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AN

**A L A R M**

TO

**UNCONVERTED SINNERS**

IN

**A Serious Treatise on Conversion.**

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**BY JOSEPH ALLEINE.**

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\* \* In this Edition some obsolete words and phrases are altered, and a few passages omitted.—The Author's Six Questions to the Unconverted, and Counsels for the Converted, are added

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Page.

An Earnest Invitation to Sinners to turn to God, in order to their eternal salvation, - - - - - 5

CHAPTER I.

Showing what Conversion is not, and correcting some Mistakes about it, - - - - - 7

CHAPTER II.

Showing positively what Conversion is, - - - - - 14

CHAPTER III.

Of the Necessity of Conversion, - - - - - 42

CHAPTER IV.

Showing the Marks of the Unconverted, - - - - - 63

CHAPTER V.

Showing the Miseries of the Unconverted, - - - - - 78

CHAPTER VI.

Containing Directions to the Unconverted, - - - - - 104

CHAPTER VII.

Containing the Motives to Conversion - - - - - 133

Six Questions to the Unconverted, - - - - - 147

Conclusion, - - - - - 150

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COUNSELS FOR THE CONVERTED, - - - - - 159





AN EARNEST INVITATION TO SINNERS TO TURN  
TO GOD.

DEARLY beloved, I gladly acknowledge myself a debtor to you all, and am concerned, as I would be found a good steward to the household of God, to give to every one his portion. But the physician is most solicitous for those patients whose case is most doubtful and hazardous; and the father's concern is especially turned toward his dying child. So unconverted souls among you call for special solicitude and earnest effort to pluck them as brands from the burning; therefore to them I shall first apply myself in these lines.

But whence shall I fetch my argument? Wherewith shall I win them? O that I could tell! I would write to them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would empty my veins for ink, I would petition them on my knees. O how thankful should I be if they would be prevailed with to repent and live!

How long have I labored for you! How often would I have gathered you! This is what I have prayed for and studied for these many years, that I might bring you to God. O that I might now do it! Will you yet be entreated?

But, Lord, how insufficient am I for this work? Alas! wherewith shall I pierce the scales of Leviathan, or make the heart to feel that it is as hard as adamant, hard as the nether mill-stone? Shall I go and speak to the tenants of the grave, and hope the dead will obey me

and come forth ? Shall I make an oration to the rocks, or declaim to the mountains, and think to move them with arguments ? Shall I give the blind to see ? From the beginning of the world was it not heard that a man opened the eyes of the blind ; but thou, O Lord, canst pierce the heart of the sinner ; I can but draw the bow at a venture, but do thou direct the arrow, slay the sin, and save the soul of the sinner that casts his eyes on these pages.

There is no entering into heaven but by the strait passage of the second birth ; “ without holiness you shall never see God.” Now set yourselves then to seek him. Set up the Lord Jesus in your hearts—kiss the Son, embrace the tenders of mercy, touch his sceptre and live ; for why will ye die ? I beg not for myself, but would have you happy : this is the prize I run for. My soul’s desire and prayer for you is, that you may be saved.

What greater joy to a minister than to hear of souls born unto Christ by his instrumentality ?

I beseech you suffer plainness and freedom with you in your deepest concern. I am not playing the orator ; these lines are upon a weighty errand indeed—to convince, to convert, and to save you. If I would quiet a crying infant, I might sing to him in a pleasing mood, and rock him asleep ; but when the child is fallen into the fire, the parent takes another course ; he will not try to still him with a song or a trifle. I know, if we succeed not with you, you are lost ; if we cannot get your consent to “ arise and come away,” you perish for ever : no conversion, and no salvation : we must get your good will, or leave you miserable.

Some of you do not know what I mean by conversion, and in vain shall I attempt to persuade you to that

which you do not understand ; therefore for your sakes I will show *what this conversion is*. Others cherish secret hopes of mercy, though they continue as they are ; and for them I must show the *necessity of conversion*. Others are like to harden themselves with a vain conceit that they are converted already ; to them I must show the *marks of the unconverted*. Others, because they feel no harm, fear none, and so sleep upon the top of the mast ; to them I shall show the *misery of the unconverted*. Others sit still, because they see not their way of escape ; to them I shall show the *means of conversion*. And finally, for the quickening of all, I shall close with the *motives to conversion*.

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## CHAPTER I.

*Showing what Conversion is not, and correcting some mistakes about it.*

Let the blind Samaritans worship they know not what, John, 4 : 22. Let the heathen Athenians inscribe their altar "To the unknown God." Acts 17 : 22. Let Papists commend ignorance as the mother of devotion. They that know man's constitution, and the nature of the reasonable soul's operation, cannot but know that the understanding has such empire in the soul, that he who will go rationally to work must labor to let in light there. And therefore, that you may not mistake me, I shall first show you what I mean by conversion.

Truly the devil hath made many counterfeits of conversion, and cheats one with this, and another with that ; and such craft and artifice he hath in his myster v

of deceits, that (if it were possible) he would deceive the very elect. Now, that I may cure the ruinous mistake of some who think they are converted when they are not, I shall show you the nature of conversion, both what it is not, and what it is.

We will begin with the negative.

It is not the taking upon us the *profession* of Christianity. Christianity is more than a name. If we will hear Paul, it lies not in word, but in power. 1 Cor. 4: 20. And are there not many that mention the name of the Lord Jesus, that yet depart not from iniquity? 2 Tim. 2: 19, and "profess they know God, but in works deny him?" Titus, 1: 16. And will God receive these for true converts? What! converts from sin, when yet they live in sin! We find not only professors, but preachers of Christ, and wonder-workers, rejected because evil-workers. Matt. 7: 22, 23.

It is not putting on the badge of Christ in *baptism*. Ananias, and Sapphira, and Simon Magus were baptized as well as the rest. How fondly do many mistake here, deceiving and being deceived! dreaming that effectual grace is necessarily tied to the external administration of baptism, (which, what is it but to revive the popish tenet of the sacraments working grace?) and thus, that every baptized person is regenerated, not only sacramentally, but really and properly! Hence men fancy, that, being regenerated already when baptized, they need no farther work.

But if this were so, then all that have been baptized must necessarily be saved, because the promise of pardon and salvation is made to conversion and regeneration. Acts, 3: 19. Matt. 19: 28.

And indeed, were conversion and baptism the same, then men would do well to carry but a certificate of

their baptism when they died, and upon sight of this there were no doubt of their admission into heaven.

In short, if there be no more necessary to conversion, or regeneration, than to be baptized, this will fly directly in the face of that scripture, Matt. 7:13, 14, as well as multitudes of others. For, first, we shall then no more say, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way;" for if all that were baptized are saved, the door is exceeding wide, and we shall henceforth say, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth unto life." For if this be true, thousands may go in abreast; and we will no more teach that the righteous are scarcely saved, or that there is need of such a stir in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, and striving to enter in. Surely, if the way be so easy as many suppose, that there is little more necessary than to be baptized and to cry, "Lord, have mercy," we need not put ourselves to such seeking, and knocking, and wrestling, as the word requires in order to salvation. Secondly, if this be true, we shall no more say, "few there be that find it;" yea, we will rather say, "few there be that miss it." We shall no more say, that of the "many" that are "called, but few are chosen," Matt. 22:14, and that even of the professing "Israel ut a remnant shall be saved." Rom. 9:27. If this doctrine be true, we shall not say any more with the disciples, "Who then shall be saved?" but rather, who then shall not be saved? Then, if a man be baptized, though he be a fornicator, or a railer or covetous, or a drunkard, yet he shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 5:11, and 6:9, 10.

But some will reply, Such as these, though they did receive regenerating grace in baptism, are since fallen away, and must be renewed again or else they cannot be saved.

I answer, 1, That there is an infallible connection between regeneration and salvation, as we have already shown; and I long to be farther evidencing, but that it is against designed brevity. 2. Then man must be born again a second time, which carries a great deal of absurdity in its face: and why may not men be twice born in nature as well as in grace? But, 3, and above all, this grants however the thing I contend for, that whatever men do or pretend to receive in baptism, if they be found afterward to be grossly ignorant, or profane, or formal, without the power of godliness, they "must be born again," or else be shut out of the kingdom of God. So then they must have more to plead for themselves than their baptismal regeneration.

Well, in this you see all are agreed, that, be it more or less that is received in baptism, if men are evidently unsanctified, they must be renewed again by a thorough and powerful change, or else they cannot escape the damnation of hell. Then "be not deceived; God is not mocked." Whether it be your baptism, or whatever else you pretend, I tell you from the living God, that if any of you be a prayerless person, or unclean, or malicious, or covetous, or riotous, or a scoffer, or a lover of evil company, Prov. 13: 20, in a word, if you are not a holy, strict, and self-denying Christian, you cannot be saved.

Paul, while unconverted, touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless. The Pharisee could say, "I am no extortioner, adulterer, unjust," &c. Thou must have something *more than all this* to show, or else, however thou mayest justify thyself, God will condemn thee. I condemn not morality, but warn thee not to rest in it: piety includes morality, as Christianity doth humanity, and grace reason; but we must not divide the tables.

It is also manifest that men may have a *form of godliness*, without the power. Men may pray long, and fast often, and hear gladly, and be very forward in the service of God, though costly and expensive, and yet be strangers to conversion. They must have more to plead than that they go to church, give alms, and make use of prayer, to prove themselves sound converts. There is no outward service but a hypocrite may do it, even to the "giving all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned."

Conversion is not the mere *chaining up of corruption* by education, human laws, or the force of incumbent affliction. It is too common and easy to mistake education for grace; but if this were enough, who a better man than Jehoash? While Jehoiada his uncle lived, he was very forward in God's service, and calls upon him to repair the house of the Lord, 2 Kings, 12: 2, 7;—but here was nothing more than good education all this while; for when his good tutor was taken out of the way, he appears to have been but a wolf chained up, and falls into idolatry.

In short, conversion consists not in illumination or conviction, in a superficial change or partial reformation. An apostate may be an enlightened man, and a Felix tremble under conviction, and a Herod do many things. It is one thing to have sin alarmed only by convictions, and another to have it crucified by converting grace. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion. With these Cain might have passed for a convert, who ran up and down the world like a man distracted, under the rage of a guilty conscience. Others think, that because they have given over their riotous courses, and

are broken off from evil company or some particular lust, and are reduced to sobriety and civility, they are now no other than real converts ; forgetting that there is a vast difference between being sanctified and civilized ; and that many seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and are not far from it, and arrive to the *almost* of Christianity, and yet fall short at last. While conscience holds the whip over them, many will pray, hear, read, and forbear their delightful sins ; but no sooner is the lion asleep than they are at their sins again. Who more religious than the Jews when God's hand was upon them : yet no sooner was the affliction over, than they forgot God. Thou mayst have forsaken a troublesome sin, and have escaped the gross pollutions of the world, and yet in all this not have changed thy carnal nature.

You may cast lead out of the rude mass into the more comely proportion of a plant, and then into the shape of a beast, and thence into the form and features of a man, yet all the while it is but lead still ; so a man may pass through divers transmutations, from ignorance to knowledge, from profaneness to civility, thence to a form of religion, and all this time he is but carnal and unregenerate whilst his nature remains unchanged.

“ Hear then, O sinners, hear as you would live. Why would you wilfully deceive yourselves, or build your hopes upon the sand ? I know that he may find hard work that goes to pluck away your hopes. It cannot but be ungrateful to you, and truly it is not pleasing to me ; I set about it as a surgeon when about to cut off a mortified limb from his well-beloved friend, which of necessity he must do, though with an aching heart. But understand me—I am only taking down the ruinous house, which will otherwise speedily fall of itself and

bury you in the ruins, that I may build it fair, strong, and firm for ever. The hope of the wicked shall perish. And hadst not thou better, O sinner, let the word convince thee now in time, and let go thy false and self-deluding hopes, than have death too late to open thine eyes, and find thyself in hell before thou art aware? I should be a false and faithless shepherd if I should not tell you, that you, who have built your hopes upon no better grounds than these before mentioned, are yet in your sins. Let conscience speak: What is it that you have to plead for yourselves? Is it that you wear Christ's livery? that you bear his name? that you are of the visible church? that you have knowledge in the points of religion, are civilized, perform religious duties, are just in your dealings, have been troubled in conscience for your sins? I tell you from the Lord, these pleas will never be accepted at God's bar; all this, though good in itself, will not prove you converted, and so will not suffice to your salvation. O look about you and bethink yourselves of turning speedily and entirely. Study your own hearts; rest not till God has made thorough work with you; for you must be other men, or else you are lost men.

But if these characters be short of conversion, what shall I say of the *profane sinner*? It may be he will scarcely cast his eyes or lend his ear to this discourse; but if there be any such reading or within hearing, he must know from the Lord that made him, that he is far from the kingdom of God. May a man be true in his dealings, and yet not be justified of God? what then will become of thee, O wretched man, whose conscience tells thee thou art false in thy trade, and false to thy word, and makest thy advantage by a lying tongue? If men may be enlightened and brought

to the external performance of holy duties, and yet go down to perdition for resting in them and sitting down on this side of conversion, what will become of you, O miserable families, that live without God in the world? and of you, O wretched sinners, with whom God is scarcely in all your thoughts; that are so ignorant that you cannot, or so careless that you will not pray? O repent and be converted; break off your sins by righteousness; away to Christ for pardoning and renewing grace; give up yourselves to him, to walk with him in holiness, or you shall never see God. O that you would take the warnings of God! In his name I once more admonish you: turn ye at my reproof. Forsake the foolish, and live. Be sober, righteous, and godly. Wash your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. But if you will not, you must die.

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## CHAPTER II.

*Showing positively what Conversion is.*

I may not leave you with your eyes half open, like him that saw "men as trees walking." The word is profitable for doctrine as well as reproof. And therefore, having thus exposed some dangerous mistakes, I would guide you at length into the way of truth.

Conversion then, in short, lies in the thorough change both of the heart and life. I shall briefly describe it in its nature and causes.

1. The *author* is the Spirit of God, and therefore it is called "the sanctification of the Spirit," and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," yet not excluding the other

persons in the Trinity ; for the apostle teacheth us to “ bless the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for that he hath begotten us again.” And Christ is said to give repentance unto Israel, and is called the “ everlasting Father,” and we his seed, and the children which God hath given him. Yet this work is principally ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and so we are said to be “ born of the Spirit.”

So then regeneration is a work of God : “ We are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John, 1 : 13. If ever thou wouldst be savingly converted, thou must despair of doing it in thine own strength. It is a resurrection from the dead, Eph. 2 : 1, a new creation, Gal. 6 : 15 ; Eph. 2 : 10, a work of absolute omnipotence, Eph. 1 : 19. If thou hast no more than thou hadst by thy first birth, a good nature, a meek and chaste temper, &c. thou art a stranger to true conversion ; this is a supernatural work.

2. The *causes* are efficient and meritorious. The efficient cause is only free grace. “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us,” and “ by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” “ Of his own will begat he us.”

God finds nothing in man to excite his complacency. Look back upon thyself, O Christian ! Do not thine own clothes abhor thee ? Job, 9 : 31. How then should holiness and pureness love thee ? Be astonished, O heavens, at this ; be moved, O earth. Who but must needs cry, grace ! grace ! Hear and blush, ye children of the Most High—O ye unthankful generation ! that free grace is no more in your mouths, in your thoughts ; no more adored, admired, and commended by such as you ! One would think you should be doing nothing but praising and admiring God wherever you are.

How can you forget such grace, or pass it over with a slight and formal mention? What but free grace could move God to love you, unless enmity could do it, unless deformity could do it? How affectionately doth Peter lift up his hands! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who of his abundant mercy hath begotten us again." How feelingly doth Paul magnify the free mercy of God in it! "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he has loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved."

The meritorious cause is the mediation and intercession of the blessed Jesus. He hath obtained gifts for the rebellious, and through him it is that God worketh in us what is well pleasing in his sight. Through him are all spiritual blessings bestowed upon us in heavenly things. Every convert is the fruit of his travail. He is made sanctification to us. He sanctified himself, (that is, set apart himself as a sacrifice,) that we may be sanctified.

It is nothing then beyond his own love, but the merit and intercession of Christ, that prevails with God to bestow on us converting grace. If thou art a new creature, thou knowest to whom thou owest it; to Christ's agonies and prayers. And whither else shouldst thou go? If any in the world can show that for thy heart which Christ can, let them do it. Doth Satan claim thee? Doth the world court thee? Doth sin sue for thy heart? Why? were these crucified for thee? O Christian, love and serve the Lord whilst thou hast a being.

3. The instrument is either personal or real. The *personal* is the ministry. I have begotten you in Christ through the Gospel. Christ's ministers are they that

are sent to open men's eyes, and to turn them to God. Acts, 26 : 18.

O unthankful world, little do you know what you are doing while you are slighting the messengers of the Lord! These are they whose business it is (under Christ) to save you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you exalted your voice, and lifted your eyes on high? "These are the servants of the most high God, that show unto you the way of salvation," and do you thus requite them, O foolish and unwise! O sons of ingratitude! against whom do ye sport yourselves! These are the instruments that God uses to convert and save sinners: and do you revile your physicians, and throw your pilots overboard? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The *real* instrument is the word. We are begotten by the word of truth. This it is that enlightens the eye; that converts the soul, Psalm 19 : 7, 8; that maketh wise to salvation. 2 Tim. 3 : 15. This is the incorruptible seed, by which we are born again. 1 Pet. 1 : 23. If we are washed, it is by the word. Eph. 5 : 26. If we are sanctified, it is through the truth. John, 17 : 17.

O ye saints, how should ye love the word! for by this you have been converted: O ye sinners, how should you ply the word! for by means of this you must be converted. You that have felt its renewing power, make much of it while you live; be for ever thankful for it; tie it about your neck; write it upon your hand; lay it in your bosom. When you go, let it lead you; when you sleep, let it keep you; when you wake, let it talk with you: say with holy David, "I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast

quicken'd me." You that are unconverted, read the word with diligence; flock to it where powerfully preached: pray for the coming of the Spirit in the word; come from your knees to the sermon, and come to your knees from the sermon. The seed doth not prosper, because not watered by prayers and tears, nor covered by meditation.

4. The final cause is *man's salvation, and God's glory*. We are chosen through sanctification to salvation; called that we might be glorified; but especially that God might be glorified, that we should "show forth his praise," and "be fruitful in good works." O Christian! do not forget the end of thy calling; "let thy light shine," let thy lamp burn; let thy fruits be good, and many, and in season; let all thy designs fall in with God's, that he may "be magnified in thee."

5. The subject is the *sinner*, and that in all his parts and powers, *members and mind*. Thou beginnest at the wrong end, if thou disputest first about thine election. Prove thy conversion, and then never doubt of thy election: or, canst thou not yet prove it? set upon a present and thorough turning. Whatever God's purposes be, (which are secret,) I am sure his precepts are plain. How desperately do rebels argue! if I am elected I shall be saved, do what I will; if not, I shall be damned, do what I can. Perverse sinner! wilt thou begin where thou shouldest end? Is not the word before thee? What saith it? "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "If you mortify the deeds of the body you shall live." "Believe and be saved." What can be plainer? Do not stand still disputing about thine election, but set to repenting and believing; cry to God for converting grace. Revealed things belong to thee; in these busy thyself. It is just

(as one well said) that they who will not feed on the plain food of the word should be choked with the bones. Whatever God's purposes be, I am sure his promises are true; whatever the decrees of heaven be, I am sure that if I repent and believe, I shall be saved; and that if I repent not, I shall be damned. Is not here plain ground for thee? and wilt thou yet run upon the rocks?

More particularly, this change of conversion passes throughout the whole man. A carnal person may have some shreds of good morality, but he is never good throughout the whole body of holiness and Christianity. Conversion is not repairing of the old building; but it takes all down, and erects a new structure: it is not the putting in a patch of holiness; but with the true convert holiness is woven into all his powers, principles, and practice. The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric, from the foundation to the top-stone. He is a new man, a new creature. All things are become new. Conversion is a deep work, a heart-work. It goes throughout with men, throughout the mind, throughout the members, throughout the motions of the whole life.

I. Throughout the mind. It makes a universal change within.

1. It turns the balance of the judgment; so that God and his glory do weigh down all carnal and worldly interests. It opens the eye of the mind, and makes the scales of its native ignorance to fall off, and turns men from darkness to light. The man that before saw no danger in his condition, now concludes himself lost, and for ever undone, except renewed by the power of

grace. He that formerly thought there was little hurt in sin, now comes to see it to be the chief of evils; he sees the unreasonableness, the unrighteousness, the deformity and filthiness of sin; so that he is affrighted with it, loathes it, dreads it, flees from it, and even abhors himself for it. He that could see little sin in himself, and could find no matter for confession, now sees the rottenness of his heart, the desperate and deep pollution of his whole nature; he cries, Unclean, unclean: Lord, purge me with hyssop, wash me thoroughly, create in me a clean heart. He sees himself altogether filthy, corrupt, both root and tree; he writes unclean upon all his parts, and powers, and performances; he discovers the filthy corners that he was never aware of, and sees the blasphemy, and theft, and murder, and adultery, that is in his heart, which before he was ignorant of.

Heretofore he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, nor beauty, that he should desire him; but now he finds the hidden treasure, and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the pearl he seeks.

Now, according to this new light, the man is of another mind, another judgment, than he was before. Now God is all with him, he hath none in heaven, nor in earth like him; he prefers him truly before all the world; his favor is his life, the light of his countenance is more than corn, or wine, and oil. A hypocrite may come to yield a general assent to this, that God is the chief good; yea, the wiser heathens (some few of them) have at last stumbled upon this: but there is a difference between the absolute and comparative judgment of the understanding. No hypocrite comes so far as to look upon God as the most desirable and suitable good to him, and thereupon to acquiesce

in him. This is the convert's voice: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

2. It turns the bias of the will both as to means and end. The intentions of the will are altered. Now the man hath new ends and designs; now he intends God above all, and desires and designs nothing in all the world so much as that Christ may be magnified in him. He counts himself more happy in this than in all that the earth could yield, that he may be serviceable to Christ, and bring him glory. This is the mark he aims at, that the name of Jesus may be great in the world.

Reader, dost thou view this, and never ask thyself whether it be thus with thee? Pause a while, and breathe on this great concernment.

The choice is also changed. He pitcheth upon God as his blessedness, and upon Christ and holiness as means to bring him to God. He chooseth Jesus for his Lord. He is not merely forced to Christ by the storm, nor doth he take Christ for bare necessity, but he comes freely; he deliberately resolves that Christ is his best choice, and would rather have him than all the good of this world, might he enjoy it while he would. Again, he takes holiness for his path; he does not of mere necessity submit to it, but he likes and loves it: "*I have chosen the way of thy precepts.*" He takes God's testimonies, not as his bondage, but as his heritage; yea, heritage for ever. He counts them not his burden, but his bliss; not his cords, but his cordials. He does not only bear, but takes up Christ's yoke: he takes not holiness as the stomach does the

loathed potion, (which a man will take rather than die,) but as the hungry doth his beloved food. No time passeth so sweetly with him (when he is himself) as that he spends in the exercises of holiness. These are both his aliment and element, the desire of his eyes and the joy of his heart. Put thy conscience to it as thou goest, whether thou art the man. O happy man, if this be thy case! But see thou be impartial in the decision.

3. It turns the bent of the affections. These run all in a new channel. Christ is his hope. This is his prize. Here his eye is: here his heart. He is contented to cast all overboard, (as the merchant in the storm ready to perish,) so he may but keep this jewel.

The first of his desires is not after gold, but grace. He hungers after it, he seeks it as silver, he digs for it as for hid treasure; he had rather be gracious than be great; he had rather be the holiest man on earth than the most learned, the most famous, the most prosperous. While carnal, he said, O if I were but in great esteem, rolling in wealth, and swimming in pleasure: if my debts were paid, and I and mine provided for, then I were a happy man! but now the tone is changed. O! saith the convert, if I had but my corruptions subdued, if I had such measures of grace, such fellowship with God, though I were poor and despised I should not care, I should account myself a blessed man. Reader, is this the language of thy soul?

His *joys* are changed. He rejoiceth in the ways of God's testimonies as much as in all riches. He delights in the law of the Lord, wherein once he had little savor. He hath no such joy as in the thoughts of Christ, the fruition of his company, the prosperity of his people.

His *cares* are quite altered. He was once set for the world; now his cry is, "What shall I do to be saved?" His great solicitude is to secure his soul. O how would he bless you if you could but put him out of doubt of this!

His fears, however, are not so much of suffering as of sinning. Once he was afraid of nothing so much as the loss of his estate or reputation; nothing sounded so terrible to him as pain, or poverty, or disgrace; now these are little to him, in comparison of God's dishonor or displeasure. How warily doth he walk, lest he should tread upon a snare! He feareth alway; he hath his eye upon his heart, and is ever watchful lest he should be overtaken with sin. No thought in the world would pain him so much as to think of parting with Christ.

His *love* runs a new course. My love was crucified, (saith Ignatius,) that is, my Christ. This is my beloved, saith the spouse. Cant. 5:16.

How doth Augustine often pour his love upon Christ! O "eternal blessedness!" &c. He can find no words sweet enough. "Let me see thee, O light of mine eyes. Come, O thou joy of my spirit. Let me behold thee, O life of my soul. Appear unto me, O my great delight, my sweet comfort: O my God, my life, and the whole glory of my soul. Let me find thee, O desire of my heart. Let me hold thee, O love of my soul. Let me embrace thee, O heavenly bridegroom. Let me possess thee!"

His *sorrows* have now a new vent. The view of his sins, the sight of Christ crucified, that could scarcely stir him before, now how much do they affect his heart!

His hatred boils, his anger burns against sin. He hath no patience with himself: he calls himself fool

and beast, and thinks any name too good for himself, when his indignation is stirred up against sin. Psalm 73:22. Prov. 30:2. He could once delight in it with much pleasure; now he loathes the thought of returning to it.

Commune then with thine own heart, and attend the general current of thine affections, whether they be toward God in Christ above all other concernments. Indeed, sudden and strong motions of the affections are oft-times found in hypocrites, especially where the natural temperament is warm. And, contrariwise, the sanctified themselves are many times without sensible stirring of the affections, where the temper is more slow, dry, and dull. The great inquiry is, whether the judgment will be steadily determined for God above all other good, real or apparent; if so, and if the affections do sincerely follow their choice and conduct, though it be not so strongly and sensibly as is to be desired, there is no doubt but the change is saving.

II. Throughout the members. Those that were before the instruments of sin, are now become the holy utensils of Christ's living kingdom. He that before dishonored his body, now possesses his vessel in sanctification and honor, in temperance, chastity, and sobriety, and dedicates it to the Lord.

The *eye* that was once a wandering eye, a wanton eye, a haughty, a covetous eye, is now employed (as Mary's) in weeping over its sins, in beholding God in his works, in reading his word, or in looking for objects of mercy and opportunities for his service.

The *ear* that was once open to Satan's call, is now open to the voice of Christ's house, and to his discipline. It saith, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

It waits for his words as the rain, and relishes them more than the appointed food, "more than the honey and the honey-comb."

The *head* that was the shop of worldly designs, is now filled with other matters, and set on the study of God's will, and the man employs his head not so much about his gain as about his duty. The thoughts and cares that fill his head are, 'principally, how he may please God and flee sin.

His *heart* that was filled with filthy lusts, is now become an altar of incense, where the fire of divine love is ever kept burning, and whence the daily sacrifices of prayer and praise, and the sweet incense of holy desires, ejaculations, and prayers, are continually ascending.

The *mouth* is become a well of life, his tongue as choice silver, and his lips feed many; now the salt of grace has seasoned his speech, has eaten out the corruption, Col. 4 : 6, and cleansed the mouth from its filthy communication, flattery, boasting, and backbiting, that once came like flashes that proceeded from the hell that was in the heart. The *throat*, that was once an open sepulchre, now sends forth the sweet breath of prayer and holy discourses, and the man speaks in another tongue, even the language of Canaan, and is never so well as when talking of God and Christ, and the matters of another world. His mouth bringeth wisdom; his tongue is become the silver trumpet of his Maker's praise, his glory, and the best member that he hath.

Now here you will find the hypocrite sadly deficient. He speaks (it may be) like an angel, but he hath a covetous eye, or the gain of unrighteousness in his hand; or the hand is white, but his heart is full of rottenness, Matt. 23 : 27, full of unmortified cares, a very oven of

lust, a shop of pride, the seat of malice. It may be, with Nebuchadnezzar's image, he hath a golden head, a great deal of knowledge; but he hath feet of clay, his affections are worldly, he minds earthly things, and his way and walk are sensual and carnal.

III. Throughout the life and practice, the new man takes a new course. His "conversation is in heaven." No sooner doth Christ call by effectual grace, but he straightway becomes a "follower of him." When God hath given the new heart, and written his law in his mind, he forthwith walks in his statutes, and keeps his judgments.

Though sin may dwell (truly a wearisome and unwelcome guest) in him, yet it hath "no more dominion over him." "He hath his fruit unto holiness," and though he makes many a blot, yet the law of life and Jesus is what he looks at as his copy, and he hath an unfeigned respect to all God's commandments, making conscience even of every duty. His very infirmities, which he cannot help though he would, are his soul's burden, and are like the dust in a man's eye, which though but little, yet is not a little troublesome. (O man! dost thou read this and never turn in upon thy soul by self-examination?) The sincere convert is not one man at the place of worship and another at home; he is not a saint on his knees, and a cheat in his shop; he will not tithe mint and cummin, and neglect mercy and judgment, and the weighty matters of the law; he doth not pretend to piety and neglect morality; but he turns from all his sins, and keeps all God's statutes, though not perfectly, (except in desire and endeavor,) yet sincerely; not allowing himself in the breach of any. Now he delights in the word, and

sets himself to prayer, and opens his hand and draws out his soul to the hungry. "He breaketh off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor," and hath "a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly," and to keep it without offence toward God and man.

Here again you find the unsoundness of many professors who consider themselves good Christians; they are partial in the law, and take up with the cheap and easy duties of religion, but go not through with the work. It may be you find them exact in their words, punctual in their dealings, but then they do not exercise themselves unto godliness; and as for examining themselves and governing their hearts, to this they are strangers. You may see them duly at the church; but follow them to their families, and there you shall see little but the world minded; or if they have family duties, follow them to their closets, and there you shall find their souls are little looked after. It may be they seem otherwise religious, but bridle not their tongues, and so "all their religion is vain." It may be they come up to closet and family prayer; but follow them to their shops, and there you find them in the habit of lying, or some covert and fashionable way of deceit. Thus the hypocrite goes not throughout in the course of his obedience.

The objects from which we turn in conversion are, sin, Satan, the world, and our own righteousness.

1. Sin. When a man is converted, he is for ever at enmity with sin; yea, with all sin, but most of all with his own sins, and especially with his bosom sin. Sin is now the object of his indignation. His sins swell his

sorrows. It is sin that pierces him and wounds him ; he feels it like a thorn in his side, like a prick in his eyes : he groans and struggles under it, and not formally, but feelingly cries out, " O wretched man ! " He is not impatient of any burden so much as of his sin. If God should give him his choice, he would choose any affliction so he might be rid of sin ; he feels it like the cutting gravel in his shoes, pricking and paining him as he goes.

Before conversion, he had light thoughts of sin ; he cherished it in his bosom, as Uriah his lamb ; he nourished it up, and it grew up together with him ; it did eat, as it were, of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. But when God opens his eyes by conversion, he throws it away with abhorrence, as a man would a loathsome toad, which in the dark he had hugged fast in his bosom, and thought it had been some pretty and harmless bird. When a man is savingly changed, he is deeply convinced not only of the danger but the defilement of sin : and O how earnest is he with God to be purified ! he loathes himself for his sins. He runs to Christ, and casts himself into the fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness. If he fall, he has no rest till he flees to the word, and washes in the infinite fountain, laboring to cleanse himself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit : he abhors his once beloved sin, as a cleanly nature doth the mire wherein he sees the swine delight.

The sound convert is heartily engaged against sin ; he struggles with it, he wars against it ; he is too often foiled, but he will never yield the cause, nor lay down the weapons, while he hath breath in his body ; he will make no peace ; he will give no quarter. He can for-

give his other enemies; he can pity them, and pray for them; but here he is implacable, here he is set upon extermination; he hunteth as it were for the precious life; his eyes shall not pity, his hand shall not spare, though it be a right hand or a right eye. Be it a gainful sin, most delightful to his nature or the support of his esteem with worldly friends, yet he will rather throw his gain down the kennel, see his credit fall, or the flower of pleasure wither in his hand, than he will allow himself in any known way of sin. He will grant no indulgence, he will give no toleration; he draws upon sin wherever he meets it, and frowns upon it with this unwelcome salute, "Have I found thee, O mine enemy?"

Reader, hath conscience been at work while thou hast been looking over these lines? Hast thou pondered these things in thy heart? Hast thou searched the book within, to see if these things be so? If not, read it again, and make thy conscience speak, whether or not it be thus with thee.

Hast thou crucified thy flesh with its affections and lusts? and not only confessed, but forsaken thy sins, all sin in thy fervent desires, and the ordinary practice of every deliberate and wilful sin in thy life? If not, thou art yet unconverted. Doth not conscience fly in thy face as thou readest, and tell thee that thou livest in a way of lying for thy advantage; that thou usest deceit in thy calling; that there is some way of secret wantonness that thou livest in? why then, do not deceive thyself; thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

Doth not thy unbridled tongue, thy indulgence of appetite, thy wicked company, thy neglect of prayer, of reading and hearing the word, now witness against

thee, and say, "We are thy works, and we will follow thee?" Or, if I have not hit thee right, doth not the monitor within tell thee, there is such or such a way that thou knowest to be evil, that yet for some carnal respect thou dost tolerate thyself in? If this be thy case, thou art to this day unregenerate, and must be changed or condemned.

2. Satan. Conversion binds the strong man, spoils his armor, casts out his goods, turns men from the power of Satan unto God. Before, the devil could no sooner hold up his finger to the sinner to call him to his wicked company, sinful games, and filthy delights, but presently he followed, like an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks; as the bird that hasteth to the prey, and knoweth not that it is for his life. No sooner could Satan bid him lie, but presently he had it on his tongue. No sooner could Satan offer a wanton object, but he was stung with lust. If the devil says, "Away with these family duties," be sure they shall be rarely enough performed in his house. If the devil says, "Away with this strictness, this preciseness," he will keep far enough from it: if he tells him, "There is no need of these closet-duties," he shall go from day to day and scarcely perform them. But since he is converted he serves another Master, and takes quite another course: he goes and comes at Christ's bidding. Satan may sometimes catch his foot in a trap, but he will no longer be a willing captive; he watches against the snares and baits of Satan, and studies to be acquainted with his devices; he is very suspicious of his plots, and is very jealous in what comes across him, lest Satan should have some design upon him; he "wrestles against principalities and powers;" he entertains the messenger of Satan

as men do the messenger of death; he keeps his eye upon his enemy, and watches in his duties, lest Satan should put in his foot.

3. The World. Before a man has lively faith, he is overcome of the world; either he bows down to mammon, or idolizes his reputation, or is a "lover of pleasure more than a lover of God." Here is the root of man's misery by the fall; he is turned aside to the creature, and gives that esteem, confidence, and affection to the creature, that is due to God alone.

O miserable man, what a deformed monster hath sin made thee! God made thee "little lower than the angels;" sin, little better than the devils; a monster that hath his head and heart where his feet should be. The world that was formed to serve thee, is come to rule thee,—the deceitful harlot hath bewitched thee with her enchantments, and made thee bow down and serve her.

But converting grace sets all in order again, and puts God on the throne, and the world at his footstool; Christ in the heart, and the world under the feet. So Paul, "I am crucified to the world, and the world to me." Before this change, all the cry was, "Who will show us any worldly good?" but now he prays, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me," and take the corn and wine whoso will. Before, his heart's delight and content were in the world; then the song was, "Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but now all this is withered, and there is no comeliness, that we should desire it; and he tunes up with the sweet Psalmist of Israel: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance; the lines are fallen to me in a fair place, and I have a goodly heritage." He blesseth him-

self, and boasteth himself in God. Nothing else can give him content. He hath written vanity and vexation upon all his worldly enjoyments, and loss and dung upon all human excellencies. He hath life and immortality now in pursuit. He pants for grace and glory, and hath a crown incorruptible in view. His heart is set in him to seek the Lord. He first seeks the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, and religion is no longer a matter by-the-by with him, but his main care.

Before, the world had the sway with him; he would do more for gain than godliness, more to please his friend, or his flesh, than the God that made him; and God must stand by till the world was first served. But now all must stand by; he hates father and mother, and life, and all, in comparison of Christ. Well then, pause a little, and look within. Doth not this nearly concern thee? Thou pretendest for Christ, but does not the world sway thee? Dost thou not take more real delight and content in the world than in him? Dost thou not find thyself better at ease when the world goes to thy mind, and thou art compassed with carnal delights, than when retired to prayer and meditation in thy closet, or attending upon God's word and worship? No surer evidence of an unconverted state, than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love, and estimation.

With the sound convert, Christ has the supremacy. How dear is his name to him! How precious is his favor! The name of Jesus is engraven on his heart, Gal. 4:19, and lies as a bundle of myrrh between his breasts. Cant. 1:13, 14. Honor is but air, and laughter is but madness, and mammon is fallen like dagon before the ark, with hands and head broken off on the

threshold, when once Christ is savingly revealed. Here is the pearl of great price to the true convert; here is his treasure, here is his hope. This is his glory; my beloved is mine, and I am his. O! it is sweeter to him to be able to say, Christ is mine, than if he could say, the kingdom is mine, the Indies are mine.

4. Our own righteousness. Before conversion, man seeks to cover himself with his own fig-leaves, and to make himself whole with his own duties. He is apt to trust in himself, and set up his own righteousness, and to reckon his counters for gold, and not submit to the righteousness of God. But conversion changes his mind; now he casts away his filthy rags, and counts his own righteousness as a filthy cloth. He casts it off, as a man would the dirty tatters of a beggar. Now he is brought to poverty of spirit, complains of and condemns himself, and all his inventory is, "poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." He sees a world of iniquity in his holy things, and calls his once idolized righteousness but filth and loss; and would not for a thousand worlds be found in it. Now he begins to set a high price upon Christ's righteousness: he sees the need of Christ in every duty, to justify his person, and sanctify his performances; he cannot live without him; he cannot pray without him. Christ must go with him, or else he cannot come into the presence of God; he leans upon Christ, and so bows himself in the house of his God; he sets himself down for a lost undone man without him; his life is hid in Christ, as the root of a tree spreads in the earth for stability and nutriment. Before, the news of Christ was a stale and tasteless thing, but now how sweet is Christ! Augustine could not relish his before so much admired Cicero, because he could not find in

his writing the name of Christ! How emphatically cries he, "O most sweet, most loving, most kind, most dear, most precious, most desired, most lovely, most fair!" &c. *Meditat. c. 37*, all in a breath, when he speaks of and to his Christ. In a word, the voice of the convert is with the martyr, "None but Christ."

The ultimate end to which we turn in conversion is, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; whom the true convert takes as his all-sufficient and eternal blessedness. A man is never truly sanctified till his very heart be in truth set upon God above all things, as his portion and chief good. These are the natural breathings of a believer's heart: "Thou art my portion." "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." "My expectation is from him; he only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; in God is my salvation and glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God."

Would you put it to an issue, whether you be converted or not? Now let thy soul and all that is within thee attend.

Haſt thou taken God for thy happiness? Where doth the content of thy heart lie? Whence doth thy choicest comfort come in? Come then, and with Abraham lift up thine eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and cast about thee, what is it that thou wouldst have in heaven or on earth to make thee happy? If God should give thee thy choice, as he did to Solomon, or should say to thee, as Ahasuerus to Esther, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted thee?" what wouldst thou ask? Go into the gardens of pleasure, and gather all the fragrant flowers thence: would these content thee? Go

to the treasures of Mammon; suppose thou mightest lade thyself as thou wouldst from hence. Go to the towers, to the trophies of honor; what thinkest thou of being a man of renown, and having a name like the name of the great men of the earth? Would any of this, all this suffice thee, and make thee count thyself happy? If so, then certainly thou art carnal and unconverted. If not, go farther; wade into the divine excellences, the store of his mercies, the hiding of his power, the depths unfathomable of his all-sufficiency. Doth this suit thee best and please thee most? Dost thou say, "It is good to be here"—"Here will I pitch, here will I live and die?" Wilt thou let all the world go rather than this? Then it is well between God and thee: happy art thou, O man—happy art thou that ever thou wast born. If a God can make thee happy, thou must be happy; for thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God. Dost thou say to Christ as he to us, "Thy Father shall be my Father, and thy God my God?" Here is the turning point; an unsound professor never takes up his rest in God, but converting grace does the work, and so cures the fatal misery of the fall, by turning the heart from its idol to the living God. Now, says the soul, "Lord, whither shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Here he centres, here he settles. It is the entrance of heaven to him; he sees his interest in God. When he discovers this, he saith, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." And he is even ready to breathe out Simeon's song, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;" and saith with Jacob, when his old heart revived at the welcome tidings, "It is enough." When he sees he hath a God in covenant to go to, "this is all his salvation and all his desire."

Is this thy case? hast thou experienced this? Why then, "blessed art thou of the Lord;" God hath been at work with thee; he hath laid hold on thy heart by the power of converting grace, or else thou couldst never have done this.

God effects this work through Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. 1 Tim. 2 : 5. His work is to bring us to God. 1 Pet. 3 : 18. He is the way to the Father, John, 14 : 6, the only plank on which we may escape, the only door by which we may enter. John, 10 : 9. Conversion brings over the soul to Christ to accept him as the only means of life, as the only way, the only name given under heaven. He looks not for salvation in any other but him; he throws himself on Christ alone, as one that would cast himself with spread arms upon the sea.

"Here (saith the convinced sinner) I will venture; and if I perish, I perish; if I die, I will die here. But, Lord, suffer me not to perish under the eye of thy mercy. Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following after thee." Ruth, 1 : 16. "Here I will throw myself, if thou kill me." "I will not go from thy door."

Thus the poor soul doth venture on Christ and resolutely adhere to him. Before conversion, the man made light of Christ, minded his farm, friends, merchandise, more than Christ; now Christ is to him as his necessary food, his daily bread, the life of his heart, the staff of his life. His great desire is, that Christ may be magnified in him. His heart once said, as they to the spouse, "What is thy beloved more than another?" Cant. 5 : 9. He found more sweetness in his merry company, wicked games, earthly delights, than in Christ. He took religion for a fancy, and the talk

of great enjoyments for an idle dream ; but now to him to live is Christ. He sets light by all that he accounted precious, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

All of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert : he loves not only the wages but the work of Christ ; not only the benefits but the burden of Christ ; he is willing not only to tread out the corn, but to draw under the yoke ; he takes up the commands of Christ, yea, and cross of Christ.

The unsound closeth by halves with Christ ; he is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for sanctification ; he divides the offices and benefits of Christ. This is an error in the foundation. Whoso loveth life, let him beware here ; it is an undoing mistake, of which you have been often warned, and yet none more common. Jesus is a sweet name ; but men “ love not the Lord Jesus in sincerity.” They will not have him as God offers, “ to be a Prince and a Savior.” They divide what God has joined, the king and the priest : yea, they will not accept the salvation of Christ as he intends it ; they divide it here. Every man’s vote is for salvation from suffering ; but they desire not to be saved from sinning ; they would have their lives saved, but withal would have their lusts. Yea, many divide here again ; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias : they cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand : the Lord must pardon them in this thing. O be carefully scrupulous here : your souls depend upon it. The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve. He is willing to have Christ upon any terms ; he is willing to have the dominion of Christ, as well as

deliverance by Christ; he saith, with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Any thing, Lord. He sends the blank to Christ, to set down his own conditions.

The heart that was once set against the laws, ordinances, and ways of Christ, and could not endure the strictness of these bonds, the severity of these ways, now falls in with them, and chooses them as its rule and guide for ever.

Four things, I observe, God doth work in every sound convert, with reference to the laws and ways of Christ; by which you may come to know your state, if you will be faithful to your own souls, and therefore keep your eyes upon your hearts as you go along.

1. The judgment is brought to approve of them, and subscribe to them, as most righteous and most reasonable. The mind is brought to like the ways of God; and the corrupt prejudices that were once against them, as unreasonable and intolerable, are now removed. The understanding assents to them all, as holy, just, and good. Rom. 7 : 12. How is David taken up with the excellences of God's laws! how doth he expatiate on their praises, both from their inherent qualities and admirable effects! Psalm 19 : 8, 9, 10, &c.

There is a twofold judgment of the understanding. The absolute judgment is, when a man thinks such a course best in the general, but not for him, or not under his present circumstances. Now, a godly man's judgment is for the ways of God, and that not only the absolute, but comparative judgment; he thinks them not only the best in general, but best for him: he looks upon the rules of religion not only as tolerable, but de-

sirable; yea, more desirable than gold, fine gold; yea, much fine gold.

His judgment is fully determined that it is best to be holy, that it is best to be strict, that it is in itself the most eligible course, and that it is for him the wisest and most rational and desirable choice. Hear the godly man's judgment: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold; I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Mark, he approves of all that God requires, and disallows of all that he forbids. "Righteous, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." See how readily and fully he subscribes; he declares his assent and consent to it, and all and every thing therein contained.

2. The desire of the heart is to know the whole mind of Christ. He would not have one sin undiscovered, nor be ignorant of one duty required. It is the natural and earnest breathing of a sanctified heart: "Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me, do thou discover it. What I know not, teach thou me: and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more." The unsound is willingly ignorant, loves not to come to the light. He is willing to keep such or such a sin, and therefore is loth to know it to be a sin, and will not let in the light at that window. Now the gracious heart is willing to know the whole latitude and compass of his Maker's law. He receives with all acceptance the word which convinceth him of any duty that he knew not, or minded not before, or which discovereth any sin that lay hid before.

3. The free and decided choice of the will is for the ways of Christ, before all the pleasures of sin and prosperities of the world. His consent is not extorted by some extremity of anguish, nor is it only a sudden and hasty resolve, but he is deliberately purposed, and comes off freely to the choice. True, the flesh will rebel, yet the prevailing part of his will is for Christ's laws and government; so that he takes them not up as his toil or burden, but his bliss. While the unsanctified goes in Christ's ways as in chains and fetters, he does it heartily, and counts Christ's laws his liberty. He delights in the beauties of holiness, and has this inseparable mark, "That he had rather (if he might have his choice) live a strict and holy life, than the most prosperous and flourishing mere worldly life." "There went with Saul a band of men whose hearts God had touched." When God toucheth the hearts of his chosen, they presently follow Christ, and (though drawn) do freely run after him, and willingly devote themselves to the service of the Lord, seeking him with their whole desire. Fear hath its use; but this is not the main spring of motion with a sanctified heart. Christ keeps not his subjects by force, but is king of a willing people. They are, through his grace, freely devoted to his service; they serve out of choice, not as slaves, but as the son or spouse, from a spring of love and a loyal mind. In a word, the laws of Christ are the convert's love, delight, and continual study.

4. The bent of his course is directed to keep God's statutes. It is the daily care of his life to walk with God. He seeks great things, he hath noble designs, though he fall too short. He aims at nothing less than perfection: he desires it, he reaches after it; he would not rest in any degree of grace, till he were quite rid of sin, and had perfect holiness.

Here the hypocrite's rottenness may be discovered. He desires holiness (as one well said) only as a bridge to heaven, and inquires earnestly what is the least that will serve his turn; and if he can get but so much as may bring him to heaven; this is all he cares for. But the sound convert desires holiness for holiness' sake, and not merely for heaven's sake. He would not be satisfied with so much as might save him from hell, but desires the highest degree: yet desires are not enough. What is thy way and thy course? Is holiness thy pursuit, and religion thy business? If not, thou art short of sound conversion.

*Application.*—And is this that we have described, the conversion that is of absolute necessity to salvation? Then be informed, That strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life—that there are but few that find it—that there is need of a divine power savingly to convert a sinner to Jesus Christ.

Again, Then be exhorted, O man, to turn in upon thine own self. What saith conscience? Doth it not begin to bite? Doth it not pierce thee as thou goest? Is this thy judgment, and this thy choice, and this thy way, that we have described? If so, then it is well. But doth not thy heart condemn thee, and tell thee there is such a sin thou livest in against thy conscience? Doth it not tell thee there is such and such a secret way of wickedness that thou makest no account of? such or such a duty that thou makest no conscience of?

Doth not conscience carry thee to thy closet, and tell thee how seldom prayer and reading are performed there? Doth it not carry thee to thy family, and show thee the charge of God, and the souls of thy children and servants, that are neglected there? Doth not conscience lead thee to thy shop, thy trade, and tell thee

of some iniquity there? Doth it not carry thee to the dram-shop, or the resort of idleness, and blame thee for the loose company thou keepest there, the precious time thou misspendest there, for the talents which thou wastest there, for thy gaming, and thy drinking? &c. Doth it not carry thee into thy secret chamber, and read there thy condemnation?

O conscience! do thy duty: in the name of the living God, I command thee, discharge thine office; lay hold upon this sinner, fall upon him, arrest him, apprehend him, undeceive him. What! wilt thou flatter and sooth him while he lives in his sins? Awake, O conscience! what meanest thou, O sleeper? What! hast thou never a reproof in thy mouth? What! shall this soul die in his careless neglect of God and of eternity, and thou altogether hold thy peace? What! shall he go on still in his trespasses, and yet have peace? Oh! rouse up thyself, and do thy work. Now let the preacher in thy bosom speak: cry aloud, and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet: let not the blood of his soul be required at thy hands.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### *Of the Necessity of Conversion.*

It may be you are ready to say, What meaneth this stir? and are apt to wonder why I follow you with such earnestness, still ringing one lesson in your ears, that "you should repent, and be converted." But I must say to you, as Ruth to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." Were it

a matter of indifference—might you be saved as you are—I would gladly let you alone: but would you not have me solicitous for you, when I see you ready to perish? As the Lord liveth, before whom I am, I have not the least hope to see one of your faces in heaven, except you be converted. I utterly despair of your salvation, except you will be prevailed with to turn thoroughly, and give up yourselves to God in holiness and newness of life. Hath God said, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God?” John, 3 : 3; and yet do you wonder why your ministers so earnestly labor for you? Think it not strange that I am earnest with you to follow after holiness, and long to see the image of God upon you. Never did any, nor shall any, enter into heaven by any other way but this. The conversion described is not a high attainment of some eminent Christians, but every soul that is saved passeth this change.

It was a saying of the noble Roman, when he was hasting with corn to the city in the famine, and the mariners were loth to set sail in foul weather, It is necessary for us to sail—it is not necessary for us to live. What is it that thou dost count necessary? Is thy bread necessary? Is thy breath necessary? Then thy conversion is much more necessary. Indeed, this is the one thing necessary. Thine estate is not necessary; thou mayest sell all for the pearl of great price, and yet be a gainer by the purchase. Thy life is not necessary; thou mayest part with it for Christ, to infinite advantage. Thy reputation is not necessary; thou mayest be reproached for the name of Christ, and yet be happy; yea, much more happy in reproach than in repute. But thy conversion is necessary; thy salvation depends upon it; and is it not needful, in so im

portant a case, to look about thee? On this one point depends thy making or marring to all eternity.

But I shall more particularly show the necessity of conversion in five things; for without this,

I. Thy being is in vain. Is it not a pity thou shouldst be good for nothing, an unprofitable burden of the earth, a wart or wen in the body of the universe? Thus thou art, whilst unconverted; for thou canst not answer the end of thy being. Is it not for the divine pleasure that thou art and wast created? Did not God make thee for himself? Art thou a man, and hast thou reason? Then, bethink thyself why and whence thy being is. Behold God's workmanship in thy body, and ask thyself, to what end did God rear this fabric? Consider the noble faculties of thy heaven-born soul. To what end did God bestow these excellencies. To no other than that thou shouldst please thyself, and gratify thy senses? Did God send men, like the swallows, into the world, only to gather a few sticks and dirt, and build their nests, and breed up their young, and then away? The very heathens could see farther than this. Art thou so "fearfully and wonderfully made," and dost thou not yet think with thyself—surely it was for some noble and exalted end?

O man! set thy reason a little to work. Is it not a pity such a goodly fabric should be raised in vain? Verily thou art in vain, except thou art for God: better thou hadst no being, than not be for him. Wouldst thou serve thy end? thou must repent and be converted: without this, thou art to no purpose; yea, to bad purpose.

Thou art to no purpose. Man, unconverted, is like

a choice instrument that hath every string broken or out of tune. The Spirit of the living God must repair and tune it by the grace of regeneration, and sweetly move it by the power of actuating grace, or else thy prayers will be but howlings, and all thy services will make no music in the ears of the Most Holy. All thy powers and faculties are so corrupt in thy natural state, that, except thou be purged from dead works, thou canst not serve the living God.

An unsanctified man cannot work the work of God. 1. He hath no skill in it; he is altogether as unskilful in the work as in the word of righteousness. There are great mysteries in the practice as well as in the principles of godliness. Now the unregenerate know not "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." You may as well expect him that never learned the alphabet to read, or look for goodly music on the lute from one that never set his hand to an instrument, as that a natural man should do the Lord any pleasing service. He must first be taught of God, taught to pray, taught to profit, taught to go, or else he will be utterly at a loss. 2. He hath no strength for it. How weak is his heart! he is presently tired. The Sabbath, what a weariness is it! He is without strength, yea, dead in sin. 3. He hath no mind to it; he desires not the knowledge of God's ways; he doth not know them, and he doth not care to know them; he knows not, neither will he understand. 4. He hath neither due instruments nor materials for it. A man may as well hew the marble without tools, or paint without colors or instruments, or build without materials, as perform any acceptable service, without the graces of the Spirit, which are both the materials and instruments in the work. Almsgiving is not a service of God, but of vain-glory, if not

held forth by the hand of divine love. What is the prayer of the lips without grace in the heart, but the carcass without the life? What are all our confessions, unless they be exercises of godly sorrow and unfeigned repentance? What our petitions, unless animated with holy desires and faith in the divine attributes and promises? What our praises and thanksgivings, unless from the love of God, and a holy gratitude and sense of God's mercies in the heart? So that a man may as well expect that trees should speak, or look for logic from the brutes, or motion from the dead, as to look for any service, holy and acceptable to God, from the unconverted. When the tree is evil, how can the fruit be good?

Also, without conversion you live to bad purpose. The unconverted soul is a very cage of unclean birds, a sepulchre full of corruption and rottenness, a loathsome carcass full of worms, and sending forth a most noisome savor to God. O dreadful case! Dost thou not yet see a change to be needful? Would it not have grieved one to have seen the golden' consecrated vessels of God's temple turned into quaffing bowls of drunkenness, and polluted with the idol's service? Was it such an abomination to the Jews, when Antiochus set up the picture of a swine at the entrance of the temple? How much more abominable then would it have been to have had the very temple itself turned into a stable or a sty; and to have had the "holy of holies" served like the house of Baal, and have been turned into a draught-house! This is the very case of the unregenerate: all thy members are turned into instruments of unrighteousness, servants of Satan; and thy inmost powers into a receptacle of uncleanness. You may see the guests within, by what comes out;

for, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," &c. This black troop discovers what a hell there is within.

O abuse insufferable! to see a heaven-born soul abased to the filthiest drudgery! to see the glory of God's creation, the chief of the works of God, the Lord of the universe, lapping with a prodigal at the trough! Was it such a lamentation to see those that did feed delicately sit desolate in the streets; and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, esteemed as earthen pitchers; and those that were clothed in scarlet embrace dunghills? And is it not much more fearful to see the only thing that hath immortality in this lower world, and carries the stamp of God, become as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, and be put to the most sordid use? O indignity intolerable! Better thou wert dashed in a thousand pieces, than continue to be abased to so vile a service.

II. Not only man, but the whole visible creation, is in vain without this. God hath made all the visible creatures in heaven and earth for the service of man, and man only is the spokesman for all the rest. Man is, in the universe, like the tongue to the body, which speaks for all the members. The other creatures cannot praise their Maker, but by dumb signs and hints to man that he should speak for them. Man is, as it were, the high-priest of God's creation, to offer the sacrifice of praise for all his fellow creatures. The Lord God expecteth a tribute of praise from all his works. Now, all the rest do bring in their tribute to man, and pay it by his hand. So then, if a man be false, and faithless, and selfish, God is wronged of all, and has no active glory from his works.

O dreadful thought to think of! that God should build such a world as this, and lay out such infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness thereupon, and all in vain; and that man should be guilty, at last, of robbing and spoiling him of the glory of all! O think of this. While thou art unconverted, all the offices of the creatures are in vain to thee: thy meat nourishes thee in vain; the sun holds forth his light to thee in vain; the stars that serve thee in their courses by their powerful, though hidden influence, do it in vain; thy clothes warm thee in vain; thy beast carries thee in vain; in a word, the unwearied labors of the whole creation (as to thee) are in vain. The service of all the creatures that drudge for thee, and yield forth their strength unto thee, that therewith thou shouldest serve their Maker, is all but lost labor. Hence the whole creation groaneth under the abuse of men unsanctified, who pervert all things to the service of their lusts, quite contrary to the very end of their being.

III. Without this, thy religion is vain; all thy religious performances will be but lost; for they can neither please God nor save thy soul, which are the very ends of religion. Be thy services ever so specious, yet God hath no pleasure in them. Is not that man's case dreadful whose sacrifices are as murders, and whose prayers are a breath of abomination? Many, under convictions, think they will set upon mending, and that a few prayers and alms will cover all again; but alas, sirs! while your hearts remain unsanctified your duties will not pass. How punctual was Jehu! and yet all was rejected because his heart was not upright. How blameless was Paul! and yet, being unconverted, all was but loss. Men think they do much

in attending God's service, and are ready to charge him with it, and set him down so much their debtor; whereas their persons being unsanctified, their duties cannot be accepted.

O soul! do not think, when thy sins pursue thee, that a little praying and reforming thy course will pacify God. Thou must begin with thine heart. If that be not renewed, thou canst no more please God than one who, having unspeakably offended thee, should bring thee the most loathsome thing to pacify thee; or having fallen into the mire, should think with his filthy embraces to reconcile thee.

It is a great misery to labor in the fire. The poets could not invent a worse hell for Sisyphus than to be ever toiling to get the barrel up the hill, and then that it should presently roll down again and renew his labor. God threatens it as the greatest of temporal judgments, that they should build and not inhabit, plant and not gather, and that their labors should be eaten up by strangers. Is it so great a misery to lose our common labors, to sow in vain, and to build in vain? how much more to lose our pains in religion—to pray, and hear, and fast in vain! This is an undoing and eternal loss. Be not deceived; if thou goest on in thy sinful state, though thou shouldst spread forth thy hands, God will hide his eyes; though thou make many prayers, he will not hear. If a man without skill set about our work, and spoil it in the doing, though he take much pains, we give him but small thanks. God will be worshipped after the due order. If a servant do our work, but quite contrary to our order, he shall have rather stripes than praise. God's work must be done according to God's mind, or he will not be pleased: and this cannot be, except it be done with a holy heart.

IV. Without this, thy hopes are in vain. "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences."

1. The hope of comfort here is in vain. It is not only necessary to the safety, but comfort, of your condition, that you be converted. Without this, you "shall not know peace." Without the "fear of God" you cannot have the "comfort of the Holy Ghost." God speaks peace only to his people and to his saints. If you have a false peace, continuing in your sins, it is not of God's speaking, and then you may guess the author. Sin is a real sickness, yea, the worst of sickness; it is a leprosy in the head, the plague of the heart; it is rottenness in the bones; it pierceth, it woundeth, it racketh, it tormenteth. A man may as well expect ease when his distempers are in their full strength, or his bones out of joint, as true comfort while in his sins.

O wretched man, that canst have no ease in this case but what comes from the deadliness of the disease! You shall hear the poor sick man saying, in his wildness, he is well, when you see death in his face; he would be up and about his business, when the very next step is likely to be to his grave. The un-sanctified often see nothing amiss; they think themselves whole, and cry not for the physician; but this only shows the danger of their case.

Sin doth naturally breed distempers and disturbances in the soul. What a continual tempest is there in a discontented mind! what a corroding evil is inordinate care! what is passion but a very fever in the mind? what is lust but a fire in the bones? what is pride but a deadly dropsy? or covetousness, but an insatiable and insufferable thirst? or malice and envy, but venom in the very heart? Spiritual sloth is but a scurvy in

the mind, and carnal security a mortal lethargy; and how can that soul have true comfort which is under so many diseases? But converting grace cures, and so eases the mind, and prepares the soul for a settled, standing, immortal peace. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." They are the ways of wisdom that afford pleasure and peace. David had infinitely more pleasure in the word than in all the delights of his court. The conscience cannot be truly pacified till soundly purified. Cursed is that peace which is maintained in a way of sin. Two sorts of peace are more to be dreaded than all the troubles in the world; peace with sin, and peace in sin.

2. Thy hopes of salvation hereafter are in vain; yea, worse than in vain; they are most injurious to God, most pernicious to thyself. There is death, desperation and blasphemy in this hope. 1. There is death in it. Thy confidence shall be rooted out of thy tabernacles, (God will up with it root and branch;) it shall bring thee to the king of terrors. Though thou mayest lean upon this house, it will not stand, but will prove like a ruinous building, which, when a man trusts to it, falls down about him. 2. There is desperation in it: "Where is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul?" Then there is an end for ever of his hope. Indeed, the hope of the righteous hath an end; but it is not a destructive, but a perfective end; his hope ends in fruition, others in frustration. The godly may say at death, "It is finished;" but the wicked, "It is perished," and in too sad earnest bemoan himself, as Job, in a mistake, "Where is now my hope? He hath destroyed me; I am gone, and my hope is removed like a tree." "The righteous hath hope in his death." When nature is dying, his hopes are living; when his

body is languishing, his hopes are flourishing; his hope is a living hope, but others' a dying, a damning, soul-undoing hope: "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth." It shall be cut off and prove like a "spider's web," which he spins out of his own bowels; but then comes death and destroys all, and so there is an eternal end of his confidence wherein he trusted; for "the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost."

Wicked men are fixed in their carnal hope, and will not be beaten out of it; they hold it fast; they will not let it go: yea, but death will knock off their fingers. Though we cannot undeceive them, death and judgment will. When death strikes his dart through thy liver, it will ruin thy soul and thy hopes together. The unsanctified have hope only in this life, and therefore are "of all men most miserable." When death comes, it lets them out into the amazing gulf of endless desperation. 3. There is blasphemy in it. To hope we shall be saved, though continuing unconverted, is to hope that we shall prove God a liar. He hath told you, that so merciful and pitiful as he is, he will never save you notwithstanding, if you go on in ignorance, or a course of unrighteousness. In a word, he has told you that, whatever you be or do, nothing shall avail you to salvation unless you become new creatures. Now, to say God is merciful, and we hope that he will save us, is in effect to say, "We hope that God will not do as he says." We must not set God's attributes at variance; God has resolved to glorify his mercy, but not to the prejudice of his truth, as the presumptuous sinner will find to his everlasting sorrow.

*Object.* But we hope in Jesus Christ; we put our

whole trust in God; and therefore doubt not but we shall be saved.

