obtaining pardon for sin and eternal life hereafter, may have in some measure occasioned the great complaint against the mysteries of the gospel: for mysteries are not indeed the necessary parts of religion, considered only as a rule of action: but most necessary they are to it, when considered as a means of obtaining pardon and eternal glory.

Consider the gospel then as a rule of action, no religion was ever so plain, so calculated upon the principles of reason and nature; so that

natural religion itself had never more natural religion in it. If we consider the end proposed to us, and the means used to entitle us to the benefit of it, it grows mysterious, and soars above the reach of human reason; for God has done more for us than reason could teach us to expect, or can now teach us to comprehend. Let us then do our part, which we plainly understand, and let us trust in God that he will do his; though it exceeds the strength of human wisdom to comprehend the length and depth and breadth of that wisdom and mercy, which God has manifested to the world through his Son Christ Jesus our Lord." Nor does God's word teach any different doctrine. In fact, it fully supports these views, Paul said: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen by angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Let us love all that God has spoken.

If it fills us with reverence and godly fear,
if it humbles us in the dust,
if it awakens pious wonder,
if it stirs us up to diligence in looking into these things
—then it must be of excellent use. But to carp at God's word, or any portion thereof, is both criminal and dangerous. Let every man beware, lest Christ and his salvation be to him for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence; for a trap and for a snare; for many among men shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be ensnared, and be taken.

6. What madness it is for any creature to be found fighting against God. He takes the wise in their own craftiness. He hides himself, and all nature stands aghast. He passes by, and a great and strong wind rends the mountains, and breaks in pieces the rocks. He utters his voice, and the earth melts. He wills it, and a world arises. He frowns, and the pillars of Heaven tremble. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he takes up the islands as a very little thing. All nations are before him as nothing." "He brings princes to nothing." "He makes the

judges of the earth as vanity." Before him, the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers.

Who can resist such a God? Some have fought against him, but who ever conquered him or escaped a certain overthrow? Was there ever a company of more consummate fools than Pharaoh and his great men, although they thought to "deal wisely?" Behold the horse and his rider, the warrior and the chariot, sunk like lead in the mighty waters! "The Lord is a man of war. He has triumphed gloriously. Who is like unto you, Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Let every man know that the Lord, he is God, and that to put one's self in array against him is to advertise to the whole universe that he is a fool, bent on his own eternal undoing. A feather can never resist the fires of a furnace, the elements cannot withstand the intense heat of the last day; neither can a worm of the dust stand up against God!

Sin is as foolish as it is criminal. If, in temporal affairs, any man violated the laws of his existence, as in spiritual affairs every wicked man does, any court would pronounce him a madman, and subject him to the restraints of a lunatic.

Wisdom says: "Whoever finds me finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul. All those who hate me love death." To think of God's wrath is fearful. To taste it is worse than a potion of wormwood and gall. To endure it is intolerable! A drop of it fell into the conscience of Belshazzar, and his knees smote together; on Herod, and he was eaten by worms; on Judas, and he turned suicide. A few drops of it have sent the voice of wailing along every valley and over every mountain in a great nation. A sprinkle of God's wrath fell on sinning angels, and in a moment they shriveled into devils. A vial of God's wrath broken on our globe will yet send it blazing through the universe. The fierceness of that wrath will crush the spirit of devils, and make sinners of our race

wish they had never been born. "Who knows the power of your anger! Even according to your fear, so is your wrath."

7. With so great a God, great sinners may hope to find great mercy. He punishes, but he also pardons—like a God. He shows compassion to the chief of sinners. His loving-kindness reaches to the heavens. If any of us shall not be saved, it will not be because God is not merciful; but because we are proud, rebellious and self-righteous. Sometimes we think our sins are too great to be pardoned by the Lord. But this is because of our wicked unbelief. Hear his own words of love: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon!"

Such offers ought to silence all our cavils, and put to shame all our unbelief. If we knew more of God, we would be less apt to distrust him.

He who has spent all his days among the mountains which lift their brows above the clouds, and has never seen any body of water greater than the mountain torrent, may naturally doubt whether there is water enough on earth to cover the peaks of his native land. But let him once cross the Atlantic, let him put down his lead thousands of fathoms, let him find that it is three thousand miles wide and yet greater in length, and he will see how all his native mountains could be buried in the sea.

In the same way, our sins are great, truly as great as we ever thought them to be. But God's mercy is greater than we have ever imagined. Let us explore it and meditate upon it, until we see how he can pardon iniquity, pass by transgression, delight in mercy, have compassion on us, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea!

8. The true glory of churches is the presence and blessing of Jehovah. The great difference between the two houses that Solomon built was,

that one was his own domicile, while the other was an habitation for the Lord. The great difference between a saint and a sinner is, that one is the temple of Belial, and the other the temple of the Lord. In monarchical governments, it is esteemed a great honor to live or to worship in the same house with the king. But wherever churches are animated with real love to God, the King of kings blesses the place of their meeting with his presence. This is honor indeed. What a glorious promise is that, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The fulfillment is as certain as the blessing promised is inestimable.

How foolish are we when we put our confidence in means and men, in singers and preachers, to make the sanctuary a delight. They may provide for the proprieties of things—as even a corpse may be decently arrayed. But if the place of meeting is to be made to our souls the house of God, and the gate of Heaven, if we, who are naturally dead in trespasses and sins, are to be made alive unto God—then it must be by the gracious presence of him whose we are, and whom we serve. Let God's people never weary of looking to him, who is the glory of his redeemed people. Let them never vainly imagine that they are anything, or can do anything as of themselves. Without him they can do nothing. That was a wise prayer of Moses, "If your presence does not go with me, carry us not up hence." If God goes before us, our enemies shall be scattered, and shall never overtake us. If he be our portion, we shall not want. If he be our glory, we shall be eternally illustrious.

9. What a capital error is that which teaches that God can be fitly represented or worshiped by images. To bow down to the sun, moon and stars, and worship all the host of Heaven, or to "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible men, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," ought to be by all people held and declared sheer idolatry. In his being, perfections, works and ways, God is incomparable, "Among the gods, there is none like you, Lord; neither are there any works like unto your works." "Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord;

who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?"
"To whom will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto him?"

The greatness of the sin of worshiping images, or of worshiping God by images, arises from these facts: It is positively forbidden in many portions of Scripture. It is contrary to God's spirituality. It degrades all our conceptions of Jehovah to a depth of debasement intolerable to God. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's devices." The spirit of the first commandment and the letter of the second commandment forbid such worship. "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

In his address to Israel given us in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses greatly insists upon the exclusion of images from religious worship.

Besides, "God is a Spirit, and those who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." God is not in any way personally connected with matter. He is an uncreated, immaterial substance. He is an active, intelligent, infinite spirit. The Belgic confession well says: "We believe in heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only and simple spiritual essence, which we call God, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, who is wholly wise, and a most plentiful well-spring of all good things." We cannot too carefully guard God's worship against all corruptions, and all admixtures of human inventions. Image worship is abominable idolatry! The Most High is not like the gods of the heathen. He dwells not in temples made with hands. Because he fills Heaven and earth,

he cannot be placed in a niche or on the altar of any house. Nor can any true image of him be made or conceived. The most exquisite piece of art is no more like God, and is no more suited to give us just ideas of him, than the most unsightly daub, or the rudest block of wood or stone.

10. How amiable is the whole character of God. Love to him is as reasonable as it is obligatory. When a scoffing infidel thought to perplex a pious little girl, by asking, "How big is your God?" she replied, "He is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he is so kind as to dwell in this little heart of mine." He dwells with all his people. He walks in them. "Thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." What matchless love is here! He who is over all God blessed forever, condescends to take up his abode in our poor hearts!

"The tabernacle of God is with men." He who is higher than the highest, does not despise our low estate. How hateful is the arrogant littleness of man, compared with the condescending greatness of God. Our God is in the heavens, and yet he is the great comforter of puny man. If this is so, how we should love and fear, serve and obey, praise and adore him! "We should give him the same place in our hearts that he holds in the universe!" We shall never be able to pay the debt we owe him. Let us give him all. Even that is but little; yet he will receive it.

Chapter 6.

Human Accountability

As creator, preserver, and benefactor, and possessed of infinite perfections, God has a right to be judge and governor. As creatures, dependents, stewards, servants, men are bound to obey. Of course it

is right they should be held to account. As a king and master God will require neither too much nor too little. The rational and moral nature of man make it fit that he should be held responsible to his rightful sovereign. If he has done only good, it will be to his honor and to his Maker's glory to have it known. If there is a controversy between him and God, it is right it should be known and declared where the blame lies. If God offers and grants great mercy, and takes the guilty into his favor—truth requires that it should appear to be to the glory of his grace.

All thinking men clearly perceive the righteousness of accountability. As surely as we are able to form moral judgments, so surely shall they be reviewed by the judge of all the earth. "The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a certain man who took account of his servants." (Matthew 18:23.) To show how this account should be conducted Jesus spoke several parables.

When we say man is accountable to God, we mean that he must one day settle with him, and that he will receive at God's hand fit treatment for all he does.

The account which we must give to God will be SOLEMN. Nothing can be more solemn than a creature reckoning with its Creator. Fools and jesters may sport in time, while prosperity lasts; but fun and trifling shall have no place when the soul stands before the tribunal of Jehovah. Both in the solemn interview with God immediately after death, and in the sublime scenes of the final judgment, the buffoon will be as solemn as the most solemn Christian! Nothing can surpass the folly of lightly esteeming this matter, or of acting as if we shall never answer at his bar. It is an awful thing to stand before God!

This accountability is UNIVERSAL. "Every one of us shall give account." "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." The maid and her mistress, master and servant, parent and child, husband and wife, minister and people, the lawyer and his client, the judge and the culprit, the king and the subject, the rich and the poor,

the wise and the simple, the conqueror and the conquered, the oppressor and the oppressed—are alike held accountable to God. In more than one case God has granted a dispensation from death, but never from judgment. Many have enjoyed immunity from poverty; none from appearing before God. Every eye shall see the final Judge. All peoples of the earth shall account to him.

This account shall be INDIVIDUAL and not corporate. Men will not appear before the tribunal of God in classes or groups. Kings and their cabinets will not be in one company, and their nobles in another, subordinate magistrates in another, and the clergy in another. Every one of us shall give an individual account of himself to God. Men often go with the multitude to do evil; and hand joins in hand to do wickedness. But God knows exactly how far each man's hand extends, and how much guilt adheres to each.

In like manner shall the actions and character of the righteous be accurately determined. "Every man shall bear his own burden." (Galatians 6:5.) "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Corinthians 3:8.) None can hide himself in a crowd. None can so lay his criminality on others so as to exempt himself. Nor shall any humble soul be overlooked. "Whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Ephesians 6:8.)

The great principles of this accountability are clearly revealed in Scripture. The bold interpolator of the Bible, who adds to the sacred canon, shall have the plagues threatened in God's word poured upon him; and he who takes from the word of God, shall lose all interest in its promises. (Revelation 22:18, 19.) The whole law and the whole gospel, the entire rule of revelation, shall be the rule of final award.

Our accountability is PERFECT. It includes everything praiseworthy and everything blameworthy. The matter, the manner, and the motive of our actions and words shall undergo the scrutiny of him who never errs! "God shall bring every work into judgment, along

with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:14.)

This accountability shall LAST FOREVER. There will be immortal rationality, and of course everlasting responsibility. The relations between God and the soul forever remaining the same, accountability must be the same. Suffering will not end it. Happiness cannot terminate it. There is no such thing as annihilation. In the divine government, there is no statute of limitation.

The full rigors of this responsibility may be felt at ANY MOMENT. God may and sometimes does give warning of the approaching summons. But he is not bound to do it; and in millions of cases he does not.

There are several dangerous popular errors on this subject.

One is that settled malignity of purpose is necessary to constitute guilt; whereas the absence of right intentions and right affections is enough to involve any man in ruin.

Sins of omission is as criminal as sins of commission.

Nor is any man capable of estimating criminality aright. The law offended is infinite; the God sinned against, is worthy of everlasting confidence and obedience. No man can tell the extent of the mischief wrought by even one transgression.

Nor is the length of time employed in committing a wrong any standard by which to determine its criminality. The enormity of guilt cannot be estimated by a watch or a clock.

Nor does inconsiderateness of the fruits of transgression hinder guilt. This is often an aggravation thereof. (Proverbs 26:18.) He who can think and will not think, shall be punished for avoiding reflection.

Nor is the end of the law of revenge. On the contrary its great aim is to maintain order and distribute justice, which is an amiable attribute in anyone, and an essential attribute in a good moral governor.

Nor does repentance of itself make any atonement. Even when genuine, it only shows that the party would not repeat the offence. Law takes no notice of repentance. It is in fact no satisfaction to a penalty. If mercy comes to sinners, it must be through a mediator and be by them wholly unmerited.

Our accountability to God can in no sense be lessened. In the divine arrangement, sin itself shall be made to establish the reign of God. Nor will any expense be spared to maintain accountability. Even among men everything is risked for this end, unless government is weak or vicious.

In estimating the extent of accountability, we may note the following among other particulars:

1. We are accountable for all the evil which we might personally have hindered, and did not. This is just. The human conscience says so. God's word settles the point: "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" (Proverbs 24:11, 12.)

2. We are accountable for all the good which we might have done. We are required to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. The occasion and ability to do good impose an obligation to do it. Paul says: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has."

3. Our accountability extends to all the evil which we might have caused others to prevent. Thus Eli might have preserved the honor of religious worship in the eyes of the people if he had used all his

authority to restrain his sons. If a city is on fire and one knows it and keeps silence, and his neighbors are burned up because he refused to give the alarm to those near him that they might give it to others, then their blood is found in his skirts.

4. Our accountability extends to the evils which we assisted others in doing. One reason why ministers may not ordain incompetent men to the ministry, is that in so doing they become partakers of other men's sins. (1 Timothy 5:22.) We may not lend a deadly weapon to commit murder. We may not endorse the character of the swindler. He who bids the wrong-doer God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (2 John 11.)

5. Our accountability extends to all the good which we might have influenced others to do. A minister of the gospel is bound to do all he personally can. He is no less obliged to use his best endeavors to persuade his people to do the same. This is also true of parents, magistrates, teachers and all guides. Some think to escape condemnation, because they say they do no harm. Thus reasoned the man with one talent. He hid it. He did not expend it in wantonness nor in plans of treason. He retained it harmlessly, but his guilt was upon him.

6. Of course our accountability extends to our actions. The deeds done in the body are fit matters of responsibility. Even human governments extend to overt actions; and the law of public sentiment condemns overt acts of injustice, unkindness or unmercifulness, even where municipal law takes no cognizance of the delinquency. "To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." (James 5:17.)

7. We are accountable for our words. This is right. Life and death are in the power of the tongue. Most of the happiness and misery in the world is the fruit of the lips. "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account to God." (Matthew 12:36.) This is no new doctrine. Long before the flood, Enoch warned the wicked that

at his coming the Judge of all the earth would bring them to account not only for their ungodly deeds, but also for all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (Jude 15.) Even human governments in many cases hold men responsible for their words, and universal public sentiment holds every man responsible for what he says of his neighbors. God's government over this world would not be perfect if he did not call us to an account for our slanders and libels and jibes and insinuations against him and his government of the world.

8. Our accountability extends to our thoughts. Hear the Scriptures: "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7.) "The thought of foolishness is sin." (Proverbs 24:9.) "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." (Proverbs 15:26.) "Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts." (Isaiah 45:7.) "O Jerusalem, how long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" (Jeremiah 4:14.) "The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.) "Pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you." (Acts 8:22.) With these manifold declarations of Scripture, common sense unites its testimony.

9. Our accountability includes all our feelings and affections. This is everywhere asserted in Scripture. The tenth commandment forbids us to desire anything belonging to our neighbor. (Exodus 20:17.) Scripture pronounces unreasonable or outrageous anger and all hatred to be murder. (1 John 3:15; 4:20; Matthew 5:22.) It declares lust to be adultery. (Matthew 5:27, 28.) It wages war against all envy, all jealousy, all revenge, and all bitterness. It condemns the lack of love to enemies, the lack of forgiveness even to persecutors. It condemns all wrong feelings, and all lack of right feeling.

10. Our accountability extends to the use we make of our property. It declares us to be stewards, not proprietors. It pronounces a great blessing on one who out of poverty contributes his mite to the cause of God.

11. Our accountability extends not only to all we have, but to all we are. It declares, "You are not your own." It claims our entire, soul, body and spirit. It requires us to present our whole selves willing sacrifices on the altar of God. (Romans 12:1.)

12. In ascertaining the extent of our accountability, no deduction is to be made for the strength of temptation, for a door of escape is always provided. (1 Corinthians 10:18;) nor for the suddenness of the temptation; nor for the weakness of our resolution; nor for the seeming smallness of the offence. Unwatchfulness is itself a sin, and one sin cannot excuse another. A feeble purpose to do right is itself criminal and is fit matter of repentance. The worthies mentioned in Hebrews 11 obtained their good report by discarding all such false reasonings. They were sorely tempted but they surely triumphed.

Chapter 7.

Deductions from Chapter 6.

If the statements of the preceding chapter are sound and correct, then it follows:

1. That there is no need of more than two states beyond the grave to embrace the whole human family. All saints are substantially alike. They are more and more so, as they increase in fitness for Heaven. There is no radical difference between them. There is no need of more than one Paradise. God has revealed but one. No Christian desires any more.

Nor is there any need for more than one Hell. All sinners are alike in this, that they have sinned, have sinned with consent, have in their hearts unbelief, ingratitude, impenitence and rebellion against God. They have no love to God, no pious fear of God, no hope in God, no

trust in the Almighty, no spiritual taste, no spiritual discernment, no holiness, no spiritual life. They all deserve wrath. They are all justly condemned. The most vicious and the least vicious among the unregenerate are sufficiently alike to be put in the same prison-house. No man can tell who is the greatest transgressor, he who has enriched himself by fraud and cruelty—or he who has made himself poor by his vices.

2. Virtue is not its own sufficient reward, nor is vice its own adequate punishment. Some men assert the contrary, but no man believes it. Slander, perjury, theft, murder are vicious acts, but no man regards them as adequate punishments to themselves. The criminal code of every country decides that some further punishment is condign, nor do temporal rewards or punishments bear any just proportion to the merits or demerits of many acts. Even if a penal death is full recompense for one murder, it cannot be for two or for twenty murders. Even the maledictions of an injured world reach not beyond the tomb.

Nor is society possessed of full means to recompense every virtuous action. Where can be found a more virtuous member of society than the pious mother, who devotes herself to the child whom God has given her? Day and night she watches his infancy and constantly supplicates the divine blessing on his life and on his soul. She teaches him all that can adorn, elevate and sanctify his character. At twelve years of age he sickens and is persuaded that he cannot live. Calling her to his dying pillow, he says, "Mother, I must now leave you—you have been a good mother to me—I cannot pay you—God reward you for all your love and kindness." He then bids her farewell and leaves the world. Has he paid her the debt he owed? Have her toil and self-donial been full compensation? Is there no recompense to such a mother beyond the bounds of time? Will a just God place her on a level with that trifling thing of vanity, who, defying the laws of maternal duty, forsakes her child to mingle in the giddy dance or shine in the brilliant saloon? Not only are not vice and virtue

adequate rewards to themselves, but clearly they are not adequately rewarded here.

3. Let us not be distressed at beholding the indiscriminateness in the distribution of good and evil. This shows that some recompense is to be looked for beyond this life. If God makes his sun shine upon the good, he does not withhold his cheering rays from the evil. If he sends his rain on the just, he does not leave the unjust to perpetual drought. (Matthew 5:45.) The waves that sink the vessel of the profane master of the ship, engulf also the riches of the pious merchant. War, famine and pestilence, in their desolations, pay little respect to the abodes of the righteous. "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." (Ecclesiastes 9:2.)

If there is no future settlement between God and his creatures, this state of things cannot be reconciled with justice. He who surrenders the belief of future rewards and punishments, if logically consistent, cannot escape the abyss of atheism. It is no worse to believe that there is no God, than to assert that God's moral character is unjust. Lord Bacon says, "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other is insult."

4. The Scriptures and our observation go yet further, and show that often the righteous is greatly afflicted in this world, while his ungodly neighbor dwells at ease. This has long been a source of perplexity to the saints. They have seen that many of the wicked "are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men; their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish." On the other hand it often looks as if the pious had cleansed their hearts in vain, and washed their hands in innocence; for all the day long have they been plagued and chastened. More or less have these things been seen in every age. The facts are undeniable.

Yet the character of God is unimpeachable. There must be a recompense to come. This state of things will not last always. Eternity is the continuance of an existence begun in time. It shall bring rest to the righteous, and tribulation to the wicked. God will amply prove that his ways are just and equal. Give him time and all shall see it.

5. There must be a future account in order to make the utterances of conscience in this life truthful. The world of mankind expect retribution. For nearly six thousand years, victims have been slain, and altars have smoked, tortures have been inflicted, and men have howled for anguish, in anticipation of a coming judgment. This has been so even where men believed their objects of idolatrous worship to be monsters of treachery, lewdness and revenge. Their thoughts accuse them of lack of conformity to a higher and holier being to whom they are responsible. Many would give all they are worth in the world, to have even one sin blotted from the tablet of their memory and from the book of God's remembrance! Their souls look for light, and behold darkness. They seek joy, and behold bitterness. These mighty monitors are not limited to sect, or gender, or age, or condition. They trouble the tyrant, who reduces cruelty to a system. They annoy the lowest wrong-doer. No might or baseness in mortality, but knows their power. In our language no word is better understood by all classes than the word remorse. It is the pain of guilt. It is the gnawing of the worm that never dies. It is a drop of the divine wrath fallen into the soul before the tempest has fully come. It is the work of torment begun before the day of retribution has arrived. Thus men know and feel. Even a conscience seared as with a hot iron may all of a sudden be filled with flames of fire. Do not these things point to a future reckoning?

6. We need not much perplex ourselves to answer the false doctrines of those who assert that no motive or consideration should influence us to avoid sin and perform duty, except such as are mild and addressed to pure and gentle natures. What does the perjurer care for the beauties of truth, the loveliness of rectitude? Some say we

must appeal to men's honor, but at least a part of mankind have no honor to appeal to; and those who talk most of honor generally have the least. When a doctrine makes a solemn oath into a solemn farce, it is dangerous to adopt it even for a moment. When Jesus Christ would make his followers triumphant even in martyrdom, he does not fail to remind them that the flames of Hell are hotter than the burning pitch. Armed with the whole doctrine of retribution, thousands have bled and died in the cause of truth and righteousness. But who ever died for the doctrine of the eternal fitness of things?

The martyrs tell us what supported them; "If we have hope only in this life, we are of all men most miserable." At the last day God will wipe off all aspersion from our characters. He will then bring forth our righteousness as the light, and in the presence of an assembled universe will say, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." Thus the dying saints believed and triumphed. To say that any philosophical dreams or fine spun theories or virtue ever produced such victories, is notoriously and outrageously untrue. No, God has not left us to theories. We have his word; "We know him who says, I will recompense!" "The wages of sin is death!" "Whatever a man sows that shall he also reap!" "It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment!" Let us hold fast the truths and doctrines of God's word.

7. If such is the doctrine of accountability, and if on such principles God will reckon with men, then believers in his word may well pity and forgive their bitterest foes, and utterly refuse to carry a grudge, or bear malice, or wish ill to any human being. Like Jesus let us pray even for enemies as yet unrelenting, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Like dying Stephen let us pray for our fierce murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" He who does a wrong, is much more in need of pardon and pity from God and man, than he who suffers a wrong.

Chalmers says, "The little that I have seen in the world and known of the history of mankind, teaches me to look upon their errors in sorrow, not in anger. When I take the history of one poor heart that has sinned and suffered, and represent to myself the struggles and temptations it has passed through; the brief pulsations of joy; the tears of regret; the feebleness of purpose; the scorn of the world that has little charity; the desolation of the soul's sanctuary, and threatening voices within; health gone, happiness gone; I would gladly leave the erring soul of my fellow-man with Him, from whose hands it came."

O unforgiving, spiteful man, hear the awful voice of Jehovah, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord." Hear and forgive.

REMARKS.

1. We need not much concern ourselves with the prosperity of the wicked. It will be very short-lived. It will soon be gone. Strange that the Lord should see it necessary to say, "Fret not because of evil-doers, neither be envious against the workers of iniquity."

I tremble for those who have lived, and still live, to amass wealth for selfish ends. There is no gold in the world where they are going. It is the world of poverty and want, of craving desire and no supply. To an avaricious man it is the mad-house of poverty and despair. To the ambitious man, it is the black hole of torment and disappointment. To the violent it is the lion's cage. To the voluptuous it is the barrenness and dreariness of perpetual exile from every living fountain of joy.

2. Nor should we be cast down with overmuch sorrow at the sufferings of saints. Sanctified afflictions lead to glory and honor at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. The troubles of the redeemed will soon come to a full and a glorious end; and then their recompense will begin—a reward not the less because all of grace. Godly men have long suffered severely; but they shall soon triumph

gloriously. The God who helped the saints of old, will never forget or forsake his chosen ones. The sorer our trials, the more steadily let us remember that God's most inscrutable ways are perfectly consistent with his holiness, justice, goodness and truth. God's way is in the sea, where no man can wade unless God goes before him, and where any man may walk, if God takes him by the hand, and leads him through.

3. Let Christians, who give evidence that they are walking with God, not be unfruitful in the things of religion. Let them abound in hope, in zeal, in piety and in good works. Let them not dole out a little service to the honor of their Master. Let them not be afraid of being too humble, too self-denying, or too much like Christ. True love "gives like a thoughtless prodigal, its all." Very gladly ought we to bring presents and offer all we have and are to him, who is greatly to be praised, and who has freely and richly given us all things needful for life and for salvation also. When we give him all, we but give him his own, for he is Lord of all.

4. Let those who walk untenderly, and are of doubtful Christian character remember that they are in great danger. The day of their account may come as a thief in the night! Their love of ease, of gain, of pleasure and of public esteem are great snares! Let them beware how even for one day more they fail to make proper preparation for undergoing the examination of God. Only he who walks uprightly, walks safely. Everyone's case is dangerous in proportion as his walk is untender. If men forsake the Almighty, then let them not be surprised if the Almighty forsakes them!

5. Those who do not profess religion have and ought to feel a lively concern in the doctrine of accountability. Men do not get rid of responsibility by denying it, by forgetting it, by failing to confess it. The thoughtless wretch, who lives like an atheist and dies like a brute, shall be held to as strict an account as the gravest Christian or the most reverent divines. Thoughtless man, wicked man—what will you say when God shall deal with your soul!!

Chapter 8.

Responsibilities of Educated Men

Responsibility is in proportion to endowments, advantages and opportunities. This men judge to be proper. "To whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more." Thus God has said he will decide in the last day. "For unto whoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

If this is so, then educated and professional men are under vast obligations to lead exemplary lives. They should live and act under the solemn impression that nothing is so important as salvation; that no risk is comparable to the risk of eternal perdition; and that all other losses are sunk out of sight in view of the loss of the soul. These truths are clear:

I. There are great difficulties in the way of the salvation of such learned men. It is not easy for any man to be saved. All men have hearts naturally leading them away from God. They are by nature children of wrath, and children of disobedience. They love not God, until renewed by his grace. Every service acceptable to God involves sacrifices disagreeable to the natural heart. These things are common to all men.

Besides these things many educated and professional men are by inheritance, or by successful attention to business, possessed of wealth. The greatest teacher earth ever saw said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!" Besides, many who have not wealth love it, desire it, and are determined to spare no pains to gain it. One of the universal principles of Immanuel's empire is that covetousness is idolatry, so that if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Educated and professional men commonly have unusual opportunities for gratifying their tastes and appetites for carnal pleasure. Thus their salvation is greatly imperiled. He who lives in pleasure is dead while he lives.

Not a few of the same class are candidates for public favor. To secure it they are sorely tempted to sacrifice even moral principles. Instead of stern inflexibility, how many artifices they adopt quite inconsistent with a pious character. He, who shall judge the world, has said to the aspiring: "How can you believe who receive honor from one another, and seek not the honor that comes from God alone?"

Moreover, it would be remarkable if in the course of education no wrong impressions concerning religious truth and obligation had been made. Many an education is so conducted or so abused, as to fill the mind with self-conceit—a great foe to personal piety.

In schools of every grade, bad examples are plentiful; dangerous principles are avowed; sinful practices become familiar. The sneers of the French infidel, or the skepticism of the German philosopher may never have polluted his ears; but favored has been the lot of him, who has never heard the ribaldry of the genteel vulgar, or the inuendos of cunning men making pretension to learning, liberality and refinement. It shall be for a lamentation that so many malignant and so few beneficent influences unite in the course of education.

But if education is finished under the most favorable circumstances, many dangers beset the path to usefulness and eminence. Unbridled earthly desires of success drive away thoughts of God, of salvation and of eternity. If the usual avenues to promotion seem closed, a brood of restless and malignant passions seek to kennel in the bosom. If success seems possible, ambition becomes keen. If success is attained, vast is the load of care brought with it.

In most places professional duties become so onerous as to tempt men to believe and act as if necessity were laid upon them to neglect the whole course of pious duties. It is fearful to see how practical impiety pervades the higher classes. Ask such to read valuable pious works, and their reply is they have no time. Remind them that one day in seven is by their Creator appropriated to religious study and devotion, and they plead the urgency of professional calls, or the necessity of relaxation. Thus they bring on their souls the withering effects of deliberately and habitually devoting sacred time to secular pursuits.

Nor are pious men of the educated and professional classes always as useful to their associates as they should be. Some exhibit offensive peculiarities. Some are not yet rid of half their false reasonings. The skeptic has read Hume and Paine, but his pious friend has never read the answers of Campbell, Watson and Fuller. He is not prepared to give a reason of the hope that is in him. Shame on some professors, who show a criminal cowardice in defending Christian truth even when a fit opportunity offers. No politeness can justify us in allowing a fellow-creature to hug a dangerous delusion, when a fearless exhibition of truth might save his soul. On religion all men are far from being courageous; yet hardly anything is more needed than genuine intrepidity.

In 1694 a child was born at Paris. Early in life he gave evidence of unusual powers. He lived to mold the literature, wit and moral sentiments of several nations. Kings courted him. The rabble lauded him. His versatile powers were one day employed in a cause that seemed good; and next in the cause of sensuality. He went from being a Christian, to a free-thinker, to an infidel. He passed through the range of the widest extremes of seeming virtue and glaring vice without apparent emotion. Without generosity he squandered his means, and without hope he left the world. This man was Voltaire, whose insidious poison of sentiments is working the ruin of many who never read a page of his writings. In the schools he placed his machinery for demolishing all that was decent, refining, sacred or

ancient in human institutions. To a fearful extent he succeeded. He dragged down to the level of his own debasement many gifted men. These were followed by the rabble. And to this day many educated, or half-educated men adopt his miserable dogmas. He portrayed the gospel as a theme for merriment; and the Bible as a jest-book.

Yet a smile will never abrogate the laws of Heaven, or the rights of the Most High. On sacred themes, mirth is trifling with God. Babes may attain to saving knowledge; but he who sports himself with the words of God puts a veil of blindness over his own heart!

Perhaps some educated men are offended at Christian truth by the ignorance or incompetency of its defenders. Oftentimes a feeble advocacy is worse than none. Sometimes it is vastly mischievous.

II. The educated have some great advantages and consequently increased responsibilities respecting religion.

Other things being equal, they have superior advantages for gaining sound knowledge. They can read, and, if well educated, they can read with pleasure. To them a book is a lively companion. They are apt to be acquainted with authors whose thoughts are stirring and masterly. In listening to an argument or discourse, they are likely to understand its scope and to have at hand solutions to many difficulties. It is a great thing when people apprehend the precise meaning of able preachers. This was felt in the days of the apostles. They seldom addressed a savage or a barbarous people. To a large extent their audiences consisted of those who had been educated. Though an idolater and a teacher of profane mythology, the school-master went before the herald of salvation throughout the Roman empire. This was a great advantage then.