*Ans.* 1. This is not to hope in Christ, but against Christ. To hope to see the kingdom of God without being born again: to hope to find eternal life in the broad way, is to hope Christ will prove a false prophet. David's plea is, "I hope in thy word." But this hope is against God's word. Show me a word of Christ for thy hope that he will save thee in thine ignorance or profane neglect of his service, and I will never try to shake thy confidence.

2. God doth with abhorrence reject this hope. Those condemned in the prophet, went on in their sins, yet (saith the text) they will lean upon the Lord. Micah, 3: 11. God will not endure to be made a prop to men in their sins. The Lord rejected those presumptuous sinners that went on still in their trespasses and yet would stay themselves upon Israel's God, as a man would shake off the briars that cleave to his garment.

3. If thy hope be any thing worth, it will purify thee from thy sins; but cursed is that hope which cherishes men in their sins.

*Object.* Would you have us to despair?

*Ans.* You must despair of ever coming to heaven as you are, that is, while you remain unconverted. You must despair of ever seeing the face of God without holiness; but you must by no means despair of finding mercy upon your thorough repentance and conversion; neither may you despair of attaining to repentance and conversion, if you set about the work immediately

V. Without this, all that Christ hath done and suffered will be (as to you) in vain; that is, it will no

way avail you to salvation. Many urge this as a sufficient ground for their hopes, that Christ died for sinners; but I must tell you, Christ never died to save impenitent and unconverted sinners, (so continuing.) A great divine was wont, in his private dealings with souls, to ask two questions: 1. What hath Christ done for you? 2. What hath Christ wrought in you? Without the application of the Spirit in regeneration, we can have no saving interest in the benefits of redemption.

I tell you from the Lord, that Christ himself cannot save you if you go on in this state.

First. It were against his trust. The Mediator is the servant of the Father, shows his commission from him, acts in his name, and pleads his command for his justification; and God has committed all things to him, entrusted his own glory and the salvation of the elect with him. Accordingly Christ gives his Father an account of both parts of his trust before he leaves the world. Now Christ would quite cross his Father's glory and his greatest trust, if he should save men in their sins; for this were to overturn all his counsels, and to offer violence to all his attributes.

1. To overturn all his counsels; of which this is the order, that men should be brought through sanctification to salvation. He hath chosen them, that they should be holy. They are elected to pardon and life through sanctification. If thou canst repeal the law of God's immutable counsel, or corrupt him whom the Father hath sealed, to go directly against his commission, then, and not otherwise, mayst thou get to heaven in this condition. To hope that Christ will save thee while unconverted, is to hope that Christ will falsify his trust. He never did, nor ever will save one

soul but whom the Father hath given him in election, and drawn to him in effectual calling. Be assured, Christ will save none in a way contrary to his Father's will.

2. To offer violence to all his attributes.

(1.) To his justice; for the righteousness of God's judgment lies in rendering to all according to their works. Now, should men sow to the flesh, and yet of the Spirit reap everlasting life, where were the glory of divine justice, since it should be given to the wicked according to the work of the righteous?

(2.) To his holiness. If God should not only save sinners, but save them in their sins, his most pure and strict holiness would be exceedingly defaced. The un-sanctified are, in the eyes of God's holiness, exceedingly vile and hateful. It would be offering the extremest violence to the infinite purity of the divine nature to have such to dwell with him. "They cannot stand in his judgment: they cannot abide his presence." If holy David would not endure such in his house, no, nor in his sight, can we think God will? Should he take men as they are, from the mire of their filthiness to the glory of heaven, the world would think that God was at no such great distance from sin, nor had any such dislike to it as we are told he hath; they would be ready to conclude that God was altogether such a one as themselves, as some of old wickedly did, from the very forbearance of God.

(3.) To his veracity. For God hath declared from heaven, that "if any shall say he shall have peace, though he should go on in the imagination of his heart, his wrath shall smoke against that man." That "they (only) that confess and forsake their sins shall find mercy." That "they that shall enter into his hill must

be of clean hands and a pure heart." Where were God's truth, if, notwithstanding all this, he should bring men to salvation without conversion? O desperate sinner, that darest to hope that Christ will put the lie upon his Father, and nullify his word to save thee!

(4.) To his wisdom. For this were to throw away the choicest of mercies on them that would not value them, nor were any way suited to them.

They would not value them. The unsanctified sinner puts but little price upon God's great salvation. He sets no more by Christ than the whole by the physician. He prizes not his balm, values not his cure, but tramples upon his blood. Now, would it stand with wisdom to force pardon and life upon those that would return no thanks? Will the all-wise God (when he hath forbidden us to do it) throw his holy things to dogs, and his pearls to swine, that would, as it were, but turn again and rend him? This would make mercy to be despised indeed. Wisdom requires that life be given in a way suitable to God's honor, and that God provide for the securing of his own glory as well as man's felicity. It would be dishonorable to God to bestow his choicest riches on them that have more pleasure in their lusts than in heavenly delights. God would lose the praise and glory of his grace, if he should cast it away upon them that were not only unworthy, but unwilling.

Also, the mercies of God are no way suited to the unconverted. The divine wisdom is seen in suiting things to each other, the means to the end, the object to the faculty, the quality of the gift to the capacity of the receiver. Now, if Christ should bring the unregenerate sinner to heaven, he could take no more felicity there than a beast if you should bring him into a

beautiful room, to the society of learned men; whereas the poor thing had much rather be grazing with his fellow-brutes. Alas! what could an unsanctified creature do in heaven? he could not be contented there, because nothing suits him. The place doth not suit him; he would be quite out of his element, a fish out of water. The company doth not suit him: what communion hath darkness with light? corruption with perfection? filth and rottenness with glory and immortality? The employment doth not suit him; the anthems of heaven fit not his mouth, suit not his ear. Canst thou charm thy beast with music? or wilt thou bring him to thy organ and expect that he should make thee melody, or keep time with the tuneful choir? or, had he skill, he would have no will, and so could find no pleasure in it. Spread thy table with delicacies before a languishing patient, and it will be a very great offence. Alas! if the poor man say of a Sabbath-day, "What a weariness is it!" how miserable would he think it to be engaged in an everlasting Sabbath?

5. To his immutability, or else to his omniscience or omnipotence; for this is enacted in the conclave of heaven, and enrolled in the decrees of the court above, that none but the "pure in heart shall ever see God;" this is laid up with him, and sealed among his treasures. Now, if Christ yet bring any to heaven unconverted, either he must get them in without his Father's knowledge, and then where is his omniscience? or against his will, and then where were his omnipotence? or he must change his will, and then where were his immutability?

Sinner, wilt thou not give up thy vain hope of being saved in this condition? Saith Bildad, "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? or the rocks be moved out

of their place?" May I not much more reason so with thee? Shall the laws of heaven be reversed for thee? Shall the everlasting foundations be overturned for thee? Shall Christ put out the eye of his Father's omniscience, or shorten the arm of his eternal power for thee? Shall divine justice be violated for thee? or the brightness of his holiness be blemished for thee? O the impossibility, absurdity, blasphemy, that are in such a confidence! To think Christ will ever save thee in this condition, is to make the Savior become a sinner, and do more wrong to infinite Majesty than all the wicked on earth or devils in hell ever did, or ever could do; and yet wilt thou not give up such a blasphemous hope?

Second. Against his word.

We need not say, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? Or, who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from beneath? The word is nigh us." Are you agreed that Christ shall end the controversy? Hear then his own words: "Except ye be converted, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "You must be born again." "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." "Repent or perish." One word, one would think, were enough from Christ; but how often and earnestly doth he reiterate it! "Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God." Yea, he doth not only assert but prove the necessity of the new birth, namely, from the fleshliness and sinfulness of man from his first birth, by reason of which man is no more fit for heaven than the beast is for the chamber of the king's presence. And wilt thou yet believe thy own presumptuous confidence, directly against Christ's words? He must go quite against the law of his kingdom, rule of his judgment, to save thee in this state.

## Third. Against his oath.

He hath lifted up his hand to heaven, he hath sworn that those who remain in unbelief and know not his ways (that is, are ignorant of them, or disobedient to them,) shall not enter into his rest. And wilt thou not yet believe, O sinner, that he is in earnest? Canst thou hope he will be forsworn for thee? The covenant of grace is confirmed by an oath and sealed by blood; but all must be made void, and another way to heaven found out, if thou be saved, living and dying un sanctified. God is come to his last terms with man, and has condescended as far as in honor he could. Men cannot be saved while unconverted, except they could get another covenant made, and the whole frame of the Gospel (which was established for ever with such dreadful solemnities) quite altered. And must not they be distracted, to hope that they shall?

## Fourth. Against his honor.

God will so show his love to the sinner, as withal to show his hatred to sin; therefore "he that names the name of Jesus must depart from iniquity and deny all ungodliness; and he that hath hope of life by Christ must "purify himself as he is pure," otherwise Christ would be thought a favorer of sin. The Lord Jesus would have all the world to know, that though he pardons sin, he will not protect it. If holy David say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity," *Psa. 6:8*, and shut the doors against them, *Psa. 101:7*, shall not such more expect it from Christ's holiness?

## Fifth. Against his offices.

"God hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Savior." He would act against both, should he save men in their sins. It is the office of a king to be "a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." "He is a

minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil." Now, should Christ favor the ungodly, (so continuing,) and take those to reign with him that would not that he should reign over them, this would be quite against his office; he therefore reigns that he may "put his enemies under his feet." Now, should he lay them in his bosom, he would cross the end of his regal power; it belongs to Christ, as a King, to subdue the hearts and slay the lusts of his chosen. What king would take rebels in open hostility into his court? What were this but to betray life, kingdom, government, and all together? If Christ be a King, he must have honor, homage, subjection. Now, to save men while in their natural enmity, were to obscure his dignity, lose his authority, bring contempt on his government, and sell his dear-bought rights for naught.

Again, as Christ would not be a Prince, so neither a Savior, if he should do this: for his salvation is spiritual. He is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21. So that, should he save them in their sins, he would be neither Lord nor Jesus. To save men from the punishment, and not from the power of sin, were to do his work by halves, and be an imperfect Savior. His office as the Deliverer, is "to turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "He is sent to bless men, in turning them from their iniquities." "To make an end of sin." So that he would destroy his own designs, and nullify his offices, to save men abiding in their unconverted state.

*Application.*—Arise then! What meanest thou, O sleeper? Awake, O secure sinner! lest thou be consumed in thine iniquities: say, as the lepers, "If we sit here, we shall die." Verily, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shalt

speedily be in it, except thou repent and be converted : there is but this one door for thee to escape by. Arise then, O sluggard, and shake off thine excuses : how long wilt thou slumber, and fold thy hands to sleep ? Wilt thou lie down in the midst of the sea, or sleep on the top of a mast ? There is no remedy, but thou must either turn or burn. There is an unchangeable necessity of the change of thy condition, except thou hast resolved to abide the worst of it, and try it out with the Almighty. If thou lovest thy life, O man, arise and come away. Methinks I see the Lord Jesus laying the merciful hands of a holy violence upon thee ; methinks he acts like the angels to Lot : “ Then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, lest thou be consumed. And, while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, the Lord being merciful unto him ; and they brought him without the city, and said, Escape for thy life, stay not in all the plain ; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed.”

O how wilful will thy destruction be if thou shouldst yet harden thyself in thy sinful state ! But none of you can say that you have not had fair warning. Yet methinks I cannot tell how to leave you so. It is not enough for me to have delivered my own soul. What ! shall I go away without my errand ? Will none of you arise and follow me ? Have I been all this while speaking to the wind ? have I been charming the deaf adder, or allaying the restless ocean with argument ? Do I speak to the trees or rocks, or to men ? to the tombs or monuments of the dead, or to a living auditory ? If you be men, and not senseless stocks, stand still and consider whither you are going ; if you have the reason and understanding of men, dare not to run into the flames, and fall into hell with your eyes

open; but bethink yourselves, and set to the work of repentance. What! men, and yet run into the pit, when the very beasts will not be forced in! What! endowed with reason, and yet trifle with death and hell, and the vengeance of the Almighty! Are men herein only distinguished from very brutes, that these, having no foresight, have no care to provide for the things to come; and will you, who are warned, not hasten your escape from eternal torments? O show yourselves men, and let reason prevail with you.

Is it a reasonable thing for you to contend against the Lord your Maker? or "to harden yourselves against his word," Job, 9:4, as though the Strength of Israel would lie? Is it reasonable that an understanding creature should lose, yea, live quite against, the very end of his being, and be as a broken pitcher, only fit for the dunghill? Is it reasonable that the only thing in this world that God hath made capable of knowing his will and bringing him glory, should yet live in ignorance of his Maker, and be unserviceable to his use, yea, should be engaged against him, and resist his Creator? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," and let the creatures without sense judge if this be reason, that man, whom God hath "nourished and brought up, should rebel against him?" Judge in your own selves. Is it a reasonable undertaking for briars and thorns to set themselves in battle against the devouring fire? or for the potsherd of the earth to strive with its Maker? You will say, "This is not reason;" or surely the eye of reason is quite put out. And, if this be not reason, then there is no reason that you should continue as you are, but there is all the reason in the world that you should forthwith turn and repent."

What shall I say? I could spend myself in this ar-

gument. O that you would but hearken to me! that you would now set upon a new course! Will you not be made clean? When shall it once be? Wilt thou sit down and consider the forementioned argument, and debate it, whether it be not best to turn? Come, and let us reason together; is it good for thee to be here? Wilt thou sit till the tide come in upon thee? Is it good for thee to try whether God will be as good as his word, and to harden thyself in a conceit that all is well with thee while thou remainest unsanctified?

Alas! for such sinners; must they perish at last by hundreds? What course shall I use with them that I have not tried? "What shall I do for the daughter of my people?" O Lord God, help. Alas! shall I leave them thus? If they will not hear me, yet do thou hear me. O that they may yet live in thy sight! Lord, save them, or else they perish. My heart would melt to see their houses on fire about their ears when they were fast asleep in their beds; and shall not my soul be moved within me to see them falling into endless perdition? Lord, have compassion, and save them out of the burning: put forth thy divine power, and the work will be done; but, as for me, I cannot prevail.

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## CHAPTER IV.

*Showing the Marks of the Unconverted.*

While we keep aloof in generals there is little fruit to be expected it is the hand-fight that does execution. David is not awakened by the prophet's hovering at a distance in parabolical insinuations; he is forced to close with him, and tell him plainly, "Thou art the

man." Few will, in words, deny the necessity of the new birth; but they have a self-deluding confidence that the work is not now to do. And because they know themselves free from that gross hypocrisy which takes up religion merely for a color to deceive others, and for covering wicked designs, they are confident of their sincerity, and suspect not that more close hypocrisy (wherein the greatest danger lies) by which a man deceiveth his own soul. But man's deceitful heart is such a matchless cheat, and self-delusion so reigning and so fatal a disease, that I know not whether be the greater, the difficulty or the necessity of the undeceiving work that I am now upon. Alas for the unconverted! they must be undeceived, or they will be undone. But how shall this be effected?

Help, O all-searching Light, and let thy discerning eye discover the rotten foundation of the self-deceiver; and lead me, O Lord God, as thou didst the prophet, into the chambers of imagery, and dig through the wall of sinners' hearts, and discover the hidden abominations that are lurking out of sight in the dark. O send thy angel before me to open the sundry wards of their hearts, as thou didst before Peter, and make even the iron gates to fly open of their own accord. And as Jonathan no sooner tasted the honey but his eyes were enlightened, so grant, O Lord, that when the poor deceived souls with whom I have to do shall cast their eyes upon these lines, their minds may be illuminated, and their consciences convinced and awakened, that they may see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and be converted, and thou mayest heal them.

This must be premised before we proceed to the discovery, that it is most certain men may have a confident persuasion that their hearts and states are good,

and yet be unsound. Hear the Truth himself, who shows, in Laodicea's case, that men may be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and yet not know it: yea, they may be confident they are rich, and increased in grace. Rev. 3 : 17. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness." Prov. 30 : 12. Who better persuaded of his state than Paul, while he yet remained unconverted? Rom. 7 : 9. So that they are miserably deceived who take a strong confidence for a sufficient evidence. They that have no better proof than barely a strong persuasion that they are converted, are certainly as yet strangers to conversion.

But to come more close. As it was said to the adherents of Antichrist, so here; some of the unconverted carry their marks in their forehead more openly, and some in their hands more covertly. The apostle reckons up some upon whom he writes the sentence of death; as in these dreadful catalogues, which I beseech you to attend to with all diligence. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extor-

tioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Wo to them that have their name written in this catalogue: Such may know, as certainly as if God had told them from heaven, that they are unsanctified, and under an impossibility of being saved in this condition.

There are then these several sorts that, past all dispute, are unconverted; they carry their marks in their foreheads.

1. The unclean. These are ever reckoned among the goats, and have their names (whoever is left out) in all the forementioned catalogues.

2. The covetous. These are ever branded for idolaters, and the doors of the kingdom are shut against them by name.

3. Drunkards. Not only such as drink away their reason, but withal (yea, above all) such as are too strong for strong drink. The Lord fills his mouth with woes against these, and declares them to have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

4. Liars. The God that cannot lie has told them that there is no place for them in his kingdom, no entrance into his hill; but their portion is with the father of lies, whose children they are, in the lake of burnings.

5. Swearers. The end of these, without deep and speedy repentance, is swift destruction, and most certain and unavoidable condemnation.

6. Railers and backbiters, that love to take up a reproach against their neighbor, and fling all the dirt they can in his face, or else wound him secretly behind his back.

7. Thieves, extortioners, oppressors, that grind the poor, or over-reach their brethren when they have them at an advantage: these must know that God "is

the avenger of all such." Hear, O ye false and purloining and wasteful servants! hear, O ye deceitful tradesmen, hear your sentence! God will certainly hold his door against you, and turn your treasures of unrighteousness into the treasures of wrath, and make your ill-gotten silver and gold to torment you, like burning metal in your bowels.

8. All that do ordinarily live in the profane neglect of God's worship, that hear not his word, that call not on his name, that restrain prayer before God, that mind not their own nor their families' souls, but "live without God in the world."

9. Those that are frequenters and lovers of vain company. God hath declared, he will be the destroyer of all such, and that they shall never enter into the hill of his rest.

10. Scoffers at religion, that make a scorn of precise walking, and mock at the messengers and diligent servants of the Lord, and at their holy profession, and make themselves merry with the weakness and failings of professors: "Hear, ye despisers," hear your dreadful doom!

Sinner, consider diligently whether thou art not to be found in one of these ranks; for if this be thy case, thou art in the "gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;" for all these do carry their marks in their foreheads, and are undoubtedly the sons of death. And if so, the Lord pity our poor congregations! O how small a number will remain, when these ten sorts are left out! May God show you your danger, and constrain you to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us!"

Sirs, what shift do you make to keep up your confidence of your good state, when God from heaven de-

clares against you, and pronounces you in a state of damnation? I would reason with you as God with them, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? See thy way in the valley; know what thou hast done." Man, is not thy conscience privy to thy tricks of deceit, to thy secret sins, to thy way of lying? Yea, are not thy friends, thy family, thy neighbors, witnesses to thy profane neglect of God's worship, to thy covetous practices, to thy envious and malicious carriage? May they not point at thee as thou goest—There goes a gaming prodigal; there goes a drunken Nabal, a companion of evil-doers; there goes a railer, or a scoffer, or a loose liver? Beloved, God hath written it as with a sunbeam, in the book by which you must be judged, that these are not the spots of his children, and that none such (except renewed by converting grace) shall ever escape the damnation of hell.

O that such as you would now be persuaded to "repent and turn from all your transgressions, or else iniquity will be your ruin!" Alas! for poor hardened sinners! However, you must know that you have been warned, and that I am clear of your blood; and whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, I will leave these Scriptures with them, which will prove either as thunder-bolts to awaken them, or as searing-irons to harden them. "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses." "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, &c. I will laugh at your calamity—when your destruction cometh as a whirlwind!"

And now I imagine many will begin to bless them-

selves, and think all is well, because they are not spotted with these grosser evils; but I must tell you that there is another sort of unsanctified persons, that carry not their marks in their foreheads, but more secretly and covertly! These do frequently deceive themselves and others, and pass for good Christians, when they are all the while unsound at the foundation. Many pass undiscovered, till death and judgment bring all to light. Those self-deceivers seem to come even to heaven's gate with confidence of their admission, and yet are turned off at last. I beseech you deeply to lay to heart and firmly retain this awakening consideration, "that multitudes miscarry by the hand of some secret sin, that is not only hidden from others, but for want of observing their own hearts, even from themselves." A man may be free from open pollutions, and yet die at last by the fatal hand of some unobserved iniquity; and there are these twelve hidden sins, through which souls go down by numbers into the chambers of eternal death: these you must search carefully for, and take them as black marks (wherever they be found) discovering a graceless and unconverted state; and as you love your lives, read carefully, with a holy jealousy of yourselves, lest you should be the persons concerned.

1. Gross wilful ignorance. O how many poor souls doth this sin kill in the dark! Hos. 4:6, while they think verily they have good hearts, and are in the ready way to heaven! This is the murderer that despatcheth thousands in a silent manner, when (poor hearts!) they suspect nothing, and see not the hand that destroys them. You shall find, whatever excuses you make for ignorance, that it is a soul-ruining evil. Isa.

27:11. 2 Thess. 1:8. 2 Cor. 4:3. Ah! would it not have grieved a man's heart to have seen that woful spectacle, when the poor Protestants were shut up, (a multitude together in a barn,) and a butcher came, with his inhuman hands warmed in human blood, and led them one by one (blindfold) to a block, where he slew them, one after another, by scores, in cold blood? But how much more should your hearts bleed to think of the hundreds, in great congregations, that ignorance doth destroy in secret, and lead blindfold to the block! Beware that this be not your case. Make no plea for ignorance; if you spare that sin, know that it will not spare you; and would a man keep a murderer in his bosom?

2. Secret reserves in closing with Christ. To forsake all for Christ, to hate father and mother, yea, a man's own life for him: Luke, 14:26.—“This is a hard saying.” Some will do much, but they will not have the religion that will save them; they never come to be entirely devoted to Christ, nor fully to resign to him, they must have the sweet sin; they mean to do themselves no harm; they have secret exceptions for life, liberty, or estate. Many take Christ thus, and never consider his self-denying terms, nor count the cost, and this error in the foundation mars all, and secretly ruins them for ever.

3. Formality in religion. Many rest in the outside of religion, and in the external performance of holy duties. And this oftentimes doth most effectually deceive men, and more certainly undo them than open profaneness; as it was in the Pharisee's case. They hear, they fast, they pray, they give alms, and therefore will not believe but their case is good. Whereas, resting in the work done, and coming short of the

heart-work and the inward power and vitality of religion, they fall at last into the burning, from the flattering hopes and confident persuasions of their being in the ready way to heaven. O dreadful case, when a man's religion shall serve only to harden him, and effectually to delude and deceive his own soul!

4. False ends in holy duties. This was the ruin of the Pharisees. O how many a poor soul is undone by this, and drops into hell before he discerns his mistake! He performs his 'good duties,' and so thinks all is well, but perceives not that he is actuated by carnal motives all the while. It is too true, that, even with the really sanctified, many carnal ends will oft-times creep in; but they are the matter of their hatred and humiliation, and never come to be habitually prevalent with them and bear the greatest sway. But now, when the main thing that doth ordinarily carry a man out to religious duties shall be really some carnal end; as to satisfy his conscience, to get the reputation of being religious, "to be seen of men," to show his own gifts and parts, to avoid the reproach of a profane and irreligious person, or the like; this discovers an unsound heart. O Christian! if you would avoid self-deceit, see that you mind not only your acts, but withal (yea above all) your ends.

5. Trusting in their own righteousness. This is a soul-ruining mischief. When men trust in their own righteousness they do indeed reject Christ's. Beloved, you had need be watchful on every hand; for, not only your sins, but your duties may undo you. It may be you never thought of this, but so it is, that a man may as certainly miscarry by his seeming righteousness and supposed graces as by gross sins; and that is, when a man doth trust to these as his righteousness

before God, for the satisfying his justice, appeasing his wrath, procuring his favor, and obtaining his own pardon; for this is to put Christ out of office, and make a Savior of our own duties and graces. Beware of this, O professors; you are much in duties, but this one fly will spoil all the ointment. When you have done most and best, be sure go out of yourselves to Christ; reckon your own righteousness but filthy rags.

6. A secret enmity against the strictness of religion. Many moral persons, punctual in their formal devotions, have a bitter enmity against strictness and zeal, and hate the life and power of religion. They like not this forwardness, nor that men should make such a stir in religion; they condemn the strictness of religion as singularity, indiscretion, and intemperate zeal, and with them a lively preacher or lively Christian is but an enthusiast. These men love not holiness as holiness, (for then they would love the height of holiness,) and therefore are undoubtedly rotten at heart, whatever good opinion they have of themselves.

7 The resting in a certain degree of religion. When they have so much as will save them, (as they suppose,) they look no farther, and so show themselves short of true grace, which will ever put men upon aspiring to perfection.

8. The predominant love of the world. This is the sure evidence of an unsanctified heart. But how close doth this sin lurk oftentimes under the fair covert of forward profession! Yea, such a power of deceit is there in this sin, that many times, when every body else can see the man's worldliness and covetousness, he cannot see it himself, but hath so many colors, and excuses, and pretences for his eagerness after the world, that he doth blind his own eyes and perish in

his self-deceit. How many professors are there with whom the world hath more of their hearts and affections than Christ, "who mind earthly things," and thereby are evidently after the flesh, and like to end in destruction! Yet ask these men, and they will tell you confidently they prize Christ above all; for they see not their earthly-mindedness, for want of a strict observation of the workings of their own hearts. Did they but carefully search, they would quickly find that their greatest satisfaction is in the world, and their greatest care and main endeavor to get and secure the world; which are the certain signs of an unconverted sinner. May the professing part of the world take earnest heed that they perish not by the hand of this sin unobserved. Men may be, and often are, kept off from Christ as effectually by the inordinate love of lawful comforts, as by the most unlawful courses.

9. Reigning malice and envy against those that disrespect them, and are injurious to them. O! how do many, that seem to be religious, remember injuries and carry grudges, rendering evil for evil, loving to take revenge, wishing evil to them that wrong them, directly against the rule of the Gospel, the pattern of Christ, and the nature of God! Doubtless, where this evil is kept boiling in the heart, and is not hated, resisted, and mortified, but doth habitually prevail, that person is in the very gall of bitterness and in a state of death.

Reader, doth nothing of this touch thee? Art thou in none of the fore-mentioned ranks? O search, and search again; take thy heart solemnly to task. Wo unto thee, if, after thy profession, thou shouldst be found under the power of ignorance, lost in formality, drowned in earthly-mindedness, envenomed with ma-

lice. exalted in an opinion of thine own righteousness, leavened with hypocrisy and carnal ends in God's service, and embittered against strictness; this would be a sad discovery, that all thy religion were in vain. But I must proceed.

10. Unmortified pride. When men love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and set their hearts upon men's esteem, applause, and approbation, it is most certain that they are yet in their sins, and strangers to true conversion. When men see not, nor complain, nor groan under, the pride of their own hearts, it is a sign they are dead in sin. O, how secretly doth this sin live and reign in many hearts, and they know it not, but are very strangers to themselves!

11. The prevailing love of pleasure. This is a black mark. When men give the flesh the liberty that it craves, and pamper and please it, and do not deny and restrain it; when their great delight is in gratifying their appetites and pleasing their senses; whatever appearances they may have of religion, all is unsound. A flesh-pleasing life cannot be pleasing to God: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh," and are careful to keep it under, as their enemy.

12. Carnal security, or a presumptuous ungrounded confidence that their condition is already good. Many cry, peace and safety, when sudden destruction is coming upon them. This was that which kept the foolish virgins sleeping when they should have been working, upon their beds when they should have been at the markets. They perceived not their want of oil, till the bridegroom was come; and while they went to buy, the door was shut. And, O! that these foolish virgins had no successors! Where is the place, yea, where is the house almost, where these do not dwell?

Men are willing to cherish in themselves, upon ever so slight grounds, a hope that their condition is good, and so look not out after a change, and by these means perish in their sins. Are you at peace? Show me upon what grounds your peace is maintained. Is it Scripture peace? Can you show the distinguishing marks of a sound believer? Can you evidence that you have something more than any hypocrite in the world ever had? If not, fear this peace more than any trouble; and know that a carnal peace doth commonly prove the most mortal enemy of the soul, and, whilst it smiles, and kisses, and speaks fairly, doth fatally smite, as it were, under the fifth rib.

By this time I think I hear my readers crying out with the disciples, "Who then shall be saved?" Set out from among our congregations all those ten ranks of the profane on the one hand, and then beside take out all these twelve sorts of close and self-deceiving hypocrites on the other hand, and tell me then whether it be not a small remnant that shall be saved! How few will be the sheep that shall be left, when all these shall be separated and set among the goats! For my part, of all my numerous hearers, I have no hope to see any of them in heaven that are to be found among these two-and-twenty sorts that are here mentioned, except by sound conversion they are brought into another condition.

*Application.*—And now, conscience, do thy office: speak out, and speak home to him that heareth or readeth these lines. If thou find any of these marks upon him, thou must pronounce him utterly unclean. Take not a lie in thy mouth; speak not peace to him to whom God speaks no peace; let not lust bribe thee, or self-love or carnal prejudice blind thee. I summon

thee from the court of heaven to come and give evidence: I require thee, in the name of God, to go with me in search of the suspected house. As thou wilt answer it at thy peril, give in a true report of the state and case of him that readeth this book. Conscience, wilt thou altogether hold thy peace at such a time as this? I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell the truth. Is the man converted, or is he not? Doth he allow himself in any way of wickedness, or doth he not? Doth he truly love, and please, and prize, and delight in God above all things, or not? Come, put it to an issue.

How long shall this soul live at uncertainties? O conscience, bring in thy verdict. Is this man a new man, or is he not? How dost thou find it? Hath there passed a thorough and mighty change upon him, or not? When was the time, where was the place, or what were the means by which this thorough change of the new birth was wrought in his soul? Speak, conscience; or if thou canst not tell the time and place, canst thou show Scripture evidence that the work is done? Hath the man been ever taken off from his false foundation, from the false hopes and false peace wherein once he trusted? Hath he been deeply convinced of sin, and of his lost or undone condition, and brought out of himself, and off from his sins, to give up himself entirely to Jesus Christ? or dost thou not find him to this day under the power of ignorance, or in the mire of worldliness? Hast thou not taken upon him the gains of unrighteousness? Dost thou not find him a stranger to prayer, a neglecter of the word, a lover of this present world? Dost thou not sometimes catch him in a lie? Dost thou not find his heart fermented with malice, or burning with lust, or

going after his covetousness? Speak plainly to all the forementioned particulars. Canst thou acquit this man, this woman, from being any of the two-and-twenty sorts here described? If he be found with any of them, set him aside; his portion is not with the saints. He must be converted and made a new creature, or he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Mortals, be not your own betrayers; do not deceive your own hearts, nor set your hands to your own ruin by a wilful blinding of yourselves. Set up a tribunal in your own breasts: bring the word and conscience together. "To the law and to the testimony." Hear what the word concludes of your state. O follow the search till you find how the case stands. Mistake here, and you perish. And, such is the treachery of the heart, the subtlety of the tempter, and the deceitfulness of sin, all conspiring to flatter and deceive the poor soul, and withal so common and easy it is to mistake, that it is a thousand to one but you will be deceived, unless you be very careful, and earnest, and impartial in the inquiry into your spiritual condition. O therefore be diligent in your work; go to the bottom; search with candles; weigh you in the balance; come to the standard of the sanctuary; bring your coin to the touchstone. You have the archest cheats in the world to deal with; a world of counterfeit coin is passing; happy is he that takes no counterfeit for gold. Satan is master of deceit; he can draw to the life: he is perfect in the trade; there is nothing but he can imitate. You cannot wish for any grace, but he can fit you to a hair with a counterfeit. Be jealous; trust not so much to your own hearts. Go to God to search you and try you, to examine you and prove your reins. If other helps suffice not to bring all to an issue, but you are

still at a loss, open your case ingenuously to some godly and faithful minister, or Christian friend. Rest not till you have put the business of your eternal welfare out of doubt. "O Searcher of hearts, put thou this soul upon, and help him in his search."

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## CHAPTER V.

### *Showing the Miseries of the Unconverted.*

So unspeakably dreadful is the case of every unconverted soul, that I have sometimes thought if I could but convince men that they are yet unregenerate, the work were more than half done.

But I find by sad experience that such a spirit of sloth and slumber possesses the unsanctified, that, though they be convinced that they are yet unconverted, they oft-times carelessly sit still; and through the love of sensual pleasure, or the hurry of worldly business, or the noise and clamor of earthly cares, and lusts, and affections, the voice of conscience is drowned, and men go no farther than some cold wishes and general purposes of repenting and amending.

It is therefore of high necessity that I not only convince men that they are unconverted, but that I also endeavour to bring them to a sense of the fearful misery of this state.

But here I find myself aground at first setting off. What tongue can tell them sufficiently of their misery, unless it were his who was in that flame? Luke, 16 : 24. Where is the ready writer whose pen can depict their misery who are without God in the world? This

cannot fully be done, unless we know the infinite ocean of bliss which is in perfection in God, and from which a state of sin doth exclude men. "Who knoweth" (saith Moses) "the power of thine anger?" And how shall I tell men that which I do not know? Yet so much we know, as one would think would shake the heart of that man that had the least degree of spiritual life and sense.

But this is yet the more perplexing difficulty, that I am to speak to them that are without spiritual sense. Alas! this is not the least part of man's misery, that he is dead, quite dead, in trespasses and sins.

Could I bring paradise into view, or represent the kingdom of heaven to as much advantage as the tempter did the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory thereof, to our Savior; or could I uncover the face of the deep and devouring gulf of Tophet in all its terrors, and open the gates of the infernal furnace; alas! he hath no eyes to see it. Could I paint the beauties of holiness or the glory of the Gospel; or could I expose to view the more than diabolical deformity and ugliness of sin: he can no more judge of the loveliness and beauty of the one, and the filthiness and hatefulness of the other, than a blind man of colors. He is alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart. He neither doth nor can know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. His eyes cannot be savingly opened but by converting grace. He is a child of darkness, and walks in darkness. Yea, the light in him is darkness.

Shall I ring his knell, or read his sentence, or sound in his ears the terrible trump of God's judgments, that one would think should make both his ears to tingle,

and strike him into Belshazzar's fit, even to change his countenance, and to loose his joints, and make his knees to smite one against another? Alas! he perceives me not: he hath no ears to hear. Or shall I call up the daughters of music, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb? Yet he will not be stirred. Shall I allure him with the joyful sound, and lovely song, and glad tidings of the Gospel? with the most sweet and inviting calls, comforts, and cordials of the divine promises so exceedingly great and precious? It will not affect him savingly, unless I could find him ears as well as tell him the news.

Shall I set before him the feast of fat things, the wine of wisdom, the bread of God, the hidden manna? He hath no appetite for them, no mind to them. Should I press the choicest grapes, the heavenly clusters of Gospel privileges, and drink to him in the richest wine of God's grace; or set before him the delicious honeycomb of God's testimonies? Alas! he hath no taste to discern them. Shall I invite the dead to rise and eat the banquet of their funerals? No more can the dead in sin relish the holy food wherewith the Lord of life hath spread his table.

What then shall I do? shall I uncover to him the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone? or shall I open the box of spikenard, very precious, that filleth the whole house of the universe with its perfume, and hope that the savor of Christ's ointments and the smell of his garments will attract him? Alas! dead sinners are like the dumb idols: they have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they

through their throat. They are destitute of spiritual sense and motion.

But let me try the sense that doth last leave us, and draw the sword of the word; yet, though I choose mine arrows out of God's quiver, and direct them to the heart, nevertheless he feeleth not; for how should he, being past feeling? so that, though "the wrath of God abideth on him," and the mountainous weight of so many thousand sins, yet he goes up and down as light as if nothing ailed him. In a word, he carries a dead soul in a living body, and his flesh is but the walking coffin of a corrupt mind that is twice dead. Jude, 12.

Which way then shall I come at the miserable objects that I have to deal with? Who shall make the heart of stone to relent, or the lifeless carcass to feel and move? That God who is able of "stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" "that raiseth the dead," "and melteth the mountains," and "strikes water out of the flint;" that loves to work like himself, beyond the hopes and belief of man; that peopleth his church with dry bones, and planteth his orchard with dry sticks; he is able to do this. Therefore "I bow my knees to the most high God;" and as our Savior prayed at the sepulchre of Lazarus, and the Shunamite ran to the man of God for her dead child, so doth your mourning minister kneel about your graves, and carry you in the arms of prayer to that God in whom your help is found.

"O thou all-powerful Jehovah, who workest, and none can hinder thee! who hast the keys of death and hell! pity thou the dead souls that lie here entombed, and roll away the grave-stone, and say as to the dead body of Lazarus, Come forth. Lighten thou this darkness, O inaccessible Light, and let the day-spring from

on high visit the dark regions of the dead, to whom I speak; for thou canst open the eye that death itself hath closed; thou that formedst the ear, canst restore the hearing: say thou to these ears, Ephphatha, and they shall be opened. Give thou eyes to see thine excellencies, a taste that may relish thy sweetness, a scent that may savor thy ointment, a feeling that may discern the privilege of thy favor, the burden of thy wrath, the intolerable weight of unpardoned sin; and give thy servant an order to prophesy to dry bones, and let the effects of this prophecy be as of thy prophet when he prophesied the valley of dry bones into a living army exceeding great." "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. He said to me, Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O ye dry bones, hear the voice of the Lord, Thus saith the Lord unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking; and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and flesh came upon them, and covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind; prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me: and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

But I must proceed, as I am able, to unfold that mystery which, I confess, no tongue can unfold, no heart can sufficiently comprehend.

Know therefore, that, while thou art unconverted,

I. The infinite God is engaged against thee.

It is no small part of thy misery that thou art "without God." How doth Micah run crying after the Danites, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" O what a mourning then must thou lift up that art without God, that canst lay no claim to him without daring usurpation! How piercing a moan is that of Saul in his last extremity, "The Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me!" Sinners, but what will you do in the day of your visitation? Whither will you flee for help? Where will you leave your glory? What will you do when the Philistines are upon you; when the world shall take its eternal leave of you; when you must bid your friends, houses, and land, farewell for evermore? What will you do then, I say, that have not God to go to? Will you call on him? Will you cry to him for help? Alas! he will not own you. He will not take any notice of you; but send you away with, "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

They that know what it is to have a God to go to, a God to live upon—they know a little what a fearful misery it is to be without God. This made a holy man cry out, "Let me have God or nothing: let me know him and his will, and what will please him, and how I may come to enjoy him, or would I never had an understanding to know any thing!" &c.

But thou art not only without God, but God is against thee. O if God would but stand neuter, though he did not own nor help the poor sinner, his case were

not so deeply miserable; though God should give up the poor creature to the will of his enemies, to do their worst with him; though he should deliver him over to the tormentors, that devils should tear and torture him to their utmost power and skill, yet this were not half so fearful. But God will set himself against the sinner; and, believe it, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There is no friend like him, no enemy like him. As much as heaven is above the earth, omnipotence above impotence, infinity above nullity; so much more horrible is it to fall into the hands of the living God, than into the paws of bears and lions, yea, furies or devils. God himself will be thy tormentor; thy destruction shall come from the presence of the Lord. "Tophet is deep and large, the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

"If God be against thee, who shall be for thee? If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" "Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who shall stand in thy sight when thou art angry?" Who or what shall deliver you out of his hands? Can mammon? "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Can kings or warriors? No; "They shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Sinner! I think this should go like a dagger to thy heart, to know that God is thine enemy. O whither wilt thou go? where wilt thou shelter thee? There is no hope for thee, unless thou lay down thy weapons

and sue out thy pardon, and get Christ to stand thy friend and make thy peace. If it were not for this, thou mightest go into some howling wilderness, and there pine in sorrow, and run mad for anguish of heart and horrible despair. But in Christ there is a possibility of mercy for thee, yea, a proffer of mercy to thee, that thou mayest have God more for thee than he is now against thee. But if thou wilt not forsake thy sins, nor turn thoroughly and to some purpose to God, by a sound conversion, the wrath of God abideth on thee, and he proclaimeth himself to be against thee, as in the prophet: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, am against thee!"

1. His face is against thee. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them." Wo unto them whom God shall set his face against. When he did but look on the host of the Egyptians, how terrible was the consequence! "I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

2. His heart is against thee. He hateth all the workers of iniquity. Man, doth not thy heart tremble to think of thy being an object of God's hatred? "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight." "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me."

3. His hand is against thee. All his attributes are against thee.

His justice is like a flaming sword unsheathed against thee: "If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine

adversaries, and will reward them that hate me: I will make mine arrows drunk with blood," &c.

So exact is justice, that it will by no means clear the guilty. God will not discharge thee, he will not hold thee guiltless, but will require the whole debt in person of thee, unless thou canst make a Scripture claim to Christ and his satisfaction. When the enlightened sinner looks on justice, and sees the balance in which he must be weighed and the sword by which he must be executed, he feels an earthquake in his breast; but Satan keeps this out of sight, and persuades the soul (while he can) that the Lord is all made up of mercy, and so lulls it asleep in sin. Divine justice is exact; it must have satisfaction to the utmost farthing: it denounceth "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul that doeth evil." It "curseth every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." The justice of God to the unpardoned sinner that hath a sense of his misery, is more terrible than the sight of the bailiff or creditor to the bankrupt debtor, or than the sight of the judge and bench to the robber, or of the irons and gibbet to the guilty murderer. When justice sits upon life and death, what dreadful work doth it make to the wretched sinner! "Bind him hand and foot; cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." This is the terrible sentence that justice pronounceth. Sinner, by this severe justice must thou be tried; and as God liveth, this killing sentence must thou hear, unless thou repent and be converted.

The holiness of God is directly opposed to thee. He is not only angry with thee, (so he may be with his children,) but he hath a fixed, rooted, habitual displea-

sure against thee. "He loathes thee." God's nature is infinitely contrary to sin, and so he cannot delight in a sinner out of Christ.

O what misery is this, to be out of the favor, yea, under the hatred of God; that God, who can as easily lay aside his nature and cease to be God, as not to be contrary to thee and detest thee, except thou be changed and renewed. O sinner, how darest thou to think of the bright and radiant sun of purity, or the beauties, the glory of holiness that is in God! "The stars are not pure in his sight." "He humbles himself to behold things that are done in heaven." O those light and sparkling eyes of his! what do they spy in thee? and hast thou no interest in Christ neither, that he should plead for thee? I think he should hear thee crying out (astonished) with the Bethshemites, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

The power of God is mounted like a mighty cannon against thee. The glory of God's power is to be displayed in the wonderful confusion and destruction of them that obey not the Gospel. He will "make his power known in them," how mightily he can torment them. For this end he raiseth them up, "that he might make his power known." O man, art thou able to make thy party good with thy Maker? No more can a silly reed against the cedars of God, or a little boat against the rolling ocean, or the children's bubbles against the blustering winds.

Sinner, the power of God's anger is against thee, and power and anger together make fearful work; it were better thou hadst all the world in arms against thee than to have the power of God against thee. There is no escaping his hands, no breaking his prison. "The thunder of his power, who can understand?"

Unhappy man that shall understand it by feeling it! "If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength : who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered ? which removeth the mountains, and they know it not ; which overturneth them in his anger ; which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble ; which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not ; and sealet up the stars ! Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him ? Who will say unto him, What doest thou ? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him." And art thou a fit match for such an antagonist ? "O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Submit to mercy ; let not dust and stubble stand out against the Almighty ; set not briars and thorns against him in battle, lest he go through them, and consume them together ; but lay hold on his strength, that you may "make peace with him." "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker !"

The wisdom of God is set to ruin thee. He hath ordained his arrows, and prepared instruments of death, and made all things ready. His counsels are against thee, to contrive thy destruction. He laughs to see how thou wilt be taken and ensnared in the evil day. "The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming." He sees how thou wilt come down mightily in a moment ; how thou wilt wring thy hands and gnash thy teeth for anguish of heart, when thou seest thou art fallen irremediably into the pit of destruction.

The truth of God is sworn against thee. If he be true and faithful, thou must perish if thou goest on. Unless he be false to his word, thou must die, except

thou repent. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself; that is, he is faithful to his threatenings as well as to his promises, and will show his faithfulness in our confusion, if we believe not. God hath told thee as plain as it can be spoken, that "if he wash thee not, thou hast no part in him;" that "if thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die;" that "except thou be converted, thou shalt in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Beloved, as the immutable faithfulness of God in his promise and oath affords believers strong consolation, so they are to unbelievers for strong consternation and confusion.

O sinner, tell me what dost thou think of all the threatenings of God's word that stand upon record against thee? Dost thou believe they are truth or not? If not, thou art a wretched infidel. But, if thou dost believe them, O heart of steel, that thou canst walk up and down in quiet, when the truth and faithfulness of God are engaged to destroy thee! so that, if the Almighty can do it, thou must surely perish. The whole book of God doth testify against thee while thou remainest unsanctified: it condemns thee in every leaf, and is to thee like Ezekiel's roll, written within and without with lamentation, and mourning, and wo. And all this shall surely come upon thee and overtake thee, except thou repent. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of this word shall never pass away."

Now, put all this together, and tell me if the case of the unconverted be not deplorably miserable. As we read of some persons that had bound themselves by an oath and a curse to kill Paul; so thou must know, O sinner, to thy terror, that all the attributes of an infinite God are bound by an oath to punish thee. O

man, what wilt thou do? whither wilt thou flee? If God's omniscience can find thee, thou shalt not escape. If the true and faithful God regard his oath, perish thou must, except thou believe and repent. If the Almighty hath power to torment thee, thou must be perfectly miserable in soul and body to all eternity, unless it be prevented by speedy conversion.

II. The whole creation of God is against thee. "The whole creation (saith Paul) groaneth and travaileth in pain." But what is it that the creation groaneth under? why, the fearful abuse that it is subject to in serving the lusts of unsanctified men. And what is it that the creation groaneth for? why, for freedom and liberty from this abuse; for the "creature is very unwillingly subject to this bondage." If the irrational and inanimate creatures had speech and reason, they would cry out under it, as a bondage insufferable, to be abused by the ungodly, contrary to their natures and the ends that the great Creator made them for. It is a saying of an eminent divine, 'The liquor that the drunkard drinketh, if it had reason, like a man, to know how shamefully it is abused, it would groan in the barrel against him, it would groan in the cup against him, groan in his throat, in his stomach against him; it would fly in his face, if it could speak. And if God should open the mouths of his creatures, as he did the mouth of Balaam's ass, the proud man's garment on his back would groan against him. There is never a creature, but if it had reason to know how it is abused till a man be converted, would groan against him: the land would groan to bear him; the air would groan to give him breath; their houses would groan to lodge them; their beds would groan to ease them, their food

to nourish them, their clothes to cover them, and the creature would groan to give them any help and comfort, so long as they live in sin against God.'

I think this should be a terror to an unconverted soul, to think he is a burden to the creation: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" If inanimate creatures could but speak, thy food would say, Lord, must I nourish such a wretch as this, and yield forth my strength for him to dishonor thee? No, I will choke him rather, if thou wilt give me permission. The very air would say, Lord, must I give this man breath to speak against Heaven, and scorn thy people, and vent his pride and wrath, and filthy communication, and utter oaths and blasphemy against thee? No, if thou but say the word, he shall be breathless for me. His poor beast would say, Lord, must I carry him upon his wicked design? No, I will break his bones, I will end his days rather, if I may have leave from thee. A wicked man! the earth groans under him, and hell groans for him, till death satisfies both, and unburdens the earth. While the Lord of hosts is against thee, be sure the host of the Lord is against thee, and all the creatures, as it were, up in arms, till, upon a man's conversion, the controversy being settled between God and him, he makes a covenant of peace with the creature for him.

III. The roaring lion, Satan, hath his full power upon thee. Thou art led captive by him at his will. This is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. He is the ruler of the darkness of this world, that is, of ignorant sinners who live in darkness. You pity the poor Indians that worship the devil for their god, but little think it is your own case. Why,

it is the common misery of all the unsanctified, that the devil is their God. Not that they intend to do him homage; they will be ready to defy him, and him that should say so of them; but all this while they serve him, and live under his government. His servants ye are to whom ye obey. Rom. 6 : 16. O how many then will be found the real servants of the devil, that take themselves for no other than the children of God! He can no sooner offer a sinful delight or opportunity for your unlawful advantage, but you embrace it. If he suggest a lie, or prompt you to revenge, you readily obey. If he forbid you to read or pray, you hearken to him, and therefore his servants you are. Indeed he stands behind the curtain, he acts in the dark, and sinners see not who setteth them on work, but all the while he leads them. Doubtless the liar intends not a service to Satan, but his own advantage; yet it is he that stands unobserved and putteth the thing into his heart. Undoubtedly Judas, when he sold his Master for money, and the Chaldeans and Sabeans, when they plundered Job, intended not to do the devil a pleasure, but to satisfy their own covetous thirst; yet it was he that actuated them in their wickedness. Men may be very slaves and common drudges for the devil, and never know it: nay, they may please themselves in thoughts of liberty.

Art thou yet in ignorance, and not turned from darkness unto light? Why, thou art under the power of Satan. Dost thou live in the wilful practice of any known sin? Know that thou art of the devil. Dost thou live in strife, or envy, or malice? Verily he is thy father. O dreadful case! However Satan may provide his slaves with divers pleasures, yet it is but to draw them into endless perdition. The serpent comes

with the fruit in his mouth, O but (with Eve) thou seest not the deadly sting in his tail! He that is now thy tempter, will one day be thy tormenter. O that I could but give thee to see how black a master thou servest, how filthy a drudgery thou dost, how merciless a tyrant thou gratifiest; all whose pleasure is to set thee on work to make thy perdition and damnation sure, and to heat the furnace hotter and hotter in which thou must burn for millions and millions of ages!

IV. The guilt of all thy sins lies like a mountain upon thee. Poor soul! thou feelest it not; but this is that which seals thy misery upon thee. While unconverted, none of thy sins are blotted out, they are all upon the score against thee. Regeneration and remission are never separated; the unsanctified are unquestionably unjustified and unpardoned. It is a fearful thing to be in debt, but above all, in God's debt; for there is no arrest so formidable as his, no prison so dreary as his. Look upon an enlightened sinner who feels the weight of his own guilt: O how frightful are his looks, how fearful are his complaints! his comforts are turned into wormwood, and his moisture into drought, and his sleep is departed from his eyes. He is a terror to himself and all that are about him, and is ready to envy the very stones that lie in the street, because they are senseless and feel not his misery, and wisheth he had been a dog, or a toad, or a serpent, rather than a man, because then death had put an end to his misery; whereas now it will be but the beginning of that which will know no ending.

How light soever you may make it now, you will one day find the guilt of unpardoned sin to be a heavy burden. This is a mill-stone, that "whosoever falleth

upon it shall be broken; but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." The guilt of our sins caused the agony and death of the blessed Savior. And if it did this in the green tree, what will it do in the dry?

O think of thy case in time! Canst thou think of that threat without trembling, "Ye shall die in your sins?" O, better were it for thee to die in a jail, in a ditch, in a dungeon, than die in thy sins! If death, as it will take away all thy comforts, would take away thy sins too, it were some mitigation; but thy sins will follow thee when thy friends leave thee, and all worldly enjoyments shake hands with thee. Thy sins will not die with thee as a prisoner's other debts will; but they will go to judgment with thee, there to be thy accusers; and they will go to hell with thee, there to be thy tormentors. Better to have so many fiends and furies about thee, than thy sins to fall upon thee and fasten on thee. O the work that these will make thee! O look over thy debts in time, how much thou art in the books of every one of God's laws; how every one of God's commandments is ready to arrest thee, and take thee by the throat for the innumerable bonds it hath upon thee! What wilt thou do then, when they shall all together come in against thee? Hold open the eyes of thy conscience to consider this, that thou mayest despair of thyself and be driven to Christ, and flee for refuge to "lay hold on the hope that is set before thee."

V. Thy raging lusts do miserably enslave thee. While unconverted, thou art a very servant to sin: it reigns over thee, and holds thee under its dominion, till thou art brought within the bonds of God's cove-

nant. There is not such another tyrant as sin. O the filthy and fearful work that it doth engage its servants in!

Would it not pierce thy heart to see a company of poor creatures drudging and toiling to carry together fagots and fuel for their own burning? This is the employment of sin's drudges. Even while they bless themselves in their unrighteous gains, while they sing in pleasures, they are but treasuring up vengeance for their eternal burning; they are but adding to the pile of Tophet, and flinging in oil to make the flame rage the fiercer. Who would serve such a master, whose work is drudgery, whose wages are death?

What a woful spectacle was the poor wretch possessed with the legion! Would it not have grieved thy heart to have seen him among the tombs cutting and wounding himself? This is thy case; such is thy work; every stroke is a thrust at thy heart. Conscience indeed is now asleep; but, when death and judgment shall bring thee to thy senses, then wilt thou feel the anguish in every wound. The *convinced* sinner is a sensible instance of the miserable bondage of sin: conscience flies upon him, and tells him the end of these things; and yet such a slave he is to his lusts that on he goes, though he sees it will be his perdition: when the temptation comes, lust breaks the cords of all his vows and promises, and carries him headlong to his own destruction.

VI. The furnace of eternal vengeance is heated ready for thee. Hell and destruction open their mouths upon thee; they gape for thee; they groan for thee, Isa. 5 : 14; waiting as it were with a greedy eye as thou standest on the brink. If the wrath of men be "as the

roaring of a lion," "more heavy than the sands," what is the wrath of the infinite God! If the burning furnace heated in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery rage, when he commanded it to be made yet seven times hotter, was so fierce as to burn up even those that drew near to throw the three children in, how hot is that burning of the Almighty's fury! Surely this is seventy times seven more fierce. What thinkest thou, O man, of being a fagot in hell to all eternity? "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? saith the Lord of hosts." Canst thou abide the everlasting burnings? Canst thou dwell with consuming fire? when thou shalt be as glowing iron in hell, and thy whole body and soul shall be as perfectly possessed by God's burning vengeance as the sparkling iron with fire, when heated in the fiercest furnace? Thou canst not bear God's whip; how then wilt thou endure his scorpions? Thou art even crushed, and ready to wish thyself dead, under the weight of his finger, how then wilt thou bear the weight of his heavy arm? Some of the choicest servants of God, when under the hidings of his face, and dreading the effects of his displeasure, have bewailed their condition with bitter lamentations. How then wilt thou endure when God shall pour out all his vials, and set himself against thee, to torment thee? when he shall make thy conscience the tunnel by which he will be pouring his burning wrath into thy soul for ever, and when he shall fill all thy pores as full of torment as they are now full of sin; when immortality shall be thy misery, and to die the death of a brute, and be swallowed in the gulf of annihilation, shall be such a felicity as the whole eternity of wishes and an ocean of tears shall never purchase?

Now thou canst put off the evil day, and laugh and be merry, and forget "the terror of the Lord." But how wilt thou hold out, or hold up, when God will cast thee into a "bed of torments," and make thee to "lie down in sorrow?" when roarings and blasphemies shall be thy only music, and the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, shall be thy only drink? and when thou shalt draw in flames for thy breath? in a word, when the smoke of thy torment shall ascend for ever and ever, and thou shalt have no rest day nor night, no rest in thy conscience, no ease in thy bones; but thou shalt be an execration and astonishment, and a curse and a reproach! for evermore? Jer. 42 : 18.

O sinner! stop here, and consider. If thou art a man, and not a senseless block, consider. Bethink thyself where thou standest—why, upon the very brink of this furnace. As the Lord liveth, and thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and this. Thou knowest not, when thou liest down, but thou mayest be in hell before morning: thou knowest not, when thou risest, but thou mayest drop in before night. Darest thou make light of this? Wilt thou go on in such a dreadful condition, as if nothing ailed thee? If thou puttest it off, and sayest, "This doth not belong to thee," look again over the foregoing chapter, and tell me the truth. Are none of those black marks found upon thee? Do not blind thine eyes; do not deceive thyself; see thy misery while thou mayest prevent it. Think what it is to be a vile outcast, a lost reprobate, a vessel of wrath, into which the Lord will be pouring out his tormenting fury while he hath a being.

Divine wrath is a fierce, devouring, everlasting, unquenchable fire, and thy soul and body must be the

fuel upon which it must be feeding for ever, unless thou consider thy ways, and speedily turn to the Lord by a sound conversion. They that have been singed by this fire, and had but the smell thereof passing upon them before they died, O what amazing spectacles they have been! Whose heart would not have melted to have heard Spira's outcries?—to have seen Chaloner, that monument of justice, worn to skin and bone, blaspheming the God of heaven, cursing himself, and continually crying out, "O torture, torture, torture! O torture, torture!" as if the flames of wrath had already taken hold on him?—to have heard Rogers crying out, "I have had a little pleasure, but now I must have hell for evermore!" wishing but for this mitigation, that God would but let him lie burning for ever behind the back of that fire, (on the hearth,) and bringing in his sad conclusion still, at the end of whatever was spoken to him to afford him some hope, "I must go to hell, I must go to hell, I must go to the furnace of hell, for millions and millions of ages!" O! if the fears and forethoughts of the wrath to come be so terrible, so intolerable, what must be the feeling of it?

Sinner, it is in vain to flatter you: this would be but to draw you into the unquenchable fire. Know ye from the living God, that here you must lie; with these burnings you must dwell till immortality die and immutability change, till eternity run out and omnipotence is no longer able to punish, except you be in good earnest renewed throughout by sanctifying grace.

VII. The law discharges all its threats and curses at thee. O how dreadfully doth it thunder! It flashes devouring fire in thy face. Its words are as drawn swords, and as the sharp arrows of the mighty. It demands sa-

tisfaction to the utmost, and cries, Justice! Justice! It speaks blood, and war, and wounds, and death, against thee.

Read Deuteronomy. O man, away to thy strong hold; away from thy sins; haste to the sanctuary, the city of refuge—even the Lord Jesus Christ; hide thee in him, or else thou art lost, without any hope of recovery.

VIII. The Gospel itself bindeth the sentence of eternal damnation upon thee. If thou continuest in thine impenitent and unconverted state, know that the Gospel denounceth a much sorer condemnation than ever would have been for the transgression only of the first covenant. Is it not a dreadful case to have the Gospel itself fill its mouth with threats, thunder, and damnation? “To have the Lord to roar from mount Zion against thee?” “Hear the terror of the Lord. He that believeth not shall be damned. Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.” “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” “He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.” “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy that hath trodden under foot the Son of God?”

*Application.*—And is this true indeed? Is this thy misery? Yea, it is as true as God is. Better open thine eyes and see it now, while thou mayest remedy it, than blind and harden thyself till (to thy eternal sorrow) thou shalt feel what thou wouldst not believe; and if

it be true, what dost thou mean, to loiter and linger in such a case as this?

Alas for thee, poor man! how effectually hath sin undone thee, and deprived and despoiled thee even of thy reason to look after thine own everlasting good! O miserable wretch! what stupidity and senselessness have surprised thee! O let me knock up and awake this sleeper! Who dwells within the walls of this flesh? Is there ever a soul here, a rational, understanding soul? or art thou only a senseless lump?

Art thou a reasonable soul, and yet so far brutified as to forget that thou art immortal, and to think thyself to be as the beasts that perish? Art thou turned into flesh, that thou savorest nothing but gratifying the sense, and making provision for the flesh? or else, having reason to understand the eternity of the future state, dost thou yet make light of being everlastingly miserable, which is to be so much below the brute, as it is worse to act against reason than to act without it? O unhappy soul, that wast the glory of man, the companion of angels, and the image of God! that wast God's representative in the world, and hadst the supremacy amongst the creatures, and the dominion over thy Maker's works! art thou now become a slave to sense, a servant to so base an idol as thy belly, pampering a vile body that must soon be food for worms? or art thou heaping together a little refined earth, no more suitable to thy spiritual immortal nature than the dirt and sticks? O why dost thou not bethink thee where thou shalt be for ever? Death is at hand; "the Judge is even at the door." Yet a little while, and "time shall be no longer." And wilt thou run the hazard of continuing in such a state, in which, if thou be overtaken, thou art irrecoverably miserable?

Come then, arise, and attend thy nearest concerns! Tell me whither art thou going? What! wilt thou live in such a course, wherein every act is a step to perdition; and thou dost not know but the next night thou mayest make thy bed in hell? O! if thou hast a spark of reason, consider, and turn and hearken to thy true friend, who would show thee thy present misery, that thou mightest in time make thine escape, and be eternally happy.

Hear what the Lord saith: "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?" O sinners, do you make light of "the wrath to come?" I am sure there is a time coming when you will not make light of it. Why, the very "devils believe and tremble." What! are you more hardened than they? Will you run upon the edge of the rock? Will you play at the hole of the asp? Will you put your hand upon the cockatrice's den? Will you dance upon the fire till you are burnt, or dally with devouring wrath as if you were indifferent whether you escape or endure it? O madness of folly! like that of a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, "Am not I in sport!" There is no one so insane as the wilful sinner, that goeth on in his unconverted state without sense, as if nothing ailed him. The man that runs into the cannon's mouth, and sports with his blood, or lets out his life in a frolic, is sensible, sober, and serious, compared with him that goeth on still in his trespasses; for "he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty: he runneth upon him, even upon his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler." Is it wisdom to sport with the second death, or to venture into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, as if thou wert but going to

wash thee, or swim for recreation? Wilt thou, as it were, jump into eternal flames, as the children through the bonfire? What shall I say? I can find out no expression, no comparison, whereby to set forth the dreadful madness of the soul that will go on in sin.

Awake, awake! O sinner, arise and take thy flight. There is but one door that thou mayest flee by, and that is the strait door of conversion and the new birth. Unless thou turn unfeignedly from all thy sins, and come to Jesus Christ, and take him for the Lord thy righteousness, and walk in him in holiness and newness of life; as the Lord liveth, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shalt without fail be in it but a few days or nights hence. O set thy heart to think of thy case. Is not thy everlasting misery or welfare that which doth deserve a little consideration? Look again over the miseries of the unconverted. If the Lord hath not spoken by me, regard me not; but if it be the very word of God that all this misery lies upon thee, what a case art thou in! Is it for one that hath his senses to live in such a condition, and not to make all possible expedition for preventing his utter ruin? O man, who hath bewitched thee, Gal. 3 : 1, that in the matters of this present life thou shalt be wise enough to forecast thy business, foresee thy danger, and prevent thy ruin; but in matters of everlasting consequence be slight and careless, as if they little concerned thee? Why, is it nothing to thee to have all the attributes of God engaged against thee? Canst thou do well without his favor? Canst thou escape his hands, or endure his vengeance? Dost thou hear the creation groaning under thee, and hell groaning for thee, and yet think thy case good enough? Art thou under the power of corruption, in the dark

noisome prison, fettered with lusts, working out thy own damnation—and is not this worth a thought?

Wilt thou make light of all the terrors of the law, of all its curses and thunderbolts, as if they were but the threatenings of a child? Dost thou laugh at hell and destruction, or canst thou drink the envenomed cup of the Almighty's fury, as if it were but a common potion?

Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Art thou such a leviathan as that the scales of thy pride should keep thee from thy Maker's coming at thee? Wilt thou esteem his arrows as straw, and the instruments of death as rotten wood? Art thou chief of all the children of pride, even that thou shouldst count his darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of his spear? Art thou made without fear, and contemnest thou his barbed arrows? Art thou like the horse that paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength, who goeth out to meet the armed men? Dost thou mock at fear, and art thou not affrighted, neither turnest back from God's sword when his quiver rattleth against thee, the glittering spear and the shield? Well, if the threats and calls of the word will not fright thee nor awaken thee, I am sure death and judgment will. O what wilt thou do when the Lord cometh forth against thee, and in his fury falleth upon thee, and thou shalt feel what thou readest? If, when Daniel's enemies were cast into the den of lions, both they and their wives and their children, the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces ere they came at the bottom of the den, Dan. 6: 24, what shall become of thee when thou fallest into the hands of the living God, when he shall gripe thee in his strong arms, and grind and crush thee in his wrath?

O do not then contend with God. "Repent and be converted," so none of this shall come upon thee. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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## CHAPTER VI.

CONTAINING DIRECTIONS TO THE UNCONVERTED.

*And there came one, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?—*  
Mark, 10: 17.

Before thou readest these directions, I advise thee, yea, I charge thee, before God and his holy angels, that thou resolve to follow them, (as far as conscience shall be convinced of their agreeableness to God's word and thy state,) and call in his assistance and blessing that they may succeed. And as I have sought the Lord and consulted his oracles what advice to give thee, so must thou entertain it with that awe, reverence, and purpose of obedience which the word of the living God requires.

Now then, attend: "Set your heart unto all that I shall testify unto you this day; for it is not a vain thing—it is your life." This is the end of all that has been spoken hitherto, to bring you to set your heart to this great work and turn without delay to the living God. I would not trouble you, nor "torment you before the time," with the thoughts of your eternal misery, but

in order to your making your escape. Were you shut up under your present misery without remedy, it were but mercy (as one speaks) to let you alone, that you might take in that little poor comfort which you are capable of in this world; but you may yet be happy, if you do not wilfully refuse the means of your recovery. Behold, I hold open the door to you; arise, take your flight; I set the way of life before you; walk in it, and you shall live, and not die. It grieves me to think you should be your own murderers, and throw yourselves headlong, when God and man cry out to you, as Peter in another case to his Master, "Spare thyself."

The destruction of ungodly men is wilful. God that made them crieth out to them, as Paul to the distracted jailor when about to murder himself, "Do thyself no harm." The ministers of Christ forewarn them, and follow them, and would gladly have them back; but alas! no expostulations or entreaties will prevail, but men will hurl themselves into perdition, while pity itself looketh on.

What shall I say? Would it not grieve a person of any humanity, if, in the time of a raging plague, he should have a remedy (as one said well) that would infallibly cure all the country and recover the most hopeless patients, and yet his friends and neighbors should die by hundreds about him, because they would not use it? Men and brethren, though you carry the certain symptoms of death in your faces, yet I have a receipt that will cure you all infallibly. Follow but these directions, and if you do not then reach heaven, I will be content to lose it.

Hear then, O sinner! and as ever thou wouldst be converted and saved, embrace this following counsel.

I. Attend conscientiously upon the word, as the means appointed for thy conversion. Attend, I say, not customarily, but conscientiously; with this desire, design, hope, and expectation, that thou mayest be converted by it. To every sermon thou hearest come with this thought; 'O I hope God will now come in; I hope this day may be the time, this may be the man by whom God will bring me home.' When thou art coming to the privileges of God's house, lift up thy heart thus to God: "Lord, let this be the Sabbath, let this be the season wherein I may receive renewing grace. O let it be said that this day such a one was born unto thee."

*Object.* Thou wilt say, I have been long a hearer of the word, and yet it hath not been effectual to my conversion. *Ans.* Yea; but thou hast not attended upon it in this manner, nor resolved to receive it into thine heart, and obey all the words which the Lord your God should speak unto you.

II. Set upon the constant and diligent use of serious and fervent prayer. He that neglects prayer is a profane and unsanctified sinner. He that is not constant in prayer is but a hypocrite, unless the omission be contrary to his ordinary course, under the force of some instant temptation. This is one of the first things conversion appears in, that it sets men a praying. Therefore set to this duty; let not one day pass over thee wherein thou hast not, morning and evening, set apart some time for set and solemn prayer in secret. Call thy family also together daily and duly to worship God with thee. Wo be unto thee, if thou be found among the families that call not upon God's name. But cold and lifeless devotions will not reach half way to heaven. Be fervent and importunate.

Importunity will carry it; but without violence the kingdom of heaven will not be taken. Thou must strive to enter, and wrestle with tears and supplications, as Jacob, if thou meanest to carry the blessing. Thou art undone for ever without grace, and therefore thou must set to it, and resolve to take no denial. That man who is fixed in this resolution says: 'Well, I must have grace, or I will never give over till I have grace; I will never cease earnestly pleading, and striving with God and my own heart, till he doth renew me by the power of his grace.'

III. Forsake thy evil company, and forbear the occasions of sin.

Thou wilt never be turned from sin till thou wilt decline and forego the temptations of sin. I never expect thy conversion from sin, unless thou art brought to some self-denial, so as to flee the occasions. If thou wilt be nibbling at the bait, and playing on the brink, and tampering and meddling with the snare, thy soul will surely be taken. Where God doth expose men, in his providence, unavoidably to temptation, and the occasions are such as we cannot remove, we may expect special assistance in the use of his means; but when we tempt God by running into danger, he will not engage to support us when we are tempted. And, of all temptations, one of the most fatal and pernicious is evil companions. O what hopeful beginnings have these often stifled! O the souls, the estates, the families, the towns, that these have ruined! How many poor sinners have been enlightened and convinced, and been just ready to give the devil the slip, and have even escaped the snare; and yet wicked company has pulled them back at last, and made them seven-fold more the children of hell? In a word, I have no hopes

of thee, except thou wilt shake off thy evil company. Thy life depends upon it: forsake this, or else thou canst not live. Wilt thou be worse than the beast, to run on when thou seest the Lord with a drawn sword in the way? Let this sentence be written in capitals upon thy conscience: "A COMPANION OF FOOLS SHALL BE DESTROYED." The Lord hath spoken it, and who shall reverse it?

And wilt thou run upon destruction, when God himself doth forewarn thee? If God doth ever change thy heart, it will appear in the change of thy company. O fear and flee the gulf by which so many thousand souls have been swallowed up in perdition. It will be hard for thee indeed to make thy escape. Thy companions will be mocking thee out of thy religion, and will study to fill thee with prejudices against strictness, as ridiculous and comfortless. They will be flattering thee and alluring thee; but remember the warnings of the Holy Ghost, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, cast in thy lot among us; walk thou not in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For the way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble. They lie in wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives." My soul is moved within me to see how many of my hearers and readers are likely to perish, both they and their houses, by this wretched mischief, even the haunting of such places and company, whereby they are drawn into sin. Once more I admonish you, as Moses did Israel. "And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men." O flee them as you would those that had the plague-sores running

in their foreheads. These are the devil's panders and decoys; and if thou dost not make thy escape they will draw thee into perdition, and will prove thy eternal ruin.

IV. Set apart a day to humble thy soul in secret by fasting and prayer, to work a sense of thy sins and miseries upon thy heart.

Read over our Lord's discourse, Matt. 5, and write down the duties omitted and sins committed by thee against every commandment, and so make a catalogue of thy sins, and with shame and sorrow spread them before the Lord.

V. Strike in with the Spirit when he begins to work upon thy heart. When he works convictions, O do not stifle them, but join in with him, and beg the Lord to give you saving conversion. "Quench not the Spirit;" do not reject him, do not resist him. Beware of putting out convictions with evil company or worldly business. When thou art in anguish on account of sin, and fears about thy eternal state, beg of God that you may have peace only in thoroughly renouncing all sin, loathing it in thy inmost soul, and giving thy whole heart, without reserve, to Christ. Say to him, "Strike home, Lord; leave not the work in the midst. Show me all my guilt, so far as nature can bear it. O go to the bottom of my corruption, and let out the life-blood of my sins." Thus yield up thyself to the working of the Spirit, and hoist thy sails to his gusts.

VI. Set it down with thyself as an undoubted truth, that it is impossible for thee ever to get to heaven in this thy unconverted state.

Can any other but Christ save thee? and he tells thee he will never do it except thou be regenerated and

converted. Doth he not keep the keys of heaven? and canst thou go in without his leave? as thou must, if ever thou come thither in thy natural condition, without a sound and thorough renovation.

VII. Labor to get a thorough sight and lively sense and feeling of thy sins.

Till men are weary and heavy laden, and pricked at the heart, and quite sick of sin, they will not come to Christ, in his way, for cure, nor to purpose inquire, "What shall we do?" They must set themselves down for dead men, before they will come unto Christ, that they may have life. Labor, therefore, to set all thy sins in order before thee; never be afraid to look upon them, but let thy spirit make diligent search. Inquire into thine heart, and into thy life; enter into a thorough examination of thyself and all thy ways, that thou mayest make a full discovery; and call in the help of God's Spirit, in the sense of thine own inability hereunto, for it is his proper work to convince of sin. Spread all before thy conscience, till thy heart and eyes be set weeping. Leave not striving with God and thine own soul, till it cry out under the sense of thy sins, as the enlightened jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" To this purpose,

Meditate on the number of thy sins. David's heart failed when he thought of this, and considered that he had more sins than hairs on his head. This made him cry out upon the multitude of God's tender mercies. An unsanctified soul swarms with filthy lusts: they fill the head, the heart, the eyes, the mouth. Look backward; where was ever the place, what was ever the time, in which thou didst not sin? Look inward; what part or power canst thou find in soul or body but it is poisoned with sin? what duty dost thou ever per-

form, into which this poison is not shed? O how great is the sum of thy debts, who hast been all thy life running upon trust, and never didst or canst pay off one penny! Look over the sin of thy nature, and all its cursed brood, the sins of thy life. Call to mind thy omissions and commissions; the sins of thy thoughts, words, and actions; the sins of thy youth, and the sins of thy riper years. Be not like a desperate bankrupt, that is afraid to look over his books. Read the records of conscience carefully. These books must be opened sooner or later.

Meditate on the aggravations of thy sins, as they are the grand enemies of the God of thy life, and of the life of thy soul: in a word, they are the public enemies of all mankind. How do David, Ezra, Daniel, and the good Levites, aggravate their sins, from the consideration of their rebellion against God, their opposition to his good and righteous laws, and the mercies and warnings they were committed against! O the work that sin has made in the world! This is the enemy that has brought in death; that has robbed and enslaved man; that has done the work of the devil, and digged hell. This is the enemy that has turned the world upside down, and sown dissensions between man and the creatures, betwixt man and man, yea, between man and himself, setting the animal part against the rational, the will against the judgment, lust against conscience; yea, worst of all, between God and man, making the sinner both hateful to God and the hater of himself. O man! how canst thou make so light of sin? This is the traitor that thirsted for the blood of the Son of God, that sold him, that mocked him, that scourged him, that spit in his face, that tore his hands, that pierced his side, that pressed his soul, that man-

gled his body, that never left till he had bound him, condemned him, nailed him, crucified him, and put him to an open shame. This is that deadly poison, so powerful of operation that one drop of it, shed on the root of mankind, has corrupted, spoiled, poisoned, and ruined his whole race. This the bloody executioner that has killed the prophets, burnt the martyrs, murdered all the apostles, all the patriarchs, all the kings and potentates; that has destroyed cities, swallowed empires, butchered and devoured whole nations. Whatever was the weapon it was done by, it was sin that caused the execution. Dost thou yet think it but a small thing? If Adam and all his children could be dug out of their graves, and their bodies piled up to heaven, and an inquest were made what matchless murderer were guilty of all this blood; it would be all found in sin. Study the nature of sin, till thy heart incline to fear and loathe it; and meditate on the aggravations of thy particular sins, how thou hast sinned against all God's warnings, against thy own prayers, against mercies, against corrections, against clearest light, against freest love, against thine own resolutions, against promises, vows, and covenants of better obedience. Charge thy heart home with these things till it blush for shame, and be brought out of all good opinion of itself.

Meditate on the desert of sin. It crieth up to Heaven; it calls for vengeance. Its due wages are death and damnation; it draws the curse of God upon the soul and body. The least sinful word or thought lays thee under the infinite wrath of God. O what a load of wrath, what a weight of curses, what treasures of vengeance, have all the millions of thy sins deserved! O judge thyself, that the Lord may not judge thee.

Meditate on the deformity and defilement of sin. It is as black as hell, the very image and likeness of the devil drawn upon the soul. 1 John, 3 : 8, 10. It would affright thee to see thyself in the hateful deformity of thy nature. There is no mire so unclean, no plague or leprosy so noisome as sin, in which thou art plunged and covered with its odious filth, whereby thou art rendered more displeasing to the pure and holy nature of the glorious God than the most filthy object, composed of whatever is hateful to all thy senses, can be to thee. Couldst thou take up a toad into thy bosom? Couldst thou cherish it, and take delight in it? Why, thou art as contrary to the pure and perfect holiness of the divine nature, and as loathsome as that is to thee, till thou art purified by the blood of Jesus and the power of renewing grace.

Above all other sins, fix the eye of consideration on these two. 1. The sin of thy *heart*. It is to little purpose to lop off the branches while the root of corruption remains untouched. In vain do men lave out the streams, when the fountain is running that fills up all again. Let the axe of thy repentance (with David's) go to the root of sin. Study how deep, how close, how permanent is thy natural pollution, how universal it is, till thou dost cry out, with Paul, upon thy body as dead.

Look into all thy parts and powers, and see what unclean vessels, what sinks they are become. The heart is never soundly broken till thoroughly convinced of the heinousness of its original and deep-rooted depravity. Here fix thy thoughts; this is that which makes thee backward to all good, and prone to all evil. That sheds blindness, pride, prejudice, and unbelief into thy mind; enmity, inconstancy, and ob-

stinacy into thy will; inordinate heats and colds into thy affections; insensibleness and unfaithfulness into thy conscience; slipperiness into thy memory; and, in a word, hath put every wheel of the soul out of order, and made it, of a habitation of holiness, to become a very hell of iniquity. This is what hath defiled and perverted all thy members, and turned them into weapons of unrighteousness, and servants of sin; that hath filled the head with carnal and corrupt designs; the hand with sinful practices; the eyes with wandering and wantonness; the tongue with deadly poison; that hath opened the ears to tales, flattery, and filthy communication, and shut them against the instructions of life; and hath rendered thy heart the cursed source of all deadly imaginations, so that it poureth out its wickedness without ceasing even as naturally as a fountain doth pour forth its waters, or the raging sea doth cast forth mire and dirt. And wilt thou yet be in love with thyself, and tell us any longer of thy good heart? O never leave meditating on the desperate contagion, the original corruption of thy heart, till, with Ephraim, thou bemoan thyself; and with the deepest shame and sorrow smite on thy breast, as the Publican; and, with Job, abhor thyself, and repent in dust and ashes.

2. The particular evil that thou art most addicted to: find out all its aggravations, set home upon thy heart all God's threats against it; repentance drives before it the whole herd, but especially sticks the arrow in the beloved sin, and singles this out above the rest, to run it down. O labor to make this sin odious to thy soul, and double thy guard and resolutions against it, because this doth most dishonor God and endanger thee.

VIII. Strive to affect thy heart with a deep sense of thy present misery. Read over the foregoing chapter

again and again, and get it out of the book into thy heart. Remember, when thou liest down, that, for aught thou knowest, thou mayest awake in flames; and when thou risest up, that by the next night thou mayest make thy bed in hell. Is it a just matter to live in such a fearful case, to stand tottering on the brink of the bottomless pit; and to live at the mercy of every disease, that, if it but fall upon thee, will send thee forthwith into the burnings? Suppose thou sawest a condemned wretch hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace by nothing but a thread which was ready to break every moment, would not thy heart tremble for such a one? Why, thou art the man: this is thy very case, O man, woman, that readest this, if thou be yet unconverted. What if the thread of thy life should break, (why, thou knowest not but it may be the next night, yea, the next moment,) where wouldst thou be then? Whither wouldst thou drop? Verily, upon the breaking of this thread, thou fallest into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where thou must lie scalding and burning in a fiery ocean while God hath a being, if thou die in thy present case. And doth not thy soul tremble as thou readest? Do not thy tears bedew the paper, and thy heart throb in thy bosom? Dost thou not yet begin to smite on thy breast, and bethink thyself what need thou hast of a change? O what is thy heart made of? Hast thou not only lost all regard to God, but hast thou lost all love and pity to thyself?

O study thy misery till thy heart cry out for Christ as earnestly as ever a drowning man did for a boat, or the wounded for a surgeon. Men must come to see the danger and feel the smart of their deadly sores and sickness, or else Christ will be to them a physician of

no value. Then the manslayer hastens to the city of refuge when pursued by the avenger of blood. Men must be even forced and driven out of themselves, or else they will not come to Christ. It was distress and extremity that made the prodigal think of returning. While Laodicea thinks herself rich, increased in goods, in need of nothing, there is little hope. She must be deeply convinced of her wretchedness, blindness, poverty, and nakedness, before she will come to Christ for his gold, raiment, and eye-salve. Therefore hold the eyes of conscience open, amplify thy misery as much as possible, do not flee the sight of it, for fear it should fill thee with terror. The sense of thy misery is but as it were the suppuration of the wound, which is necessary to the cure. Better now to fear the torments that abide thee, than to feel them hereafter.

IX. Settle it upon thy heart that thou must look out of thyself and away from thy own doings for help.

Never think thy praying, reading, hearing, confessing, or amending will do the cure; these must be attended to, but thou art undone if thou rest in them; thou art a lost man if thou hope to escape drowning on any other plank but Jesus Christ. Thou must unlearn thyself, and renounce thine own wisdom, thine own righteousness, thine own strength, and throw thyself wholly upon Christ, as a man that swims casts himself upon the water, or else thou canst not escape. While men trust in themselves, and establish their own righteousness, and have confidence in the flesh, they will not come savingly to Christ. Thou must know thy gain to be but loss and dung, thy strength but weakness, thy righteousness rags and rottenness, before there will be an effectual closure between Christ and thee. Can the lifeless corpse shake off its grave-

clothes, and loose the bands of death? Then mayest thou recover thyself, who art dead in trespasses and sins, and under an impossibility of serving thy Maker acceptably in this condition. Therefore, when thou goest to pray or meditate, or to do any of the duties to which thou art here directed, go out of thyself, call in the help of the Spirit, as despairing to do any thing pleasing to God in thine own strength; yet neglect not duty, put thyself in the way of the Spirit. While the eunuch was reading, then the Holy Ghost did send Philip to him. When the disciples were praying, when Cornelius and his friends were hearing, then the Holy Ghost fell upon them and filled them all.

X. Forthwith renounce all thy sins.

If, on the contrary, thou yield thyself to the practice of any sin, thou art undone. In vain dost thou hope for life by Christ, except thou depart from iniquity. Forsake thy sins, or else thou canst not find mercy. Thou canst not be married to Christ except divorced from sin. Give up the traitor, or you can have no peace in heaven. Cast the head of Sheba over the wall: keep not Delilah in thy lap. Thou must part with thy sins or with thy soul; spare but one sin and God will not spare thee. Never make excuses; thy sins must die, or thou must die for them. If thou allow of one sin, though but a little, a secret one—though thou mayest plead necessity, and have a hundred shifts and excuses for it, the life of thy soul must go for the life of that sin. And will it not be dearly bought?

O sinner! hear and consider: if thou wilt part with thy sins God will give thee his Christ. Is not this a fair exchange? I testify unto you this day, that if you perish, it is not because there was never a Savior provided nor life tendered, but because you prefer (with

the Jew) the murderer before the Savior, sin before Christ, "and love darkness rather than light." Search thy heart therefore with candles, as the Jews did their houses for leaven before the passover. Labor to find out thy sins; enter into thy closet, and consider, What evil have I lived in? what duty have I neglected toward God? what sin have I lived in against my brother? And now strike the darts through the heart of thy sin, as Joab did through Absalom's. Never stand looking upon thy sins, nor rolling the morsel under thy tongue, but cast it out as poison, with fear and detestation. Alas! what will thy sins do for thee, that thou shouldst hesitate to part with them? They will flatter thee, but they will undo thee and poison thee while they please thee, and arm the justice and wrath of the infinite God against thee. They will open hell for thee, and pile up fuel to burn thee. Behold the gibbet that they have prepared for thee! O serve them like Haman, and do upon them the execution they would else have done upon thee. Away with them crucify them, and let Christ only be Lord over thee

XI. Make a solemn choice of God for thy portion and blessedness.

With all possible devotion and veneration avouch the Lord for thy God: set the world, with all its glory, and paint, and gallantry, with all its pleasures and promotions, on the one hand; and set God with all his infinite excellences and perfections on the other; and see that thou do deliberately make thy choice. Take up thy rest in God. Sit thee down under his shadow. Let his promises and perfections turn the scale against all the world. Settle it upon thy heart, that the Lord is an all-sufficient portion, that thou canst not be miserable while thou hast God to live upon.

Take him for thy shield and exceeding great reward. God alone is more than all the world ; content thyself with him. Let others possess the preferments and glory of the world ; place thou thy happiness in the favor of God, and in the light of his countenance.

Poor sinner ! thou hast fallen off from God, and hast engaged his power and wrath against thee ; yet know, that of his abundant grace he doth offer to be thy God again in Christ. What sayest thou, man ? wilt thou have the Lord for thy God ? Why, take this counsel, and thou shalt have him ; come to him by his Christ, renounce the idols of thy pleasures, gain, and reputation, let these be pulled out of their throne, and set God's interest uppermost in thy heart. Take him as God, to be chief in thy affections, estimations, and purposes ; for he will not endure to have any set above him. In a word, thou must take him in all his personal relations and in all his essential perfections.

1. In all his personal relations. God the Father must be taken for thy father. O come to him with the prodigal ! " Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son ;" but since, of thy wonderful mercy, thou art pleased to take me, that am of myself most vile, even a beast and no man before thee, to be a child, I solemnly take thee for my Father, commend myself to thy care, and trust to thy providence, and cast my burden on thy shoulders. I depend on thy provision, and submit to thy corrections, and trust under the shadow of thy wings, and hide in thy chambers, and flee to thy name. I renounce all confidence in myself ; I repose my confidence in thee ; I declare my engagement with thee ; I will be for thee, and not for another. Again, God the Son must be taken for thy

Savior, thy Redeemer, and thy righteousness. He must be accepted, as the only way to the Father, and the only means of life. O then put off the raiment of thy captivity, put on the wedding garment, and go and marry thyself to Christ. 'Lord, I am thine, and all I have, my body, soul, and estate. I give my heart to thee; I will be thine undividedly, thine everlastingly. I will set thy name on all I have, and use it only as thy goods, during thy leave, resigning all to thee. I will have no king but thee to reign over me. Other lords have had the dominion over me: but now I will make mention of thy name only, and do here take an oath of fealty to thee, promising to serve and fear thee above all competitors. I disavow mine own righteousness, and despair of ever being pardoned and saved for my own duties or graces, and lean solely on thy all-sufficient sacrifice and intercession for pardon, and life, and acceptance before God. I take thee for my only guide and instructor, resolving to be directed by thee, and to wait for thy counsel; for thine shall be the casting voice with me.' Lastly, God the Spirit must be taken for thy sanctifier, for thy advocate, thy counsellor, thy comforter, the teacher of thy ignorance, the pledge and earnest of thy inheritance. "Awake thou north wind, and come, thou south, and blow upon my garden." "Come, thou Spirit of the Most High; here is a temple for thee; here do thou rest for ever; dwell here; lo, I give up the possession to thee, full possession; I send thee the keys of my heart, that all may be thine. I give up the use of all to thee, that every faculty and every member may be thy instrument to work righteousness and do the will of my Father who is in heaven

2. In all his essential perfections. Consider how the

Lord hath revealed himself to you in his word. Will you take him as such a God? O, sinner, here is the most blessed news that ever came to the sons of men: "The Lord will be thy God," if thou wilt but close with him in his excellencies. Wilt thou have the merciful, the gracious, the sin-pardoning God to be thy God? "O yes," saith the sinner, "I am undone else." But the Father tells thee, I am the holy and sin-hating God; if thou wilt be owned as one of my people, thou must be holy—holy in heart, holy in life; thou must put away all thy iniquities, be they ever so dear, ever so natural, ever so necessary to the maintaining thy fleshly interest. Unless thou wilt be at enmity with sin, I cannot be thy God. Cast out the leaven. "Put away the evil of thy doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well;" else I can have nothing to do with thee. Bring forth mine enemies, or there is no peace to be had with me. What doth thine heart answer? "Lord, I desire to have thee as such a God; I desire to be holy as thou art holy, and to be made partaker of thy holiness. I love thee, not only for thy goodness and mercy, but for thy holiness and purity. I take thy holiness for my happiness: O be to me a fountain of holiness; set on me the stamp and impress of thy holiness: I will thankfully part with all my sins at thy command. My wilful sins I do forthwith forsake; and for mine infirmities that cleave unto me, though I would be rid of them, I will strive against them continually: I detest them, and will pray against them, and never let them have quiet rest in my soul." Beloved, whoever of you will thus accept of the Lord for his God, shall have him.

Again, he tells you, "I am the all-sufficient God." Will you lay all at my feet, give up all to my disposal,

and take me for your only portion? Will you own and honor my all-sufficiency? Will you take me as your happiness and treasure, your hope and bliss? I am a sun and a shield all in one; will you have me for your all? Now what dost thou say to this? Doth thy soul long for the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt? Art thou loth to change thy earthly happiness for a portion in God? and though thou wouldst be glad to have God and the world too, yet canst thou not think of having him, and nothing but him; but hadst rather take up with the earth below, if God would but let thee keep it as long as thou wouldst? This is a fearful sign. But now, if thou art willing to sell all for the pearl of great price; if thine heart answer, "Lord, I desire no other portion but thee; take the corn, and the wine, and the oil whoso will, so I may have the light of thy countenance; I fix upon thee for my happiness; I gladly venture myself on thee, and trust myself with thee; I set my hope in thee; I take up my rest with thee; let me hear thee say, I am thy God, thy salvation, and I have enough, all I wish for; I will make no terms with thee but for thyself; let me but have thee sure; let me be able to make my claim and see my title to thyself; and for other things, I leave them to thee; give me more or less, any thing or nothing, I will be satisfied in my God." Take him thus, and he is thy own.

Again, he tells you, I am the sovereign Lord; if you will have me for your God you must give me the supremacy. I will not be an underling; you must not make me a second to sin or any worldly interest. If you will be my people I must have the rule over you; you must not live at your own choice. Will you come under my yoke? Will you bow to my government?

Will you submit to my discipline, to my word, to my rod? Sinner, what sayest thou to this? "Lord, I had rather be at thy command than live at my own will; I had rather have thy will to be done than mine; I approve of and consent to thy laws, and account it my privilege to lie under them. And though the flesh rebel, and often break its bounds, I have resolved to take no other Lord but thee. I willingly take the oath of thy supremacy, and acknowledge thee for my Sovereign, and resolve all my days to pay the tribute of worship, obedience, love and service to thee, and to live to thee to the end of my life." This is a right acceptance of God.

To be short, he tells you, I am the true and faithful God. If you will have me for your God you must be content to trust me. Will you venture yourselves upon my word, and depend on my faithfulness, and take my bond for your security? Will you be content to follow me in poverty, and reproach, and affliction here; and to see much going out and little coming in; and to tarry till the next world for your preferment? I deal much upon trust. Will you be content to labor and suffer, and to tarry for your returns till the resurrection of the just? My promise will not always be instantly fulfilled; will you have the patience to wait? Now, what say you to this? Will you have this God for your God? Will you be content to live by faith, and trust him for an unseen happiness, an unseen heaven, an unseen glory? Do your hearts answer, "Lord, we will venture ourselves upon thee; we commit ourselves to thee; we cast ourselves upon thee; we know whom we have trusted; we are willing to take thy word; we will prefer thy promises before our own possessions, and the hopes of heaven before all the en-

joyments of the earth; we will do thy pleasure—what thou wilt here, so that we may have but thy faithful promise for heaven hereafter.” If you can in truth, and upon deliberation, thus accept of God, he will be yours. Thus there must be, in a right conversion to God, a closing with him suitable to his excellences. But when men close with his mercy, but yet love sin, hating holiness and purity; or will take him for their benefactor, but not for their sovereign; or for their patron, and not for their portion; this is no thorough and sound conversion.

XII. Accept of the Lord Jesus in all his offices, as thine.

Upon these terms Christ may be had. Sinner, thou hast undone thyself, and art plunged into the ditch of most deplorable misery, out of which thou art never able to climb up; but Jesus Christ is able and ready to help thee, and he freely tenders himself to thee. Be thy sins ever so many, ever so great, or of ever so long continuance, yet thou shalt be most certainly pardoned and saved, if thou dost not wretchedly neglect the offer that in the name of God is here made to thee. The Lord Jesus calleth thee to look to him and be saved. “Come unto him, and he will in no wise cast thee out.” Yea, he beseecheth thee to be reconciled. He crieth in the streets; he knocketh at thy door; he inviteth thee to accept of him, and live with him. If thou diest, it is because thou wouldst not come to him for life.

Now accept of an offered Christ, and thou art made for ever; now give thy consent to him, and the match is made; all the world cannot hinder it. Do not stand off because of thy unworthiness. Man, I tell thee, nothing in the world can undo thee but thy unwilling-

ness. Speak, man; art thou desirous of the honor? Wilt thou have Christ in all his relations to be thine; thy king, thy priest, thy prophet? Wilt thou have him with all the inconveniences? Take not Christ without consideration, but sit down first and count the cost. Wilt thou lay all at his feet? Wilt thou be content to run all hazards with him? Wilt thou take thy lot with him, fall where it will? Wilt thou "deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow him?" Art thou deliberately, understandingly, freely determined to cleave to him, in all times and conditions? If so, thou shalt never perish, but art passed from death unto life. Here lies the main point of thy salvation, that thou be found in thy covenant-closure with Jesus Christ; and therefore, if thou love thyself, see that thou be faithful to God and thy soul here.

XIII. Resign up all thy powers and faculties, and thy whole interest to be his.

"They gave their own selves unto the Lord." "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." The Lord seeks not yours, but you; resign therefore thy body, with all its members, to him; and thy soul, with all its powers, that he may be glorified in thy body and in thy spirit, which are his.

In a right closing with Christ all thy faculties give themselves up to him. Thy judgment says, "Lord, thou art worthy of all acceptation, chief of ten thousand: happy is the man that finds thee. All the things that are to be desired are not to be compared with thee." Prov. 3: 13-15. The understanding lays aside its corrupt reasonings and cavils, and its prejudices against Christ and his ways. It is now past questioning, and carries it for Christ against all the world. It concludes it is "good to be here," and sees such a trea-

sure in this field, such a value in this pearl, as is worth all. Matt. 13 : 44-46. "O! here is the richest bargain that ever I made; here is the richest prize that ever man was offered; here is the most sovereign remedy that ever mercy prepared; he is worthy of my esteem, worthy of my choice, worthy of my love, worthy to be embraced, adored, admired, for evermore. Rev. 5 : 12. I approve of his articles: his terms are righteous and reasonable, full of equity and mercy." Again, the will resigns. It stands no longer wavering, nor wishing, but is peremptorily determined: "Lord, thy love hath overcome me, thou hast won me, and thou shalt have me. Come in, Lord; to thee I freely open; I consent to be saved in thine own way. Thou shalt have any thing—nay, have all, let me have but thee." The memory gives up to Christ: "Lord, here is a storehouse for thee; out with this trash; lay in the treasure; let me be a repository of thy truth, thy promises, thy providences." The conscience comes in: "Lord, I will ever side with thee: I will be thy faithful registrar: I will warn when the sinner is tempted, and smite when thou art offended; I will witness for thee, and judge for thee, and guide into thy ways, and will never let sin have quiet in this soul." The affections also come in to Christ: O, saith Love, "I am sick for thee: O, saith Desire, now I have my longing; here is the satisfaction I sought for; here is the desire of nations; here is bread for me, and balm for me: all that I want." Fear bows the knee with awe and veneration: "Welcome, Lord, to thee will I pay my homage: thy word and rod shall command my motions; thee will I reverence and adore; before thee will I fall down and worship." Grief likewise puts in: "Lord, thy displeasure and thy dishonor, thy people's calamities and

my own iniquities shall be what shall set me at work. I will mourn when thou art offended ; I will weep when thy cause is wounded." Anger likewise comes in for Christ : " Lord, nothing so enrages me as my folly against thee, that I should be so besotted and bewitched as to hearken to the flatteries of sin and the temptations of Satan against thee." Hatred too will side with Christ : " I protest mortal enmity with thine enemies, that I never will be a friend to thy foes ; I vow an eternal quarrel with every sin : I will give no quarter ; I will make no peace." Thus let all thy powers yield to Jesus Christ.

Again, thou must give up thy whole interest to him. If there be any thing that thou keepest back from Christ, it will be thy undoing. Luke, 14 : 33. Unless thou wilt forsake all, (in preparation and resolution of thy heart,) thou canst not be his disciple. Thou must hate father and mother, yea, and thine own life also, in comparison with him, and as far as it stands in competition with him. In a word, thou must give him thyself, and all that thou hast, without reservation, or else thou canst have no part in him.

XIV. " Make choice of the laws of Christ as the rule of thy words, thoughts, and actions." This is the true convert's choice. But here remember these three rules :—1. You must choose them all, there is no getting to heaven by a partial obedience. None may think it enough to take up with the cheap and easy part of religion, and let alone the duties that are costly and self-denying, and oppose the interests of the flesh ; you must take all or none. A sincere convert, though he makes most conscience of the greatest sins and weightiest duties, yet he makes true conscience of little

sins and of all duties. 2. You must choose Christ's laws for all times, for prosperity and adversity, whether it rain or shine. A true convert is resolved in his course; he will stand to his choice, and will not set his back to the wind, and be of the religion of the times. "I have stuck to thy testimonies; I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even to the end. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever. I will have respect to thy statutes continually." 3. This must not be done carelessly, but deliberately and understandingly. The disobedient son said, "I go, sir; but he went not." How fairly did they promise, "All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee we will do it!" And it is likely they spake as they meant. But when it came to the trial it was found that there was not such a heart in them as to do what they had promised.

If you would be sincere in closing with the laws and the ways of Christ, study the meaning, and breadth, and extent of them. Remember that they are spiritual; they reach the very thoughts and inclinations of the heart; so that, if you will walk by this rule, your very thoughts and inward motions must be under government. Again, they are very strict and self-denying, quite contrary to the grain of your natural inclinations. You must take the strait gate, the narrow way, and be content to have the flesh curbed from the liberty it desires. In a word, they are very large, for "thy commandments are exceeding broad."

Rest not in generals, for there is much deceit in them, but bring down thine heart to the particular commands of Christ. Those Jews, in the prophet, seemed as well resolved as any in the world, and called God to witness that they meant as they said: but they

stuck in generals; when God's command crosses their inclination, they will not obey. Art thou resolved, in the strength of Christ, to set upon the conscientious practice of every duty that thou findest to be there required of thee, and to set against every sin that thou findest there forbidden? 'This is the way to be sound in God's statutes, that thou mayest never be ashamed.

Observe the special duties that thy heart is most against, and the special sins that it is most inclined to, and see whether it be truly resolved to perform the one and forego the other. What sayest thou to thy bosom-sin, thy gainful sin? What sayest thou to costly, hazardous, and flesh-displeasing duties? If thou haltest here, and dost not resolve (by the grace of God) to cross the flesh and be in earnest, thou art unsound.

XV. "Let all this be completed in a solemn covenant between God and thy soul." For thy better help therein, take these few directions.

Set apart some time, more than once, to be spent in secret before the Lord—in seeking earnestly his special assistance and gracious acceptance of thee—in searching thy heart, whether thou art sincerely willing to forsake all thy sins, and to resign up thyself, body and soul, unto God and his service; to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life. Compose thy spirit into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance. Lay hold on the covenant of God, and rely on his promise of giving grace and strength, whereby thou mayest be enabled to perform thy promise. Trust not to thine own strength, to the strength of thine own resolutions: but take hold on his strength.

XVI. Take heed of delaying thy conversion, but make a speedy, an immediate surrender of thy heart to God. "I made haste, and delayed not." Remember and tremble at the sad instance of the foolish virgins, that came not till the "door of mercy was shut;" and of a convinced Felix, who put off Paul to another season; and we never find that he had such another season. O come in while it is called to-day, lest thou shouldst be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; lest the day of grace should be over, and the things which belong to thy peace should be <sup>a</sup> hidden from thine eyes." Now mercy is inviting thee; now Christ is waiting to be gracious to thee, and the Spirit of God is striving with thee; now ministers are calling; now conscience is stirring: now the market is open, and oil may be had, thou hast opportunity for buying. Now Christ is to be had, if accepted. O strike in with the offers of grace: now or never! If thou make light of this offer, God may swear in his wrath, thou shalt not taste of his supper.

## A SHORT SOLILOQUY.

What meanest thou, O my soul, to go on thus? art thou in league with hell? hast thou made a covenant with death? art thou in love with thy misery? "Is it good for thee to be here?" Alas! what shall I do? shall I go on in my sinful ways? Why then, certain damnation will be my end. And shall I be so besotted as to go and sell my soul to the flames for a little ale and a little ease, for a little pleasure, or gain, or satisfaction to my flesh? Shall I linger any longer in this wretched state? No; if I tarry here I shall die. What then? Is there no help, no hope? None, except I turn. Why,

but is there any remedy for such woful misery? any mercy, after such provoking iniquity? Yes, as sure as God's oath is true I shall have pardon and mercy yet, if immediately, and unfeignedly, and unreservedly I turn by Christ to him.

Why, then, I thank thee upon my bended knees, O most merciful Jehovah! that thy patience hath waited for me hitherto; for, hadst thou taken me away in this estate, I had perished for ever. And now I adore thy grace, and accept the offers of thy mercy: I renounce all my sins, and resolve by thy grace to set myself against them, and to follow thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

Who am I, Lord, that I should make any claim unto thee, or have any part or portion in thee, who am not worthy to lick up the dust of thy feet? yet, since thou holdest forth the golden sceptre, I am bold to come and touch. To despair, would be to disparage thy mercy; and to stand off when thou biddest me to come, would be at once to ruin myself and rebel against thee, under the pretence of humility. Therefore I bow my soul to thee, and with all possible thankfulness accept thee as mine, and give up myself to thee as thine. Thou shalt be Sovereign over me, "my King and my God:" thou shalt be on the throne, and all my powers shall bow to thee; they shall come and worship before thy feet. Thou shalt be my portion, O Lord, and I will rest in thee.

Thou callest for my heart. O that it were any way fit for thine acceptance! I am unworthy, O Lord, everlastingly unworthy to be thine; but since thou wilt have it so, I freely give up my heart to thee: take it: it is thine: O that it were better! But, Lord, I put it into thine hand, who alone canst mend it: mold it

after thine own heart ; make it as thou wouldst have it, holy, humble, heavenly, soft, tender, flexible ; and write thy law upon it.

“ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly ;” enter in triumphantly ! take me up to thee for ever : I give up myself to thee ; I come to thee as the only way to the Father, as the only Mediator, the means ordained to bring me to God. I have destroyed myself, but in thee is my help ; save, Lord, or else I perish !” I come to thee worthy to die and to be damned. Never was the hire more due to the servant, never was penny more due to the laborer, than death and hell (my just wages) are due to me for my sins. But I flee to thy merits ; I trust alone to the value and virtue of thy sacrifice, and the prevalence of thy intercession. I submit to thy teaching ; I make choice of thy government. “ Stand open, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.”

O thou Spirit of the Most High, the comforter and sanctifier of thy chosen ! come in with all thy glorious train, all thy courtly attendants, thy fruits and graces ; let me be thine habitation ; I can give thee only what is thine own already ; but here, with the poor widow, I cast my two mites, my soul and my body, into thy treasury, fully resigning them up to thee, to be sanctified by thee, to be servants to thee. They shall be thy patients ; cure thou their malady. They shall be thy subjects ; govern thou their motions. Too long have I served the world ; too long have I hearkened to Satan ; but now I renounce them all, and will be ruled by thy dictates and directions, and guided by thy counsel.

O blessed Trinity ! O glorious Unity ! I deliver up myself to thee : receive me ; write thy name, O Lord,

upon me, and upon all that I have, as thy property; set thy mark upon me, upon every member of my body, and on every faculty of my soul. I have chosen thy precepts; thy law will I keep in mine eye, and study to follow. According to this rule do I resolve, through thy grace, to walk; after this law shall my whole man be governed; and though I shall come short in all thy commandments, yet I will allow myself in the breach of none. I know my flesh will hang back; but I resolve, in the power of thy grace, to cleave to thee and thy holy ways, whatever it costs me. I am sure I cannot come off a loser by thee, and therefore I will be content with reproach, and difficulties, and hardships here; and will "deny myself, and take up my cross, and follow thee." Lord Jesus, thy yoke is easy, thy cross is welcome: as it is the way to thee, I lay aside all hopes of worldly happiness; I will be content to tarry till I come to thee. Let me be poor, and low, and despised here, so I may but be admitted to live and reign with thee hereafter. Lord, thou hast my heart and hand to this agreement: be it as the laws of the Medes and Persians, never to be reversed. To this will I stand; in this resolution, through grace, I will live and die; "I have sworn," and will perform it, that "I will keep thy righteous judgments;" I have given my free consent; I have made my everlasting choice: Lord Jesus, confirm the contract. Amen.

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## CHAPTER VII.

CONTAINING THE MOTIVES TO CONVERSION.

Though what is already said of the "necessity of conversion," and of the "miseries of the unconverted,"

might be sufficient to induce any considerate mind to resolve upon a present turning unto God; yet, knowing what a piece of desperate obstinacy and untractableness the heart of man naturally is, and thinking it therefore possible, after all that I have said, some might still refuse their whole selves to the Lord, I have added the following motives.

Lord, fail me not now, at my last attempts. If any soul hath read hitherto, and is yet untouched, now, Lord, fasten on him, and do thy work; now take him by the heart, overcome him, persuade him, till he say, Thou hast prevailed, for thou art stronger than I. Lord, didst not thou make me a fisher of men, and have I toiled all this while and caught nothing? Alas! that I should have spent my strength for naught! and now I am casting my last; Lord Jesus, stand thou upon the shore, and direct how and where I shall spread my net; and let me so enclose with arguments the souls I seek, that they may not be able to get out. Now, Lord, for a multitude of souls! now for a full draught! O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me this once, O God.

But I turn me unto you.

Men and brethren, heaven and earth call upon you; yea, hell itself preaches the doctrine of repentance unto you; the ministers of the churches labor for you. The angels of heaven wait for you, for your repenting and turning unto God. O sinner, why should the devils make merry with thee? why shouldst thou be a morsel for that devouring leviathan? why should harpies and hell-hounds tear thee, and make a feast upon thee; and when they have got thee into the snare, and have fastened their talons in thee, laugh at thy destruction, and deride thy misery, and sport themselves

with thy ruinous folly? This will be thy case, except thou turn. And were it not better thou shouldst be a joy to angels, than a laughing-stock and sport for devils? Verily, if thou wouldst but come in, the heavenly hosts would take up their anthems and sing, "Glory be to God in the highest;" the morning stars would sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, and celebrate this new creation as they did the first. Thy repentance would, as it were, make a holiday in heaven, and the glorious spirits would rejoice, in that there is a new brother added to their society, another heir born to the Lord, and the lost son received safe and sound. The true penitent's tears are indeed the wine that maketh glad both God and man.

If it be little that men and angels would rejoice at thy conversion, know thou that God himself would rejoice over thee, even with singing, and rest in his love. Never did Jacob with such joy weep over the neck of his Joseph, as thy heavenly Father would rejoice over thee upon thy coming to him. Look over the story of the prodigal. Methinks I see how the aged father lays aside his state and forgetteth his years; behold how he runneth! O the haste that mercy makes! the sinner makes not half that speed. Methinks I see how his bowels move, how his compassions yearn. How quick sighted is love! Methinks I hear the music at a distance. O the melody of the heavenly choristers! I cannot learn the song, Rev. 14: 3, but methinks I overhear the burden, at which all the harmonious choir with one consent strike sweetly in, being none other than, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." I need not farther explain the parable: God is the father; Christ is the provision; his righteousness the robe; his grace the ornaments; min-

isters, saints and angels the friends and servants; and thou that readest (if thou wilt but unfeignedly repent and turn) the welcome prodigal, the happy instance of this grace, and blessed subject of this joy and love!

O rock! O adamant!—what! not moved yet! not yet resolved to turn forthwith and to close with mercy! I will try thee yet once again; if one were sent to thee from the dead, wouldst thou be persuaded? Why, hear the voice from the dead, from the damned, crying to thee that thou shouldst repent: “I pray thee that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house, (for I have five brethren,) that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment: if one went to them from the dead, they will repent.” Hear, O man! thy predecessors in impenitence preach to thee from the infernal world, from the flames, from the rack, that thou shouldst repent. O look but down into the bottomless pit; seest thou how the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever! What thinkest thou of those chains of darkness? Canst thou be content to burn? Seest thou how the worm gnaweth, how the fire rageth? What sayest thou to that gulf of perdition? wilt thou take up thine habitation there? O lay thine ear to the door of hell: hearest thou the curses and blasphemies, the weepings and wailings, how they lament their follies and curse their day? How do they roar and gnash their teeth! how deep their groans! how inconceivable their miseries! if the shrieks of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were so terrible (when the earth clave asunder, and opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them) that all Israel fled at the cry of them, O how fearful would the cry be, if God should take off the covering from the mouth of hell, and let the cry of the damned ascend

in all its terror among the children of men! and of all their moans and miseries this is the piercing, killing emphasis and burden, "for ever! for ever!"

Why, as God liveth that made thy soul, thou art but a few hours distant from all this, except thou "repent and be converted."

O, I am even lost and swallowed up in the abundance of those arguments that I might suggest. If there be any point of wisdom in all the world, it is to repent and come in. If there be any thing righteous, any thing reasonable, this is it. If there be any thing in the world that may be called madness and folly, and any thing that may be counted sottish, absurd, brutish, and unreasonable, it is this, "to go on in thine unconverted state." Let me beg of thee, as thou wouldst not willingly destroy thyself, to sit down and weigh, beside what has been said, these following motives, and let conscience say if it be not most reasonable that thou shouldst "repent and turn."

I. The God that made thee, most graciously invites thee.

His most sweet and merciful nature invites thee. O the kindness of God, his boundless compassion, his tender mercies! As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. "He is full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy." This is a great argument to persuade sinners to come in, "Turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

If God would not repent of the evil, it would be some discouragement against our repenting. If there

were no hope of mercy, it would be no wonder that rebels should stand out; but never had subjects such a gracious prince, such pity, patience, and clemency to deal with, as you have. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Micah, 7:18. O sinners! see what a God you have to deal with: if you will but turn, "he will turn again, and have compassion on you; he will subdue your iniquities, and cast all your sins into the depths of the sea." "Return unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you." Sinners do not fail in that they have too high thoughts of God's mercies, but in that, 1. They overlook his justice. 2. They promise themselves mercy out of God's way. His mercy is beyond all imagination; great mercies, manifold mercies, Neh. 9:19, tender mercies, sure mercies, everlasting mercies; and all is thy own, if thou wilt but turn. Art thou willing to come in? The Lord hath laid aside his terror and erected a throne of grace. He holds forth the golden sceptre: touch and live. Would a merciful man slay his enemy when prostrate at his feet, acknowledging his wrong, begging pardon, and offering to enter with him into a covenant of peace? Much less will the merciful God. Study his name.

His soul-encouraging call and promises invite thee. Ah, what an earnest suitor is mercy to thee! how lovingly, how instantly, it calleth after thee! how earnestly it wooeth thee! "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquity. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; return, and I will heal thy backslidings. Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return unto

me, saith the Lord." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All the transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Repent, and turn you from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

O melting, gracious words! the voice of God, and not of a man! This is not the manner of men, for the offended sovereign to sue to the offending traitorous rebel. O how doth mercy follow thee, and plead with thee! Is not thy heart broken yet? O that "to-day you would hear his voice!"

II. The doors of heaven are thrown open to thee, the everlasting gates are set wide for thee, and an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven is administered to thee.

Christ now addresses thee, and calls upon thee to arise and take possession of this good land. View the glory of the other world, as set forth in the map of the Gospel; get thee up into Pisgah of the promises, and lift up thine eyes northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, and that goodly mountain; behold the

Paradise of God, watered with the streams of glory. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for the land which thou seest, the Lord will give it to thee for ever, if thou wilt but return. Let me say to thee, as Paul to Agrippa, "Believest thou the prophets?" If thou believest indeed, do but view what glorious things are spoken of the city of God, and know that all this is here tendered in the name of God to thee. As verily as God is true, it shall be for ever thine, if thou wilt but thoroughly turn.

Behold the city of pure transparent gold, whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose gates are pearls, whose light is glory, whose temple is God. Believest thou this? if thou dost, art thou not worse than insane, that wilt not take possession when the gates are thrown open to thee, and thou art bid to enter? O ye sons of folly, will ye embrace the dunghill and refuse the kingdom? Behold, the Lord takes you up into the mountain, shows you the kingdom of heaven and all the glory thereof, and tells you, All this will I give you, if you will but return unto me; if you will submit to mercy, accept my Son, and serve me in righteousness and holiness. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Will you seek and serve the world, and neglect eternal glory? What! not enter into Paradise when the flaming sword, which was once set to keep you out, is now used to drive you in! But you will say I am uncharitable, to think you infidels and unbelievers. Why, what shall I think of you? Either you are desperate unbelievers, that do not credit it, or insane, that you know and believe the excellence and eternity of this glory, and yet do so fearfully neglect it. Surely you have either no faith or no reason, and I had almost said conscience shall tell you so before I leave you.

Do but attend to what is offered you: a blessed kingdom, a "kingdom of glory," a "kingdom of righteousness," a "kingdom of peace," and an "everlasting kingdom." Here thou shalt dwell, here thou shalt reign for ever, and the Lord shall seat thee on a throne of glory, and with his own hand shall set the royal diadem upon thine head, and give thee a crown—not of thorns, for there shall be no sinning nor suffering there—not of gold, (for this shall be viler than the dirt in that day,) but a "crown of life," a "crown of righteousness," a "crown of glory," yea, "thou shalt put on glory as a robe," and shalt "shine like the sun in the firmament, in the glory of thy Father." Look now upon thy worthless flesh. This very flesh, which is mere dust and ashes, shall be brighter than the stars. In short, thou shalt be made like unto the "angels of God," and "behold his face in righteousness." Look in now and tell me, Dost thou yet believe? if not, conscience must pronounce thee an infidel; for it is the very "word of God" that I speak.

But if thou sayest thou believest, let me next know thy resolution. Wilt thou embrace this for thy happiness? Wilt thou forego thy sinful gains, thy forbidden pleasures? Wilt thou trample on the world's esteem, and stop thy ears to its flatteries, and wrest thee out of its embraces? Wilt thou be content to take up with reproach and poverty, if they lie in the way to heaven, and follow the Lord with humble self-denial, in a mortified and flesh-displeasing life? If so, all is thine, and that for ever.

And is not the offer a fair one? Is it not just that he should be damned that will go on and perish, when all this may be had by taking it? Wilt thou take God at his word; wilt thou let go thy hold of the world,

and rid thy hands of thy sins, and lay hold on eternal life? If not, let conscience tell thee whether thou art not insane, that thou shouldst neglect so happy a choice, by which thou mightest be made happy for ever.

III. God will settle unspeakable privileges at present upon thee.

Though the full of your blessedness shall be deferred till hereafter, yet God will give you no little things in hand. He will redeem you from your thralldom. He will pluck you from the paw of the lion. The serpent shall bruise thy heel, but thou shalt bruise his head. He shall deliver you from this present evil world. Prosperity shall not destroy you; adversity shall not separate him and you.

He will redeem you from the power of the grave, and make the king of terrors a messenger of peace to you. He will take out the curse from the cross, and make affliction the refining-pot, the fan, the medicine, to blow off the chaff, purify the metal, and cleanse the mind. He will save you from the arrest of the law, and turn the curse into a blessing to you. He hath the keys of hell and of death, and shutteth and no man openeth, and he will shut its mouth, as once he did the lions', that you shall not be hurt of the second death.

Beside, he will not only save you from misery, but install you into unspeakable prerogatives. He will bestow himself upon you; he will be a friend and a father unto you. He will be a sun and a shield to you. In a word, he will be a God to you. And what can be said more? What may you expect that a God should do for you, and be to you? *that* he will be, *that* he will do. She that marries a prince expects he should do

for her like a prince, that she may live in a suitable state, and have an answerable dowry: he that hath a king for his father or a friend, expects he should do for him like a king. Alas! the kings and monarchs of the earth, so much above you, are but like the painted butterflies amongst the rest of their kind, or the fair colored palmer-worm amongst the rest of the worms, if compared with God. As he does infinitely exceed the glory and power of his glittering dust, so he will, beyond all proportion, exceed in doing for his favorites whatever princes can do for theirs. He will "give you grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from you." He will take you for his sons and daughters, and make you heirs of his promises, and establish his everlasting covenant with you. He will justify you from all that law, conscience, and Satan can charge upon you. He will give you free access into his presence, and accept your person, and receive your prayers. He will abide in you, and hold a constant and friendly communion with you. His ear shall be open, his door open, his store open, at all times to you. His blessing shall rest upon you, and he will make your enemies to serve you, and work out "all things for good unto you."

IV. The terms of mercy are brought as low as possible to you. God has stooped as low to sinners as with honor he can. He will not be an author of sin, nor stain the glory of his holiness: and how could he come lower than he has, unless he should do this?

God does not impose any thing unreasonable or impossible, as a condition of life, upon you. Two things were necessary to be done, according to the tenor of the first covenant. 1. That we should fully satisfy

the demands of justice for past offences. 2. That we should perform personally, perfectly, and perpetually, the whole law for the time to come. By our sins we render salvation through either of these ways impossible. But, behold God's gracious provision in both. He does not insist upon your satisfaction: he is content to take of the Surety (and he of his own providing too) what he might have exacted from you. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." He declares himself to have received a ransom; and that he expects nothing but that you should accept his Son, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and he shall be righteousness and redemption to you; "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." If therefore you come in his Christ, and set your heart to please him, making this your chief concern, he will graciously accept, and even reward you, though your obedience be not perfect.

O consider the condescension of your God; let me say to you, as Naaman's servants to him, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather when he says to thee, Wash and be clean!" If God had demanded some terrible, some severe and rigorous thing of you, to escape eternal damnation, would you not have done it? Suppose it had been to spend all your days in sorrow in some howling wilderness, or to

“offer the fruit of your bodies for the sin of your souls,” would you not have thankfully accepted eternal redemption, though these had been the conditions? Nay, farther, if God should have told you that you should have burned in the fire for millions of ages, or been so long tormented in hell, would you not have gladly accepted it? Alas! all these are not so much as one grain of sand in the glass of eternity. If your offended Creator should have holden you but one year upon the rack, and then bidden you come and forsake your sins, accept Christ, and serve him a few years in self-denial, or lie in this case for ever and ever; do you think you should have hesitated at the offer, and disputed the terms, and have been unresolved whether you were to accept of the proposal? O sinner, return and live; why shouldst thou die when life is to be had for taking, when mercy seems beholden to thee (as it were) to be saved? Couldst thou say, “Lord, I knew thee, that thou wast a hard man,” even then thou wouldst have had no excuse; but when the God of heaven has stooped so low, and condescended so far, if still thou shouldst stand off, who shall plead for thee?

*Object.* Notwithstanding all the advantages of this new covenant, I am unable to repent and believe, and so comply with its conditions.

*Ans.* Dare you thus charge your impenitency and unbelief upon God? Your ability is sufficient to render it your duty to repent without delay. But let the next consideration serve for a fuller answer.

V. God doth offer all needed grace to enable you.

“I have stretched out mine hand, and no man regarded.” What though you are plunged into the ditch of that misery from which you can never get out?

Christ offereth to help you out; he reacheth out his hand to you; and if you perish, it is for refusing his help. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to me I will come in." What though you are poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked? Christ offereth a cure for your blindness, a covering for your nakedness, a remedy for your poverty; he tenders you his righteousness, his grace: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Do you say, The condition is impossible; for I have not wherewith to buy? You must know that this buying is "without money and without price." This buying is by begging and seeking with your whole heart. God commandeth thee to know him, and to fear him. Dost thou say, Yea, but my mind is blinded, and my heart is hardened from his fear? I answer, God doth offer to enlighten thy mind, and to teach thee this fear that is presented to thy choice. So that now, if men live in ignorance and estrangement from the Lord, it is because they will not understand and desire the knowledge of his ways. "If thou criest after knowledge, if thou seekest her as silver, &c. then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Is not here a fair offer? "Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you." Though of yourselves you can do nothing, yet you may do all through his Spirit enabling you, and he offers assistance to you. God bids you "wash and make you clean." You say you are unable, as much as the leopard to wash out his spots. Yea, but the Lord doth offer to purge you; so that if you are filthy still, it is through your own wilfulness, "I have purged thee,

and thou wast not purged." "O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?" God doth invite you to be made clean, and entreat you to yield to his proposals; accept of his offers, and let him do for you, and in you, what you cannot do for yourselves.

#### SIX QUESTIONS TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Q. 1. *What is my state by nature?* Is it not a state of death? Eph. 2:1. A state of wrath? ver. 3. Sirs, awake, and bethink yourselves where you are, and whither you are going. While you are in your natural, unconverted, unbelieving state, all your sins are unpardoned, and the wrath of God abideth on you. Suppose you saw a poor creature hanging over a burning fiery furnace by nothing but a slender thread, like to break every moment, would not your hearts ache for such a one? Sirs, it is your very case; you hang over the infernal burnings by nothing but the small thread of your lives, while you know not but it may break the next moment, and then where are you? Is this a case for you to go on contentedly and merrily in?

Q. 2. *What condition is my soul now in?* Am I changed and renewed by conversion, or am I not? Speak, conscience; hath this man, this woman, this child, been soundly and savingly changed, both in heart and life? Where are your evidences? Can you show the marks of the Lord Jesus upon your souls? Let conscience answer. Where was the place? what were the means? when was the time that your soul was thoroughly renewed? At least, if you cannot show the time, place, or means, can you

prove the thing? Can you say with him that was born blind, One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see? Sirs, be not deceived; I tell you, whatever you do, nothing will avail you to salvation, except you be new creatures.

Q. 3. *What if I should lose my soul? What sad work should I make of it then?* This is very possible; yea, it is the case of the most. There are but few of the children of men that escape safe to heaven. Sirs, beware of your danger, and fear, lest a promise being left of entering into rest, any of you should at last come short of it. Suppose a man were to travel through some perilous wood or wilderness, having but one jewel in all the world, in which his all was bound up, and should see some stand on one hand and some on the other, and hear one company in this place and another in that cry out under the hands of some cruel robbers; O, in what fear would this traveler go lest he should lose this jewel, and be robbed of all at once! Why, thou art the man; this traveler is thyself; this jewel is thy soul; this wilderness or wood is this world thou art to travel through: swarms of sins, legions of devils, and a whole world of temptations—these are the robbers that lie in wait for thy soul; and if all that these can do can keep thee out of heaven, thou shalt never enter there. O! what if thy pride or worldliness, thy delays and triflings in religion should at last betray thy soul into the robbers' hands? Other losses may be repaired; but thy soul being once lost, God is lost, Christ is lost, heaven is lost, all lost for evermore.

Q. 4. *What am I doing for my soul? What!* have I a soul, an immortal soul to care for, and look no better after it, and bestow no more of my time or

pains upon it, no more of my thoughts about it? When Augustus the emperor saw the outlandish women carrying apes and such kind of strange creatures in their arms, he asked, What! have the women in these countries no children? So it may be said of many among us, that are early and late at their worldly business, but let the care of religion lie by neglected, What! have these men no souls? Why, man! hast thou a soul, and yet dost so little in thy closet, so little in thy family, from day to day, for it? What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, that thou perish not. What will become of thy soul if thou lookest to it only at this careless rate?

Q. 5. *What if God should this night require my soul, where would death land me?* There was one that promised himself many merry days and years, as it is likely thou dost, but that same night God called for his soul. Sirs, are you prepared? Are you fit to die? O dare not to live in such a case, nor in that course in which you would not dare to die.

Q. 6. *Should I not be in a happy case, if I had but secured my soul?* O if this were but once done, how sweetly mightest thou live! Then thou mightest eat thy bread and drink thy wine with a merry heart, when assured that God accepteth thee and thy works. Then thou mightest lie down in peace, rise up in peace, and go out in peace. Then thou mightest look death in the face, thou mightest look dangers in the face, yea, look devils in the face, and never be afraid. Go then to Christ, seek the pardon of your sins through his death, commit your soul into his hands, believe in him, and then this happiness shall be yours: but go, I beseech you, without delay.

## CONCLUSION.

And now, to conclude, let me know your mind; what do you intend to do? Will you go on and die, or will you immediately turn and lay hold on eternal life? How long will ye linger in Sodom? "How long will ye halt between two opinions?" Have you not yet resolved whether Christ or Barabbas, whether bliss or torment, whether this vain and wretched world or the paradise of God be the better choice? Is it a disputable case whether the Abana and Pharpar of Damascus be better than all the streams of Eden; or whether the vile puddle of sin is to be preferred before the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? Can the world in good earnest do that for you which Christ can? Will it stand by you to eternity? Will pleasures, land, titles and treasures descend with you? If not, had you not need look after somewhat that will? What mean you to stand wavering, to be off and on? Shall I leave you at last, like Agrippa, no further than almost persuaded? Why, you are for ever lost if left here! as good be not at all, as not altogether Christians. You are half in mind to give over your former negligent life, and set to a strict and holy course; you could wish you were as some others are, and could do as they can do. How long will you rest in idle wishes and fruitless purposes? When will you come to a fixed, firm, and full resolve? Do not you see how Satan cheats you by tempting you to delays? How long hath he drawn you on in the way of perdition? How many years have you been purposing to mend? What if God should have taken you off all this while.

Well, put me not off with a dilatory answer ; tell me not of hereafter ; I must have your immediate consent ; if you be not now resolved, while the Lord is treating with you and inviting you, much less are you like to be hereafter, when these impressions are worn out, and you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Will you give me your hand ? Will you set open the door and give the Lord Jesus the full and ready possession ? Will you put your name unto his covenant ? What do you resolve upon ? If you still delay, my labor is lost, and all is likely to come to nothing. Come, cast in your lot ; make your choice. "Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation : to-day, if you will hear his voice." Why should not this be the day whence thou shouldst be able to date thy happiness ? Why shouldst thou venture a day longer in this dangerous and dreadful condition ? What if God should this night require thy soul ? "O that thou mightest know in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, before they be hid from thine eyes ! This is thy day, and it is but a day. Others have had their day, and have received their doom and now art thou brought upon the stage of this world, here to act thy part for the whole of eternity. Remember thou art now upon thy good behavior for everlasting ; if thou make not a wise choice now, thou art undone for ever. Look what thy present choice is ; such must thine eternal condition be.