Now educated men cannot live in excusable ignorance or innocent rejection of the Gospel. Even the unlearned, if he is rightly disposed, may know enough of its truth to be saved thereby. Much more then are the intelligent wholly without excuse. "To him that knows to do

good, and does it not, to him it is sin." "That servant who knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Another advantage of the educated arises from their influence in society. Were vicious sentiments and wicked practices confined to the crude and vulgar, vice would soon be clad with infamy. But when it claims for its patrons those whose training ought to have elevated them above sordid baseness, society must be kinder.

The ancients had a fabled tree called the Upas tree. They said that nothing could grow or live under its shade; that one of its leaves, borne by the winds, would blight a distant plant; that its blossoms and even its pollen would destroy vegetable life; that all around it, for a great distance, reigned barrenness and death. The congenial warmth and showers of spring and summer caused many seeds to vegetate, but no sooner did they appear above ground than the blight of death fell upon them.

In the Upas tree behold the emblem of an educated, influential and wicked man. To his neighbors he is polite, but he murders their souls. His manners may be elegantly polished, only to give his vices a graceful air. A young and tender plant, springing up under his influence, sickens and dies! His example raises up others who imitate him in the work of moral ruin. Perhaps few present characters of unmixed evil. Open blasphemy, boasting atheism, swaggering wickedness and foaming shame—are now seldom found among the educated. The position of most wicked men in that class, is chiefly one of negation. Greatly would they be scandalized if charged with hostility to religion. They say they would not lift a finger against it. But then they would not lift a finger to help a poor soul into the kingdom of Heaven; much less would they enter themselves.

Sometimes they visit the house of God. Perhaps their deportment is decent, their attention respectful and their criticisms just. But here the whole matter ends. They hold much truth, hut they hold it in

unrighteousness. They have studied logic; yet they have never reasoned so correctly as to see that the doctrines of the Gospel require of them personal holiness and diligent preparation for the judgment to come and for an awful eternity. The result is they are not saved. Their influence is not on the side of God and of truth. Their sins of omission fill the catalogue. The best thing that can be said of any one of them is that he is a barren fig-tree. He brings forth no evil fruit, yet he brings forth no good fruit. But there is no character of mere negation of good. Every man by his example, impresses deep effects on someone.

Nor is it harsh or unjustly severe in God to hold men responsible for sins of omission. The sentinel of an army incurs the heaviest penalty by neglect, no less than by the willing admission of spies. He who sees one man about to murder another, and might, but will not hinder it, cannot be counted innocent. The awful curse against Meroz was that in a great conflict, endangering the existence of the church of God, she did nothing. One of the clauses in the solemn indictment against Belshazzar was, "The God, in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified."

But let us take a more pleasing view of this subject. Suppose all attainments and influence of the educated to be for the good of men and the honor of God. A life of well-doing may indeed sometimes subject one to the sneers of the unthinking, or the more formal hostility of the malevolent. But those who dwell under the influence of such shall return. It shall be a blessing to know such a one, to love him and to abide with him. It is not given to every man to be a public influence for godliness; but to most is given more talent for good than is well employed. Such a one may not be able to add a volume to the profitable reading of his day, nor even usefully to fill a page in a magazine, or a column in a newspaper; yet could he not write many private letters which might instruct or at least cheer some pilgrim on his heavenly way? If once the mind is roused by the healthful glow of a kind and warm heart, there is no end to its devices for mitigating human suffering and elevating human character. Such a one going

forth, like his heavenly Master, with his hands full of blessings to all around him, keeps alive the memory of truths the most important, and, because unpleasant, the most easily forgotten. His work shall not be in vain in the Lord. He lives not for applause, but his memory shall not rot. To try his faith and to purify him as silver, God may put him into the furnace of affliction and his soul may see troubles; but "to the upright, light is sown in darkness;" and "though weeping endure for a night, yet joy shall come in the morning." All the time he has the prayers and sympathies of the pious poor. Nor is he eaten up with boredom or discontent. He may be ignorant of much that is common in fashionable life, but then he has no bitter experience of its baseness.

Never will you hear him exclaiming with the unhappy Chesterfield, "I have run the silly round of business and pleasure, and I am done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility. I have been behind the scenes; I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move and exhibit the gaudy machinery. I have seen and smelled the tallow-candles which illuminate the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant multitude. When I reflect upon what I have seen, and what I have heard and done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry and bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look upon all, that has passed, as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions. And I do by no means wish to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream."

The true Christian bears a far different testimony. He serves a good master. Reviled he may be while living, but when dead there will be no reviling; the wicked themselves will whiten his sepulcher. Even bold transgressors will praise him, when his bright example and fearless fidelity no longer condemn their ungodly deeds.

A CONTRAST

I have somewhere met with something like the following train of thought respecting two men known to modern history, in some things alike, in others wholly dissimilar—Henry Martyn and Lord Byron; the former from a poor family, and the latter of noble origin.

As for similarities, both had superior intellects, quick conceptions, ardent feelings and exquisite sensibilities. In early life both received very high honors. Both were flattered, caressed and admired. The road to fame and glory lay open before them both, and both died young and in a foreign land.

Here the parallel ceases. Martyn, constrained by the love of God, after mature reflection, left kindred and country and fair prospects of worldly aggrandizement, sundered all the tenderest ties of humanity, and presented himself on the shores of heathendom, there to endure the contradiction of sinners and the severities of missionary life, all for the purpose of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. The criminal and the debased, the crude and the violent, were often his pupils and companions. He was permitted to translate the Word of God into the language of Persia, and to lay a copy on the throne of that empire. He disputed with the learned doctors of Mohammedanism, and told them the story of Jesus. With nervous sensibilities exquisitely wrought, he yet endured almost incredible sufferings in traversing sandy deserts, in want, in hunger and in sickness.

On the other hand Byron, rebellious against the laws of his Creator, set fast his affections on dress and the good things of this world; and on human admiration. No habit of devotion restrained his turbulent passions. No tenderness of conscience enforced rigorous self-denial. The places of vice were his haunts. The halls of gaiety and splendor were at the same time open to him. His genius was brilliant. He held the world entranced. He sang and sinned, and sinned and sang, until he was a moral wreck.

It would be more than a mere gratification of curiosity—it would give lessons of wisdom—could we penetrate the deep recesses of these men's hearts. They have furnished us the means. Each of them has written his thoughts upon anniversaries in his life.

Martyn says, "I like to find myself employed usefully, in a way I did not expect or foresee. The coming year is to be a perilous one, but my life is of little consequence, whether I finish the Persian New Testament or not. I look back with pity on myself, when I attach so much importance to my life and labors. The more I see of my own works, the more I am ashamed of them, for coarseness and clumsiness mar all the works of man. I am relieved by reflecting that we have a city whose builder and maker is God. Men pass away as soon as they begin to exist. Well, let the moments pass.

"They'll waft us sooner o'er
This life's tempestuous sea,
Soon we shall reach the blissful shore
Of blessed eternity!"

Byron thus records his feelings on a like occasion, "At twelve o'clock I shall have completed thirty-three years! I go to my bed with a heaviness of heart at having lived so long and to so little purpose. It is now three minutes past twelve and I am thirty-three. But I do not regret them so much for what I have done as for what I might have done."

Three years later he writes a poem on his last—his thirty-sixth birthday. In that he says:

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The fruits and flowers of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

The deaths of these men corresponded to their lives. Martyn's last record of any of his thoughts runs thus: "I sat in the orchard and

thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God, in solitude my company, my friend and comforter."

Among Byron's last recorded thoughts was a wish that he might fall in battle by the Turkish scimeter before the standard of the false prophet Mohammed, but this was denied him. In his last hours of rationality no star of hope seems to have risen upon his soul. A delusive gleam of light from the polished weapon of a Turk was all that he saw, and that but dazzled and deceived him.

Which of these was the wise and happy man?

"Byron declared that upon the most careful recollection of his experience of life, he could recall but eleven days, in which he enjoyed himself, and which he would wish to live over again."

On the other hand Martyn's Memoir shows that his peace was like a river.

It is idle to discuss the questions, Which of these men fell the safest? or, Which of them now condemns his manner of life on earth? On such subjects silence is more expressive than tongues.

REMARKS.

1. There is a God who will judge all who have ever lived.
2. Every human being on earth will soon be in a changeless state, fearfully wretched, or indescribably blessed. Reader, which shall it be in your case?
3. If you have had good advantages of knowing God's will and have not done it, and die without repentance, your doom will be just and frightful. You "shall be beaten with many stripes."
4. Let us all flee to the only Redeemer of lost men. Let us do it now, now, NOW.

Chapter 9.

All Men Are Sinners

In stature, in complexion, in intellect, in civilization and in refinement, the diversity among men is immense. Yet all are so much alike that they clearly belong to the human family. The agreement establishes identity of race. We are all alike men.

So also we are alike sinners. This is positively asserted in Scripture, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12.) "The whole world lies in wickedness." (1 John 5:19.) There are many other Scriptures as explicit. So that it is bald infidelity to deny that men are sinners. Some in words admit that men are sinners; but merely mean that their moral nature has some slight faults. They deny the necessity of a radical change of heart, and are even offended at the old scriptural doctrine of total depravity. To prevent mistakes let it be remembered,

1. That man is subject to various sensations, which are not in themselves either sinful or holy. Such are hunger, thirst, weariness, sleepiness. Even some of the emotions of the mind are not in their own nature either holy or sinful. Such is the pleasure felt at beholding a beautiful landscape, or the terror felt at the approach of a violent tempest. Sinful affections may coexist with these emotions; but these are not of themselves wicked. The same is true of various degrees of surprise, wonder and astonishment.

2. The scriptural doctrine of depravity does not deny the existence of many amiable qualities, where they are found to exist. It does not deny that the mother naturally loves her child, that without divine grace men are sometimes good husbands, good sons, good fathers,

good neighbors and good citizens. It admits all this, and does not forbid us to admit and admire any good natural qualities.

3. Nor do the Scriptures teach that all bad men are equally bad. On the contrary they guard us against such an error. They record that "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all who were before him;" that he "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel before him;" and that "there was none like Ahab, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord." (1 Kings 16:30, 33; 21:25.) And when Christ was on earth he saw a young ruler so amiable, that our Lord's natural affections were drawn out towards him and he loved him. Some bad men are worse than others.

4. Nor do the Scriptures assert that unrenewed men are as bad as they might be. If they live longer in sin, they will be worse men. "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse." "They proceed from evil to evil." Saul of Tarsus was a very wicked young man when he held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen. But he was a worse man, when he took letters to Damascus. And while seldom if ever does a vice exist solitary, yet rarely are all the vices found in full strength in any one man. Commonly some one evil becomes dominant. If wicked men continue longer in sin, they will be worse men than they now are.

5. The goodness of God is very great in placing restraints on human wickedness in this world. Divine restraints on man are as merciful as they are wonderful. Were they taken off, earth would not be any where the abode of order, thrift, or any morality. God has hedged up men's way so as wonderfully to check outbursts of wickedness.

6. The original matter in depravity is not a war between man and man, but a war between man and his Maker. Were things all right between the soul and God, they would be right in human society. Most mercifully in this world, God makes it appear to many to be to their interest to be kind, and generous, and just, and obliging. But

Godward, all is wrong. It is as if a people of a county should renounce and reject the authority of their King. Against the authority of the King all would be firm and united. In the mean time among themselves they might still perform all the offices of good neighborhood. So publicans and sinners love one another, greet one another, befriend one another. But towards God the Judge of all, men are firmly set. With these explanations, it may be asserted and maintained,

1. That unregenerate men are wholly destitute of Scriptural holiness. There can be no holiness without love to God. Yet to the unconverted, Jesus says, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you." (John 5:42.) Sometimes holiness is expressed by the fear of God. Yet "the transgression of the wicked says within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." (Psalm 36;1.) The wicked do not believe God's word, nor rest upon his Son alone for salvation. Yet "without faith it is impossible to please God." They do not weep and blush and mourn for sin, nor turn from it with loathing. Yet, "Except you repent you shall all likewise perish." We must be poor in spirit, and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Yet, "the wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God." We are saved by hope. Hope is the anchor of the soul. Yet all good hope is through grace. That kind of hope alone can see a shir in the darkest night, or a bow in the blackest cloud. The holy man says, "I will not fear though an host should encamp against me," but the wicked are in great fear where no fear is. True holiness begets sobriety and represses rash ardor. But the wicked are as the horse and the mule, whose mouth must be held in with the bit and bridle. Resignation says, "Your will be done," and sweetly acquiesces in the mind of God. But wickedness, like Pharaoh says, Who is the Lord, that I should ohey him, or like Cain it cries out, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Meekness turns its cheek to the smiter and prays for its persecutors. But the wicked man hates his foes, and renders evil for evil. Perseverance holds on its way and is steadfast with God. But the goodness of unrenewed men is like the morning cloud and the early dew. Jesus Christ clearly taught that

unrenewed men were wholly without holiness when he said: "That, which is horn of the liesh, is flesh." Paul also said, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good thing." "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Could language more clearly assert that without regeneration men are entirely destitute of holiness? There is no soundness in us.

2. The Scriptures declare us not only destitute of holiness; but they teach that human depravity is something exceedingly stubborn and ungovernable. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," they "love evil more than good;" they "hate the good and love the evil." (Ecclesiastes 8:11, Psalm 52:3, Micah 3:2.) The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9.) "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madnes is in their heart while they live." (Ecclesiastes 9:3.) "Man drinks iniquity like water." The Scriptures pay no regard to the nice refinements of philosophers. They give us clear, strong, well-guarded statements respecting our cases and characters. All these statements agree in representing human depravity as very dreadful.

3. Paul has given us in Romans 1:21-32 an account of the outworkings of human nature among the Gentiles, who were without Scripture revelation. It is a just delineation of human nature in all ages, when left to itself. He says, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things

rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them!"

Is not such a terrible account of human nature among the Gentiles suited to make the impression that they are totally depraved?

4. From the same inspired pen we have an account of the actings of depraved human nature among the Jews who knew the true religion. In Romans 3:9-20 Paul says, "What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no

one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

Does not such a passage clearly show that we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and that we are defiled in all the faculties of soul and body?

5. Now and then wickedness breaks out even in the young in an appalling manner. "They go astray from the womb speaking lies." Here is a real case. It is now 1868; thirty years ago, in a family not free from reproach, was born "Michael". He actually beat an opponent to death, fled from this country, and became famous in the Prize Ring.

In early life Michael traveled on board a vessel bound to a distant city on our own coast. During the voyage he united with others in a mutiny, killing the captain and taking possession of the vessel. They sailed in this way until they reached port, where Michael was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to be hung. Through the intervention of friends, the President then in power granted him a pardon. At this time he was very young. While still a youth he became a resident of another large city. Here he committed some petty crime, for which he was confined in the House of Refuge. In a short time he set fire to the premises. For this offence he was tried and sentenced to be burned. The dreadful doom of the youth was now so nearly sealed that the rope was actually adjusted to his neck. At that moment a messenger announced a pardon from the Governor of the State. Subsequently in the same city, he committed a felony, for which he was sentenced to prison for ten years. He served out his whole time, no pardon coming to his relief.

Soon afterwards he removed to the city where he had lived in early boyhood. Here he committed a crime, for which he was sentenced to a long confinement. After serving four years, friends interceded, and he was again pardoned. He then removed to a city, where he had never before resided. He took an humble office in a shipping house.

He wooed and won the hand of a young woman to whom he was married, when he was about thirty years old. Some time after marriage he conceived a jealousy towards his wife, and deceitfully drawing her to his lap, plunged a knife into her side. The wound was intended to be fatal, but she survived. He was arrested, committed, tried, convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary for seven years and six months. In prison he attempted to kill his wife, who had come to visit him. Her life was only saved by a prison guard. He has attempted to kill the warden. He has attempted to kill two of his guards. He was shot by one of them, but not mortally wounded. When last heard from he declared he would not obey the prison laws. He has several times attempted to commit murder; he was actually engaged in one murder; he has once been guilty of arson; he has twice been sentenced to death; he has been in confinement more than five-eighths of his life. He defies God and man. He foams out his own shame.

Such a narrative shows that the way of transgressors is hard, that the wicked will do wickedly, that decided youthful depravity is likely to grow worse, that young murderers are hard to be reformed, that systems of education conducted on the supposition that there is nothing wrong in man, are false and ruinous, and that without the grace of God there is no telling what men will come to.

Now was this man wholly depraved? Was he entirely destitute of Gospel holiness? All say he was. When did he become so? After the commission of his first crime? or his second? after he had been in prison five years, or ten? Was he not so at the outset of his career?

What was lacking when his conduct rendered it necessary for his guard to shoot him? The love and fear of God. Why did he plunge the knife into the body of his wife? Because he did not love or fear God. Why did he commit arson? Because he had not the love of God in his heart nor the fear of God before his eyes. Why did he join in killing the captain of his vessel? For the same reason. He was wholly destitute of holiness. Is not that fair reasoning? Is there any flaw in

it? When he told his first lie, or swore his first oath, or first disobeyed a just command of his parents—the reason was the same. He had no love of God in him, and no fear of God before him, and that is total depravity. "When once a man departs from God, from that moment he falls from one sin into another."

6. Any fair interpretation of Scripture would lead us to the same conclusion. Before the flood "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.)

After the flood he said "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21.) The apostle surely teaches that men are totally depraved, when he says that they are "dead in trespasses and sins." If they are dead, they have no spiritual life. Dr. Kevins says, "Some object to the phrase total depravity as expressing the moral condition of men. But that phrase, though technical and definite, is not so strong as the language of Scripture. There we are said to be 'dead in trespasses and sins.' The phrase means much, but what? Why, that men by reason of sin are the subjects of death. There is an physical life; they are not dead with respect to that. There is an intellectual life; but they are not dead in reference to that. The highest, happiest, noblest species of life is spiritual life—they are destitute of that. Thus they are dead. That life is not languishing in them. It is extinct. They are not dying. They are dead in trespasses and sins; wholly destitute of spiritual life; altogether without holiness; having no love to God."

Indeed more than 750 years before the birth of Christ, God by Isaiah pronounced on human nature that "Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness— only wounds and welts and

open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil." Isaiah 1:4-6. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away!" Isaiah 64:6

REMARKS

1. This doctrine lies at the foundation of all correct views in theology. It is fundamental. If men err here, they err throughout. If they are right here, they are probably not far wrong elsewhere. "It is in vain," says Owen, "to dispute with any about justification, who have not been duly convinced of the sinfulness of man, and of sin's guilt."

2. In the dreadful guilt and pollution of man, is laid a broad foundation for the whole work of salvation. Redemption is necessary. It is as necessary as it is glorious. What do you say, dying man, what do you say of divine things, as compared with worldly things? What say you of redemption? Will you hail it with joy? Will you make it yours by faith?

3. In order to be salved, men must be born again. Great must be the work of grace in the heart of a sinner. Great is the victory over sin wrought by divine grace. We may enter Heaven without fame, or fortune, or family, without health, or wealth, or worldly wisdom; but not without regeneration. That is necessary, and is the only remedy for the dreadful evils that are native in the human soul. The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, is the only sovereign cure of our dreadful depravity. Nothing else will do.

ALL MEN ARE SINNERS.

Municipal law, however wise its criminal code, can never renew the heart. It punishes. It does not purify. Philosophy may hold forth her light. Moralists may give good rules. Reason may clearly point to the path of rectitude. But in none of these is there any saving energy. The evil possession still cries, Paul I know, and Jesus I know, but who are you? "There is no power can reach a case of death but God only. A

man, by human means and ministrations, may be brought back from the very state of dying; but when death has supervened, these means are vain. Now men are dead. Their case requires vivification, resurrection. God alone can reach it. The Christian character, that which alone renders one meet for Heaven, is not any improvement of the native character, but the substitution of a new and different character." I have long since ceased to wonder at the doctrine of the necessity of the New Birth. But I wonder more and more that men should be offended at it. The last hope of the sinner is in that promise of God, "A new heart will I give you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. " Surely this is good news to the vile. "If God insists on a new heart, must it not be because the old one is wholly incapable of improvement?" "You must be born again!"

Chapter 10.

Sin Is Horrible!

Horror is terror mingled with detestation. It is the emotion produced by objects at once hateful and terrible. Sin is odious and alarming. In view of it Isaiah said, "Woe is me! I am undone!"

Said Jeremiah, "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears!"

Said David, "Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake your law."

God himself twice calls sin a "horrible thing," and once a "a horrible and shocking thing!"

In another place, "Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. "My people have committed two

sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

We use no exaggerated language when we say that Sin is horrible; for,

1. Sin is a horrible defilement.

It is so spoken of in Scripture. Because the inspired writers have no epithet more expressive of that which is odious, they say that sin is "exceeding sinful!" The worst thing that can be said of any thought, word, or deed is not that it is criminal, injurious to health or to honor, but that it is sinful. So the Scriptures compare a sinful heart to a cage of unclean birds and to a sepulcher full of rottenness and dead men's bones.

How horrible a sight is a battlefield, some days after it has been covered with dead who have not been buried, and with wounded, who have not been duly cared for. Yet an equal number of beings, fallen under sin, present to our sight a more frightful appearance! Such wounds, such bruises, such mangling and woes, earth has never seen—as sin has made in the souls of men.

I have walked through the long wards of hospitals, and seen my fellow-creatures in every stage of disease and of suffering. Some had undergone, and others expected soon to undergo painful surgical operations. To the unaccustomed eye, the sight was truly sickening. But some were convalescent; others, it was hoped, soon would die; and from many the precious name of Jesus, which is as ointment poured forth, was heard in accents of prayer and praise. But to see such numbers as unmistakably declare their impiety either by speech or by their want of fruit, is to a benevolent heart a sight far more appalling than any hospital or battle-field. In the latter cases it is the body which is mangled and defiled. In the former case it is the soul that is polluted and dying.

Its noble faculties are all debased.

Its affections are cold and dead.

Its understanding is darkened.

Its conscience is defiled.

Its will is the slave of base appetites and desires.

How defiling is sin! Its spots are indelible and can never be washed out.

Godly men may not understand the metaphysical nature of sin, yet they loathe and abhor themselves on account of it. They see how it breaks communion with God. They see how contrary it is to his holiness, and how it brings down their hearts with labor and sorrow. One of their great hopes for a future life is that there they will be forever done with sin and temptation!

3. Sin is horribly mischievous, and likely to spread far and to ruin many. As a source of disorder and lawlessness in the divine government, it may well fill the contemplative mind with horror. Sin began its work of ruin among the angels—it emptied many of the shining seats in glory. Legions of those burning ones were hurled from the heights of bliss to the depths of despair. What devastation!

Many mansions in the house not made with hands were left desolate to people the lake of fire. Hell was originally built as the prison house of sinning angels. (Matthew 25:41.) Their ruin is and ever has been irretrievable. Their sorrow has always been hopeless sorrow. Their sufferings never had and never shall have any mitigation. Their guilt forever remains. Their war with Jehovah is unceasing, uncompromising. If sin had never done anything more than to ruin rebelling angels, the thought of it should fill us with horror.

But it has visited our world also. It has made earth an Aceldama—a field of blood; and a Golgotha—the place of a skull; a loathsome charnel house; a universal graveyard. It has made this world, at

whose creation the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, the scene of the most provoking and cruel insults ever offered to the Almighty.

On earth, not in Hell, have the saints been martyred.

On earth, not in Hell, was Jesus Christ crucified.

On earth, not in Hell, has salvation been despised, and mercy rejected, and the Spirit grieved, and damnation derided.

The ravages of sin have gone on in every climate, and under every form of government; and involved in inconceivable and remediless misery, every child of Adam not rescued by the far reaching and almighty grace of God.

Generation after generation has by sin been swept into the grave; and except where men abhorred it, it has drowned them in eternal damnation.

Once God came forth arrayed in terror, and for their sins summoned to his dreadful bar the whole human race, eight souls only excepted. At another time, fire and brimstone fell upon populous and wealthy cities in a vastly fertile region, and in their place this day stands that awful monument of God's wrath, the Dead Sea. Many a time has God sent forth famine, and war, and pestilence, to waste cities and nations that had forsaken his law. He has armed tribes of insects and directed their march over the earth where the land was "as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." For his sins, man has been made the sport of the elements. The sea has opened wide her jaws, and swallowed millions of men alive. The tempest has overturned the stable dwellings of man, and driven them like chaff from the threshing floor, and filled cities and countries with horrible

desolation. The earth herself has been charged with explosive substances, and in the paroxysms and throes of her internal

convulsions she has reeled to and fro like a drunken man. The heavens above have grown black, have looked terribly angry, and shot forth devouring fire!

Yet earth is not the scene of perfect retribution. If such things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Here judgment is mingled with mercy, yes, mercy triumphs over judgment; yet a righteous God gives these fearful tokens of his sore displeasure.

3. The hearts and consciences of men testify that sin is horrible. Often does God fulfill the threatening against his enemies, "I will send a faintness into their hearts; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursues, and they shall have no power to stand." (Leviticus 26:36, 37.) Every earthly mind has sometimes felt a strange uneasiness and a strong disgust; and sometimes conscience has wrung the heart with anguish. "The wicked flee when no man pursues." They are often "in great fear, where no fear is." It is chiefly owing to the operations of conscience that "the wicked have no peace, but are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." They have no rest by day, and they are scared in visions of the night. From this source they have often suffered so much that they have chosen strangling rather than life, and with suicidal hands have plunged into the miseries of Hell, rather than endure the torments of earth. Under the power of a guilty conscience, men have used such expressions as these:

"I suffer death every day!"

"I wish I was a dog and had no soul!"

"I wish I had never been born!"

"O, the insufferable pangs of Hell and damnation!"

"Hell, if you can cover me, take me!"

"I am the worst of murderers—I have murdered time, and my own soul, and the souls of others."

A volume would not contain the expressions and acts of horror which have proceeded from men under the power of an evil conscience.

Why does a wise and merciful God permit such things to occur in this world? Either these unhappy men do or they do not deserve such things. If they do not deserve them, how is God wise and merciful, or even just in permitting such torments to be endured? If they do deserve them, if these things are the just reward of their evil deeds, the whole matter is entirely plain.

Then these things teach us the malignant nature of sin. It is a deadly poison. Under its wasting power the spirit of man dies within him. The striped snake escapes its tormentors by burying her fangs deep in her own side. But the soul stung by sin lives on. It can neither escape the tormentor nor resist his scourgings. In the hands of a guilty conscience, the stoutest spirit of man is like a lamb in the jaws of the bear. It is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God!

4. Some centuries ago a man was publicly executed by the order of a cowardly judge, who had repeatedly declared his prisoner innocent of all crime. His sufferings had been foretold by ancient seers. Their concurrent testimony was that though he should be of blameless innocence, yet both in life and death his sorrows should be unparalleled. Having endured woes unequalled, his sacred lips swollen with grief, his life "was poured out like water. All his bones were out of joint, his heart was melted like wax, his strength was dried up like a potsherd; and his tongue cleaved to his jaws." Then crying with a loud voice, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me!" He suffered a while longer and again "cried with a loud voice and breathed his last!"

A learned Greek in Egypt that day, when he beheld the sore amazement of the heavens, is reported to have said, "Either nature is

dissolving, or a God is expiring!" Why was this consternation throughout the realms of the visible world? The answer is, Nature's Author was making expiation for sin! The Son of God, on whom were laid our iniquities, was treading the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone! Ah! this reveals the cause of that sympathy which nature manifested in his sufferings, and of that unequaled sorrowfulness of soul which he himself said was unto death. If even the incarnate Son of God must bear the bitterness and sting of death, which is sin; if even he must take our law-place, and suffer the just for the unjust, in his agonies at that dreadful hour, the universe shall see that sin is a horrible thing!

In the cross of Christ, Heaven and earth shall read the lesson that sin is no trifle, no common evil; that it has a deeper malignity, a wider sweep, a more terrific power to blast and crush and consume than any, yes, than all other evils combined!

5. God's word reveals a terrible destruction to come on the soul on which sin is found at last. Though God's mercy is exceedingly deep, yet he is as just as he is loving; and "the soul that sins it shall die." Yes, "O wicked man, you shall surely die." Dying in your sins, you shall not escape an overthrow, the thought of which might well overwhelm any finite mind. The following are but samples of the manner in which God teaches how he will punish impenitent men for their horrible offences: "I will cancel the bargain you made to cheat death, and I will overturn your deal to dodge the grave. When the terrible enemy sweeps through, you will be trampled into the ground. Again and again that flood will come, morning after morning, day and night, until you are carried away. This message will bring terror to your people." (Isaiah 28:17, 18.) "I will kill with the sword those who survive. No one will escape! Even if they dig down to the place of the dead, I will reach down and pull them up. Even if they climb up into the heavens, I will bring them down. Even if they hide at the very top of Mount Carmel, I will search them out and capture them. Even if they hide at the bottom of the ocean, I will send the sea serpent after them to bite them." (Amos 9:1-3.)

The carnal security and presumptuous quiet of wicked men add not to their safety, nor avert impending judgments; for "when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:3.)

What an evil sin must be, that the wisest and best and most loving being in the universe should be thus awfully determined to punish it wherever found, and permit no unpardoned transgressor to escape the almighty grasp of eternal justice! If God, who cannot err, has thus judged that sin must be openly, terribly and eternally dealt with—then none but those who are profane can think and feel and act as if it were a light thing to sin against God. In the terrible language of the Bible, "Fools make a mock at sin." Men must be bereft of all sobriety and sagacity, before they can sport themselves with that which is so offensive to the Most High.

5. Nor is all this astonishing, if we look at the nature of sin itself.

Sin is wholly contrary to the only perfect law ever given for the direction of men, (1 John 3:4;)

it is shocking contempt of the God of Heaven, (Psalm 10:13;)

it is rebellion of the worst form, (Isaiah 1:2;)

it is despite to the riches of his goodness, (Romans 2:4;)

it is robbery of the Most High, (Malachi 3:8;)

it is a wicked assertion of the right of property in ourselves, (Psalm 12:4;)

it is a denial of the divine sovereignty, (Exodus 5:2;)

it is a making light of the fearful threatenings of God, (Malachi 1:6;)

it does all it can to impeach the divine veracity, (1 John 1:10;)

it is a proud scorning of all the lessons taught us by our sore afflictions, (Jeremiah 5:8;)

it is the most terrible obstinacy, (Isaiah 48:4;)

it is making war on the Almighty, (Acts 5:39;)

it is serving and obeying the wicked one, the great enemy of God and man, (Ephesians 2:2;)

it is in defiance of our own reason, judgment, understanding, conscience and convictions, (Proverbs 1:36;) against many solemn purposes and engagements to the contrary, (Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5.)

Sin assaults every attribute of God.

It tramples under foot every principle of moral obligation.

It puts time before eternity, the body before the soul, fleeting vanities before unending realities.

"All sin is founded in a secret atheism," says Charnock. "Atheism is the spirit of every sin; all the floods of impieties in the world break in at the gate of a secret atheism; and though several sins may disagree with one another, yet like Herod and Pilate against Christ, they join hand in hand against the interest of God. Though lusts and pleasures be divers, yet they are all united in disobedience to him. All the wicked inclinations in the heart, and evil motions, secret repinings, self-applauding confidence in our own wisdom, strength, envy, ambition, revenge—are sparks from this latent fire. The language of every one of these is, "I would be a lord to myself, and would not have a God superior to me." Scripture calls sin a turning of the back upon God, (Jeremiah 32:33;) a kicking against God, (Deuteronomy 32:15;) a cursing of God in the heart, (Job 1:5.)

If for anything we ought to weep, and lament, and cover ourselves with sackcloth and ashes, it is for sin against God. It brings on the sinner himself—guilt, shame, confusion, condemnation. It defiles every power and faculty of the soul and makes it a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction!

REMARKS

1. If Christians sorrow, it is not without a cause. In themselves they see the workings of original sin and of a remaining depravity. There is a war—a fearful war—in their members. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. In the midst of this fearful conflict, the greatest apostle cried out, "O what a wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then too the righteous behold the wickedness that is in the world. They sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the land.

2. Beware of that temptation of the wicked one—confusion of mind. If Satan can once persuade us that bitter is sweet and sweet bitter, that there is no difference between sin and holiness, duty and transgression; or at least that we are not morally bound to distinguish between them, he will have gained a fearful advantage over us. Heaven and Hell are not wider apart than sin and holiness!

3. Guard with great care against the occasions of sinning. Your strength is in your weakness. Cry mightily, "Lead us not into temptation." If a pursuit, a companion, a train of thought inclines you to evil, avoid them. The beginning of sin is as when one lets out water.

4. How kind is the offer of pardon and reconciliation, made by God to us, so great sinners. Alas, some never know how kind the gospel call is, until it is too late. Jerusalem was in that sad case. (Luke 19:42.) In two ways we may learn the value of a kind proposal. One is, by embracing it, and securing, all the benefits it offers. Here is the wisdom of the just. The other method of learning the value of a good

offer is by rejecting it, and afterwards enduring the evil consequences of such folly. If any one who reads this book shall die in his sins, he may at the last day look up and see the amazing blessings of the righteous, and say, "One of those robes, and harps, and crowns might have been mine, had I not despised offered mercy." how will the impenitent mourn at the last, when their flesh and their body are consumed and each of them says, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me!" Proverbs 5:11-13.)

Such may see the Savior shining as the sun shines in his strength, and say: That Redeemer, all glorious in his apparel, all wondrous in his mercy, all condescending in his kindness, might have been mine, but I refused him. Oh that I had sought his favor when I heard his gospel preached, and when I felt his Spirit move. Oh that I had opened the door and let him in when I heard his gentle knocks, his words of grace and truth.

Fellow-traveler to the judgment bar of God, will you never learn how great are the kindness and mercy of the Redeemer in offering salvation, until the master has risen up and shut the door? Count the long-suffering of God to be salvation. Accept the gift of God which is eternal life. The interests of your immortal, yet sinful soul are at stake. You may now indeed be living in pleasure and quaffing "the full bowl of sparkling joys;" but remember you must yield the cup of sinful pleasure, or you cannot drink the cup of salvation. Hold fast the former a little longer, and you will find at the bottom of it, wormwood and gall, the wine of astonishment, the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation!

Or you may now be in full possession of the honor that comes from man, and not care for the honor that comes from God alone. But before long, you would give the world, if you had it, for the least token of favorable regard from the Most High.

Or now you may be satisfied with wealth. You may think you have goods laid up, or that you soon will have goods laid up for many years, when you may eat and drink and take your ease. But soon God will say: "This night shall your soul be required of you!" Are you prepared to meet that long dreaded requisition?

Chapter 11.

The Saint Excels the Sinner

Moral worth and the blessings inseparably connected therewith, constitute the only excellence deserving the eager pursuit of mortals. True, its record, its treasures and its glories are on high. The people of God are not in this life distinguished from others by marks visible to the eye of sense or reason. The angel with his inkhorn (Ezekiel 9:2-7) is an invisible messenger, and makes no mark that can be read with carnal eyes. And yet the saint is better and is better off than the sinner. But note,

1. It is not asserted that in the judgment of the ungodly the righteous is the better man. Whatever misgivings he may have he is commonly self-satisfied. "There is a generation which is pure in their own eyes, yet is not washed from their filthiness." (Proverbs 30:12.) The Pharisee had no doubt that he was a far better man and had far brighter prospects before him than the publican had before him.

2. Neither is there anything in piety to make the righteous man self-conceited. It is the vile hypocrite who says to each man around him, "I am holier than you." Paul pronounced himself the chief of sinners. True piety makes its subjects lowly. With all his haughtiness the Pharisee had not so poor an opinion of the publican as the publican had of himself.

3. The superior excellence of a righteous man over his neighbor is not constitutional nor the result of education. In such matters the

ungodly often possess great advantages. Often they are more amiable and have received better educations than their pious neighbors. The difference of which we speak, is wholly gracious and springs from the sovereign and distinguishing love of God.

4. Therefore in this doctrine there is nothing designed to awaken feelings of enmity in the mind of the wicked towards his pious neighbor. If sinners have bad feelings towards saints, they must spring from envy.

5. One of the best modes of ascertaining differences is to contrast decided cases. There is a region of twilight in character where we see but dimly, and where some men, not very bad, do not appear very different from other men, not very good. But when very bad men and very good men are fairly contrasted, all men see the difference.

With these explanations let us proceed to show how the saved saint excels the lost sinner.

1. The righteous has a much better rule of conduct than the sinner. To the former God's word is law, a rule and an end of controversy. Over the latter, convenience, expediency or downright infidelity has prevailing power. A revelation having nothing to reveal beyond the scope of man's knowledge and science, would cease to be a divine revelation. Its mysteries are to witnesses of its divinity, and I should cease to believe its revelations, were the mysteries not there.

The sermon on the Mount—what a treasure! why it contains more wisdom in a few pages than all the folio volumes of ancient and modern theologians.

When men reject the only infallible guide, their whole course through life is certain to be erratic. Glaciers and avalanches do indeed teach lessons; but they teach them more thoroughly to him who hears the voice of God in his word, than to anyone who slights the lessons of inspiration.

In their science men may ascend even to the stars, but there the good man leaves his neighbor and travels on to the Eternal Throne of him who made the earth, and by his Spirit garnished the heavens.

2. In his thoughts the righteous excels his neighbor. When he thinks of time and eternity, sickness and health, poverty and riches, honor and dishonor, pleasure and misery, truth and duty, himself and God, Heaven, earth and Hell—his thoughts are quite unlike his neighbor's in several respects.

First, the righteous is concerned about these things in a good degree according to their real worth; while the man of the world estimates them more according to their nominal value. The thoughts of the righteous more nearly coincide with the judgment of God on these matters than do the thoughts of his neighbor.

Secondly, men of the world usually estimate things in proportion to their nearness, leaving very remote things wholly unprovided for. Just the opposite of this is true of the pious. They sometimes hardly notice present evils for the sake of the good which is far future, and never seen but by the eye of faith.

The ungodly man says of time, It is my enemy, which I am always trying to kill but never can. Of time, the righteous says, It is a golden talent, which rightly improved secures a title to Heaven.

Ask a pious man where pleasure is, and his thoughts instantly recur to the prayer closet, the sanctuary, or the furnace of affliction, where he has often met God. Ask the sinner where pleasure is, and he points you to the theater, the ball-room, the card party, a comfortable life, a residence in some distant city.

Propose advancement to a sinner, and for it he will give up even honor. Propose advancement to a child of God and with Fletcher of Madeley, he says, "All I want is more grace."

Ask the sinner what is morally grand, and he will point you to some convocation of potentates or to some hard-fought battle field. Ask the saint the same question, and he tells you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

Thirdly, the righteous excels his neighbor in the motives which govern him. In the sinner, self is the law. In the righteous, self-denial is the law. One is the center of all his own plans—all the lines of his conduct meet in himself. To the other God is the center of everything—a regard to his glory is supreme.

One asks, Will it please men for me to obey God? the other asks, Will it please God for me to obey men? The love of Christ bears on the saint. Aversion to Christ constrains the other.

3. In his speech the righteous excels his neighbor. He is free from the stain and guilt of that enormous load of profane and irreverent speaking, which so much prevails with the ungodly. Besides, much that is said by the wicked consists of vain and idle words, of foolish talking and jesting. So far as a man is a godly man, he follows not this evil example. Moreover the righteous loves serious conversation. He is not repelled by the solemnities of eternity. The judgment and its stupendous scenes linger about his mind always; nor are they unwelcome themes. The ungodly are not so. No carnal heart loves just thoughts on everlasting things.

4. In his principles the righteous excels his neighbor. "The wicked borrows, and pays not again; but the righteous shows mercy and gives." (Psalm 37:21, Compare 2 Kings 6:5.) If carnal men have not a price upon their integrity, it is because they have made their reputation their idol. It is certain that if a man does not fear God, no sound thinker is surprised at discovering that he does not regard man. There is a foul blot on the honesty of all ungodly men because they withhold from the Almighty the tribute of praise and service due to his name. The wicked defraud Jehovah; they rob God. When a

man will cheat his own father, it is not surprising he should practice extortion on a stranger.

5. The righteous excels his neighbor in his temper towards men. To a rude swaggering youth, James Haldane said, "There was a time, sir, when I would have resented this impertinence; but I have since learned to forgive injuries and to overlook insults." Flesh and blood teach no such lesson as this. Cicero, the best of the heathen philosophers, says; "A man ought to feel kindly towards all except his enemies." But the child of God honestly practices on the precept, "Overcome evil with good;" and like dying Stephen cries, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

6. The righteous excels his neighbor in his conduct under the outward displeasure of God. One cries, Why am I made to suffer? The Christian says of all his afflictions, They are light. To the sinner the day of adversity has nothing but darkness. To the upright light arises in the darkness. The tears of the one scald; the tears of the other are blessed. For fratricide, Cain was expelled. Well might he have been sentenced to a terrible death. But instead of submission, instead of regarding his sentence as light, in the spirit of rebellion he exclaims, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." (Genesis 4:13.) On the other hand the righteous have learned to be patient in tribulation. Jeremiah was of an exceedingly gentle spirit. His uprightness is unquestioned. He greatly loved his people and Jehovah. Yet sorrow rolled in upon him like a tide, so that he cried out to all that passed by, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of of his fierce anger. I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." (Lamentations 1:12; 3:1.) Yet not a murmur escapes his lips. But he penitently and piously says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the

yoke in his youth. The Lord does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord." (Lamentations 3, in many places.)

7. In his treatment of Jesus Christ, the righteous excels his neighbor. All God's people are united in judgment concerning the Savior. They all say, He is the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely! He is the first and the last, all in all to their souls.

On the contrary the wicked esteem him as a root out of a dry ground, without form or loveliness, and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him.

The righteous would die for him; but the wicked would rather die than be saved by him. Thus he is set for the rise and fall of many. To some he is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, a trap and a snare. But to the righteous he is the Author of eternal redemption, and they glory in his cross.

8. The righteous has greatly the advantage over his neighbor in point of conscience. The conscience of the righteous is purged from dead works and from guilt by the blood of Jesus; and the whole church of God unites in saying, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world." (2 Corinthians 1:12.)

But it is far different with the ungodly. Every unsanctified heart is a volcano whose eruptions may at any moment pour forth torrents of burning lava. Conscience is seldom so stupid as not to awake at the approach of divine judgments; and "conscience never sleeps so soundly as not to awake at the approach of death." This is the reason why the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

9. In the solid comfort with which he passes through life, the righteous greatly excels his neighbor. Yonder is Haman the Agagite. He is next in command to his monarch, the Artaxerxes. The mighty bowed before him; the many revered him. Whom he would, he exalted; and whom he would, he degraded. But there was one old bondman, venerable for age, piety and public services, who would not cringe and truckle before the bloody tyrant. This so mightily stirred up the wrath of the prime minister that he said of all his greatness, "It avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the gate." He maliciously determined not only to destroy the old man, but to wreak his vengeance on his entire nation. Yet in the providence of God he was soon required by his monarch to array his enemy in royal attire, mount him on the king's horse and lead him through the city, proclaiming, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor. "Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto Haman: If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him;" and so it came to pass. Envy and perturbation were followed by a gallows fifty cubits high.

Turn now to Paul the Apostle: "Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. (2 Corinthians 12:23-27.)

Yet how did he regard such trials? He himself shall answer, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have

received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24.)

Let us further contrast the feelings of the prince of modern infidelity, and of an experienced saint of God. Voltaire says, "Who can, without horror, consider the whole world as an empire of destruction? It abounds with wonders; it abounds also with victims. It is as a vast field of carnage and contagion. Every species is without pity pursued and torn to pieces through the air and earth and water. In man there is more wretchedness than in all the other animals put together. He loves life, and yet he knows he must die. If he enjoys a transient good, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This knowledge is his fatal prerogative. Other animals have it not. Man spends the transient moments of his existence in diffusing the miseries which he suffers; in cutting the throats of his fellow-creatures for pay; in cheating and being cheated; in robbing and being robbed; in serving that he might command; and in repenting of all he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate; and the globe contains rather carcasses than men. I tremble at the review of this dreadful picture, and find it contains a complaint against Providence itself, I wish I had never been born." This is the testimony of one whom nations flattered and kings courted.

We now turn we to Halyburton, who died as he lived. Near the end of life he said, "I shall shortly get a very different sight of God from what I have ever had, and shall be made meet to praise him forever and ever. O, the thoughts of an incarnate Deity are sweet and ravishing. How I wonder at myself that I do not love him more, and that I do not adore him more. What a wonder that I enjoy such composure under all my bodily pains and in the view of death itself. What mercy that having the use of my reason I can declare his goodness to my soul. I long for his salvation—I bless his name that I have found him, and I die rejoicing in him. Blessed be God that I was born. Oh that I was where he is. I have a father and mother and ten brothers and sisters in Heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. If there

be such a glory in his conduct towards me now, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Blessed be God that I was born."

Surely Voltaire and Halyburton were very different men!

10. Standing on the verge of life, even in good health, how different are the feelings of a man of the world and of a man of God. For example take Gibbon the historian, and Paul the apostle. Both of these men were accomplished scholars; both had great energy of character; both had given to the world writings which they expected to be read with interest to the end of time; both had filled a large space in the public eye for a long period; and both lived to as great an age as commonly consists with an unimpaired intellect.

Just before leaving the world, they tell us their thoughts. The closing paragraph of Mr. Gibbon's autobiography reads thus, "The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more; and our prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful. This day may possibly be my last; but the laws of probability, so true in general, so fallacious in particular, still allow about fifteen years. I shall soon enter into that period, which as the most agreeable of his long life, was selected by the judgment and experience of the sage Fontenelle. His choice was approved by the eloquent historian Button, who fixes our moral happiness to the mature season in which our passions are supposed to be calmed, our duties fulfilled, our ambition satisfied, our fame and fortune established on a solid basis. In private conversation that great and amiable man added the weight of his experience; and this autumnal felicity might be exemplified in the lives of Voltaire, Hume and many other men of letters. I am far more inclined to embrace than to dispute this comfortable doctrine. I will not suppose any premature decay of the mind and body; but I must reluctantly observe that two causes, the abbreviation of time, the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life."

Autumnal happiness exemplified in Voltaire! Why the poor creature cried out, I wish I had never been born. As to the fifteen years, they

never came, nor fifteen months either, nor even the half of that time.

Listen now to the language of Paul the aged, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8.)

11. The righteous has the preeminence over his neighbor on entering the eternal world. Hooker says, "I have lived to see that this world is made up of perturbations; and I have been long preparing to leave it, and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near. And, though I have, by his grace, loved him in my youth, and feared him in my old age, and labored to have a conscience void of offense towards him, and towards all men; yet, if you, O Lord, should be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can stand? And, therefore, where I have failed, Lord, show mercy to me, for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness through his merits, who died to purchase pardon for penitent sinners. And since I owe you a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take your own time; I submit to it. Let not my will O Lord, but may your will be done. God has heard my daily petitions; for I am at peace with all men; and all are at peace with me. From such blessed assurance, I feel that inward joy which this world can neither give nor take from me. My conscience bears me this witness, and this witness makes the thoughts of death joyful. I could wish to live to do the church more service, but cannot hope for it; for my days are past, as a shadow that has passed away."

Here his strength failed him, and he sighed out his last breath, falling asleep in Jesus, and no doubt entering into the presence of the glorious Redeemer, where is fullness of joy.

On the other hand the Bible tells us of a rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. This lasted long. His heart was hardened in pride, and steeled against pity. At length he died, and was buried, and in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. He asked that a man whom he had slighted and left to the tender mercies of the dogs, might be sent to quench the fires with a drop of water on the tip of his finger—the very prayer itself being full of despair.

Is there not a difference between the righteous and the wicked?

12. At the Judgment-day this difference will be yet more manifest—it will be manifest to all. "Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." (Malachi 3:18.) In that great day any man would rather be the victim, than the tyrant; the oppressed, than the oppressor; the poor, rather than the proud; the saint, rather than the sinner.

REMARKS.

1. The proofs of the excellence of true religion are many and overwhelming. They are such as to extort confessions even from the lips of enemies. A thousand times have the hardened skeptic and the daring infidel been compelled to cry out, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his!"

2. Is true religion so powerful for good? Then it is of great value, and we are bound to make it known. "Let him that hears say, Come!"

3. Obviously regeneration is indispensably necessary in order to salvation. Men may love each other. Friendships may be strong and tender, but without the grace of God, the wicked will be found at last undone. When the ship Mexico was wrecked, two sweet little sisters were found congealed together, imbedded in ice. They had died in each others' arms. In the same way, we may go to the eternal world

loving and being loved by man; but if we are not born again, the frosts of eternal death will stiffen us forever.

4. Clearly it is just, proper and necessary that there be a great difference in the eternal destiny of the righteous and of the wicked. A great difference exists in all time, why should eternity make all alike?

Chapter 12.

Thoughts on Noah, His Times, His Faith and His Ark

The history of Noah has no parallel. It is a study full of lessons, full of instruction.

His name signifies rest, repose, consolation, and seems to have been given him by prophecy, for his father said, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." Some think that his father regarded him as the promised seed of the woman; if so, he was mistaken.

Like Adam, Noah was the head of the whole human family, and for a time lord of the world. Like Adam, he was a type of Christ. But while Adam brought ruin on all he represented, Noah was honored to preserve a remnant from the common destruction. Noah saw the world before the flood, during the flood, and after the flood. His father was born before Adam died. Noah lived six hundred years before the flood and three hundred and fifty years after it. When he died he was twenty years older than Adam was at his death. But two men ever lived longer, Jared and Methuselah, the former by twelve, the latter by nineteen years.

Of Noah's piety we are not left in doubt. The record is decisive, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God."

"According, to all that God commanded him, so he did." (Genesis 6:8, 9, 22.)

The historical fact of the deluge is admitted by almost universal tradition. The best geologists concede it. Revelation declares and establishes it.

Let us take a view of the history and times of this man, of his faith, and the ark which he built.

I. Let us notice the points of resemblance in the condition of the old world and of the world that now is.

In the days of Noah a very large proportion of the human family were the enemies of God by wicked works. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . . and God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Genesis 6:5, 13.) To this day, this is a just account of human nature. Corruption marks the path of men. When such is the case, destruction is not very distant.

In the days of Noah, preaching was attended with but little success. Noah himself was a preacher of righteousness for at least a hundred and twenty years (2 Peter 2:5); yet like those who lived after him, he was forced to cry, "Who has believed our report?" Of all earth's inhabitants, but seven believed him. In the same way, now men generally refuse to hearken. Our preaching is but shouting in dead men's ears, until God's Spirit calls men to spiritual life.

In the days of Noah, appearances were decidedly in favor of the wicked. There were no portents of coming evil, no signs of approaching ruin. There never had been a deluge. Of course some would think there never could be a deluge. Perhaps some of old were as philosophic as some moderns, and proved to their own satisfaction that there was not enough water to drown the world. That there was no remarkable appearance in the heavens infallibly

betokening a coming deluge is certain; for Noah was "warned by God of things not seen as yet." The eye of sense and of reason perceived nothing but the even course of nature.

It is just so with the wicked now. Temporal things are seen, are near, are urgent. Eternal things are unseen, remote and do not clamor for attention. The Judge and the judgment bar, in whose presence we are to appear, are both invisible. Heaven and Hell are beyond the reach of our senses. Neither the kingdom of God nor the damnation of Hell come with observation. He who will continue in sin, may transgress without phenomena to startle him.

Many and solemn warnings were given the old world. "Jesus Christ by the Spirit preached to the disobedient in the days of Noah, while the ark was being preparing." (1 Peter 3:19,20.) Both by words and by example, Noah "condemned the world" that then was. These warnings lasted long. All admit that Noah was probably engaged fifty years in building the ark. Some concede a still longer time. The preaching of Noah and of other pious men had given timely and abundant warning.

So it is now. Wisdom cries, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." Every species of warning that ought to influence men's moral conduct, is given us by the Lord—and so kind, timely, solemn and grave.

God was very patient and forbearing with the old world. He waited a long while. His stroke was not one of impatience. "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." (1 Peter 3:20.) Considering the length of human life in those days, and the skill with which men seemed to have sinned, it is clear that the Most High was slow to anger.

In this day too, God is very patient. Indeed his forbearance is amazing. "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any

should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.)
Why will not men come to repentance?

But the old world abused God's mercy. They said if he meant to punish, he would not wait so long. Thus they hardened themselves in sin. They esteemed Noah's preaching as mere babbling. They counted the ark a monument of his folly. They sinned more and more.

It is just so now, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecclesiastes 8:11.) This is human nature, until it is made a partaker of the divine nature. Only when regenerate, do men count the long-suffering of God to be salvation.

The old world was spared so long as it was because God had a church, and as yet the ark was not finished. God never confounds the righteous with the wicked. He always discerns between those who serve him, and those who serve him not. But as soon as the ark was completed and his church safely lodged in it, his wrath burst forth! This is clearly taught by the history of the affair and by the words of the apostle, "The long-suffering of God waited while the ark was being prepared." (1 Peter 3:20.) So now the church preserves the world. God's people are the salt of the earth. For the elect's sake, the world stands. (Matthew 24:22.)

God would save none of the inhabitants of the old world without their consent and concurrence. If Noah himself will be saved, he must build an ark for that purpose and must go into it. God never works miracles for the indolent, nor drags reluctant men into Heaven. His people are willing in the day of his power. In this day as much as in any other men must work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

II. Let us notice some things in which Noah was like the pious in our day.

Noah took the warnings which God gave him. "Being warned by God he prepared an ark." It is a part of God's general plan to admonish his creatures. His word abounds in kind and beneficial cautions. It is a sign of heavenly wisdom to receive these timely notices of coming certain ruin. Noah and all saints know the voice of God both in warning and in encouraging. Let us be warned. The saints have the best reason in the world for their pious conduct; they are warned by God.

Not like a coward, but like a courageous man, Noah yielded to reasonable fears. Foolish men are stupid when they should prepare for coming events, and alarmed when fear can do no good. True courage foresees danger and provides against it. It is fool-hardiness not to fear terrible things. Noah foresaw the evil, and though not perturbed, he was "moved with fear." Pious men now contemplate with beneficial fear the terrors of God's wrath, the thunders of his power. These fears are rational and potential for good. They make the cross of Christ precious.

The governing principle of Noah's conduct was reliance on the testimony of God. "By faith Noah prepared an ark." His faith was mighty. The popular current ran counter both to his belief and his actions. The time set by God for the flood was remote, if not uncertain. The expense of time, toil and wealth in building the ark was immense! The expectation of being saved by any means in such a deluge looked extravagant. All things considered, Noah's faith was very illustrious. The great trial of Abraham's faith lasted but three days; Noah's lasted certainly more than a century. Abraham's was confined to his own bosom; Noah's was aggravated by the taunts of the wits of his time. In the same way, faith is the great controlling efficient principle in the pious of this time. What would a follower of Christ do without faith?

Noah showed his wisdom by preparing for the very worst event which he had any right to expect. He had cause to look for the flood; he prepared for it; and when it came, he was ready. If there had been

no flood, he would have been as safe as others. As things turned out he was the only head of a house who saved himself and his family.

In the same way, it is with the Christian. If God shall never punish anyone, of course he will never be condemned. If all shall be saved, of course he will not be lost. If there is no Hell, of course he will not lie down in eternal burnings. If there shall come no day of wrath, he cannot suffer perdition. But if Tophet is ordained of old, if there is an avenging God—then the Christian is safe; and he alone is safe. Others must perish.

By his preaching and practice, Noah "condemned the world." His speech and his example left all who persisted in sin without excuse. So now by their pious conversation and lives of faith, Christians reprove and condemn those who walk after the flesh. Fearful criminality attaches to him who persists in sin, in defiance of godly example.

By his course of conduct Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. So also do saints of this day. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1.) "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." (Romans 8:33, 34.)

In the ark the number saved was small. The Apostle says "few, that is, eight souls were saved." (1 Peter 3:20.) It is still true that "many are called, and but few chosen." The wicked world despises such statements as the Bible makes on all sacred things. So did they before the flood. Men are vexed that Christians should have better hopes than they. The great mass of men are despisers, who behold, and wonder, and perish! If the flock of Christ is little, let us adore the grace that makes us of that number. Let us remember that none are safe but believers in Jesus. Let us be very earnest, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. Let us not be discouraged

because few believe and and saved. Let us be solemnly impressed with the truth that he who perishes in a Christian land, perishes willfully. So taught Jesus, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." (John5:40.)

III. Let us notice some points of resemblance between the Ark and our lord Jesus Christ.

The ark was very capacious. So vast a structure for riding on the waters had never been known. In the same way, Jesus Christ is able to save all who come unto him. In Noah's day no man perished because on seeking he found not room in the ark. Now no man perishes "because there is any lack of grace or merit in Jesus Christ.

The ark was long in preparation. So the plan of salvation dates from eternity, and has been unfolding from the first promise in Eden until the Redeemer pronounced the work finished on Calvary!

The strength of the ark was immense, it could not be broken. Besides being well built, it was girt with omnipotence. In the same way, Jesus Christ is full of strength. He is a rock, a fortress, a deliverer, mighty to save, the mighty God! None can pluck his people out of his hand.

There was a time when the ark might be entered; then came a time when it could not be entered. The door was shut before the tempest and floods came. So now Jesus Christ invites us all to him. He is ready to receive us. The Master of the house, however, will soon rise up and shut to the door of salvation forever.

The ark seems to have been constructed without rudder, or sails, or any appliances for moving or protecting itself. A constant watchful providence was over it. So was it with Jesus Christ when on earth, and so has it always been with those who are in Christ. God guides them with his eye. The very hairs of their heads are numbered.

The ark was God's sole appointed way for saving men from the deluge. He who despised it, despised God and perished. Christ is the

only way of salvation to lost men. He who despises him, despises him who sent him.

The ark was for all living things on the face of the whole earth. Great and small, clean and unclean, tame and wild, gentle and ferocious, the lamb and the lion, the dove and the serpent were gathered there under Noah. In the same way, in Christ "the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm." Isaiah 11:6-8

The ark saved Noah and his family from the flood. So Jesus Christ is spoken of by the prophets as "a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." Again, "But you are a tower of refuge to the poor, O LORD, a tower of refuge to the needy in distress. You are a refuge from the storm and a shelter from the heat." Isaiah 25:4. Again, "Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come near unto him." (Psalm 32:6.)

Thus safe is the child of God. So too when the deluge of fire shall come, it shall have no power over him. Deliverance from floods of water and from consuming fire is promised in the same verse, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

As the ark, after the tossings and tempests of the flood, rested safely on the top of Mount Ararat; so Christ, having suffered all things that were appointed, entered into his glory—and his rest is glorious.

IV. Let us notice the points of resemblance between the destruction of the old world and the coming destruction of wicked men.

The old world was destroyed by a flood; and the wicked will be destroyed in a similar manner. "You carry them away as with a flood." (Psalm 90:5.) "Terrors take hold on him (the wicked rich man) as waters, a tempest steals him away in the night. The east wind carries him away, and he departs; and as a storm hurls him out of his place." (Job 27:20, 21.) Often in Scriptures waters, floods, waves, billows, and tempests are the emblems of judgment, anguish and distress. How terrible will be the ruin of the wicked! It will be an overthrow complete and total.

There was no escaping the waters and ruin of the deluge when it came! The flood was above, beneath, around. So will it be in the destruction of the wicked. He who opened the chambers of Heaven and emptied the deluge on the earth "will rain snares, fire, brimstone and a horrible tempest on the wicked; this shall be the portion of their cup! (Psalm 11:6.) Compare Isaiah 24:17-20, Amos 9:1-4, Isaiah 28:17, 18, Daniel 9:26, Ezekiel 38:22

In the deluge the ruin was total and universal. "All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat!" Genesis 7:21-23

So shall it be with the ungodly at last. "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm 9:17

The flood lasted long enough to complete the entire work begun by it. Forty days and forty nights without intermission, did the windows of Heaven and the fountains of the great deep pour forth their floods,

until the highest mountains were covered fifteen cubits. Then the waters stood still one hundred and ten days longer, soon after which the ark rested upon the top of a high mountain; but it was a whole year and eleven days from the time Noah entered the ark before he thought it safe to leave it.

The deluge of divine wrath shall last not only three hundred and seventy-six days, but forever and ever!

Though many warnings had been given, yet to most men the destruction by the flood was sudden and unexpected. So shall it be in the destruction of the wicked. For "as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away—so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:38,39.) Compare Luke 17:26-30

REMARKS.

1. Though the ark was tossed to and fro for a long time, and yet found rest, so shall it be with the church of Christ, now "tossed with tempest and not comforted." (Isaiah 14:11.) When ready to be overwhelmed, God will lead her to the Rock that is higher than her. Yes, dear people of God, the days of your turmoil and perturbation shall not last always. Enlargement and deliverance shall come in due time. "In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," says your Savior.

2. We have seen how long-suffering God is towards his bitter foes; then let us imitate him and "be patient toward all men." Be grieved at their sin, for that is your duty; but think it not strange nor fret at it, that they continue to abuse the long-suffering of God, and yet that he continues ever abused by suffering them. Zeal is good only as it springs from love. (Luke 9:55.) "The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God." God himself conquers by love. (Romans 2:4.)

3. The first thing Noah did after the flood was to build an altar to the Lord from the clean animals preserved in the ark to offer a sacrifice. He pleaded not the scantiness of his supplies. What is saved from God and the poor, from religion and humanity—will never make anyone rich. What is bestowed on works of piety and mercy, is property laid out at more than common interest. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground anymore for man's sake." (Genesis 8:21.)

4. Let us cultivate faith, without which it is impossible to please God. The reason why our piety is so dwarfish, is that our faith is so feeble. "Lord, increase our faith."

5. None are safe but the righteous. God is with them; and he is against the wicked. As the deluge reached every sinner on the face of the earth, so shall God's anger break forth and destroy all his enemies.

6. The righteous are safe and shall be abundantly honored. Long generations after the deluge, by a great prophet, the Lord enrolls Noah with such worthies as Daniel and Job. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20.) The best of all is, his name is written in Heaven.

7. Come you and all your house into the ark! (Genesis 7:1.) Come! Set the example. In the cause of God and of righteousness be firm, and like Noah willing to stand in a minority of one against the world. And bring all your house with you. Leave not one behind.

CHAPTER 13

The Life and Character of the Apostle Peter

One of the most striking characters in history is that of Simon Peter. In it is something to deplore and avoid, but much to admire and imitate. His was no tame and negative character. His life was full of incidents, full of trials, full of blessings. It was troubled, but it ended well. No man ever lived in more eventful times. None was a more eager actor in the stirring events of his own day.

The first thing we learn of this extraordinary man is that he is the brother of the apostle Andrew. He is also called Bar-jona ; but learned men are not agreed whether that points to his father or his mother. Some think it the same as Jonah or John ; others regard it as a contraction for Joanna. The more probable opinion is that Jon a was his father. His own first name was Simon or Simeon, one that hears or obeys. Peter is Greek and Cephas is Syro-chal- claic, and each of them signifies a rock.

Peter lived with his family at Capernaum, on a beautiful sheet of water sometimes called the lake of Gennesareth, sometimes the sea of Tiberias, and sometimes the sea of Galilee. (Mark i : 29; Matt, viii : 14; Luke iv : 38.) He had a wife and her mother in his family. Early tradition says he had

children. Both Clemens Alexandrinus and Epi- phanius so acknowledge. Augustine mentions a daughter of this apostle. It is also said that his daughter Petrina or Petronilla suffered martyrdom, and that her name is inserted in some martyrologies for the 31st of May.

Andrew, being called by Christ, met Peter and said to him, "We have found the Messiah, and brought him to Jesus. This was when our Saviour was thirty years old. At this time Peter is thought to have been forty years old or upwards. So that he was ten or more years older than his Lord and Master. It is a great thing to have a good brother, one who will not rest till he sees us coming to Jesus. These brothers seem to have remained with Christ at first but a short time, some think but a day, when, no doubt with the consent of their Lord, they returned for the present to their usual employment, which was fishing. This occupation was always humble and laborious. They seem to have prosecuted this business with diligence. They were not idlers.

This first calling of Peter gave a turn to his whole life and character. This was the day of his happy change, when God's grace determined him to be for Christ and for no other. He received Christ and with him power to become one of the sons of God. The beginning of a new life is a great matter.