And is it true indeed ? Are life and death at thy choice ? Why then, what hinders but that thou shouldst be happy ? Nothing doth or can hinder but thine own willful neglect or refusal. It was the remark of the eunuch to Philip : "See, here is water ; what

doth hinder me to be baptized?" So I may say to thee, See, here is Christ, here is mercy, pardon, life; what hinders but that thou shouldst be pardoned and saved? One of the martyrs, as he was praying at the stake, had his pardon set by him in a box, which indeed he refused rightly, because upon unworthy terms; but here the terms are most honorable and easy. O sinner! wilt thou burn with thy pardon by thee? do but forthwith give up thy consent to Christ to renounce thy sins, deny thyself, take up the yoke and the cross and thou carriest the day; Christ is thine; pardon, peace, life, blessedness are all thine. And is not this an offer worth embracing? Why shouldst thou hesitate or doubtfully dispute about the case? Is it not past controversy whether God be better than sin, and glory than vanity? Why shouldst thou forsake thy own mercy, and sin against thy own life? When wilt thou shake off thy sloth, and lay by thine excuses? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, thou knowest not" where this night may lodge thee.

Now the Holy Spirit is striving with you; he will not always strive. Hast thou not felt thine heart aroused by the word, and been almost persuaded to leave off thy sins and come to Christ? Hast thou not felt some motions in thy mind, wherein thou hast been warned of thy danger, and told what thy careless course would end in? It may be thou art like young Samuel, who, when the Lord called once and again, knew not the voice of the Lord; but these motions and desires are the offers, and essays, and callings, and strivings of the Spirit. O take advantage of the tide, and know the day of thy visitation.

Now the Lord Jesus stretcheth wide his arms to receive you; he beseecheth you by us. How movingly

how 'meltingly, how compassionately he calleth! the church is put into a sudden ecstasy at the sound of his voice, "the voice of my beloved." O wilt thou turn a deaf ear to his voice? Is it not the voice that breaketh the cedars, and maketh the mountains to skip like a calf? that shaketh the wilderness, and divideth the flames of fire? It is not Sinai's thunder, but a soft and still voice. It is not the voice of Mount Ebal, a voice of cursing and terror, but the voice of Mount Gerizim, the voice of blessing and glad tidings of good things. It is not the voice of the trumpet nor the voice of war, but a message of peace from the King of peace. I may say to thee, O sinner, as Martha to her sister, "The Master is come, and he calleth for thee," Now then, with Mary, arise quickly and come unto him. How sweet are his invitations! He crieth in the open concourse, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." How bountiful is he! He excludeth none. "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Whoso is wise, let him turn in hither. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live." "Come unto me, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." How doth he bemoan the obstinate refuser! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" "Behold me, behold me! I have stretched out my hands all the day to a rebellious people." O be persuaded now at last to throw yourselves into the arms of his love.

Benedicte, O ye sons of men, the Lord Jesus hath

thrown open the prison, and now he cometh to you by his ministers, and beseecheth you to come out. If it were from a palace or paradise that Christ did call you, it were no wonder that you were unwilling; (and yet how easily was Adam tempted thence!) but it is from your prison, from your chains, from the dungeon, from the darkness, that he calleth you, and yet will you not come? He calls you unto liberty, and yet will you not hearken? His yoke is easy, his laws are liberty, his service is freedom, and (whatever prejudice you have against his ways) if God may be believed, you shall find them all pleasure and peace, and shall taste sweetness and joy unutterable, and take infinite delight and felicity in them.

Sinners, I cannot tell how to give you over. I am now ready to close, but I would see a covenant made between Christ and you before I end. What! shall I leave you at last as I found you? Have you read hitherto, and not yet resolved immediately to abandon all your sins and to close with Jesus Christ? Alas! what shall I say? what shall I do? Will you turn off all my importunity? Have I run in vain? Have I used so many arguments, and spent so much time to persuade you, and must I sit down at last in disappointment? But it is a small matter that you turn me off; you put a slight upon the God that made you; you reject the compassion and beseechings of a Savior, and will be found resisters of the Holy Ghost, if you will not now be prevailed upon to repent and be converted.

Well, though I have called you long, and you have refused, I shall yet this once more lift up my voice like a trumpet, and cry from the highest places of the city before I conclude with a miserable exclamation

“All is over!” Once more I shall call after regardless sinners, that (if it be possible) I may awaken them: “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.” Unless you be resolved to die, lend your ears to the last calls of mercy. Behold, in the name of God I make open proclamation unto you: “Hearken unto me, O ye children; hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not.”

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

Ho, every one that is sick of any manner of disease or torment, or is possessed with an evil spirit, whether of pride, fury, lust, or covetousness, come ye to the Physician, bring away your sick; lo, here is he that healeth all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases, among the people.

Ho, every one that is under conviction, and every one that is in distress, and every one that is discontented with himself, gather yourselves unto Christ, and he will become a Captain over you. He will be your protection from the arrests of the law; he will save you from the hand of divine justice. Behold, he is an open sanctuary to you: he is a known refuge. Away with your sins and come in unto him, lest the avenger of blood seize you, lest devouring wrath overtake you.

Ho, every blind and ignorant sinner, come and buy eye-salve, that thou mayest see. Away with thy excuses ! thou art for ever lost if thou continue in this state. But accept Christ for thy Prophet, and he will be a light unto thee. Cry unto him for knowledge, study his word, take pains about religion, humble thyself before God, and he will teach thee his way, and make thee wise unto salvation. But if thou wilt not follow him, but sit down because thou hast but one talent, he will condemn thee for a wicked and slothful servant.

Ho, every profane sinner. come in and live. Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on thee ; be entreated. O return, come. Thou that hast filled thy mouth with oaths and execrations, all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven thee, if thou wilt but thoroughly turn unto Christ and come in. O unclean sinner, put away thy whoredoms out of thy sight, and thy adulteries from between thy breasts, and give up thyself unto Christ, as a vessel of holiness, alone for his use ; and then, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Hear, O ye drunkards, how long will ye be drunken ? Put away your wine. Though you have rolled in the filthiness of your sin, take the cup of repentance and heartily renounce your beloved lust, and the Lord will receive you. Give up yourselves unto Christ, to live soberly, righteously and godly ; embrace his righteousness : accept his government : and though you have been unclean, he will wash you.

Hear, O ye loose companions, whose delight is in

vain and wicked society, to sport away your time in carnal mirth; come in at Wisdom's call, and choose her and her ways, and you shall live.

Hear, O ye scorers, hear the word of the Lord; though you make a sport at godliness and the professors thereof, though you have made a scorn of Christ and of his ways, yet even to you doth he call, to gather you under the wings of his mercy. In a word, though you should be found among the worst of the black roll, yet upon your thorough conversion you shall be washed, you shall be justified, you shall be sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Ho, every formal professor, thou art but a lukewarm Christian, and retest in the form of godliness. Give over thy halting; be throughout a Christian, and be zealous and repent: and then, though thou hast been an offence to Christ, thou shalt be the joy of his heart.

And now confess that mercy hath been offered you. "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that you may live." I can but persuade and warn you; I cannot otherwise compel you to be happy; if I could, I would. What answer will you send me with to my Master? Let me speak to you as Abraham's servant to Nahor's family, "And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me." O for such a happy answer as Rebecca gave them! "And they said, We will call the damsel and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebecca, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? and she said, I will go. O that I had but this from you! Why

should I be your accuser, who thirst for your salvation? Why should the passionate pleadings of mercy be turned into horrid aggravations of your obstinacy and additions to your misery? Judge in yourselves; do you not think their condemnation will be doubly dreadful, that shall still go on in their sins, after all endeavors to recall them? Doubtless "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you!"

Sinners, if you have any pity for your perishing souls, close with the present offers of mercy. If the God that made you have any authority with you, obey his command and come in. If you are not the despisers of grace, and would not shut up the doors of mercy against yourselves, repent and be converted; let not heaven stand open for you in vain; let not the Lord Jesus open his stores, and bid you buy without money and without price in vain; let not his Spirit and ministers strive with you in vain, and leave you now at last unpersuaded, lest the sentence of condemnation go forth against you.

Father of spirits, take the heart in hand that is too hard for my weakness. Do not thou end, though I have done. A word from thy effectual power will do the work. O thou that hast the key of David, that openest and no man shutteth, open thou this heart, as thou didst Lydia's, and let the King of glory enter in, and make this soul thy captive. Let not the tempter harden him in delays; let him not stir from this place, nor take his eyes from these lines, till he resolve to forego his sins, and accept of life on thy self-denying terms. In thy name, O Lord God, did I go

forth to these labors: in thy name do I close them. Let not all the time they have cost be lost hours: let not all the thoughts of the heart, and all the pains that have been about them, be but lost labor. Lord, put thy hand upon the heart of this reader, and send thy Spirit, as once thou didst Philip, to join himself to the chariot of the eunuch while he was reading the word. And though I should never know it while I live, yet I beseech thee, O Lord God, let it be found at the last day that some souls are converted by these labors; and let some be able to stand forth and say, that by these persuasions they were won unto thee. Amen, Amen. Let him that readeth say *Amen*.

## COUNSELS FOR THE CONVERTED.

*Value no mercy barely as it may promote your temporal welfare, but view it rather in reference to eternity, and as it may serve to advance your Maker's glory.—* The cipher put to the figure is of great signification; but set by itself it signifies nothing at all. Creature comforts separated from their respect to God and eternity, are of no value; but, in order to these ends, they signify much. We have ease and fullness when many others are in pain and poverty; and we have much the start of them, if we be wise to improve our health, in laying in apace against a wet day, and preparing apace for eternity, and serving the Lord with more diligence, and cheerfulness, and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things: but, if this be all we have by it, that our bones lie a little softer, and our palates are tickled with a little more delight, what profit have we by our health and estates? If they that are sick or poor, love and serve the Lord better

than we, they have the advantage of us; and better were it for us to be poor and sick as they are.

*Rest not in probabilities for heaven, but labor for certainties.*—Beloved, certainty may be had, else the counsel of God to make our calling and election sure is in vain, else the experience of the saints were but delusion, who tell us they “know they are passed from death to life,” else the power of self-reflection were to no purpose, and the spirit which is in man would not know the things of man. Now, if a certainty may be had, will you not try by all means to obtain it? Sirs, you have need to push hard to get assurance, and to get it now. We are ever at miserable uncertainties for all outward enjoyments; we know not how soon we may be called to part with them all. Professing Christians, will you be content to have nothing sure? Will you not settle your everlasting condition, seeing you are so unsettled as to your outward condition? What will you do in the day of visitation, when extremity comes in upon you, if you have no assurance that God will receive you? It would make one’s heart tremble to think of being upon such a fearful temptation as to part with all for Christ, and not to be sure of him neither. O man, what an advantage will the tempter now have upon thee, when he shall suggest, ‘Wilt thou be such a fool as to let go all at once? Thou seest heaven is not sure, Christ is not sure; therefore keep the world whilst thou hast it, and hold what thou hast sure.’ Beloved, what a fearful slighting of God, and contempt of heaven and glory, and all the promises, doth this argue, that you can be content to be at uncertainties whether they be yours or not! How many of you are there that do not know whether you be going

to heaven or hell! And what desperate carelessness doth this argue, to go on from week to week in such a case! Some hopes you have that you shall do well, but put me not off with hopes. Never be satisfied till you are able to say, not only I hope I shall be saved, but I know I am "passed from death to life;" I know that "when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, I have a building not made with hands."

*Be not satisfied with some grace; but reach after growth in grace.*—Do not think all is done when you have obtained the evidence of grace, but press toward the increase. That person who doth not desire and design perfection, never came up to sincerity. He that desires grace truly, desires it not barely as a bridge to heaven, and so to seek no more than will just bear his charges thither; but he desires it for its own sake, and therefore desires the height of it. That person who desires grace only for heaven's sake, and inquires what is the lowest measure of grace that any may have to come to heaven (by which he means to be saved from misery) upon this design, that if he could but come to that pitch he would desire no more; that person is rotten at the heart. Christians, the Lord doth expect of you that you should not be babes and dwarfs; he looks now especially that you should make some progress. What do you more than heretofore? What! do you feel his spurs in your sides, and his whip at your backs, yet never mend your pace in religion, nor stir one jot the faster? Let me commend you to Paul's study, It argues a base and unworthy spirit to content ourselves with small things in religion.

*Labor that holiness may become your nature, and religion your business.*—Then you are come to somewhat

indeed in religion, when the work of God is become your natural and beloved employment, your meat and drink, your work and wages; when your tongues and hearts naturally run on God, as others on and of the world. Much of that may be attained by constant care and prayer. Brethren, let God's work be done by you, not by the by, but as your greatest business: "Seek first the kingdom of God;" that so, whatsoever you do, you may be able to give the same account of yourselves that our Savior did when they inquired of him—that you are about your Father's business.

*Confine not religion to your knees, but carry on an even thread of holiness through your whole course.*—It is the disgrace of religion that Christians are so unlike themselves unless it be when they are in holy duties. This wounds religion to the quick, when it shall be said of professors, These men indeed will pray like angels, but, for aught we can see, they are as peevish and touchy as any other men, and they are as hard in their dealings, and make as little conscience of their words as others do. Beloved, do not think religion lies only or chiefly in praying, hearing, or reading; for you must be throughout religious. Sirs, bring forth your religion out of your closets into your ordinary course; let there not be a life of holiness on the outside of the cloth, but let holiness be woven into the whole of your conversation. Herein consists the excellency and difficulty of religion; when you have the baits of intemperance before you, then to hold the reins hard and deny your flesh; when you have provocation before you, then to restrain your passions and bridle the unruly member; when you have dealings with others, then to proceed by that golden rule of equity and charity to do unto others as you would have them to do

in like case to you; when you are called upon by your several relations, then to behave yourselves with that tenderness and love, with that reverence and obedience, with that courtesy, condescension, and kindness which becomes you in your various capacities. In this, I say, lies the excellence of religion.

*Ever walk with your chief end in view.*—It is true, according to the usual similitude, the traveler thinks not of his journey's end every step, nor need he; yet he never loses sight of it, it is never out of his mind. Brethren, there is nothing hinders but that, with prayer and watchfulness, you might come to this in every solemn action, to mind God as your chief end. Impose this on yourselves as your daily rule to walk by, never to lie down but with these thoughts, "Well, I will make use of my bed as an ordinance of God, for my natural refreshment, that a servant of his may be fitted for his work." Never to rise up but with these thoughts, "I will set out this day in the name of the Lord, and make it my business throughout the day to please him." Never to set about your callings, but in the entrance think thus, "I will set about my employment in obedience to God, because it is his will I should walk with him in my place and station." Never to sit at your tables but thinking, "I will now eat and drink, not merely to feed my flesh, but to cherish a servant of Christ Jesus, that he may have strength for his service." Charge this upon yourselves, and examine in the evening how you have minded it, and check yourselves wherein you come short. Once learn this, and you are come to something, and shall have the undoubted evidence of your sincerity, and shall know by experience the blessed mystery of walking with God.

*Be and do more than ordinary in your closets and families.*

*In your closets.*—Be more than ever in self-examination. And here let me put it to your consciences: Are you habitual in examining yourselves by the word of God? Do you try yourselves by it daily? Ah, wretched negligence! What, have you given your approbation and yet forget your duty? God expects it of you, that, now you know his will, you should with more zealous fear, and tender circumspection, and holy watchfulness and self-denial, walk before him; else you will greatly excite his indignation.

*Finally—In your families.* The Lord calls you to set your houses in order. O see what is amiss in them, and strive to cast out whatever may be a provocation.

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## A CASE OF CONVERSION.

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Deacon B. had acquired such knowledge of divine things, such insight into character, and such skill in detecting the operations of mind under the truth, as very seldom to mistake in his treatment of sinners.

On one occasion, which will now be related, he ascertained that a young woman of his acquaintance had, a short time previously, evinced some conviction of sin; but that her concern of mind was now wearing off. He knew that she had been educated in a Christian family, and had been the subject of a gentle and long protracted seriousness. During this long seriousness she had had great light in the understanding, and now that she had, within a few days, been brought to deeper anxiety than ever deacon B. felt that, should her

concern subside, she would, in all probability, grieve away the Holy Spirit for ever. What was to be done? He felt his impotence, and lifting up his heart to God for that influence which alone can make the truth effectual, he resolved, as an immortal soul was probably in the crisis of its destiny, that he would use special efforts for its recovery. He told her his views of her condition. But when he urged her to surrender her heart to the Lord Jesus, she was unwilling to do it yet—she wished to put it off still longer. He entreated—he urged the command of God, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell—still she hesitated, and ran through the whole circle of cavilings about inability, election, Adam's sin, &c.; but it was evident to the discerning mind of Deacon B. that it was only the device of an unreconciled heart, to put off the work of compliance with the command of Christ.

Here then was the awful struggle. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit was spreading truth before the mind, and flashing conviction upon the conscience, through the instrumentality of this good man; and on the other, a worm of the dust was engaged in resisting with desperate strife every motive that would lead to submission. It was enough to make the heart of piety tremble to see the conflict, knowing how much might depend on the issue. Deacon B. again told her in few words the state of her case;—her guilt as a rebel against God—a slighter of the Savior—a resister of the Holy Ghost. He demonstrated the preciousness of the present moment, and urged her to cast away the weapons of her rebellion. She wept, but remained unchanged in her determination. At length, raising his venerable form erect and throwing all the decision of his soul into his voice, he said, "Depend upon it, I am

resolved not to leave you till you make up your mind to be either for God or against him." He then repeated the urgent motives of the Gospel, till, pressed down by the weight of truth and the power of the Holy Ghost, she fell upon her knees and exclaimed, "*Lord, save me or I perish! I give myself to thee, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight.*"

Subsequent fruits showed it to be a genuine surrender of her heart to Christ. But had Deacon B. grown weary with her obstinacy, how awfully different might have been the result!

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### CONVERSION OF A FAMILY.

From the American Pastor's Journal.

During a short residence in the town of G—— in this state, I presented the Tract "*Pause and think, am I a Christian?*" to a young lady, with a request that she would give it an attentive and prayerful perusal. God was pleased to bless the reading of this Tract to her awakening; for on conversing with her the next day, she had a realizing sense of her guilt and danger, and was anxious to know what she must do to be saved. I endeavored to convince her that God was striving with her, that it was consequently a critical and solemn time with her; and that now it became her to work out her salvation with fear and trembling, while God was working in her by his Holy Spirit. A few days after this I saw her again. Her iniquities had now taken hold upon her, so that she was not able to look up; and I was peculiarly struck with the anguish and solemnity of soul that her countenance expressed.

"It is deeply impressed on my mind," she said, "that God is now giving me the *last call*, and that if I do not obtain religion *now*, I never shall." I replied, "A—, I feel now more concern for your salvation than ever, as your eternal destiny may now hang on the decisions of a moment. Whence is this impression? Surely from no evil influence, surely not from your wicked heart. There can be no doubt that this impression is made on your mind by the *Spirit of truth*, and is consequently a solemn truth. God in all probability is striving with you for the *last time*, and if you grieve away the Holy Spirit, or defer the concerns of eternity, *your soul may be lost for ever.*" She covered her face with her hands, and as her agitation appeared great, I thought it best to leave her alone. In about five minutes I returned, feeling an indescribable concern for her salvation. She had changed her seat, her eyes were fixed toward heaven, her face beamed with delight, and the storm within her soul appeared to be hushed. Fearing she had listened to temptations and had dismissed the subject of religion from her mind, and hoping to bring her again to solicitude about her eternal welfare, I asked her "Why is it, when we know we have sinned against a holy God, and are under the curse of his righteous law, that we have so little concern about our soul's salvation?" She replied, "I feel now no alarm—I am perfectly calm. I think I have found the Savior. I think I love him. *I feel that I can trust in him.*" After cautioning her on the danger of self-deception, I retired to rest, determining that if on the morrow she gave evidence of a change of heart, I would mention it to the family, in hopes that it would affect them. In the morning A— seemed to be still resting on the Savior, and to be greatly affected with

the sinfulness and ingratitude of her past life. When the family were assembled for prayer, I read the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, made a few remarks on the *New Birth*, and mentioned that A—— was indulging a hope that this great work had been wrought in her soul. I then told the family that if A—— was really a Christian, a separation had been made in the family that would continue through eternity, unless they repented of their sins, and became reconciled to God. The family was affected, every member being without God and without hope. They looked at A—— as if surprised at the expression of joy that beamed in her countenance. The Spirit of God came down upon that family. The father, mother, and another child became anxious to flee from the wrath to come. Soon they were all found sitting at the feet of Jesus. The family altar was erected, and there was great joy in that house.

About a year after I passed through the place, and found they were still hoping and trusting in the Savior. The father, mother, and A—— had made a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ, and gave increasing evidence that they had passed from death unto life. "It is the Lord's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

**RELIGION**  
AND  
**ETERNAL LIFE,**  
OR  
**IRRELIGION**  
AND  
**PERPETUAL RUIN,**

**The only Alternative for Mankind.**

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BY J. G. PIKE,  
Author of "Persuasives to Early Piety, &c."

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"One thing is needful."

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## PREFACE.

IT is apprehended that though this little work scarcely requires a preface, yet that a *few* prefatory lines may not be unappropriate. The design of this book is to call the attention of those who may deem it worthy of perusal, to the importance and necessity of decided religion. It is hoped that its contents may prove adapted to strengthen religious feeling in the breasts of the pious; but it is more especially addressed to the irreligious of any class, and at any period of life.

The Sacred Scriptures are the source whence its lessons and statements are drawn. It offers no metaphysical refinements of religious truth, but plain scriptural instruction. Its readers are addressed not as churchmen or dissenters, but as fallen, undone, and dying, yet immortal beings who need eternal salvation. It would humbly follow in the track of those "Calls" and "Alarms" to the unconverted, by which Baxter, and Doolittle, and Alleine and others "being dead yet

## PREFACE.

speak," and have for nearly two centuries, under the Eternal Spirit's blessing, been speaking to the hearts of many of the thoughtless children of men. The careless millions of mankind need many such monitors; and if but one individual among those careless millions should by this volume be led to the Saviour, an object will be accomplished sufficiently important, to recompense the labours of even numerous years.

Perhaps some readers may think that references to the eternal state are too frequently repeated in the following pages, but let such consider how solemn is eternity! and how awfully important its momentous interests! If a person were to spend one minute in a state of probationary existence, which minute should be followed by a century of holiness and happiness, or guilt and woe, could the solemnities and interests of the approaching century be pressed too much upon his attention, through that single minute? yet that minute would bear some proportion to the following century, but the longest life bears none to eternity.

Derby, Jan. 21, 1834.

# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I. *Introductory Address.* Page 5.

SECT. 1. The Reader's attention solicited. 2. Religion the most important and lasting of distinctions. 3. The choice of decided piety never lamented. 4. The reader reminded of the transient nature of earthly things. 5. That eternity presents the solemn contrast of perfect blessedness, or utter ruin. 6. That each may be blessed, or must be undone. 7. That life is the only time of offered mercy. 8. And that the passing year, may perhaps, prove the Reader's last. 9. Prayer.

## CHAPTER II. *The necessity of Religion shown from the guilt and ruin of all mankind.* Page 14.

SECT. 1. Man an unforgiven and perishing sinner, till possessed of Gospel blessings. 2. All liable to the charge of having not glorified God, and of having violated his law. 3. The subject further pursued. 4. Appeal to the Reader on the sinfulness of his heart. 5. And on the countless number of his sins. 6. Sin not an inconsiderable evil. 7. Man while unpardoned, is in a state of condemnation. 8. The question, Who are the wicked? answered. 9. The subject pursued in remarks on the wickedness of neglecting the Father and the Son. 10. The aggravations of sin, many and great. 11. Further remarks on the wickedness of man, as alienated from God. 12. Evidences of alienation from God. 13. Men while alienated from God, mere cumberers of the ground. 14. Guilty man must meet his God. 15. Various delusions on which the unconverted rest noticed and exposed. 16. Appeal to the Reader, on his own ruined condition. 17. This subject pursued; and remarks on the wrath of God. 18. Further expostulation with the Reader on the danger of an impenitent state. 19. This danger, constant danger. 20. No blessing possessed, without forgiveness and every blessing with it.

## CHAPTER III. *Religion described.* Page 39.

SECT. 1. The Reader's attention requested to the nature of Religion. 2. All intelligent beings divided into two classes—the enemies or the children of God. 3. Religion a solemn consecration of ourselves to God, as displayed in the Gospel. 4. Religion possessed when Christ is cordially received. 5. The Christian life, a life of active faith. 6. All the Christian's best interests committed to Christ. 7. The Christian comes to Christ. 8. Has Christ in him, the hope of glory. 9. Thus the truly pious are the Lord's peculiar people.

## CHAPTER IV. *Further illustrations of the nature of Religion.* Page 50.

SECT. 1. Religion connected with repentance—distinctions between true and false repentance. 2. The true penitent enjoys forgiveness of sin. 3. Remarks on the evidences of possessing forgiveness. 4. Distinctions pointed out between genuine grace and a formal Religion. 5. The pious love Christ. 6. The pious are new creatures in Christ Jesus. 7. The reality and greatness of the change in regeneration further illustrated. 8. Various marks of possessing the spirit of piety.

CHAPTER V. *The worthlessness and mischiefs of a formal Religion, and the necessity of decision.* Page 71.

SECT. 1. Many deluded by what they esteem Religion, but which is a vain Religion. 2. No genuine piety without consecration to God. 3. Various marks of a vain Religion. 4. Its evils—spiritual destitution—most fatal deception. 5. Other dreadful consequences of a vain Religion. 6. Necessity of decision, because, where Religion is concerned, there is no neutral state, no middle class. 7. Many varieties among the pious and irreligious, though all ultimately divide into those two bodies. 8. The Reader entreated to consider, that if not the friend, he is the foe of the Lord Jesus. 9. Indecision as ruinous to the soul as open hostility. 10. Decision in religion further urged.

CHAPTER VI. *Encouragements to embrace Religion furnished by the grace exhibited in the Gospel.* Page 89.

SECT. 1. The Gospel displays the most precious blessings. 2. The forgiveness of sin, and deliverance from its reign. 3. Deliverance from condemnation. 4. Blessings from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, issuing in heavenly happiness. 5. Salvation an eternal salvation. 6. Brief notice of various errors as to the way of obtaining salvation. 7. Christ obtained eternal redemption for us. 8. The matchless love of the Father displayed in the gift of Christ. 9. The love of the Son equally incomprehensible. 10. The atoning sufferings of Christ, foretold by prophecies and types. 11. The forgiveness which the penitent receives, is through his sacrifice. 12. The Saviour worthy of the most devout regard. 13. He is an Almighty Saviour. 14. An all-compassionate Saviour. 15. The tidings of his grace are for the Reader. 16. Verses expressing the feelings of a humble believer. 17. Further remarks to encourage the desponding penitent. 18. The same subject pursued, and some fears of the desponding noticed. 19. Salvation free for the most unworthy and the most undone. 20. The Reader reminded that the death of Christ, must be to him the greatest of blessings, or an aggravation of guilt. 21. Hymn by Newton. 22. Caution against abusing the doctrines of grace.

CHAPTER VII. *Religion urged by considerations connected with the goodness and claims of the Eternal God, and by the guilt and evils of neglecting the Lord Jesus.* Page 115.

SECT. 1. Attention solicited to the motives for Religion, and the importance of the choice. 2. The claims of God, and the blessedness of consecration to Him—Expostulation on this. 3. This further urged by the guilt of continuing to slight God. 4. Aggravations of this guilt from the cause of such neglect, and the objects preferred. 5. Further aggravation in the abuse of divine mercies. 6. The Saviour's claims from his love—Expostulation on them. 7. From the good he would bestow which many have enjoyed. 8. Expostulation with the Reader on what he would desire if he could see the Saviour displaying his love. 9. Every evil escaped, and every good gained if Christ is won. 10. The subject pursued, Christ no feeble or common friend. 11. Neglect of Christ, a most common

sin among all classes. 12. Illustrations of the nature of neglect. 13. The guilt of neglect, great beyond description. 14. The subject pursued in serious expostulation with neglectors. 15. Neglect of Christ binds all its other sins upon the soul. 16. Is what Satan desires a sinner to indulge in. 17. The folly of such neglect inexpressible, as all good is neglected and lost by neglect of Christ. 18. The sinner by neglecting Christ, changes every blessing to a curse, and does himself irreparable mischief. 19. In neglecting Christ, man neglects the only Saviour. 20. Neglect of Christ exposes the soul to numberless and dreadful evils, and to utter condemnation. 21. The careless entreated to consider the end of such a course. 22. Neglectors of Christ are associated with all the vilest beings in the universe.—Some future consequences of such neglect. 23. Life or death is before the Reader.

CHAPTER VIII. *Religion enforced by the solemnities of death and judgment. Page 151.*

SECT. 1. Death and judgment await all mankind. 2. The Reader must die—the solemnity of death and the worth of a Saviour in the dying hour. 3. Solemnities preceding eternal judgment. 4. The great day come, and mankind before their Judge. 5. The welcome and blessedness of the Righteous. 6. The doom of the unrighteous. 7. The Reader urged to secure the blessings of that great day by welcoming the Saviour.

CHAPTER IX. *Decision in the choice of Religion urged by the ruin and misery that await the impenitent. Page 164.*

SECT. 1. Warnings respecting future punishment important. 2. Hell the certain portion of the finally impenitent. 3. Dreadful scriptural descriptions of hell. 4. Future punishment eternal. 5. The poverty of the lost who are deprived of all temporal good. 6. Other views of the dreadful condition of a lost soul. 7. No escape from this condition. 8. No change of character or relief from sin to be ever experienced. 9. Expostulation with the careless sinner on his danger. 10. The Reader entreated to consider what he must be hereafter if destitute of salvation. 11. The same subject continued. 12. The careless warned that their own ruin will be endless. 13. And entreated to think what reflections must be indulged when the day of salvation has ended. 14. Lessons of gratitude to be learned by the Christian from contemplating the horrors of hell.

CHAPTER X. *Decision as to Religion urged by the blessedness of heaven. Page 187.*

SECT. 1. The present happiness of departed Saints forms a subject for pleasing meditation. 2. Heaven not to be reached without decided piety. 3. Scriptural representations of heaven. 4. Considerations assisting contemplation on the blessedness of heaven. 5. All evils excluded from heaven. 6. The blest enjoy perfect safety and exalted triumph. 7. The happiness of heaven augmented by the perfection and holiness of its inhabitants. 8. Who dwell in the presence of God and the Lamb. 9. Heavenly happiness inconceivably great. 10. The Reader urged to seek this happiness.—Appeal on its worth, and anticipation of heaven. 11. Christians from con-

temptations on heaven, should learn their great obligations. 12. The scenes of the future world eternal. 13. Illustrations of eternity. 14. The joys or sorrows of eternity like itself unending.

CHAPTER XI. *Serious questions proposed to neglectors of Religion.* Page 208.

SECT. 1. Is not your soul worth saving? 2. The love of God worth having? 3. Heaven worth possessing? 4. Is not the Lord Jesus worthy of regard? 5. Is God's anger too insignificant to be dreaded? 6. Is not escape from hell worth attention? 7. What then do you mean in neglecting the salvation of your soul? 8. Do you mean to perish? 9. Can you be saved while careless? 10. Can you find another way of salvation? 11. Would you slight salvation if this were your last day? 12. If God were to array your sins before you, would you say, "I scorn pardon, I will keep them all?" 13. If you had seen the Saviour suffering, would you slight his dying sorrows? 14. If you had seen the solemnities of the judgment day, would you continue careless? 15. If you could see hell opened before you, would you take the way to that abyss? 16. If you could see the wicked one, would you not almost die through fear of being the slave of such a horrid being? 17. If you could hear the damned say, "You will soon be like us," would you go on in carelessness? 18. If you could see heaven, would you say, "This shall not be my home?" 19. If you could see the saints in light, would you say, I will not seek their Saviour, or their home? 20. If you had felt for one hour what the blest enjoy and the lost suffer, would you think anything too valuable to be resigned for Christ? 21. Is Satan's service so honourable and so profitable that you should be unwilling to renounce it? 22. Why then are you so unwilling to yield yourself to God? 23. Delay—and questions to delayers. 24. Have not millions perished through delay? 25. Have you not delayed long enough? 26. Delay is useless—God will not change 27. Delay is inexcusable—There is nothing in God to justify delay 28. Nothing in Christ to excuse it. 29. Nothing good in irreligion to excuse delay. 30. Nothing pleasing in Satan to justify it. 31. Nothing good in the sinner's state to excuse delay. 32. Nothing in delay itself to excuse a delayer. 33. Nothing in man's unwillingness to turn to God that can palliate the guilt of delay. 34. The delayer is a rebel. 35. In a state of dreadful danger. 36. Deserving extreme divine wrath.

CHAPTER XII. *Concluding Addresses — To young Women — To young Men — To Readers generally.* Page 230.

SECT. I. Inquiry as to the effect upon the heart of the truths presented to the Reader's attention. II. 1. Young Women addressed. 2. Female characters destitute of piety described. 3. Description of pious female characters. III. 1. Young men addressed—Profligate and infidel—Anecdote of a dying infidel. 2. Description of moral but irreligious young men. 3. Pious young men described. IV. Conclusion. 1. Further expostulation with the Reader on the value of Religion. 2. Concluding warning on the consequences of Indecision. 3. Closing Address.

# RELIGION AND ETERNAL LIFE, &c.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

1. THIS little work is addressed to you, who now look upon this page, as a traveller to the eternal world. Its object is your immortal welfare; and to promote that object the writer requests a few moments of your fleeting time; and solicits your attention to subjects that will infinitely concern you, when time with all its periods shall be no more. Were you sick, and health the subject of inquiry; were you a prisoner or a slave, and liberty the object of pursuit, each would deserve, and each would gain, attention. But that to which your attention is now solicited, is far more momentous. It will concern you when health or sickness appear unutterable trifles; when liberty or slavery, through the span of time, seem scarcely worthy of a moment's care. Religion is this subject. This is worthy of all attention, and of all acceptance. In possession of its blessings the poorest are rich; but destitute of them the richest are poor. Without its blessings riches are but splendid poverty; what man deems wisdom, pompous folly; liberty, but refined slavery; and life itself, the path to endless death. Without its blessings you must be poor

in the saddest sense, and soon be poor in every sense for ever. Ah, foolish world! that can trifle with blessings which constitute an angel's wealth! Ah, wretched men! who lose, in a few moments, what eternal ages never can restore! and the loss of which will fill eternal ages with anguish, remorse, and despair! Are you such a trifler? If you are, stop, O stop! and consider your ways! Many considerations claim your devout attention to the subjects discussed in this little volume. Think of a few of these —

2. Religion constitutes the most important distinction in the human character, and forms, as it were, the dividing line between life and death eternal. All other distinctions will speedily vanish. Those of character, of disposition, of conduct, of beauty or deformity, will soon be forgotten. Those of learning or ignorance, of wealth or poverty, of wearing the gem or digging the mine, of possessing a throne or toiling as a slave, of youth or of age, of revelling in health or lingering in agony, will shortly pass away, and be as if they had never been. They who were separated so widely apart in this world, will sink, if strangers to the converting grace of God, to an equal level of guilt and misery; or rise, if possessors of heartfelt piety, to equal heights of happiness and honour, and wear eternally the high distinction of being the lovers and children of God.

3. Consider that no one ever repented of embracing religion, and becoming the humble disciple of the adorable Saviour. Multitudes, that no man can number, have tried what satisfaction the paths of transgression and irreligion can im-

part. They have at length found the whole to be vanity and vexation of spirit; and when quitting time for an awful eternity, have lamented, with bitter regret, their fatal choice. Not an hour elapses, but some are passing from beds of anguish, to their final account, full of consternation and remorse at the recollection of lives spent without God and without Christ; but no one ever lamented the choice of humble, persevering piety; or reviewed with remorse the day that led him to the Saviour. Many, after vainly seeking happiness in worldly dissipation, sin, and folly, have been led, by the Divine Spirit's influence, to choose religion as their portion. Then they found the peace they never knew before; and never felt regret, except regret that they trod the ways of sin so long, and came no sooner to the Saviour for salvation. While millions of the careless have mourned, at the approach of death, with unutterable anguish, their neglect of humble piety, no dying believer ever lamented his choice, or wished that choice unmade; but multitudes, departing in peace, have blessed their Saviour, with gratitude past utterance, for his grace, in making them the heirs of salvation. And will you make that choice of a careless irreligious life, which, though the choice of countless millions, must be by them all eternally regretted? God forbid! Why will you not choose that good part which shall never be taken away! and make that choice which, under divine grace, happy millions have made, and not one among them ever lamented!

4. If indisposed to yield to this suggestion, think how transient are earthly things! and how

## 8 TRANSIENT NATURE OF EARTHLY THINGS.

soon you will lose all, for which you slight the welfare of a deathless soul! "The world passeth away and the desire thereof." Its cares, its pleasures, and its businesses, like the waves of a rapid stream, are rushing by. Where are they, who, one hundred years ago, were amused with the vanities of life, or agitated with the cares of domestic scenes or the politics of conflicting nations? *Where* are they now? In that eternity where you must shortly be. *What* are they now? How changed! how happy, or how sad! while the pleasures or sorrows of a world that once engaged them so much, seem as insignificant as a falling leaf, or a feather driven by the wind! You, too, are going apace to a long long home. Whether young or aged, vigorous or sickly, you will soon be there. For a few years, perhaps, you may inhabit some earthly dwelling, then must your *dust* "*return to the earth as it was, and your spirit shall return unto God that gave it;*"<sup>1</sup> while over your grave the storms of ages shall beat, till that last day dawns, which shall perfect your happiness or complete your condemnation. And is it for so transient a world as this, that you will slight the interests of an immortal soul!

5. Consider, too, that in that eternal world, which lies before you and cannot be far off, there are two states only, and those infinitely opposite. The Lord Jesus, when urging every sacrifice to secure salvation, declares, in the compass of a few verses, three times over, that you must "*enter into life or into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.*"<sup>2</sup> O, think how solemn, how dreadful is the contrast! Before you in eternity is all life

(1) Eccles. xii. 7.

(2) Mark, ix. 43—48.

or all death—all holiness or all guilt—all joy or all woe—all triumph or all despair—all rapture or all wailing and anguish—all light or all darkness—all praises and blessings, or all blasphemy and cursing—all angels and saints as blest as they, or all devils and spirits damned like them—all heaven or all hell, Thus the good or evil, the gain or loss before you, is immrensly great. If your undying soul be saved, all is saved ; if lost, all is lost. If blessed, all will to you eternally be blessing ; if cursed, all for ever will be ruin. If this be lost, nothing for you can be saved ; nothing bless you ; nothing benefit you. If this be saved, nothing can harm you, nothing can injure you. Satan's every effort will be defeated, and God's love gloriously triumphant.

6. Pursue these considerations, and think what you *may* be, or what you *must* be. You may be a follower of the Lamb, and thus a child of God. You may enjoy true blessings here, and greater hereafter. You may in the world unseen, become a holy happy being. You may bear the image of your Father God, in spotless holiness. You may wear the likeness of your redeeming Lord, where his saints shall "be like him, and see him as he is;"<sup>1</sup> where they shall "never never sin." You may dwell in his kingdom, and may be with his saints in light, as holy and as happy as they. You may possess with them the tranquil mansions of eternal rest ; may share in the triumphs of the resurrection day, and meet the welcome of the King, the Saviour God, who will sit as judge eternal. And when the solemnities of the judgment day shall

(1) 1 John, iii. 2.

have finished, you may possess all that heaven can give; and enjoy freely, fully, ceaselessly, and eternally, the Son's love and the Father's favour. May all this be yours? yours who are now looking on this page? it may! can it be? yes it may! All may be yours, and will you be so basely wicked, as to slight the grace, and despise the love that would give you all this! or will you be so unutterably distracted as to neglect it all! If by neglect of the gospel, you have hitherto done this, and will continue to act so vile, so horridly ungrateful, and madly foolish a part, then remember what you *must* be. Your soul must live. If debased by sensuality; if sunk in sin; if rendered earthly, sensual, devilish, yet it is immortal; and you must live. You may undo your soul, but cannot put it out of being. If impenitent and unpardoned, you must drag on existence eternally, while existence will eternally be a curse. You must be infinitely unholy, and hellish; the object of abhorrence to every holy and happy being. You must wear Satan's likeness, in eternal enmity to God and goodness. You must be exposed for ever to the retributions of divine justice; to the wrath that burns to the lowest hell, and which will "beat upon your naked soul in one eternal storm." You must inhabit Satan's prison, instead of the sweet mansions of life and peace. You must roll in the lake of fire, and howl amidst the shrieks of the damned. Your gay companions, if undone with you, changed to tormentors; your employments wailing, and cursing, and blasphemy; your mercies ended; your delights gone; your sorrows unavailing; your ruin hopeless; and

you must see ages of guilt and gloom beyond ages of guilt and gloom in never-ending succession. What a change! Where then will be youth, gaiety, pleasure? Alas, for ever sad! Where the possessor of wealth and honour, who knew not Christ? Alas, poor possessor, for ever poor! O, think these statements are not cunningly devised fables. They are grounded on the testimony of that infallible word which is eternal truth, and by it are fully confirmed. And must you, even you, if not truly pious, be thus undone? Indeed you must. And will you trifle? or will you flee from the wrath to come? and turn your feet into the ways of God? and lift up your heart to Him for pardoning mercy and renewing grace?

7. While meditating on these solemn subjects, consider also that this life is the only time of offered mercy. Hereafter no fears will alarm the pious, and no hopes will cheer the lost. If for ten thousand years the Lord Jesus would invite you to receive himself and the blessings of his grace, though delay would be base ingratitude, it would not insure such certain ruin. But he will not wait long. Not many years, or perhaps not one. Before the dawning of next new-year's day, the state of millions will be for ever fixed; and perhaps you are one of those who are to die this year. Should you die unconverted and unsaved, if there were ever to come a period, though at the distance of millions of ages, when mercy and salvation should once more, for a single hour, be set before you, such a hope might almost change the gloom of hell to heaven. But no such hope will ever dawn upon you in the

eternal world. There are no pardons in eternity; no conversions beyond the grave. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."<sup>1</sup> But a day, and if that day be lost all is lost. O heart-breaking guilt, pitiable madness of miserable men, to waste that precious day of mercy and salvation! Reader, have you wasted it hitherto? If you have, O praise the mercy that has kept you from the regions of despair! While in the land of hope, repent and turn unto the Lord! Listen to his admonition, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."<sup>2</sup>

8. By one consideration more your attention to the pages that follow is earnestly requested. Perhaps this may be your last year, the last that God will give you in this probationary state. If it should, when another year begins, how changed will be your state, according as you now regard or slight the great Author of salvation. If you are made a partaker of his blessings, short as may be your Christian race, it will conduct you to the kingdom of your God; but if you slight him, and are cut down this year, how different will be your state at its close, from that at its commencement! How awful to begin the year with false hopes, and to end it in hell; to begin with God mercifully offering his blessings, and the Saviour waiting to be gracious, and ere it end to be placed beyond the reach of mercy!

(1) 2 Cor. vi. 2.

(2) Is. lv. 6, 7.

To begin it loving the world, and the things of the world, perhaps delighting in plays, and novels, and songs, and dances, and in all things that make the vain still vainer, and to end it with every pleasure vanished, and of all, the eternal sting only remaining! To begin the year with sinful men, and ere it end to be mingling with infernal spirits! Oh, awful change! yet if you slight the Saviour, and die this year, this change you must know by sad experience. The writer would, therefore, in this volume, with all the seriousness he can feel, address you, as standing on the borders of eternity; and would regard you as a dying mortal. When we meet at the judgment bar, will you then think it possible to be too earnest in recommending to your attention the things that belong to your eternal peace! You are entreated to read seriously what is seriously written, and not only read but pray. Pray for the grace of God. Ask for the Holy Spirit's aid or you will read in vain; and whatever feelings may be excited in your mind, they will be transient as a morning cloud or as the early dew.

9. From beseeching you to regard these things, I would turn to God on your behalf. "Father of all mercies, Giver of all blessings, who desirest not the death of a sinner, open the hearts of the readers of this book to receive the instruction it contains. All teaching as to eternal life, is vain without thy teaching. All admonition and entreaty vain, unless thy Spirit open the heart and seal instruction on the mind. All-gracious Lord, they who are here addressed, need a more powerful call than this, 'nor will they heed a feebler voice' than thine, which at length will

wake the slumbering dead. O Thou that didst give thy best beloved for man's salvation, and with whom is the residue of the Spirit, pour that Spirit down. Speak by the still small voice of his influence, and bring many to welcome the Saviour and salvation. And Thou that didst bleed and agonize and die for guilty men, Thou that on the day of pentecost didst shed that Spirit down, that changed thousands of hearts in an hour, accompany this book with thy Spirit's influence, and magnify thy truth, thy love, and mercy, by bringing the lost, the guilty, and the ruined, as willing captives to thy feet. Amen."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION SHOWN FROM THE GUILT AND RUIN OF ALL MANKIND.

IN the last chapter your attention was invited to the subjects that are now to follow.

1. Were you to enter the condemned cell of some gloomy prison, and there behold a wretched criminal awaiting an ignominious death, you would not hesitate one moment to admit his need of mercy; and the importance of his instantly employing every means by which mercy might be obtained. The state of man is very similar; and the importance of heartfelt piety is seen in the fact, that while you are a stranger to its blessings, you are an unforgiven and perishing sinner. Nothing short of being cleansed from sin can do you lasting good. While your

sins lie unpardoned on your soul, if the world were yours you would be poor; if all that man esteems lovely adorned you, in God's sight you would be hateful; and if the love of all mankind were fixed upon you, and ministering to your happiness, you would be, in truth, a miserable being, living under your Creator's frown. When we look at the state of mankind, we behold crowds thronging the path of transgression and woe. There are the aged and the young, the rich and the poor. There are profligates and scorners; but there too we see multitudes, that are moral in their conduct, and pleasing in their dispositions; respectable young men, and amiable young women, yet, because strangers to true piety, still classed with the wicked, and perishing with the unforgiven.

2. The solemn accusation brought of old against Belshazzar, may in substance be brought against every human being, while continuing in a state of nature.<sup>1</sup> "Thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." If thou hast not bowed down to gods of stone or wood, of brass or iron, to silver saviours or saints of gold, thou hast had idols. All that has kept thy heart from God, has been an idol to thee. Perhaps thy sabbath-breaking parties; perhaps thy sinful companions; perhaps some beloved sin. These, or things like these, have been thy idols; and the God in whom thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not

(1) Daniel, v. 23.

glorified. Is not this accusation too well founded? Does not conscience bear witness to its truth? and "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."<sup>1</sup> To you will apply the awful declaration, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."<sup>2</sup> God examines your state. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men."<sup>3</sup> The rule by which your thoughts, actions, and words, are and must be tried, is his holy law.

The requirements of the moral law were proclaimed by God, with terrific solemnity and grandeur, from Mount Sinai. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.—Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy

(1) 1 John, iii. 20.

(2) Daniel, v. 27.

(3) Psalm, xi. 4.

cattle, nor thy stranger, that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.—Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Thou shalt not kill.—Thou shalt not commit adultery.—Thou shalt not steal.—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."<sup>1</sup> Of this law a brief summary given by the Lord Jesus, is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>2</sup> It reaches the thoughts and desires of the heart. Thus the Lord Jesus explains it in reference to one precept, and doubtless the spirit of his explanation is applicable to all.<sup>3</sup> "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The tenth commandment applies principally to the desires of the heart. This law reaches to the words of the lips, the Lord Jesus says, "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof

(1) Exodus, xx. 3—17. (2) Matt. xxii. 37—39. (3) Matt. v. 26—27.

in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”<sup>1</sup> “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.”<sup>2</sup> It requires sinless obedience; and obedience continued, and perfect without a flaw. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all.”<sup>3</sup> “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”<sup>4</sup> Survey then and often survey its extent, for the commandment is exceeding broad. It requires love to God, the most fervent, entire, and uninterrupted. It requires love to man, as perfect and continued. It requires perfect conformity to its directions at all times, in the actions of the life, the thoughts, and desires of the heart, and the words of the lips; and its language is, “Do this and live; but for less than this you die.”

Weighed in these balances, are you not found wanting? Have you come up to the requirements of God’s holy law? and loved him with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength?

(1) Matt. xii. 36—37.

(2) Matt. v. 21—22.

(3) James, ii. 10.

(4) Galatians, iii. 10.

and loved the adorable Saviour with supreme affection? and loved your neighbour as yourself? You dare not declare you have. Then you are found wanting. Have you improved as you might have done talents and time, sabbaths and mercies? Ah no! then you are found wanting. Have you obeyed, in full perfection, through every moment of life, the other precepts of the divine law? Ah no! then you are verily guilty before God. A poor negro thus described what passed in his own mind, when hearing a missionary preach the gospel at Regent's Town, in Western Africa: "Yesterday morning when you preach, you talk about the ten commandments. You begin at the first, and me say to myself, 'Me guilty!'—the second, 'Me guilty!'—the third, 'Me guilty!'—the fourth, 'Me guilty!'—the fifth, 'Me guilty!' Then you say the sixth, '*Thou shalt not kill*;' me say, 'Ah! me no guilty! me never kill some person.' You say, 'I suppose plenty people live here, who say—Me no guilty of that!' Me say again in my heart, 'Ah! me no guilty.' Then you say, 'Did you never hate any person? did you never wish that such a person, such a man, or such a woman, was dead?'—Massa, you talk plenty about that; and what I feel that time I can't tell you. I talk in my heart, and say, 'Me the same person!' My heart begin to beat—me want to cry—my heart heave so much me don't know what to do. Massa, me think me kill TEN people before breakfast! I never think I so bad. Afterward you talk about the Lord Jesus, how he take all our sin. I think I stand the same like a person that have a big stone upon him

head, and can't walk— want to fall down. O Massa, I have trouble too much—I no sleep all night. (*Wept much.*) I hope the Lord Jesus Christ will take my sins from me! Suppose he no save me, I shall go to hell for ever."

3. Like the awakened negro, unless you are miserably deluded, you must stand as condemned before God, and say, "I am guilty of all the charges Thou canst bring against me." Think of the graces you ought to possess; as, gratitude, faith, hope, love, humility, patience, resignation. Have you possessed them as they should be possessed? Ah, no! Here again you are found wanting. Think of the homage you should have paid to God; devout, frequent, persevering. But has not prayer been often restrained and neglected? or at other times, mere formality? Here too you are found wanting. Think of resolutions broken; of convictions stifled; of pious desires quenched; of solemn impressions worn off; and in all this you are found wanting. Add to all this, the depravity of your heart; the sinfulness of your nature; and how can you stand! Tried by a heart-searching God, and by the standard of a righteous law, there is not one point in which you would not be found wanting.

4. Ah, reader, deceive not yourself on this momentous subject! Though you may never have been profligate, you have had many sins. For through how many days and hours have you been a sinner! Had you had but one sin a day, the load would be awful. But instead of one a day, if you know yourself, you will be sensible you have had many. Look back on life, while you have been living careless of God

and what has it been, but one scene of sin? Look into your heart; how many evil passions have harboured there! how many corrupt dispositions and desires been cherished! What thoughts of vanity, pride, resentment, love of the world, and alienation from a holy God have been allowed to take up their abode there! What has your heart been? What, but the dwelling of iniquity, or a world of iniquity! changing, in some respects, like the unstable waves of the ocean, yet always sinful; and, according to circumstances, a trifling heart, or an envious heart, or a careless heart, or a resentful heart, or an ungrateful heart, or a murmuring heart, or a disobedient heart, or a worldly pleasure loving heart; or at the same moment all these together. The word of God describes the heart as "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."<sup>1</sup> One way in which this wickedness is shown is, in contradicting the testimony of God. He says, all are by nature under condemnation; the sinner, on the contrary, thinks himself too good to merit hell. God says, man has a bad heart; the sinner thinks he has a good one. God declares, that sin is as destructive as the poison of asps, and as odious as the offensive fumes of an opened sepulchre; yet the sinner thinks sin pleasant, and true piety dismal. God bids the sinner repent to-day; the heart deceives him with the hope of repenting hereafter. God says to man, Turn or die; the sinner flatters himself, that he may live careless and be saved at last.

5. But take another view. Look back on life: you sinned in childhood; you have sinned in

(1) Jer. xvii. 10.

youth; and, if riper years have rolled over your head, have been a sinner through those years. You have sinned in thought, you have sinned in words; "for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."<sup>1</sup> "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."<sup>2</sup> You have sinned in actions. You have sinned by leaving duties undone; and you have sinned by doing what God forbade. You have sinned against your fellow-creatures, when not doing to others as you would that they should do to you;<sup>3</sup> when not loving your neighbour as yourself. You have sinned against your own soul, in slighting its eternal welfare; in loving this world and trifling with a better. You have sinned in all these things; and, as far as guilt is concerned, have, above all, sinned against God. *You have sinned against the Father*, by abusing his mercies, his time; by slighting his word; by breaking his laws; by profaning his sabbaths. How many have you wasted or misimproved! You have sinned against him by slighting intercourse with him. How many prayerless mornings, and prayerless evenings, and prayerless days have you known! *You have sinned against the Son*, by slighting his dying love, and by treating with wicked neglect his claims upon your service and your heart. *You have sinned against the Holy Spirit*,<sup>5</sup> by resisting the im-

(1) Matt. xii. 37. (2) Jas. iii. 16. (3) Matt. vii. 12. (4) Matt. xxii. 39.

(5) Of course by this expression is not meant that peculiar sin against the Holy Ghost, which is never forgiven; and with which it is to be hoped few persons are now chargeable, except the *most hardened* infidels.

pressions he produced in your mind ; by grieving and quenching the Holy Ghost. Take such a view, and are your sins but as few as your days? Rather are they not as numberless as your minutes? In one view only, passing others by, they literally are as many as your waking minutes. God's first and greatest command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."<sup>1</sup>

While you have been living without God, every minute of life this precept has been broken. Thus every minute of life has witnessed a fresh violation of a just and holy, a righteous and reasonable law, which ought every moment to have been obeyed, but which has been every moment broken. Thus every minute of your waking existence, has in fact been a season of sin.

6. Sin is not a trifling evil ; nor are the sins of men light. One sin undid the world, when our first parents transgressed in their pleasant Paradise : that one transgression caused death and all our woe : "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."<sup>2</sup>

When the Lord Jesus in figurative language describes the evil of sin, he compares it to an immense debt, a debt that hardly the wealth of empires would be sufficient to discharge, and that no humble individual ever could pay. He compares it to ten thousand talents ;<sup>3</sup> to a sum of money equal in weight, if in gold, to nearly forty thousand pounds, and in value to almost

(1) Luke, x. 27.

(2) Rom. v. 12.

(3) Matt. xviii 24, &amp;c.

two millions. He teaches us, that this debt has been contracted by *every* human being; for the lessons of forgiveness which he meant for all, are plainly grounded on the fact, that all are such debtors. You then, reader, are such a debtor. Your numberless sins have in them an unutterable and fatal malignity, sufficient to undo your soul for ever.

7. The scriptures describe mankind not only as in a state of guilt, but also of condemnation and ruin. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.<sup>1</sup> For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.<sup>2</sup> The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>3</sup> As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.<sup>4</sup> And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the

(1) Rom. iii. 23. (2) Rom. ii. 12. (3) Rom. vi. 23. (4) Gal. iii. 10.

mind ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."<sup>1</sup>

It is an important inquiry, what is the curse of the holy law which men have violated, and under whose doom they have fallen? Is it temporal evil and natural death? or is it the everlasting ruin of the soul, the being cast soul and body into hell? It may include the former ; but that the former is not principally intended is evident, because Christ is said to have "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ;"<sup>2</sup> but Christ has not redeemed the heirs of grace from temporal evils and natural death. Like others they are afflicted, and like others die. This then is not the curse under which man has fallen ; but Christ is said to have saved his followers from the wrath to come ;<sup>3</sup> to have made peace by the blood of his cross ;<sup>4</sup> to have reconciled them to God ;<sup>5</sup> and to have obtained redemption and forgiveness for them.<sup>6</sup> This curse therefore is the wrath of God. It is everlasting banishment from him. It is the direful punishment of sin. It is the damnation of hell. This is called the second death ;<sup>7</sup> and death, as opposed to endless life.<sup>8</sup> Every thing short of sinless obedience from the cradle to the grave, would leave man under the curse of God's holy and violated law. Its curse is awful, though by millions little feared ; the soul that lies under its weight is separated from God ; is exposed to his wrath ; and must encounter his frown. Its hopes are deception ; and its end, if it continue what it is, will be despair. It

(1) Eph. ii 1—3. (2) Gal. iii. 13. (3) 1 Thess. i. 10. (4) Col. i. 20.  
 (5) Rom. v. 10. (6) Heb. ix. 12. Eph. i. 7. (7) Rev. xxi. 8.  
 (8) Rom. vi. 23.

is ready for hell. This danger is not fanciful, but real now. Death will seal the condemnation ; judgment will ratify the sentence ; and eternity will witness its execution.

8. Ask the question now, who are the wicked and undone ? and it may be answered, "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup>

But repeat the question, who are the wicked ? Are they those only that have been mentioned ? Ah no, not less wicked than many of them is the moralist, who, however respectable in the domestic circle, or in the neighbourhood, has a heart estranged from God. The prodigal was wicked,<sup>3</sup> when a wanderer from his father, whatever his gay companions might say of his friendship or good-nature. The young ruler was wicked, when he preferred his wealth to the Saviour and his service,<sup>4</sup> notwithstanding the moral excellences that adorned, to a certain extent, his character. So, though no stains of

(1) Cor. vi. 9, 10.

(2) Gal. v. 19—21.

(3) Luke, xv. 11, &c.

(4) Mark, x. 22.

open immorality should have blackened yours, while a neglecter of the gospel, you have been wicked; and if to that neglect has been added the open crimes of the lewd, the drunkard, or the profane, there has been so much additional wickedness.

9. If you have lived careless of religion you have been wicked; for what a good, and gracious, and majestic God you have slighted! Against what infinite excellence you have rebelled! and on what infinite goodness cast the contempt of giddy indifference and base ingratitude! You have been wicked; for what a Saviour you have neglected! what love you have treated with unconcern! love that fills even heaven with wonder; into which angels desire to look; and which will fill eternity with praise! Yet all this love has had no charms for you; and has by you been neglected through many long rebellious years. You have been wicked; for what a gracious Spirit you have resisted! the influences of that Spirit, who has trained millions for immortality! yet that Spirit you have grieved by wicked neglect! What important convictions you have stifled! What important mercies abused! What precious sabbaths wasted! What gracious invitations slighted! What calls, what promises, what warnings disregarded! What heavenly preparatives for immortal life, treated with an unconcern as cruel to your own soul, as it has been ungrateful to God! Had Sodom enjoyed your mercies, Sodom might have repented and been saved. And for what has all this been done! What hateful things, or what trifles at the best, have

you preferred to the love, and service, and favour of your Creator! What a complication, what a continuity of mercies have you in fact baffled! You may say with the dying profligate, "I have been too strong for Omnipotence, I have plucked down ruin. What has God not done to save and bless me!" and yet I have slighted all! And have you not been wicked? Your delay has been wicked delay; and your days of unconcern wicked days.

While thus living without God in the world, little as you have suspected it, and much as you may disbelieve the assertion, you have really been living in a state of subjection to Satan. He prompts the profligate and guides the trifler. He is described as the god of this world, who works in the children of disobedience.<sup>1</sup> Notice the expression, the children of disobedience. All who disobey the glorious gospel, whether by open hostility, or by trifling with its claims upon the heart. And so vast is the number, that when an apostle said of the little flock of Christ, "We are of God," he added, "and the whole world lieth in wickedness,"<sup>2</sup> or lieth under the power of the wicked one. Could you hear the infernal spirit say, "I rule thy heart; thou art a child of mine. Like me thou rebellest against our common Creator. I am preparing for thy reception, and expecting thy coming; and soon thou wilt be like me in this abyss of woe." Could you hear all this, how would you be alarmed! yet all this might in effect be said.

10. The aggravations of sin are numberless. The God you have sinned against is the Author

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 4. Eph. ii. 2.

(2) 1 John, v. 14.

of your existence ; the Giver of your blessings ; the Source of all your mercies ; the eternal God, who has pitied your soul, and who claims and deserves your utmost gratitude, and most fervent love. You are in his sight an insect, a worm, a nothing ; just started into life, yet scarcely had you begun to live, before you began to sin. O patient mercy, that bears with such ingratitude ! O miserable man, that begins to sin so soon !

11. Not only have you the guilt of all your transgressions, but the guilt of alienation and estrangement from God, and even of enmity against him. Man's misery began in leaving God ; and this departure is complete in heart and in life, and has proceeded till man is alienated from God, and an enemy to him in his mind by wicked works.<sup>1</sup> In wandering from God, you broke off connexion with him. You were formed to love him, but you have not loved him. God created a world, that that world might love and serve him ; but that world has become, through sin, a world of enemies and rebels, and you have been one of them. Could you create a single being, would you not claim that being's service, gratitude, and love ? and pronounce it vile and wicked ingratitude and rebellion, if these were denied you ? and still worse if that being set himself in open opposition to your pleasure and authority ? Yet all this you have done to God. *Did you ever do one action out of simple love to God ?* perhaps you say, "I am charitable and honest." What of this, while you are a rebel against God ! You thought, perhaps, to secure heaven, and thus, as it were, to buy

(1) Col. i. 21.

blessedness by your charity ; but do you buy an article out of love to the seller, or to suit your own convenience ?

12. This dreadful and ruinous estrangement from God, is evidenced in many ways, to some of which allusion has been already made. The mind capable of knowing him, seeks not acquaintance with him. God is not in all its thoughts. Sinners *think* not of him, but choose any subject to occupy their thoughts, sooner than God. This marks the alienation of the heart from him. What we love, we love to think of. What we hate or disregard, we banish from our thoughts. When his name is profaned, his sabbaths broken, his book slighted, it marks the alienation of the heart. These are but streams from that fountain of wickedness. We are anxious for the favour of those we love, but when there is no love in the heart, we care little for the smile or frown of one we neither love nor dread. When there is little concern for God's favour ; no anxious inquiry after it ; when his love is not prized, nor his anger dreaded, so dreaded as to cause the soul, at all events, to flee from it ; there too is alienation from God. This indifference is but another stream from the fountain of inward wickedness. When his notice is not considered, nor his kingdom sought ; when his beloved Son is not welcomed as the treasure of the soul ; when some of his laws are broken without compunction, and others left undone without concern ; these are but so many indications of a heart at enmity with God. When trifles are preferred to his favour, and communion with him is disregarded ; this

marks enmity to him. We seek no intimacy with those we hate. When it is plain that the soul can love and hate, hope and desire, fear and prize, yet that it loves not God nor what he loves, hates not what he hates, desires not his favour, fears not his displeasure, prizes not his salvation; how blind is the sinner, that cannot perceive in his own heart, the fatal evidences that he is an enemy of God!

13. While such, reader, has been your state, you have been a mere cumberer of the ground; and have lived in vain, or, in reality, worse than in vain. Past years have brought you no real good; and you have brought to your Creator and Redeemer, no revenue of praise. No Saviour has been gained by you a sinner; no pardon for your transgressions obtained; no title to eternal life acquired. Living worse than in vain, you have heaped up wrath against the day of wrath; and treasured up for yourself indignation, tribulation, and anguish.<sup>1</sup>

14. Guilty as you are, you must nevertheless meet your God. How solemn will be that important, and not distant interview, when you, a rebellious child of man, shall stand before the awful Judge of earth and heaven! How will you meet him! Contrast his purity and your corruption; his holiness and your sinfulness; his love and your ingratitude; and how will you meet him! Consider his mercies and your abuse of them; his commands and your disobedience; his justice and your rebellion; and how will you meet him! If you continue as you are, how will you go before him! What

(1) Rom. ii. 5, &c.

can you expect but the sentence—Depart? Had you the righteousness of all the saints, would it blot out the guilt of fifteen or twenty, or more years of alienation and rebellion? Had you the wealth of worlds, would it pay your enormous and ever-growing debt? What can you do? You cannot undo the past. Will years of sorrow wash away transgression? Will floods of tears? Ah no! be not so deluded! Would future obedience cancel past transgressions? If perfect it would only be what every future moment claimed, and would pay nothing of the past! But will it be perfect? If you become a child of God, will not defect still mingle with all you do and are? Do what you can, unless brought to Christ, the debt remains. Every sinful thought, and word, and action; every sin of every kind; all you remember, and the many more that you have forgotten, but that God remembers; all these, unless you become interested in the Saviour, will be brought into judgment against you. Can you flee where God is not at hand? Ascend into heaven; hide beneath the mountains, or in the depths of the ocean's bed; and he would find you there. Can you cloak your transgressions or conceal them? Ah no! they all glare before the Searcher of Hearts, in all their fearful malignity. For let it be deeply impressed upon your heart and conscience, that as you are a guilty creature, so you are a condemned creature, while you have no saving knowledge of the Lord, and thus are in fact a stranger to heartfelt piety.

15. O reader, this is your condition, while you are not united to Christ by a living faith! But

perhaps you cling to some broken reeds of fallacious hope. You have some pleas to offer, to show that your danger is not so extreme. Bring them forward, and try them by God's word.

Perhaps you plead, "I have not sinned greatly nor often." Poor self-deceiver! Can any sins be little committed by an ungrateful worm against an infinitely good and glorious God? But suppose your plea were correct, and your sins few, it avails you nothing; for God declares, that his wrath is revealed against all ungodliness;<sup>1</sup> that the wages of sin is death;<sup>2</sup> that every one is cursed that continueth not in *all* things written in his law to *do* them;<sup>3</sup> and he who should keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is guilty of all.<sup>4</sup> Were your sins small, in those awful denunciations the smallest are included. But you plead, "I have repented." If you have, will repentance pay a creditor? or gain release for a criminal condemned to exile or to death? Ask a criminal in such a situation. No more will it avail in your case; and no more will promises not to offend for the future, blot out the guilt of the past. But you say, "I am as good as my neighbours; better than many." Be it so; but if they are unconverted, they are perishing too, for cursed is every one that violates the divine law.

Will it comfort you if you sink under the curse of God's violated law to the eternal prison, to meet some of your neighbours there? But you urge, "God is merciful. He did not make man to damn him." This is true: but God is just and true, as well as merciful; and if man

(1) Rom. i. 18. (2) Rom. vi. 33. (3) Gal. iii. 10. (4) James, ii. 10

continue an impenitent sinner, God will condemn him, though he did not make him for that purpose. Satan, when commencing rebellion against God, might have said, "God is merciful. He did not make angels to punish them." But though he did not, yet when they fell, that fire was prepared for the devil and his angels, into which the impenitent and unpardoned will also eternally sink.

16. It is a solemn question for you, "What is my state? Hope or despair?" Till you come to Christ it is despair. Not despair that mercy is not ready to receive you; but despair of being saved in your present condition. "What is my state? Is it *partial* ruin or *utter* ruin?" The answer of truth and love to you must be, it is a state of utter ruin. Hence, you need the Saviour and the blessings of his salvation. While you continue in such a state, you are as helpless as you are ruined. You are like a condemned criminal, shut up in a cell, which he can never break, but whose gloomy door mercy can open; and in your case mercy waits to open a door of hope. Without this, however, you are helpless. On you is guilt. Before you is ruin. Your own conscience convicts you. God's law condemns you. No power of yours can avert the doom. Fetch back your wasted sabbaths, if you can. Unsay your words; unthink your thoughts; undo your deeds. Then, and not till then, you may blot out your own guilt. Then, without coming to Christ, you may cancel your transgressions from the book of God's remembrance, but never till then.

O sinner! think while you live without heart-

felt piety, you are a condemned creature, and justly condemned. Was the Israelite who refused to consecrate the best part of his flock to God, under a curse? And are not you deserving of a curse, who have transgressed God's laws a thousand times, and delay or refuse to yield him your heart? While you will not love him, will not serve him; will not come to Christ; will not give up the world for him who died for man upon the cross, do you not deserve to be accursed? and you are so doubly. You lie under the curse of the law, and the curse of the gospel; for the gospel has its curse, its anathema. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema maranatha.<sup>1</sup> Thus you have not one blessing. Christ said, If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.<sup>2</sup> *No part*: none whatever. Neither pardon nor peace; neither divine favour nor undeceiving hope. Not one good in possession, or in store. All ruin now; all darkness and gloom in prospect. Not one friend secured, but exposed to every evil. While in this condition the Saviour who pitied must condemn you. You are worse than they who cried, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" for they knew not what they did. The law is against you; for you have broken its commandments, and lie under its curse. The gospel is against you; for you slight its blessings, and neglecting its Author expose yourself to its anathema. The wrath of God is upon you; and God, that would have compassion on you, is against you.

17. Think not that the wrath of God is fury or passion. Add not to your sins by forming

(1) 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

(2) John, xiii. 8.

such views of your awful Creator. No, it is not fury; it is not the rage of weak passion; but it is calm, determined, dreadful wrath. An awful narrative may perhaps illustrate this subject:—History relates, that an accusation was brought to an Irish judge, charging his own son with murder. The afflicted parent, regarding only the claims of justice, had his son apprehended. The young man was tried, convicted, and his father sat as judge when he was doomed to die. His frantic mother and other relatives sought to snatch him from the ignominious death to which he was sentenced, but in vain. While the father mourned, the judge was inflexible; and the young man suffered death close by the house of his agonized parent. He, after displaying such invincible regard to the claims of the law, which forbids a murderer to live, soon followed his wretched son to the grave, dying probably of a broken heart.

Like this is the wrath of God: not fury, not passion; but a calm determined regard to justice and holiness, that prompts him to be inflexible in punishing the impenitent transgressor. If God be but as firm in justice and judgment as the afflicted parent, what, sinner, must become of you, if you die without a Saviour?

18. While you continue unpardoned and impenitent heaven is shut against you. Had you reached the pearly gates of the celestial city, and been refused admittance there, how would you feel! but they are shut, and will, unless you welcome Christ, be shut for ever. While in such a state satan is your master. Could you behold that infernal one, just ready to drag you

to perdition, how would you tremble with horrid anguish! yet continue as you are, and you must see him at another day. For hell, while you are unforgiven, is your home; and death is hastening to you, to cut you down and send you there. Many are already there; and you are liable to the same ruin. Every unpardoned soul, every unconverted soul, is exposed to all this danger. Sin has exposed you to it. Alienation from God has fitted you for eternal banishment from him; and death, in an impenitent state, must seal your endless doom.

19. Think too that this danger is constant danger. No moment of life is a moment of safety. Awake, asleep at home, abroad, you are always in danger. By day, by night, you have no security. But as without Christ you are sure to perish, so you may perish any moment; and perishing once you are lost for ever. O what a state is this to live in! yet, reader, you have lived in it all your careless years! and if yet in your sins you are living in it still. One dreary winter's day without a single comfort; food, or clothing, or fire, or habitation, would be a long and miserable day; but what will eternity be without a comfort or a blessing! A year spent without a friend, or intercourse with any human being, would be a long and gloomy year, and seem like ages in length; but what will be an eternity of such gloom! It is related that an offer was once made of a handsome reward, if not a competency for life, to any person who would spend seven years in utter solitude, during which no intercourse should be had with any human being; but every needful accommo-

dation should be provided. Some attempted to earn the promised reward, but no one had fortitude sufficient to secure it on the terms proposed. To pass seven years without seeing the countenance or hearing the voice of a friend, was too severe a trial for human perseverance. But what will eternity be without a blessing or a friend! and every day you live without a Saviour, you are in danger of sinking into such an eternity.

While you slight the divine Redeemer, your condition is like that of a condemned malefactor, mortally sick of the plague. Death threatens him in a double form: both the plague and the gallows. So you are exposed to condemnation as an actual transgressor, and dying of the disease of sin, that would for ever shut you from the realms of holiness; but Jesus Christ would give you a double cure.

20. O consider it then as a decided point, that nothing can benefit you without the forgiveness of sin. Look at a perishing sinner. Why has he no true peace? Because sin lies on his soul. Why lies he under God's frown and fearful wrath? Because his sins are charged to his account. Why must he soon be judged, and hear the doom, Depart, and die eternally? Because sin is imputed to him, and will eternally load his guilty and neglected soul. Why must he once fixed there never hope? never have ease, peace, comfort? Because his sins will be for ever imputed to him. But reverse the scene. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man

to whom the Lord will not impute sin."<sup>1</sup> Why has the Christian peace? Because the Lord will not impute sin unto him. Why can he view God as his Father? Because no load of unforgiven sin separates him from his heavenly Father's love. Why is he blessed in all the blessedness of a Saviour's favour? Because sin is no more charged to his account. Why does he not fear hell? Because the load that would have sunk him there is gone. Why does he anticipate heaven? Why will he meet the solemnities of judgment with tranquillity? Because no sin lies unpardoned on his soul. He has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. He is prepared to join in the celestial song, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."<sup>2</sup>

Reader, what is your state? O pray that the Christian's privileged condition may be yours!

## CHAPTER III.

### RELIGION DESCRIBED.

1. It is here designed to represent to you the nature of true religion. The religion here recommended to you, is not a mere form or a profession that may be worn through life, but which would leave you helpless in a dying hour. It is that heartfelt piety, which will yield you

(1) Rom. iv. 7, 8.

(2) Rev. v. 9. 12.

support in death, and bless you when you lie covered with the ground, and forgotten in the grave; which will pass the test of final judgment; which the eternal Judge will acknowledge to be genuine and divine; and which will insure your welcome to the realms of glory. The possession of this blessing is your own chief interest. "If thou be wise thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest thou alone shalt bear it."<sup>1</sup> If you receive the Saviour you will be blessed; but if you slight Him others will receive Him, and God will not want children, nor the Lord Jesus disciples, nor heaven inhabitants, because you may neglect or refuse the great salvation.

2. All the distinctions between intelligent beings throughout God's vast creation, at length resolve into two; one part are his obedient children, the other wicked and rebellious enemies. Thus it is in the world unseen. In heaven are saints and angels, all the children of God; in hell are demons and the damned, all his enemies. There is no middle class. On earth it is the same. Here there are the converted and the unconverted. To which of these vast bodies do you belong? As there are, thus viewed, but two classes in God's creation; so there are but two states for mankind in the present world, in one or the other of which every child of man is found. One is the state of nature, the other that of grace. Each is a state. It cannot be asserted of any one, that he is a Christian to-day, and no Christian to-morrow; a Christian when the feelings are warm, and no Christian when they flag; safe when the passions are roused, and

(1) Prov. ix. 12.

lost when they are dull: but every one is either a humble child of God, saved in Christ, or an unpardoned sinner perishing for want of an interest in the Saviour. The children of men are thus divided into two immense bodies.<sup>1</sup> One part "partakers of the divine nature,"<sup>2</sup> the other unrenewed in heart and mind. In these classes there is much variety. Of the former some bear of the fruits of grace a hundred fold, while others produce but thirty.<sup>3</sup> In the latter many, though not pious, are amiable and moral. Many things, deserving of esteem, may be common to both, though in that, which will form an eternal distinction, so wide a difference exists. Thus the Christian cannot be a drunkard; the mere moralist may not: the Christian must be honest, true, benevolent;<sup>4</sup> the mere moralist, with an unchanged heart, may be all this.

3. What then is religion? It consists in the sincere, the heartfelt surrender of our whole selves to the ever blessed God, *as he is displayed to us in his gospel*. The soul is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved through his death, his merits, and his living care.<sup>5</sup> The heart is devoted to him, as its rightful owner.<sup>6</sup> The will is subjected to him; and the Christian would have its subjection to the divine will, perfect and entire. The mind learns of him; the powers of the body are consecrated to his service; and the life is regulated by his precepts.<sup>7</sup> To win Christ, and to

(1) Matt. vii. 13, 14. Matt. xiii. 24, &c. John, i. 11—13. 1 John, iii. 10. 1 John, v. 19. (2) 2 Peter, i. 4. (3) Matt. xiii. 8.

(4) Though some may profess religion, that do not in their conduct manifest its principles, it is evident, that such are mere hypocrites or dreadful self-deceivers.

(5) 2 Tim. i. 12.

(6) Matt. x. 37—39. John, xxi. 17

(7) John, xiv. 21—24. John, xv. 10, 14. Matt. vii. 21, 22. Acts, ix. 6.

be found in him, constitutes the Christian's first care.<sup>1</sup> This world is renounced, and heaven is followed after.<sup>2</sup> The solemn surrender which, under the influence of divine grace, the Christian thus makes of himself to the Lord Jesus, is deliberate, decided, and final. It is an "everlasting covenant, not to be forgotten."<sup>3</sup> Never to be renounced, whatever may be suffered or be lost. He yields himself to Christ with a disposition to lose any thing, so that he may but win Christ; and esteems nothing too dear to be forsaken on his account. The disciples of this divine Saviour, are not Demas who forsook his people, "having loved this present world;"<sup>4</sup> nor Simon Magus, who, though he was baptized, had a heart "not right in the sight of God;"<sup>5</sup> nor the many who were offended and forsook him:<sup>6</sup> but Peter and Paul, and hosts, in spirit like them, who, for his sake, "loved not their lives unto death."<sup>7</sup>

4. The Lord Jesus, that faithful and true witness, describes those who are thus brought to him as passing "from death unto life."<sup>8</sup> This is the most solemn and momentous transition imaginable. Could a soul pass from hell to heaven; from the guilt, and gloom, and hatefulness, and torments of the pit of despair, to the bright regions of endless light and peace, and holiness and love, it would be a transition beyond imagination blessed and important. It would call forth the eternal thanksgivings of the happy creature thus delivered, and the wonder and praises of the admiring inhabitants of heaven. But, little

(1) Philip. iii. 7. 8. Luke, xiv. 33. (2) 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Col. iii. 1—3.  
 (3) Jer. i. 5. (4) 2 Tim. iv. 10. (5) Acts. viii. 21. (6) John, vi. 66.  
 (7) Rev. xii. 11. (8) John, v. 24.

as it is regarded, not much less important, nor connected with less important results, is the transition that takes place from death unto life; from condemnation, guilt, and ruin, into pardon, holiness, and safety, in the case of every forgiven penitent. This transition takes place, this way of life is entered, when the penitent cordially receives the Lord Jesus, as his Lord and his All, for time and eternity.<sup>1</sup> Then and not till then does the soul pass from death into life. Without being brought to this, the sinner may become acquainted with his guilt; but these convictions do not render him an heir of salvation, for he may stifle them all, and live the same. He may become sensible of his danger; but this does not take him from death into life, for he may close his eyes against the danger, or, through love of the world, go with them open to perdition. Thus many act like the besotted man, who said, that if his soul and a quantity of spirits were placed upon a table, he would sell his soul to taste the intoxicating liquor. But when the sinner, abhorring his guilt and feeling his danger, welcomes the Lord Jesus Christ, then he passes from death to life. God in the gospel, as it were, says, "I have found a ransom, and laid help on one that is mighty. I have provided a Saviour. Wilt thou have him to save thee and to govern thee? Wilt thou take him from thy heart as thy salvation and thy Lord?" Do you answer, "Lord, I will. I desire nothing so much. I will; I do. Come, Lord Jesus, and rule within my breast?" The prodigal was restored to his father's favour, not when meditating on his

(1) John, i. 12. Luke, xix. 9. Acts, xvi. 31. 34.

guilt, or thinking of returning, but when he arose and came to his Father.<sup>1</sup> Thus the soul obtains true blessings when the penitent comes to Christ. Then it has escaped the general wreck. The grace which led it to the Saviour, implants the seeds of all piety within the breast. The believer enters on a new way, and commences the course which terminates in heaven. Have you thus been led to him?

5. Various expressions are used in the book of God to represent to us the nature of real piety. The Christian is emphatically represented as a believer on the Son of God, and as such all blessings are promised to him; but his faith is not the cold assent of the understanding to a truth presented to its view; it is described, as a believing "with the heart,"<sup>2</sup> perceiving and cordially embracing the truth. The Christian so believes as to trust, and rest on Christ, and to desire to be found not having his "own righteousness" as the ground of hope, "but that which is by faith in Christ."<sup>3</sup> He so believes as to love and prize his Lord, whom he loves though unseen, and whom faith renders precious to him:<sup>4</sup> the Christian's faith "works by love,"<sup>5</sup> purifies the heart,<sup>6</sup> and "overcomes the world."<sup>7</sup> Under the influence of this heavenly principle the believer lives;<sup>8</sup> and acts and walks;<sup>9</sup> and seeks a home above;<sup>10</sup> desires a better country;<sup>11</sup> esteems "the reproach of Christ greater riches," than worldly treasures;<sup>12</sup> and endures as seeing him who is invisible.<sup>13</sup> The Christian so believes as to follow

(1) Luke, xv. 20. (2) Rom. x. 10 (3) Phil. iii. 9. (4) 1 Peter, i. 8 ii. 10.  
 (5) Gal. v. 6. (6) Acts, xv. 9. (7) 1 John, v. 6. (8) Gal. ii. 20.  
 (9) 2 Cor. v. 7. (10) 2 Cor. iv. 18. (11) Heb. xi. 16, 39.  
 (12) Heb. xi. 26. (13) Heb. xi. 27.

the Lord whithersoever he goeth;<sup>1</sup> and so as to prefer him to father or mother, son or daughter, or even life itself;<sup>2</sup> and at heart he sacrifices all these for him.<sup>3</sup>

6. The Christian is represented as committing his soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day."<sup>4</sup> The solemn committal of the deathless soul and its immortal interests to the Saviour, is more than knowledge; more than outward forms of piety; more than desires of its blessings, or convictions of its necessity; more than correct morality: all these go with it, but it is more than all. It is the solemn transaction, in which a helpless sinner entrusts his all to the care, and unfeignedly resigns himself to the disposal of the almighty Saviour. This becomes his hope, "for me the Saviour died;" and the governing feeling of his breast is, "I am not my own, but his to whom I have been led to commit myself and my all." No one, while he continues to live in carelessness, is led to this: carelessness is the mark of eternal death. A very different spirit animates the Christian: "None but Christ, none but Christ," was the language of the dying martyr; and "none but Christ," is in effect that of every heir of heaven. "I count all things but loss that I may win Christ:" pleasure, honour, wealth, friends, all are trifles compared with an interest in him. My desire is not merely to hear of his excellences, or think of his love, or

(1) Rev. xiv. 4.

(2) Matt. x. 37, 38. Luke, xiv. 26, 27.

(3) Luke, xiv. 33.

(4) 2 Tim. i. 12.

talk of his glories, but to win Christ; to call him mine, while I am his."

7. The Christian is described as one that comes to Christ. He himself says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst." "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "Jesus cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."<sup>1</sup>

The promises in these gracious passages are made to him that *comes* to the Saviour; not to him that hears of coming, or thinks of coming, or coldly desires salvation, but to him that comes. Coming to Christ, expresses the application of the soul to him for the blessings that it wants: and with this, will always be connected correspondent dispositions. An afflicted pauper applies to a skilful and benevolent physician for help. How does he come? As diseased and needing help; as sensible of disease and desiring a cure; as confiding in his benefactor's skill and care, and willing to leave himself to his disposal. Thus the penitent comes to Christ disordered and undone; sensible of sin and misery; concerned for salvation and mercy; trusting the Saviour's power and grace; and willing to be saved in the Saviour's way. By those who come to him, the Lord Jesus is wel-

(1) Matt. xi. 28, 29. John, vi. 35. 37. vii. 37.

came as the hope and trust, the life and refuge of the deathless but ruined soul. O have you thus come to Christ? Have you been brought to him? What is the ground of your hope? If you think you are in the way to heaven, why do you indulge this expectation? Perhaps you reply, "The Saviour died for sinners." True; but the damned may say the same. If you stop there you will soon be as lost as they. Can you say what they never will, "He died for sinners, and I, as a poor, helpless sinner, have been led to him for pardon and salvation. I know in whom I have believed; I have come to him; his death is my plea, his righteousness is my trust, his grace is my strength. To him my soul is committed and myself resigned?" If you know nothing of this you are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. The charge against undone millions at last will be, "Ye received me not:<sup>1</sup> Ye heard of me, ye bore my name, ye listened to my word; but ye received me not." No sin is so common, and none more ruinous.

8. The Christian is described as one who has Christ in him. The inspired apostle represented to some of his Christian friends, that "Christ in" them "was the hope of glory."<sup>2</sup> He said to others, "Know ye not, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."<sup>3</sup> Of himself he said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."<sup>4</sup> And for others he prayed, "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith."<sup>5</sup> These pas-

(1) John, i. 11. v. 43.

(2) Col. i. 27.

(3) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

(4) Gal. v. 20.

(5) Eph. iii. 17.

sages may receive an affecting illustration from the narratives which are found in the New Testament respecting unhappy persons possessed by evil spirits. In that case the infernal spirit influenced the man, directed his conduct and his words, and ruled him with an absolute and fatal sway. When Christ is described as in his people, it imports that he has taken possession of them; has erected, as it were, his throne within the heart; and rules the conduct of the life, and the passions of the soul. If Christ is in you, the hope of glory, you must have felt the changing influence of his renewing spirit. Were you proud; you now seek humility. Were you passionate; you resist passion and follow after meekness. Were you resentful; you have become forgiving. Were you covetous; you have become liberal. If Christ is in you, he rules within your heart. He prompts you to maintain an inward warfare, and to mortify the sin which may easily beset you. He makes you conscientious in private as well as in public. His pleasure moves you; his approbation encourages you; his promises animate you; his frown saddens you; and his laws bind you. He says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings."<sup>1</sup> Christ is not in you, if his commands are slighted. Profession without obedience is hypocrisy. You may have the name of Christian, and be

(1) John, xiv. 21. 23, 24.

unacquainted with all that has been described as distinguishing the Christian; but you cannot have Christ in you, and be a stranger to such a change. Perhaps you object, "I see some that make a flaming profession of religion, who seem strangers to all this." Be it so. You then see hypocrites or self-deceivers; for God's description of Christian piety will be found true, if all the world were deluded.

9. Thus the Christian is one who can say, "I am the Lord's:<sup>1</sup> his by solemn surrender; his by devout dedication; his for time; and his for eternity." Some have desires after religion; he has them too, but they are much more than cold inactive desires. Some form resolutions; he forms them too, but in reliance on strength superior to his own. Some forsake sins; he forsakes them too, but stops not with forsaking the transgressor's ways. Some are religious by fits and starts. Some are near the kingdom, but never reach it; they halt when almost persuaded to be Christians. True piety leads its possessor beyond all these. It brings him to the Saviour's feet. Were you ever brought there? And there he can say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; my will determined; my choice made; my affections engaged. I see the vanity of time; I feel the Saviour's love, the Saviour's worth. My heart is fixed for God, for the Saviour, and for heaven. Lord, I am thine. These hands, these eyes, these feet are thine. This heart is thine, this soul is committed to thy care. This body is not my own, but bought with a price, and to be employed for thee."

(1) Isaiah, xlv. &

A religion that leads to this is much more than what satisfies many. It is more than mere nature ever produced or ever will. It has its origin from heaven, and leads its possessor there. Is yours such? If it be, to have the heart thus fixed will keep you steady in the way to everlasting life. Else you will be tossed to and fro, and driven you know not whither. But if you are thus the Lord's, this grace will keep you steadily in the ways of God, and urge you onward to heaven. You will be like a sailor intent upon his home, tossed by tempests, and driven and distressed by opposing winds and waves, who still turns his vessel for the port he seeks, and never yields the contest till he gains the expected and desired haven.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE NATURE OF RELIGION.

1. WERE a mathematician pursuing some important calculation, on the correctness of which all his future reputation and prosperity depended, with what care would he watch against the smallest mistake! Were a merchant making a calculation, in which by the error of a single figure he might become the loser of thousands of pounds, how carefully would he prove all his reckonings, and test the correctness of his accounts! But in examining the nature of religion a far more important inquiry is pursued. If the mathematician or the merchant err, some loss

may be endured, but loss which will soon appear light as vanity itself. But if delusion is suffered where religion is concerned, the loss of the soul will be the dreadful consequence. The subject being of such importance, it may be useful to take a view of real piety in some other lights, and of the marks by which it is distinguished.

True piety is connected with genuine repentance. The indispensable necessity of repentance is most solemnly asserted in the divine word; but there is much delusion as to its nature. True repentance is not to be distinguished from false so much by the pungency of the penitent's convictions, as by the change of his views, of his heart, and of his life. Most persons acknowledge the necessity of repentance, but multitudes under that name regard a mere delusion. They put the sorrow of the world which worketh death, in the place of that godly sorrow whose author is God, and whose end is salvation. There are, however, many points of contrast between false and true repentance.

False repentance springs solely from the fear of punishment and ruin. The sailor in a tempest, the profligate on a sick-bed, cry out for mercy, merely because they dread death and hell which seem at hand. In true repentance, though the fear of dreaded evil may be felt, yet connected with this is a more generous feeling, and sin is abhorred. Job said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."<sup>1</sup>

False repentance cloaks and lessens sin. Its evil is not felt, nor its guilt acknowledged. The sinner looks for every extenuating circumstance,

(1) Job, xlii. 6.

to hide the deformity of his own transgressions. In true repentance the evil of sin is felt. Its aggravations are acknowledged by the soul, that neither pleads, nor wishes to plead any extenuation. The penitent feels he has none to offer and the confessions of the psalmist are the language of his heart: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."<sup>1</sup>

He that is deluded with false repentance, hopes and pleads for mercy on account of good that he has done. It is true, he acknowledges, he has done wrong, but then he has often done right; he has sinned, but then he has often done good. The true penitent owns himself quite vile, and casts himself solely on the mercy and grace of a forgiving God. Thus David did when his prayer was, "Have mercy upon me, O God;" and when in all his penitential confession, not one plea was urged from any service he had ever done, nor one allusion made to any thing that as a servant of God he had ever been. Thus the publican acted when smiting on his breast, with downcast eyes, he exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And the prodigal displayed

(1) Psalms, li. 1-5.

this spirit when he said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."<sup>1</sup>

In false repentance the sinner, with all his professions of sorrow, still thinks, on the whole, well of himself. He sees no great deep of iniquity within his own heart; nor does he feel that his character as a sinner, is in the view of God altogether hateful and debased. True repentance leads the penitent to abhor himself; and the more he feels of its influence, the lower he sinks in self-abhorrence and humiliation. God thus describes repentance: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."<sup>2</sup>

In false repentance, the sinner regards solely the injury sin has done himself, and the danger to which it has exposed him. In true repentance the penitent looks at the ingratitude and vileness of sin in reference to a good and gracious God and Saviour; and mourns that infinite excellence should have met with such base treatment from him, and infinite goodness with so vile and ungrateful a return. It is related of Colonel Gardiner, that after his wonderful conversion, though he assuredly believed for a length of time that he should soon be in hell, yet that what he suffered of his inward distress, was not so much from the fear of hell, "as from a sense of that horrible ingratitude he had shown to the God of his life," and to the blessed Redeemer. There is much variety in the feelings

(1) Luke, xv. 21.

(2) Ezekiel, xxxvi. 31.

of different individuals even on religious subjects, but this sorrow in a way more or less deep is experienced by every real penitent.

In false repentance, when danger is over the sorrow is forgotten. Thus the mariner professing penitence in a storm, rushes on in the career of iniquity when the tempest has ceased its rage. And the sick-bed penitent, in almost all cases, returns to carelessness and sin, so soon as returning health removes death and hell from his affrighted view. Sin, then, instead of being forsaken and abhorred, is loved and followed. It maintains its sway over the soul, and in the miserable man's esteem is as sweet as ever. When true repentance is felt sin is hated, and even when pardoned is hated more than ever. The penitent forsakes its ways; resolves and prays against its snares; loathes the sin that may easily beset him; and could he sin without punishment, still for its vileness and baseness, he would flee from sin, and hate it with utter hatred.

False repentance is such as a devil might feel; and as many dying in impenitence indulge when they can sin on earth no longer; while many of the feelings connected with true repentance, are such as a saint in heaven might indulge.

2. The humble and contrite that have fled to the Saviour, as the penitent's refuge, are described in the scriptures, as greatly blessed. It is not merely asserted that they *shall be* blessed, but such dispositions of soul are represented as proving them *already* blessed. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and hum-

ble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”<sup>1</sup> The Lord Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.”<sup>2</sup>

The true penitent welcomes gospel mercy, listens to the Saviour’s invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,”<sup>3</sup> and is made a partaker of forgiveness. The penitent publican went down to his house justified;<sup>4</sup> the penitent prodigal received his father’s pardon, and was restored to his father’s family;<sup>5</sup> the penitent female, who dropped her tears on the Saviour’s feet, and wiped them with her hair, heard the cheering declaration, “Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.”<sup>6</sup>

3. But what are the evidences of enjoying forgiving grace? On this there is much delusion. Some fancy, if the feelings are fired, if the passions are roused, and if sorrow gives place to joy, though they know not why, that this is a proof of forgiveness. All this is deception. Satan sometimes appears as an angel of light,<sup>7</sup> and may kindle an unhallowed joy in an unchanged heart.

(1) Is. lvii. 15. Is. lxvi. 1, 2. (2) Matt. v. 3, 4, 6. (3) Matt. xi. 27.

(4) Luke, xviii. 14.

(5) Luke, xv. 22.

(6) Luke, vii. 48. 50.

(7) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

No one thing, but several united, may be represented as constituting satisfactory evidence of an interest in pardoning mercy.

Peace of mind has been regarded as an evidence of forgiveness. But this is not decisive; for the hope of the hypocrite may inspire a false peace. Nor is the absence of peace an evidence that forgiveness is not enjoyed; for the sorrowing, doubting Christian, may write bitter things unreasonably against himself.<sup>1</sup> But peace of mind, springing from trust in the Saviour's atonement, from faith in his blood, and connected with the experience of the sanctifying and constraining power of his love, may be considered a sure evidence that the soul has regarded the gospel call.

With this invariably is connected, subjection to the Lord Jesus. The forgiven penitent is a member of a new kingdom, over which the Saviour rules.

New principles and dispositions, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, also mark the pardoned soul. The forgiven penitent is partaker of a new nature; is a new creature in Christ Jesus, in whom old things pass away, and all things become new.<sup>2</sup> The Lord Jesus never forgives a soul, and leaves it one of Satan's slaves. Every pardoned penitent has a new disposition, that tolerates no sin; that allows not subjection to the world; and that pants after universal holiness. Blessed and happy are they who experience this! The load is taken away, that else would have ruined them eternally. Who shall condemn them? God justifies them. Who shall injure

(1) Psalms, xlii. lxxvii. Isaiah, xi. 27.

(2) 2 Cor. v. 17.

them? God protects them. Who shall impoverish them? God enriches them. Who can harm them in life or death, time or eternity? All things are theirs, and they are Christ's. Are you one of this happy family?

4. The Christian may be further viewed as the possessor of true grace, in distinction from those, who have but the form of godliness. But wide is the difference between the religion of these different characters. The religion of one is *formal*; it consists chiefly in knowledge, and outward forms: that of the other is *heartfelt*; the Christian does not despise the forms of piety, but its chief seat is in his soul. The religion of the formalist is *partial*; he regards some duties and slights others; shuns some sins, and indulges in others. The religion of the Christian is *entire*: it embraces the love and pursuit of universal holiness, and the renunciation and abhorrence of all sin. The religion of the formalist speedily reaches its maturity: the same forms to-day as yesterday, and to-morrow as to-day, satisfy him. The religion of the Christian, like a brightening light, shines more and more unto the perfect day. His concern is, to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ;"<sup>1</sup> to forget the things behind, and reach unto those before.<sup>2</sup> The formalist is soon satisfied. He wants no high attainments in divine things. The Christian never is so satisfied as to say, "I have grace enough." He almost thinks nothing gained, while any thing remains ungained. The formalist desires only religion enough to reach heaven; and a delusive hope quickly

(1) 2 Peter, iii. 18.

(2) Phil. iii. 17.

satisfies him. The Christian can at times almost lose the thought of the good he expects, in his desire for entire transformation to the Redeemer's likeness. "Wash me, Lord, and not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Not partially but entirely. My desires; my affections; my tempers and conduct; make all like thine own. Wash me from love of the world; from pride, and selfishness, and every evil passion. Change me, and change me not in some things only, but in all. Teach me all I should learn, and make me all I should be."

5. The true Christian is distinguished by love to the Lord Jesus Christ. His early disciples are described as those who loved him though unseen.<sup>1</sup> Blessings are pronounced on all that love him; "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:"<sup>2</sup> and an awful curse on all who love him not, whatever in other respects may be their character, their knowledge, their conduct, or their profession; "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."<sup>3</sup> The apostle, describing his own views and feelings, represented, at the same time, those of every child of God: "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; that I may win Christ and be found in him."<sup>4</sup> Be the Christian a Briton or a Hindoo, the effect of the gospel upon his heart, as to the adorable Saviour, is the same. "I love him," said Krishna in his last illness, "but not as he loves me." The careless and presumptuous will speak of love to Christ, while their whole

(1) 1 Peter, i. 7. (2) Eph. vi. 24. (3) 1 Cor xvi. 22. (4) Phil. iii. 8.

life is neglect of him, or rebellion against him. The love of the Christian to his Lord is *heartfelt*. He sees his Redeemer's worth: "Lord, in poverty thou art my wealth; in disgrace, my honour; in sorrow, my joy; in weakness, my strength; in death, my life." The Christian's love to the Saviour, is connected with a sense of his suitableness to the wants of the soul: "I was lost, he redeemed me; I am guilty, he saves me; I am blind, he teaches me; I am poor, he enriches me; I am to die, he must support me. He is every thing to me; and none can supply his place." The Christian's love to his Lord is active and influential. It does not evaporate with glowing words, nor spend itself in warm professions. It is manifested in desires for more love. Never did a pardoned penitent love Christ without desiring to love him better. It is evidenced in desire to do his will, and to promote his glory. The Christian's love to the Saviour is supreme. The Lord requires this: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."<sup>1</sup> "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."<sup>2</sup> None can suppose the Saviour means, we should hate those he commands us to love; but that they should have the second place in the affections of the soul, while the first is given to himself. He is to be loved more and with higher estimation

(1) Matt. x. 27, 28.

(2) Luke, xiv. 26.

than they; and to be pleased in preference to them. The Christian must be ready, if required, to forsake them sooner than renounce his Lord; and to sacrifice all things rather than forsake his Redeemer. Thus his love to Christ must be supreme. Am I so circumstanced, that I must deny myself, or violate his laws; I must offend friends, or offend my Lord; I must sacrifice their favour and love, or forsake his service? In such a case the Christian will not hesitate what part to act. In such a case how would you act? What is the tenor of your life? the settled bent and purpose of your soul? Some have warm passions in God's house, and lead careless lives in their own. How do you live? Do you love your Lord? and *evidence* that love by loving his house? by loving his sabbaths? by loving his people? by loving his ordinances? by loving his precepts? by loving all he loves, and hating all he hates? Is it with you, life's chief concern to live to him? and to reach his kingdom, where you shall live with him? Whatever engages you besides, is this your first concern? that which takes the place of all others? which is regarded above all besides? and to which the thoughts and cares return, whatever else may occupy them through a large portion of your waking hours? An affectionate child, at the call of Providence, leaves his parents, and goes to a distant land; yet he remembers his home. He keeps in view the time for returning to it. He discharges the duties of the new scene, in which, for a while, he is placed. These occupy much of his time, and engage many of his thoughts, yet his fondest thoughts turn to home. There his heart is

most set. That is never long out of mind ; and at the appointed period, with gladness, he returns to the place, where his thoughts have daily been. Do you feel a love to the adorable Saviour, Jesus Christ, whose effects are of this description?

6. The Christian is represented as a new creature. In conversion, in making any one really a Christian, not only is there some outward change in the character and conduct; but there is an inward change, which is as really the product of divine power, as is life itself, and of which none but God can be the author. The necessity of such a change is solemnly asserted: Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."<sup>1</sup> Every real Christian is represented as a partaker of this new nature: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."<sup>2</sup> The blessed God said. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I

(1) John, iii. 3. 5, 6, 7.

(2) John, i. 12. 2 Cor. v. 17.

will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”<sup>1</sup> This new heart and new birth probably consists chiefly in giving to the soul a new disposition, which becomes the seed of universal holiness in heart and life. This change is compared to that which is confessedly mysterious; but though mysterious it is not less real. Natural life, in its origin and continuance, is as mysterious as the nature of the life of grace in the renewed soul. Each becomes visible from its effects. We know man lives, not by seeing life infused, or by comprehending the nature of life, but by seeing its effects. He breathes; he speaks; he sees; he moves; he acts. These effects declare him to be a living man, not a lifeless corpse. Thus is spiritual life evidenced. Its effects are, sense and feeling. The heart of stone, which could not feel, is changed for a heart that can, that does. Pride and carelessness give place to humility and contrition. Sin is deplored and forsaken. The possession of the spirit of Christ marks the regenerate. He was humble, man is proud; but the renewed man becomes humble. He was meek, man is violent and passionate; but renewed man learns of him who was meek and gentle. He was forgiving, man is resentful; but renewed man becomes forgiving. He was benevolent, man is selfish; but renewed man learns of Jesus, to care for others' welfare as well as his own. He loved his Father God, man is alienated from him; but renewed man loves his God, and seeks his glory. He was heavenly-

(1) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

minded, man is earthly and sensual ; but renewed man sets his affections on things above. He was holy, man is altogether sinful ; but renewed man follows after holiness. Thus the Christian is a new creature ; new in principles, feelings, dispositions, conduct, pursuits, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, prospects, and connexions. The change experienced, whether wrought more gradually, or more suddenly, is a divine and entire change, that renders him, who experiences it, as to his character and state, in the sight of God, a new man. The dark mind is enlightened ; the insensible heart is softened ; the affections are turned into a new channel, and, as to the highest objects of their regard, fix on new objects. The life that was careless or wicked, is altered to a life of piety. And the man is said to be " created in Christ Jesus, unto good works."<sup>1</sup> The operations of divine grace, in producing this change may be very various, but its termination is the same. Some, in the midst of a career of iniquity, may be awakened by the terrors of the Lord ; and the light of divine truth, revealing to them their guilt and misery, may break in upon their souls, almost as suddenly, as if the sun were to rise in an instant at midnight, and change darkness into day. In the case of many others, the light may open gradually upon their souls, like the usual dawns of the day ; first one gentle beam, and then another, and another, and another. A little more light, and a little more, till, though they know not how, the darkness is gone, and the light shines on them in the blaze of day. In such cases, it may be impossible to distinguish

(1) Eph. ii. 10.

between what may be termed the last efforts of mere nature, and the first operations of the Eternal Spirit; but it is enough to know that the heart is renewed, that effects which mere nature never produced, are experienced; and truths, which it never taught the mind to comprehend, are known. A traveller commencing a journey by the light of the moon, before the faintest gleam of the dawn appears, and pursuing his journey, at length finds light increasing round him. It brightens more and more. The creation assumes a new aspect; and he finds the glimmering of moonlight changed for the effulgence of the newly-risen sun. But request him to distinguish the last beam of the light of the setting moon, from the first of the rising sun, and were life depending on the answer, life must be lost, sooner than he could give a correct reply. Yet though he could not tell which was the first gleam of opening day, he can tell that the day shines all around him; and it matters little to him while enjoying the daylight, that he is unable to declare which was its first faint ray. As little does it matter to the Christian, to distinguish the first movings of the Eternal Spirit, from the last of his own, if he now walks in the light, as Christ was in the light.

7. The representations of the Christian as a new man, a new creature, are strikingly emphatic and descriptive. Look at a profligate, he drinks in iniquity like water. He is lewd, drunken; perhaps a scorner, a swearer, a sabbath-breaker. He treats with contempt all that is good, is prayerless, careless and insensible, neglects the bible and the house of prayer, rushes forward to

eternal perdition. Look at the same man if renewed in the spirit of his mind. He shuns the paths of vice, he is chaste, sober, temperate, he reveres the divine name, keeps holy the sabbaths of the Lord, prizes the bible, loves prayer and the worship of God, hates all that once he loved, and loves most what once he hated most, and acts, and lives, and prays as one whose chief object is to secure eternal life. Is he not a new man? a new creature? Had divine power destroyed his whole frame, and produced another man in his place, would he have been a more different man? or more completely a new man, in all that will long distinguish man?

Look at another. He is not profligate, but sober, steady, moral, yet a stranger to piety. He utters stated prayers, but they are only formal. God has not his heart; his own interests, honour, gain, or pleasure, lie much nearer to his heart, than the glory or honour of his Creator. He acknowledges Christ as a Saviour; but the Saviour's love impresses not his soul, and wins not his affections. He reads the bible as a kind of task, as a school boy reads his lesson; and perhaps, with all this, thinks himself very good and very safe. Look at the same man, if renewed. As he was never immoral, there is not so striking a change in his outward conduct as in the former instance; perhaps little visible there; but there is as real a change in his heart. His prayers are no longer formal, but express the feelings of a soul that knows its wants and its guilt. His heart is yielded to God, and he regards his Father's honour and glory, above any trifling interests of his own. The Saviour's love

impresses now his heart; and draws out the best affections of his soul to his Lord, in gratitude and love. The bible is no longer a task, but is read as with new eyes, and with an enlightened mind. All his former conceit of his own goodness and safety has vanished. He sinks in humiliation before his God; feels he was as really a lost creature, as the more profligate sinners around; with a heart as estranged from God, and as corrupt as theirs. Is he not a new man, in all that constitutes the moral character of an intelligent and immortal being? as completely new, as if God had sunk his whole frame into nothing, and formed a new man to occupy his place? O remember that all outward forms without an inward renewing change, are, so far as eternity is concerned, vanity of vanities. Eternal truth has declared, "Ye must be born again."

No alternative remains for any child of man but this—he must be converted or condemned.

8. After thus noticing some of those representations which are given of the real Christian, it may not be useless to point to a few marks of possessing the spirit of Christ, which form important tests, by which to try our state.

A holy jealousy of ourselves, and such fear of deception, as produces solemn caution and care, to guard against delusion—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."<sup>1</sup>

Prizing the favour of God above all earthly good, and desiring more earnestly to love him

(1) Psalm, cxxxix. 23, 24.

more; to serve him better, and to feel more of his love, than to obtain worldly wealth or any earthly acquisition — “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”<sup>1</sup>

Seriously and solemnly taking the life to come, as the portion of the soul; regarding this as its highest interest, having reference to this in all our pursuits, and habitually preferring the things unseen, before the visible objects of this transitory world — “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. We walk by faith not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Maintaining habitual attention to the state of

(1) Acts, xx. 24. Psalm, lxxiii. 24—26. Psalm, iv. 6, 7. Psalm, xxvii. 4.

(2) 2 Cor. iv. 18. 2 Cor. v. 7, 8.

the heart and care about it; so that the sins of the heart are observed and lamented, and grace is sought to subdue whatever is wrong within the breast, as well as what may be openly amiss in the conduct—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."<sup>1</sup>

Living not allowedly in any known sin; and having no sinful infirmity, which is not, when known, lamented, and a concern maintained that it may be corrected and subdued—"In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."<sup>2</sup>

Desiring the highest degree of holiness; loving holiness and longing for more of its power, and wishing rather to be more holy than more prosperous or more rich—"Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. As he

(1) Prov. iv. 23. Psalm, li. 10. Heb. iv. 1. 2 John, 8.

(2) Rom. vi. 10, 11. 22. 2 Cor. vii. 1. 1 Tim. vi. 12.

which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”<sup>1</sup>

Cherishing love to the cause and the people of God — “ For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”<sup>2</sup>

The possession of a prayerful and devotional spirit, that makes private devotion precious, and produces love to the worship and ordinances of God’s house — “ As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God ? How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him.”<sup>3</sup>

(1) Heb. xii. 14. 1 Peter, i. 15, 16. 1 John, ii. 4—6. (2) John, xiii. 15  
1 John, iii. 14.

(3) Psalm, xlii. 1, 2. Psalm, lxxxiv. 1, 2. 10  
Luke, xviii. 1. 7.

Daily regard to the Saviour as the author of salvation, and the daily application of the soul to him as its life, its righteousness, its redemption, its wisdom, and its all—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."<sup>1</sup>

And all this the settled bent and bias of the soul: not a fit of religion for a day, or a week, or a month, or a year; but that which an inward principle of divine grace, prompts the soul perpetually to follow; which has been chosen once, but chosen for life, and which the soul would not renounce for all the world.

This is experienced by the truly pious in every land. God rules in the heart. Christ is loved. His word is prized and regarded. Heaven is sought; prayer is loved; sin is hated; their hopes, their feelings, their sorrows, and their joys are all connected with religion, and are in substance of the same description. They may have their conflicts, but these mark life not

(1) Gal. ii. 20. Heb. xii. 2. John, xv 4,5. 1 Cor. i. 30. Ccl. iii. 3, 4

death: a dead soldier fights no battles. They may have their fears; these often mark their anxiety to be right. They may have their defects; but their inward lamentations, over what, perhaps, none but themselves and God perceives, bear testimony to their unfeigned sincerity. Happy are such persons wherever found! They are the Lord's, and are his now preparatory to being his for ever.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE VANITY AND MISCHIEFS OF A FORMAL RELIGION, AND THE NECESSITY OF DECISION.

1. TRUE religion elevates and blesses its possessors; but many are satisfied with what the scripture describes as a vain religion;<sup>1</sup> a false religion. As you value your soul, guard against such delusion; a delusion that would spread its blasting influence over a whole eternity. Life is no blessing without Christ, and its loss is a trifle to the loss of Christ. Death is eternal gain, if Christ is ours; but if a vain religion deludes the soul, all will be lost that should bless eternity. All short of that divine change of heart and character, which has been described in the preceding pages, if it go under the name of religion, will but deceive and undo the soul. Where there is not contrition of heart; where there is habitual negligence about the interests of the deathless soul; where pride of mind is indulged, and displayed in exalted views of a self-righteous kind, and in want of a teachable spirit; where

(1) James, i. 26.

Christ is slighted for worldly objects, when these interfere with his claims or his service ; where there is not a prayerful spirit ; where there is not love to the cause and family of God ; where sin is trifled with, and little sins, as they are termed, or beloved sins are tolerated and allowed—where this is the case, there may be the name of religion, but it is a vain religion.

2. Where there is not the sincere surrender of the heart to God, though there may be a profession of religion, yet that religion is vain. When God, under the old dispensation, had required from Israel the best and most perfect animals in sacrifice, and they had brought inferior offerings, he said, “If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”<sup>1</sup> The crime against which the wrath and curse of God were denounced, was not that of making no offering, but of not offering to God the best in the possession of the professed worshippers. They withheld what was best, and tried to put him off with some meaner offering. Such is the conduct of multitudes in what they deem religion. Some have the habit of repeating life-

(1) Malachi, i. 8. 13, 14.

less words, as prayer, who never pray. Some have the form of godliness without the power. Some practise smaller duties, tithe, as it were, mint, annise, and cummin, while they neglect the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth. Some regard what are deemed the weightier of God's commands, while they are strangers to the "faith working by love," which prompts its professor to follow universal holiness. In all these cases the heart is not surrendered to God. The sinner has not become a subject of that kingdom over which the Saviour rules. Put the conduct of such persons into words, and how glaringly wicked it appears:—The almost Christian then might say, "I should give my heart and my best affections to God; but I am not disposed to make such a sacrifice: I am willing to respect religion, and to acknowledge its importance; but not *quite to embrace* it. I am willing to go as far as I can go with it, so as not quite to renounce the world, nor to surrender myself unfeignedly body, soul, and spirit unto God. Let me but give the world my heart, and all short of that offering I will give to God." The formalist might say, "I never mean to give my affections to God, or to surrender myself and interests to his disposal. I will give the world my affections; but I will give to God the form of piety. I will go to his house on the Lord's day, and will slight him all the week. I will daily utter some solemn form of prayer; but even while I am uttering the words, my heart shall not go with them, but the world shall have my thoughts. I will call God, my God and Redeemer; but I will neither seek his favour, nor

care for his displeasure, nor promote his glory, nor heed his commandments." Who with the lips would utter such impious resolutions! yet as well might they be spoken by the lips, as spoken in the daily conduct of the life. In that they are daily uttered by every formal professor of religion, by every one who refuses to surrender himself to God.

3. There are many marks, by which a vain religion may be distinguished, from that, which is genuine in its nature, and divine in its origin.

All religion is vain which does not influence the conduct, which does not soften and change, and which does not govern and direct the affections. It is not meant to assert, that all is vain, which does not immediately elevate the Christian to the perfect standard of Christian piety; but that all is so which does not exert a ruling, an increasing influence over the conduct, the heart, and the temper. Where the heart is not humbled, where sin is not hated, Christ is professed in vain. Where, instead of humility, pride maintains its sway; where, instead of gentleness and meekness being followed, passion and rage still mark as unchanged the temper; where a misplaced word, or a slighting expression or look is sufficient to occasion a storm of anger, religion is vain. Practical piety is described as connected with the "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."<sup>1</sup> But faith without its work, love without its labours, hope without patience, all are vain, and mark a vain religion.

(1) 1 Thes. i. 3.

Where religion is not the first thing, the soul's chief concern, there is every reason to apprehend it is a vain religion. 'The Lord said to some of old, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."<sup>1</sup> "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."<sup>2</sup> His admonition to all is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."<sup>3</sup> Many persons who are all life, vigour and activity, where worldly interests are concerned, appear slothfulness itself, where religious interests are at stake. Hence they are eager for worldly prosperity, but not eager for spiritual improvement; attentive to the state of their worldly affairs, but not attentive to the state of their hearts. They profess to renounce all for Christ, yet wilfully offend him, sooner than endure worldly inconvenience or loss. They dread the displeasure of an employer or a customer, more than his displeasure. They are at heart more anxious for the world's favour than for the favour of God. They profess to take the life to come, as their inheritance, but in reality evidently regard this world as their chief portion

(1) Rev. iii. 1, 2.

(2) Rev. iii. 15—17.

(3) Matt. vi. 33.

Instead of making every thing bend to religion, religion must bend to the world, and eternal interests be hazarded if temporal ones are to be secured. Alas, their religion is vain.

Religion is vain where its professed possessors slight those privileges and means, which are designed to promote its influence and are indifferent to the universality of its claims. Love to communion with God in private, distinguishes true piety. Love to his public ordinances has ever marked his people. David said, "As for me I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God; for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord: in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> To Christians it is said, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."<sup>2</sup> Love to the word of God distinguishes the pious soul. The Psalmist describes its instructions, as "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb."<sup>3</sup> And of the man who is truly

(1) Psalm, lv. 16. 17. Psalm, v. 2, 3. Psalm, xxvi. 8. Psalm. cxxii. 1

(2) Heb. x. 24, 25. (3) Psalm, xix. 10.

blessed it is declared, "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."<sup>1</sup>

Where, instead of such dispositions, there is little value for communion with God, and private prayer is disregarded or lightly valued, there is every reason to apprehend a state of spiritual and eternal death. Entire neglect of prayer is a sure token of spiritual death. The prayerless in effect say, "We have nothing to do with God. We desire no intercourse with him;" and none is maintained. They are atheists in practice, and if professedly Christians, worse, in one view, than atheists; as they believe in God and neglect him. Neglect of prayer, while marking spiritual death, renders the wretched and guilty neglectors, like devils and the damned; they never pray; and makes them Satan's property. As well might we expect to find piety in hell as in a prayerless heart. They who profess religion, but who pay little regard to prayer, who for every trifle slight public worship, and neglect the blessed book of God, clearly prove, that even their religion is vain. And as religion is designed to subdue and transform the whole man, that which allows of sin, if not very open and flagrant, and pays little attention to growing holiness, is a mere delusion, a profession without possession, a form without life.

4. Life without religion is a dreary blank. The beasts, the birds, the reptiles, answer the end of

1) Psalm, i. 2, 3.

their existence ; but man, without piety, had better never have been born. This is as really the case, where formality is put in the place of heartfelt piety, and where religion is vain, as where there is no appearance or profession whatever. Many are the evils inseparably connected with an insufficient religion.

A vain religion imparts no saving blessings. It gives no title to an interest in the Saviour's merits ; and is vain as to restoring to man the divine likeness which he has lost. Religion is designed to impress on a fallen immortal the likeness of his holy Creator ; to infuse into his nature those dispositions and principles, which may grow beneath the inclement sky of this world ; but which will ripen to full perfection, among the blessed, beneath the brighter skies of heaven. Religion is designed to qualify its possessors to associate with angels and the spirits of the just, by making them partakers of the same principles, and feelings, love, and hatred, and character as they. But a vain religion answers none of these designs. It leaves the sinner where it found him, estranged from God, and perishing in sin ; though he may have put on a mask of piety, which open sinners do not wear.

The possessor of a vain religion, if not a wilful hypocrite, is a miserable self-deceiver. Has he a hope, it is a false one. He thinks his state better than that of mere worldly men around him. In this he deceives himself ; for it is really no better. His sins are as much upon him, as theirs on them. His heart is as truly unchanged ; and as really estranged from God. He has no more interest in the Father's favour, in the love

of the Son, and in the blessings of eternal life. than is possessed by more profligate sinners. Heaven is no more his than theirs; and hell is no more escaped by him than by them. Unhappy creature! he disregards the most solemn warnings, for he thinks they are meant for others, not for himself; and, probably, may never wake to a knowledge of his real character and situation, till he wakes amidst the horrors of eternal ruin.

5. In some views a vain religion is the most dreadful of evils. If earthly hopes prove fallacious, if friends betray, if health is vain, and prospects deceitful, religion still might enrich and bless you; and might give you brighter prospects, and unfailing friends, and hopes in which there is no deception, and a country where the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick." But if your religion is vain, even your religion, that should be the source of all your blessings, even this vain, then what shall do you good!

In one view a vain religion is worse than none at all. It deceives the soul; and renders it a more certain and easy prey for its infernal foe. The religion of the formalist is not vain, as to accomplishing Satan's purposes. These it effectually promotes. It blinds the deathless spirit till its day of grace is over. Lulls it asleep in false security and sin, till in eternity it awakes, as from a pleasing and delusive dream, to utter misery; and in a moment feels itself in a state of unpardoned guilt and hopeless wretchedness. Behold such an unhappy self-deceiver. He passes through life deluded; talks of a Saviour in whom he has no interest, and heaven in which he has no part. At length he dies, and dies de-

luded. He enters eternity, and the delusion vanishes. Sudden as the lightning from the blackest cloud, and more terrific than the thunders of the most appalling tempest, the conviction darts upon him, that he has lived and died deceived; and he is overwhelmed with storms of misery and mountainous billows of woe. O reader, guard against the delusions of a vain religion! guard against a formal profession of piety! To treat with comparative indifference what a Saviour was born and died to bestow, and what martyred millions have laid down life to secure, is a folly past expression. Consider the Saviour's solemn and decisive language: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."<sup>1</sup>

"Without me ye can do nothing;"<sup>2</sup> absolutely nothing that shall benefit your soul, unless you cordially receive him, and in his strength live to God. Formality cannot long avail you any thing. It cannot truly comfort you here. It cannot pass the Judge's bar. It cannot secure you a place in heaven. It cannot save you from the depths of hell. It can indeed prevent your enjoying any of the blessings the Saviour died to purchase. It can delude you worse than even a profligate is deluded; but no one good can it ever accomplish for you. Nothing can supply the place of a vital union with Christ, and of an interest in him. No knowledge, no morality, no freedom from grosser crimes, no serious desires, no occasional convictions, no outward forms, will prove a substitute for Him. You can have

(1) John, vi. 53.

(2) John, xv. 5.

no life, till you are brought to the Lord Jesus as a humble penitent believer. Till then you will be dead as the most dead; unpardoned as the most unpardoned; perishing as the most perishing; and condemned as really as the most condemned. "How long," then, "halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."<sup>1</sup>

6. While a vain religion is as useless and mischievous, as has now been represented; so let it be impressed upon your heart, that indecision is equally ruinous. Where God and religion are concerned, there is no neutrality. In a thousand cases of difference and dissention you might say, "I am of neither side;" but not so here. If you are not with Christ, you are in his view against him.<sup>2</sup> If not a friend, you are an enemy. If not pardoned, you are condemned. If not lovely in God's sight, you are hateful. If not saved, you are lost. If not travelling to heaven, you are doomed to hell. There is no neutral ground between the armies of the Prince of Light and the prince of darkness. There is no middle state. This is abundantly evident from the uniform language of the scriptures. The Lord Jesus speaks of two ways, and *but* two, in one or the other of which all mankind are travelling:<sup>3</sup> one broad and crowded, but leading to destruction; the other narrow and unfrequented, but conducting the few travellers in it to eternal life. In figurative language he represents mankind as divided into the tares and the wheat;<sup>4</sup> compares them to noxious weeds or to useful grain, yet

(1) 1 Kings, xviii. 21. (2) Matt. xii. 30. (3) Matt. vii. 13, 14.

(4) Matt. xiii. 25.

speaks of two divisions, and but two. Elsewhere the family of man is described as divided into the children of the kingdom and of the wicked one, of God or of the devil.<sup>1</sup> The truly pious are quickened or made alive by God, and the rest of mankind are the children of wrath.<sup>2</sup> True Christians are of God, while the whole world lieth in wickedness.<sup>3</sup> The uniform language of scripture represents mankind as divided into the two classes of the righteous and the unrighteous. All are dead, or living to Christ; are in a state of death, or have passed into life; are forgiven, or unforgiven; converted, or unconverted; consequently, blessed, or cursed; ready for heaven, or ready for hell. In conformity with these representations, no middle class appears at the judgment bar; all are righteous, or unrighteous; at the Judge's right hand, or his left; and in eternity no middle state is apparent, heaven or hell will become the abode of every child of man.

7. Among the two immense bodies into which the scriptures thus divide mankind, there may be, and are, many varieties, though in what decides their state there is a pleasing or dreadful uniformity. Life may be weak, as it is in an infant; but it is still life, and, unless extinguished, will soon manifest its reality by its increasing vigour. Death may seem lovely, as in the corpse that yet retains the bloom of health; but it is still death, and soon will evidence its fatal reign. Among the children of God are babes, and young men, and fathers in Christ.<sup>4</sup> Some bear of the fruits of holiness thirty, some sixty, and

(1) Matt. xiii. 3—8. 1 John, iii. 10. (2) Eph. ii. 1, 2. (3) 1 John, v. 19.

(4) 1 John, ii. 12, &c.

some a hundred fold.<sup>1</sup> Among the crowds that throng the downward way, some are disgusting profligates; others scoffing infidels; others only careless of religion; others amiable, moral, and kind; others almost persuaded to be Christians, yet still withholding their hearts from God.

Among these are many varieties. Some seek religion for a time, and then desist from the pursuit of its blessings. Others try to unite the love of Christ and of the world. Many never at heart sacrifice all things for him; and so, if they even profess religion, only stand till the day of trial comes. A new and more profitable, though irreligious situation, or an ungodly wife or husband, has charms sufficient to draw them aside. Many, like the young ruler, ask how they may attain eternal life; but dislike a path so narrow, and "choose the way that's wide, and strive to think it right." Many halt between the world and Christ, like Israel when Elijah said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."<sup>2</sup> Such a state is a state of ruin. Those who act thus, are not persons that are at rest in sin; such are not halting between two opinions, but are the willing slaves of an infernal master. But the description represents those who are, as to religion, wavering and irresolute, sometimes one thing, and sometimes the other. Now earnest, then negligent. Now attentive to religious ordinances, then trifling with them. Now at God's house, then at that of Satan. A Christian with Christians, and a worldling with the world.

8. The Lord Jesus solemnly declares, "No

(1) Matt. xiii. 23.

(2) 1 Kings, xviii. 31

man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”<sup>1</sup> He confirms this solemn truth in words to which reference has recently been made. “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” He that is not my *decided friend*, I consider as my *decided foe* ; and he that does not help, injures my cause. Thus the Lord Jesus leaves you no alternative between decision and rebellion. Do you say, “This is hard. I would not be his enemy ; but at heart to sacrifice all for him, and to take up my cross and follow him, is more than I am willing to do ;” it were easy to show that this is not hard ; that what he requires is just and reasonable ; that only the exceeding wickedness of the heart would make you wish to offer less : but hard or not, *so it is*. His judgment will decide your eternal state ; and he has already decided, “He that is not with me is against me.” There is no alternative, but unconditional submission to him, or continued rebellion against him : between these make your choice.

Examine your condition. Since there is no middle way, no middle state, you are, at this moment, either condemned or uncondemned ; either not forgiven or forgiven ; either lost or saved. Have you reason to fear that the former is your lot ? O, pray for grace at once to cast yourself at the Saviour’s feet ! for, according to the principles the Lord himself has laid down, you are his foe till you become his friend. You are

(1) Matt. vi. 24.

an enemy till you are a child. You are lost till you are saved. You are cursed till you are blessed. You have all blessings in his love and favour, or all curses in impenitence and indecision. You are a rebel till you receive Christ. There may be some dispositions to penitence in your breast; there may be some desires after religion; there may be some esteem for the Lord Jesus; but still you are a rebel, till you receive him as your Lord and your all. A country rebels against the most benevolent of Monarchs. The King sends his Son with overtures of mercy. This exalted Messenger of his Father's love, invites and entreats these rebels to submit, and to receive mercy and pardon. Part of them scorn his offers and himself. Part of them persist in obstinate rebellion: but a part waver; think of the mercy proffered; feel half disposed to yield; at times advance, as if going to cast themselves at the prince's feet; seem ready to throw down their arms; do all but yield. Yet they are rebels still, as truly as their more obstinate companions. At length some of them throw down their arms; cast themselves at their injured Sovereign's feet; yield, and welcome his mercy. Till that moment they were rebels. From that moment they are rebels no longer. — The application is easy. Thus many sinners act. They listen to the gospel; profess to venerate its Author; seem to advance almost to his mercy-seat, and to his bleeding cross. They appear ready to cast themselves at his feet, yet do not quite submit. Alas, they are enemies still! enemies while halting! while wavering! while delaying! and never do they become children, till they, in effect, cast themselves at his

feet with, "Lord, save or I perish! Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!"

9. The soul is as much ruined by indecision, or by trifling with Christ, as by open hostility. The gospel is really made light of, where it is not the object of our first and chief concern; and Christ is rejected as really by the trifler as the infidel. Suppose a number of persons to be afflicted with some dreadful plague. A physician prescribes for them, and proffers a medicine of infallible efficacy. Some of the sufferers reject the medicine and call it poison. Others extol its virtues, but never take it. Where in the end is the difference? and where, at length, the difference between the infidel who rejects the gospel, and the undecided who neglects to embrace the great salvation? A stranger bent on a benevolent errand, goes through a village, and calls at every dwelling. The inhabitant of one house blusters at him for knocking at his door, and dismisses him with savage ferocity. Another, before he can hear his errand, shuts the door in his face. A third receives him cordially; commends his benevolent intentions; extols and admires his disinterestedness; but takes no notice of his message. Where, as to benefit from the stranger's message, in the end, is the difference between these seemingly different persons? and where, at last, between the scoffer or blasphemer, and the undecided? They all in fact reject Christ, though the latter do so in a softer manner than the former.