But the return of Peter and Andrew to their nets and ships was only temporary. The same year, in which they first believed, Christ stood on the shore of the lake of Gennesareth, and saw them washing

their nets. The inspired record here is full and graphic. It says Jesus "entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing ; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes : and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, Lord.

For he was astonished and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken : and so was also James and John the sons of Zebe- dee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all : and followed him." (Luke 5 : 3-11.) This is the second step leading to the public ministry and usefulness of Peter. He was now under the tuition of one, in whom he had entire confidence, and he was a disciple indeed. He learned the lessons of heavenly wisdom.

Some think it was alter this time that Christ came to Capernaum, and finding Peter's mother-in-law

sick of a fever, he miraculously healed her, and she arose and began to serve them.

About two years from his first acquaintance with his Master, Peter entered on his public ministry, lie did not seek to hasten this solemn step. He was sent with others to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was not reluctant to do the work assigned him. He dared not assume the responsibility of declining an office to which God called him. False humility is but rebellion. In this mission Peter and his associates "preached and healed every where." The object of their preaching seems to have been much the same as that of John the Baptist. It was preparatory and introductory to the setting up of Christ's kingdom. A wise preacher will endeavor to prepare the people for those truths, which they otherwise would reject.

The next thing we hear of Peter is his requesting Christ to call him out of a ship one night and to bid him walk on the water. His motive in this case is not very apparent. Did he wish to try the strength of his own faith? Was he so desirous of being near to Christ that he could wait no longer for his arrival? Was it a desire to gratify an adventurous spirit? Was it an act of presumption ? We may not be able to satisfy ourselves on these points. Christ consented, however, and Peter, making the attempt, soon began to sink, and cried out

"Lord, save me." In his love Christ put forth his hand and rescued him. Peter had many sad lessons to learn respecting his own weakness. This was but one of a long series.

When Christ said : "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man ; but that, which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man ;" Peter answered and "said 'unto him, Declare unto us this parable." (Matt, xv: 11, 15.) Thus he evinced his characteristic promptness in all such things.

The next time we hear of Peter was when so many were offended at Christ's doctrine and forsook his ministry. Jesus asked his disciples if they also would leave him? "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John vi: 68, 69.)

Perhaps, it was not long after this, "when Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, and asked his disciples. ..whom say ye that I am? and Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter [xsrpos], and upon this rock [izsTpa] I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt, xvi : 13, 15-19.) Here we have a proof of Peter's readiness to answer for himself and others, (v. 10.) Through life he seems never to have been of a hesitating mind. Next we have a renewed avowal of Peter's belief in the Messiahship and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, (v. 16.) Then we have Christ's declaration of the blessing that had come upon Peter, particularly in his being taught of God. Then follow the change of Peter's name, and a declaration that upon the great truth thus confessed the church should rest, and nothing should subvert it.

Lastly, we have Christ's statement of the power of the keys. That this power was in no sense peculiar to Peter is evident from Matt, xviii : 18, where Christ says to all the disciples, ' ' Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." The meaning of all this is that whoever shall be by them according to Christ's word declared blessed, shall indeed be blessed ; but they, who shall be rightfully rejected from the church, shall be rejected of God also.

The next time we hear of Peter is where he brings upon himself the severe rebuke of the Lord, who was foretelling his own sufferings and death. Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." But " Jesus said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but these that be of men." (Matt, xvi : 22, 23,) q. d. Your opposition to my sufferings arises from a blind, earthly affection, indulged in ignorance of the true interest and object of my coming into the world. It is the fruit of unbelief.

It makes you my tempter, instead of my encourager. To defer the day of crucifixion would have been to postpone redemption.

The next time we hear of Peter is at the trans-figuration. This scene made a great impression on him. He said it was good to be there, and proposed the erection of three tents, one for his Master, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. This proposal is stated by both Matthew and Luke ; but Luke says that Peter "knew not what he was saying." The whole vision overpowered him. It was too much for him. He spoke confusedly. (Matt, xvii: 1-3; Luke ix : 28-33.)

Some time after this Peter drew from our Lord several important lessons. One was the lawfulness and obligation of supporting the government, under which we live, by paying taxes. To this end Christ miraculously provided the means in the mouth of the fish which Peter caught. Another was that forgiveness of injuries was to be

granted even to the four hundred and ninetieth time ; i. e., no limit was to be affixed to it. Another was that all Christ's servants should receive for all their sacrifices an hundred fold in this world, and in the world to come, life everlasting. (Matt, xvii : 27 ; xviii : 21, 22, anclxix: 27-29.)

Three days before our Lord's passion Peter drew Christ's attention to the withered fig-tree, which the Lord had cursed. Two days before the crucifixion Peter inquired when the temple should be destroyed. The day before the crucifixion he and John went into Jerusalem and prepared to celebrate

the passover. That night at supper Peter made signs to John to ask Jesus who should betray him. After supper questions of precedence arose, and Jesus to shew them his views girded himself, and began to wash their feet. To this Peter in his own case objected in strong language; but finding Christ's authority against him, he yielded, saying, "Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head." (Mark xi : 21. Matt, xxiv: 3. Mark xiv: 15. John xiii: 24. John xiii: 9.)

"We are now to view this distinguished servant of God in circumstances novel and difficult. Previous to his passion, Christ informed his disciples that they should forsake him. He particularly informed Peter that Satan desired to sift him as wheat. Peter professed to regard such a suspicion with amazement. He said, "Though all men forsake thee yet will not I." Spiritual pride had a hand in dictating this reply. Peter was painfully ignorant of the weakness of his own virtue. Self-confidence is a poor substitute for genuine humility. Christ exhorted his disciples to watch and pray lest they should enter into temptation. Instead of taking this warning Peter with the rest seems to have been quite off his guard, and in the garden fell asleep. "When the dreadful hour of betrayal came, Peter had a some- what fierce, carnal spirit, and drew his sword, and smote off the ear of Malchus. The Saviour healed the wound, and warned Peter against carnal weapons in his cause.

Christ was now led away by his captors, and Peter's courage began to fail him. Fear and trepidation seized him. Accordingly as they led Jesus away Peter followed afar off. He had real love to Christ, and so could not utterly forsake him. His love was weak and his fears very strong, and so he followed at a distance, he wished to see the end of the matter, and came to the high-priest's palace, but went not in where his Master was, but remained in the middle of the hall, where the servants and soldiers had a fire. This was bad company. Here a young woman charged him with belonging to Christ's company. Another damsel soon did the same thing. To both these Peter gave a denial. "I know not what thou sayest." "Again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man." About an hour after a third person brought the same charge, and they that stood by joined in with him. But he "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." What a sad failure of courage ! What work is this man making for bitter repentance !

Immediately on his third denial the cock crew. This reminded him of what the Lord had said. About the same time Jesus gave him a significant look. These things awakened reflection. "He thought thereon." His conscience was now aroused. The piercing, melting, reproving, winning look of Christ cut him to the heart. He could stand it no longer. "He went out." Shame covered him like a garment. His cowardice amazed him. A sense of guilt pierced him. His soul was full of grief. He was now drinking wormwood and gall. "He wept bitterly." How gladly would he have undone

all that had happened the last few hours. He had put another thorn in his Master's crown. He had wounded him in the house of his friends. His sin was very great, and he felt it to be so.

It is thought by some that Peter did not witness our Saviour's crucifixion, but that he was alone weeping in secret from the time of his third denial during the whole of that and the next day. He is mentioned no more till the morning of our Lord's resurrection. He and John came running to the sepulchre. John outran Peter and first

reached the sepulchre, but did not go in until Peter came and went in. "Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed." Worldly sorrow may make cowards; but godly sorrow makes heroes. After the resurrection Peter was more courageous than John. The same day that Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to Peter. Some days after, the Lord appeared to several of his disciples on the sea of Galilee. John said to Peter, It is the Lord. Peter immediately swam to shore. The others followed in their vessels. After some refreshments Jesus introduced, with unspeakable tenderness and fidelity, those heart-searching questions, Lovest thou me more than these ? Lovest thou me ? Lovest thou me ? to all of which Peter answered affirmatively, and received a charge to feed Christ's sheep and lambs. On the same clay Christ informed Peter that in his old age he should die a violent death. This was Peter's last interview with Christ until the day when he ascended up on high. Peter witnessed that glorious sight, and received the explanation of it from the angels.

Peter continued with the other apostles in prayer till the day of Pentecost ; on that day he preached with great boldness and success ; some days after he healed the impotent man at the temple. He and John were arrested, brought before the magistrates, and charged to teach no more in the name of Jesus ; but they boldly said that they would obey God rather than man. We next hear of Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Wonderful gifts of healing were long granted to all the apostles. Even the shadow of Peter falling on the sick was thought to be efficacious. Imprisonment soon followed, but God delivered his persecuted ones, and gave them boldness to declare the mystery of God and of Christ. Soon they were apprehended again, and received every man forty stripes save one. Persecution is an old trade.

Peter and John first imparted miraculous gifts to the converts at Samaria. Here Peter encountered and dismayed Simon Magus. He now began to travel much, going from city to city. At Lydda he cured Eneas, who had been a paralytic eight years. At Joppa he raised

Tabitha from the dead. At Cesarea of Palestine he was led to make known the gospel to the Gentiles. His conduct in this matter he justified to the satisfaction of the brethren. This is supposed to have been about eight years after our Saviour's ascension. But several years previous to this it is thought that he planted the church at Antioch, and that he was there frequently for some years, in the mean time visiting Jerusalem, Bithynia, Cappadocia and Pontus. It was probably during this time that he was betrayed into that dissimulation, which was at once so contrary to his natural character and the whole spirit of the gospel. Eleven years after Christ's ascension Peter was again imprisoned at Jerusalem by Herod Agrippa ; but God sent his angel and delivered him. After this we know nothing certainly of him until the writing of his first epistle, which is supposed to have been about the year 48 or 50. Soon after this he attended the great council at Jerusalem A. D. 51 or 52. Peter fully concurred in the decrees of this venerable Synod. In the year 67 or 68 he wrote his second epistle. The remainder of his history is veiled in much uncertainty. The traditions concerning him are many, but none of them well supported except that he was crucified at the age of from 74 to 78 years, and went to his Saviour. He may have visited Rome, but there is no such evidence in support of that opinion as that Paul was there, no such evidence as to justify men in making it an article of faith, as some would do.

Chapter 14.

Lessons from the Life and Fall of Peter

The life and history of the Apostle Peter teach many lessons.

I. One is the great value of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. This was his sheet-anchor. Flesh and blood did not reveal it to him. No man can call Christ, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. Long before Christ's crucifixion Peter twice professed his faith that Jesus was the

Christ, the son of the living God. In his first epistle his great theme is Christ, his blood and resurrection, his glory and appearance, and his preciousness to all believers. In his second epistle he urges the same things, and predicts the character of the men who should teach contrary doctrine, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping." (2 Peter 2:1-3.) The last words of this Epistle are, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and forever! Amen."

Christian character depends upon our receiving Christ and resting on him, as the Son of God and the Savior of men.

2. We also learn that we must not put implicit reliance on our best and most pious friends. They may become our tempters. Peter loved his Lord, and yet he tempted him to shun the cross. Abraham tempted Sarah to prevaricate and she was led astray. Rebecca successfully tempted Jacob to deceive his father and supplant his brother. He who would have a good conscience, void of offence, must not commit it to the keeping of others. To a wife one may be compelled to say, You speak as one of the silly women. And to a bosom friend, Get behind me, Satan. Speaking of an evil time; Micah says, " Trust not in a friend, put you not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of your mouth from her that lies in your bosom." (Micah 7:5.) "Keep your heart with all diligence." "Cease from man."

3. God deals variously with his people according to their evil propensities, which he would correct, and their good principles, which he would strengthen. What a contrast between Peter and John. The former sailed through stormy seas. The latter had a serene

sky and propitious gales. The one was full of impulse and emotion. The other was all love and gentleness. If God deals with you differently from some others, it is because there is a need be. John did not require the rebukes and rebuffs which were necessary for Peter. Peter did not need the gentleness of treatment which was necessary to inspire John with great boldness and confidence. If an experience is essentially scriptural, it will stand the test, though vastly diverse from that of many others. All the children in the same family are not of like disposition, and will not bear the same treatment.

As Christian character varies, so the Lord sees best that there should be a variety in the talents and manners of his ministers. They have gifts differing one from another. Among the early preachers were two sons of thunder, and one son of consolation. If a mild, tender preacher is very useful to some, so also is a stern, rousing preacher to others. It would be a great loss to the cause of truth to have all its heralds and defenders cast into the same mold.

4. The history of Peter shows that all ministers of Christ are not called to that work when young, and free from the cares of a family. Peter seems to have been fully forty years old before he was even a disciple of Christ. He then had also the cares of a family upon him. Under such circumstances many would excuse themselves. But Peter did no such wicked thing. He was obedient to the heavenly calling. Ought not some, who are now immersed in worldly cares, to be going to and fro preaching salvation? It is not credible that all who have been called of God to minister before him, have obeyed his voice.

Yet as old as Peter was he studied three years or near that time under him, who spoke as never man spoke, and who was the infallible teacher.

Entering the ministry late in life is no excuse for slighting preparation for its duties. It was, perhaps, William Tennent, who said, "If one must enter the ministry, and "believes he has but three

years to live, let him study two of them and preach one." When we speak of the mental character of the apostles so as to justify ignorance attempting to teach, we sadly pervert truth. They were illiterate men, when Christ called them. Neither did they frequent the schools of philosophy. But they learned of Christ, and were moreover endowed with the knowledge of many languages and with many miraculous gifts.

5. Nor should we forget that the best ministers are often taken from the humble walks of life. Peter and several other apostles were fishermen and sailors. One was a publican. All seem to have been of a lowly condition. Strike out of Church History the names of all, whom God has raised from the dunghill and set among princes, and what a chasm would be made. Beginning with Samuel, rejecting others of the prophets, John the Baptist and the apostles, and casting off Bunyan and many others, we should see a hideous chasm. Such men are often more willing to bear hardships than others, but the reason why God chooses such, is that he delights in staining the pride of all glory. Let us never forget that in building his church God delights to employ the plain, the lowly. And let us not despise poor and pious youth seeking the ministry.

6. When Peter was called to follow Christ, he was industriously engaged in an honest calling, the work of a fisherman. So were others. Matthew too was collecting taxes when he was called. Lazy men put many hindrances in the way of their conversion and subsequent usefulness. We read in Scripture of the conversion of a senator, of a seller of purple, of a jailer, of a thief, of a persecutor and blasphemer. But does any inspired historian mention the conversion of idlers? Paul addressed a crowd of such at Athens; but not one of them seems to have been converted, though "certain men cleave unto him, and believed; the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." (Acts 17:34.) Idle habits are a great sin, and a great misery. Inertness of mind is a great hindrance to salvation. Avoid sloth. It is itself a vice and the parent of many others.

7. We may learn from Peter's example the great secret of improving in knowledge. It lies in a readiness to confess our ignorance, and to learn from those who are able to teach us. If Christ said anything which Peter did not understand, he asked him in private. At no time does he appear to have tried to conceal his own ignorance. Even in his old age he is ready to admit that Paul saw some things more clearly than he did; for he says that "in all Paul's epistles are some things hard to be understood." Had he been a self-conceited man, he would never have written that sentence, but would have professed to know all about them. John Locke said that he had gained his knowledge by being always willing to confess his ignorance. It is a great thing to know our own deficiencies.

Nor is it so bad sometimes to err in honestly trying to do good, as never to attempt to do good for fear of committing some mistake. It is better to be reprov'd for erring in the exercise of a pure zeal, than it is to have no zeal. Imprudence should be avoided, and so should unbelief and lukewarmness. An honest-hearted blundering man, is a far safer pattern than a cold, cunning calculator. We too often forget that honest mistakes can be corrected; but that no outward decency is a substitute for living fire in the soul. To prune and regulate is much easier than to impart qualities and supply deficiencies. When men are afraid of nothing but imprudence they are in danger of being mere drones.

8. The history of Peter also shows us how weak is virtue in the best of men, if left to themselves. With all his natural firmness and all his gracious dispositions, Peter was easily led astray. No power of reasoning, no regard to health, or interest, or character, no vows, no promises, no oaths, no sense of shame, no dread of death or Hell, no ordinances, no warnings—nothing can hold us up, when we are strongly tempted, if God forsakes us. "I have seen an end of all perfection." No man knows what he will do until he is tried. Hazeel felt insulted when the prophet foretold his cruelties; but he committed every one of them! Peter was very sure he would never

show any want of love to Christ, but in less than twelve hours he denied him with oaths and curses.

How difficult it is to eradicate constitutional, or habitual sins, sins which are rooted in our natures, or have been fostered in our education. What are your besetting sins? Find them out and slay them! This will be no easy work. Peter had a natural fault of character, rashness. He seems hardly to have been cured of it. His cursing and swearing in the hall of the high-priest is supposed to have been a return upon him of the old habits of profaneness, which he formed when a sailor on the sea of Galilee. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil." (Jeremiah 13:23.) If you would avoid dreadful anguish, mortify your sins.

9. We see too in how undesirable a state a man may go to the Lord's table. Peter was there but a few hours before his great sin. His heart had in it much pride, ambition, self-confidence and wrath. But he seems not to have known it. So good men may now do some very wrong things, and right things in a very wrong spirit—even in the midst of most solemn acts of worship and devotion to Christ. And how soon after intimate communion with Christ, one may dishonor the Savior, and disgrace himself and his profession. Raptures may soon be followed by shocking iniquities. Those who believe they are safe because they have been at the Lord's table and been much affected there, should remember Simon Peter.

10. How much do those err, who pronounce one a bad man for one offence, though it be flagrant. Had Peter lived in this day many would at once mark him as a hypocrite. A minister of the gospel, who should now err as widely as Peter did, would meet with no charity from some, who think themselves patterns, and trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. No evidence of repentance in such cases will satisfy some people. How necessary the apostolic injunction at all times, "If a man be overtaken in fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;

considering yourself lest you also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1.) The general tenor of a man's life, and not one, two, or more conspicuous acts must determine his character. The sun often has spots on his disc; yet he is the most luminous body in the heavens.

11. But if erring brethren would wish the same kindness shown to them when they sin, which was shown to Peter after his fall, let them repent as he repented. He did not send his brethren to summon witnesses to prove his sin. He did not quibble about forms of doing business. He did not deny his sin. He did not attempt to excuse it. He went out and wept bitterly. He also at once brought forth fruits fit for repentance. True repentance hates and turns from all sin. If you fall into sin, never add to it by denying it.

How idle are the pretenses of infallibility of the Pope of Rome, when Peter who is claimed as his predecessor often erred, even after he was made an apostle. Christ said to him, "Get behind me," "Put away your sword," etc; and Paul "withstood him to the face, for he was to be blamed." Hardly any good man has left behind him more proofs of liability to err than this very apostle. Yet the popes claim to get their infallibility through him. Could he transmit what he never had, never claimed? Away with such idle dreams.

Romanists are no less mistaken in another matter. They loudly assert and insist upon the celibacy of their pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons. Yet Peter had a wife. Even after Paul's conversion he writes of this matter, "Have we not power to have a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5.)

12. The history of Peter instructs ministers to be full of activity in their Master's work. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with his might. He was full of life. He seems to have sought no rest. The result was that he did a world of good. He accomplished wonders.

13. We also see in the case of Peter the steps and evidences of such a decline in religion as may end in open and flagrant sin. The first sad mark is carnal security, which consists in a vague, blind persuasion, that there is no danger. He is the least safe, who is the most secure. He is in the greatest peril, who apprehends the least danger. The weakest spot in every man is where he thinks himself the wisest, or the strongest. Peter could not be persuaded of his perils. Whenever men cease to watch and pray, there is hourly danger of their plunging into open and dreadful sins. Temptations commonly come at an unexpected hour, and from an unexpected quarter. The fiery darts are shot from an invisible bow. The very next hour's neglect of prayer may bring dreadful misery to the soul for life.

Another mark of approaching disaster is a vain persuasion that we shall be able to triumph over the tempter, if he should assault us. In his blindness and self-confidence Peter supposed he was ready even to die for his Lord. Yet the first assault made him drop his profession. Many, who glory much in their strength, upon trial are found as weak as water. Those, who regard themselves as lion-hearted, when fairly tested are found to be chicken-hearted. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool!" "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." (Jeremiah 17:5.)

The next step towards a fall is spiritual pride and a boasted superiority to others. Peter said; "Though all men shall be offended yet will not I." When he asserted that he loved Christ more than others, he was in extreme peril. When Paul said, "I am less than the least of all saints," he was comparatively safe. "With the lowly is wisdom."

One, who has gone thus far, will be liable to display heated passion and blind zeal in his Master's cause. Peter was for resorting to the sword.

Next we see Peter following Jesus "afar off." If he had continued with his Lord, the presence of his Master might have sustained him. Do

you follow the Lord fully and closely? Have you daily communion with him?

Peter's next step was the choice of bad company. He was with the soldiers and servants and wicked damsels in the hall of Caiaphas. He had no business among these enemies of the Lord.

What sort of company do you keep? Is your fellowship with men a matter of conscience? "He who walks with wise men, shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Thus his fall was brought about. He went step by step towards the precipice, down which he soon fell bruised and mangled!

14. True believers will rise after a fall. "A just man falls seven times, and rises up again." (Proverbs 24:16.) Sin falling on a good conscience, like sand in a good eye, will cause it to weep and weep and weep until it weeps it out, "Though a good man falls, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with his hand... The Lord loves judgment, and forsakes not his saints." (Psalm 37:24,28.) "If my children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail." (Psalm 89:30-33.)

For a time real grace may be terribly obscured, as a candle may be put under a bushel. There may be wheat under a great pile of chaff. Judge no man. He who judges all things is the Lord. One may wander, but if God is his guide, he will restore his soul.

The means of Peter's recovery were, first, the crowing of the rooster. God can make use of anything he chooses to impress us with a sense of our guilt.

The second means used was Christ's turning and looking on Peter.

The third was that he remembered the words, that Christ had so recently spoken to him.

The steps of his recovery were few and simple.

The first step was reflection. "He thought thereon."

The second step was full, clear, spiritual conviction.

The third step was sincere sorrow. "He wept bitterly."

The cause of his recovery was the same that brings any sinner to repentance, namely, Christ's intercession, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not; and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:31,32.)

15. The good effects of the discipline, through which God led Peter in connection with his fall, were many. The covenant of grace is so administered that even the sins of believers, notwithstanding their tendency to the contrary, are made to promote their sanctification. Christ said, "When you are converted strengthen your brethren," implying that he would then be prepared to act such a part.

Peter's fall made him humble. We do not hear of him boasting any more. It is said that when he was crucified, it was at his own request with his head downwards, as unworthy to be honored with the same posture as his Lord. When he wrote his first epistle he said that saints "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (Chapter 1:5.)

His fall seems to have powerfully counteracted his rashness. After this time we hear but once of his being involved in trouble on that account. (Galatians 2:11-13.)

He also seems to have been more than ever a man of prayer. Tradition says, that every morning about cock-crow he used to rise for secret devotion.

Nor was his penitence without increase. It is said that whenever and wherever he heard the rooster crow, the tears would rise in his eyes.

To these virtues he added gentleness. After his recovery he never used any sword, but the sword of the Spirit.

He was also watchful. With what earnestness did he write to his friends, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8.)

Peter's fall and recovery also made him truly bold. It took from him vain confidence and taught him to make his boast in God. True courage is modest, but fearless when walking in the path of duty. In the very city where he had so recently denied his Master, Peter fearlessly preached Jesus. Paul calls Peter "a pillar." (Galatians 2:9.)

And he was greatly beloved. When in prison, "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." So greatly did they love him and desire his release. And Peter learned to love even those who opposed him. Paul reproved him sharply, yet in his last epistle he speaks of "our beloved brother Paul." He was not alienated by fraternal faithfulness. Peter's experience about the time of the crucifixion seems greatly to have advanced his preparation for his work.

"Before honor is humility." (Proverbs 15:33.) Peter was to be a great and successful preacher, both among Jews and Gentiles. In a mysterious way God was teaching him wherein his great strength lay, and making him wise to win souls.

Finally, are you a great sinner? So was Peter. Did he find mercy? So may you. But all God's grace to sinners is treasured up in Christ.

Come, come, come and welcome to Jesus Christ.

Chapter 15.

Nine Questions about Pleasing

In order to avoid misunderstanding of the mind of the Spirit we must compare spiritual things with spiritual, learn the analogy of faith, look at the grammatical construction, and closely examine the context of any portion of God's word. This is so on almost all matters. It is surely so in reference to pleasing ourselves, our neighbor and our God. In each of the following verses it is the same word in the Greek Testament that is rendered please.

"We then that are strong ought not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself."

"I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

"Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ."

"So we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who tries our hearts."

"You have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God." (Romans 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:33; Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 4:1.) We cannot interpret these verses harmoniously if we are governed by the mere sound of the words. Yet their teachings do not conflict. It will aid us to understand these and like passages to consider distinctly these questions:

1. How far may we please ourselves?

2. How far must we deny ourselves?
3. Why should we deny and not please ourselves?
4. How far may we please our fellow-men?
5. When must we be willing to incur their displeasure?
6. Why should we lightly esteem the smiles and the frowns of men?
7. How far are we to go in pleasing god?
8. Is it right ever to displease him?
9. Why should we please him?

To make these several points clear it will not be necessary to be tedious; yet they may best be considered separately. Let us take them up in order.

1. How far may we please ourselves?

The answer is that we may humbly, thankfully and joyfully acknowledge and use all that we are and all that we have. We may enjoy the health, the food, the friends and other favors bestowed upon us by providence. We may use all God's creatures as not abusing them. We may love and cherish our whole nature. We must not dishonor or torture our bodies. We must not neglect the cultivation of our minds, and the improvement of our hearts; and that in general we may seek our own good in all ways, not forbidden in Scripture, carefully preferring the spiritual to the carnal, the eternal to the temporal. In all these ways and to this extent we may please ourselves. We are not bound to try to make ourselves miserable.

God has freely given us all good things richly to enjoy them. He is no hard master. Freely and abundantly have we received of his bounties. He has provided of his goodness for the poor. Let them thankfully receive and temperately enjoy all his blessings.

2. How far must we deny ourselves?

The answer is, We must refuse and forsake all those ways, and thoughts, and plans, and practices, and gains, and intimacies, which hinder the growth of the soul in saving knowledge and true holiness. We must so far deny our own intellectual powers, as not to regard them infallible, or even safe without divine guidance. "Lean not unto your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5.) "Be not wise in your own eyes." (Proverbs 3:7.) "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom." (Jeremiah 9:23.) Men must learn to submit their understandings to the teachings of God's word, and Spirit, and providence; else they cannot be saved. We must not set up our wills against the will of God. We must learn to say, "May Your will, not mine, be done, God." "Father, not as I will, but as you will." If we cannot heartily desire to say thus, we have no piety. If we cannot say thus decidedly and habitually, we have very little religion.

We must not pamper our natural appetites and the members of our bodies, but restrain them lest they gain a mastery over us. We must not yield them instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. We must guard all affections, as love and aversion, joy and grief, hope and fear, lest they become excessive. (Ezekiel 23;11.) We must mortify our affections. We must keep our body (our whole nature) under control. We must renounce self-righteousness and confess that we have no merits. Our righteousnesses are only filthy rags, and we ought to think and feel and say so.

Self-flattery is as dangerous as it is sinful. Self-sufficiency is ruinous.

We must deny ourselves all gains, all honors, all pleasures, known or suspected to be sinful. We must give up even lawful things, when we

see that our indulgence will mislead others. We must be pure. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. We must not count our lives worth holding at the cost of a good conscience. It was the devil, who said, "All that a man has, will he give for his life." That is true of men who are the children of the Wicked One. It is not true of real Christians. They are animated by principle. Their love is stronger than the fear of Death. They know it is not wicked to suffer, but they cannot consent to sin.

3. Why should we thus deny and not please ourselves?

The reasons are many and strong. Let us consider a few of them.

We should imitate Christ, who "pleased not himself." Let us be like him. Oh that we had his image. He pleased the Father who sent him. He emptied himself and became of no reputation. And he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Self-denial is the road to honor, glory and immortality; while pleasing self is the road to ruin. "Whoever will save his life shall lose it; and whoever will lose his life for Christ's sake shall find it." All great characters are formed in the school of self-control. All holy characters are formed in the school of self-denial.

By divine grace the exercises of self-denial are healthy and pleasant to the soul. As in our animal nature the arts of self-indulgence and sloth do in the end make us miserable, while manly exercise promotes health and vigor; so is it with our souls.

4. How far may we please our fellow men?

We may and we must honor, obey, and so endeavor to please our civil rulers, our parents, our teachers, our masters, all who have lawful authority over us. This should be done from religious motives, cheerfully, universally, embracing all their lawful commands.

We may and we must be courteous, gentle, humble, obliging, giving no needless offence, so that our neighbor, if well disposed, may find it easy to love us, easy to lay aside his prejudices against us, so that he may be willing to listen to our warnings and entreaties, so that we may by God's favor do him good and save him from sin and folly, and thus show true Christian charity, meekness, humility, and zeal for the salvation of men's souls, and avoid harshness, moroseness, surliness and unamiahleness of character.

The general rule is that we are to love our fellow men as ourselves, and to do unto them as we would they should do unto us. In case of a doubt we are to give our neighbor the benefit of the doubt, while in matters of civility and honor we are to prefer others to ourselves.

We may not and we must not envy the good qualities and fine endowments of others, but acknowledge them on fit occasions, and rejoice in them. Not to own and be glad for them is both a weakness and a wickedness. It is both foolish and sinful in us to prefer our own ignorance to the sound learning of others, or to despise the cause or the faculties of one, who is not eloquent in his own defense.

We may and we must honor and meekly receive the counsels, reproofs, admonitions and encouragements of those who watch for our souls and seek our good.

We may and we must so far respect all classes of men, as to do all we can by integrity and Christian behavior to maintain our own good name, and to deserve the esteem of all right-minded persons.

5. When must we be willing to incur the displeasure of men?

The answer is, When men will be offended with us, or when we sin against God, break his commandments, and defile our consciences. "If doing our duty will displease men, let them be displeased." If dancing before the ark is an offence to Michal, then David must dance on. If preaching Christ crucified brings down the wrath of persecuting Jews, the apostles must not desist from their work. If

Nebuchadnezzar requires those young men to bow to the image he has set up, or to go into the burning fiery furnace—they must go into the furnace. It is wicked to burn a man to death for conscience sake; but it is not wicked to be burned to death for conscience sake.

The reasons why we must displease men rather than sin against God are such as these:

He is God. He is the great and the terrible God. Having killed the body, he can destroy both soul and body in Hell. He claims and he deserves our prompt, cheerful, universal obedience.

Sin is the only intolerable evil in the world. Men have exulted and triumphed over persecution, expatriation, prisons, racks, tortures, flames and gibbets. But a wounded spirit who can bear? A soul, stung with sin, has a living death. The wail of the damned is from no other source. When all is well internally, all is well eternally.

6. Why should we lightly esteem the smiles and the frowns of men? Why should we not be careful to please men? Because:

Men are but worms. They are crushed before the moth. Their wrath is but impotent rage, until God shall choose to lengthen their chain and give them permission. Man is puny, not to be feared. Man is frail and fickle. Man is a fool, until God gives him wisdom. Man is lighter than vanity. All men are liars until God gives them the love of the truth. Man is . . .

brutish in his knowledge,
violent in his prejudices,
fierce in his passions,
blind in his self-interest,
slandrous in his speech,
a hater of all goodness
—until he is taught from Heaven.

Why should you either court or fear one whose breath is in his nostrils? Dread and trust are alike misplaced when man is their

object.

The ungodly world has always misjudged the best living men of each successive generation. Which of the prophets did they not kill? Which of the apostles did they not hunt and hound? Did they not kill the Son of God himself? Ought we to expect better treatment than these? Therefore, if for the sake of Christ and righteousness, we are accounted as the scorn and offscouring of all things, and as pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people, and such as are unworthy to live, and have all manner of evil spoken against us falsely—it must not seem strange or unexpected to us, nor cast us down, but we must bear it patiently, yes, and exceedingly rejoice in hope of our reward in Heaven.

A Christian must not expect to please men. He must not be disappointed, therefore, if he does not. A professing Christian should be alarmed when the world flatters and caresses him. He should suspect that either his life is not right, or that men are spreading a snare for his feet. The world is in no better humor with holiness than it was formerly. Rest assured of that. Blessed is he who has grace to take joyfully the confiscation of his goods, who esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of earth, and who glories in death for Jesus' sake.

When the jailer said to John Bradford, "Mr. Bradford! I bring you heavy tidings; tomorrow you must be burned, and your chain is now being bought," he put off his hat, and said, "Lord, I thank you; I have looked for this a great while, it is not terrible to me; God make me worthy of such a mercy!"

All human opinions, judgments and decisions must and shall be revised by the infallible Judge; and, if erroneous, reversed. Up to this time men have condemned more innocent men than guilty, more saints than felons. So that we may and often must say with Paul, "With me it is a small matter to be judged by you, or of man's judgment; I have one that judges me, even the Lord." On this passage

Calvin has this note, "We must give an account of our doctrine to all men that require it, especially to ministers and councils; but when a faithful pastor finds himself oppressed with unrighteous and perverse designs, and that there is no place for equity and truth, he ought to be careless of man's esteem and to appeal to God and fly to his tribunal." "It is our duty," says Baxter, "to love and honor, but not to be loved and honored." The more Paul loved some, the less was he loved by them. (2 Corinthians 12:15.) But that was not his fault, though it was his affliction.

Another reason, why we should not be careful about the smiles and frowns of unrenewed men, is that they are the children of the devil, and his works will they do. They think, and feel, and act like the wicked one. To please them is to please Satan. To displease them is to offend the adversary of God and man. We are not in bondage to Apollyon or any of his minions and myrmidons.

It ought to make us desist from trying to please the world that those who have tried hardest have most signally failed, or have most deplored their folly, when they found the outcome. History is filled with such instances. In pleasing some, we are sure to displease others. What pleases a bad or a weak man today, may displease him tomorrow.

Even good men are diverse from each other in a thousand matters of taste, habits and manners. It is impossible even to please all good men. Some good men are great cowards; some are very moody; some are very far from walking tenderly; some are very weak; and some are very ignorant. How can you please such by doing right? And if you could please them, you would be but pleasing poor sinful worms.

7. How far are we to go in pleasing God?

The answer is, We are to go all lengths, and run all risks, and suffer all things, and endure all things, and, if need be, sacrifice all things—for him. We are to hate father, and mother, and wife, and children,

and brethren, and sisters, yes and our own life also—in comparison with him. (Luke 14:26.) If we must defile our consciences by sinning against God, or give up all earthly friends, and kindred, and blessings—we may not, we must not hesitate to make God our exceeding joy and let the rest go. Yes, we must sacrifice all things.

God never asks us to do a base thing. Nor are we ever to sacrifice conscience. He holds that sacred; and he would have us hold it sacred also. Men show that their damnation is both just and sure when they do evil that good may come. It is frightful to serve God with our iniquities! (Isaiah 43:24.)

8. Is it right ever to displease God?

No never! Never! Never! We cannot displease him but by sinning against him. And sin is always abominable. Chrysostom, "There is in human affairs nothing that is truly terrible but sin. In all things else, in poverty, in sickness, in disgrace, and in death, (which is held to be the greatest of evils) there is nothing that is really dreadful. With the wise man they are all empty names. But to offend God, to do what he disapproves, this is real evil." If we may displease God once, we may do it as long and as often as we please. One theft makes a man a thief. One willful, malicious homicide makes a man a murderer. In the same way, one sin makes a man a sinner; and the "wages of sin is death." "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" (1 Samuel 2:25.)

9. Why should we please God?

Because he is God. He alone is God. He is God alone. There is none with him, none "beside him, none like him. He is over all God blessed forever. None else deserves religious worship or religious service, supreme homage and supreme obedience. He deserves the highest service of angels and men, because he is God.

If we can so act that "whether living or dying we may be accepted of him," then all shall be well. His smile is life. His frown is death. If he approves, then all the world cannot put us in the wrong. If he condemns, then all the world cannot set us right. Learned, judicious and pious men have often approved whom the Lord condemned, and rejected whom the Lord received.

God is our Master. To him we stand or fall.

God is our Creator and Preserver. Shall we not seek to serve and please him? How monstrous that the thing formed should hesitate to obey him who formed it! How reasonable that, being fed and tenderly cared for all our days by the Lord, we should honestly and supremely try to please him.

God is Judge. He is Judge of all. His judgments are final, his decisions irreversible. God never calls a good man or a good cause bad, nor the reverse.

He is evil, whom God calls evil.

He is a fool, whom God calls a fool.

He is wise, whom God instructs.

He is happy, whom God pronounces blessed.

It is a great thing to be judged by the Lord. God is not and cannot be pledged to make good anything spoken by the wicked against the righteous; but he will make good every word he has spoken in their favor. Here truth is often outfaced and overborne by numbers, by clamor, by cunning, by force. But God's judgment will make all right. The last day will clear up a thousand things involved in darkness here.

What God says, he will stick to and execute. He is never influenced by clamor or the popular voice. Here on earth the wicked are often

set on high; and even after death great honors are often paid to them. But a great name on earth, or histories written in their favor, or a gilded monument over their bones—are a poor relief to damned souls!

Consider too that God is a good Master. He never makes unreasonable demands. He is never capricious. He asks no more than is his due. It is possible to please him. All the humble, contrite, believing people of God please him. He accepts service according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. Blessed be his name.

REMARKS.

1. Are we then pleasing God? This is a great question. Let us test ourselves by safe and strict rules. No man is pleasing God further than the tenor of Scripture applied to his case evinces. The tenor of Scripture is its general scope. This condemns some outright. Others it at once acquits. But others are of a doubtful character. They have some show of piety, some exercises of mind resembling Christian experience; but the scope of the Bible is against them. How is it with you?

No man pleases God any more than he evinces by his habitual speech. "By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." He who flatters, backbites, reviles, spreads scandal, or delights in foolish talking and jesting—is not pleasing God. But he who blesses and curses not, who keeps his lips from falsehood and deceit and vanity and malice, and trains it to love and truth and praise, is surely pleasing God.

Nor do any of us please God beyond what is evinced by our spirit of devotion. If we have no habits of devotion, we have no piety. If we have mere fits of praying and confessing sin, and yet do not always call upon God, our closets are witnesses against us. All who are pleasing God, evince it by their serious study of God's word, their

hearty prayers and praises, their honest self-examinations, and devout meditations.

Nor do we please God beyond what is proven by our common practice. All true religion is practical. A hypocrite can hear God's words; but to hear them and do them shows one to be a child of God. What is your life? All of life is a test. Everything tries us. What does your life say? It was Judas' habit to fail as often as fairly tried. It was not Peter's habit to deny Christ.

Does conscience say you are pleasing God? No man is better than a good conscience says he is; though many are worse than their evil consciences declare them to be. "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."

Nor are we pleasing God further than we are in heart conformed to the moral law. What does the law say of you? What do you say of it? "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Do you love?

Nor does any man please God further than he is like God.

God is just. Are you unjust?

God is true. Are you deceitful?

God abhors cruelty. Do you delight in mercy?

God is long-suffering. Are you impatient towards enemies?

Nor do we please God further than as we are like Christ and imitate him.

He was meek and lowly. Are you proud and haughty?

He forgave his enemies. Are you malignant or spiteful?

He loved godly men. Do you esteem the pious as the excellent of the earth?

He never needlessly hurt any man's feelings, and yet he never concealed a wholesome truth.

Are you like him? Do you desire to be more like him?

No man pleases God except as he is wrought upon by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and in sanctification. Has the Holy Spirit ever wrought effectually in you? Were you ever born again? Were you ever soundly converted? Is your sanctification progressing? Do you even know what sanctification is?

Try yourself, prove yourself, and find out what manner of spirit you are of. Self-deception is always more or less willful. Of course it is wicked. It is also foolish. It is always dangerous. It is many times fatal. "Be not deceived." "Don't you know that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" If you do not please God, you are yet in your sins.

2. If you are pleasing God, take the comfort of it, rejoice in the grace that enables you so to walk, and lay fast hold on the promises of God made to all such. Hear a few of them:

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he who receives it. To him that overcomes, I will give the morning star. He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white clothing; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. Him that overcomes, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne. He who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

3. How precious is redemption and how necessary is a simple faith in Jesus Christ. We must receive Christ as little children. For this there is no substitute. In his last hours, Bishop Butler was in darkness. One said to him, "Jesus is able to save them to the uttermost, those who come unto God by him." "I never understood that verse before," said he, as by those words the blessed Spirit lifted the clouds from his mind, and the light of Heaven broke in on his soul.

Dying, John Foster said, "If that great cause of faith and hope, the all-sufficient merits and atonement of our Lord and Savior were taken away, I would have nothing left."

John Selden was a most erudite Englishman, possessed much antiquarian, historical and legal knowledge. He was master of many languages, and author of works which have tilled Europe with his fame, and was possessed of a library of eight thousand volumes. When he lay dying, he said to Usher, "I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with

books and manuscripts on various subjects; but at present I cannot recollect any passage out of all my books and papers whereon I can rest my soul save this from the sacred Scriptures: "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

The most gigantic intellects have never found any way to peace with God, but by the cross of Christ. There is no other. There is no need of another way. This is the true way, the living way, the only way. Oh that you would believe in Jesus? Oh that you would cast yourself at his feet now. Tarry not. Delay not. "When his storm is in its fury, it may be too late to drop the anchor." Now is your time.

CHAPTER 16.

HOW God's People May Make Great Attainments.

Professors of religion may be divided into three classes. First, there are those of whom charity dares not hope that they are passed from death unto life. They are carnal, careless, covetous. They are manifestly just such as they were before they joined the church. In them no change of life appears to prove a change of heart. They are much like their other worldly neighbours, except that they go to the Lord's table. They add no strength to the cause of truth. They are spots in Christian feasts. They are a grief and a shame to godly people. The church has their names, but the world has their hearts. The number of such is painfully large.

A second class consists of those, who sometimes seem quite changed. Once in a while their faith and love and zeal appear to be unfeigned, and their humility profound. But their course is not uniform. At times they are like sky-rockets for brilliancy; but soon they lose their effulgence, and all you find left is a dirty stick. They have great defects and are also guilty of some excesses. The best Christians have not confidence in them, not because they love to indulge suspicion, but because they cannot help it. Paul said to some: " I stand in doubt of you." (Gal. iv: 26.) It is a sad thing when the conduct of professors of piety keeps their brethren in a state of alternate fear and hope, distrust and confidence. If they either fully and heartily condemn or confide in such, they fear that they are doing wrong. This class of church members at one time seems to be quite under the power of evil, and then quite penitent. There is perhaps not much very decidedly against them, but there is nothing very decidedly in their favour. They are always falling and yet seeming to recover themselves. They sin and seem to repent, and yet seem not to have thoroughly repented, for they soon sin again. Their number is considerable. Some, perhaps more of them than is generally hoped for, will be saved ; but many of them will no doubt perish. Those of them, who shall reach heaven, will be saved as by fire. They will suffer great loss too, for their works shall be generally burnt up, because they are wood, hay, and stubble. What a blessing it is that the Lord knoweth them that are his, and can find a grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff. Those of them, who are not saved, will perish very fearfully, for they had many convictions, made many vows, lived in the enjoyment of many privileges, and yet all to no purpose.

The third class of professors consists of those, whose profession is attended by fervent love, deep humility, Christian firmness, a well-tempered zeal, attachment to the whole law of God, and a habitual renunciation of the world, as a portion. Such have trials, days of darkness, and doubts, which lead them to cry mightily to God. At times perhaps they suffer even keen anguish. But no charitable person, who knows them, seriously doubts where their hearts are. They do not turn back — they do not look back. They are reliable

people. They maintain regular secret devotion, and consequently they exhibit a devout temper in society. Their brethren trust them, and are never disappointed. In their presence even wicked men feel "how awful goodness is," and often cease to lay snares for them, for they see that their minds are made up. They lose little time in debating idle questions. They do not by a doubtful course of life create distressing questions of casuistry. Their rule is to keep themselves as far as possible from all sin. They seldom dally with temptation. If they are overcome, it is only to rise with new strength after every fall. There is a sweet savor of piety about them. Their manners are perhaps very various, some being polished and bland, or affable and free ; others being awkward and uncouth, or quiet and retiring. But they uniformly shew a tenderness of conscience, an uprightness of intention, a zeal for God and a love to his people, which cannot be mistaken. They use the world as not abusing it. They live not after the flesh. They live unto God and they will die unto God. They do not overact their part. They are zealous, but not officious, prudent but not cowardly, decided but not obstinate. They greatly love the truth. It is their food. They hate every false way and all lying words. But they do not make a man an offender for a word. They are modest but not mean. They are often cast down but not in despair. Their humility, like the ample folds of a large cloak, covers even their good works from the gaze of many, and especially from their own eyes. They say but little to their own praise, because they do not think well of themselves. They put themselves among the least of all saints, yea among the chief of sinners. With pleasure they acknowledge the gifts and graces of their brethren. They often feel re-proved by what they esteem the superior attainments of others. They never think themselves eminent Christians. They forget the things that are behind and press forward to learn and to do more and better than ever before. They hate and resist vain thoughts. They are ashamed of their many failures. They grow. They first cast their roots downwards, then they bear fruit upwards. They not only begin but they continue to live by the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Their fruit remaineth in them because they abide in Christ. He is

their life and all their salvation. They glory in his cross. They glory in nothing else. Having begun in the Spirit they end in the Spirit also.

They may not be able to reason with subtle errorists, but neither are they led astray by them. They know that all doctrine, which puffs up the carnal mind, which gives low views of sin, which detracts from the glory of Christ, which gives iniquity an advantage over us, must be unsound. They, therefore, wisely eschew it. They have learned the difference between truth and error chiefly, perhaps, by means of that spiritual discernment, taste, and experience, of which they are possessed. Though they may not be skillful in argument, they are wise unto salvation. As the children of wisdom, they always justify her. Every one of them is at heart a martyr, and, under a fair trial, would be found unto praise and honor and glory. Through education, or church relations, they may have imbibed some narrow views, but they are not at heart bigots. And it is delightful to see their pure love like a flowing stream, rising above all obstructions, and pouring forth its warm sympathies on all, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever be their name or nation, color or condition.

The prosperity of Christ's kingdom lies near their hearts. They are often filled with sadness at the abounding of sin ; but they rejoice at the progress of truth and righteousness. The state of the unconverted and perishing millions of men deeply affects them. The low state of piety in the church makes them mourn and weep and pray. Yet the joy of the Lord is their strength. They rejoice in tribulation. They are useful and pray and study to be more and more so. Their example is a sermon, which no man can answer. By well-doing they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. They are not aware of half the good they are doing.

As they advance in life a delightful mellowness of character is more and more perceptible. They may seem to shrink away from the public gaze and from public duties, but it is not because they are soured with the world, nor because they have any haughty, or embittered feelings. They have learned in honor to prefer one another. They love

to be alone with God. Their meditation of him is sweet. They think of him in the night watches. They rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.

Some such eminent servants of God finish their course early in life. Their sun rises and shines in his strength, but goes down before it is noon. What a blessing such persons are. Those, who know and love them, cherish their memories with extreme tenderness. Their removal from earth is one of the things, which makes good men willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Others live longer and die at a time when we would expect them to be most useful. Such were Halyburton, and Brainerd, and Martyn, and Payson, and Kevins, and thousands, whose record is on high. Their death makes sad all their pious friends ; but it is hallowed. Had they lived longer, many might have leaned on them, or the church might have felt less her need of ascension gifts from Christ her Lord. Their work was done, and their Master called them to fill a higher sphere of usefulness, and honor, and felicity. And when he called them, good men both wept and rejoiced.

Some of the eminently pious are spared to old age. Then, like shocks of corn fully ripe, they are gathered into the garner of the Lord. Their last days are to the body full of pain and weakness, but to the soul full of peace. Their hoary head is a crown of glory, because it is found in the way of righteousness. No man can read the memoirs of John Newton, Thomas Scott, John Brown of Haddington, and many others, without seeing something desirable in the heritage of the saints even in old age. Balaam said: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

All of this class of persons enjoy religion. It is their meat and drink. They have bread to eat which the world knows not of. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he shows them his covenant. He is their portion. They are not driven out of the world, but willingly leave it. "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow

them." No sorrowing friend is sunk to the earth for fear that they are not saved. In the next world they shine as the stars forever and ever.

The well-spring and fountain of all these attainments must be sought in God, and in God alone. He says: "From me is thy fruit found." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." And God is a Sovereign, dividing his gifts severally as he will. His grace is as free and unmerited as it is great and glorious.

Yet God commonly makes his grace abound the most where his people most diligently use the proper means. Spiritual sloth is worse than natural. We must be up and doing. Words are cheap. We have in the church "many walking and talking skeletons." They are not fat and flourishing. They are sometimes loud and noisy professors, yet none but themselves think well of their case. They may talk of zeal and love, yet they never are much. But others are like cedars in Lebanon. They are strong men in Christ Jesus. They are pillars in the church. How did they become so ? The answer is, God made all grace abound to them, and so they abound to every good work. But how was his abundant grace bestowed on them ? This is a grave question, and deserves a grave answer. No man has ever become eminent for piety but in the humble use of proper means. The Holy Spirit is the sole efficient cause of holiness. "We may use all the means and be no better, he bless them to us. But then he always sends a rich blessing on all, who rightly wait upon the Lord in the ways of his appointment.

It has been said that some Christians, as some infants, are born with much more vigor, and seem to grow much more rapidly than others at the first. This is true. But did you never see such after a while become sickly? And have you not seen those, who seemed feeble at first, become strong and mighty? A healthy child may be so injured by the treatment it receives as never to make a strong man. The proper means must be used, and the divine blessing be secured on those means. What then must be done?

1. It is essential to the Christian's improvement that he maintain tenderness of conscience. A scrupulous conscience is like a diseased eye, which weeps at the light, or at nothing. But a tender conscience is like a sound eye, which weeps when a mote is in it. It is called in Scripture "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." We have many pleasing examples of such a conscience. Take one. In the midst of battle David became weary and thirsty. In that hour he thought, as men are apt to do, of the water, which he drank in his childhood and youth. And he said : " that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem." And three mighty men broke through the enemy's line, and drew water out of the well, and brought it to David; nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said: "Be it far from me, Lord, that I should do this : is not this the blood of the men, that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it." This was indeed a tender conscience, he knew that it was lawful to drink water. he knew that it would please his faithful men for him to drink this water. But then it had cost too much. It had been procured at the hazard of life. So he made it a thank-offering to God, who had mercifully, and, perhaps, miraculously preserved alive those intrepid men, who had perilled their lives for the comfort of their commander. Go thou and do likewise. Keep a tender conscience at all costs and at all hazards. Put not wicked gains into your pocket, nor lay them up for your children. In the end they will bring a curse on all concerned. Give no quarters to sin. Parley not with temptation. Touch not, taste not, handle not any evil thing, any doubtful thing. Defile not your soul with courses, the right of which you even suspect. It is extremely perilous to do so.

; 2. Be a diligent student of God's word, of God's whole word. Despise no portion of it. Its promises encourage. Its threatenings warn. Its precepts direct. Its histories teach by example. Its songs cheer. Its doctrines edify. Its prophecies prove its divinity. Not only read but hear the word of God, as it is the word of God. Beware of that bane of profitable hearing, a critical spirit. A display of your critical powers may please your vanity, but will never bring you on your journey

heavenward. Dr. Owen says of some : "They are ready to think and say, that the preaching and religious exercises, which they had in former days, were far to be preferred above what they now enjoy ; and they despise the ministers of the present age in comparison of their fathers. But the change is in themselves. They have lost their spiritual appetite. Being grown full of themselves and conceited of their own abilities, they have not that taste and relish for the word, which they had formerly ; and this is both the cause and the evidence of the decay of all their other graces." Any one, who has formed the habits of a severe, not to say capricious critic of preaching, is greatly to be pitied. Even faultless preaching would but strengthen such a habit. Beware of it. Earnestly cry to God for that faith, which must be mixed with the word read or preached, that you may profit withal. " As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." It is in this way that "the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, and grow like a cedar of Lebanon. Those, that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ; to shew that the Lord is upright : he is their rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

8. Would you attain eminence in piety \ You must also be a companion of all them, who fear the Lord, and especially of such as have knowledge and experience in religion superior to your own. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise. " The presence of such is no mean preservative against sin and no feeble stimulant to good. It is a great thing to have before us the words and example of one, who is a burning and a shining light. Great men often appear in clusters, as in the days of Augustus, of Cromwell, of Queen Ann, and of George the Third. The same is true of pious men. Eminent goodness is seldom attained by one man alone. It needs a Peter to strengthen his brethren, a John to set a high example of love, a Paul to bring out in their connection the truths of Scripture, and these all taught from above, and giving us high examples of virtue. Many a man has been vastly benefitted by spending even an hour with an eminent servant of Christ.

4. If you would attain eminent piety, study and labor to do good, as you have opportunity to all men. "He that watereth shall be watered." The widow's oil increased only so long as she continued pouring out. He, whose world is himself, must have both narrow views and contracted feelings. The very spirit of piety is benevolent. Our Saviour went about doing good. Nor did he tire at his work. Even when wearied with his journey he sat at Jacob's well, he would not fail to do good to the Samaritan woman. But beware of Jehu's vanity, and of what is akin to it, an angry spirit. Be grieved, but not offended, if sinners will not turn to God. Be not bitter against them. You ought to bear with the wicked as Ions: as God doe3. "Be patient toward all men." Quarrel not with them. They will be glad to have their controversy with God brought down to a contest with you. If they revile you, do you bless them. Expect not to be useful, but at a cost of feeling, ease, or money. Try every way that is lawful and wise. Encourage and aid those who shew any desire to flee from the wrath to come. Do all you can and in as private and modest a way as possible. Sow not sparingly. If men were but governed by an enlightened self-love, they would hardly be as penurious as they often are. " So quickly has the wheel turned round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity, which his own piety projected and consummated." In the very exercise of benevolence there is a blessing, which is worth far more than all it costs. The joy of doing good is one of the purest and most pleasing of all our affections. To do good from pure love is to be like God. But watch providence. To run uncalled and not to run when called are two things more nearly allied in temper and in guilt than is commonly supposed. Dr. Pavson says :

"What God calls a man to do, He will carry him through. I would undertake to govern half a dozen worlds if God called me to do it, but I would not undertake to govern half a dozen sheep unless God called me to it." And keep in your own sphere. "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." When Nero entered the lists to write poetry in competition with Lucan he was ridiculous and his life was embittered. When Henry the Eighth

undertook to confute Luther, he burnt his fingers, and the reforming monk laughed him to scorn. Let no man, in doing good, undertake what he cannot do well. The frogs may swell themselves till they burst, but they will never be oxen. And let not the oxen try to become little as frogs. It is no glory to a king, a senator, or a minister of Christ to excel in fiddling or in jesting. It is well to know what you can do, and what it befits you to do. When Cyrus of Persia and Jackson of America did the duties of a private soldier, it was to animate their troops by example. What is your proper place in the church of God, and in all labors of love? Find it out. Never leave it. Many a useful and honorable teacher of a Sabbath School loses all his influence by attempting to preach. Many souls may be won to Christ by an humble, laborious colporteur, who would be a burden to the church if he attempted some higher calling. " Earnestly covet the best gifts ;" but give not your great work for something above you or beneath you. There should be a place for every church-member, and every church-member should be in his place.

5. If you would advance rapidly in divine attainments, you must be serious. Moroseness is a sin and melancholy is no friend to piety. But seriousness is essential to great success in any thing, and especially in religion. - In the days of Elizabeth flourished that great statesman, Walsingham. In old age he retired into private life. Some, who relished merriment, visited him and rallied him on what they called his melancholy. He replied : * * I am not melancholy ; I am serious ; and it is fit I should be so. Ah my friends, while we laugh, all things are serious about us. God is serious, who exerciseth patience towards us ; Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us ; the Holy Spirit is serious in striving against the obstinacy of our hearts ; the Holy Scriptures bring to our ears the most serious things in the world ; the holy sacraments represent to us the most serious and awful things ; the whole creation is serious in serving God and us ; all that are in heaven and hell are serious, and shall not I be serious too ?" A mind, soured with the world, though it may be more unamiably and tormenting, is hardly a greater enemy to piety than is levity.

6. When you have done all these things, and whatever else seems called for, cast yourself entirely and constantly upon the Almighty Father for strength ; upon Jesus Christ for mercy, for atonement, for righteousness and for all-prevailing intercession ; and upon the blessed Holy Spirit for illumination, guidance, purity and abundance of inwrought grace. Do this at all times, praying with all prayer. "Whoever at any time has gone to heaven has climbed up thither on his knees. Nothing can be a substitute for a devotional spirit. They may, and I suppose they do live in heaven without what we call prayer on earth. But on earth prayer is our vital breath. Without it we die.

Whoever doeth these things shall never fall, nor shall he be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He shall make his calling and election sure ; and so an entrance shall be ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Chapter 17.

The Privileges of Believers

Christians have made a wise choice. They have cause to lament their folly in so long refusing God's grace, and in having served Christ with so little zeal. But no wisdom is comparable to the wisdom of the just. The main-spring of piety is love to God, to his Son, to his law, and to his service. This affection is not impaired, but strengthened by learning that the service of God is accompanied by amazing benefits and privileges. Should it be discovered that a life of piety had no higher blessings attending it than those which belong to a life of sin, there would certainly be great sadness among the friends of God; and his enemies would shout aloud for joy. The privileges of believers relate both to the present and to the future.

The first great blessing conferred on believers is the remission of all their sins. In the 103rd Psalm David puts this as the first of the benefits he received. He was right. Health is not so valuable. Life is not so great a blessing. When God forgives, he forgives all our iniquities. One unpardoned sin would as surely sink a soul, as one leak will sink a ship. Sin is like fire, of which a spark, no less than a shovel full of coals, will blow up a magazine.

The great defect of all systems of false religion is that none of them make any adequate provision to satisfy divine justice, or meet the demands of an enlightened conscience. The poor blinded devotee offers his prayers, and sacrifices, and comes away with all his guilt upon him. He mortifies his body by acts of voluntary humility, and goes into eternity wishing he had done more, or hoping that others will pray him out of torment. Nothing speaks peace but the blood of Jesus. That cleanses from all sin. So that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The handwriting, which was against them, is all blotted out.

And God's people are not only forgiven; they are also taken into His favor. By faith they lay hold of the merits of Christ, and, for his sake, God regards and treats them as righteous. Being found in him, and not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness, which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ, they are not found naked. Through the merits of Christ they have a right to the tree of life. Angels in robes of innocence have not so glorious an apparel as believers have in that linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints. How can men expect to stand before God, except with confusion and shame, unless they are partakers of the righteousness of Christ? In religious experience it would be no worse, it would produce no more distress to give up all confidence in the divine faithfulness, than to let go all hold on the infinite and all-perfect righteousness of the Redeemer. The truth of this remark is amply sustained by Scripture, and by the testimony of God's children.

God's people are also made personally holy. Their sanctification is begun by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and by the same blessed agent is carried on to perfection. In justification we are declared righteous in law; in sanctification we are made righteous in fact. In the former righteousness is imputed; in the latter it is imparted. Christ will present all his people before God without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. By his Spirit he makes the King's daughter all glorious within. The beauty of holiness shall be illustrious in all the redeemed of the Lord. "Be holy, for I am holy, says the Lord." He, who has begun the work of faith, will complete it with power. He is able, he is willing, he is determined to do it. He has set his heart upon it. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

These blessings are a beginning, and but a beginning of what God does for his people. Having done thus much, he is thereby graciously pledged to do more. And so he opens the store-house of his grace and bestows those precious benefits, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, growth in grace, a blessed hope of eternal rest, power to resist temptation and strength to hold on their way and be faithful unto death.

Even the ills of life are made the means of lasting good to them. The thorn in Paul's flesh kept him from spiritual slumbers and spiritual pride, and the buffetings of the messenger of Satan roused him to strong crying for help and salvation. His infirmity gave a blessed opportunity for the power of Christ to rest upon him, and so he gloried in it. Indeed such are the arrangements of the covenant of grace that all things work together for good to those who love God. The peaceable fruit of righteousness is gathered in great abundance from trees, whose buds are very bitter. The scorn of the wicked makes the saints pour out their tears unto God. Every pang is made the means of ultimate pleasure. So that the saints may well count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations. These produce a higher degree of patience, experience, hope and confidence.

Nor is the victory doubtful. God is on the side of truth and holiness. He is rich in resources, and has pledged them all for the complete deliverance of those who make him their refuge. A child of God, however weak, shall not be cast out. "The feeble among them shall be as David." The people who "know their God shall be strong, and shall do exploits." It is as high proof of the folly as of the malice of wicked men and fallen angels, that they still unceasingly annoy the true people of God. The great enemy was never yet able to pluck any out of the hand of the Savior! Many a time, indeed, where faith is weak, and the enemy comes in like a flood, the timid believer says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of my enemy!" Yet this same man shall soon shout, "Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Even that appalling event, the dissolution of the body, is followed by spotless purity and perfection, and by a crown of glory! Of all the steps in the exaltation of his people, none is more admirable than that taken at death. Then the believer goes from pain, weakness, fear, conflict and death—to joy, rest, victory and life everlasting! The public acquittal of the day of judgment, the immortal vigor and resplendent glory of a resurrection body, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God to all eternity, will be but fitting sequels to a life of faith and a death of hope.

Glory shall surely follow grace, and not a little of it either. There shall be an "exceeding weight" of it. Nor shall it be transient. It shall be eternal. It shall never fade away. It is not measurable. It is the glory of God, which shall be revealed in all the saints. It is matchless, endless, bottomless, fathomless glory. The faculties of the greatest men, so far as yet developed, seem to be incapable of any adequate conception of a state of glory. This has given rise to the opinion that as taste, reason and judgment are faculties of the mind quite undeveloped in childhood—so there are in all the saints undeveloped faculties, which on their admission into glory, will be brought into exercise. It may be even so.

Perhaps most men are aware of having both perceptions and conceptions which cannot be expressed, because they are so vague. Archibald Alexander says, "There are probably faculties of the human soul, not now exercised, which will be developed in Heaven."

Whatever may be the truth in this matter, Paul tells us that "now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as I am known." Saints "shall be forever with the Lord," and shall "behold his glory, which he had with the Father before the world was."

True, the attainments and condition of God's people are now low. Christ himself when on earth called them "little ones." This title is expressive and appropriate, not merely in the case of those who in childhood believe in Jesus, and are little of stature and of feeble faculties. Such are included; for out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God often ordains strength. But others are likewise included, even all believers. In the esteem of the wicked they are all "little ones."

Sinners have always held the saints in derision. They esteem and call them the offscouring of all things. The whole vocabulary of contempt has in every age been exhausted upon them. Puritans, Fanatics, Fools are but a few of the odious epithets bestowed upon them. The virtues of the Christian character do not please the tastes of carnal men. They despise the righteous. Ever since the foundations of the New Jerusalem began to be laid, sinners have shouted, "if a fox goes up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

The people of God are also in their own esteem "little ones." They have the temper of a little child; they are poor in spirit; they think soberly of themselves; they choose a low place as most befitting them. If others decry them, they answer not in great swelling words. They have long used such expressions as these:

Behold I am vile!

I am a man of unclean lips!

God be merciful to me a sinner!

I am not worthy to be called an apostle!

I am less than the least of all saints!

I am the chief of sinners!

Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?

God's people are generally, in fact, little ones, as compared with many around them. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things, which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things, which are not, to bring to naught things that are. Plebeian blood, a humble birth, poverty and shame are the common lot of nearly all, who love the Savior.

And the people of God on earth are "little ones," as contrasted with the angels in Heaven, who are mighty and excel in strength. Believers are weak. Like the conies they are a feeble folk; their strength is in their Rock. The glory of an angel lighted the earth, but the saints on earth have no dazzling brightness, no resplendent effulgence.