10. Consider, then, I beseech you, that a precious and great salvation is set before you in the gospel: that an almighty and infinitely excellent

Saviour claims your heart, and all you have and are. Never forget that there is no alternative between being his from the heart, or his in no degree ; that there is no alternative here between religion or more aggravated guilt ; and hereafter between heaven and deeper ruin, than would have been your lot if the gospel had never reached you. They that will not lead a life of holiness, must lead a life of sin ; and they that will not be God's children, must be the devil's slaves. If hostility were necessary to deprive you of Christ, you might, though undecided, hope for escape. If open enmity were requisite to undo you, you might plead, "I abhor open enmity against such infinite excellence." But only neglect the Saviour, only obey not the gospel, and you are undone. This will kill your soul like famine, that kills by starvation, as effectually as the sword that kills by piercing its victim's heart. This indecision will keep you utterly poor, and destitute of all spiritual blessings. This will make you helpless, guilty, condemned, like infidels in portion. This will cause you to pass a few years of sin as a rebel against infinite goodness, and this will render you a lost soul through eternal ages of despair. Then for ever and ever will you have to utter the tormenting lamentation, "I chose this sorrow when I would not go to Christ for life ; when I would waver between the world and him." Unhappy creature, how much better would it have been for you never to have been born ! how much better to have been a dog, or a serpent, or a toad, or the most contemptible insect, or the most disgusting reptile, than to possess immortal powers, and

become a lost soul through wicked neglect of an all-compassionate Saviour!

If you *could* go out of the world as you came into it, trifling and indecision might have some excuse, but this is impossible. As here there is no alternative presented to you, but religion or irreligion, so you must die, a happy saint or an undone sinner. And you must go hence, to become as happy as angels, or more wretched than guilty and miserable Sodom. You must rise to the happiest heaven, or sink to the deepest and most dismal hell. If you would follow what would deceive you, continue undecided and follow the world. If you would be left helpless in affliction, and in death, and in eternity, still trifle with Christ and follow the world. If you would be like the wretched and despairing when dying, then follow the world, and still refuse to surrender yourself to the Saviour. And if you would have your portion with the damned, neglect the Saviour for a little longer, and all will be accomplished, and the direful deed will be done. But if you would have peace with God; if you would possess well-founded hope; if you would be cheered with immortal prospects; if you would have an everlasting arm placed beneath your dying pillow; if you would meet the welcome, "Come in, thou blessed;" if you would be a child of God for ever — flee to the Saviour. At whatever loss flee to the Saviour. Whoever would hinder you go to the Saviour, and commit your soul, your heart, your all, to him, to be truly and for ever his. Would companions or friends endeavour to hinder you, had you not better renounce their friendship, than give up

eternal good? Had you not better go without them to heaven, than with them to hell? Had you not better, even if you were houseless and friendless, and without raiment and food, be safe in Christ, and be guided by him to the paradise of God, than halt or waver, though in the midst of worldly enjoyment, and go with the careless and undecided to Satan's dark abode? — The God of mercy guide you right!

## CHAPTER VI.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO EMBRACE RELIGION, FURNISHED BY THE GRACE EXHIBITED IN THE GOSPEL.

1. AMPLE encouragement to seek the blessings of heartfelt piety, is presented in the work effected by the blessed Son of God; and in the displays of heavenly love manifested in him. Did we only know that man is lost and guilty, and were it impossible to point out a refuge for the fallen and condemned, it would be useless to contemplate the guilt for which no pardon could be found, and the wretchedness for which no remedy could be discovered. But, glory to God in the highest! there is a remedy, for there is a Saviour.

The salvation exhibited in the gospel is infinitely precious; it is, in fact, a complication of blessings, every one of which is of invaluable and eternal worth.

2. Its primary blessing, or that which leads to all the rest, is the complete forgiveness of sin. This forgiveness consists in the eternal God no

longer charging sin to the sinner's account. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute (or reckon) sin."

A man owes me a debt. I cancel it. I have now no charge against him. Thus the blessed God acts when he pardons a transgressor. He cancels the sinner's debt. Pardon does not, in fact, make the sinner no sinner; but it renders him as free from the charge of transgression as if he had never sinned. This forgiveness is most full, reaching to every offence; and it is most free, without money and without price. Many expressive images are employed in the scriptures, to represent the completeness of forgiveness. It is said, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."<sup>1</sup> Forgiven sin is thus removed and hidden, as if buried for ever in the depths of the unfathomable ocean. God is represented as removing sin to the greatest possible distance from the soul. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."<sup>2</sup> In the most expressive of images it is said by God himself, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."<sup>3</sup> Snow just fallen from the clouds is whiteness itself, unsullied whiteness; it presents to view only one sheet of dazzling white. Thus completely pardoning mercy blots out transgression, and renders the pardoned soul as free from the charge of sin, as the newly-fallen snow from every darkening stain.

Where sin is thus forgiven, the *reign of sin is at an end*. Sin may harass the soul, and temptation distress it; but sin no longer governs it,

(1) Micah, vii. 19. (2) Psalm, ciii. 12. (3) Isaiah, i. 18.

like a mighty tyrant, driving at his pleasure his crouching slave. "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."<sup>1</sup>

3. Consequent on deliverance from the load of guilt, is deliverance from its awful doom. The soul is delivered from the curse of the law it had broken. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."<sup>2</sup> It is no longer in a state of condemnation. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."<sup>3</sup> No condemnation; none whatever. None for past transgressions, and none for present but lamented unworthiness. *No* condemnation: every evil consequence of sin, as far as the soul is concerned, is removed; and as no guilt lies unpardoned upon it, so no evil threatens it in time or eternity. The pardoned penitent is declared to be justified.<sup>4</sup> In other words, is made just or righteous; has sin no more charged to him, than if he had never committed it; and is regarded by God with the same favour, as if he had been a perfectly innocent being.

4. The partaker of salvation, being thus blessed, enjoys the divine favour, and "has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"<sup>5</sup> and is blest by the eternal Father's love.<sup>6</sup> Through

(1) Rom. vi. 12. 14. 22.

(2) Gal. iii. 13.

(3) Rom. viii. 1.

(4) Luke, xviii. 14. Rom. iii. 24. v. 1.

(5) Rom. v. 1.

(6) John, xvi. 27.

wonderful condescension on the part of God, the penitent believer is numbered with his children. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."<sup>1</sup> "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."<sup>2</sup>

These happy persons have the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour; who delivers them from the wrath to come. He is their Shepherd; the chief Shepherd; the good Shepherd; and an Advocate; who ever lives to intercede for them.<sup>3</sup> The Spirit of God becomes their helper; and the source of love, and joy, and peace to their souls.<sup>4</sup> Angels are ministering spirits to every heir of salvation;<sup>5</sup> and death, with all its solemnities, to them will be gain. When absent from the body they are present with the Lord.<sup>6</sup> At length the end of all things will arrive, and salvation begun when guilt was taken away, will be perfected by the glories of the resurrection; by the solemn decisions and honours of the judgment day; and by the blessedness of eternal life.<sup>7</sup>

5. This salvation, in itself so rich in value, derives additional value from the fact, that it is an eternal salvation, an eternal redemption. Look down in your imagination to the pit of hell. Behold its horrors — its darkness; its despair; its torments; the worm that never dieth; and the fire that never shall be quenched; and consider, that as a sinner you deserved it all, and

(1) John, iii. 1. (2) Rom. viii. 16, 17. (3) 1 Thess i. 10. Tit. ii. 1, 2. Heb. v. 9. John, x. 11. 1 Peter, v. 5. Rom. viii. 34. 1 John, ii. 2, &c.

(4) John, xiv. 16. xvi. 7. Rom. v. 5. viii. 11. xv. 13, &c. &c.

(5) Heb. i. 14. (6) Phil. i. 21, 23. 2 Cor. v. 8. (7) 1 Cor. xv.

Phil. ii. 21. Matt. xxv. 34. Rev. xxi.

were exposed to it all. Then lift up your thoughts to the heavenly world. Think of life without death; peace without pain; holiness and happiness without defect. Now suppose every moment of your life extended to ten thousand ages; that you had as many times ten thousand ages to live, as you have lived moments. Think of all these ages spent under God's frown, and transgression's load, amidst the horrors and despair of damnation. How awful the ruin! Think of a deliverance thus lasting, and of all these ages passed in the light and holiness and blessedness of heaven. How precious a salvation! yet you have not thought of eternal salvation. As many times ten thousand ages as there have been moments in your life, are but the twinkling of an eye compared to eternal salvation! O, think of this! Think and feel, that if you live neglectful of salvation, more than ten thousand ages of despair and horror, of guilt and gloom, await you for every sinful moment spent on earth; and that if you enjoy its blessings, more than ten thousand centuries of happiness and rest, of joy and love, await you in the heavenly world, for every moment spent in the Redeemer's service here. How precious is such a salvation!

6. How can man be just with God? How become an heir of heaven? How can such a good be obtained for a ruined and miserable sinner? Many ways for obtaining peace with God, have been devised by the blind and deluded children of men. Offerings and forms, and acts of austerity and penance, have formed the refuge, the ruinous refuge of many. Others have rested on penitence and charity; but penitence cannot

wash away innumerable transgressions ; and charity to man can never compensate for ingratitude and rebellion against God. Others have relied on human works, or freedom from grosser transgressions, and attention to some social duties, as expressed in the spirit of one of old. " I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all I possess."<sup>1</sup>

If you believe some previous statements from the divine word, you must be sensible that all these are entirely insufficient, and cannot make you a partaker of the salvation just described. While the scriptures represent them all as refuges of lies, that the overwhelming flood of divine wrath will shortly sweep away, that blessed book declares, that salvation was obtained for men, by the merits, sufferings, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He "obtained eternal redemption for us."<sup>2</sup>

7. To accomplish this infinitely benevolent object, he came into this world, and the Son of God, appeared on earth as the Son of man. He, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."<sup>3</sup> He was born at Bethlehem. The infidel and would-be philosopher, scoff at the idea of God incarnate. But what right have they to scoff ; that they should

(1) Luke, xviii. 11.

(2) Heb. ix. 12. See also x. 12. 19.

1 Peter, i. 18. Dan. ix. 24.

Is. i. 3, &c. &c.

(3) Phil. ii. 6-8.

assert that to be absurd and impossible which God himself asserts actually to have taken place?

Ask such men, "What is matter?" They cannot tell you. "What is spirit?" They know nothing about it. "What binds the parts of matter together?" They cannot tell. What is their own body? What the soul? What the nature of the union of the two? Of all this, and of the plainest facts in nature, let them search as far as man can go, they know *nothing*; and yet they know so much about God, as to contradict what he declares; or to disbelieve the most precious truths of his word, because of their incomprehensible nature. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit: there is more hope of a fool than of him."<sup>1</sup> Let the infidel scoff then, if he will, in the greatness of his folly, but receive it as the most precious of truths, that He who "was with God, and was God,"<sup>2</sup> became for you a man of sorrows; and then atoned for sin and iniquity. He bore the curse for us. The Father "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."<sup>3</sup>

8. Contemplate the unbounded love that such a plan of heavenly grace exhibits. Think of the words soon uttered but never exhausted: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>4</sup> "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."<sup>5</sup> Think of the objects of this strange compassion. Miserable men! all sinners! all dead! all rebels! some

(1) Prov. xxvi 12.

(2) John, i. 1.

(3) 2 Cor. v. 21.

(4) John, iii. 16.

(5) 1 John, iv. 14.

hardened, others heedless! Laden with mercies, and forgetful of the Giver! History tells us, that Augustus, having twice witnessed the ingratitude of one of his subjects, softened him when a captive rebel, and changed him into a friend by a third time bestowing peculiar favours on him. Thus the emperor's treacherous friend was soon won to him; but man is not so soon won to God. The Father has manifested forbearance; has uttered in his word entreaties and invitations; has borne with provocations, ingratitude, and insult; and yet is forgiving. To complete all he gave his best-beloved, the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."<sup>1</sup> He sent his Son; and thus, as it were, by one gift exhausted the treasures of infinite benevolence: for further in displaying love how could even God advance! The strange and matchless love thus manifested, he manifested also in the design he contemplated. He gave his only-begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. He would have manifested love, if he had consigned a world of rebels to non-existence; if, when indignation and wrath had been merited, he had permitted the sinner to forget his guilt and its punishment in everlasting nothingness, and rendered death, what infidels would like it to be, an eternal sleep. But such was the Father's love, he would, through the death of his Beloved, give life. And not a life like Adam's, lengthened to almost ten centuries, or ten thousand times as long, but eternal life; and delighting in the happiness of the pardoned rebels that become partakers of his salva-

(1) Heb. i. 3.

tion, he calls them to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, and will bless them with eternal freedom from sorrows and from sins. O wonderful love of God! and wonderful wickedness of infatuated man, that slights and disregards such patient and unbounded love!

9. The divine love manifested in the scheme of human redemption, was most gloriously displayed by the adorable Son of God. Though rich, he becomes poor; and says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."<sup>1</sup> He appears on earth as the babe of Bethlehem. Angels announce his birth; because of it they say, "Glory to God in the highest,"<sup>2</sup> and direct the astonished shepherds where to find the King of Glory. Where and in what state must the shepherds find him? As angels appear, with a countenance like lightning, and raiment white as snow? No: as a babe. Amidst royal pomp, for courtiers to honour and nobles to praise? Had this been the case, had he taken a monarch's throne, the love were infinite. But, no! he does not thus appear—he is a babe amidst poverty and want. The time of his sojourning below rolls on, and he says, "foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."<sup>3</sup> At length he dies, and dies not a hasty, but a lingering death; not an easy, but a tormenting death; not in a chamber surrounded by sympathizing friends, but on the cross, beset by insulting enemies; with nothing to lessen its bitterness; his friends fugitives; his enemies scoffers; gall offered him; and in that hour of his extremity, the presence of the Father, that sup-

(1) Heb. x. 9. (2) Luke, ii. 9. (3) Luke, ix. 58.

port of martyrs and of confessors, withdrawn. It were love for a friend to die for a friend ; greater love to die for a stranger ; love still more exalted to die for an enemy ; but love beyond description to die for an enemy, doomed through that enmity to die ; yet of this nature was the love of the incarnate Son of God, though love far more exalted than could possibly be manifested by one mere human being dying for another.

How many were those sins for which he died ! how ruinous ! how aggravated ! how multiplied ! On him they met ; he bears the whole load. He tasted death for us : when all were dead “ one died for all.”<sup>1</sup> He came “ that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”<sup>2</sup> He died for the sins of others ; he had none of his own. He must die, or they must die eternally ; and then he died to bring them near to God. “ Christ died for the ungodly :”<sup>3</sup> “ died for our sins :”<sup>4</sup> “ died for us :”<sup>5</sup> he “ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world :”<sup>6</sup> he is “ our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,”<sup>7</sup> and “ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”<sup>8</sup>

10. As his sufferings and their design were expressly foretold by prophets,<sup>9</sup> so they appear to have been strikingly referred to in some of the dispensations of Moses. The passover furnishes an impressive illustration of the effect of the Saviour’s sacrifice. The destroying angel was about

(1) 2 Cor. v. 14. (2) Heb. ii. 9. (3) Rom. v. 6. (4) 2 Cor. xv. 3.  
 (5) 1 Thess. v. 10. (6) Gal. i. 4. (7) Tit. ii. 14. (8) 1 Pet. iii. 18.  
 (9) David, Isaiah, Dan el, &c.

to proceed through the land of Egypt, spreading death and desolation. The paschal lamb was then slain, and its blood sprinkled on the Israelitish dwellings; and it was declared, the Lord himself would protect the inhabitants of the blood-besprinkled house from the destroyer.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Father justifies and protects the soul that flees for refuge to the atoning sacrifice of the Son. The two goats on the great day of atonement, appear to have pointed to the same sacrifice. One of them was slain, and his blood taken within the veil, to represent the Saviour's atoning sacrifice. Over the head of the other the high-priest confessed the sins of the people, and sent him away into a land not inhabited, to represent that thus the Saviour takes all sin away. Viewing him, the Christian sings,

“My faith would lay her hand  
 On that dear head of thine,  
 While, like a penitent, I stand,  
 And there confess my sin.  
 My soul looks back, to see  
 The burdens thou didst bear  
 When hanging on the cursed tree,  
 And hopes her guilt was there.”

A propitiatory sacrifice was called<sup>2</sup> *kopher*, that which *covers or hides*; for when the victim was offered, the fault, on account of which the offerer presented the sacrifice, was passed over.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the victim might be said to hide or cover the sin; to cleanse the offerer from it. Thus Christ offered himself as a sacrifice. He “was once offered to bear the sins of many;” he

(1) Exod. xii. &c.

(2) Exod. xxix. 33. Dan. ix. 9. &c.

(3) See this repeatedly declared, Leviticus, Chapters 4 and 5.

“appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”<sup>1</sup>

11. Through his sufferings sin is forgiven. In those ancient offerings there was no real virtue. The divine word declares, that it is not possible the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.<sup>2</sup> But of his sacrifice it is said, that he “by himself purged our sins;”<sup>3</sup> that “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;”<sup>4</sup> that believers are “justified by his blood;”<sup>5</sup> and that “his blood cleanseth them from all sin.”<sup>6</sup> Such is the atoning efficacy of his sacrifice. His blood cleanses from sin; from sin of all kinds; and in all cases where the soul is led to him. Precious as are his instructions, it is not these which are described as purifying the soul from sin; but his blood. Salutary as are his heavenly lessons, it is not these that heal the sinner’s wounds; but by “his stripes we are healed.”<sup>7</sup> Thus by dying he conquered death. By poverty he secured for millions immortal wealth. By sufferings purchased for millions unfading happiness. Thus he OBTAINED for man eternal redemption. In vain had the loftiest of the angelic host tried to accomplish such a triumph. It could be effected by him only who was God manifest in the flesh. He came down from heaven, and obtained eternal redemption; then re-entered heaven, like a mighty conqueror, and lives to bestow the salvation he wrought out. When he came to earth the world was perishing; but when he returned the work of infinite mercy was accomplished; and redemption was secured

(1) Heb. ix. 28. 26. &c.

(2) Heb. x. 4.

(3) Heb. i. 3.

(4) Heb. x. 14.

(5) Rom. v. 9.

(6) 1 John, i. 7.

(7) Is. liii. 5.

for all that will ever listen to the invitations of his love.

12. This salvation, which is so unutterably valuable, which was secured at so expensive a price, and which displays such incomprehensible love, is the salvation which you want, and which in the gospel is offered to you. Regard the angelic message as a message to yourself—unto you was born a Saviour Christ the Lord. You cannot save yourself; nor blot out your own sins; nor change your own heart; nor write your own name in heaven; nor snatch your soul from the pit of woe, nor raise it to eternal bliss. But here is a Saviour for you, who has come to do all this. Were you in prison, how welcome would be liberty! Were you in slavery, how welcome would be a deliverer! And how welcome should a Saviour be! A Saviour from the load of sin; and from the reign of iniquity; and from remorse of conscience; and from the wrath of God, and from the damnation of hell. How welcome should that Saviour be! A Saviour, whose love flows, as it were, in streams of blood divine; and who confers mercy most valuable and most complete. An earthly sovereign, perhaps, spares the forfeited life of a condemned criminal; but the criminal becomes an exile, and wears out life in banishment from his country and his home. But this Saviour, when he forgives, forgives entirely; and takes the pardoned criminal, and makes him a child. He gives to the pardoned soul present peace, and the love of God and the glory of eternity.

13. Were you informed of a Saviour, but had cause to doubt whether he could save you to the

uttermost, the tidings would not be so gladsome. But this Saviour is an Almighty Saviour; God manifest in the flesh. He is equal to the task he undertakes: he came to conquer death and Satan; to open heaven and people it from earth; and he will do what he has undertaken to perform. He gives promises that none but a God could give, and will fulfil every promise. On him have millions leaned, and he has never failed one that trusted in him. His love was so vast that it brought him down from heaven; and his power is so great that it raises myriads there. His works on earth manifested his power: when the dumb spake; when the deaf heard; when the blind eye saw; when tempests listened to his bidding; when diseases fled at his command; and death resigned his prey; then was his uncontrollable power displayed. His miracles of power were emblems of mightier miracles of grace and love: he has opened hearts more blind than the blindest eyes; and taught tongues, more silent than the dumb, to speak his Father's praise. There are no sins so many and so vile, that he cannot blot them out; no hearts so hard that he cannot soften them; none so unworthy that he cannot welcome them; and none so weak that he cannot help them to heaven. Are not the tidings of such a Saviour good tidings of great joy?

14. Were you told of an almighty Saviour, but had cause to doubt his compassion and grace, the tidings would not be so full of unmingled joy. But this Saviour "can have compassion," and is full of love. Go to his manger; what laid him there but love? Go to the garden of

Gethsemane; what caused him to endure its agonies and bloody sweat, but love? Go to Calvary; what made him bear his cross and die upon it, but love? Hearken to his promises: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>1</sup> Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."<sup>2</sup> What speak these but love? Again, hearken: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."<sup>3</sup> What speak these sweet words of eternal life, but love? Go to facts in his conduct: behold the penitent woman weeping at his feet; the pharisees reprove him for his notice of her; but he says, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."<sup>4</sup> What spoke that language, but love? See Canaan's widow; she entreats his aid for her afflicted daughter; he seems to turn a deaf ear, but it is that her faith may shine more conspicuous; and at length he says, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."<sup>5</sup> What spoke those words, but love? O reader, as there are no sins so vile that he cannot blot them out; so there are none so vile and aggravated, that he is unwilling to take their load away. As there is no heart too hard for him to soften; so there is none so hard, that, when his help is sought, he is unwilling to bestow it. As there are none so unworthy that he cannot help them; so there are none that he is unwilling to help. And as there are none

(1) Matt. xi. 28. (2) John, vi. 37. (3) John. v. 24.

(4) Luke, vii. 48—50.

(5) Matt. xv. 28.

so weak that his strength is not sufficient for them; so there are none so weak but he is willing to help them to death and to heaven.

15. And, reader, all these tidings are for you. If he were all that has been described, but had no blessings for you, his power, his grace, his love would be nothing to you. But all these tidings are for you, if you will listen to the voice of his mercy. Whosoever will may "take the water of life freely."<sup>1</sup> The provision that is so ample, and so suited to your wants, is provided for you. Are you poor? in him are riches. Are you wretched? in him is happiness. Guilty? with him is pardon. Destitute and friendless? with him is endless good. Are you dying? in him is life. Through his poverty you may be rich. His life was given for your life. Would you be a slave for a slave? or impoverished for a beggar? or condemned for a criminal? yet the Son of God has done this for you. What you desire, if you are a penitent, the Saviour is willing to give. You have sinned, but he has suffered. You are unworthy, but God will accept you in the beloved. An ancient Christian writer remarks, "What could cover our sins but his righteousness? By whom could we, who were wicked and ungodly, be justified but by the only Son of God? O delightful exchange! O unsearchable contrivance! O unexpected benefit! that the iniquity of many should be hid by one righteous person, and the righteousness of one justify many wicked!"

16. If you are a humble penitent believer, the

simple and plaintive language of one who is now a saint in light, may express your feelings :

- “ In that day, O grant I may  
Find mercy, Lord, with thee !  
Thro’ him who kept thy holy law,  
Without a blemish or a flaw,  
Then died upon the tree.
- “ Full of sin and guilt within,  
No worthiness I plead ;  
If thou iniquity shouldst mark,  
Dismal my prospect were and dark,  
Hopeless my case indeed.
- “ Merit none I call my own,  
But my demerits vast ;  
Think of the merits of thy Son,  
What he has suffer’d, he has done,  
And I am sav’d at last.
- “ Vile I am, but that blest Lamb  
His precious blood has spilt ;  
That blood, thou hast been pleas’d to say,  
Can wash the vilest stains away,  
And cancel all my guilt.
- “ On Him I humbly rely,  
All other help abjure ;  
Jesus, to thee alone I flee,  
This hope shall like an anchor be,  
For ever firm and sure.”

17. While the careless presume, the penitent often despond ; and that great enemy, who tempts the former to disbelieve God’s threatenings, tempts the latter to doubt his promises. If, with a humble and contrite heart fleeing from your sins, you are seeking pardoning grace, be assured, on the authority of all that is true and solemn in the gospel, that you will not seek in vain. The Sa-

viour says, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."<sup>1</sup>

Thus he declares it to be his Father's will, that he should save every one, however lost or guilty, that sees his excellency, and believes on him for salvation. To this he adds his own most gracious promise: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."<sup>2</sup> Can words be more comprehensive or more expressive? Were the divine Saviour to say, "Form such a promise as will most effectually encourage your soul. Tell me what it is, and I will bind myself to accomplish all it expresses;" would it be possible to form promises more encouraging, than that thus given, and others to which reference has been made? "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?" No sins, however great, no guilt, however aggravated, shall prevent the penitent's salvation that comes to me. Not the continuance of transgression that has been prolonged through many rebellious years, shall keep the soul from pardon which comes to me. No meanness and insignificance shall cause me to slight the penitent that seeks salvation at my hands. No present unworthiness and lamented defects, if he come to me, shall cause me to cast him out. No want of ability to make a suitable return, shall prevent my exercising my pardoning mercy. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Elsewhere it is declared, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make inter-

(1) John, vi. 30.

(2) John, vi. 37.

cession for them."<sup>1</sup> Thus you are assured, that he can save from the heaviest load of sin; for he can save to the uttermost. He can save from the greatest extremity of danger; for he can save to the uttermost. He can save amidst all the assaults or trials of time, and save with a salvation that shall extend through eternity; for he can save to the uttermost. He ever lives to save. His saving power continues from age to age, unimpaired by the flight of time; unweakened by the ingratitude with which millions neglect his great salvation. So earnest is the Lord Jesus to save, that he compares himself to a person standing and knocking at a door, and seeking admittance, that he may benefit every one who opens to him.<sup>2</sup> So earnest is he to save, that he has commissioned his servants to say, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."<sup>3</sup>

In other cases the poor beg of the rich; here he, who is possessed of infinite riches, begs the poor to be enriched by him. Subjects beg the favour of kings; but here the King of kings beseeches a rebellious worm to accept his favour. Criminals implore their judge's mercy; but here the Judge beseeches the condemned criminal to receive the mercy he delights to bestow. And can he, who condescends so much to benefit lost mankind, be unwilling to save a suppliant seeking mercy at his feet!

18. Perhaps you say, "I have wasted many years. They have all been marked with carelessness and sin. I have abused many mercies, and

(1) Heb. vii. 25.

(2) Rev. iii. 20.

(3) 2 Cor. v. 20.

grieved the Spirit of God by long-continued neglect." Allow it to be so; and if it is, you cannot be too deeply humbled for such aggravated transgressions; yet the Saviour says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" and of him it still is said, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

Perhaps you urge, "My sins are great and many." So were Israel's, yet God said to them, "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."<sup>1</sup> So were Paul's: he persecuted the church of God, yet he obtained mercy, and declared, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."<sup>2</sup> So were those of many that became members of the Corinthian church. To them it was said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you;" yet vile as they had thus been, through heavenly grace it was added, "but ye are washed, but ye

(1) Is. lv. 7

(2) 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."<sup>1</sup>

Your sins are great, but they are not greater than God's mercy. "For as heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."<sup>2</sup> Your sins are great; their vileness cannot be expressed, yet their vileness cannot exceed the infinite value of the Saviour's atoning blood. "It cleanseth from all sin."<sup>3</sup> "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."<sup>4</sup>

Your sins are great; but the longer you wait the greater they will be. Every day in which you delay to trust yourself and your all to Christ, adds to the number of your transgressions. He is a great forgiver. Whatever you are, flee to Him. Are you young or aged, poor or rich, go to Christ. Have you been moral or profligate, go to him. If you have been a swearer, and a drunkard, break off your sins, and flee to him. If you have been the most moral of mankind, you still need him, or must die. When Joseph fed the famishing inhabitants of Egypt, the general direction for all that needed food, was, "Go to Joseph;" and for all that feel themselves undone, the direction is, "Go to Christ." In his mercy there are heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, equal to all your wants. There are depths that will reach low as the depths of your guilt and danger, and reach, and save you from the edge of hell. There are

(1) 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. (2) Psalm, ciii. 11, 12. (3) 1 John, i. 7.

(4) Rom. v. 20.

heights that will advance you to unknown holiness and happiness, in the heavenly world. There are breadths that will cover all your guilt; and lengths that will flow on through the scenes of time, attend the soul to death and judgment, and then bless a whole eternity. And all this is ready to bless you. You may think with ecstasy, "I have not to obtain redemption by my feeble efforts. It is already obtained. The Lord Jesus Christ gained it for me. The work is already done. His blood can take away my sins. His righteousness can clothe my soul, and supply my want of righteousness. And, though separate from him I am nothing, and have nothing, yet in him is all I want."

19. All this good, and all the blessings of the Saviour's grace, you may have freely and fully. All the fitness requisite, is to feel your need of him, and be cordially willing to receive him, as he is set before you in the gospel. You want no previous preparation to render you less unworthy of pardoning mercy, but may come to the Saviour guilty and lost as you are. This is abundantly evident from his word. Consider the parable of the prodigal;<sup>1</sup> he went to his Father in wretchedness and misery, but at once experienced pardoning mercy. Look at the history of the publican.<sup>2</sup> When he prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" it was with that oppressive sense of his own unworthiness, that he would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven; but he went down to his house justified. Think of the case of the multitudes whose conversion is recorded in the second chapter of the

(1) Luke, xv.

(2) Luke, xviii.

Acts of the Apostles. They are charged with even the monstrous guilt of having taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain "the Lord of glory:" but when they, pierced to the heart, inquire what they must do to be saved, at once they are directed to the Saviour; and the same day which saw them broken-hearted penitents, beheld them rejoicing disciples. Consider the history of the gaoler.<sup>1</sup> He was a heathen and a persecutor. He was this over night. During the night not only were his slumbers dissipated by the earthquake, that shook the prison, but his soul was filled with alarm, from a sense of the danger of his state. With trembling and anxiety he inquires, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He is answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He welcomes the tidings; and he who in the evening was a heathen and a persecutor, and in the night a trembling penitent, before the morning dawns has received the gospel message, and rejoices in the Lord as his salvation. In all these cases there were no preparatives requisite, but a feeling of their want and guilt, and willingness to welcome the proffered mercy, by receiving the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and their Lord. Just as free is salvation to you; and to be enjoyed in the same way by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; a faith which humbly relies upon him, and includes the surrender of soul and body to him.

Conformably with these views the Lord Jesus is described as saving, and the Father as justifying, not the righteous, not the worthy, but the ungodly. "They that are whole need not a

(1) Acts, xvi.

physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”<sup>1</sup> “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”<sup>2</sup> “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”<sup>3</sup> “When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”<sup>4</sup>

20. The death of Christ cannot be to you a matter of no concern. It will prove either a blessing or a curse. He died to reconcile you to God. If you slight him, you will be banished further from God, than if he had never died. He died to deliver you from guilt and remorse, to save you from hell, and raise you to heaven. If you slight him, your guilt will be increased many fold; your remorse will be more tormenting; heaven will be for ever shut against you; and you will sink in the depths of a deeper hell. But if you welcome him, in him you will be completely saved, completely blest. You will know the Lord Jesus Christ as your all in all; and while a growing acquaintance with yourself may lead you to adopt the words of a dying saint, “God may justly condemn me for the best duty I ever did,” in him you will have peace. You may then with the happy apostle exclaim, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded

(1) Matt. ix. 12. (2) Luke, xix. 10. (3) Rom. iii. 23, 24, 28. iv. 5.  
(4) Rom. v. 10.

that he will keep what I have committed unto him against that day.<sup>1</sup>” Yes, he will keep the invaluable treasure I have trusted to his hands. I expect temptations; I expect to meet the solemnities of a dying hour—but amidst all he will keep what I have committed to him. I expect to meet him at the judgment day; to look upon a dissolving world; to see the earth burning, the heavens vanishing away; to behold the Judge upon his fiery throne, and the universe gathered before him—yet amidst all these scenes of solemnity, he will keep what I have committed unto him.

If you have become the humble disciple of the Saviour, all this invaluable good he will effect for you. Still daily cleave to him, and let him be your all in all. Manna was to Israel, for a time, their only food; so Christ must be to you the only bread of life. Here rest—he gave himself for me. Is it inquired, What plea have you to ward off condemnation? The Lord Jesus has died. Why are you forgiven? Because the Lord Jesus has died. Why do you hope for mercy? The Lord Jesus has died. Why do you expect heaven? The Lord Jesus has died, and I have fled to him. No works of righteousness have we to atone for guilt that is passed, but the Lord Jesus has died. No merits have we in present obedience, to deserve divine blessings for the future, but the Lord Jesus has died, has obeyed and suffered in our place. No offerings have we wherewith to come before the Lord, and to bow ourselves before the high God, none to present that will deserve his notice, but the Lord Jesus

(1) 2 Tim. i. 12.

has died. Here Christian hope begins, here rests, here ends—the Lord Jesus has died. Regard

“This first, this last, this midst, and without end.”

21. A hymn by the late Mr. Newton expresses with peculiar felicity the Christian's feelings and hopes :

“ One glance of thine, eternal Lord,  
Pierces all nature through ;  
And all the thoughts of ev'ry heart  
Are open to thy view !

“ Though greatly from my soul conceal'd,  
Thou seest my inward frame :  
To thee I always stand reveal'd  
Exactly as I am !

“ Since, therefore, I can hardly bear  
What in myself I see ;  
How vile, how black, must I appear,  
Most holy God, to thee !

“ But O ! my Saviour stands between,  
In garments dy'd in blood !  
'Tis he, instead of me, is seen,  
When I approach to God.

“ Thus, though a sinner, I am safe :  
He pleads before the throne  
His life, his death, in my behalf,  
And counts my sins his own.

“ What wondrous love, what mystery,  
In this appointment shine !  
My sins he takes, and gives to me  
His righteousness divine !”

22. There are some so exceedingly wicked as to pervert the truths exhibited in this chapter, to their own deeper condemnation. Because the

foundation of a sinner's hope is a crucified Saviour, and salvation is the free gift of God, they make this grace an occasion for sin; and are careless of the very holiness in which this wonderful grace should render them daily anxious to excel. If you are ever tempted to indulge such a spirit, consider that it is the vilest, the most ungrateful, the most infernal, that exists out of the pit of perdition. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The principle that denies the necessity of Christian holiness, is one of the worst of heresies; and the individual who vaunts his prospects of heaven, and his confidence in Christ, while he turns the grace of God into licentiousness, and lives the slave of sin, appears, perhaps more completely than any other human being, the dupe and the image of the wicked one.

## CHAPTER VII.

RELIGION URGED BY CONSIDERATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE GOODNESS AND CLAIMS OF THE ETERNAL GOD, AND WITH THE GUILT AND EVILS OF NEGLECTING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1. IN several former chapters the design has been, to represent to you the nature of religion; to show you, from a scriptural view of your own state, how needful its blessings are to you; and, by exhibiting the Saviour's grace, to present the encouragements that exist for seeking this great salvation. And now, reader, as addressing you on a matter of life or death, of life or death eternal, I beg your attention, while some of those

solemn motives, which should engage your heart to the Saviour and religion, are plainly set before you. If you have already happily felt their power, it may revive past salutary impressions to review them again. But if you have not, if you are to the present moment a trifler with God and your own soul, then, by all that is dear to you, be entreated to read seriously, and to consider attentively, the solemn reasons that should urge true piety, as the one thing needful, on your immediate choice. This is the most important choice that can ever demand your attention. It concerns you now, as to the state in which you must pass the remainder of your days, whether in guilt or piety, in safety or in danger; it will concern you in death, as to possessing comfort, or sinking in distress; it will concern you when entering eternity; and will eternally make a distinction in your condition, as blest and saved, or lost and accursed. The blessings of the present world you need but for a span of time; but the blessings of religion for all eternity. These blessings are needful for both worlds. In the possession of divine grace, you might be happy though destitute of earthly good. So was Lazarus, when lying, though in the depths of poverty, at the very gate of heaven. But if destitute of religion, you can have no happiness hereafter, nor be truly happy here. Other things will not supply the want of this; but, as to what is most important, this would supply the want of all things. The soul that enjoys the Saviour's favour, belongs to the same family as the angels of light; and soon will be as blessed and as happy as they.

“A Christian and an angel ; these between  
How thin the barrier ! What divides their state ?  
Perhaps a moment, or perhaps a year,  
Or if an age it is a moment still,  
A moment or eternity’s forgot.”

2. Consider to whom you are entreated to surrender yourself. To no mean possessor, no feeble Lord, no unworthy object of regard. But to God ; the great, the blessed, the eternal God ; to the God that made you ; that supports you ; that sees you ; that pities you ; that blesses you ; that would save you, or that will condemn you. To this great, and blessed, and infinitely holy Creator, you are entreated to yield yourself ; to the God that will smile and bless you, or frown and curse you ; whose love will make endless ages happy, or whose anger will make endless ages miserable ; whom you soon must meet, and with whom ere long you must have a most solemn interview. He is the God whose love renders saints and angels happy. He was the God of Abraham ; and Abraham has long been with him. He was the God of Paul ; and Paul welcomed martyrdom. The God of martyrs ; and they longed to die, that they might go to be with him. He was the God of believers now departed ; and they lived in hope and died in peace. He is the God of many that now sojourn on earth ; and they would not give up their hope in him for millions of worlds. *Shall he be your God ?* Why will you not give him your heart ? Could you enter heaven, and behold its happy inhabitants, could you then ask the angel hosts, “Whence springs your happiness ?” the answer might be, “God loves us.” Could you put the

same question to the sainted spirits of the just, the same might be the reply, "God loves us." And could you inquire, "And can he love me?" the answer might be, "He can; such is his boundless mercy! He can, he will, if you seek all your happiness in him who died for your transgressions; if you listen to the voice of his mercy, and yield yourself to God." O yield to him, and then he will love even you with an everlasting love. Then he will love you with more than parental affection;<sup>1</sup> with love that will lead him to delight in bestowing blessings upon you.<sup>2</sup> And is it not reasonable to give yourself to this blessed God? Has he not a claim on you superior to all other claimants? Has he not a right to you? Is it not a base withholding from God that which is his righteous due, and thus a wicked robbery of God, to withhold from him yourself, your body, and your soul? Is it unreasonable, to entreat you to give to God the life he gives? the affections he implants? and the powers of body and of mind which he has bestowed upon you? Can you venture to say, "It is not reasonable that I should employ in God's service the life he prolongs, the time he gives, and the mercies he imparts. It is more reasonable I should employ all these in the service of Satan, and in neglect of God, than in his service." If self-interest move you, your own interest is concerned in surrendering yourself to God. How much you need from God! how little from the world! ere long nothing but a coffin and a grave! How long you will need bless-

(1) Isaiah, xlix. 15.

(2) Luke, xii. 35.

ings from God! how short a time from the world! then yield yourself to God.

3. If you are unwilling to comply with this entreaty, think of the guilt of slighting God, and of the numberless aggravations of such guilt. If you were to give food and clothing, for a single month, to some wretched beggar, would you not expect him to cherish gratitude and love? but what has God done for you! He gave you life, and would have you spend it in his own service; and will you not? He gives you mercies, and would have you love the Giver; and will you not? He gave his Son for you, to redeem you from death and hell, and bids you come to himself, by this divine Saviour; and will you not? O wicked ingratitude! O miserable sinner! What insults you heap on God, while he sees you prefer the merest trifles, the basest pleasures, or the most degrading sins, to his service and himself! Does God deserve such treatment from you? Better slight brother or sister, husband or wife, parent or child, than merely slight your God. That neglect were vile, but this is viler. Of that neglect, perhaps, you would not be guilty; but in this have been living all your days. And, perhaps, because not openly immoral, fancying that your heart and life were good, even while you were neglecting your greatest benefactor, with wicked ingratitude, every hour of waking life. Does God deserve such treatment! God, the source of happiness! the God of grace!

O sinner, how aggravated is your guilt! aggravated by the grace, and goodness, and excellencies of your abused and neglected benefactor. God so kind, and you so ungrateful! God so

compassionate, and you so negligent of all his compassion! Christ so loving, and you so basely neglectful of his love! his exertions on your behalf so great, and your neglect of him so obstinate, and long-continued! the Eternal Spirit so kind in producing serious impressions in your heart, and you so deaf to his still small voice, so unyielding to his strivings in your breast.

4. For what is your God thus neglected? Here is another aggravation of your guilt. Not for an equal friend or benefactor, but for the world, and the flesh, and the devil. When God bids you turn, it is not to turn from what is good; but to exchange sin's base pleasures, or trifling neglect, for pure and solid delights, and serious attention to interests of eternal moment. It is not from a course of conduct that you can yourself approve; but from vile ungrateful neglect of the best friends, and of all that will long concern you. It is not from friends and benefactors, that have a righteous claim upon you; but from the pursuit of a world that is alluring you to ruin, and from the bonds of the wicked one that would sink you in the pit of despair and torment. Could a lost soul be snatched from hell, and then abuse this mercy, and neglect the God that delivered him, how vile, how horrid would be such ingratitude! O consider, you, while in your sins, are on the edge of hell! you are ready for that place of woe! you are all but there! God would deliver you, but oh, unhappy creature! you treat with base ungrateful neglect your compassionate Benefactor, and his invaluable mercy!

5. This guilt, in itself so aggravated, is aggravated still more, by all the mercies you neg-

lect or abuse; and by the love you slight; and by the means of grace you disregard; and by all that has been, and is, done to make you happy. Every careless day you live, adds to the heavy load of your transgressions. You have had another day in which to turn to God, and had it in vain. You have continued a rebel for another day. Every wasted sabbath aggravates your guilt. You have had another sabbath in which to turn to God, but had it in vain. Every warning addressed to you, every gospel sermon you hear, is another mercy lost upon you. Could they speak, your mercies might plead against you. Your sabbaths, had they voice, might say, "We shone on him, and he abused our precious hours!" Your weeks and years might complain, "We furnished him with numerous opportunities to become wise unto salvation, but he slighted them all." The sun that shines on you, the earth on which you tread, might witness against you. These indeed have not speech, but your abuse of mercies will as much be remembered as if they had. Your Christian friends may have to witness against you, and to declare how often they warned you, but warned you in vain. Your minister may have to declare that he is free from your blood, for he has not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God. And God himself will be a swift and terrible witness against you. He will remember the mercies he gave, and the invitations he addressed to you; all he did to bless you; all which you slighted and abused. O, turn, turn to God!

6. Consider also the numerous claims which the Lord Jesus Christ, the brightest image of the

Father, has upon you. If your heart is not harder than stone, and cold as mountains of eternal ice, there are considerations in his character, and work, and love, that should bow you at his feet. Every god-like excellency appears in his character; and was displayed by him, when, as God manifest in the flesh, he sojourned below. And all those excellencies and attributes he would employ for your benefit, or to strengthen your consolations in himself. Think of all this, and should you not love him? Think of the greatness of his love. Imagine affection in its strongest forms; but his was stronger. Have you friends, that love you as life itself? Christ has displayed superior love. Those friends have not left a heaven for you! They have not trod through scenes of suffering and death on your account! Love you as much as they may, they have worn for you no crowns of thorns, and borne no cross of misery. They have left no throne, to raise you from the depths of woe, and laid down no life to ransom yours; but the blessed Son of God has done all this! He came from heaven to earth, to raise you from earth to heaven. He left his starry throne, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that he might give life to you. He agonized in Gethsemane, and endured the crown of thorns, that he might raise you, an undone child of man, to glory, honour, and immortality. He died on a cross of dishonour and misery, that he might raise you from death to life; and from condemnation to salvation; and from ruin to happiness; and from the deep debasement of sin to a throne of honour eternal in the heavens.

All this, reader, he has done as really for you, as if there were not another sinner that needed such stupendous mercy. And should you not yield your heart and your all to him? should you not love him with supreme and never-dying regard? Will you not, when none else can vie with him? Had some other friend done as much, or almost as much for you, had some other benefactor laid you under equal, or almost equal obligations, the guilt of neglect would be less atrocious. You might slight him then without such certain ruin, and without such vile ingratitude. If some other Saviour could say, "For you I left a heavenly throne; I stooped to deepest poverty on your account; I humbled myself, and became for you obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and for you I died: be mine" — if thus conflicting claims were made upon you, you might then slight the Lord Jesus, and give yourself to that other Saviour. But you know this is not, cannot be, the case; and will you not be his?

7. Think of the good which this divine Saviour would bestow upon you: as he humbled himself and died for you, so he would bless and save you. Think of your poverty; he would enrich you. Think of your guilt; he would cleanse you. Think of the pit of despair from which he would snatch you. Think of the numerous mercies he would bestow upon you. Compared with him, your dearest and best friends are helpless benefactors, and miserable comforters. If you have friends so affectionate, as to be willing even to sacrifice life itself for you, what are they to him? You have sins; can they forgive them? Ah no! You have a corrupt heart;

can they renew that heart, and fashion it afresh? No, never! You are a feeble mortal; can they support you amidst a thousand snares and trials? They cannot. You have to languish in sickness and pain; can they brighten the gloom of a sick chamber, and fill it with celestial peace? Ah no! You have to die; can they cheer your departing spirit, and give it an abundant entrance into an everlasting kingdom? Ah no! You have to be judged; can they crown you with approbation, and welcome you to glory? Ah no! With you they must stand before the same solemn bar, blessed or cursed, as they have regarded or slighted him. But have you sins; this divine Saviour can take the whole load away, so that his Father's eye shall not see one unforgiven blemish in your character, or stain upon your soul. Have you a sinful heart; he can change the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. Have you to pass through, perhaps, years of snares and trials; he can guard you from every snare, and support you in every trial; he can do this, till time, and snares, and trials end together. Have you to languish in sickness and suffering; he can dissipate the gloom of suffering; can make sickness better than health, and even pain than ease. Have you to die; he can cheer your departing spirit, and can infuse strong consolation into your otherwise sinking soul. He can uphold you when flesh and heart are failing together; he can receive your departing spirit; he can present it faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. He can say, "Father, this spirit is mine; receive it into the mansions thy love has prepared." And when mil-

lions tremble at his bar, and all nations are gathered there, he can say, "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world." O reader! the Lord Jesus Christ can do all this for you, and none beside can do it; and will you not yield yourself to him? Should not you, who love earthly friends, love this infinitely greater Benefactor. Not only is he *able* to do all this, but if you become his he *will* do it all. Multitudes that no man can number, have already experienced in life, in death, and in heaven, his care. Behold these happy companies, as described to you by an inspired pen: "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."<sup>1</sup>

8. O, could you view that blessed assembly;

(1) Rev. vii. 9. 14, &c.

could you see countless thousands happy in their heavenly home; could you behold the Son of God, crowned with celestial glory, and hear him then inviting others to the realms of rest, and saying, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" would you then not desire to listen to his voice, and to be one of that happy multitude? Could you, as successive years roll on, and as new pilgrims pass from earth to heaven, behold this divine Saviour exerting for each his power and his care; could you see him supporting the dying, and welcoming the departing spirits of the just—would you not then yield yourself to him? Could you see him, as he will be seen at another day, bestowing the crown of life on every one that is faithful unto death—would you not then receive him? These things you cannot see now, but if you become his disciple, will see and know hereafter. If on the other hand you slight him and his salvation, how, when too late, will you covet the blessings you slight! How you will wish for an interest in him as your shepherd! How you will desire to be welcomed by him in the moment of death! and when you meet your God, what would you give for him then to say, "This soul is mine!" And when you see him on his judgment throne, with what inexpressible earnestness will you wish to meet the gracious welcome, that awaits his humblest followers! Will you then love him? Will you be his? Inquire of the dying the worth of his love. Ask the dead, and how would they describe its value! No words can utter their sense of its importance.

9. If you are made a happy partaker of the blessings of the Saviour's grace, this will prepare you for every event. The soul then possesses pardon, peace, happiness; God as its portion, and heaven as its home. Life need no longer retain its charm, nor death its terror. You need not fear pain, nor sickness, nor death, nor judgment, nor Satan, nor eternal scenes. You may welcome your departing hour, and greeting angels and everlasting realities. The blessed apostle counted all things loss, that he might win Christ. If Christ is won by you, you are rich in poverty, and blessed in affliction; will ere long be a conqueror in death, and in a few short years, at most, an inhabitant of heaven. Eternal blessings await you there; and there eternal friends are ready to receive you. Had you worldly prosperity, this might leave you. Had you only worldly friends, the dearest and the best, they must die; but if you have the Saviour as your friend, the nearest will he be when others are most remote; and though you must die alone the Lord will deliver you from every evil work, and will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom. And are you then his? or will you be so?

His love is everlasting love. As to this world, the dearest ties are quickly broken. You may soon have to utter the lamentation, "My brother or my sister, my parent or my child, my wife or my husband, is dead. The heart that was never cold before, is frozen by the cold of death;" but never would you have to say, "The Saviour's heart is cold, his hand has lost its power to bless." Rather, if his disciple, you might triumphantly exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

10. Thus all that man deems excellent, is exceeded in the Saviour and in his salvation. Here are better friends than this world ever gave, and friends whose love entails no disappointment, and dreads no end. Here is better liberty and better wealth, than the liberty or the wealth for which millions have laboured or died. They who yield to him are infinite gainers; and will you not be his? should you not love him? Can you, will you, practically, though not in profession, prefer Satan to him? When you are invited to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are invited not to an uninterested spectator of your way, but to the kindest of Friends; not to a feeble benefactor, but to the Giver of eternal good; not to one to whom you are not indebted, but to a Saviour who has every solemn claim upon you; not to one whose favour will always be to you an indifferent matter, but to Him whose favour will soon appear of such value, that if possessed, worlds would not buy it from you; and if wanted, you would, did you possess them, give worlds to gain it. Think too, you are not now invited to a friend, who will for ever wait:

(1) Rom. viii. 35, &c.

there are limits to his patience and mercy. If you delay, he may swear in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest. Are you then willing to be his? Will you be so? Should you not love him? Will you consecrate yourself to this Lord of glory, who clothed in love, and possessed of eternal treasures, would guide you in life, cheer you in death, and conduct you to heaven? O reader, what is your choice?

11. Notwithstanding the excellencies of the divine Saviour are so great, and the blessings of his salvation so precious, no sin is more common than neglect of him. Many, who may read the preceding pages, when they reach this will, it is to be feared, be still neglectors of the all-compassionate and gracious Son of God. Perhaps you are one of this number; if so, be entreated to meditate on the guilt and folly of your conduct. The Lord Jesus in two parables represents the sin of neglecting himself and his salvation as the most common of sins. Describing the conduct of mankind, in reference to the message of heavenly mercy, he says, "They made light of it;"<sup>1</sup> "they all with one consent began to make excuse."<sup>2</sup> This sinful neglect is found among all classes, and all characters but one; the class composed of his devoted disciples. Some sins are confined to profligates; but not this. Of this the moral are as guilty as the profligate. Some sins are those of youth, others of age; but this is the sin of both. Some sins are the sins of poverty, others of wealth; but of this the rich and the poor are equally guilty. Some sins are the sins of the openly wicked, of the sabbath-breaking and pro-

(1) Matt. xxii. 5.

(2) Luke, xiv. 18.

profane part of mankind ; but this is the sin of millions that frequent the house of God, as well as of millions that neglect that sacred place. This is the sin of multitudes that avoid profaneness, as well as of the openly profane. Open crimes kill their thousands, but neglect of Christ kills its ten thousands. No question is more solemn than, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"<sup>1</sup>

12. But when is salvation neglected? This precious boon is neglected when it is not earnestly and perseveringly pursued. "Strive," said the Lord, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."<sup>2</sup>—It is neglected when it is not the subject of our first and chief concern: "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness."<sup>3</sup>—Salvation is neglected when worldly concerns form an excuse for trifling with the interests of the deathless soul. Thus the Lord Jesus describes neglectors as acting: "They went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandize."—The Lord Jesus is neglected when he is not loved and valued more than every friend, and when, as far as the preference of the heart is concerned, all is not sacrificed for him: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."<sup>4</sup>—Neglect was the guilt of Capernaum, which exposed them to denunciations of awful

(1) Heb. ii. 3. (2) Luke, xiii. 24. (3) Matt. vi. 33. (4) Luke, xiv 33.

woe: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."<sup>1</sup> The Saviour was not opposed and persecuted in Capernaum. We do not read of his fleeing thence, or being driven by violence away. But neglect was their sin. They heard; they were desirous of hearing the gracious words that dropped from his lips:<sup>2</sup> but they profited not. They embraced not the great salvation. They listened to his warnings, his threatenings, and his promises, and thronged to hear them; but heeded them not. Hence, no effect remained. How often, alas! is this the case. The gospel is heard, but not embraced. The swearer hears it, and is still a swearer; the drunkard, and is still a drunkard. The sabbath-breaker listens, but continues a sabbath-breaker: the covetous preserves his avarice: the worldly pursues his vanities: the careless young man and the trifling young woman continue careless and trifling, and the great salvation is thus neglected.

13. O reader, how little can you feel aright the guilt of slighting such a gospel and such a Saviour! The gospel exhibits a plan devised by the Eternal Father, and executed by the Son in human nature, to bestow the richest blessings upon lost mankind. A scheme of mercy devised by an Almighty Judge, to save a ruined malefactor; by the King Eternal, to redeem a wretched rebel:

(1) Matt. xi. 23, 24.

(2) Mark, ii. 2.

This gospel is adapted to preserve you from the depths of hell, and to bestow on you unfading happiness; yet this is the gospel you neglect! This plan of heavenly mercy was executed by him before whom demons tremble; at whose voice the dead arose; and at whose dying cry the heavens grew dark, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent: yet this is the gospel you slight! To secure and bestow this salvation the Lord of Glory came down from heaven, and laboured, and died; and yet you neglect the blessing! The Eternal Spirit exerts his influence to carry on the work of mercy; and yet you disregard this great salvation! Millions in heaven enjoy its blessings; millions in hell wail the want of them: and yet you on earth can trifle with them! Angels, with adoring wonder, would look into the mysteries of redemption;<sup>1</sup> and yet you, a dying mortal, treat those wonders with infatuated indifference! Wretched creature! that in doing this, art slighting a Saviour's love; his dying sorrows; his atoning blood; his living care; his promised blessings; all he has done; all he is doing; and all he will for ever do for those that listen to his voice!

14. O reader, what is the guilt of such neglect! Behold the Lamb of God! Behold the once suffering, now glorified Saviour! Why should you slight him! Does he deserve this at your hands! Has he for you done so much; endured so much, does he offer you so much; and have you no return to make but wicked neglect! Is he willing to do so much eternally for you; and should he be slighted! Does not he deserve

(1) 1 Peter, iv. 12.

your heart! Unhappy creature! He would bless you, and you in effect refuse to be blessed! Cruel enemy to your own soul! He would save your deathless soul, but you will destroy it; while you receive not him whom every saint in heaven received, and by slighting whom every lost sinner to whom the gospel has gone has perished. Many are the aggravations of such guilt. The cause of this wicked neglect lies in your unwillingness to be truly his. So he said to some of old, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."<sup>1</sup> The guilt he charged on them was unwillingness to be his: "Ye will not, (ye are not willing to) come to me." While you neglect the gospel, the same heavy charge lies against you. Oh the guilt of such a state! He has every claim upon you; and you not willing to be his! Follow him in your thoughts from his throne to his manger at Bethlehem, and to his cross at Calvary, and think, all this was for you; and you not willing to come to Him! Think of the eternal Father's goodness in giving such a Saviour, when "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;"<sup>2</sup> and you not willing to receive him! Think of his design to save you from the wrath to come, to raise you to glory, honour, and immortality; and you not willing! O horrid load of guilt! O exceeding wickedness! A God willing to receive you as a child; and you unwilling to become one! A Saviour willing to make you his own; and you unwilling to be his!

15. The neglect of Christ binds all your other sins upon you, and increases tenfold the load of your transgressions. Did you receive him, your

(1) John, v. 40.

(2) Rom. viii. 32.

guilt would all be blotted out; but as you slight him, it will be all charged against you hereafter. Then it will be seen, that you were the man that sinned against infinite goodness with a high hand, and slighted every admonition to repentance; or that you were the woman that rebelled against the God of love, and would do evil in his sight; that you were the thoughtless youth, or the careless girl, that lived in the midst of privileges, but abused them, and refused your heart to him, to whom they were meant to lead you; that you, perhaps, had a house of prayer near your dwelling, yet wasted your sabbaths at home, or, if you entered the sacred courts, trifled with all that is most solemn. What confusion will overtake you when all this is known! Your wicked neglect of Christ, weightens all your load of other guilt; binds every curse upon you; fits you for hell, and soon will sink you there. For to receive the grace of God in vain, is the worst abuse of mercy. It is bad to receive in vain, and to render useless by wicked neglect, the gifts of food and raiment, liberty and health; but, far worse, to treat with indifference God's love in his only-begotten Son. This is the finishing crime in human guilt. It is viler ingratitude, than all other ingratitude of which you can be guilty. When persisted in, it fills up the measure of the sinner's iniquities. His other guilt might all be blotted out; but this sin fixes all the rest upon him, and makes the cup of his wickedness overflow. Thus, in reality, it is the sealing act to the soul's damnation. So long as you live without receiving the Lord Jesus, you are lying in all your guilt; and your danger is extreme. You

are always in danger. Do you laugh; it is on the edge of hell. Do you wake; you are nearer to waking there. Do you sleep; you are nearer to the place where you will never sleep. Do you rejoice; your joy will soon be changed to sadness, and your laughter to eternal mourning. While you are neglecting Christ, your life is sin, your years a curse, and your death will be perdition. Neglect is that sin which the lost will have to remember with infinite remorse, while eternity endures. The despairing soul will be tormented with the reflection, "I would not come to Christ. Had I come to him, the guilt that has undone me, would all have been forgiven; but I would not come. I compelled, by my neglect, the Lord of Glory to say of me, with guilty millions, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not!" O sinner, these words may ring in the hearing of a lost soul through eternal ages! "Ye would not come to me." And still will the wretched criminal have for ever and ever and ever to feel, "I am out of heaven, because, I would not go to the Lord Jesus Christ; I *would* neglect him. I am in hell, because I *would* not yield to him; I would neglect him." And every pang the miserable immortal feels, may revive the tormenting recollection, "I endure this pang, I am here, because I would not go to Christ, but fixed all my other guilt upon me, by wicked neglect of him."

16. In slighting Christ, you are doing just what Satan would have you do; and are gratifying his infernal desires for your own destruction. The choice of heartfelt religion, is a choice

which is approved by angels, and by their great Sovereign, God. It is that which the dying and the dead approve. It is a profitable one in youth or age; in health and sickness; in life and death. It is a choice, which all will wish at length to have made, and of which no one will ever repent; but it is a choice which is opposed by the world and the devil. Satan does his utmost, to prevent unhappy men from receiving the Lord of Life, and salvation through him. He takes away the seed from the careless heart,<sup>1</sup> he hides the gospel, by his infernal influence, from the benighted mind; for, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world, hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."<sup>2</sup>

Consider, reader, who it is that would keep you from Christ—Satan and his blinded slaves; and while you neglect the gracious Saviour, you gratify the cruel wishes of the wicked one himself. You accomplish his end as effectually, as if you seriously designed this result. You destroy your soul as completely, as if you could sell it to "your adversary the devil, who, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."<sup>3</sup> You would not be so infatuated as solemnly to vow, "I will be the devoted slave of the wicked one; I will not be the follower of the Lord Jesus; I will not learn of him; I will not give him my affections, nor commit to him my soul; I will live careless of his salvation; I will call him Lord, but will neglect him; and treat with equal indifference,

(1) Matt. xiii. 19.

(2) 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

(3) 1 Pet. v. 8.

his invitations and his threatenings, his favour and his anger. I will not have pardon from him, nor receive any blessing from his hands; but I will perish, and deliberately do I adopt as my own, the awful language of the dying profligate, 'Come, O devil, and take me.'"<sup>1</sup> But though you would tremble to utter such expressions, be solemnly assured, that while you neglect Christ, you gratify the desires, and accomplish, as to yourself, the designs of Satan as effectually as if you expressed such horrid resolutions. This is indeed the dreadful fact. Be not so deceived by the wiles of the wicked one, as to imagine that something less decidedly ruinous is connected with your neglect. This is the case, whatever you do, if from your heart you receive not the Saviour. Only stop short of coming to him, and Satan's designs are accomplished. It will matter little in the view of that infernal enemy, that you may respect religion, and be less immoral than some others; for while you commit not yourself to the Saviour, you will still belong to his dark kingdom; and still be guided by him, according to the course of this world.

17. Dreadful as is the guilt of slighting the Saviour's claims, not less deplorable is the folly. In neglecting the Lord Jesus, you are neglecting with him blessings of everlasting worth; all the blessings of eternity. Behold them! view those mansions of peace! that better country! those rivers of pleasure at God's right hand for evermore! those crowns of glory, which await the just! and all the tranquil peace, and serene delight, of one unbounded, eternal day of happi-

(1) William Pope.

ness In slighting the Redeemer, you slight all this. Ask angels and saints in light, the value of these blessings, and would they not tell you, that the wealth of a world were insignificant compared with the *smallest* celestial treasure! But what are *all* those treasures, yet you slight *all*! Yes, in slighting Christ, you are slighting all this precious world of blessings. Not only are neglecting him, but every good with him, and in losing him are losing all O wretchedness extreme, but self-incurred! Ruin everlasting, but wilfully chosen! for how soon will all, for which Christ is lost, have left you for ever! You are not his. Unhappy mortal! what a load of guilt and ruin is upon you! Yours is an unutterable loss, and an everlasting one; the loss of all the benefits of the Saviour's toils and death; of all connected with his everlasting love. It is enough to break the heart, merely to think of such a loss; what will it be to suffer it! How would you feel if every earthly help and good were lost! if you were deprived of every possession and every friend! if helpless, houseless, starving, and naked, you were turned adrift to pine and die! But it is a far worse loss to lose all the Saviour bled to secure; all that gladdens martyrs, saints, and angels; all that enraptures heaven, and brightens and blesses eternity. Thus you are your own worst enemy, a worse enemy to your own immortal soul than even Satan can be! He can but tempt you to follow the world: he cannot compel you to neglect the Saviour and die. It is you, that by refusing to come to Christ, choose to perish. The blessed effects of conversion are great beyond expression.

Think of one ransomed soul, arrayed in the garments of salvation and victory. Had that now saved soul been lost, could it have shed one tear in a century, it might have shed a sea of tears, and yet have been no nearer to an end of sorrow and despair, when the ocean were full than when the first tear fell. That one soul! may enjoy in the unmeasured expanse of eternal ages, more happiness than the united sum of blessings, which all the angels of light have ever yet enjoyed. That one soul, in which sin would have reigned unto death, in which every hellish disposition would eternally have flourished, shall now for ever bear its Creator's lovely likeness; and flourish in all the beauties of holiness, and the glories of immortality. Thus blessed and happy, reader, might your soul become; but slighting the Lord Jesus Christ, you slight all this inestimable good. What would others give for the blessings you thus madly slight! what would the dying! what would a despairing soul! what would a spirit just quitting the body, and sinking into the abyss! what would a lost soul! what would you in death or judgment, and through eternity! O think, reader, how dreadful is your infatuation, while you neglect the Saviour! and think how transient, sinful, ruinous, and hateful, are the objects for which you neglect him. Place, as it were, on one side, the Saviour and salvation. All the blessings of his love; all the treasures of eternity; the eternal God as your portion, and mansions in heaven as your dwelling. Place on the other side, all this world can give, all your sins; all your vanities; all your pleasures; all that ensnares and bewitches your

soul to perdition. Poor sinner. Do you prefer the latter! Wretchedly blinded and guilty creature, do you for these sins and follies, slight the eternal God, the only Saviour and all those blessings! O if you do, devils might gaze on you with delight! the saved with grief, and the damned with wonder! How deservedly if you persist in such a course, will you sink to the abyss of hell! and what will be your remorse there.

18. Neglect of the divine Saviour not only robs the soul of every blessing, but with a deadly malignity changes every present blessing to a curse. You have God's mercies; you had better never have had them, for every mercy will increase your condemnation. The more gracious God appears, the more guilty are you for neglecting him. When a dying profligate was reminded that God is merciful, he answered, "Or I could not have been thus guilty." You have life; you change by your neglect life itself into a dreadful evil; you had better never have been born, than come into existence, to live a few guilty years, in trifling and folly, and then be forever hateful and wretched. You have rational and immortal powers. If you neglect Christ, you had better have been a serpent, or a brute, a crawling worm, or a loathsome reptile; than, through your own sin, to be immortal, only to be wretched, and rational merely to be guilty. Reptiles and worms are laden with no sin, and no ingratitude; they treasure up no wrath against the day of wrath; they fill the place in which their Creator has fixed them, and neither render him ingratitude for mercies given, nor

have cause to fear his displeasure. But you, possessed of a rational and immortal spirit, raised far in nature above the mere animal creation, are sinning against goodness unbounded, and excellence that is infinite. O happy is the serpent from which you start with horror! happy is the worm you tread under your feet! nay, happy is the senseless dust, on which you walk, compared with yourself, while you neglect all the excellencies and all the love of the Saviour. You have many privileges, and sabbaths of inestimable worth; but by abusing them, you change the medicine to poison, the honey to gall. You had better never have had them; had better have been a heathen, wretched and miserable, his food the wild roots of the wilderness, his house a cave, his god a serpent or a stone, than live in the midst of Gospel light, and yet neglect the Author of salvation. You would have been foolish then to look at the lights of heaven, and the scenes of earth, and yet say to a stone, "Thou art my God;" but you would not have been so foolish, as you are, if possessing the bible, and having salvation set before you, you slight that great salvation. You would have been guilty then, to worship the inanimate block, instead of its unseen Creator; but not so guilty, as in the midst of gospel blessings to neglect the Giver of them all. Tyre and Sidon were guilty heathen cities; but more guilty were those that heard in vain the Saviour's voice. To some of them he said, "I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for

you.”<sup>1</sup> The name of Christ has been proclaimed to you ; but if you neglect him, you had better never have heard that name, which gladdens the hosts of the redeemed. The love of God has been displayed to you ; but while you neglect his Son, has been displayed in vain. Though the Father has done so much to bless you, you are still lost. Though the Son has suffered so much for you, you are still unforgiven and unchanged. Though the Spirit has manifested such kindness to you, you reject all by slighting the Saviour, to whom he would lead you, and thus resisting the Holy Ghost. And all this mischief will soon be irreparable. Your blessings changed to curses, will be curses to eternity. The blood of Christ imparting to you no salvation, will be on you to aggravate your everlasting condemnation. Days and years will have been given in vain to you ; the last will have departed and left you in your sins. Heaven, once within your reach, will be for ever closed against you ; and escape from hell once easy and sure, will for ever be impracticable. What might you be if you listened to the Saviour ? A child of God and an heir of happiness ! What will you make yourself by slighting him ? A child of wrath, an heir of ruin, an inhabitant of hell !

19. In neglecting the Lord Jesus Christ and Salvation, you neglect the *only* Saviour and the only Salvation that can benefit your immortal spirit. Were there another Saviour, and another salvation, this guilt and folly would not be so appalling ; but there is no other God to pity you if you slight the grace the God of the gospel

(1) Matt. xi. 22.

has manifested; there is no other Saviour to die for you, if you slight him who suffered on Calvary; there is no other heaven open to you, if you neglect that to which he would raise you; there is no other deliverance from the power and malice of Satan, from the curse of the law, and from eternal death, if you slight that the gospel exhibits. Were there but one physician that could relieve a sick man, how foolish would it be to slight that one! Were there but one arm strong enough to help an endangered man, what madness would it be to slight that one! Ah! there is but one physician that can cure your dying soul! There is but one arm strong enough to help you from death to life, from ruin to heaven; and but one short life, in which to receive the life that never ends. Slight that one physician, and all cure is hopeless; neglect that one arm, and all help is impossible; waste that one short life, and life eternal is for ever lost; do this, and where for you ere long can help be found! The universe cannot furnish it, and thou, great God, wilt not.

20. As neglect of Christ robs you of all good, and does to your deathless soul irreparable mischief, so it exposes you to evils numerous, most dreadful and unavoidable. Not one lasting good can be possessed by you; not one evil shunned. Your state will be ere long wholly evil, and eternally evil. If you could be partly happy, partly holy, your condition were not so deplorable, but without Christ you can have no happiness, no holiness, no God, no Saviour, no heaven. Not one sin is forgiven you! No mercy is found by you! No blessing is waiting for you! Eter-

nity is before you, but no good for all eternity. You are exposed to the wrath of God and of the Lamb, for of neglectors it is said, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation."<sup>1</sup> "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>2</sup> "Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me."<sup>3</sup> How awful will be that wrath, when love is changed to wrath! and mercy to vengeance! while you have no Saviour. Who is your Father? The wicked one. Mr. Whitfield relates, that a minister visiting a young woman near death, said to her, "Where do you hope to go when you die." She answered, "I do not care where I go." "What," said he, "do not you care whether you go to heaven or hell?" "No," she replied, "I do not care whither I go." "But," said he, "if it were put to your choice, where would you go?" Her awful answer was, "To hell." "Are you mad?" said he; "will you go to hell?" She answered, "Yes, I will." "Why so!" he exclaimed. "Why," said she, "all my relations are there." O reader, think that while you are unconverted, your eternal relations are there. "Your father, the devil, is there;" infernal spirits and lost souls; "your brothers and sisters are there;" and you, while careless, are hastening to join them.

21. Perhaps you treat these warnings with indifference; but "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Indifference cannot bless you, nor carelessness alleviate your ruin; for the end is coming. Pretending to fear

(1) Heb. ii. 3.

(2) Heb. x. 31.

(3) Luke, xix. 27.

nothing will not prove you happy, or make you safe. On the verge of bankruptcy some have seemed most prosperous ; and on the edge of hell many a miserable sinner has been careless and cheerful : but the end was at hand. What will the end of neglect be ? What to you ? Conscience, now asleep, will then awake to all the horrors of remorse. Satan, now an unseen tempter, will then be a visible tormentor. Sin, now beloved by you, will then bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. Departed hours of sinful merriment will come to mind again ; but, O, how changed will they appear ! What hours of guilt and madness ! Sinful companions, now desired associates in folly, will then seem more like devils than friends ! Oh, think of this when slighting Christ ; when quenching the Spirit ; when running into sin ; when reveling with the vain and the worldly ; think of the end ! What shall the end be ? Then how changed too will be the sinner's views of mercy now abused !

Even when dying, an alarmed neglecter said, " O ! that I had been wise, that I had known this, that I had considered my latter end ! Death is knocking at my doors : in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp ; and then judgment, the tremendous judgment ! how shall I appear, unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God ! How shall I endure the day of his coming ! O ! that holiness is the only thing I now long for. I have not words to tell you how highly I value it. I would gladly part with all my estate, large as it is, or a world, to obtain it. Now my benighted eyes are enlight-

ened ; I clearly discern the things that are excellent. What is there in the place whither I am going but God ! Or what is there to be desired on earth but religion ! O ! if the *righteous* Judge would try me once more ; if he would but relieve, and spare me a little longer ; in what a spirit would I spend the remainder of my days ! But, alas ! why do I amuse myself with fond imaginations ? The best resolutions are now insignificant, because they are too late."

If the prospect of death produces such a change of view, what, when the last conflict has ended, will be the feelings of millions, when all the effects of neglecting Christ are seen, are felt ! One may exclaim, "Woe is me ! Did I think of this when I laughed at piety, and treated all its blessings with contempt !" Another : "Did I look for this end when I slighted the admonitions of pious parents, and all their entreaties to seek God and happiness !" A third : "Alas ! was I hastening to this ruin when I refused to listen to the Saviour's voice ; when I talked of liberty and followed pleasure ! Was this the liberty I chose ! and this the pleasure to which I hastened ! Miserable wretch ! God called, and I refused ! now I eat the fruit of my own ways, and am filled with my own devices !" O reader, could you feel, for one moment, what it is to be lost, with the full sense of being lost for eternity ; could you longer neglect the Saviour ? Not to have one mercy, not to be one moment safe ! Oh, what a condition ! Are you then willing to flee from poverty, sin, hell, to the arms of heavenly mercy ? Would it be madness, if starving, to refuse an estate ? if drowning, to refuse

help? would it be distraction to run into a burning volcano? to go unarmed into a lion's den? to throw yourself in a tiger's path? It is worse distraction to slight a gracious Saviour's love; and by doing so to bring huge, intolerable, and everlasting evils upon your soul. And to do this when time with you is already so far spent; when eternity is so near; when the rewards of sin are so poor; and when salvation must be found now or never. Compared with salvation nothing deserves regard. Life to the condemned, help to them in a house on fire, food to the dying, are not worthy to be named in comparison with this blessing. If you were condemned, or in the midst of flames, how welcome would be deliverance; but this salvation is more worthy of acceptance; and will you neglect this?

22. In addition to all that has been already urged, it is an awful consideration, that while you neglect the Lord Jesus you are actually associated in dreadful rebellion against God with all the vilest of mankind, and with all the evil beings in the universe; and thus must live and die laden with horrid ingratitude. You may not be an infidel; but with infidels are a rebel against God. You may not be a murderer; but with murderers must be classed now and will have your future portion. You may not be lewd, or dishonest, or a drunkard, or profane; but you belong to the same miserable family, as all the lewd, and drunken, and profane, and dishonest. You are not a devil; but, while an impenitent sinner, with devils are a rebel against God. Thus with them you are united in sin and in conduct, and soon, unless grace happily deli-

ver you, will be united with them in misery. O reader, how wretched and how odious is such a character! how hateful must you be in the sight of all God's holy and devoted subjects! How hateful while unwilling to yield to so good a God, to so kind a Saviour! and if you continue what you are, this will mark your character for ever. Hereafter you will be known as one so wicked, that you would not yield to God. This will be known in the day of awful judgment. The mask of delusion or deception will then be torn away. All the excuses you now form for your guilty neglect, will have vanished like a dream. The cause of your neglect of all that is good, will appear to have been the vileness of your own depraved heart; and you will stand before the universe branded with the guilt of refusing to love your God and the Saviour. Even in the abyss of despair you will be known as one that would not love God. Thus, if you continue neglectful, *laden with ingratitude and sin, you must live.* While you live, could angels weep they might weep over you. "There," it might be said, "is an immortal being that should be aspiring to heaven, grovelling in the mire, with but one span of time for mercy, yet wasting that one; invited to everlasting life, yet utterly careless of the invitation; possessed of an immortal spirit to which God is most kind, and himself most cruel."

Under *this load you must die.* When your last hour arrives it may be said, "there lies and dies one to whom God has given a thousand mercies, but who has abused them all. The blessings that should have trained that departing

spirit for heaven, have all been bestowed in vain ; and now that unprepared and long-neglected soul is going, covered with guilt, to its final account, and to its direful home." And when you are in the grave it may be said, "There lies one who enjoyed through many years the means of grace and the tidings of mercy, but who went down into the dwelling of the dead unpardoned and unchanged. That poor dust once loved the world, and for it slighted eternal good. The world has left that dust to moulder there till the resurrection day, insensible of pleasure or of pain ; and the ruined soul that once inhabited that mouldering dust, is gone where griefs for ever live, and sorrows for ever multiply, and remorse for ever reigns, and darkness and despair for ever dwell. O miserable purchase ! O foolish choice ! that gained some trifles from the world, and ruined a deathless soul !"

23. Reader, life or death are before you, according as you regard or slight the mighty Saviour. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life."<sup>1</sup> If you continue to neglect Christ your doom must be death and only death. O choose not death but life ! Welcome now the long-neglected Saviour ! and how different will be your state ! He will blot out your sins, and enrich you with every good. Then it shall be said, "The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are he everlasting arms."<sup>2</sup> His broad shield is ever over thee, and his love will for ever bless thee. The promise belongs to you, "Fear not : for I

(1) Deut. xxx. 19.

(2) Deut xxxiii. 27.

have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."<sup>1</sup> The Saviour of myriads will then be your Saviour and your Shepherd. The good Shepherd's care will bless you; and you may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."<sup>2</sup> He will guard you and fulfil the promise; "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He will keep you and train you for heaven; he will enable you to subdue your corruptions and lead you to immortal life. What now is your inheritance? the home that angels have, the heaven that they enjoy. Who are now your future companions? all the first-born sons of light! all the spirits of the just made perfect! all whose names are written in heaven. They loved the Saviour, and they followed him. Their dwelling will be yours, if their Lord is yours. And will you not be his? Then your character, which else would have been for ever hateful, will be for ever lovely: will shine in a fair though humble resemblance of your Lord's, and thus will shine for *ever*. Choose then this day whose you will be, and whom you will serve.

(1) Is. xliii. 1-3.

(2) Psalm, xxiii. 1-3.

## CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGION ENFORCED BY THE SOLEMNITIES OF  
DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

1. WHEN the scriptures describe the spirit and conduct of the early disciples of the Lord Jesus, they are represented as those who were *waiting* for the Son of God from heaven;<sup>1</sup> who were looking for the Saviour;<sup>2</sup> who loved his appearing;<sup>3</sup> and who thus were familiar with the solemnities of death and eternity. Insufficient attention to these solemn subjects, lowers the piety even of the pious; and keeps from safety and peace many that might otherwise be led, by the impressive sense of their dying condition, to seek eternal good. It cannot then be unappropriate, while pressing heartfelt piety on your devout attention, in addition to the many allusions to these solemn subjects, contained in the preceding pages, more expressly to beg your attention to them. O regard them as solemn motives, for the unhesitating and unfeigned consecration of yourself to him, who hath brought life and immortality to light. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment."<sup>4</sup> All must die, but a wide difference exists in death. Many die unforgiven, unchanged, unblest, unprepared for eternity.

(1) 1 Thess. i. 10.

(2) Phil. iii. 20.

(3) 2 Tim. i. 1, 2.

(4) Heb. ix. 27.

This is the case with all who die uninterested in the Saviour's grace. But his friends die, some peacefully, some exultingly, *all safely*. They die forgiven, renewed, and blest. How will you die?

2. *You* must die, and the dying hour must inspire feelings unknown before; the value of the Saviour, and the worth of the blessings of his grace, will never be fully known till then. Christ is all in all for the day of death. His love cheers with immortal hopes life's last solemn hours. How solemn is the dying hour! The body sinking under the violence of disease. The powers of nature rapidly failing. The pulse fluttering and about to stop for ever. The spirit just going to take its everlasting flight. Mourning friends surrounding the dying sufferer, and observing with breathless silence the last struggles of mortality. And ministering angels, or infernal spirits, as unseen visitants, watching near the dying pillow. Perhaps some violent convulsion seizes the sufferer, and the struggle is soon over. Perhaps, while the soul retains all its consciousness, death steals gradually upon its mortal tabernacle. The coldness of the grave seizes the hands and the feet. Now speech fails. Now sight is gone. Now the breathing becomes weaker, and weaker, and weaker. At length the heart ceases to throb, and all the tale of life is over. What are the thoughts and feelings of an immortal spirit in such a situation! what its views of a life of sin! what of a life of poverty or comfort! what of a life of piety! Can language describe what its feelings must be, respecting the unutterable vanity of every posses-

sion and every pursuit excepting heartfelt religion! A pious lady adding a few lines to a letter she had begun, but which the approach of death prevented her completing, wrote, "I fear I cannot finish. O my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have *now*, you would see as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death. Let it be so with you."

Solemn as is the dying hour, the presence and support of the Saviour are sufficient to impart strong consolation. An aged minister, eminent in his day, being at the funeral of one more eminent, a friend said to him, "Well, Dr. Grovesnor, you have seen the end of Dr. Watts, and you will soon follow: what think you of death?" "Think of it," he replied, "Why, when death comes, I shall smile upon death, if God smiles upon me." A dying Christian said, "O the joys I feel! my heavenly Father is carrying me to heaven in his arms; I am going thither *on a bed of roses*. I feared this hour, lest my pains should extort an impatient word, or cause that I should seem to be uneasy under his hand; I have often wished to die praising God; how kind is he who gives me leave to do so! trust my God; he will not fail those who put their trust in him. O the comforts I feel."<sup>1</sup>

Suppose yourself just about to die. Before you stretches an immeasurable eternity. Behind you is the now ending span of time. What *now* to you are friends, possessions, pleasures! All that once agitated, pained, or pleased, is vanity; but the Saviour's love assumes new importance. He now is all in all. If you have

(1) Thos. Reynolds.

him, you have every thing ; without him nothing. Suppose yourself just launched into eternity. The scenes of time are ended ; you have closed your eyes to open them on earth no more ; the latest pang is over ; the last conflict finished, and eternal scenes have opened upon you. What now appear the world, youth, health, prosperity, pleasure ! what idle dreams ! what now are friends, whose love once seemed almost as important to your comfort as life itself !. It is nothing now. What now are earthly possessions, comforts, or sorrows ! They are equally and infinitely insignificant. Whether your way was painful or pleasing, matters nothing now ! Whether reproach or honour, wealth or poverty, were your lot, is all one now. Nothing now avails you any thing but Christ. All you want is in him. The frowns or smiles of mankind no longer concern you ; all depends on his. If he smile none can frown ; if he frown none can smile. Who can reject you if he welcome ! who can welcome if he rejects you ! In that hour, at the furthest not very distant, how much you will desire the blessings of the gospel !

The closing of the scenes of time, is to every soul, the commencement of unutterable solemnities. When absent from the body, you will be present with the Lord, or numbered with the lost.

3. The solemnities of eternal judgment should prompt you to surrender yourself to the Saviour. None can conceive what will be the solemnity, the joy, or the terror of the great day. Nor are the scriptural statements on this subject poetical figures, but a description of solemn

facts. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God."<sup>1</sup> "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." He shall come to be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe.<sup>2</sup> "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."<sup>3</sup> "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats ; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal."<sup>4</sup> According to these infallible testimonies the archangel will descend ; the trumpet will proclaim the Judge's coming ; and such a sound be heard through all the regions of this lower creation, that, compared with it, the shouts of an assembled world, or the roar of ten thousand thunders, would be stillness ; for all mankind will hear. The Lord will then visibly descend. He will come with his mighty angels

(1) *Thess. iv. 16.* (2) *2 Thess. i. 6.* (3) *1 Cor. xv. 52.*

(4) *Matt. xxv. 31, &c. &c.*

in flaming fire. He will come in the glory of his Father, and in his own. He cometh with ten thousands of his saints. Now "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."<sup>1</sup> The righteous rise to glory, honour, and immortality; but the unrighteous also hear his voice. In their case that which "was sown in corruption, rises in incorruption," that it may endure a death that can never die. That which "was sown in dishonour," rises to dishonour more aggravated, "to shame and everlasting contempt." That which "was sown in weakness, is raised in power;" strong to endure immortal misery. That which was sown a natural body, rises a spiritual body, to become the accursed dwelling of that immortal spirit that prostituted its powers on earth to folly, vanity, and guilt.

4. The scenes of final judgment advance, and, amidst their solemnities, "the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein are burnt up!"<sup>2</sup> O, reader! in meditation anticipate this day! View it as come! Think you hear the cry, "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand!" The sun, moon, and stars have ceased to shine! The heavens have passed away. The cares and businesses, the pursuits and delights of earth have vanished like a dream. The tumults of nations, the contentions of statesmen, the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of joy or of weep-

(1) John, v. 28.

(2) 2 Peter, iii. 10.

ing, are heard no more. The oath is sworn that time shall be no longer, and all its scenes are ended. The dead are raised, the Judge is come. There he sits in majesty, and at his bar the nations are collected to hear their doom. He sets the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. The righteous meet him with rapture; the unrighteous are dragged before his awful bar. Within them gnaws the worm of conscience that never dies. All appear in their real character; there is no deception and no mistake here. There is no middle condition. There is no mingling among the pious if not pious; the ungodly often mingle with the pious now, but not then. There myriads of angels observe the solemn process, and wait and watch the conduct of their King. Above opens the higher heaven to welcome his redeemed. Below burns the pit of fire and darkness prepared for the devil and his angels, and ready as the prison of the lost. All are about to rise or sink for ever, and you and I are there. Long has this day been spoken of; long believed, long disbelieved; but it is come. The believer and the infidel alike believe in it now. It is come. The last day of man's probation is over, and all are assembled for their eternal doom. It is come. The Judge is seen; how different from what he once was seen! how changed from what he then appeared! how changed are all his followers too! and O how changed his foes! Where is now their unbelief? their pride? their haughtiness? their scorn? It is come. Time has rolled its last year, its last hour away. This day seemed slow to come; the day of mercy

lasted long, but it is over, and this judgment day is come.

5. The Judge eternal now pronounces man's unchanging doom. He says to them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." He owns their humble services of faith and love; and according to his solemn promise, confesses them who confessed him. O, sweet words of eternal life! they are pronounced, and suspense, and doubt, and fear are vanished for ever. Now, indeed, the righteous come to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads; now, indeed, sorrow and sighing are fled away. What a recompense is this for tears, and toils, and sorrows! What thinks the Christian now of these! The Saviour allowed his followers once to toil in sorrow and persecution; but now he changes toil to rest, and sorrow to unending joy! He let them endure grief; but now he gives the crown of life and honour. The great day of wrath is no day of wrath to them; no fears, no alarm, will now disturb their tranquillity more. Many of them toiled in poverty, and were afflicted and trodden down of men; but all this is past. Their conflicts are changed for the victor's palm. What will be the humble Christian's feelings while gazing on his Judge? "This is he to whom I fled! This is he after whom I struggled, at times with almost fainting steps! This is he whom the world would fain have had me leave! This is he to whom my heart was devoted! This is he, about an interest in whose love I often felt painful anxiety; but he is come, and I am his. I

know it now, and anxiety and enemies shall vex me no more."

O reader, would you be thus blessed? If you would, remember these things are no cunningly devised fables; and, as in the view of death and judgment, now embrace unfeigned religion.

6. But hearken to a different sentence. Behold a different scene! Besides those on the right hand, there are myriads on his left. What says the Judge to them? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."<sup>1</sup> Oh, the horrors of that sentence, and of that day! If you should be among them, how will you meet that day? What will be the terror of beholding a long-neglected Judge? to see him on whose decision hangs life or death eternal? to see him on whose smile or frown heaven or hell depends? And to recollect what he once was? what he once would have been to you? and with what base neglect his love was treated? And what will be the terror connected with the disclosure of unnumbered crimes, when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing?"<sup>2</sup> Should you die in your sins, all your transgressions will then pass in direful review. Secret or open guilt will alike be visible; crimes shrouded in privacy and darkness, will be open to universal view. God says of men, "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."<sup>3</sup> We may forget our own offences; others may forget them; multitudes of sins are unobserved; and multitudes more for-

(1) Matt. vii. 23.

(2) Eccles. xii. 14.

(3) Hos vii. 2.

gotten. Time weakens or wears out the impression of the evil of many transgressions; but God remembers all. They glare always before him in all their hideous deformity. Oh, if you should live careless of your Judge, and a stranger to his pardoning grace, how will you meet him then? "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God,"<sup>1</sup> but how will you give up that account? If a prince were to employ a servant to transact some weighty business for him in a foreign land, and, on his return, calling for his account, should find so much time spent in singing, so much in dancing, so much in novel-reading, so much at the play-house, so much in foolish merriment with gay companions, so many days idled away, and so many played away, and the very business for which he was sent entirely neglected and undone, what would be thought of such a servant? Would not his master justly cast him off for ever? God has entrusted to you talents, privileges, and mercies; has given you life that you may glorify him, and be prepared for everlasting life. But if the great concerns of religion are neglected, all this is left undone; and what must be your account, when, like the wicked and slothful servant just described, you have to render one to your injured Master? How will you account for your numberless sins? for abused mercies? for privileges neglected? for admonitions disregarded? for preferring trifles to God, Christ, and religion? for thus insulting the Father, and rejecting the Son, and grieving the Spirit?

And what will be the terror of the wrath these crimes have merited? Thousands of years of

(1) Rom. xiv. 12.

mercy will have rolled away, and every sinner had his day of grace and mercy, but all will now be changed to vengeance; to vengeance deserved for mercies abused, and for love despised; deserved for slighting God, neglecting Christ, and resisting the Holy Ghost. Patience will long have waited; but patience will have given place to wrath. The Lord will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,"<sup>1</sup> upon all that have not obeyed the truth. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."<sup>2</sup> O, reader, if you continue uninterested in the Saviour, this will be your lot. However thoughtless or unbelieving, you *must* appear before his bar. There you will be seen confounded, trembling, and despairing. There you will stand with all the impure and the profligate; the vile and the infernal; with all the monsters of iniquity that the earth ever bore, and that meet there laden with unpardoned sin. The Judge's lightnings will flash, and his thunder roll; you will hear your doom, and that doom will be the damnation of hell. The doom of that day will be final. There will be no after-change. The blessed will never be cursed; the cursed will never be blessed. When man was created, Satan entered Eden, and Adam fell: Christ came to earth, and the fallen rise; but no tempter will enter heaven, no Saviour will visit hell. Wrath then experienced will never be appeased. Through the days of heavenly mercy, the Saviour was full of compassion; prayer was heard and pardon given: but not then. There

(1) Rom. ii. 1.

(2) Psalm, xi. 6.

will be no sacrifice to atone for unpardoned guilt; no prevailing prayer; no intercessor. The ungodly will cry to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."<sup>1</sup> Alas! vain refuge! yet the rocks would sooner hear their cry than the inexorable Judge. If through irreligion this should be your lot, "Lord, Lord," you may exclaim, "have mercy on me." No: the day of mercy is past; that prayer might have been heard once, but cannot be heard now. The gate of salvation is shut, and you and others despairing cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." No: the door shut once never opens.<sup>2</sup> No, sinner, never! no, never! Eternal truth has said it! no, never! for you would neglect the Lord of life and salvation; you would not be his disciple. When the Lord invites you to come to him and be happy, you can refuse; but when he says, Die, you cannot refuse to die; and when he says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," depart you must. Into that abyss may devils drag you, and enmity to God will make you like a devil there.

7. Should you be exposed to all this, what will you think of the present warning? Should you be at his left hand, or see some you know among the blest and be among the lost, what bitter regret will then distress your soul? What joyous meetings of the saved will there be on that day! What solemn partings where some have known Christ, and others slighted him! What solemn partings between neighbours and congregations! What eternal separations between

(1) Rev. vi. 16.

(2) Matt xxv. 10.

fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, friends and companions, some ascending to glory, others sinking to destruction. Of the lost, whose heart would not break on that day, at that separation, if a heart then could break? but that will not be. Whatever your friends do, let this be your concern, to secure the Judge's welcome and everlasting life. But what can give you the certainty of this? Nothing but possessing an interest in his salvation. Then you may indulge a cheerful confidence, that, when on his judgment throne, he will justify you; and who shall condemn you? That he in effect will say, or act as if he said, "This soul is mine. It was committed to my care. I blotted out its transgression and guided its way. It was mine in its pilgrimage on earth, and now is mine for ever." Will this be said of you?

And now the trumpet is hushed. The judgment is passed. The judge has left his judgment throne, and all are gone to their eternal abodes. The lost are howling in agony, and wailing in despair. The blest have entered their rest. Eternity is now their day. Its cloudless sun has risen upon them. Its vast expanse stretches before them, and is all one scene of rapture, tranquillity and praise. Their home is heaven. Their father is God. Their rest is with him who died. Their friends are the angel hosts, and all the blood-bought myriads of the redeemed. Their holiness is perfect. Their happiness is endless. The former things have passed away. Reader, where is your home? where will it be for ever? Shall you be one of these?

## CHAPTER IX.

DECISION IN THE CHOICE OF RELIGION URGED BY  
THE RUIN AND MISERY THAT AWAIT THE IMPE-  
NITENT.

1. AN old writer remarks, that sermons concerning "hell may keep many out of hell." Religion or ruin is the only alternative presented to you. Think not that the most awful displays of your danger, if you are a trifler with religion, are inconsistent with the indulgence of that spirit of love which the gospel enjoins. The Lord Jesus was full of compassion; and because he was so, he uttered the most awful representations of future ruin which the New Testament contains.

2. Consider that it is not more certain that you live, than it is that you will perish if you do not turn to God. Indulge not the delusive expectation that God will be less strict, and more merciful, than his own word represents him to be. God is merciful, but he is also just and true. God is a tender parent to the penitent that seeks him, but he is a consuming fire to his enemies. Though to the contrite in heart, his mercy is as great as the heavens are high above the earth; yet against the impenitent his wrath will burn to the lowest hell.<sup>1</sup> A deception that would bring you to the gallows were dreadful; but a decep-

(1) Deut. xxxii. 22.

tion that would sink you to hell is infinitely worse. Be not then deceived, "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> Repeating this solemn warning the inspired writer, when referring to the works of corrupt nature, declares, "I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup> "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."<sup>3</sup> Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."<sup>4</sup> Thus there is not a hope, unless, with reverence be it spoken, God could prove false, that you can be saved without true piety. A millstone will not more surely sink when cast into the waves, nor a mass of lead thrown from the top of a precipice more surely fall, than you will fall, and sink, and perish, if you pass through time a stranger to the Saviour's grace. The Father declares that the impenitent shall die. The Son confirms the awful truth. The old Testament and the new repeatedly inculcate the solemn sentiment. The law dooms them, and the gospel adds to the awful doom.

3. Consider the dreadful descriptions which are given by the God of truth respecting the sinner's misery. A great variety of the most terrific images are employed to represent this horrid ruin. Hell is described as "a furnace of fire," into which the unrighteous are cast, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth;<sup>5</sup> as "a lake which

(1) 1 Cor. vi. 9.      (2) Gal. v. 21.      (3) Luke, xiii. 3.

(4) John, iii. 5-7.      (5) Matt. xiii. 42.



the last of them, the same word that describes the unending nature of the happiness of the righteous, is employed to describe that of the misery of the lost. The Lord Jesus, in what precedes the solemn declaration, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment," has been representing the scenes connected with man's final doom. Were an earthly judge to address a prisoner, "Your life or death is now to be decided; if convicted you must die," would it not be deemed madness for the prisoner to slight the means of acquittal, under the hope that the judge would not be true to his word, nor adhere to his declaration? And is it not worse infatuation, when the Lord Jesus declares, that the unrighteous shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, to indulge the hope that he means a period of suffering infinitely less than eternal.

"The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." On this expression Dwight remarks, "The phrase commonly rendered 'for ever and ever,' is used, if I mistake not, eighteen times in the New Testament. In fifteen instances it is applied to the continuance of the glory, perfections, government, and praise of God. In one (Rev. xxii. 5.) it is said of the righteous in the future world, that 'they shall reign for ever and ever.' In one of the remaining two it is said of the impenitent, that is, of those among them who worship the beast and his image, that 'the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.' In the remaining instance it is said of the devil, who deceived the nations, of the beast, and of the false prophet, that 'in the lake of fire and brimstone they shall be tor-

mented day and night for ever and ever.' Now let me ask, whether a man, even of moderate understanding, could be supposed to write with scrupulous integrity a system of theology, and employ this phrase sixteen times to denote an absolute eternity, and twice to denote that which was infinitely different; while these were the only instances in which the phrase was applied to a given subject, and that of immeasurable importance to those for whom he wrote? But if such a man cannot be supposed thus to use language, nor vindicate it when used in this manner, can such conduct be attributed safely to the Spirit of God?" Besides those passages in which the expressions everlasting, eternal, for ever and ever, are employed to represent the duration of the sufferings of the lost, there are passages that in other phraseology most solemnly assert the same awful truth. The Lord Jesus, admonishing his disciples to suffer any thing rather than lose the soul, repeats this dreadful truth no less than five times in a few sentences. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm

dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."<sup>1</sup> Can a warning be more solemn, or language more decided, than there "THE FIRE NEVER SHALL BE QUENCHED." To these passages others might be added; but if these are disbelieved, so would all the rest.

5. Thus guided by the infallible word of God, consider the situation to which those who die in irreligion will be reduced. They lose all present good. When you leave this world, you will have left for ever all the comforts and pursuits of time; and then, if you have no heaven to welcome you, you will be poor beyond expression. Think of a lost soul. The poorest beggar is not so poor; the most miserable criminal not so wretched; and perhaps even devils themselves not tormented with such remorse. In the case of such an unhappy creature, the satisfactions of the present world are all over. Its guilty pleasures are finished; its innocent comforts are ended. Whatever gratification might once be enjoyed in the pursuits of life; in friendships, in connexions, in the love of parents or of children, all is past. While these continue the sinner may find some satisfaction without the blessings of religion; but what will he do when these shall all have left him. An old writer<sup>2</sup> relates, that a vain ungodly man was lying sleepless on his bed, and being weary, and finding no rest, he began to think, would any be hired to lie thus for two or three years in darkness without friends or amusements? Would any one be willing to be bound to a bed, though it were a bed of down, and never stir abroad? And he thought, no one

(1) Mark, ix. 43—43.

(2) Drexelius.

would. Then he reflected, that the time would come, when willing or unwilling he, unless snatched away by a sudden stroke, must lie upon a bed of sickness and death; and he thought, "But what bed shall I have next, when death shall thrust me out of this? My body must rot in the earth; for this is the condition of all men after death. But what shall become of my soul in another world? Surely all men do not go to the same place after death. Do not some go one way, and some another? Is there not a hell as well as a heaven? Woe and alas! What kind of bed shall the damned find in hell? How many years shall they lie there? In what year after their first entrance shall the flames cease and be put out? Assuredly Christ doth not only in word threaten to cast the wicked into everlasting fire, but will also cast them in indeed." These thoughts followed him, and he could not rest. Eternity still run in his mind. He tried to banish the solemn impression amidst companions and sinful delights, but in vain. Conscience, if seeming for a while asleep, soon awoke, and inflicted fresh stings upon his soul. He thought, "I am not certain whether I shall live till to-morrow or no: daily funerals sufficiently prove this. Oh eternity, if thou wert not! Oh eternity, if thy place be not in heaven, though it be on a soft down bed, thou canst not but be bitter and unpleasant!" At length he fled from the paths of sin, and lived and died a pious man. Happy they who thus seek the ways of peace. The impenitent, with all their worldly comforts, will lose all which in life yielded some support. All false hopes expire. The delusive

expectations of the wavering and the undecided, of the formalist and the self-righteous, are no more. Eternity is before them without a comfort or a blessing: but this is only the beginning of sorrows. "Hast thou seen this, O son of man! turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater 'sorrows' than these."

6. The sinner dying in his sins is banished from God, the only source of light and joy. He has forfeited his Creator's favour and love. In the love of God the blessed rejoice; and in it angels find their heaven; but, unhappy creature! it is lost to him. He is exposed to his Creator's frown; to the liveliest sense of the wrath of God, whose frown is so dreadful, that a dying profligate exclaimed, "O thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! hell itself is a refuge, if it hide me from thy frown." But hell will not hide the sinner; he must bear that frown continually. There too he feels not only the loss of all he once loved, but the everlasting loss of all the saints enjoy. Does he look to heaven? It is lost to him. Does he think of pious friends or pious parents? They are forever parted from him. They dwell in life and rapture, and he in death and misery. Does he think of sabbaths and seasons of mercy? He had them once, but they are forever gone from him. Religious mercies are at an end. All that were given to help the soul to heaven, and that were neglected and abused, have finished. His state is a state of utter friendlessness. There is none to love him, none to pity him, none to help him. No friend to cheer one hour in an eternal night of woe; no merry companion to

laugh away a single moment, or to stifle for the twinkling of an eye the stings of a tormenting conscience. Around him all are equally wretched, and equally guilty with himself. Among the myriads of the lost, that he may meet, the crowd that once thronged the downward way in merriment and folly, or contempt of piety and scorn of God, he sees not one cheerful countenance. There are the lewd, but now they gnash their teeth with the companions of their guilt. There is the drunkard ; once he boasted of his crimes, but now his boastings are changed to wailings, his glorying to agony. There is the swearer ; and all his swearing prayers are answered in his utter condemnation. There is that child of the devil, the liar, gone home to his father's house. There are the prayerless ; once they would not pray, and the time for prevailing prayer is passed. There is the infidel ; but he now too late believes. There is the blasphemer, now more blasphemous. There are players, but no play-houses ; and lovers of dissipation, but no dissipation to please them. There are the opposers of humble piety, who hated religion upon earth ; and now with vain but malignant hatred, they hate its Author more than ever. There are they who had privileges and mercies in vain ; who were once raised to heaven by blessings, but are now brought down to hell. For them all no Christian prays. On them no sabbath shines. Before them no hopes bloom. To them no mercies come. Hope is gone. Mercy is gone. Grace is gone. Sin cannot be forgiven. God has forgotten to be gracious. The compassion of a Saviour never more will reach them.

There is the horrible society of the devil and his angels. Every hellish spirit for whom that place of woe was originally created, is there, his own tormentor, and the tormentor of his fellow-sufferers and fellow-rebels. What must such society be! It is heart-rending to think of it, what will be the woe of being mingled with it continually! There will doubtless be a dreadful variety of miseries; none of them light, but each of them distressful beyond present apprehension. The eye will see sights of woe. The ear be open only to shrieks of despair, and yells of blasphemy and misery. The immortal and incorruptible body will feel the torments of the fire that never shall be quenched; and the lost but immortal spirit will endure the worse tortures of remorse and despair that never can die. The memory will torment the sinner while he recollects the past, thinks of the sins which brought him there, and of the mercy which he once abused, and of the vanities for which he sold his soul and lost eternal life. Looking backward, he will see amazing displays of divine grace, and horrid manifestations of his own ingratitude and folly. Apprehensions for the future will be no less tormenting than recollections of the past. Forward he will see guilt, and gloom, and punishment, and darkness, and despair; guilt, and gloom, and punishment, and darkness, and despair. And still his prospect will be for ever unchanged; it will still be guilt, and gloom, and punishment, and darkness, and despair. All these sorrows will be not occasional, but constant. Sorrow on earth has its intermissions; pain has its hours of ease, or at least of lighter pain: but

the sorrows of the lost are unmitigated and unintermitting sorrows. The compassionate Saviour has taught us this dreadful truth. He describes a lost sinner as soliciting the smallest possible alleviation of misery; not a day's deliverance, not an hour's ease; he only prays, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." What could be less? what alleviation more trifling? what intermission of misery more insignificant? yet even this was too much to be granted to a lost soul. The answer not only contained a refusal, but declared that such alleviation was impossible.

7. How awful is the change from earthly comforts to this deep poverty! From the family circle, or the company of gay associates, to the utter friendlessness of hell! From privileges once abounding, to the dwellings of despair! From having a Saviour displayed, to the hopelessness of unceasing and unmitigated wretchedness and ruin. For all this heart-breaking load is not transient, but eternal. The prison of the lost is an everlasting prison. Earthly prisons cannot long detain their captives; time rolls by, and if none else open the prison doors, death comes, and sets the prisoner free. When a devoted martyr was confined in one of the prisons of that profligate persecutor, Charles the II, and he had declared the prisoner should never have his liberty, a nobleman once said to him, "Jenkins has got his liberty." "Ah;" said the wicked monarch, "Who gave it him?" "A greater than your majesty, the King of kings." But no King of kings will open the prison doors of those

who are eternally lost. Some of these prisoners have been there already four thousand years;<sup>1</sup> but no year of release has come, and none will ever come. Hell they chose when they chose sin; and what they chose they must for ever have. Time brought an end to their earthly sorrows; they had their last; but eternity will bring no end to the sorrows of perdition. Time brought an end to their pleasures; they had their last delight, their last vain pleasure, their last hour of sinful merriment, a last laugh as well as a last sigh; but of their present ruin, no one will ever say, The end is come. If ten thousand years hence the question were asked, Where are they who neglected God, slighted Christ, loved the world, and died in sin? and how are they employed? The answer might be, They are helpless captives in the prison of the lost; there they are blaspheming their God, and weeping, and wailing, and suffering; hateful, and hating one another. And if ten thousand years beyond that period, the question were again proposed, the answer must still be the same, and the same would it be for ever. Their last change was a final one. Help cannot reach them. Now, Christian, if you can, tell those hapless souls of peace, tell them of your Saviour! O, you cannot; he can never be theirs. Now, Christian minister, proclaim your message; proclaim pardon through atoning blood! Ah! you cannot; though once, perhaps, some of them sat beneath your ministry, yet as to them your work is done; your commission is over; you have no message to bear to them, no pardon to proclaim, no Saviour

(1) 1 Peter, iii. 19, 20. Jude, 7

to display. O, be zealous while you may; not long can you help any to heaven; they will be out of your reach, or you removed from them.

8. Their state is unchangeable, for their character cannot be renewed. They went out of the world unholy, and thus hateful and hellish; and such they must for ever remain. No change will their hearts ever know. No love to God will ever be found within their breasts. No alteration will ever take place in their relative condition as to God and Christ, to saints and angels, or to the devil and the lost. Of God and Christ they would be neglectors, and thus were enemies, and enemies they will for ever continue. With the blessed family of saints and angels they had no connexion; they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; and such they will eternally remain. They were the children of the wicked one, and did his will in slighting mercy and persisting in rebellion; and now they must be his helpless captives. No change can they know as to sin and condemnation. Unpardoned sins fixed on them, when they died, must load them for ever; their condemnation then was sealed. The darkness of the fall might be removed; the stains of guilt might have been effaced; but the darkness of hell can never be dissipated; the load of guilt once felt there, must sink the soul eternally beneath its intolerable weight. For them no rest remains; no rest from sinning and from suffering. Their absence from God is everlasting; their enmity to God will be everlasting; and their sufferings beneath his wrath will be everlasting. Their dwelling with accursed friends

and miserable associates in guilt will be everlasting. Earthly sorrows know nothing of such wretchedness. In pain or agony to-day, we hope for ease to-morrow; but there will be no to-morrow of ease to be hoped for there. If languishing in disease now, a few days may bring recruited health; but the disease of sin will never be removed. When thousands of years of woe are past, the sinner will still have to lament his fatal choice. If he had chosen God and Christ, religion and heaven, he would not have been this destitute, forsaken, friendless wretch; but he chose the world, and sin, and folly; and all he loved has left him, and only the bitter fruits of his fatal choice remain. A disgraced courtier once said, "If I had served God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my grey hairs." Every lost sinner may say, "If I had served the Saviour, as I served the world, if I had given the heart to him which I gave to the world, he would not have left me to be the victim of devils, and the prisoner of hell, in utter sorrow and endless poverty."

9. Reader, if you are careless of salvation, be entreated to consider your own concern in these solemn truths. These are not cunningly devised fables. Even demons dreaded the gulf of sorrow; and when permitted, for a little while to rove on earth, prayed for transient relief from the abyss. They besought the Lord that he would not command them to go into that deep.<sup>1</sup> Did demons dread hell, and will you rush into it! Did they, when deliverance was hopeless, beg for a moment's absence from the pit, and

(1) Luke, viii 31.

will you slight eternal deliverance! Did devils pray, and will you not pray! At this very moment, multitudes unknown are in the world unseen, suffering the torments of guilt, perdition, and despair. While you slight salvation, they who have slighted the gospel before you burn. While you laugh, perhaps at this warning, they wail at the recollection of warnings once scorned. While you talk of liberty, they groan in the prison, to which such liberty leads. At this moment, could you behold their sorrows, and hear their groans, their cries of misery might fill you with consternation, while the thought forced itself on your mind, "I am travelling to the same abode." They lament while you neglect; and suffer for sins while you commit them; but if you pursue a careless course, what must be its termination? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

10. Think, what if you continue to slight the gospel, will be your future lot! Picture your future self. Suppose you follow the world; you love it, you have it, and you neglect your soul. Thus you go through life; at length the end comes; sickness seizes you, and you lie stretched upon the bed of death. Alas, you are not prepared for the great change! Did you do well to neglect the only Saviour? Eternity is before you, and you are not ready to meet, with comfort, its amazing solemnities. You look backward, and can think of vanities, follies, pleasures loved and prized, yet ended; but you cannot think of piety, of sweet seasons of prayer; of Christ welcomed;

and a deathless soul committed to his hands. You can think of serious impressions, but this deepens your anguish, for these impressions were quenched. You can remember desires after God and holiness once felt, but those desires were stifled; the Spirit was resisted, and sin and folly chosen. You can think of sabbaths, whose profanation added to the enormous load of your transgressions. Unhappy they, who must lie upon a dying bed indulging such reflections! But you must if you will not turn to God. From looking backward, you look forward, but all the prospect is dark and distressing. Perhaps, some false hope bears you up a little; but your case seems dreadfully doubtful at the best. At length you die, and doubt is over. Your lot is decided now; you are in eternity, and all your sins upon you. What will then be your torturing feelings! What different views will you take of this world! of your own conduct! of your guilty choice from those you cherish now! What different thoughts will force themselves upon you, of your present pleasures! of your abuse of God's mercy and patience! of Christ's love and your neglect! of his long-continued goodness and your long-continued indifference and ingratitude! What then will seem youth, riper years, and, perhaps, age spent without God in the world! But regret will come too late, the deed will be done that cannot be undone.

11. Think of yourself now, going to your dismal prison. Infernal spirits have seized your miserable soul. There is none to help you. Through many long rebellious years you sight-

ed him who would have helped you, and saved you from the pit. Think yourself entering the place of sorrow. How horrid is the place! how deep the darkness! how unutterably dreadful the prospect! Now what is your remorse for mercies past and wasted! Now what do you think of sabbaths broken! of sabbath work, and sabbath amusements! Now what do you think of the warnings, that Christians and ministers once addressed to you! Will you now say they were too plain? Now what do you think of the house of God, which you would not frequent! of your careless days and guilty nights; and all your scenes of worldly festivity and merriment! Now how do you review stifled convictions, and neglected calls and invitations! O that you could have them again! O that now some helping hand could be stretched out, to prevent your going into the deep! but there is none! O that prevailing prayer could now be offered! but there is none. The day for prayer is over; and the prayerful will never more pray for you. Now you may groan out, "Is this my fancied wisdom! Did my ways lead to this! Is this the ruin from which the Lord would have saved me! and to which I rushed so heedlessly and madly!" What will you do! Fly to seek refuge among the pious you once despised? You cannot. Almighty power engaged against you, forbids the hope. Escape the wicked one? You have served him, you have done his will in sin, or in wicked neglect of the Saviour, and you cannot escape him. Will you repent? pray? Ah it is too late! Now you may pray. You may go to Christian

friends or Christian ministers, or search the sacred page for instruction and advice; but then you cannot. Go you must into your dismal prison. Oh the groans of your sinking despairing soul! You may laugh at these things in health and strength, in the present world, though God himself has said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."<sup>1</sup> In hardened sin, or trifling folly you may laugh while here; and treat these awful truths as bugbears invented to frighten you; but entrance on the infernal prison will produce, too late, an inconceivable change in all your views of these solemn subjects. When your neglected soul wakes in torments; when round you is the horrid glare of hellish fire; before you the dreadful forms of hellish tormentors; on you all the wrath of God; and in you all the tortures of despair; then will you know what it is to go into the deep you dread so little here. When God has left you, when Christ has left you, when mercy has left you, when there is not one to pray for you, none to fan your false hopes, none to amuse you, then will you know what it is to neglect the Saviour, and sink into the dreadful deep of hell! O awake! awake! and flee from the wrath to come. Awake! awake! and welcome the Saviour of the lost!

12. If you will not listen to this entreaty, O hear one warning more. According to the views given from God's word, your ruin will be endless. The writer once travelling, fell into company with a young man, just released, after eighteen months' confinement, from a well-con-

(1) Psalm, ix. 17.

ducted English prison ; whose governor was distinguished for kindness to his prisoners ; yet this young man remarked, that it seemed to him almost like heaven when out of gaol, to walk about the streets of the town. It was remarked to him, that a prisoner might come out of an earthly prison, but if he went to hell he would never be delivered. A poor negro made the same observation to a number of his countrymen. "If you go to gaol you soon will come out again ; if you go to hell you never come out." Now is this so in your case, as in the case of other impenitent transgressors ? Not only is hell everlasting, but if you go to it, it will be *everlasting to you* ? And can you dwell with devouring burnings ? can you dwell with everlasting fire ? What would you not, when too late, give for even a moment's respite ? Will one moment come through endless years, in which a lost soul will not view, with bitter remorse, the day of salvation wasted ! Will one pang be felt, amidst the sufferings of a whole eternity, that will not bring to remembrance mercy abused ; grace despised ; Christ neglected ! salvation slighted ! and sin and folly preferred !

13. Ere this warning close, O reader, again be entreated to think of the agonizing reflections that will force themselves upon you, if by neglect of salvation you sink yourself to final ruin. When help is at an end ; when they who prayed have done praying for you ; and they who wept have done weeping for you ; when the Christian has ceased inviting you ; and the minister yearning over you ; when the Saviour has done waiting on you ; and even the wicked one has done tempt-

ing you, because his end is answered, and no one can save you ; then how will you contemplate the past ! How many were your mercies once ! but they are over. You had convictions ; they are stifled and past. Invitations ; they have ceased. Hopes ; the last glimmering of hope is gone. You heard sermons ; they are ended. You had days, weeks, years, sabbaths of mercy ; they are all finished. Many would have had compassion on you ; the Father pitied you, and called you to himself, but he has ceased to call. The Son died for sin, and invited you to come to himself for happiness ; but he invites you no longer. The Spirit strove with you ; but he has ceased to strive. Ministers preached to you, and displayed the wonders of redeeming love ; but they have ceased to bring to you the message of salvation. The followers of Christ longed for your conversion ; but their anxious solicitude is ended. These mercies followed you through successive periods for many years. Of many it may be said, " You had all these blessings in youth. Then the Spirit strove with you, then the Saviour's love was displayed to you ; but the Spirit stroved, and the Saviour invited you in vain. The years of youth passed ; its latest day departed, and left you unconverted, even further from God and happiness, than when its opening morning dawned upon you. Then came riper years. Through these too the Saviour's love was slighted, and eternal life disregarded. They ended, and left you further from God than ever. Then, perhaps, came the declining years of age, and, like those of youth or middle life, passed unimproved away. Through

all these periods mercy followed mercy, sabbath succeeded sabbath, blessings trod, as it were, upon each other in constant succession. One invitation was scarcely rejected before another was given. One year of abused privileges hardly ended before another commenced. But at length the last arrived, and the last departed unimproved. God called for the last time, and, like all his former calls, the last was disregarded. The Spirit strove for the last time, and was for the last time resisted, and left the heart for ever. The Saviour for the last time displayed his love, and offered his salvation, and, like all the rest, this last display was vain. The harvest passed, the summer ended, and you are not saved.

Not saved! What horrors those few words express when descriptive of the state of an immortal spirit fixed in the eternal world! Not saved from the ruin of the fall! from the curse of the law! from the captivity of Satan! from the wrath of God! from the load of sin! from the torments of hell! O reader, should this ever be your condition, vain then will be anxiety and remorse. Vainly will you wish you had your time again. Vainly will you exclaim, "O those mercies! those neglected mercies! could I have them again I would trifle with them no more! O those sabbaths! those broken sabbaths! that they could but once more return, and bring the blessings they offered heretofore! O could I have those wasted years again! and hear one invitation more to the compassionate Saviour! Shall I not have one!" No, unhappy creature! not one! God called, and you refused. When Esau despised his birthright, and afterwards fel\*

his loss, he wept and prayed, "Hast thou but one blessing for me, my father! bless me, even me also, my father!" but vain were his entreaties. "He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears;" and equally vain hereafter will be the agonizing cries of all who trifle the day of grace away.

14. The subject of this chapter, if considered aright, is full of instruction to the most pious, as well as to the irreligious. While the ungodly should think of hell, that they may feel their danger and flee from the wrath to come; the pious should remember hell, that they may recollect what was once their desert, and what are their infinite obligations to redeeming love. If you are a Christian indeed; if you are a partaker of grace; if you are delivered from all fear of everlasting death, and can even read in the brightest characters your title clear to mansions in the skies; even if all this is your happiness, still forget not the awful subject of this chapter. Stand as it were on the edge of the infernal pit, and, in your meditations, look down into that abyss of guilt, and shame, and woe; then reflect, What must be the evil of sin that has deserved such a doom! *deserved* it, for a God of boundless love would never inflict such punishment if not deserved! If sin had not deserved the doom, justice as well as compassion would forbid its infliction. Has sin therefore deserved this dreadful doom? is this death, not an arbitrary and unreasonable punishment, but its *wages*? then what must be its evil! How little can we possibly comprehend the malignity of sin!

But, Christian, look down into that abyss again, and bring the awful subject nearer to your own bosom. Not only had sin deserved this doom, but each may confess, "I had deserved it. I as a sinner had merited this dreadful wrath. O wretched condition! wretched past imagination! But I am delivered. O what a deliverance! how stupendous! how precious! how incalculably valuable! how inexpressibly great! Had I to linger for a year in pain, how welcome would have been relief! Had I to linger for ten, for fifty years in misery, how welcome would be a deliverer, that should save me from fifty years of pain! how great would be my obligations to him! had I been doomed to toil in the deepest poverty for fifty years, how much should I owe to a benefactor that might relieve that poverty, and give me fifty years of wealth and plenty, instead of fifty years of penury and want! Had I been doomed to spend fifty years in some horrid dungeon, how much should I feel indebted to him, that might open my prison door, and make those years, years of rapturous freedom, instead of miserable captivity. But I was doomed to a prison worse than earth's most dismal dungeon, and doomed to spend not fifty years only, but eternal ages there. There I must have endured eternal heart-ache, and eternal poverty. But the Saviour delivered me. He has given me hope, instead of despair; heavenly wealth, instead of hellish poverty; and all the blessings of the Father's favour, instead of all the terrors of his justice. What do I not owe him! Such a salvation exceeds all human comprehension, and much

more transcends all earthly praise. Yet never can I feel the value of that salvation aright, nor my obligations to its Author, but when I feel from what a hell he has snatched me ! and to what a heaven he would raise me !

## CHAPTER X.

### DECISION AS TO RELIGION URGED BY THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEAVEN.

1. Most pleasing are the representations furnished in the undecieving word of God, of the blessedness of those who rest in Christ. "Absent from the body," they are "present with the Lord,"<sup>1</sup> and enjoying intermediate blessedness, while their mouldering dust lies, unconscious that it once was man, in unknown and forgotten graves. It is pleasant to think of those, who, in past ages, trod the paths of humble piety. Where are they, who formerly in deep poverty loved the Saviour, who were unnoticed and despised, who lingered in chambers of affliction, and wasted away on beds of suffering ? or whose course if not so afflictive has long since ended ? Where are they ? where they are no longer poor or despised, suffering or mortal. They have entered into rest, and "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."<sup>2</sup> They had their trials ; but these are ended. They had their pains, and fears, and tears, their days of languishing and hour of dying, but all this is over ; "the former things are passed away." They had dangers, but

(1) 2 Cor. v. 8.

(2) Rev. xiv. 13.

these are escaped; temptations, they are vanquished; conflicts, but the warfare is ended, and the victory sure. They were weak, but received strength sufficient to reach heaven. Their Father chastened them, but the last chastening is over. Their Saviour led them through trying scenes, but the last is ended. They felt unworthy, yet are glorified. The "work of faith and the labour of love" are finished. The "patience of hope" has endured to the end, and is no longer needed. Satan tried all his arts to undo them, and was baffled. The world employed all its snares, yet all were escaped; sin made all its assaults, yet all were overcome. Blessed was the day, when they were brought to the Saviour's feet! more blessed that when they landed in the skies! "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."<sup>1</sup>

2. Consider that *without decided piety, you cannot possibly become a partaker of the blessedness of heaven.* Far more reasonable would it be to expect the king of England to fill his palace with condemned felons, than for you to hope for admission into heaven, if you continue a stranger to the Saviour's grace. Could you persuade some timorous friend, to admit blood-thirsty tigers and poisonous serpents into his chamber? Not for a world. Yet it would be more easy to effect this, than to prevail on the holy God, to admit an unpardoned and impenitent trifler into heaven. But should heaven be lost to you, all is lost for ever.

3. Heaven is described as the Christian's future

(1) Psalm, cxv. 1.

happy home. Many expressions are employed to furnish some faint ideas of its excellence and blessedness. It is represented as "a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God."<sup>1</sup> A city adorned with unutterable splendour, whose walls are founded on precious jewels; whose streets are gold; whose gates are pearl, and whose light is the glory of God. These images are designed to represent the glory of the heavenly world. To it will apply the prophet Isaiah's expressive language: "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."<sup>2</sup> Heaven is represented as a "better country," purposely provided by God for his redeemed;<sup>3</sup> as a kingdom which he delights to bestow upon his children;<sup>4</sup> a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.<sup>5</sup> It is described as the Eternal Father's house,<sup>6</sup> in which are many mansions; dwellings of peace, of tranquil, and continued stay; and in that happy home, in the presence of God, "there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. Contemplation on the blessedness of that

(1) Heb. xi. 10. (2) Is. lx. 18—20. (3) Heb. xi. 16. (4) Luke, xii. 33.  
 (5) Matt. xxv. 34. (6) John, xiv. 2. (7) Psalm, xvi. 11.

better country, may be assisted by viewing the excellencies of the present world; and by considering that this was formed for a span of time, that for eternity itself! This world displays its Creator's eternal power and Godhead, and wisdom, and love. How beautiful and goodly are many of its scenes! The verdant spring with all its flowers; the blooming summer with all its promise; and the autumn with all its fruits; valleys green with perpetual herbage; fields covered with corn; hills crowned with woods; mountains piercing the skies; streams fertilizing the plains; and rivers pouring their torrents to the ocean, perpetually flowing and never exhausted; stupendous oceans always full, yet never extensively overflowing; the opening morning, and the calm evening; the sun by day, diffusing light and warmth from age to age; by night the moon and stars shedding a feebler but more solemn light; the land and the water abounding with numerous creatures, supplying food, or ministering to the comfort of mankind. All this, with much besides, shows forth the might and goodness of the world's great Creator. Yet the world thus adorned, and crowned with good, was formed for man's accommodation, through a short period of time, a period that, compared with eternity, is like nothingness, what then must be the eternal world! What shall we suppose the beauty and glory and splendour of that country, which is designed to endure through eternal ages! If the inn for dying pilgrims be so magnificent, and princely, so full of excellency and glory, as this creation is; what must be the palace of the

Eternal King, in whose many mansions his beloved shall reign in joy and immortality!

An early Christian writer has a soliloquy to the following purport: "O Lord, if thou for this vile body of ours, givest such great and numberless benefits from the firmament, from the air, from the earth, from the sea: by light, by darkness, by heat, by shade, by dews, by showers, by winds, by rains, by birds, by fishes, by beasts, by trees; by many herbs and various plants, and by the ministry of all thy creatures: what manner of things, how great, how good, and how innumerable are those thou hast prepared in our heavenly country, where we shall see thee face to face! If thou do such great things for us in our prison, what wilt thou give us in our palace! If thou givest so many blessings in this world, where the righteous and the evil are mingled together, what hast thou laid up for those who will be all righteous in the world to come! If thine enemies and friends are so well provided for in this life, what shall they who are all thy friends receive in the life to come! If there be such great comforts in these days of tears, what joy shall there be in that day of marriage! If our prison contain such great treasures, what shall our country and kingdom do!"

5. The fulness of joy of the redeemed, springs from various sources. One important part of their happiness, yet in reality the lowest part, is, exemption from all evil. Mere exemption from evil is not positive delight, and must be regarded as the lowest portion in the scale of heavenly blessedness; yet it is the source of varied and

unspeakable good ; and what then must be the nobler blessings of the redeemed? Were all evil banished from this world, even this would be a Paradise. Were pain and sorrow and sin extinct, were disease and sickness unknown, were no groan or sigh ever uttered, and no tear ever shed ; even earth would form a kind of imperfect heaven. But all this, which will never be realized here, is realized above. The scriptures declare respecting the redeemed, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."<sup>1</sup> "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away."<sup>2</sup> "And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him."<sup>3</sup> What varied and inconceivable good will flow from such entire exemption from all evil ! The cares and anxieties incident to the present state, no more distress those happy conquerors. God has wiped away their every tear, and dried up every source of sorrow. They have no toilsome days, no wearisome nights. The head never aches, the heart never throbs. Pain and sickness are alike unknown. Instead of feeble, emaciated, withered forms, all are beheld happy beings, vigorous with immortal health, and clothed with celestial loveliness. Here the loveliest

(1) Rev. vii. 16, 17.

(2) Rev. xxi. 4.

(3) Rev. xxii. 3.

fade, like a flower; but the flowers that fade on earth, if once transplanted to heaven, will there never fade more, but will bloom through everlasting ages in unwithering beauty. With pain and sickness, death too will cease. When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortality immortality, death will be swallowed up in victory. The sublime language of the Redeemer will be accomplished: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."<sup>1</sup> There shall then be no more death; no more will that last enemy daunt the children of God by his approach, nor will they ever again dread his power. The languors that precede the hour of dissolution will never be felt; the painful separations that death frequently occasions, will never be known. None will be summoned by death to leave the friends they love, or the happy country where they dwell.

6. The state of the blest in heaven, is a state of perfect safety. This world is a scene of danger, and of frequent conflict. In all its changes and in all its states, temptation is found. Prosperity tempts the soul to love the world; adversity, to repine at the dealings of God. Youth and age, poverty and wealth, health and sickness, have all temptations peculiar to themselves. Even the zealous discharge of Christian duties, and the possession of elevated Christian graces, may be connected with temptations to those odious sins, self-righteousness and pride. And, while in every circumstance temptation may

(1) Hos. xiii. 4.

exist, the great enemy of God and man, "like a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;"<sup>1</sup> but in heaven no inward corruption distresses the soul; no anger, no shame, no envy, no ambition is ever felt. No temptation harasses the redeemed. They left danger and sin behind when they left the precincts of mortality. Now, tempter! grieve that peaceful soul that once was harassed by thy dire suggestions; once more break its peace, and rob that humble conqueror of sweet tranquillity. Ah! thou canst not: the peace of earth might be interrupted by hellish arts; but not the peace of heaven. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest."<sup>2</sup> The sufferer has forgot his sorrows; the endangered is for ever safe. Here Christians struggle for important victory; there they possess the crown and wave the palm of triumph. Here Christians run the race that is set before them; but there the race is ended. Here they are, as it were, on a battle-field, struggling against numerous foes for life and immortality; but "there are no fields of battle there." Here they are tossed on a stormy sea; there in the pleasant harbour. In that better country they hear no complaints, shed no tears, dread no dangers, feel no corruptions, anticipate no evils. Instead of sin, there is holiness; instead of danger and temptation, safety; instead of weakness, strength; instead of languishing, beauty; instead of painful partings, eternal unions; instead of sorrow and death, unutterable joy and never-ending life. They *were* with us, they *are* with Christ; they were in the church below, they are

(1) 1 Pet. v. 8.