And in all things God's people on earth are but as children. They think, they understand, they speak, they enjoy as little ones. It shall be so until they put away childish things and cease from flesh and earth.

Yet feeble, few and little as believers are, they shall be held up, for God is able to make them stand.

Finally they shall be more than conquerors through him that loved them and gave himself for them. God will at last avenge their wrongs, overthrow their enemies, and put all their adversaries to shame. His power is made perfect in their weakness. He is their God and strength and portion.

The same blessed volume which calls them Christ's "little ones," styles them God's "hidden ones." (Psalm 83.) In what sense are they hidden? Not from the knowledge of God surely. The Lord knows those who are his. All things are naked and opened unto him. Nor are they hidden from the care of God. It is unbelief which suspects such a thing. "Why do you say O Jacob; and speak, O Israel: My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." Jehovah says, "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me." Every heir of grace may sing, "Lord, all my desire is before you, and my groaning is not hid from you." Saints are not hidden from the care of God.

Nor are they hidden from the watch of angels. They are a spectacle to angels. Their angels do always behold the face of God in Heaven, yes, they come forth and minister to all them, who shall be the heirs of salvation.

Nor are God's people hidden in the sense of being covert, guileful and cunning. Though they are not ostentatious, they are not deceitful. Nor do they make a secret of their love to Christ. They do not blush to own him. Nor do they try to hide their iniquities from the eye of God. They have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and do not walk in craftiness. Nor do they pass through the world without any mark upon them by which they might be known. They are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hid. In none of these senses are God's people "hidden ones."

How then are they hidden? They are hidden in God. Every perfection of the Almighty is a chamber of refuge to the humble. Thus David says, "You are my hiding-place; you shall preserve me from trouble;

you shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." Again, "You are my hiding-place and my shield; I hope in your word." And Solomon says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe." Eternal wisdom, power, justice, love, mercy and faithfulness, in short all divine perfections are towers of strength, where the chosen of the Lord find shelter. He hides "them in the secret of his presence from the pride of man;" he keeps them "in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

They are God's hidden ones also, inasmuch as they have food to eat, which the world knows not of. They feed upon the hidden manna. The kingdom of Heaven in all their hearts is like unto leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. They are hidden because their true character is not known to the world. Their master was unknown, and so are they. As his glory was veiled, so is theirs. The world sees their strictness, their zeal, their humility, their imperfections—but not their glory.

To the pious, every ordinance of God is a hiding place. Thus says David, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." None but those who have felt it, can tell the peace and comfort of a child of God, rejoicing in the ordinances of prayer, praise, preaching, and the sacraments of God's house.

God's people are also hidden ones, as the book of life where their names are entered, is kept in secret. It is in Heaven. It is not exposed to the gaze of the curious and profane. The enrollment is made by God himself.

They are also in the esteem of many often buried under the slanders and outcries of the wicked. The smoke of calumny often obscures their solid worth. Their best qualities are misnamed and their best acts misjudged. But let them not fear. God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day. Their motives and principles are not understood by the world; but the Lord

is their Judge. He will wipe every foul aspersion off from their names.

The highest excellency of being a hidden one is found in a union with Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. To the Colossians Paul says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." Thus is wondrously fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." This hiding-place has been sung and celebrated and resorted to by the saints ever since the days of righteous Abel, and shall be to all eternity.

God's people are also hidden by his providence. David prays; "Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings." All God's people are hidden by him. In vain does Pharaoh seek the death of the infant Moses, when God protects him. In vain do Jerahmeel and Seraiah and Shelemiah seek to destroy Baruch and Jeremiah, when God hides them. His kingdom rules over all.

Strange to tell, though God's people are unknown, yet they are well known, and, in due time, their characters shall be fully revealed. "The good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." The day will declare it. Blessed be God! He knows well the difference between chaff and wheat. He will manifest his hidden ones. Now but few discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked; but by and by the most dull shall perceive it. The day is not distant when shouts and alleluiahs from the righteous shall call forth groans, curses and screams from their enemies. The ungodly will soon be saying to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." But such a cry is desperate, and can bring no relief. For there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. The hail

shall sweep away their refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow their hiding-places.

But not so the righteous. They are safe, come what will. God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. They are secured against all perils. They are sure of all mercies. Nothing shall ruin, nothing shall damage them. The everlasting God is their exceeding great reward and their unfailing portion.

REMARKS.

1. Thanksgiving is a most reasonable duty. On the part of real Christians nothing could be more obligatory. If the half of what they believe and hope for shall ever be realized, they have cause for unceasing songs. But when we remember that God will do for them exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think, the motives to thanksgiving acquire unparalleled strength.

Besides, all these blessings are secured to us, in Christ Jesus. They are the price of his incarnation, the fruit of his agony, the purchase of his tears and blood. As Christ, and nothing else, is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes; as Christ and nothing else, can save a single soul of man; so it is right that Christ who came, and his Father, who sent him, and the Spirit, who anointed him, should have all the honor and glory of man's salvation. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus!" Let every creature say, Amen. This doxology was written by Paul, a prisoner. No chains, nor bars, nor stripes could repress his adoring praises. No griefs, nor calamities should repress ours. Let us crown our God and Savior in each of our songs.

2. Christians can well afford to let the wicked triumph now. Their laughter is but the crackling of thorns under a pot. It will take an infinite mind to gauge the folly of living a life of sin. Many think

there is a wisdom quite above that of fearing God; but this delusion never passes the portals of eternity, and seldom passes beyond the limits of temporal prosperity. The poorest man in the world is he who is not rich towards God. None have so much cause to be afraid of Hell as those who never think of it, nor fear its dreadful sufferings. Hell is the truth seen too late! How dreadful it must be to live in thoughtlessness and for the first time awake to just apprehensions of our character and destiny, when the day of grace is gone forever.

Nothing surprised men more than the blessings which our Lord pronounced on the righteous when on earth; unless it was the woes he denounced against some who are apt to bless themselves in their iniquity and compass themselves about with pride as with a chain. The former were such as these, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are you that weep now. Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Blessed are the meek," etc.

The woes are such as these, "Woe unto you that are rich—for you have received your consolation! Woe unto you that are full—for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now—for you shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you—for so did their fathers to the false prophets." It will be found in the end that the very beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

3. How reasonable it is to invite and persuade all men to be truly and earnestly pious. Make the service of God your business, and it will surely be your delight. The door of mercy is now open, therefore rise and enter. In an hour it may be shut, therefore fear and tremble. Speed your flight to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. If you are ever to be partakers of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, it must be in Christ. Can you doubt the wisdom of giving your heart to Christ and his service?

God's word and providence and man's experience, all point in the same direction. One of the best ways of ascertaining the nature of things is to ask dying sinners. They commonly speak clearly and uniformly. Not one of them has ever pronounced gold, or earthly honor, or carnal pleasure, of real value to a dying man. Not one of them has ever pronounced a life of sin wise, or a death in sin desirable. Nor do dying sinners ever testify to the value of their strong delusions, even when they hug them fast in time of health. The utmost error can do in that awful hour is to make those embracing it sullen, or irritable. It never kindles up the countenance with an unearthly smile. It never gives songs in the night.

The doctrine of the cross is the only religion for a dying sinner! Nothing else bears the soul above the world. Nothing else makes it strong in God. Nothing else gives the loud shout of victory to the poor soul of a dying man.

Chapter 18.

Good Works—Their Basis and Their Nature

Jesus Christ is not the minister of sin. "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:1, 4.) The true relation between God's mercy and man's holiness is a weighty matter. He, who holds the true doctrine respecting grace and works, has heavenly wisdom.

In explanation of this matter the Scriptures employ a great variety of figures. Among these none is more expressive than that drawn from architecture. The whole church of God is presented as a house of vast dimensions, and of great strength, beauty and durability, having the Lord Jesus Christ for the corner-stone, for a foundation. To his

people he is all in all. He is the ground of their faith and hope. On him they rest all their weight. He is the Rock of ages. In him center all their desires. From him are all their expectations. From him spring all their good motives. In the business of salvation he is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. He is the only foundation.

What he is to them, he is to the exclusion of all others. He admits no rivals in our confidence and affections. He is Lord of all. Other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is none other name given under Heaven among men, whereby we must be saved. He is the one and only Mediator between God and men. His blood alone, his righteousness alone, his priestly intercession alone—are sufficient for us. We need no other Savior. There is no other. No other can do us any good. All attempts to find another are efforts to defraud the Son of God of the glory, which is his due, and will be so regarded by him. He who climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Christ is not only the foundation of all good hopes and good results, but he is also the basis of all good works. From him is our fruit found. His Spirit gives us life and energy. His cross opens the way for the acceptance of such good works as fallen but regenerate men can perform. His love is the great ruling motive and stimulus to a holy life. Without him we can do nothing. All works, which do not spring from him, are dead works and have neither vitality, nor acceptance with God. He, who would be saved, must be willing to have Christ for his wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.

Unless our religion produces fruits of holiness, it cannot be genuine. Practice is the very life of piety. He who feels and thinks correctly, will act correctly. This is sound and true.

In God's word these things are made very plain.

I. In order that a work may be a good work unto God, it is necessary that it be something required by God in His word. No alleged good intention, no amount of zeal under pretense of religion can ever elevate any human device to the dignity of a good work. He who makes his people perfect in every good work does it by enabling them to do his will. To prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is our great business. Uncommanded observances in religion are at the best superstition. "Who has required this at your hands?" is the stern and solemn rebuke administered by God to all, who invent, or practice anything invented by man, to honor God. Of such Christ says, "In vain they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9.) By an ancient prophet God condemns those "whose fear towards him is taught by the precepts of men." (Isaiah 29:13.) He who forsakes God's revealed word as the rule of holy living, will find no natural resting place, until he shall arrive at the height of wickedness, reached by those who thought that they did God service by killing his saints. Their first and grand error was in determining for themselves, independent of God's word, how they would serve him. God gave us his word, not that we should judge it, revise it, or amend it, but that we should obey it. This law determines the whole matter, manner, measure and motive of duty. It tells us what to do, how and why, and how much to do. The word of the Lord is perfect. It admits of no improvements. God is the sole Lord of conscience, the only lawgiver in religion. Good works, therefore for the matter of them, must be enjoined by God.

In doing them our object must be the advancement of the glory of God, and our motive must be love to God. The whole must be done in the strength of Christ. He is our life. His grace is sufficient for us. By him we live, and conquer, and reign.

II. It is possible for a good man so to live and act that notwithstanding the imperfections of his services, they shall be accepted by God. In other words he may perform good works, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Thus Paul teaches that a man may build upon this foundation 'gold, silver and precious

stones,' by which beyond a question he means good works which shall be pleasing to God. It is true that sin is mixed with all we do. Our very best actions have in their imperfection a cause of humiliation, and so a ground of condemnation. But God, who graciously accepts the persons of believers, does graciously accept their sincere and honest attempts to serve and please him. This acceptance is abundantly declared in Scriptures. Thus the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. There is indeed in these works no merit by which a man may redeem his soul or purchase Heaven. They themselves gain admission only through the merit of Christ. So teach the Scriptures, "You also, as living stones, are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. " (1 Peter 2:5.)

So that it is true of all those who have fled for refuge to Christ, that, "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward his name." The merits of Jesus Christ cover such works of God's people with a delightful perfume, and their prayers and alms come up in remembrance before God. So that Christ is altogether and every way our Savior. He saves our souls from wrath and Hell and sin. He saves our works from condemnation and eternal oblivion, which they richly deserve, and makes them to be to us forever as gold, and silver, and precious stones, and thus we have treasure in Heaven.

III. A truly godly man, who really believes in Christ, may so act that his works will be rejected by God. They may be 'hay, wood and stubble.' This is a very solemn subject, and well deserves the close attention of every one. A man, who in the main trusts in the blood of Christ for salvation, may so far lose sight of the gospel plan of salvation as to go back to the law, and seek to commend himself to God more or less by his works. Having begun in the spirit, he may seek to be perfected by the flesh. Having fled from the law at the first, he may venture back hoping that now by the deeds of it, he may

perpetuate the divine favor towards him. This was the great error of the Galatians, which Paul so strongly reproved, and which brought on them so many troubles.

Preaching the gospel is itself a good work. If rightly done, it shall meet a great reward. Even if done with wrong motives, the truth preached may save the souls of the hearers, but to the preacher all will be hay, wood, and stubble at last. Paul tells us of some, who preached Christ from envy and strife, and some also from good will. The one preached Christ from contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. Yet he rejoiced that Christ was preached every way, whether in pretense, or in truth.

In the same way, a man may now preach the truth, not for the love he bears to it or to Christ, but for applause, for profit, or for some base end. Such service may get its reward here, but it will not gain any hereafter.

Or a converted man may be led far astray into fanaticism, or superstition, and may, with a blind and furious zeal, do things commanded; or, under pretense of serving God, may do things, which God has nowhere commanded, and so he may waste much of his life. The ingenuity and cunning of man work not the righteousness of God, and never will be owned by him as of the least value. It has been already shown how utterly valueless are all superstitious or uncommanded observances. That a good man may go very far astray, the Scriptures clearly teach; and observation and experience abundantly confirm. A man's life may in this way be miserably wasted. His work may be burned up and he suffer loss, but he himself saved. The Scripture does not say that a truly renewed man may so act that all his works shall at last be rejected. But it does clearly assert

that he may adopt such erroneous views, be swayed by such unworthy motives, and propose to himself such selfish ends—as

wholly to bring on an act, a series of acts, a great part of his acts, utter rejection by God.

They were not performed in the name or strength of Christ.

God's glory was not their end.

The love of Christ was not the constraining influence, that prompted them.

Self-sufficiency, formality, habit, or something, that implies no love or fear towards God, determined all.

Whereas Christ's great question at last will be, What did you do unto me? What did you do out of regard to my authority, my law, my example and my love?

IV. The scrutiny which all the actions of men will undergo in the last day will be thorough and searching. It will be the scrutiny of God. Omniscience cannot be deceived. The divine majesty will not be mocked. The holiness of God is unspotted. Our God is a consuming fire. All this is clearly asserted in God's word.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." It will not be by practicing any deception on himself or any of his creatures, that God will discriminate between the righteous and the wicked, the works of the spirit and the works of the flesh. God's people will not be saved, nor their works accepted by connivance at sin, and folly, madness and superstition. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The righteous Lord loves righteousness. He is not and never will be, like a partial parent, blind to the faults of his own people. It is not by shutting his eyes to their offences, but by finding in Christ a full satisfaction, which they also accept by faith, that he absolves them from guilt, and takes them into his favor. Nor will he regard as done unto him anything that was not intended for his glory.

The grace of the gospel does in no sense consist in trampling on law, in disparaging holiness, in denying iniquity and justice. God has already published in his word what will be gloriously manifest in the last day, that, while he freely pardons the sinner, he condemns sin; that while he accepts sinners graciously, he makes it manifest that it is a gracious acceptance he grants to believers. As gold, silver, and precious stones will stand fire, and their true nature be manifest by being brought under its action, so will the good works of God's people be tested by the fires of the last day. And as hay, wood and stubble are always consumed by a vehement flame, so will the essentially deficient works of the righteous perish in the fires of the last day, together with all the works of unregenerate men, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "Their sacrifice is an abomination unto the Lord, because it is offered with a wicked mind."

If these things are so, then:

1. Let every man solemnly consider his ways and inquire whether his present course of life is or is not really pleasing to God. You are a professor of religion. You ought to be. It is right publicly to own allegiance to God. How is your practice? Does it comport with all that a profession implies? Does it in its uniform course and bearing agree with your clear and settled principles? Or do you live without any principles on some great and weighty matters? Do you know your Lord's will?

God has declared that "whatever is not of faith, is sin." This one declaration covers these two cases. It clearly condemns those who willingly live in ignorance of their duty, and those, who, knowing what is right, are not true to their principles. Do you belong to either class? Are you fickle, or are you steadfast? Are you a pillar, or are you a reed shaken with the wind? "Those who trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever."

You visit the house of God and show some zeal in his worship. Why do you do it? Is it to glorify God, and seek your soul's edification? Or is it to maintain the proprieties of life and secure the respect of mortals? Is your heart in it? Are the courts of the Lord amiable in your eyes? When you are in your seat, where are your thoughts? Is your service rendered unto the Lord?

You give of your substance. Very well. If piety takes hold of a churl, it will make him liberal. It will convert a miser into a philanthropist. But then every man is not liberal from love to God. Some are so from a natural generosity of heart, some because they have been trained to it, some because they wish to be well thought of by men, and some because they expect to buy Heaven with their sordid pelf, despite their more sordid motives. Why are you liberal? Possibly you may have no higher motive than to get rid of importunity. Do you set the Lord always before you? When you have done a service to religion, do you dwell upon it with self-righteous delight? Or do you like Nehemiah say, "Remember me, my God, for good for this also and spare me according to the greatness of your mercy."

To be lightly esteemed of men for seeming to be a Christian, and to be rejected of God for not being one—is the righteous doom of every self-deceiver. But should we even be true Christians, yet what loss we may suffer by neglecting a proper course of vigilance over our ways and hearts. How mournful is the thought that some may live long and yet lay up but little treasure in Heaven. Watch! Stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. It is possible to err in engaging too much in outward observances.

No man ever watched his own heart too closely. Let your judgments and investigations of yourself be impartial, thorough and scriptural, remembering that they must all be reviewed and, if false, reversed in the last day. Therefore inquire often and earnestly:

whether you have any infallible signs of grace,
whether self-love has given place to the love of God and man,
whether self-justification has yielded to self-condemnation,
whether self-admiration has yielded to self-abhorrence,
whether self-seeking has yielded to self-denying,
whether your heart really approves of and loves the whole law of
God,
whether you really hunger and thirst after righteousness,
whether you earnestly desire to please God,
whether your heart is habitually towards the saints, the excellent
of the earth,
whether God's service and honor hold the supremacy in your
affections,
and whether you hate vain thoughts.

Especially what are your thoughts of Christ?

Do you rejoice in his honor?

Are you afflicted when he is reproached?

Do you chiefly care for his kingdom?

Is he precious to you?

Do you love him above all others?

Can you rejoice in tribulation for his sake?

Is his will as revealed in his word, your law?

Is he the end of the law for righteousness to you?

2. Let every man solemnly consider that the great end of our existence here, is to prepare for another and a better world. If men have any use of gold, silver and precious stones here—they will have much more need of imperishable riches hereafter. If the gold that perishes is of any use, the enduring substance of the next world will be of far more use. The gains of earth, though honestly obtained, are miserable trash, compared with the true riches of Heaven.

A residence on earth, united with the curse brought on us by the fall, has subjected us to employments, which to say the least are commonly not very elevated. But our debasement in sin, our foolish love of trifles, and our groveling conceptions—make us still more base in most of our aims. God is not in all our thoughts. We forget our everlasting home. We are so busy in laying up treasure here that we fail to lay up treasure in Heaven. Yet this is our great business, the very end for which every wise man lives.

One of the most difficult of all duties, is to keep eternity in full view. What will all our pains and trials for Christ's sake be to us, when we shall reach the everlasting future? Because "our life is a passage to eternity, it ought to be a meditation on eternity, and a preparation for eternity."

How poor will those men be who toil and save and hoard, and go to eternity without any righteousness to cover them, or any shelter to protect them. We are in the habit of regarding beggars on earth, as miserable, yet their wants may be supplied. Beggars on earth may become princes. But go poor to eternity, and your poverty will not only come like an armed man, but it will be perpetual. On the other hand, the righteous who are wise, and spend their lives and their all in seeking to glorify God, shall have an everlasting home, with God for their Father, and a kingdom glorious beyond all conception!

3. All, who shall at last be saved, will not be alike glorious. The joys and bliss of Paradise are the rewards of grace and not of debt; yet they will bear a relation to the service rendered to Christ on earth. He who sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly. Behold we count them happy, who endured cruel mockings, scourgings and deaths. There is no good man who does not believe the faithful martyr's crown to be very glorious. None of us may ever wear one so effulgent. But while the righteous shall shine as the firmament, those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever, and as one star differs from another star in glory, so also shall it be in the resurrection. When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality, and death is swallowed up in victory, and the people of God be glorified together with Christ—the least of them shall be wondrously glorious, but some will be as stars of the first magnitude.

4. Well do we speak of the true system of religion as the Christian religion. It is Christian because Christ is the sum and substance, the author and finisher of it. He is the way, the truth and the life.

If we would stand, Christ must be our foundation.

If we would be safe, Christ must be our sanctuary.

If we live usefully, it must be by his grace.

If we die happily, it must be through the power of his resurrection.

His doctrines are pure truth,
his example is without spot,
his death was a complete atonement,
his promises are stable as the pillars of Heaven.

None can resist his power, overreach his wisdom, or defeat his counsels!

It is easy to give too prominent a place to man. But it is not possible to make too much of Christ. "To be in him is Heaven below; to be with him and to be like him, is Heaven above." Oh that all would be his people! Oh that all would take him for their Savior!

Chapter 19.

Vain Religious Rites Compared with Hearty Piety Towards God and Genuine Kindness Towards Men

It is a fond conceit of many that sin, and the evils flowing from it, can be cured by the careful observance of religious rituals. The corrupt heart is averse to real holiness. It loves to heal slightly its own hurts. Some of the worst men of every generation are punctilious in their attention to religious ceremonies. They heed not the words of God, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6) In Scripture great stress is laid on this truth. Our Lord twice quotes these words; once to justify himself in holding familiar fellowship with publicans and sinners; and once to justify his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. (Matthew 9:13; 12:7.) Thus he clearly teaches that in a conflict between the letter of the ceremonial law and the spirit of the moral law, the former must yield. God prefers mercy, kindness, goodness, charity out of a pure heart—to any rites, or forms of religion, even when prescribed by himself.

Conformity to both tables of the moral law is of the essence of true religion. He who loves the one will not hate the other. Both demand the heart. Both claim the will and affections. From no precept of either can we be dispensed. But in every age God has instituted methods of public worship. These are in themselves right. Yet in God's esteem, our attendance upon them is as nothing compared with love and obedience to God and genuine kindness to man, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, comforting

the distressed, counseling the perplexed. If we cannot be in the house of God without slighting the charities of life, we must stay at home. He, who under pretense of piety leaves his sick wife or child to suffer alone, may join in public worship even with a great show of zeal, but he is not in the line of his duty.

The ceremonial of religion was never designed to make war on the moral duties which we owe to God or man, and all views of religion which elevate the ritual above the practical, the formal above the substantial, are erroneous. We may never sell morality to buy religion. Every ordinance of God was made for the good of man; and a right interpretation of Scripture can never justify either impiety towards God or injustice, cruelty or unkindness to man. That we may see how true this is, let us remember,

I. God is entirely beyond the reach of any personal benefaction from us. Even the Son of man, who once became poor, is no longer within the reach of human charity. Our goodness therefore cannot extend to any person of the Godhead. Man cannot be profitable to his Maker. But God has constituted the believing poor, the dependent and the afflicted of our race, his heirs and representatives. To them we may give whatever our love to him prompts. Thus our love to God has full though indirect scope; and opportunity of proving it is furnished to every man. So that if a man sees his brother have need, and shut up his compassion from him, the love of God dwells not in him. For if we love not our brother whom we have seen, we cannot love God whom we have not seen. (1 John 3:17; 4:20.)

II. Every day God sets us an example of goodness and mercy, which he requires us to imitate. He opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. He sends rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness. He makes his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust. He is good to the unkind and to the unthankful. He requires us to be imitators of him. (Ephesians 5:1.) If we are not like God, we cannot be saved; and if we

do not in our measure act like God, we are none of his. (Matthew 5:44, 45.)

III. Even under the Mosaic dispensation, God often declared a decided preference for a life of hearty piety, usefulness, self-denial and justice—over any devotion to prescribed forms of worship. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." (Proverbs 21:3.) The 50th Psalm declares very fully the principles on which the judgment of the last day will proceed. It announces that no man will be condemned for the lack of attention to sacrifices and burnt offerings, and expresses strong preference for thanksgiving, the payment of vows, prayer, obedience to the Word of God, honesty, purity, truth, charity and brotherly kindness. (Psalm 1:8-20.)

The prophet Isaiah lived in a time of general defection from God. The state of religion was sad, and the state of the nation threatening. All this time great devotion to sacrifices and burnt offerings to new moons, and the calling of assemblies and appointed feasts was manifest, but powerless. The remedy God prescribes is in these words, "Wash and cleanse yourselves; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:16, 17.) In his later writings the same prophet shows how iniquities had separated the people from God and their sins hid his face from them. Blood-guiltiness, injustice, lies, perverseness, reliance on vanity, violence and love of strife were the real causes of the divine judgments. (Isaiah 18:2-8.)

By the weeping prophet, the Almighty hewed the same guilty people. Theft, lying, murder, impurity, perjury, robbery, no less than idolatry, reduced their state so low that God actually forbade the prophet to pray for them. (Jeremiah 7:8-16.) Indeed in the same chapter God says, "I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but these things I

commanded them, saying: Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people." (Jeremiah 7:22, 23.)

The prophet Daniel held forth this same strong doctrine to the guilty Nebuchadnezzar, "Break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." (Daniel 4:27.)

Indeed thousands have gone through all the solemn forms of religion, and yet have continued enemies to God. However zealous we may be in professions, all is useless if we lack self-denial, benevolence, humility and a desire to do good. The worship of God, however decent, will not profit those who lie, and steal, and swear, and are drunken, and practice extortion, usury, backbiting, tale-bearing and tyranny. The unmerciful creditor and the fraudulent debtor, who come and stand before God and make either long or short prayers, are an offence to the Almighty. One may pay close attention to all the outward forms of religion without any genuine humility, or any spirit of true obedience, without ever heartily confessing or honestly forsaking a single sin.

The great matter in religion is to get the heart right. Until that is effected, nothing is right. A beautiful story is told by the Rabbis, "There came to sacrifice before the Lord—a poor, penitent Israelite. He had just risen from a sick bed, where he had lingered for many months, longing and fainting for the courts of the Lord. He could now scarcely sustain his tottering limbs; but he came 'with the people that kept holy day,' to witness the morning sacrifice. He heard those delightful words, 'You desire not sacrifice, else would I give it. You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, you will not despise.' They were like a cordial to his sinking spirit. The service was finished. One after another brought his sacrifice, and was accepted and dismissed; but the penitent had none! At length he drew near, and prostrated himself before the priest. "What will you give, my son?" said the venerable man. "Have you an offering?"

"No, my father, last night a poor widow and her children came to me, and I had nothing to give her but the two young pigeons, which were ready for sacrifice."

"Bring then, an ephah of fine flour."

"Nay, my father, but this day, my sickness and poverty had left only enough for my own starving children, and I have not even an ephah of flour."

"Why, then, are you come to me, my son?"

"I heard them sing—'the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.' Will he not accept mine? God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

The old priest was melted, and the tears started in his eye, as he lifted the feeble man from the ground. He laid his hands upon his head. 'Blessed are you, my son! Your offering is accepted. It is better than thousands of rivers of oil. Jehovah make his face to shine upon you, and give you peace.'"

IV. In Scripture God often declares his high estimate of the practical and spiritual above the formal and ceremonial. Kindness to the poor and defenseless, the widow and the fatherless, the stranger and the oppressed, is according to Scripture more pleasing to God than all religious rites.

Hear the decisions of his word, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10.) "To do good and to give, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Hebrews 13:16.) "Pure and unspotted religion before God is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27.)

More than once does God reprove the Israelites for requiring widows and poor persons to pledge their goods for money lent to them, or for

necessities sold to them. If a man would please God, let him not adopt religious cant; but let him so act that when the ear hears him, it will bless him; and when the eye sees him, it will give witness to him. Let him deliver the poor that cry, and the fatherless, and him who has none to help him. Let the blessing of him who is ready to perish come upon him; and let him cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. Let him be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor. (Job 29:11-16.) Let him not despise the cause of his manservant, or of his maid-servant; let him not eat his morsel alone, nor refuse the fatherless a portion; let him clothe the naked and cover the poor. (Job 31:13, 16, 19.)

V. There is a great day coming when all men shall be put upon trial involving their everlasting destiny. Omniscience will preside. No escape to the guilty will be possible. Men's real characters will then come forth to the gaze of the universe. On that awful day, what things will, and what will not be regarded by the judge as evidence of love to him? He, from whose lips each man shall receive the award of eternal life or eternal death, has said much about the points on which destiny will depend, "Then the King will say to those on his right: 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" (Matthew 25:34-36.)

Nothing is clearer from many Scriptures than that he shall have judgment without mercy, who has showed no mercy. (James 2:13; 2 Samuel 22:26, 27. Matthew 5:7.)

VI. All this reasoning and decision of Scripture is right and fair. No wife, no husband, no parent can be satisfied or ought to be satisfied with compliments and civility the most precise and abundant, if the heart is lacking. The most careful attention to solemn rites in religion may leave the heart full of pride, malice, ambition, worldliness,

resentment, forgetfulness, self-will, self-esteem and self-righteousness. Men love religious display and show; but God claims the heart.

Cain is quite willing to do anything demanded in the way of mere ceremony, provided he is not called upon to humble himself as a sinner before God. The Scribes and Pharisees paid tithes of mint, anise and cummin, but could not be brought to give due attention to the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, faith and the love of God. (Matthew 23:23; 22:37-40.) One of the most difficult tasks undertaken by apostles themselves was to teach the churches that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature and faith which works by love. (Galatians 5:6; 6:15.)

REMARKS.

1. Though men shall be judged by their works, yet they shall not be justified for their works. Grace and mercy alone save sinners. We do nothing to merit God's compassion, and yet every man shall be judged by his works. If a man shall not by his deeds, have proved his faith and his love, the Lord will judge that he had neither of those graces.
2. You should carefully guard against sordidly bargaining with the Almighty for salvation. Love is the spring of all works acceptable to God. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor and have not love, it profits me nothing."
3. When the Scriptures highly commend works of mercy and kindness to the unfortunate and afflicted as forming a chief part of the evidence in one's favor at the last day; they commend not a few isolated acts, performed in peculiar circumstances, when refusal would have covered one with shame. A churl may have permitted a traveler to lodge under his roof, but a churl was never "given to hospitality." No doubt Judas gave alms, but he cared nothing for the poor. The tenor of the life, not occasional departures from our old

habits, must determine the character. Peter once greatly sinned, but it was not his habit to deny his Master. None more fearlessly professed his name at the risk of life itself.

4. We may now see why some professors of religion have so little comfort in their heavenly course. They do but little good, and they get but little good. They sow sparingly, and they reap sparingly. If one would be a bright and shining light, he must lay himself out to serve God and his generation. Of all Christians Paul says, "None of us lives to himself." Would you have good evidence of acceptance with God? Study and pray and labor to please him, and to be profitable to your neighbor.

5. Beware of spoiling all your good works by indulging pride and the spirit of ostentation. Remember how sorely good Hezekiah suffered for displaying the treasures of his kingdom. If possible, let not your left hand know what your right hand does. One reason for this rule is that the feelings of the beneficiary may be spared.

6. Proper observation and reflection will probably satisfy anyone that ordinarily it is best for every man to distribute his own charity during his natural life. Testamentary bequests are often of doubtful character. In this land they seldom effect the object of the testator; or if they do, it is often at a great expense to the feelings of those appointed almoners. Greedy relatives commonly seize upon all they can get. Nor does it look well for one to hold on to his possessions as long as he lives, and then hinder his poor kindred from enjoying them by giving them to something perhaps designed to perpetuate his memory. Deny yourself, not your poor heirs.

7. What a happy world this would be if true religion, as described in the Bible, universally prevailed. If every man met in every other man a brother and a friend, if the holy law of honor, truth, justice and mercy were in full force, if prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God from all the inhabitants of earth—the joyful proclamation might be made, "The tabernacle of God is with men!"

No infidelity, no atheism, no form of error could long hold out against such holiness. The church would be clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. God would soon subdue her enemies under her. Tears and wailings of the children of sorrow would cease to cry for vengeance on their unfeeling fellows. The work of God would go on rapidly until the kingdoms of the world should become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. From widows and orphans would be heard the voice of thanksgiving and melody. Those who are now bound in affliction and iron, would come forth rejoicing. The dying mother would no longer speak of leaving her babe to the cold charities of the world. There would be bread enough and to spare; and the reproach of ages against religion would be gone. An outcry against godliness would then be but impotent malice, the barking of dogs against the lights of Heaven, the foaming of waves against eternal rocks.

8. This discussion forces upon us the conclusion that considering the amount of religious profession, there is but little genuine piety in the world. Form, fashion, feeling will save no man. There must be pious principles. There must be holy living. Godliness and mercy must enter into the vitals of character. True religion is something very different from popular belief. So far as we truly love God and are kind towards man, we are Christians; but no farther.

9. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another. Let us break off our sins by righteousness and by showing mercy to the poor. Let us see not how miserable, but how happy we can make every body around us. Let us weep and mourn before God. Let us never rest until we renew our hope in the blood of atonement, in the great Sacrifice of Calvary.

10. How guilty are lost sinners! If God asked them to do some great thing, especially something that would distinguish themselves—how soon would they do it! But when he says, Repent, believe, obey, accept the grace freely offered; and then as you have received mercy,

show mercy to others, they reject the salvation of the gospel. Such perverseness must meet with sore reprehension.

Chapter 20.

Instability in Religion

Human nature without divine grace, is the same from age to age. Depravity has no new forms. What has been, is still. One class of men are a great grief to the pious, particularly to godly ministers. They are those who awaken hopes, only to disappoint them. At times they are serious, but soon they are as thoughtless as ever. Their convictions are sometimes strong, but they are transient. They form good resolutions, but they break them. They make vows, and forget them. They turn their faces towards Zion, but, like Lot's wife, they look back. This is a practical subject and affects many. Let us look at it in order.

I. Transient and temporary religious impressions are common to many.

In fact few if any unconverted men are wholly without them. Pharaoh was often deeply impressed. He even asked God's ministers to pray for him, and made a very proper confession, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." (Exodus 9:27.) Yet he waxed worse and worse until he perished in the Red Sea!

So of Ahab, who abounded in daring iniquity. Yet this guilty prince was not without many deep and pungent impressions. When afraid of coming judgments, he assumed the attitude of a penitent, "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." Nor was all this sheer hypocrisy. Ahab was really alarmed. He had a sense of guilt. His humility was real, though it was not evangelical. God himself said, "See Ahab—how he

humbles himself before me?" But he soon reverted to his old sins. He hated the true prophets and sinned with the greatest greediness, until at length he ended his days miserably, and the dogs licked up his blood as they had licked up the blood of innocent men, his victims.

Learn a lesson from the history of King Saul, of Herod to whom the Baptist preached, of Simon Magus, who asked Peter to pray for him, and of Demas, who once sent salutations to the churches. All of these were the subjects of serious impressions; but none of them had any steadfastness of character.

Two of the four descriptions of persons mentioned in the parable of the sower illustrate the same truth.

In our own day, observation painfully confirms these general views. God sends sorrows on men, or families, or nations; their spirits are somewhat broken; they think of the past; a sense of ill-desert takes possession of them; they open the Bible; they read; they go to the house of God; they are sad; they send for their religious friends; they converse with them; they determine to forsake some sins; they resolve to pray—perhaps they do pray. But soon all comes to nothing. A few years or months or weeks end all their concern. They are no more affected. They are calm and quiet. Like the hypocrites of whom Job speaks, they do not always call upon God, but reserve prayer for seasons of great distress. They become shy of pious people. They go back to their old habits.

Some years ago a pastor made this record of one of his people, "He was sick—he was near unto death—and the world was receding from him—and hope was like a dying candle; and sore as was the body's agony, it was not like that pang the soul felt when the prospect of parting was before it, and the remembrance of the sunny day and starry night, and spring with all its awakened beauties, and the charm of friendship, and the exultant feeling of health, and the comfort of home and all that enchains to life—all to be left behind,

came to his heart. Oh! it was a confused mingling of pain and regret and dread. All was dark—all was wild. He 'mourned sorely like the dove—he chattered like the swallow.' Then he cried unto God and petitioned Jesus. And when his strength failed, he moaned a piteous prayer, and said, 'Oh, if I might be spared, if God would but raise me up, I would sin no more, I would never forget his goodness. I would be faithful, and my whole life would be a demonstration of my thankfulness.'

God heard and raised him up, and once more he went forth to the world. But the promise he made to his Maker, he forgot; and in the oath, with which he bound his soul, he perjured himself, and when one reminded him of that which should have burned upon his memory, he smiled and turned away.

How often does ease retract vows made in pain—as violent and void.

What godly pastor has more painful solicitude or greater anguish, than when he sees those for whose salvation he labors, forgetting their vows and promises made in sickness, or in other distress. They may not smile at the mention of their past sorrows and engagements. But they forget their anguish and break their vows. They are "very gracious when the pangs are upon them;" but they soon forget God who saved them from their troubles. All over the land many have often felt deeply under the preaching of the gospel. Tears have dropped from their eyes, and they have gone away, and been ashamed that they had wept. Perhaps they expressed the purpose to heartily to serve the Lord. It has seemed to them foolish, dangerous and wicked longer to defer solemn attention to their souls' affairs. To them time has justly appeared short, eternity near, and the soul of priceless value. To them religion has seemed to be a good thing—the one thing needful. Their affections have been moved. Unusual solemnity has come over them. But for fear or shame, they would have asked, "What must we do to be saved?" The stillness, the close attention to preaching, and occasionally the silent tear show what is

going on. To many the Word of God proves a discerner of the thoughts and intents of their hearts.

Some are cut to the heart, and feel that they must do one of three things:

either give up their sins and submit to God,

or cease to frequent the house of God,

or find out some new method of controlling their feelings.

After almost every revival of religion, we find members tracing their first impressions back to times when the ways of Zion languished, but when the gospel was still faithfully preached. The course of many is that of mad men. God loudly calls—and they stubbornly refuse. Sinner, sinner, is it not so?

What shall be the result? Will you awake out of sleep, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give you life?

II. All impressions and excitements of mind on religious matters which are thus short-lived, are without any saving efficacy. To all such inconstant souls God says, "What shall I do unto you?" I cannot approve you—I cannot count you as my friends. Yes, you deserve my frown and dread—you mock me and trifle with me—what punishment is too great for such? You have wearied me."

To all such God says, "Be not deceived, for God is not mocked!" That is, God will not allow himself to be trifled with. Speaking of such Peter says, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than at the beginning, for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them, according to the true proverb: The dog is

turned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire!" (2 Peter 2:20-22.)

In the state of such persons there is something exceedingly alarming and dreadful. Their latter end is worse than their beginning. And yet their beginning was under the curse and pollution of original sin. They were "by nature the children of wrath even as others." But their latter end is still worse. All serious impressions, all convictions of sin, all resolutions of amendment, all sound religious instructions—not ending in a scriptural conversion to God, sink the soul under heavier guilt and into deeper ruin! Those, and only "those who endure to the end shall be saved."

"The fearful soul, that tires and faints,
And walks the ways of God no more,
Is but esteemed almost a saint,
And makes his own destruction sure."

No temporary religious impression is saving!

III. All considerations proper to such a subject urge us to stability and perseverance in a pious course.

The transcendent importance of religion itself demands our whole hearts during our entire lives. If religion is anything, it is everything. If it is of the least importance, it is of infinite importance. If it is worthy of a thought, it claims the highest degree of attention. If man has a soul that shall outlive the blazing sun in the heavens—then no effort to save it can be too great, too resolute, too persevering.

Though an infidel, yet Hume had the sagacity to see, and the candor to say, that admitting the immortality of the soul, the damnation in Scripture threatened against one wicked man was a greater evil than the destruction of a thousand material worlds. He spoke correctly. It is an unvarying rule of wisdom to attend to our interests according to their relative importance. But what interest rises to such amazing magnitude as the salvation of the soul? One soul is worth millions on

millions of worlds! In the pursuits of literature, of science, of gain, or of ambition—our zeal and devotion may easily be excessive. Not so in scriptural endeavors to save the soul. The prize for which we run is worthy of all diligence, of all sacrifices, of all earnestness!

To save the soul, the eternal Son of God humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death of the cross. The value of the soul does not vary. Why should our efforts to save it be vacillating? In the bloom of youth, in the cares of middle life, in the infirmities of old age, in public and in private, in sickness and in health—our souls being eternal, are always of infinite value. Should not our efforts then be persevering? Oh that men would ask the price before they barter away their souls for toys, their eternal life for fleeting joys, the glory of Heaven for the pains of Hell!

Nor are the dangers and difficulties in our way so variable as to justify relaxation in vigilance and fervor. The enemies of our souls are cunning, numerous and powerful. Nor can we tell the day or the hour of sorest trial, for the peril is often greatest when we are least apprehensive. Carnal security is a dangerous and alarming token for evil. In view of our dangers and enemies, inspired men say, "Be vigilant, be sober, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour!"

Nor should we forget that the principles and claims of the divine government are the same, and therefore our service should be zealous and constant at all times. Whatever our obligations were to God yesterday, the same are they today, and the same shall they be forever. There are no days set apart by God for the indulgence of carelessness or of any other sin. To the pious soul his service is the keeping of a jubilee. All other service is bondage and drudgery. It is therefore merciful as well as just in him to hold us firmly and perpetually bound to cleave unto him with full purpose of heart. In no way can we escape his service for an hour, but by desertion and dereliction. We owe him all we have and are. Nor can our sacrifices for him ever be equal to his claims upon us. No godly man ever

desires a discharge from his obligations perpetually to love and obey God. Whatever cause the godly man has to be pleased with the character of God, the person of Christ, the work of the Spirit and the duties of religion, is permanent. There is no reason why he should be much engaged in religion today, and heartless in it tomorrow.

The very nature of a religious profession implies the same thing. Christ authorizes the enlistment of no men in his service for a hundred days, for six months, or for a term of years. Once a Christian, always a Christian! is the law of enrollment. "The righteous shall hold on his way." 'Tis the hypocrite who follows the Lord, but not fully. 'Tis the self-deceiver who makes some reserve. 'Tis the double-minded who intends by and by to take his fill of sinful delights. The man, whose heart is really engaged to God, asks the privilege of offering himself a whole burnt-offering. His language is,

E'en if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give him all!

The spurious professor intends to do as little as possible, because he acts by constraint. The genuine follower of Christ desires to withhold nothing because he is impelled by love.

Continually recurring mercies, call for our best services. There is excellent theology in the couplet,

Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise!

A sense of the hourly goodness of God seems to have taken possession of David. He said his devotions should be paid 'morning, noon and night.' And as though that were not enough he said, "Seven times a day will I praise you." A heart in such a mood would not waver like a wave of the sea. Its course would be steady and onward. To be afraid of a little sin, to be conscientious about little duties, and

to be thankful for small mercies—are good evidence that we are in a gracious state. Nor is a true Christian at any loss to find mercies both great and small. They are scattered all along his path. "By reason of use his senses are exercised to discern tokens of the Lord's kindness through life." Load him with chains, and he is thankful that the throne of grace is accessible. Feed him on the plainest food, and he blesses God that his bread and his water are sure. Shut him up in a dark dungeon, and he sings, "The Lord is a sun and a shield. He will give grace and glory. No good thing will be withhold from those who walk uprightly." Such a man will find new and mighty motives to cheerful and persevering obedience in the darkest hour and under the thickest clouds. In the night season, God will be his song. His meditation of the Most High will be sweet.

Thus it comes to pass that the more the pious man knows of God and his service, the more is he pleased with them. Nothing offends him. No commandment of God is grievous to him. Even the work of self-denial, by reason of use and the help of grace, becomes pleasant. Flesh and blood rebel—but grace triumphs.

REMARKS.

1. Immortal soul, what is the character of your religious impressions? Are they stable? Are they transient? Are you dying unto sin? Are you alive unto righteousness? Are you strengthened with might in the inner man? Is your profession unwavering? Are your convictions of personal unworthiness deeper and deeper? Do you wish them to be deeper still? Has your former seriousness of character given way to levity? Do you often and solemnly think of eternity? Has your liveliness in religion been followed by dull formality? Is your goodness like a morning cloud? or is it like the rising sun that shines more and more unto the perfect day? These are solemn questions. Be honest with yourself and upright with God in your answers. On what do your hopes for eternity rest?

2. And, now, unconverted man, do you not see the worthlessness of much that you have been trusting in as a ground of hope? Your occasional twinges of remorse are no substitute for abiding spiritual conviction of sin. Your temporary paroxysms of grief for sin, can never take the place of sincere godly sorrow. For some of your grosser faults, when exposed or reproved, you have been ashamed for a time; but that will avail nothing unless you "remember, and are confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when the Lord is pacified toward you for all that you have done." (Ezekiel 16;63)

Prayers you have doubtless at some time offered, but they will do you no good unless you have a heart to "pray always with all prayer in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance." Efforts you may have made to save your soul. But such efforts! So fitful, so sluggish, so unproductive of lasting good.

He, who in the study of any science, or the practice of any art or profession, should imitate your efforts in religion, yourself being judge, would be guilty of superlative folly! Come forth at last, and give your heart to God. "Then you shall seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your hearts!" You must sell all that you have, if you would buy the pearl of great price.

God forbid that on any subject the Lord's ministers should deceive you. But when all is at stake, when the salvation of the undying soul is directly involved, deception is cruel soul-murder! It is but common honesty to say to you that if you love father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, ease, houses, lands or life—more than Christ, you cannot be saved; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. You, whose goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew, come and make an everlasting covenant with God that shall never, no never, no never be forgotten. Come and embark for life, for eternity in the best of causes, under the best of masters, and with the sure hope of the best of rewards.

Chapter 21.

The Falls of Good Men

There is much said in the Bible about standing and falling. To stand is to endure, to be steadfast, or gain the final victory. To fall is to lose ground, lapse into sin, or perish.

The lapses of God's professed friends present a mournful subject of contemplation. But as sad as it is, it may do us good to reflect upon it.

I. Professors of religion, and even good men may openly and shamefully sin.

It is not surprising that false professors should fall into sin. They have no religious principle to sustain them. It is a wonder that they give so little pain and trouble to the church as they often do.

Take the case of Demas. For a long time and in considerable peril, he professed the faith of Jesus. He seemed ardently attached to the person of Paul and to the doctrine of the Gospel. He was associated with the pious Luke. He united with others in sending greetings to the Colossian church. All this looked very well. Yet in a time of no peculiar danger, when the church had comparative rest from persecution, suddenly he forsook Paul, being overcome by covetousness. Tradition says he became a priest in a heathen temple, where he could get gain. It is astonishing that he did not much sooner manifest his worldly spirit.

Unhallowed nature may go very far in its professions, and yet may fall away without any strong temptation. We are poor creatures. Our strength is weakness; our wisdom folly. We have no might to do good. Any church may have a Demas. He who has not the root of the matter in him may at any time fail in his profession.

But truly pious people also may fall into open and shameful sin. God has given us many and solemn warnings on this subject. We are commanded to give the more earnest heed to these things, lest at any time we should let them slip; to be sober and to be vigilant; to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. We are even exhorted not to talk about some things. The bare mention of them might excite to sin. Many Scriptures urge precaution and carefulness and circumspection.

It was a merciful arrangement in Israel that as the Passover was to be celebrated with unleavened bread, the Jews were not allowed to keep leavened bread in their houses; nay, nor even leaven itself, lest they should be tempted to make fermented bread and so transgress the ordinance of their God.

To put the matter beyond all doubt, the Bible gives us instances in which good men have wounded their consciences and given gainsayers a weapon against religion. The Bible tells us of . . .
the drunkenness of Noah and of Lot,
the prevarication of Abraham,
the deception of Jacob,
the sins of Moses, of Eli, of David and of Solomon.

The New Testament informs us of grievous disorders in different churches, especially in Galatia and at Corinth. Even good men in the enjoyment of high privileges may greatly err. They may fall from the truth. They may err from the right ways of God.

II. There are reasons why God permits his people thus to FALL.

1. One is that he may destroy their spiritual pride. This is a great foe to grace and to God. Men may even say that pride ill becomes them, that they have nothing to be proud of, and that they ought to lie in the very dust and cry, "Unclean!" Yet the approaches of pride are so insidious, that even good men are sometimes terribly under its influence. When this is so, it is frequently unavailing to warn them

with words. Therefore to save their souls, God withdraws his supporting hand and lets them go, and down they come! Because the heart was lifted up, God fills it with labor and sorrow. Thus "when pride comes, then comes shame." (Proverbs 11:2.) "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18.) It is a great thing when we go astray, that God fills the soul with its own ways and makes it hate itself for its lack of humility. The Lord is determined to stain, mar and bring down the pride of man. (Isaiah 23:9; 25:11; Jeremiah 13:19.) Sooner or later he will do it. If he has purposes of mercy towards us, he will adopt painful remedies if mild ones will not answer. The work of sanctification cannot go on in any heart where spiritual pride reigns. To destroy such evil in the heart, God sometimes lets the proud fall.

2. The falls of Christians are sometimes permitted to destroy their self-confidence. This is strikingly illustrated in the history of Peter. He was not willing, even for a moment, to doubt his own firmness and constancy. The like often happens to others who trust in themselves that they are strong, or faithful, or courageous. "When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died." (Hosea 13:1.) "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." God will teach men that lesson, cost what it may.

3. Some good men, however, are of so hopeful a temperament and are so much inclined to a secret leaning on their own virtues, resolves and energies, that severe and painful lessons are necessary thoroughly to put them on their guard. It is a great mercy when the Lord teaches us habitually to feel that no flesh shall glory in his presence, and that whatever good is in us, is the fruit of divine grace. The self-confident do not relish those statements of Scripture which make them take shame to themselves, and give glory to God; such as, "I am what I am by the grace of God!" "The weak brother shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand." "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy—to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and

forever!" The self-confident knows not half the sweetness of such Scriptures; but if other measures fail it is kind in God to let them fall, that they may learn to look away from self to the God of all grace.

4. Sometimes God permits his people to fall that he may teach them more fully to give up the world. Even good people may attempt to form alliances so that they may receive the praises and smiles and advantages of worldly men. In vain are they warned that it is impossible to serve both God and Mammon, to hold fast the friendship of the world and the favor of God. They vainly think they see a middle way whereby they may secure the good of both worlds. They court the world; it smiles; then they yield a little; thus matters proceed until they find themselves enthralled and the ungodly laughing at their weakness and despising their piety. It is sad indeed when the children of God so walk as to mar their profession by an exposure of their covetousness and by rendering their integrity doubtful. At such times conscience is severely wounded. But it is better to have our sins exposed here, than when it is too late.

5. Sometimes God permits his people to fall that he may make them tender and charitable towards their brethren. When a professor is harsh towards an offending but apparently penitent brother, he is committing a real sin and may soon fall into even a greater error. When men will not show forgiveness to others until they are painfully made to feel the need of it themselves, it is a mercy in God by any means to work in them kindness of heart. Uncharitable tempers prove any one far out of the way. As no man is more often offended by pride in others than the proud themselves; so no man needs a kind reproof of his conduct, more than he who is slow to show pity. If God loves such, he will make them sensible of their own errors. In some effectual manner he will teach them their vileness, insufficiency and need of pity both from God and man!

6. The same tenor of remark may be applied to any sin under the power of which one is brought. God lets some fall to cure their distrust in Jehovah, their forgetfulness of him, their ingratitude for

his mercies, their covering of their own iniquities, their selfishness and unchristian timidity. It seems like a strange course to let a man get worse in order to make him well; yet some are slow to send for the Great Physician until they see that they are ready to perish! Some will not let Christ put to death their lusts, until they become outbreaking.

Such a course of treatment is very painful. Every good man who has had experience in this thing has found it so. He was made to smart for his transgressions. He was a loathing to himself. His bones were broken. Some have lain deserted by God for a long time; and some seem never to have recovered their religious happiness to the day of death. Yet this was better than to live in sin, until one should stumble on the dark mountains.

7. Another reason why God permits his people to fall is that the wicked may have an opportunity to exhibit their true characters. On such occasions they speak reproachfully, and ordinarily utter much wickedness. The day of judgment will show how perverse, profane and malignant have been their speeches at such times. God proved Pharaoh by the plagues of Egypt. God proves all men by his prolonged mercies; and he tries his enemies by letting them see the falls of even good men. If David must ascend the mount of Olives weeping, Shimei shall be there to curse him.

8. The falls of God's people promote holiness in their brethren, not by a direct influence but by the power of divine grace. At Corinth the church had become somewhat cold and disorderly. One of the members fell into gross sin. At that time Paul wrote to them. For a season his Epistle made them sorry. It is still true that when one member errs, his brethren have great anguish. But this is profitable to them. Paul says, "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done." (2 Corinthians 7:11.) Well may it make one watchful when his fellow stumbles. Well may each one search his

heart and implore the scrutiny of omniscience when his brother, in whom he confided, has erred from the path of rectitude. At such times the pious hear Christ saying, Will you also go away? Will you also wound me in the house of my friends? Will you also be high-minded and not fear? Will you not learn to go softly before the Lord? Such a fall brings into exercise pity, compassion, Christian sympathy, kindness and forgiveness towards him, who has sinned and repented. Thus God sometimes makes such a fall the occasion of increase of grace in various ways. This is all owing to his sovereign power and amazing love. Blessed be his name forever.

III. If we would not fall we must take good heed to ourselves.

Heed is care, attention, caution, wariness, circumspection. He who having treasures walks among thieves, is careful what he does. If any one Christian grace more than another enters into this heed, it is that excellent quality, holy fear. Bunyan says, he had sometimes wished that the whole keeping of the town of Mansoul had been committed to godly fear. This grace at once so calm and so solemn, so watchful and so opposed to sin, is a grand preservative against falling. Carelessness, light and inconsiderate conduct naturally lead to error and to anguish.

Of course a very high estimate of the value of spiritual and everlasting things has no little to do in keeping us from falling. When that which is at stake is felt to be infinite, in fact to be our all, it is not possible for us to think slightly of its loss. The Savior says, "Let no man rob you of your crown." If we lose the crown, we shall with it lose the kingdom.

When one walks through the grass or the grain infested with poisonous serpents, he takes every step with caution; he looks before, behind and on either side, lest he should be bitten.

If one is placed on an eminence, supplied with weapons and told to keep a strict watch, and he shall easily repel all attacks made upon

him; the danger is that after awhile he may be thrown off his guard, may say to himself that all is well, and thus be overpowered.

The Christian is furnished with the panoply of God, is told that he will be assaulted, but is assured that if he will do his duty, he shall never fall. For a while he obeys orders, fights the good fight of faith, but in some unsuspecting moment, he falls asleep on his post, and at such an hour as he thinks not—the enemy surrounds him, and he is led captive by temptation. If he had known the number and strength of his foes, he would not have acted thus; or had he known the hour when the assault would be made, he would have been on the alert.

This heed is specially called for, when we have first recovered from a fall. Having gained one advantage, the adversary will soon make another assault. What has been done, may be done again. Without special care, the soul will relapse and the second fall will be worse than the first. If you have fallen once, remember that you may fall again. He who is once conquered, proves that he is not invincible. A second fall will probably wound the conscience very deeply.

We should be very careful to walk circumspectly immediately after the reception of special blessings from God. "When you have eaten and are full, then beware!" Religious raptures are sometimes succeeded by fleshly frolics. Satan's first attack on Christ was soon after the voice from Heaven had said, "This is my beloved Son," and just after the Holy Spirit had descended in a visible form to rest upon him.

Recent refreshments in the Lord, and recent observance of ordinances, so far from forming a defense against the attacks of Satan, rather expose one to them. The cunning pirate lets a fleet of ships empty in ballast pass by him, but gives hot chase to the rich merchantman.

When one is about to engage in any new and special work for the glory of God Satan often endeavors to gain an advantage over him.

The son of Sirach gave the sum of many a Scripture warning when he said, "My son, if you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation." A good beginning is of great importance. If the adversary can prevail on us to take a first false step, he will hope to have a continued advantage over us.

In short there is no situation in which this heed is not called for. Occasions of stumbling are presented so suddenly, the enemy is so subtle, he approaches us under so plausible appearances, he so well knows our peculiar weaknesses and besetting sins, that he who is not continually on his guard is liable to be hurried away into sin in such a manner as to render him miserable through life, and to do an injury to Christ's cause which long years may not be able to repair! How all eyes are turned to the sun when eclipsed. In like manner but with malicious joy, the wicked gaze at the church, when instead of shining fair and clear, dark spots obscure her brightness. Then the profane wag the head, reproach the Savior, and say that all religion is vain. Thus they confirm themselves in error and rebellion. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

REMARKS.

1. All those affections, sentiments, opinions and practices, whose nature is to beget carelessness and unguarded conduct, are unscriptural. If even our joys and hopes make us heedless, we are better without them. If we have so conceived of the gospel as to judge that its fullness and promises render watchfulness unnecessary, we quite mistake its true nature. If we esteem the influence and operation of the Spirit and grace of God as authorizing us to pursue any course of conduct agreeable to our carnal nature, we are certainly turning our liberty into a licence for sin, and perverting the richest mercies of God. "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall"—lest he fall into open and shameful sin—lest he fall never more to rise. Paul says, "I beat my body and bring it into subjection;

lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27.)

That which is at stake is of infinite value! A man may lose an eye or an arm and yet have an eye and an arm left; but if he loses his soul, then all is gone, and gone forever!

2. The perseverance which God requires is perseverance in holiness—fidelity unto death. Though God may overrule the falls of his people to his glory and their good, yet let no man tempt the Lord, or suppose that it is not perilous for him to do anything presumptuously.

3. We may be greatly mistaken in our estimate of the efficiency of causes, both good and bad. We may think ourselves safe, when there is but a step between us and ruin. Paul was much delighted with himself when he was persecuting the church to strange cities; yet had he died the morning he set out for Damascus, he would have been forever undone!

4. Though all professors of religion may err, yes, though all of them were insincere, yet that can in no wise excuse or profit the unregenerate, who have not assumed the Christian profession. Every one of us must give account of himself unto God. Hypocrites and unbelievers shall have their portion together in the eternal lake of fire!

5. When men shall be taken from present scenes and circumstances, and have their abode in the eternal world—then their views of things will be vastly changed. Nothing will seem very evil except sin. Nothing will wear the stamp of very great value except holiness. We shall find that we have miserably overestimated the present, and underrated the future.

Chapter 22.

Self-deception!

Self-deception is easy—and there is much of it!

The word of God, good practical writings on religion, the polite literature of the day and common observation, all unite in begetting the persuasion that there are many self-deceivers in the world. Every thinking man must admit that the subject is of great importance, involving our best interests. The following positions are easily sustained:

I. Self-deception is easy.

The mind itself is subtle, and all its operations are rather concealed from our view. The soul was formed for contemplating God, his works and ways, rather than for looking at itself. He who made the soul and he alone understands it perfectly. It is probable that holy angels in Heaven study their own character unspeakably less than they do the character of God.

Moreover, sin itself begets self-deception: "Men love darkness rather than light." "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it!" Sin always darkens the understanding. Huge volumes of smoke and darkness have risen from the bottomless pit and settled over the mind, so that man is altogether brutish in his knowledge, and vain imaginations are ever floating in his mind. Men have eyes but they see not.

Inordinate self-love also blinds the mind. You can undertake no more unwelcome task than to convince a man of his own errors. Men are lovers of themselves more than lovers of God. They riot in carelessness. How seldom does an unrenewed man observe a day of self-recollection. It is a great tax upon one's time to sit down and investigate his own heart and conduct. Or if such a thing is attempted, what is more common than greatly to slight the work?

Then, too, familiarity with any sin, and especially with sin in ourselves, mightily diminishes our ideas of its odiousness. Frightful as death itself is, familiarity with it is found often to harden the heart. Much more do we become callous in regard to that which is morally wrong.

Moreover, the meltings of nature and the meltings of grace much resemble each other. The faith of the understanding in some things is not wholly unlike the faith of the heart. Self-confidence sometimes gives as much composure as the confidence of faith. False humility often puts on as coarse sackcloth as gospel humility. False hopes give joy as well as a good hope through grace. Morbid sensibility often weeps as much as true penitence. Scrupulosity often looks like tenderness of conscience.

Systems of education, which have in them finesse and insincerity, greatly add to the power of these things. We may conceal our sentiments and principles from others, until we ourselves hardly know what they are. Many systems of polite education are full of hypocrisy.

Moreover the god of this world blinds the minds of those who believe not.

Although not omniscient, yet he knows much that is in our hearts.

He is skilled in deceiving.

He is very daring.

He assailed even Christ.

He quotes Scripture with great readiness, Matthew 4:6.

He is dreadfully malignant.

Innocence is no barrier against his wiles.

He entered Eden itself!

He has no compassion on the weak or the ignorant.

He assumes every appearance from that of a roaring lion, to that of an angel of light.

False religion pleases him as well as total atheism.

He has great power in deluding men and making them think they are something, when they are nothing.

He rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

Under his influence men call good evil, and evil good.

He is always busy.

He never misses a sermon or a prayer meeting!

He corrupts our secret devotions.

He closely watches his prey and tightens his fetters.

He is often most busy with us, when we least think of his presence.

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes!" Ephesians 6:11

Men help to deceive each other. The world is full of errors on all subjects connected with piety. False opinions prevail. The wise, the rich, the powerful and the honorable greatly influence those around them. The learned possess vast power, but even the rude and the poor terribly corrupt one another. There is hardly an error in

doctrine or morals concerning which the opinion of some great one may not be cited in approbation.

So it has come to pass that almost all vices and errors have good names, and every species of sin is palliated. Especially does the world universally approve and commend a low standard of piety. "Many deceivers are entered into the world." (2 John 7)

Then the heart is all ready for these temptations. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." (Proverbs 28:26) "They return but not to the Most High." (Hosea 7:16.) All this is abundantly taught in Scripture. "The pride of your heart has deceived you." (Obadiah 3) "Take heed that you be not deceived." (Luke 21:8) "Let no man deceive himself." (1 Corinthians 13:18.) "Be not deceived." (Galatians 6:7) "Let no man deceive you with vain words." (Ephesians 5:6) "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22) "Little children, let no man deceive you." (1 John 3:7)

II. There is much self-deception in the world. This is true in all respects. How many mistake their calling through an erroneous view of their talents. Every profession has many such. For every office, aspirants without qualification are numerous. Many, who would otherwise be respectable, make themselves ridiculous by claiming qualities or abilities of which they have not the semblance. How many are deceived about even their manners. If they saw how offensive they were, surely they would not retain their bad manners.

But the heart is much more subtle than the mind or the manners. Some men will allow you to criticize their gifts, or their ways, provided you will not impeach their moral qualities. Indeed the more you tell an outrageous man that his conduct is intolerable, the more outrageous does he become. None calls more loudly for acquittal than the base and the crude. It is well worthy of note that the best men in the world have always lamented their liability to self-deception. They know that they are apt to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. How many have vainly

supposed themselves possessed of more grace and strength than their subsequent experience evinced. Some who imagine that their souls are like Mount Zion, that they will be faithful unto death, that their zeal will be quenchless, that their hopes will always be bright—are soon found quivering like leaves, forgetting their vows, overcome with languor, and ready to sink into despondency.

All Christians testify that before conversion their views of themselves were very erroneous. And even after conversion, not only individuals but whole churches have said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," when the Lord saw that they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!"

Those developments of character, called changes for the worse, give us like warning. When young, the Emperor Nero seemed truly solicitous to make his people happy. He was kind, compassionate and condescending. He was tender and generous. So men esteemed him. So doubtless he esteemed himself. But as circumstances changed and his real principles gained strength, he butchered his own mother, set fire to Rome, and exercised cruelties which have made him infamous forever. Hazael furnishes another example. When the story of his wickedness was read to him by the mouth of prophecy, he exclaimed, "What, is your servant a dog that he should do this evil thing?" (2 Kings 8:13) So true is it that even wicked men, moved by the power of conscience, may express abhorrence of sin, and yet they may soon commit it.

Whoever has had much to do with those sinners, who have been left to perpetrate great crimes, has seen how difficult it is to convince them of their wrong the Bible abounds with proofs that the worse men are, the better they commonly think themselves to be. When the Jews were terribly apostate from God, had wearied him with their words, had robbed him, had used stout words against him, they yet cried, "How have we wearied you? How have we robbed you? What have we spoken so much against you?" (Malachi 2:17, 3:8, 13.) The

world is full of Pharisees and Pharisaism. Saul of Tarsus thought himself an excellent man when he was murdering the saints.