(2) Job, iii. 17.

in that above. How great such a change from the scenes of earthly care and labour! from the toils of the factory or the field, the shop or the counting-house! How great to many the change from the company with which they had to mingle in fields or mills, during daily toil, to the company of perfected spirits, and the blessed society of holy angels.

7. The happiness of heaven will be augmented by the perfection and holiness of its blessed inhabitants. The general assembly and church of of the first-born is composed of the spirits of the just "made perfect."<sup>1</sup> The Lord Jesus will "be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."<sup>2</sup> He will change their vile body, the body of their humiliation, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."<sup>3</sup> As they "have borne the image of the earthy, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly."<sup>4</sup> "It doth not yet appear what" they "shall be; but when he shall appear," they "shall be like him, and see him as he is."<sup>5</sup> He will present to himself the whole company of the redeemed, as "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" but "holy and without blemish."<sup>6</sup> He will present them "holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight."<sup>7</sup> He will present them "faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy."<sup>8</sup> How rapturous will be this scene of holiness and happiness! An immense assemblage of happy beings, forming one glorified family, in the presence of their God and Redeemer. Angels and

(1) Heb. xii. 23. (2) 2 Thess. i. 10. (3) Phil. iii. 21. (4) Cor. xv. 49.  
 (5) 1 John, iii. 2. (6) Eph. v. 27. (7) Col. i. 22. (8) Jude, 24.

saints now brethren in Christ Jesus; their abode, their pleasures, their employments, and their character for ever the same. Not one defect among them all; not one blemish in the character of countless millions; not one error in their conduct; not one defective disposition; not one unkind feeling ever experienced; not one unholy thought ever known. Every countenance glowing with heavenly beauty, and every heart full of heavenly love; every eye the index of a soul adorned with all the lovely excellencies of its redeeming Lord. All in their measure resembling him in glory. All like him, and all so resembling him in character and disposition, that his all-piercing eye shall not discern one defect in all his happy family; but even in his sight they shall be unblameable and unreprouable. Happy they who form part of such a family! Reader, shall you be one of its members?

8. All this however does not complete the happiness of heaven. The scriptures describe that happiness as great and varied. There is the noblest enjoyment of God's presence, and the richest enjoyment of his everlasting love. The "pure in heart" "shall see God."<sup>1</sup> "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."<sup>2</sup> "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he

(1) Matt. v. 8.

(2) Rev. xxi. 3.

that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."<sup>1</sup> The blessings of the divine Saviour's love and care, shall eternally enrich his humble flock. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."<sup>2</sup> They shall behold his "face in righteousness," and "be satisfied" when they "awake in his likeness."<sup>3</sup> They have followed the Lord; and shall be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world."<sup>4</sup> They "shall ever be with the Lord."<sup>5</sup> They "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."<sup>6</sup> "Honour and glory"<sup>7</sup> are designed for them. They are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," and if they "suffer with him shall also be glorified together."<sup>8</sup> Their inheritance is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away." It is "reserved for them in heaven."<sup>9</sup> They shall "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away;"<sup>10</sup> a "crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give" to all that "love his appearing;"<sup>11</sup> "a crown of life" given by his own hands to them who are "faithful unto death."<sup>12</sup> The sufferings which they here endure "are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in"<sup>13</sup> them. Long years of affliction upon earth are, compared with their future blessedness, "light affliction, which is but for a moment," and work for them "a far more exceed-

(1) Rev. vii. 14, 15.

(2) Rev. vii. 17.

(3) Ps. xvii. 13.

(4) John, xvii. 24.

(5) 1 Thess. iv. 17.

(6) Heb. x. 34.

(7) 1 Pet. i. 7.

(8) Rom. viii. 17.

(9) 1 Pet. i. 4.

(10) 1 Pet. v. 4.

(11) 2 Tim. iv. 8.

(12) Rev. ii. 10.

(13) Rom. viii. 18.

ing and eternal weight of glory.”<sup>1</sup> “The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”<sup>2</sup> They “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and as the stars for ever and ever.”<sup>3</sup> They shall be pillars in the temple of their God, and “shall go no more out;”<sup>4</sup> but

“Shall bear in those bright courts above  
Inscriptions of immortal love.”

Shall, like pillars in a sumptuous temple, be for ever monuments of his grace who fixed them there, and ornaments to that bright and happy world. Exalted to the highest honour, they shall walk with Christ “in white, for they are worthy.”<sup>5</sup> He will grant them “to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is sat down with the Father on his throne.”<sup>6</sup> “The God of all grace has called” them “to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”<sup>7</sup> The Saviour gives them eternal life, and the end of their course “is everlasting life.”<sup>8</sup> Once fixed thus in their celestial home, they will enjoy in a manner now inconceivable the presence of their God. Of their celestial dwelling, besides what has been already introduced, the scriptures add; “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 17. (2) Matt. xiii. 43. (3) Dan. xii. 3. (4) Rev. iii. 12.  
(5) Rev. iii. 4. (6) Rev. iii. 21. (7) 1 Pet. v. 10. (8) Rom. vi. 22.

do bring their glory and honour into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."<sup>1</sup> "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."<sup>2</sup>

9. How little can the mind comprehend the happiness described in all this expressive, though in some instances figurative language! What is it to see God and dwell with him! What is it to be led by the Lamb to living fountains of immortal blessings! to be satisfied in his likeness! to possess fulness of joy and pleasures for ever more! to enjoy incorruptible and unfading inheritances! and to be honoured with crowns of righteousness of glory and life that never fade away! What is it to possess a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, a glory too great to be described by the boldest expressions heaped on others equally bold, and continued to eternity! What is it to sit down as a happy and honoured conqueror by the Saviour's side! What is all this! and all this additional to other blessings already contemplated! to perfect safety! to per-

(1) Rev. xxi. 22, 23, 24. 27. (2) Rev. xxii. 1, 2. 5.

fect holiness! to perfect freedom from every ill! from every vexing disposition, every unholy feeling, every pain and every sorrow! What is it to *be all this, and possess all this*, not for ages or centuries only, but for periods, compared with whose duration the whole of time, from the creation to the judgment day, would be the twinkling of an eye! Reader, what is all this! No tongue can express; no heart can conceive; but, *you must have it all or lose it all! gain it all in Christ. or lose it all by slighting him!* Many already possess these blessings. They have reached their home. They mingle with better friends than any this world ever gave. They possess what formerly they sought. Eternity opens to them no prospects, but prospects bright with gladness and joy, in infinite succession. And who are these? and whence came they? Some of these were the benevolent possessors of wealth and plenty; but many of them toiled in poverty; yet in poverty they were rich. They laboured in the field or the factory; in the mine or on the road. They wept; they languished; yet in affliction they were blessed. They watched; they prayed; they fled to Jesus; they followed him; and he has fixed them in their heavenly home.

10. You, reader, are now in this world for a little while; and the alternative is before you—religion here, and this blissful heaven hereafter or carelessness here and hell hereafter—religion and eternal life, or irreligion and everlasting ruin. Make your choice. Decide as in God's sight; but know you must decide; and the decision is for eternity. Behold that eternal good, which God in his word, has graciously unveiled to your

contemplation. See those mansions of peace! those crowns of life! that blessedness which flows in an eternal stream! Behold those happy immortals! many of them once poor, despised, and suffering, now so changed! Harken to the praises which they render! to the anthems of delight they sing! Witness their raptures in perfect safety! Belonging to Jesus leads to all this. Will you be his? or will you madly and wickedly refuse? Would not heartfelt piety be gainful to you beyond expression? Would it not be gain for you to dwell with God? to appear cleansed by the Saviour's sacrifice from every crime and every fault? and to be presented by him faultless before his presence with exceeding joy? Would it not be wealth for you to possess immortality? to call heaven and all its blessings your own? to have your low employments changed for the blessed activity of heaven? to have your feeble and soon dying voice raised in celestial praises? Would it not be blessedness for you to mingle, not with earthly but celestial friends? to join angelic bands? their Father yours; their dwelling yours? Would it not be gain for you when "absent from the body to be present with the Lord?" when a hundred years hence forgotten in the grave to be a happy saint in light? Would it not be ecstasy for you to meet the Judge eternal with unmoved tranquillity? to hear the approving sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Would not all this be gain to you? and will you slight it all by slighting Christ? or secure it all by seeking salvation in him? Would you not "be wise for yourself," in counting all things loss

that you may win Christ? Would it not appear that you were so, when welcomed to his kingdom? Then, if some one that loved you, and mourned your departure, could say, "Come back, departed Christian, come again to earth and to us," what would bribe you back? And if such a request could possibly be made, and an answer given, would you not say, "No, it is you must seek to join me in heaven; for worlds should not bribe me back to earth?" and will you embrace religion and secure that heaven? or trifle with religion and secure ruin? *One you must do.* Which will you do? Is it difficult to you to become decidedly pious? Will not eternal life compensate every struggle? Are your enemies many, must your sacrifices be great? still what are they when compared with the blessings of eternity! How small is the loss of what you soon must leave for ever! How rich the gain of blessings you will never lose! How momentary the loss! how eternal the gain! Even now the hope of heaven would give you blessings far greater than any the world can ever give; while you would be looking forward to still greater good hereafter. How sweet now is the anticipation! what will be the possession! "O ye blessed scenes of perfection and peace, shall ye be mine! and mine soon! and then mine for ever! Thou happy heaven! glorious abode! where for me eternal love has prepared a mansion of peace, and where for me elder brethren wait; shall I soon see thy walls of salvation, and thy gates of praise! Ye happy angels! shall I, a poor traveller on earth, soon be equal with you, as blest, as rich, and as safe as you! Thou Lamb of God! once

slain for my transgressions, and now my life, shall I soon, Lord! see thee as thou art, and wear thy lovely image! Shall I have done with toil and care, with worldly labours and earthly sorrows; and all to me be rest, and peace, and praise! the enduring calm and the victory of heaven! Shall all this be mine, when "a few more suns have rolled their cares away." Then what need I fear the trials of this wilderness! To thee, my Lord, and to the heaven thy love has prepared, will I look with many a longing desire. There shall I see thee as thou art. There praise thee better through eternal days.

"Yes, when these lips shall cease to move,  
And death shall close these eyes,  
Then shall my soul to nobler heights  
Of joy and transport rise;  
Then shall her powers in endless strains  
Their grateful tribute pay:  
The theme demands an angel's tongue,  
And an eternal day."

11. If instead of being a decided Christian, you are a vain follower of the world, what is there in all your delights that gives the satisfaction inspired by such a hope! Will you seek it? Some, who love Christ, and are the possessors of this hope, have it indeed amidst doubts and fears; but many with brighter evidence, and all that live to him, will soon possess, in the eternal state, all they anticipated, and more than all. How rapturous will be the shout of praise that will ascend, when all the redeemed of any one period meet in the perfect security and triumph of heaven! there with feelings now inconceivable, will they ascribe their salvation

to God and to the Lamb. The inspired writer says, "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended," the day of grace is gone, but they are saved. What gratitude will fill the soul, while heavenly love is the theme of praise! Every saint in heaven will pay to the Saviour the tribute of praise for salvation. "I had never been here but through thy love. Grace taught my wandering feet to tread the path of peace and life; grace led me on, and grace fixed me here." Happy conqueror, that has done with the imperfect services of time, and commenced the nobler ones of eternity; whose sabbaths all are ended here, but to whom an eternal sabbath has arrived! Will this be your happiness?

If you are a Christian indeed, how deeply should these views impress upon your heart your unutterable obligations to your adorable Redeemer! Contemplate the ruin from which he has delivered you. Contemplate the blessings he has in store for you; and what do you not owe him for such a rescue, and for such treasures, of whose value eternity will be for ever making fresh discoveries! That these blessings should be designed for one so unworthy, and so weak, renders the love still more wonderful, and demands praise and gratitude still more ardent.

12. In the preceding pages your attention

has been directed to scenes of woe, or blessedness, between which the difference is never to be fully comprehended ; but it is eternity which will complete the misery of the former, and the happiness of the latter. When he leaves this world, "man goeth to his long home." Strive to impress upon your heart the truth, that whether your future abode be hell or heaven, it will be a long, an eternal home. You will not long be here. Foes or friends will soon be left behind. Your present dwelling will know you no more. The comforts and pains of life will alike be ended, and alike be insignificant ; but eternity, with all its overwhelming scenes, follows this momentary span of time. Think of eternity. In the light of that amazing duration, what is worth one thought, except religion ? Suppose yourself dead and fixed in eternity ; now what concerns you except salvation ? Suppose yourself dead for a thousand years, that a thousand years had passed since you closed your eyes upon this world ; what now are its concerns, its pleasures, or its pains ? Are they not vain as a broken bubble, and lighter than vanity ? The time will come, when, for a thousand years, you will have been mingled with the dead ; what then will this vain, busy, ensnaring world matter to you ? The leaves that fell from the trees a thousand years ago, are not more insignificant now, than this vain world, with all its interests, possessions, and cares, will then appear to you. But go forward in your thoughts, millions of years beyond that period, and what will the world be to you then ? How blest will

you then be if eternal life be yours! how wretched if that good be lost.

13. Eternity is a duration that is long beyond calculation and beyond comprehension. Think of the years that have elapsed from the days of Adam to the present day—eternity is longer. Think of those that may pass from this day till that when the judgment trumpet shall sound—eternity is longer. Look at the ground adorned with its green carpet, covered with innumerable millions of blades of grass—are the years of eternity as many? They are more—eternity is longer. Look at the leaves that clothe the trees with verdure—are the years of eternity countless as those leaves? They are more—eternity is longer than such a period of ages. Add to these years others as numerous as the drops of morning dew—do these describe eternity? No—eternity is longer. Count the drops of the sea—will their number represent eternal ages? No—eternity has ages far more countless. These, compared with it, are like a drop to an ocean. Repeat these calculations, yet eternity is longer. Millions by millions multiplied, give no idea of its duration; and all the years that human thought can heap together, compared with it, are insignificance and nothing—beyond them all eternity still stretches forth its immeasurable duration. This eternity awaits you.

Eternity is a duration that nothing can shorten, and that never can end. Time has an end; eternity has none. The period daily approaches nearer, when the end of time shall be announced. The last spring that shall cheer the earth with its bloom, will have passed away;

the last summer will have ended; the last autumn have finished; the last harvest this earth shall ever produce be reaped; and the last winter have concluded. Time's last year will have arrived; its last day; its last hour; its last minute; its last moment; and time shall be no more: but no such end will arrive to close eternity. Let thousands of ages pass away, eternity is not shortened. Let millions more, and worlds of millions roll along, eternity remains the same. As long, as blest, as happy or as dreadful and miserable as ever.

14. As it is with the duration of eternity, so it is with its blessings and its sorrows. The joys and sorrows of time have an end; but those of eternity have none. Time brings an end to the Christian's sorrows; but eternity will bring no end to his joys. Did he sigh? there was a last sigh. Had he pangs of grief? there was a last pang, and a last grief. Did he weep? there was a last tear. Had he struggles? there was a last struggle. Did he pine in poverty? there was a last day of want. But in eternity there will be no last joy; no last rapture; no last song of praise; no last thanksgiving for redeeming love. On earth, among Christian friends, time brought a last meeting, and a last parting; a last dying look, and a last farewell: but eternity will bring no last meeting, no last look, no dying eye.

As it is with the pious, thus, but in an awfully opposite manner, it will be with the ungodly. Time will bring to the sinner a last trifling day or festive night, a last pleasure, and a last hour of sinful gaiety; but eternity will bring no last pain, no last sorrow. The sinner's pleasures will end,

but not his pains; his joys, but not his griefs; his gain, but not his loss. O reader, think of this solemn eternity! and in the view of it choose that good part which should never be taken away from you! You may look forward, and in imagination see yourself leaving this world; your funeral over; your body in a coffin, and that coffin in the grave; and after a few years yourself so forgotten there, that no one on earth will know you ever existed; but then you will be in eternity. Before your friends have laid you in the grave, your immortal spirit will have begun to experience the joys or sorrows of eternity. Happy they who enjoy the Saviour's grace! and who, when they quit this world, are welcomed by him to "everlasting habitations!"

## CHAPTER XI.

**SERIOUS QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO NEGLECTORS OF RELIGION; AND THE FOLLY AND INEXCUSABLENESS OF DELAY.**

1. PERHAPS, reader, you are one of that unhappy multitude that still crowd the broad way which leads to destruction; and upon whom all that has hitherto been urged, has been urged in vain. Let the writer then, before he leaves you for ever, earnestly beg your attention to a few plain questions connected with the subjects of the preceding pages, and with your eternal interests.

Is not your soul worth saving? That precious treasure for which the Son of God shed his blood

and whose conversion would raise new joy in heaven, is it not worth your care? If it is, why do you treat that deathless soul as if it mattered nothing whether it be saved or lost, blessed or cursed, to all eternity! Yet this you do, while refusing to commit your all to the Saviour's care.

2. Is not God's love worth having? That love perfects the happiness of saints and angels. In it they rejoice and ever rejoice; and the want of that love insures the hopeless misery of the lost. If the world were yours, you would be an undone creature without that love; and if stripped of every earthly good, would be happy if possessed of that treasure. And will you, a poor dying mortal, that will soon, unless you repent, be a dead sinner, and a condemned sinner, will you treat that love with as much disregard as if it were deserving only of infinite contempt? yet this you do while you will not turn to God.

3. Is God's heaven worth possessing, and his salvation worth enjoying? or is it not? If it is, why do you madly neglect so great salvation, and obstinately slight that blessed heaven? Would you wish God to swear, in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest? and that whoever may enjoy salvation you shall have no part in its blessings? Would you not think this a direful doom indeed? yet is it not as bad to deprive your own soul of salvation, by wicked carelessness, by open sin, or by halting between two opinions, as it would be for God to shut you out of heaven? Rather is it not worse? Will not such a wilful loss of salvation be connected with more bitter remorse and more self-accusing agony, than its loss in any other way could pos-

sibly be? Will it not deepen the gloom of eternal night to remember, that the fair inheritance of heaven was lost to you, not because God was unwilling you should be saved, but by your own sin and folly, because you would not seek salvation.

4. Is the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Saviour and a friend, not worthy of your regard? Perhaps you would exclaim, "God forbid that I should indulge so wicked and horrible a notion!" But while you refuse him your heart, you treat him as if you indulged it; and though you will not say, with your lips, that he is unworthy of attention, yet you, as it were, say this by a careless ungodly life; and by persevering, in spite of warnings and entreaties, in making light of this great Saviour. When you make light of earthly objects, it is of trifles, not of treasures; of persons mean and inconsiderable, not great and honourable: and when you make light of Christ, whatever you may say, or may profess to mean, you are guilty of the horrible crime of treating the Lord of heaven, as if he did not deserve your notice, though you are but a dying worm; and of *practically* despising, as unworthy of regard, the Author and Giver of salvation.

5. Is God's anger so trifling, and his indignation so harmless, that escape from them is not worth your care? You will not assert that this is the case; why then, unhappy mortal, trifle with that dreadful anger? and play, by neglecting salvation, with that fiery indignation? Nothing is so dreadful as the deserved anger of a long patient but incensed God. Though he is love itself to the penitent, who seeks his mercy,

to the careless neglecter he will be a consuming fire; his wrath will burn to the lowest hell. If once the flaming sword of divine justice be let loose against you, hope and escape will for ever be impossible. If once the long gathering tempest of divine wrath, break on your guilty and devoted head, it will "beat upon your naked soul in one eternal storm;" and God will, for ever, "render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" to you, an unhappy worm, because you would not receive his proffered mercy, welcome his beloved Son, and become his happy and obedient child. Oh if, through sin and folly, this should ever be your unhappy lot, you will know too late that all which man esteems most appalling here, is mild and harmless compared with the deserved wrath of a just and holy God!

6. Is it not worth your while to escape from hell? is that place of torment so little to be feared, that you may heedlessly rush into its undying flames? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Will the pleasures of sin, and the pursuits of folly, recompense you for enduring the flames of damnation? Before you rush into those flames try to ascertain. Put one finger in a candle's blaze, and hold it there till the flesh is consumed, and the bones appear. For what would you do this? Not for a trifling reward. But for what would you hold your hand in a fire till it were consumed? or for what would you rush into a blazing furnace to perish in its flames? Would you for the whole world? Yet what is that fire, that would be extinguished in an hour, to the fire "that never shall be quenched?" So surely as God is true, while you slight

religion, thither you are going, whether you mean to win perdition or mean it not; and if you do not turn, there will you soon lift up your eyes in torments. Unhappy mortal! if you should, surely the remembrance of abused mercies and neglected warnings, will complete the bitterness of your cup of misery. Hell, in every view, will be horrid, but surely it will be a dreadful addition to its horrors to be compelled to reflect, "I sunk myself here. I need never have come to this place of misery. God waited on me, but I would not listen. A Saviour died, but I would not give my heart to him. I chose the path of death, and the sorrows that I now endure."

7. What then do you mean in neglecting the salvation of your soul? Perhaps you mean to repent hereafter; but before that time comes, you may be in the grave; or God may have given you over to a hardened heart, and may have no mercy for you. He may have sworn that you shall not enter into his rest. What do you mean? Perhaps you mean to follow the world, and unite religion with its pursuit. Alas! you cannot do this. No man can "serve God and mammon." You may keep the world and hell with it; but not the world and religion with it.

8. Do you mean to perish? Have you made up your mind to sink to hell, to "curse God and die" eternally? No! you have not; you have no such intention. But you might as well design this, as take the way to perdition. You may not mean to perish; but if you slight the Saviour you *must perish*. You may not design to be damned; but if you neglect religion you must. You may not intend to lose heaven and burn in hell; but if

you do not turn to God you must do both. What you mean will weigh nothing at the judgment bar. The inquiry will not be, "Did this sinner mean to go to hell?" but "Did he take the way thither?" "Did he intend to lose heaven?" but "Did he make light of the only Saviour, that could raise him to eternal life?" If you set out on a journey to London, but took a road that led you further from that city, it would be vain to say, "I intend this road shall take me to London," when every step left you more distant than the preceding; and if a friend were to say to you, "Every step you take you are getting further from the place towards which you profess to travel," it would make you seem beside yourself, to be offended with your friend, and to affirm, "I am travelling towards London," when all who knew the road saw you were getting further and further away. Just as vain is it, to hope to go to heaven while you slight the only Saviour; and not to intend to go to hell, while you take the way that leads to that abyss of woe. You might as well at once mean to perish; make up your mind to be lost; and seriously and deliberately choose everlasting perdition; as trifle with God and eternity, with the Saviour and salvation; or live in an undecided state, halting between the Saviour and the world. You could but perish in the former case; and you will surely perish in the latter. If you do not feel your danger, insensibility will not ward it off. While you are without Christ you may sleep; but your judgment lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not.

9. If you do not mean to perish, and if inde-

cision will ruin you as surely as if you did ; Can you be saved as you are? If you are still the character addressed in this chapter, this is utterly impossible. " God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent."<sup>1</sup> Let God be true if every man be a liar.<sup>2</sup> But if God is true, it is not possible for you to be saved without repentance, for the Lord has said, " Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."<sup>3</sup> " The wicked shall be turned into hell."<sup>4</sup> It is not possible, for you to be saved without conversion, for He who is the truth, has said, " Ye must be born again. Verily verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup> Therefore to hope to be saved in an unconverted state, is a desperate and wicked hope indeed. It is to hope something so horrid, that resolution is needed, to bring the pen to write it down. It is, with reverence be it spoken, to hope that the God of truth and love will prove a liar, to save a sinner in his sins ; and to save a sinner *in his sins*, that might be saved *from them*, but *that will not turn to God*. O what a desperate and wicked hope is a hope that includes all this ! Yet this is your hope if you hope to be saved unconverted as you are. Surely Satan has begotten and now nourishes your guilty hope.

10. If you cannot be saved as you are, can you find another way of salvation? Blessed be God ! in the Gospel there is one equal to all your wants and state, but that one you slight. You are not willing to receive the Saviour in his

(1) Numb. xxiii. 19.

(2) Rom. iii. 4.

(3) Luke, xiii. 3.

(4) Psalm, ix. 17.

(5) John, iii. 5. 7.

own way. Is there then another path to heaven? Ah no, "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."<sup>1</sup> The scriptures represent the salvation of every one that slights the only Saviour as hopeless. "He that believeth not shall be damned."<sup>2</sup> "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus:"<sup>3</sup> there is no escape if we neglect so great salvation.

11. If you knew this were your last day, would you continue to slight this precious salvation? If you had reason to believe that when at night you close your eyes to sleep, you would wake in eternity, could you then pursue your guilty course of sin and folly? Yet little as you expect it, this may be the case. Not long ago, the writer knew a tradesman apparently vigorous and to be feared a man of the world, who was on a journey. He spent the evening at an inn. He was fond of company, was cheerful that night and sat up later than usual. In the morning he did not rise, and some one entered his chamber. There he lay a corpse. His bed was unruffled, and he appeared to have died without a struggle; probably while asleep. How solemn the change! Such has been the lot of multitudes, and it may soon be yours. And if it should, with what awful surprise, will eternity open on your unpardoned spirit! Multitudes every morning awake on earth, in one place or other, that before the evening comes have finished their course, and are gone to meet their God. Every setting sun, many are found inhabitants of this world, who before that sun rises again, are fixed

(1) Acts, iv. 12.

(2) Mark, xvi. 16.

(3) 1 Cor. iii, 11.

beyond hope or fear in an eternal state. More than eighty thousand human beings are supposed to pass into eternity every four and twenty hours. How soon among these crowds, may you be one!

12. If God were to number all your sins, and to set them all in array before you, would you say, "I scorn pardon, I will keep them all?" One of them unpardoned would undo you for ever; what will all the load! Yet, if they are not forgiven, God at another day will set them all in array against you. You would not say, "I scorn pardon, I will keep them all." Yet you might as well solemnly and deliberately declare this, as slight the Saviour and neglect his pardoning grace. Were you to be so infatuated as to make such a declaration, you could but keep all your sins; you could but perish in them; and if you will not come to Christ you will keep all your sins; you will assuredly perish in them; and where in the end will be the difference? You would tremble to express such a horrid resolution as that of scorning pardon, and clinging to your guilt; yet you do as bad; and will be as deeply ruined, merely by *neglecting* or *refusing* to yield yourself to the mighty Saviour.

13. If you could have seen the Saviour suffering on the cross, could have beheld his overwhelming sorrows, his bloody sweat, his thorny crown, his pierced hands, feet, and side; and could then have heard him utter the mournful cry, "My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" if after this you could have seen him bow his head and die; would you have slighted his dying sorrows, and still have treated him with

wicked disregard? If God would now present to your view, a miraculous representation of these sorrows of his Son, and would say to you, "Sinner, all this was borne on thy account." Would you say, "I know it was; but I will receive no benefit from it all? I will return this Saviour nothing but ingratitude: He shall be no Saviour to me, nor will I ever be a follower of his?" Surely nothing would bribe you to utter such a declaration; or if you tried, your trembling tongue would hardly be able to express the horrid resolution. But did not Christ die as really as if you saw him die? Were not his sorrows as heavy, as if you had witnessed them? Was not his love as great, as if you had seen its displays? And will it not be the same thing at last, to refuse him your heart in one way as in another? *If that dreadful deed is done, it matters not whether you do it by insulting words, or a careless or ungodly life.* If you do not unfeignedly receive Christ, he is in effect refused by you: *and it is that wicked refusal, not the manner in which it is made, that must seal all your guilt upon you, and undo your soul for ever.* If a physician offered his help to two persons ill of the plague, and one, with insult, rejected his aid, and the other complimented the physician as his friend and benefactor, yet completely disregarded his advice, and slighted his healing medicines, the one would die as much unaided and as certainly as the other. So whether you slight the Lord Jesus Christ's sufferings by open scorn, or slight them by neglecting the great salvation, the effect will be the same. You and the scornful are going alike to the same place of

ruin; though you are taking rather different ways to hell; and what will be the difference at last? If one man suffer death for committing a hundred murders, and another for committing one, the gallows is the same, and death is the same; nor would it avail for the less guilty criminal to plead "I have not sinned to the same extent as my fellow sufferer." So if some perish for blaspheming Christ, and you should perish for neglecting him, the heaven lost to them and you will be the same; the hell incurred will be the same; the death that never dies will be the same; then where in the end will be the difference? O receive Christ entirely, or you can have no part no lot in him!

14. If you had seen the solemnities of the judgment day, could you continue careless of the Saviour's favour? If you had seen the earth burning; the heavens vanishing away; the dead rising; the Judge descending; the millions of the saved exulting in his favour and lifting up their heads in triumph; the millions of the lost wailing in utter despair, and longing to be hidden by burning hills and melting mountains, would you then make light of the Saviour's grace? Would you then say, I will be content to have the pleasures of sin for a season, and after this to stand at the Judge's left hand, and wish for rocks to cover me, and wail in infinite despair? If you had heard the eternal Judge utter to the two divisions of mankind the solemn and decisive words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world;" and "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the

devil and his angels!" could you then say, "I am willing to hear the sentence 'Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire,' if I may but follow the world for a few short years?" Yet you will see all this. "Behold he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him." You will hear the solemn and decisive words of final doom spoken to *you*; and will you not then seek the Judge as your Saviour and your friend?

15. If you could see hell opened to your view; could behold the outer darkness; the burning flame; the tormented captives; the infernal spirits, that toss and howl in misery there; would you then be intent on taking the way to that abyss of agony? If some angelic messenger could say to you "*Look* at those flames, hear those curses, hearken to those groans, these are the curses and groans of neglectors like thee;" Would you say, "And I will join them soon; I will not escape this flaming prison, I will have my portion there?" You would rather tremble with horror and dread lest you should be cast into that pit of despair. Yet you might as well make such a declaration as merely neglect and slight the Saviour. You could but sink to hell if you vowed to go there, and neglecting Christ, if there be nothing worse, will conduct you to the same abode. You cannot see these regions of misery and these sights of woe; but if you continue a careless impenitent sinner, so surely as God speaks true, you shortly *must*. Yes, *you must embrace Religion, or you must shortly see it all*; and more than *see it*, must sink into the pit.

16. If you could see the wicked one, furious

with infernal rage, and could hear him say, "You are mine, you are doing my will; you are accomplishing my purposes, and you will soon be with me;" would you not almost die through fear of dying the slave of such a horrid tormentor? Yet will you not believe God, as readily as Satan? and if you will believe God, you must believe, that while you have no heartfelt piety, you are a child of the devil. You are doing his will in a life of carelessness and sin. He seeks the damnation of your soul; and while you slight Christ, you are accomplishing his infernal desires. Every prayerless day you live; every warning you slight; every sabbath you break; every conviction you overcome; you are doing the will of the wicked one. Could he speak to you, he would tell you to disregard this volume; and to slight all the advice and warnings it contains. And shall Satan have his way? or will you disappoint his hellish desires by turning to God?

17. If looking into the pit of perdition you could hear the lost, amid the wailings of their distress, address you, and say, "We were once like you, and you will soon be like us; you are taking the way which brought us here; and shortly you will join us, and be all that we are now;" could you hear this, would you still go on in carelessness? But will you not believe God as soon as a lost spirit? He tells you in his word, that if you do not turn you must die; and that if you die in sin you will wake in hell; and will you not believe Him? and if you do believe Him, why flee you not from the wrath to come?

18. If you could see heaven, and it could be

said to you, "Follow Christ, and this shall be your home;" would you say, "No, it shall not, I will have hell in preference; let those who like it seek the kingdom of God, but hell and its horrors are my choice?" But is not heaven as truly the world of happiness as if you saw it? and are not many now enjoying its blessings? and will you not as really lose it by neglect, as if you were to say, "I will have no home there?"

19. If you could see the saints in light, could behold their peaceful mansions and unfading crowns, and could witness all their unalloyed happiness; and if one of them could say to you, "Follow Christ, and you will soon be like us;" would you say, "No, I will not follow him; I will never seek either your Saviour or your home?" Would you, for the world, utter in words such a declaration? Yet it will come to the same thing at last, whether you resolve never to go to their home, or live careless of him who would lead you thither. Would such a view, and such a declaration from a saint in light, induce you to seek the Saviour's grace? and will you not seek this, when the God and Father of those saints tells you of a happy heaven; and promises, that if you receive his Son, that heaven shall soon be yours? will you not listen to his words of mercy?

20. If you had not merely *seen* heaven and hell, but had *felt* for one hour what the blest enjoy, and what the lost suffer, would you then think any thing too hard to be endured, or too valuable to be resigned for Christ? Would *one hour spent in heaven, or one hour in hell*, work such a change in you, and will you not let the consi-

deration, that you must pass not one hour only, but *all eternity* amidst the raptures of heaven or the horrors of hell, have any effect upon your mind? Is it not as certain as God's truth can make it, that you must soon be in one or the other of those opposite worlds? And shall this weigh nothing with you? Will you exercise no forethought, when eternal interests are depending? Some insects in summer prepare food for their winter supply; and will you exercise no care, when an eternity without one blessing is before you, unless you secure those blessings now? Will you never so believe in hell, as to have a concern to flee from it, till you are sinking into it, or till you feel its fire? Will you never so believe in heaven, as to seek its blessings till you see those blessings lost for ever, and the impassable gulf fixed between you and happiness? O debase not thus the rational powers that God has given you! nor thus ruin your own immortal soul!

21. Is the service of the devil so good, and honourable, and profitable, that you should be unwilling to renounce it? What is the honour? Perhaps the applause of a few deluded and, in truth, miserable beings, led captive by Satan at his will. What is the gain? A few brutish pleasures, suited to a debased and fallen nature; or a few years of carelessness and trifling gaiety. And is this all that you gain? Yes, all, the very utmost. And what is the gain of Satan's service hereafter? Remorse and despair; wailing and agony; eternal night and the depths of hell. And is this the service you are so backward to leave? And what is the loss connected with this service?

The favour of God ; the love of Christ ; the joys of heaven ; glory, honour, and immortality ; all that blesses angels in light ; all that enriches saints in glory. And will you encounter all this loss, *to all eternity*, for the low reward that Satan's service can give you, through *a moment of time* ?

22. Why then are you so loath to yield yourself to God ? so backward to welcome Christ as your Lord and Saviour ? This is what all the saints in light have done. And why should you be backward to become what all who have been, bless God for eternally, and think they never knew one happy moment till they knew that grace ? Why should you be backward to be what all the inhabitants of heaven approve, and only devils condemn ? The cause is not in God, but in yourself. It lies in your own sinful heart. But what a horrid unwillingness and backwardness is this ! How sad your state while under its influence ! while you are backward to love and serve a God so good and kind ! backward to follow such a Saviour ! unwilling to leave the infernal spirit's service ! unwilling to be holy ! backward to be happy ! unwilling to take the only way that can raise you to heaven, and keep you from hell ! in fine, unwilling to leave all that God hates, and that the devil loves ; and that has already ruined millions ! O, what cause you have to deplore before God this wicked backwardness ! this horrid unwillingness to be pious, and thus be blest ! O, what cause you have for confessing, that your heart is indeed desperately wicked !

23. But perhaps your purpose is *delay*. You

cannot bring yourself to think of always living, and at length dying without God; but you hope to seek him hereafter. You are perhaps young; or if not young, vigorous and full of business; or you look forward to a future time, when you may repent and turn to God. This is a fatal delusion. No time will be better than the present. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."<sup>1</sup> Think therefore:—

24. Have not millions sunk to hell through delaying? Are not multitudes now in hell, that never meant to perish, but only meant to do what you are doing, to delay a little longer? They did so. Some were cut off in an unexpected hour, others grew hardened in carelessness and sin; and the ruin they would not flee from when they might, at length overwhelmed them. O seek religion now! The longer you delay, the more hopeless will be your condition; the more hardened your heart; and the less the prospect of your finding mercy.

25. Have you not delayed long enough already? How old are you? Perhaps you have seen forty or fifty years; perhaps not more than fifteen or twenty. Whatever has been the length of your past life, has it not been long enough for the service of sin and satan? Has it not been long enough for heaping up wrath against the day of wrath? and is it not time for you to awake from the dreadful sleep of sin? As remedies against this delusive evil; consider that—

26. Delay is useless. You cannot expect an

(1) 2 Cor. vi. 2.

easier way to heaven. God will not widen the strait gate and the narrow way, that you and other careless sinners may keep your carelessness, and yet travel in the path of life. He has declared, in passages already quoted, that you must repent or perish ; be converted or shut out of heaven ; turn from sin or be turned into hell.

Do you expect him to alter those solemn declarations ? and to lower his terms of mercy till they will suit your love of the world and folly, your indifference and neglect ? O be not so deluded ! God will not change. It is you that must be changed. If every human being were to slight the proclamation of Gospel mercy, God, notwithstanding all his love, would rather let every human being perish, than change his gracious overtures to adapt them to the vices and the lusts of men. He is the unchangeable God ; and his Gospel is the everlasting Gospel, like its Divine Author, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Nor can you ever reach heaven, unless you are willing to tread the same narrow path of humble piety as martyrs and departed saints have trod. If you want a religion adapted to the taste of worldly men, you may delude yourself with the notion that you possess it, and will then die and find you had "a lie in your right hand."

27. As delay is useless, so it is inexcusable, and connected with dreadful guilt. As you have been reminded, till you are decidedly a Christian you are a rebel, an enemy to God and the Saviour ; and an enemy without excuse, for there is nothing in God to excuse your delays. If he were unkind, unlovely, ungracious, you might have some excuse. If his favour brought no good,

his love no blessings, you might be less guilty in delaying. But you have no excuse of this kind; God is infinitely lovely and gracious. He has been infinitely kind to you; his mercies have been numberless, and his claims upon you are as numerous as those mercies. His favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. There is not one harsh feature in his grace, not one defect in his excellencies, to *justify your neglect of him for a single hour; nor one cause in all he is, to excuse your delay for a single moment.* He has always deserved your affections and service. He has always been worthy of them. He has always justly claimed them, and every hour you delay to turn to him is an hour of ingratitude and guilt.

28. There is nothing in the Saviour, to keep you from closing with his invitations of mercy, and giving him all your heart. In him appears every divine excellence, and all that heavenly goodness, which would win any heart, except a heart embruted by sin, and governed by Satan. If, notwithstanding his goodness, there were any defect in him, to make him less deserving of confidence and admiration, you might have some excuse for delay; but there is nothing. All he has done, and all he is, and all he says, bids you come at once, and makes every hour of delay an hour of guilt, for which there is no possible extenuation.

29. There is nothing in irreligion so good or so gainful, as to excuse your continuing in an irreligious state. Every hour of an irreligious life is an hour of sin, of black rebellion against a good God and gracious Saviour. To have lived many

years in such a state is awful; to refuse to turn from it, and to perish in such a course, is, if possible, still more awful.

30. There is nothing in the devil so lovely, as to excuse your delay in forsaking his service. You do not yourself think there is. Every hellish deformity, every infernal passion, exists in that great enemy of God and man. How inexcusable is that miserable man, or woman, or child, that will not leave the service of this hateful master, for that of a good and gracious Saviour!

31. There is nothing in your own state so good as to excuse your delay. Were you possessed of good friends and great blessings, which by delaying you might keep, but by deciding must lose, there would then be some excuse for your conduct; and though very blameable, you might still be pitiable; but this is not the case. While delaying to turn to God, you possess not one real blessing. You have no Saviour; no title to heaven; no Father there. You have no pardon; no well-founded hope; no bright prospects for eternity. Your state is one of guilt and condemnation, of wretchedness and ruin. O fall upon your knees, and beg of God to bring your mind to decision, and let you delay no longer!

32. There is nothing in delaying itself so good as to excuse you. Delay insults God, who tells you that now is the day of salvation. Is ungrateful to Christ, who became man, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man,"<sup>1</sup> and who cannot too soon possess your heart. It grieves the Spirit of God. It deprives you of comforts, and blessings, and hopes that you might

(<sup>1</sup>) Heb. ii. 2.

enjoy. It prolongs your days of guilt and rebellion; and increases the already heavy load of your transgressions. It hardens your own heart; trains you for hell, and, if you go on, will soon fix you there. O can you find an excuse at the bar of God for that which does all this accumulated mischief, connected with not less aggravated guilt?

33. As thus there is nothing in God or the Saviour, in irreligion or Satan, in your own state or in delaying itself, to excuse you; so there is nothing in your unwillingness to turn to God, that can in the smallest degree palliate your guilt. The cause that you do not come to Christ *lies in your heart*. You are not willing to come to him. But this unwillingness, instead of being an excuse, is the highest aggravation of all your guilt. You are not only careless and wicked *outwardly*, but more wicked *inwardly*; and that is the fountain whence flows your outward wickedness. To delay to turn to God is a great sin; but to delay to turn to him, because you are really unwilling to do so, is a greater. Suppose you knew a child that was continually rebelling against his parents, and disregarding all their commands; would you not think it an aggravation of this child's guilt, if he were to plead, "Father, I disobey you, because my heart is estranged from you. I break your commands, because I have no love whatever to you?" This would be a tenfold aggravation of rebellious conduct. Yet such is your case; you will not turn to God, because you are estranged from him, and this aggravates all your sin.

34. Thus while you delay you are a rebel, and a rebel without excuse. God looks upon you as

an enemy; and an enemy's lot is yours. You are exposed to numberless and intolerable evils; and *you deserve them all*, through your former sins and your present *wicked delay*. O trifle not with the declaration, to which compassion for your soul must give utterance; *you are deserving of hell for every hour in which you delay to turn to God*.

35. While such is your condition, delay is connected with extreme danger.

Nothing keeps you out of hell but God's long-suffering and patience; and how long, while living in such aggravated sins, can you depend on being thus kept? You have not one claim on him to spare you. Can you point to one? You have not one promise that he will continue to spare you, nor one reason justly to expect it. Why should he spare you? that you may sin longer? that you may rebel longer? that you may abuse more mercies? trample on more grace? insult him longer? treat Christ with more ingratitude? grieve the Spirit more? and serve sin and the devil longer? Can you justly expect that God will spare you to do all this? Can you depend on his sparing you to do this, when he sees you unwilling to turn and do any thing else? And though you may be youthful, vigorous, and healthful, he wants not instruments to cut you down. He can in a moment send disease into your frame; stretch you on the bed of languishing; lay you in the grave; and call your spirit to his judgment bar.

This is not all, your state is even worse than this. As has been represented to you in a former chapter, you are, while uninterested in th.

Saviour, a condemned sinner. Then you deserve to be cut down. And while you have no claim on mercy, and while your *desert is judgment*, how soon may the awful doom go forth against you! While you look for life, death may come. God has been merciful and spared you, that you might repent; but, perhaps, this may be the last year of offered mercy. The door of salvation may to you be shut before this year shall close; and should it be so, how changed ere long will be your state! If you still delay, how dreadfully changed! This year then you will meet your God. This year all your hopes will end in black despair; and all your worldly comforts will have fled away for ever. What will you do? Will you yield yourself to Christ? Will you go to a throne of grace and seek mercy to be entirely the Lord's? Will you lay this book down, determined by divine grace to become a child of God? Or will you still delay and die a child of Satan? O decide! O pray to become what you will wish to be for ever!

## CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUDING ADDRESSES—TO YOUNG WOMEN,—TO  
YOUNG MEN,—AND TO READERS GENERALLY.

I. You have been shown that there is no alternative between heartfelt piety and eternal ruin; what is the effect of the truths presented to you? The most solemn and the most important event in human existence, viewed as embracing both time and eternity, is the committal of the soul, with the surrender of the heart, to the Lord Jesus.

Is your soul committed and your heart devoted to him? Then the lost and undone pass from death and misery, and Satan's power and condemnation to hellish horrors, into life, and light, and liberty, and peace, and salvation. Have you thus passed from death to life, and gained every blessing at the Saviour's feet? The contrast is great indeed between what the Christian was when a careless sinner, and what he is when become a humble believer. Sin then unpardoned is now forgiven. Then he had no hope; now every hope is his. Then this life was his all; now it is a comparative nothing. Death was a curse; but now it is a blessing. Then he was the enemy; now is the child of God. Then Satan's slave; now the friend of Christ. Then the heir of hell; but now of heaven. Then in his prospects all was darkness, gloom, and death; now they are bright with life and immortality. All these blessings are enjoyed through an interest in the Lord Jesus. Are all these blessings yours? If so, how memorable is the day when such treasures were secured! If not, how pitiable is your condition while destitute of them all!

## II. TO YOUNG WOMEN

1. What has been written in the preceding pages, has been addressed indiscriminately to irreligious persons of either sex and of any age; but there are some classes that it may not be unsuitable more expressly to address. Let the writer turn first to young women.

My young female friend, are you a stranger to true piety? How sad then is your condition!

Religion is the brightest ornament among the many that adorn your sex. And among females religion finds the greater part of its decided votaries. Women were among the most affectionate and faithful of the disciples of the Lord. They watched beside his cross when his own apostles forsook him and fled. They were last at his cross, and first at his sepulchre. And what they were to the Divine Master, they have since been to his feeble servants labouring in his work. The piety and consistency of Christian females has been a chief source of encouragement and comfort to the ministers of the gospel; and probably of the truly pious two thirds are women.<sup>1</sup> But you, my young friend, want that chief glory of an immortal nature.

Oh, how can you trifle with your God, with your Judge, and with your deathless soul! Perhaps you are so timorous that a flash of lightning alarms you. You would be frightened by meeting alone an ill-looking man upon a lonely road, and yet you can trifle with the terrors of God's wrath and the horrors of Satan's reign. Alas! if you persist in slighting humble piety it may soon be said of you, when dead and gone, "Here lies one who loved the world, but it has left her for ever; who lost her soul for its gaieties and pleasures, and its pleasures are for ever over. Unhappy girl, how different her lot from theirs who loved and followed Christ the Lord!"

2. How many are thus unhappy! Look at a young woman who is openly irreligious. She is false; without remorse can violate the law of

(1) Professor Dwight states, that Jonathan Edwards remarked, that in the American churches about two thirds were females.

truth. She is perhaps profane; was nursed up in sin and loves it. She scorns true piety, and laughs at its restraints. Wretched girl! little does she think to whom she belongs, and whither she is going! Her Lord is Satan, and her home is hell.

Behold a prayerless girl! like the brutes in the field she rises and lies down, careless of the God that gave her being, and before whose dreadful bar she must shortly stand. She seeks no blessings for eternity, and she has none. No heaven is hers; no peaceful rest awaits her. She is without God, and without Christ, and without hope.

See a third! her idol is dress and display. She thinks much of adorning the body, but nothing of adorning the soul. A new garment fills her with delight, and puffs her up with pride; but she slights the robe of righteousness. The body that must soon mingle with the dust is all her care. The soul that must live for ever is utterly neglected. Whose is she? what must she shortly be, when the grave is her home, and her only suit a shroud? Then must that idolized body be a loathsome mass of corruption and decay, hidden from the sight of men; and that neglected soul, without one ornament of grace, must be for ever deformed, and hateful, and hellish amidst the poverty and gloom of perdition.

A few years ago some particulars were related to the writer respecting a young woman who had died just before. This unhappy girl was what thousands are, devoted to the world. The love of dress reigned in her breast. Dress was

her idol. The time for a fair was approaching, and she had a new garment in which she designed to attend its scenes of dissipation. Part of several preceding sabbaths had been employed in preparing some of her apparel, as she usually left this work for that sacred day. On Saturday evening before the fair she was not quite well; the next morning however she attended to some worldly business. In the evening of that profaned sabbath she became ill, and soon sunk into a state of insensibility. Thus she continued till Friday, the day of her anticipated pleasure; but on that day about three o'clock she expired, at the very time when she would probably have been in the fair, had not disease and death disappointed her expectations. Some time before she died the hair was shaved from her head; she was then sufficiently sensible to say, "Not my hair, not my hair, I am tormented in my soul!"

Behold another! She feels convictions of her sin and folly, and listens to pious instructions; but she will not give her youth and herself to God. She goes forward, sinning against light and knowledge, till she gets into a state of hardened indifference. Ah, whose is she? What are her prospects? The God she trifles with will soon cease to pity her. The Spirit she resists will soon cease to strive with her. The Saviour she slights will soon cease to invite her. The heaven she neglects will soon be shut against her. Then what will this poor trifler be for ever?

View one young woman more. She is very different from those already described. In disposition amiable; in conduct commendable. She respects religion, and esteems its friends;

yet she is not its possessor. She is but almost a Christian. Then what is she? still, like others, a perishing creature. What are her prospects? Alas, as dark as theirs. Soon, unless she become a Christian indeed, she must be shut out from that heaven of which she often hears; she must be separated eternally from those whose piety she respects but does not imitate. Unhappy girl, to be so near the kingdom and yet to come short at last!

A pious minister relates that he visited a female on her dying bed, who had indulged false hopes of heaven; and listened to her awful regrets for time past, and to her prayers that she might not die. "I cannot die, I cannot die!" she exclaimed. "My bible will rise up in judgment against me. I've forgotten God and served the world, and now he is taking me away for ever. Oh! I cannot die." Vain exclamations, she could not flee from death.

My young friend, what are you? Is either of these representations a description of yourself? But we will view some of an opposite character.

3. Behold then a young woman whose heart is intent upon winning Christ, and obtaining the blessings of religion. She is humble and penitent; though never immoral, yet in her own esteem the chief of sinners. She is watchful and prayerful while struggling after the Saviour. Whose is she? the Lord's. What is her portion? blessedness; for he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger

and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.”<sup>1</sup>

Behold another. She has gone further in the path of peace. Not only has she come out from the world, and given up its vanities, but she has avowed herself to be the Lord's. His vows are upon her. Her treasures are above. Her home is there ; her heart is there. She is learning of her Lord ; growing in spirit and conduct like him ; looking for him, and following him as her guide to glory. Happy girl ! the treasures of empires are poverty to her wealth ; and all the science of philosophers folly to her wisdom. Now she is “a daughter of the Lord Almighty,” and soon will be his favoured child in his immediate presence.

How wide the contrast between these and those first described ! wide now, but how much wider will it be when the first shall have left the world they love, and the others shall have reached the heaven they seek ! when the first shall have exchanged their dress and their youthful bloom for the shroud, the grave, and hell ; and when the last shall have left their conflicts, their doubts and fears for perfect peace and endless victory ; and shall have exchanged the fading bloom of youth on earth for the immortal glories and unfading beauties of heaven !

To which of these two opposite classes do you belong ? If to the former, by all that is dear to you, be persuaded to listen to the admonitions addressed to you in this book ! and pray for grace to become now what you will else eternally wish in vain to have become, the humble follower

(1) Matt. v. 3, 1. 6.

of the Saviour, and thus a "daughter of the Lord Almighty."

### III. TO YOUNG MEN.

Perhaps the writer is addressing some irreligious young man. If so, my young friend, harden not your heart against the admonitions, that might, if regarded, do you good for ever. Among young men there is much wickedness; much daring wickedness; much open wickedness; and a greater proportion of them than of the other sex are wicked; and they harden each other in wickedness. Thus multitudes act. Every sabbath is profaned. Perhaps its morning spent in the fields, with their dogs and their wicked companions; and its evenings at the tavern or the alehouse; where they are, as it were, uniting to train each other for the pit of perdition; and they too fatally succeed. Were this their object, they could not accomplish it more effectually than they do. Look at the course of many young men. Some are lewd and drunken; the tempters of the other sex, the disgrace of their own, and the destroyers of themselves. Is their state a safe or happy one? Ah, no! it is one of accumulating guilt and constant danger. Many die the victims of youthful lusts. Others meet death in some drunken fit, and are suddenly hurried from the company of the alehouse to the society of devils. So common is this, that frequently, in a single week, the public prints record several instances of persons thus in the midst of their sins snatched into eternity. Lately an account appeared of two individuals riding home intoxi-

cated. One fell from his horse and was killed on the spot; the other fell on him, and was found lying asleep by his dead companion, but so injured as to leave little hope of his recovery. In the same week another public print mentioned, that a waggoner driving down a hill in the dark, heard a noise, and thought one of his wheels was cracked; but looking for the cause, he found that a wheel had gone over a drunkard's head, who was lying on the road, had smashed his skull to pieces, and left his corpse a horrid monument of the effects of drunkenness.

From viewing such characters turn to another. Behold the affected infidel. Though he knows little or nothing, and has perhaps never read the bible in his life, he is too wise in his own conceit to listen to its sacred truths, and dares to despise that book which Milton, and Newton, and Locke, and Washington, and the greatest and wisest of men have revered as divine. He scorns instruction. But what is his condition? is it one of peace and safety? Ah, no. God will bring him into judgment.<sup>1</sup> He cannot live always; nor always sit in the scorner's chair. He cannot always jest at religion. He may laugh now at its solemn truths; but laughter will not drive death and hell away. What is his peace and support? let those who have been like him declare. A devoted Christian,<sup>2</sup> who when a young man was an infidel, remarks, "I was a professed infidel, but then I liked to be an infidel in company rather than alone. *I was wretched when by myself.*"

A visitor to one who had scorned the bible

(1) Eccles. xi. 9.

(2) Cecil.

states, I found him in the full possession of his mental faculties, but much agitated and alarmed by a sense of his great sinfulness and approaching misery. About six months before the time at which I saw him, he had been deprived of his wife by death. To suppress the sorrow occasioned by this loss, he went frequently to a public-house; there he found companions whose mirth caused him to forget for a moment his troubles. At first he was surprised and shocked at their profaneness, but he soon proved that 'evil communications corrupt good manners.' These men were infidels; and it was not long before they persuaded their new associate to imitate their example, in abandoning the profession, and casting off the restraints of religion. On Sunday mornings they met to encourage each other in all manner of wickedness; and on one of these occasions, according to previous agreement, they together committed their *Bibles* to the flames, and vowed never again to enter a place of *religious worship*. 'All this,' said the wretched man, 'did well enough while I was in health, and could 'keep off the thoughts of death.' Now, however, he was stretched on a bed of sickness, and conscious of his near approach to eternity; in this state, forced to reflection, his guilt and danger excited the utmost horror and alarm: despair had taken full possession of his mind. When I spoke to him of the mercy and forgiveness which the most heinous offenders are encouraged to seek through the mediation of a Redeemer, he hastily exclaimed, 'What's the use of talking to me about mercy?' When entreated again and again to 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sin of the world,' he said, 'I tell you, it's of no use now; 'tis too late—'tis too late.' In reply to my exhortation to *pray*, he said, 'Oh! I could pray *once*, but *now* I can't pray;' and after a pause, 'I *will* not pray.' These expressions were subsequently several times repeated, '*I cannot pray, I will not pray.*' Two men having entered the room, whom I understood to have been leaders in the guilty company by whom this poor man had been deluded, he hastily turned his face from them with obvious disgust and terror; and after they had addressed to him some blustering expressions, by which they hoped to rally his spirits, he raised himself on his bed, lifted up his hands, and in the most deliberate and solemn manner called on God Almighty to *blast those wretches to all eternity!* They almost immediately left the apartment, uttering a profusion of oaths. Some time afterwards three others of the wretched men entered, and occasioned a repetition of the imprecations, which it was impossible for any to hear without shuddering.

"After I had been with him about two hours, during which time he frequently repeated such expressions as have been stated, he became quite indifferent to what was said to him, rolling about on his bed, and now and then ejaculating, '*My Bible! Oh! the Bible!*' His eyes were for several minutes fixed on me, but he seemed not to hear the questions and entreaties which I continued to address to him. He then concealed his face by turning it to the pillow; and after having remained in this position perhaps a quarter of an hour, his whole frame was violently convulsed; he groaned, and then again was still; and whilst

I was speaking to the by-standers, he expired. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'"

2. See a young man that ranks not thus openly with the enemies of holiness. He spends his sabbaths in worldly company; on the newspaper, or mere worldly science. He neglects all piety. He lives a prayerless life. In vain for him opens the house of worship, he enters not that sacred place; or if occasionally there, goes in only lifeless form. In vain for him the Christian minister proclaims the tidings of heavenly love. He treats those wonders on which angels gaze astonished, with utter indifference. But what is his condition? Is he safe and blest? Ah, no! Ruin, only ruin lies before him. He is exposed to utter danger, to eternal destruction. Yet he is vigorous, and fears no ill. True; but health may soon leave him. It has left millions once as fearless and vigorous; and they, guilty and ruined, have sunk into the grave. Insensibility lessens not his guilt nor his danger.

Behold a young man different from all these. He respects religion, treats its truths with reverence, its friends with kindness. No open profanity or vice marks his conduct. As far as the outward observance of many divine precepts is concerned, he can say with a young man of old, "All these have I observed from my youth." He is regular at the house of God; and is generally esteemed and beloved. Yet his heart is not given to Christ. He has not surrendered himself and his all to the Saviour. What is his condition? Alas! with all that is so promising, he is still perishing. Though he joins not the scoffer and the

drunkard, still while he receives not the Saviour he belongs to the same wretched family as they. Unhappy youth! with so much that is commendable and promising, yet to want the one thing needful. Unhappy youth! that meets with Christians, yet has himself no part in Christ; that shuns the place where scorners and blasphemers meet, yet has no more interest in the Saviour than they, and is hastening to the same dark dwelling of despair.

3. But see a young man different from all these. He is the humble and devoted disciple of the blessed Jesus. If once a profligate and a sabbath-breaker, he now hates all the paths of sin, and loves the sabbath he profaned. If brought up strictly, he now feels much more than the mere influence of habit or education; he has unfeignedly yielded up himself to God. Religion is the element in which he lives. Prayer his pleasure; the bible his guide; the friends of Christ his beloved associates. Youth cannot beguile him with its delusions. Whatever prospects of opening life are before him, he looks to brighter prospects and to fairer scenes beyond the limits of earth and time. God is his God. The Saviour is his all; and heavenly mansions his expected home. Happy young man! He possesses the good part that shall not be taken away from him.

Which of these very different characters do you resemble? If the latter, give God the praise. If any of the former, ruin is before you. O, flee from the paths of youthful sin and folly! or you will find, too late, that the way of transgressors is hard.

## CONCLUSION.

IV. And now, reader, before this address closes, let the question once more be pressed on your attention, What are you? Are you yet undecided? If so, what have you to object to embracing religion? Would you lose by turning to God? Would it render you unhappy? Would you ever repent of doing so? Can you find another Saviour or happiness elsewhere? If not why continue undecided? Would not committing your all to the Lord Jesus, make this the best and happiest year of your life? Would it not prepare you for all events, to live on earth, or to die and live in heaven? Why then continue but almost a Christian? Why thus be ruined by what ruins multitudes? Probably few expect to perish for ever. Some delusion props up their hopes, till death and eternity sweep all delusive hopes away. Some speak of minding religion, but not, they allow, *as they should do*; when the fact is, they have never from the heart embraced the gospel. Others hope to become pious hereafter. Thus some are undone by one delusion, and others by another. But will you allow the deceitfulness of sin thus to ruin you? The Lord says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate;" and will you not strive when eternal life is depending?

2. Reader, before you are left to God and your own conscience, bear with one more warning against trifling with religion, for trifling would undo you eternally. Only make light<sup>1</sup> of Christ, and you will resemble a criminal whose state is

(1) Matt. xxii. 5.

hopeless and who is left for execution. Only make light of Christ, and your life will be sin, your death despair, and your home hell. You are already a condemned sinner, make light of him and you seal that condemnation. No remedy will then long be presented to you, only make light of salvation, and all hope will be soon over. Nothing worse is needed to ruin you for ever. To be shut out of heaven, only trifle with the Saviour's claims, and the deed is done. Only stop with being but almost a Christian, and you destroy your soul as effectually as you could do by infidelity itself. To sink to hell you need not be a drunkard, or a swearer, or a liar, or lewd, or dishonest, only make light of Christ, and this will sink you there. To live and die laden with iniquity, to murder your own soul with the undying death, you need not keep adding open sin to sin, and transgression to transgression, only make light of Christ, only neglect decided religion, and the deed of destruction is completed, and the soul is undone.

Dying child of man ! what will you be ? whose will you be for ever ? The most important choice you can ever make is now before you. It is not, who shall be your companions, or what your employment for a few short years ; but who shall be your companions, and what your employment to eternity. Will you have a part in the blessings of salvation ? or will you have no part nor lot in the matter ? Will you have the supports of a Saviour's love ? or will you neglect his grace and have them not ? Will you make the choice which under divine grace millions have made and none ever lamented ? or will you not ?

4. What will you be? Decide by God's help now. Your last day is coming; your body will soon be in the grave, and your soul gone to meet its God. If these events were never to come to pass, you might trifle; but they will arrive, and then you will see religion as with other eyes, and feel its importance as with another heart. Will you become a child of God instead of continuing a guilty prodigal? and will you have an interest in his promises and favour? Will you become a partaker of his grace? Shall his everlasting love bless you? O trifle not longer with such blessings! Will you come to Christ and rejoice for ever in heaven? or follow the world and wail for ever in hell? *One you must do, which shall it be?*

O yield yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus become as blest as they that have already reached his heavenly kingdom; thus learn to live as safely, and to die as peacefully. Thus follow him who will teach you to sing the song of victory, and soon unite you to their happy bands. O come! O yield! and when death comes it will be gain; and when you are in the grave, your spirit will be with the Lord; and when you are forgotten in the dust, you will still be with him, and with him for ever.

What will you do? "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."<sup>1</sup> God's message is delivered to you; he waits your answer and the Saviour waits. The question is, Will you be indeed Christ's disciple? What is your answer? the answer of

(1) 2 Cor. v. 20.

your heart? "Yes, Lord, I will!" Blessed be God if this is your reply. You will have to bless him through eternal ages for the grace that inspires this answer, "Yes;"—then Satan has lost his prey and hell its victim! "Yes, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest!" Praise to the Lord! The Saviour is thine, and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over thee, a repenting sinner.

Is it so, reader? is it so? Is "Yes," your answer? Perhaps you say, "I long to be his, but I fear he will not welcome such a sinner." Away with such unbelieving fears; if you are willing, he is more willing: it was his grace that made you willing, and he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;<sup>1</sup> him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out."<sup>2</sup>

But is, "Yes, I will, in the Lord's strength, be Christ's disciple," the heartfelt answer of all the readers of this book? It is to be feared not. Perhaps it is not yours. What then, reader, is your answer? There is no medium between Yes and No; between decided religion and eternal life, and irreligion and everlasting ruin. You are not willing to be quite the Lord's. Then do not deceive yourself; but speak plainly what the Lord regards as plainly done. At once say, "No, I will not be the Lord's." Is this your answer either by words or by conduct? Then for you the Son of God will have no blessings. "No:" then Satan exults, you are his victim still. "No:" then shall you deplore eternally your fatal resolution. "No!" Abide by this answer and your doom is settled, and your damnation sealed.

(1) Matt. xi. 27.

(2) John, vi. 37.