Many have thought that they had the very spirit of martyrs, when on fair trial they openly renounced Christ. When bloody Mary ascended the throne, a general fear of persecution was excited. The pious and humble Saunders expressed to Dr. Pendleton apprehensions lest in time of temptation he would wound his own conscience by some act of sinful timidity. On the other hand, Pendleton spoke confidently of his ability to resist unto blood. The time of trial came. Out of weakness, Saunders was made strong, and died in the faith; while Pendleton drew back, renounced his principles, and received the mark of the beast! He who thought he had the very spirit of Stephen, had the spirit of an apostate.

Others, who have supposed themselves fully prepared for the hour of ordinary death, have discovered their mistake when it was too late. Death came, and ah! what fear! Ah! what trembling! Ah! what anguish! Ah! what amazement! Ah! what despair! The annals of our race are full of such records.

The history of every wicked man who ever thought himself fit for Heaven, shows how apt men are to deceive themselves. The number of such is immense. In the time of our Savior, the great body of the Jewish people bore this character. Every general persecution has detected many such. The loose, careless, worldly lives of many professors now on earth, prove the same thing. The tree is known by its fruits. "He who does righteousness is righteous, he who commits sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:7, 8.)

The above shows how easy it is for men to deceive themselves, and that many are actually self-deceived. Let us now consider the signs and dangers of self-deception.

III. The SIGNS of self-deception are many.

When a professor of religion is wise and prudent in worldly matters, but not shrewd or discerning in the things of religion, he is deceived. "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." (Isaiah 54:13.) If we lack spiritual discernment, then we lack the Holy Spirit; and "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9.) Jesus Christ laid down that gross spiritual blindness as a mark that men were not of God. (Matthew 16:2, 3)

Another sign against many professors is, that though when sick, or afflicted, or terrified by conscience or by judgments—they engage in prayer; yet because they have no genuine spirit of devotion, they soon find it irksome. "Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" (Job 27:10)

The whole religious experience of self-deceivers is fitful and transient. Dr. Payson says that such do not repent any more after a hope of forgiveness springs up. But the true Christian never is more broken-hearted, than when his hope of forgiveness is strongest. Self-deceivers often pretend tenderness and liveliness in the things of God beyond what their experience will justify.

They are uniformly more afraid of suffering than of sin. They are more afraid of denying themselves than of denying Christ. When liberty, property, character or life is endangered by a Christian profession, their fears are dismal. (Isaiah 33:14.) Sooner or later the rain descends, the floods come, the winds blow and beat upon their house, and great is the fall of it!

Self-deceivers also judge harshly and severely. They are keen to discern small faults in others, and slow to perceive great faults in themselves. (Matthew 7:3-5.)

Those professors who live under the power of covetousness and are not careful as to the means employed for accumulating, who esteem their wealth, their time and their talents as their own, who are cruel in their dispositions and bring malice into the service of God, who

are ready to promise and slow to perform, who abound in professions and in failures, who hide their sins under specious pretenses, who are strict in the ceremonies of religion, but easily pass by faith, justice, mercy and the love of God—may be sure that they are deceiving themselves. (1 John 2:15; Exodus 5:2; Psalm 12:4; James 1:20; Matthew 23:2, 3, 5, 14, 23.) The same is made manifest when men commend the pious dead and hate the pious living among them. (Matthew 23:29, 30.)

The good of self-deceivers is commonly overestimated. When they should be liberal, they are prodigal; when they would be economical, they are stingy. Instead of being humble, they are mean. Instead of being noble, they are proud. In them:
moodiness takes the place of seriousness,
levity takes the place of cheerfulness,
cringing takes the place of courteousness,
stubbornness takes the place of decision,
laxity takes the place of moderation,
bitterness takes the place of zeal,
indifference takes the place of calmness,
superstition takes the place of devotion.

Whatever they do is overdone. They carry their principles to great extremes. If they sing, they sing too loud. If they pray, they pray too long. If they commend, they become flatterers. If they reprove, they break the head. Instead of prudence and discretion, they have craft, cunning and sly reserve. Without faith they are presumptuous. Without hope they are confident. Without meekness they are tame. They are bitter instead of charitable, and fierce instead of kind.

"Some men carry on a kind of coasting trade in religion. In the voyage of life, they profess to be in search of Heaven, but take care not to venture so far in their approximations to it as entirely to lose sight of the world; and should their frail vessel be in danger of shipwreck, they will gladly throw their darling vices overboard, as other mariners their treasures—only to fish them up again, when the

storm is over. To steer a course that shall secure both worlds is still a thing unattained as yet, either by the divine or the philosopher, for the track is discoverable only by the shipwrecks that have been made in the attempt."

Many deceive themselves by supposing that they are pious because they love to go to church. If the services of the sanctuary are properly conducted, they are delighted. The music puts them into a very pleasant state of mind. They admire the gifts of their pastor. In manner they are very devout.

With solemn step they leave the house of God. Not an unjust criticism escapes their lips. Even pungent preaching pleases them. The most solemn truths do not disquiet them. Such were Ezekiel's hearers, of whom God says, "They come unto you as the people comes, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words. And lo, you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Where is the failure here? All looks well. God tells the whole story in brief, "They hear your words, but they do them not." (Ezekiel 33:31, 32)

Some go still further, "Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me." (Isaiah 58:2.) Education, conscience, love of society, self-righteousness or something else other than the love of God, constrains them to be present and stirs up their emotions. One may be called a Christian, may rest in the gospel, may make his boast of God, may know his will, may approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Scriptures, may be confident that he is a guide of the blind, a light to those who sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and of the truth—and yet know nothing of true religion. (Romans. 2:17-20.)

Self-deceivers often rely more on the estimate given of their state by some partial or charitable person—than on the clear, unmistakable decisions of Scripture. It is amazing how far some men will go to learn the opinion of a pastor, or a parent, or a neighbor. Some pastors and some people very unwisely persuade others to join the church. There seems to be a great vanity in swelling numbers. But the opinions of our fellow-men can never settle the question of the reality of our piety. The church of Sardis had a name to live—a good reputation among men; but he whose prerogative it is to judge the heart, pronounced them "dead."

Others deceive themselves by making their prosperity the test. "Ephraim boasts: I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin." (Hosea 12:8.) Yet all the while he held a deceitful balance and loved to oppress. Prosperity can never establish piety. God often gives great success to the worldly schemes of carnal men.

Others think they are certainly the children of God because they are so afflicted. Sickness, bereavement, loss of property, loss of public favor— any form of tribulation is enough to satisfy them that they are on their way to Heaven. They regard each pain as having some merit. But they are strangers to holiness of heart; they are never conformed to the image of God.

Others deceive themselves by judging that they are as good as their neighbors. In this they may be mistaken; but if not, their neighbors may still be living in sin. Oh that men would wisely say as did the apostles, "We dare not compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12.)

IV. In religion self-deception is dangerous, and if persisted in, eternally ruinous. What profit is there in self-deception all? One may for a time gain a little popular applause, though that would be rather

a dark sign. He may have an increase of public confidence, but he will probably soon lose that. He may obtain some false peace of conscience. The foolish virgins slept as soundly as the wise. But an earthquake will soon shake the soul to its foundations.

All these semblances of good are short-lived. At the farthest, death will take them all away. A good name, public confidence, solid peace of mind and all other advantages of a profession of religion, can be much better secured by sincerity than by self-deception.

What constant effort the self-deceiver must put forth to keep up appearances, to act a character not his own, and conceal the character belonging to him! He smothers the fire in one place, presently it breaks out in another. He hardly mends and daubs one part of the wall, when another is ready to fall down. His whole life is vexation to no good purpose. In death, if not before, he finds his profit to be pain. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, when God takes away his soul?" (Job 27:8.) "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." (Job 20:5.) In the end he will fall into his own pit and entangle himself in his own net! At death his day of grace forever closes, his opportunities of salvation end, and he becomes the receiver of endless woe! His very insincerity brings upon him as the Savior said it would, "the greater damnation." In eternity his shame will be perpetual, his wounds incurable, his guilt overwhelming, his ruin everlasting! All the hopes he ever cherished will become his tormentors. His self-righteousness will clothe him with confusion.

REMARKS.

1. The eternal happiness of many a man depends upon his entirely giving up his present false hopes of Heaven. This will be the first step towards salvation. What one thinks he has, he will not seek after. It is asking a great deal to request a man to give up his religious hopes and lay a new and solid foundation. Very few men who have come into the church, have ever ceased to hold fast the lingering delusion that all was right. Many professed new conversions are of very

doubtful character. False hopes please the carnal heart. Yet continuing to hold them, is adding sin to sin. The self-deceiver disbelieves all that God has said on the subject in his holy word. In so doing he impeaches the divine veracity. He must terribly mistake the divine character, when he supposes that the Most High can delight in one whose soul is filled with such vile affections as are continually in exercise in his bosom. "Sound conversions are rare; but the instances of false religious hopes being forsaken, are still more rare," says Jonathan Edwards.

2. It is a blessed thing that our salvation does not depend upon knowing ourselves perfectly, but on our being known of God. (2 Timothy 2:19.) With what joy does the believer come, and humbly appealing to Omniscience say, "Search me, God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 119:23, 24.) An honest desire to know the worst of our case, and to secure the scrutiny of Him who searches the heart—is a hopeful sign in a professor of religion.

3. If we are thus in danger of being deceived, how watchful ought we to be over our own hearts. We wrestle against flesh and blood, against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places and against the rulers of the darkness of this world. We must watch:

all our opinions,
all our doctrines,
all our practices,
all our words,
all our thoughts and feelings.

Jealousy over ourselves is seldom excessive, unless the mind has become diseased. Who ever heard of a dying saint lamenting that he had put too strong restraint upon his own lusts, or had served God with too much carefulness?

4. The fundamentals of character in all unregenerate men are the same. The ordinary non-professor has no more love to God, no more faith in Jesus Christ and no more indwelling of the Spirit than has the self-deceiver. He does not indeed pretend to what he has not, but then he has not that which would make his profession of piety sincere. Neither of them has forgiveness; neither of them has experienced a change of heart. Both of them are on their way to eternal ruin. Whatever may be their present estimate of themselves, they are preparing for a dreadful overthrow. The poison of sin is working death in them!

5. It is a great mercy that we have the Scriptures in our own language. Our translation is a good one and the Scriptures are clear. They point out the way to the skies, and the way to the pit, with great discrimination. Let us test all our opinions, hopes and feelings by this unerring rule, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

6. Let no man blame religion for that to which religion is most opposite. All insincerity and self-deception are frequently but very erroneously put down to the score of genuine piety. It might as well be said that the sun was the cause of blindness, that courage was the parent of cowardice, that patriotism was the cause of treason, that truth was the cause of falsehood and that love was the cause of hatred. A good tree does not bring forth evil fruit. Insincerity is incompatible with true religion. True piety is the sole and sovereign remedy for self-deception. The truth is simply this: Christ has on earth a true church. Satan has also a kingdom in this world. These princes and their hosts are utterly opposed. But Beelzebub frequently sends into the ranks of Immanuel some of his followers. They come in as spies, or under some strong delusion. They profess love to Christ. His people are not of a suspicious temper. They more readily distrust themselves, than others. They ordinarily take men upon their profession. This proves that they are charitable; but a self-deceiver is yet an unbeliever—a tare growing in the midst of wheat. So that neither Christ, the Bible, nor true piety can fairly be held responsible for the self-deception of any man.

Chapter 23.

Modern Missions

The history of evangelization for the last hundred and twenty years is full of instruction. In most of its enterprises, the beginnings have been small. A few dollars for the treasury, and a few friends for counsel and prayer, have been all that could be found for a start. This is God's ordinary plan. From the acorn comes the oak. The kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. No wise man will despise the day of small things. The human race have always begun existence in embryo. Only one pair ever escaped the weakness and helplessness of infancy.

In how many cases has God put great honor on poor, plain, young, earnest men. Some such have belted the globe with a hallowed influence. God delights in taking the poor from the dunghill and setting him among princes. What a change in the history of men and families would be made by striking out all that is connected with missions!

Labors for the spread of the gospel have been extraordinary schools for the minds, hearts and manners of men. Perhaps no men have evinced more decided growth in all the elements of greatness than many foreign missionaries. To be fit to rule and raise his people, Peter the Great condescended to labor a shipyard. To avoid hindrances to the gospel, Paul became a tent-maker. To teach the Hottentots to build houses, Vanderkemp labored in a brick yard. Rather than not go to China, Milne was willing to take the place of a servant. Hardship is the road to eminence.

Many missionary undertakings have presented to natural reason the most painful discouragements, yet they have succeeded. Take from the Moravians their missionary exploits, and their glory is departed. How the islands of the sea have waited for God's law, and their poor

inhabitants been raised and made to rejoice in his salvation. There are now on earth hundreds of thousands of converts from heathenism. Nations have been born unto God. Ninety million copies of God's word have been sent out into all the earth. People who seemed doomed to extinction, have been raised to thrift, comfort and increase. The Stockbridge tribe of Indians, who at one time were reduced to one hundred and twenty-eight souls, are more than doubled in numbers, and quadrupled in wealth. The whole history of modern missions proves the truth of Elliott's saying, "Prayer and pains along with faith in Christ Jesus, can accomplish wonders."

Beyond all other causes, missions have advanced the interests of literature. Under their influence, spoken tongues have become written languages. They have produced more grammars of strange languages than all other causes. They have filled the world with translations of all the inspired writings, and of many of the choicest productions of gifted men. Bunyan, the great Dreamer, is showing many heathen born pilgrims the way to the Celestial City. The Dairyman's Daughter is read by the Hindu with as much zest as by the farmer of America. The printing-press is at work day and night. Millions of readers have been raised up and taught to know much that concerns their well being.

Whatever has been done in this cause has been in the face of the fiercest opposition. The enemy has practiced all his old arts. He has resorted to scorn and slander, contempt and violence, persecution and murder. But the cause moves onward. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. At one time the cry is, "If a fox runs along that wall, it will fall down." At another, the cry of treason and rebellion has been loud against the best of men. But God holds all of his enemies in derision.

All who have lived for the spread of the gospel have been remarkably sustained in spirit and in personal happiness. Who ever received a murmuring, melancholy letter from a foreign missionary? Trials they have had, but God has not forgotten them. Often have they been:

troubled on every side, yet not distressed;
perplexed, but not in despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken;
cast down, but not destroyed.

Above most, they have learned in whatever state they are, therewith to be content, and to rejoice in tribulation. "Doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man's life."

Modern missions have remarkably evinced the power of the distinguishing truths of the gospel. Christ crucified is still the great theme for the preacher who would bring men to know, love, fear and obey God. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. The East and the West Indies, the high latitudes of the North, and the warm regions of the South Seas—furnish like testimonies to the power of the preacher, who stands crying, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" There is no Savior but Jesus. There is no truth that can save, or heal, or help, but in him. The lessons taught to mankind on this very subject by the labors of many good men have been of the highest importance.

Missions have also shown that genuine piety is ever the same. However diverse people may be in manners, color and government, if the grace of God takes hold of them, it makes them all in their measure like their Savior. The martyrs of Madagascar have shown the same constancy and benevolence of those who suffered under Nero and Domitian. The desire to make known God's love to sinners appeared in Africaner after his conversion, no less truly than in Paul the Apostle. The joy in Samaria does not seem to have surpassed that at many a mission station, when the Holy Spirit was poured out. If in early times sound conversions were manifested by holy living, so were they in Brainerd's poor Indians.

The reflex influence of missions has been most happy and most powerful. They bless all who love them, or give to them, or pray for them. What reading, and writing, and speaking, and parting, and

meeting, and giving, and receiving, and hoping, and believing, and praying, and praising have had their rise in this blessed cause.

What illustrations of Scripture we find in missions. Such texts as the following seem to have new meaning, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive." "He who waters, shall be watered." "Your bread and your water is sure." What a chasm would be created in our best religious biography, if we would have to give up at once the memoirs of all modern missionaries.

The conclusion is that we should all have more zeal in this cause. It is more worthy of our love and efforts than we have ever thought it to be. Help on this cause at any sacrifice of ease, or pleasure, or property. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Chapter 24.

The Right Temper for a Student of the Bible

Everyone must have observed that very different degrees of success attend the studies of those engaged in inquiring into sacred things. Nor is this difference always decided by natural talents, nor by literary acquirements. Wholly sanctified to the glory of God, these are truly important; but relied upon, they are but a splendid failure. The history of the Church abounds in mournful illustrations of the danger of leaning on these things, and of forgetting the necessity of other and higher qualifications.

That the study of the Bible conducted in a wrong temper, will be productive of little or no profit, is a truth commonly admitted by serious people. Surely the Scriptures so teach. Moreover, a wrong

temper is itself criminal, and should be avoided, even if it were no hindrance to one's progress in knowledge. The lack of a right temper produces more miscarriages in the lives of theologians than all other things united. The whole history of theological studies does not tell us of one who kept his heart with excessive diligence. The reason is that out of the heart are the issues of life.

There is reason for believing that many fail in their studies because of the power of prejudice. Nothing is more opposed to teachableness or to our advancement in learning, than a state of mind forearmed against the truth. Impartiality, essential to high success, is difficult of attainment. Prejudices are judgments for or against things proposed to our minds without investigation, or at least without sufficient foundation. They result from education, from temperament, from sectarianism, or from some sin indulged. Even when prejudices are in favor of the truth, they have no saving efficacy. Sanctification is not through the strength of our prejudices, but through the belief of the truth. Prejudices against the truth often prove fatal, overriding strong convictions, and causing the entire and sometimes a bitter rejection of doctrines essential to salvation.

When one is in such a state that he will not examine evidence and truth with a good degree of impartiality, it is certain that he will go astray.

When men come to God's word, not to be taught, but to teach, not to learn the mind of the Spirit, but to find some way of supporting error, or of evading unwelcome truth; when with avidity they seize anything favoring their dogmas, but carefully avoid whatever wars against their preconceived opinions—they effectually exclude themselves from the way to any large attainments in divine truth. The light that is in them thus becomes darkness.

So far as it is unsanctified, the human mind is enmity against God, against his nature, his will, his word; so that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness

unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Some indulge prejudices against particular books of Scripture, and others against particular doctrines of God's word. Such are often found following vain and wild notions. One says, "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."

Richard Baxter says, "Fame and tradition, education and the country's vote, become the ordinary parent of many lies; and folly makes us to fasten so fearlessly in our first apprehensions, that they keep open the door to abundance more falsehoods. It must be clear teachers, or great, impartial studies of a self-denying mind, with a great blessing of God, that must deliver us from prejudice and undeceive us."

It requires no humility, no faith, no grace of any kind, to be an earnest partisan of any dogma or sect. Whatever our education may have been, we will find it no easy task to eradicate prejudices. It is a great mercy when God enables us to lay aside our "beloved opinions," and to sit down with prevailing candor to the study of his truth.

Such are the weakness of the human mind and its liability to err, that nothing is more reasonable than sincere humility in every student of Scripture. The greatest experts in every branch of knowledge have been tenderly conscious of their own weakness and liability to err. The books are full of commendations of this virtue in all the walks of life. But humility is not a mere ornament. It is of essential use in the conduct of our studies. It should therefore be sincere. The Scriptures lay great stress on this matter. "Do you see a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than for him!" "Trust in the

Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

Our Lord chiefly refers to this humble estimate of ourselves, when he says, "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." He who is grossly ignorant of his own faults and deficiencies, who greatly overestimates his abilities and attainments, will hardly advance in anything good or great. He who has real piety and much knowledge of himself, must be lowly, far removed from flippant self-conceit.

Such subjects as God's nature, counsels and government; as man's dependence and freedom, his obligation and destiny; such themes as time and eternity, life and death, sin and holiness, Heaven and Hell—cannot be rightly understood by the proud and self-sufficient. Let men hear and read, "not to contradict and confute, nor blindly to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." We might almost as well not meditate on divine things at all as to think in the self-sufficiency of a proud heart.

If one has a great idea of himself, the presumption is that it is the only great idea he is likely ever to have. But let not these remarks be misunderstood. Let no one cultivate servility of mind. Contempt for the faculties God has given is as unfriendly to success as self-conceit. Dr. Taylor of England gave to his students this wholesome advice:

"1. I solemnly charge you, in the name of the God of truth, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the "Way, the Truth, and the Life, and before whose judgment-seat you must shortly appear, that in all your studies and inquiries of a religious nature, present or future, you do constantly, carefully, impartially, and conscientiously attend to evidence as it lies in the Holy Scriptures, or in the nature of things, and the dictates of reason; cautiously guarding against the sallies of imagination, and the fallacy of ill-grounded conjecture.

"2. That you admit, embrace, or assent to no principle, or sentiment, by me taught or advanced, but only so far as it shall appear to you to be supported and justified by proper evidence from revelation or the reason of things.

"3. That, if any time hereafter, any principle or sentiment, by me taught or advanced, or by you admitted and embraced, shall upon impartial and faithful examination, appear to you to be dubious or false—that you either suspect, or totally reject such principle or sentiment.

"4. That you keep your mind always open to evidence. That you labor to banish from your breasts all prejudice, and party-zeal. That you study to live in peace and love with all your fellow-Christians, and freely allow to others the unalienable rights of judgment and conscience."

If any man would be a master in the knowledge of God's word, let him at all hazards maintain independence of thought and freedom of inquiry. Jesus designed to warn us against blindly following the opinions of men, as many in his day did. We have but one Master, even Christ. Implicit faith is due to the word of God alone. When he speaks, it is the height of wisdom to bow down our souls, and receive every declaration as true. He who made the mind, has rightful authority over all its powers. But all propositions set forth for our embrace by men, however many, learned or venerable—are fit matter of inquiry, not only as to their import, but as to their accordance with the truth of God.

Let every man cautiously settle and firmly hold all his religious principles. The Bible encourages humility, not servility of mind. Paul says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Think for yourself. Be firm as a rock; but be not stubborn as a mule. Embrace truth, and yield to evidence. David says, "I have stuck unto your testimonies." In theology merely human authority cannot have too little weight, as divine authority cannot have too much weight. Lord

Bacon well says, "Disciples owe unto masters only a temporary belief, and a suspension of their own judgments, until they are fully instructed—and not an absolute resignation."

The Biblical student cannot exalt Christ too much. He is King and Prophet, he is God's beloved Son. Hear him. But beware of blindly following any man, any body of men, any school, any Church. In malice be children, but in understanding be men. When a truth is settled, be not easily moved to surrender it, nor even to doubt its truth. And let no one allow himself to be beguiled into a fickleness, respecting even the terms of theology. A late writer says, "The progress of language is uttering aloud against those who call evil good and good evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. And in view of the evils which the use of language can produce by weakening or confounding moral distinctions, does it not become the sober, honest, religious portion of the world, to stick to the old terms by which the indignation of men against sin has been conveyed from of old, instead of diluting the power of truth and blunting the edge of reproof by an inoffensive, but inane word which circulates in good society?"

What is here said of terms to express our ideas of right and wrong is fully applicable to all religious subjects.

There is not a more important qualification of a student of divine things than profound reverence for all that is sacred. Seriousness is not enough. Solemnity is necessary, and that united with holy fear. He who jests, he who trifles, he who feels no solemn awe with the truths of God's Word, may well doubt the reality of his piety.

When God was about to call Moses, and make him a great prophet, he first appeared to him in the burning bush. And when Moses "turned aside to see," God said, "Do not come any closer! Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground!" "And Moses hid his face." So let every man do. Divinity is holy ground. "Sanctify the Almighty 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 trembles at my word."

Two classes of persons commonly show a shocking irreverence for divine things. One is composed of fanatics; the other of the authors or abettors of fundamental heresy. Their tempers lead to their errors and their errors are best supported by their tempers.

Too much solemnity and holy reverence cannot be exercised by any who would advance in the knowledge of the truth. In the study of the Bible, irreverence is profaneness. God's truth will profit no man who is incurably addicted to levity of mind respecting divine things. Of all dispositions, none is more unfriendly to the successful study of religious truth than a fondness for jesting with sacred things. Luther said, "Whom God would destroy, he first permits to sport with Scripture!" When Pilate said, "What is truth?" he could not have asked a graver question. But his conduct immediately after showed that he could have asked no question in a less reverent state of mind.

In Jewish Bibles the frontispiece has that saying of Jacob upon his vision of God at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!"

Remarking on this, John Owen says, "So ought we to look upon the word with a holy awe and reverence of the presence of God in it."

In his judgment of Scripture, Cranmer says, "I would advise you all who come to the reading and hearing of this book, which is the word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic that remains upon earth, that you bring with you the fear of God, and that you do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory of frivolous disputation, but to the honor of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and others."

Another says, "It is of great importance that we should resist the temptation, frequently so strong, of annexing a familiar, facetious, or irreverent idea to a Scripture text or a Scripture word. Nor should we

hold ourselves guiltless, though we may have been misled by mere negligence or lack of reflection. Every person of good taste will avoid reading a parody or travesty of a beautiful poem, because the recollection of the degraded likeness will always obtrude itself upon our memories when we wish to derive pleasure from the contemplation of the original. But how much more urgent is the duty by which we are bound to keep the page of the Bible clear of any impression tending to diminish the feeling of habitual respect and reverence toward our Maker's Word."

Of all the dispositions requisite to success in the study of religious truth, none is more important than a sincere, constant, and ardent love of truth. "No qualification is before this. He, who loves his own opinions because they are his, or is greatly attached to views which are of high esteem in his sect or party because they are a Shibboleth, is a candidate for shame and error. Without strong love for the truth, no man has ever made any considerable progress in divine knowledge. It is indispensable. Nothing can compensate for the lack of it. It has been a prominent trait of every good man's character.

Job says, "I have esteemed the word of his mouth more than my necessary food."

David says, "My soul breaks for the longing it has unto your commandments at all times." "How sweet are your words unto my taste, yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "I love your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold."

Solomon says, "Buy the truth and sell it not." "If you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures—then shall you 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 you may grow thereby."

The love of truth is a sure pledge that God will bless and guide us in our quest after stores of spiritual knowledge. When one is ready to "receive the engrafted word with meekness," then it is both easy and pleasant to teach him. This is one of the most pleasing characteristics of those who have been thoroughly regenerated.

Genuine young converts greatly love the truth. It is their chief qualification for advancing in discoveries of the way of life and the rule of duty.

Another state of heart very important to every learner is patience, producing caution and deliberation. A hasty spirit is wholly unfriendly to sound learning. The minds of many rush with impetuosity toward conclusions. They seem to be impatient of all delay, or to regard it as a derogation from their just estimate of themselves to ask them to tarry long in the premises of any subject. Yet observation shows that conclusions hastily adopted, are often as hastily abandoned. Even if we reach the truth, but in a rash manner—it can hardly be as a pillar of beautiful proportions in our thoughts, nor can we be half so sure that it is truth to be relied on in all exigencies, as if we had reached it by more careful steps.

Let reasonable doubts produce uncertainty, and let us suspend our judgments, until time has been given for further prayer and investigation. Such a habit may leave us for a while unsettled about some matters of great interest. Very well. Jesus said, "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." And Paul said, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

In all lawful pursuits a spirit of diligence is of great importance. Thus spoke God of old, "The book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then shall you make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success."

The Bereans are commended because they searched the Scriptures daily. The great law of acquisition in knowledge is, a little at a time and often repeated. "The hand of the diligent makes rich." Pious men of old have set us a good example in this respect. David says, "How I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."

"Meditation, to the book of revelation—is like the microscope to the book of nature; it is sure to discover new beauties." Many a difficulty is cleared up by diligence, while the slothful finds himself daily plunged into greater embarrassment on many points. Are not learners of all degrees of culture often tempted to think too high a price, in the way of diligence, toil and hardship, is exacted of them? But the fact is that after all that is done to arouse them, many are but half awake. Let him who would have religious truth dwell in him richly, spare no pains, but maintain strict habits of thought and inquiry, denying himself all laziness, and subjecting all his powers to a wholesome discipline.

It is no less true that genuine living by faith in the divine testimony is essential to large success in any student of the Bible, otherwise the mind will all the time be feeding on forms and losing the substance; it will be gathering shells and losing the kernels of things. We must "walk by faith." In proportion as any human character has shone illustriously, it has been remarkable for freedom from blind credulity on the one hand, and on the other hand from carping scepticism. There never was a truly great, nor any safe mind, that believed without evidence, or refused to believe upon sufficient evidence.

One of the greatest perils in the way of any student of religious truth is just here. The principle of faith is as easily vindicated as any other principle of our nature. The right exercise of faith is a solemn duty enjoined by God in many ways. He, who does not firmly believe and hold what he has learned of divine truth, will be like a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro—a poor unstable thing.

It is of the utmost importance to every man, that he maintains habits of just moderation in his judgments of divine things. He whose mind is fond of great extremes, and who believes that doubt is a mark of truth, will pretty certainly hold and teach error. I am free to say that any view of divine truth, which disinclines those who abound in godly fear and humbleness of mind, to admire and adore—is neither safe or true. Even the grand and solemn doctrine of the divine sovereignty, when rightly viewed, is well suited to beget thanksgiving and adoration, as we learn from that saying of our Savior. Matthew 21:15, 16; Luke 10:21.

If one would become mighty in the Scriptures and rich in the truth, he must have the spirit and delight in the duty of prayer. No act that man can perform is more capable of full vindication before the bar of reason, than that he should pray for divine illumination. His mental dependence on God is absolute. Left to himself, he must fatally err. How often did David cry, "Teach me your statutes!" "Open mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law!" " Give me understanding!" "Incline my heart unto your testimonies!"

The pious Thomas Boston thus lets us into the secret of much of his success in his studies: "I spread the Bible before God, and cry to the Father, that, for the sake of his Son, he would by the Spirit shine on it, into me, give light into, and reveal his mind in the word; that he would give me life, health, strength, time and inclination to the study, and a blessing thereon." "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not."

From the life of the venerable Thomas Scott it appears that over every passage of Scripture he has lifted up his heart in prayer. The result is a very remarkable commentary, which has been read with profit by millions of people. McCheyne says, "Turn the Bible into prayer. Thus, if you are reading the first Psalm, spread the Bible on the table before you, and kneel and pray, 'O Lord, give me the blessedness of the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Let me not stand in the way of sinners. Let me not sit in the seat of

the scornful.' This is the best way of learning the meaning of the Bible, and of learning to pray."

In prayer be not faithless but believing. The breath of prayer comes from the life of faith. Let your prayer for light and teaching be fervent. "God hears the heart without words; but he never hears words without the heart." "Never expect to go to the throne of grace without having some stumbling block thrown in your way. Satan hates prayer, and always tries to hinder it."

Let no man forget that religious truth is not merely to fill a niche in his system of theology, nor to furnish the means of debate to himself and his friends. It is all intended for practice. It must first be proposed to our minds, then loved, embraced, and finally reduced to practice. Practice makes sure our knowledge comes in a way that nothing else does. This is true in the exact sciences and in the useful and ornamental arts; above all is it true in regard to divine things.

A malicious mind cannot be expected to make rapid progress in an understanding of the boundless mysteries of love.

A worldly mind is ill suited to scan the glories of spiritual things.

Practice is not only the life of piety, but it is essential to any sure progress in wisdom. There is no greater folly than that which stalks to Hell with the lamp of truth burning before it all the time! Well did David say, "I will keep your statutes." And Jesus has informed us that practice has much to do with progress in learning, when he says; "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." This is a truth illustrated in the life and experience of every converted man. The apostle James also says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do

this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does." James 1:22-25

How can he understand the place charity should occupy in a system of practical truth, who carries grudges and old animosities in his bosom? How can he know the connection between Christ's poverty and our riches, whose soul is never drawn out to the needy, but trusts in uncertain riches?

Of course the whole spirit and temper of every learner of divine truth should be evangelical. A mere legalist is as wide of the truth, as he is far from holy living. If Jesus Christ is not the Alpha and the Omega of our theological system, it matters little what else is in it. A Christless Christianity is as false in theory, as it is powerless in practice.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions November 2021. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068