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## THE CONTRAST.

By Rev. L. B. MADISON, of the Western Va. Conference.

In the following pages, I address myself particularly to the soldiers of the Southern armies; and impelled by an earnest desire to do them good, I beg a careful perusal of them by every one into whose hands this little tract may fall. I know that there are thousands of our soldiers who are always glad to receive tracts, and will read and prize them highly, while I regret to say that there are some who will accept them when offered by the chaplain or colporteur, but often throw them aside without even taking a glance at their contents. This ought not to be so. You ought, my friends, to read them all carefully, as you would a letter from home. They are messages of love sent to you by your friends. They freely contribute of their means to send these little angels of mercy to you, freighted with the glad tidings of salvation, and you ought to appreciate their kindness and heed the admonitions thus given you. I am happy, however, to say, that there are comparatively few, so far as my observation extends, who do not appreciate this kindness on the part of their friends.

Your situation now is very different to what it was a short time ago. You were then in the midst of kind and affectionate friends. A mother's smiles, a sister's affection or a wife's devotion filled your breast with the happiest emotions, and your life was comparatively a life of comfort and happiness; but now no companions but your comrades in arms greet you. You are cut off from all the associations of other and happier

days, and are denied those enjoyments to which you were accustomed before the war. The contrast is any thing but a pleasant one, and I deeply sympathize with you, and with you sigh for a return of peace, that we may all again enjoy that delightful society of home-friends of which we have been deprived so long.

But this is not the contrast which I wish to bring before you for your consideration, striking and painful as it may be; and involving as much interest as it does, it is not of so great importance as other matters to which I wish to call your attention.

I intend to notice something of the life of the Christian, and of the sinner. A most striking and powerful contrast may be seen here. Indeed, there are no two points of resemblance between them in the whole course of life. They are diametrically opposed to each other. Friendship with the world or with sin is enmity against God; and once enlisted under the banner of King Immanuel, we must forever contend against the powers of sin and darkness. There is no medium or half way ground in the matter—we are either on the one side or the other.

The Christian is the child of God. "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." He is devoted wholly to the service of God." He denies himself all ungodliness, and lives soberly and righteously in this present world." In trouble and affliction he looks upward to God, and feels a calm, holy resignation to the will of God. He is patient under trials, and murmurs not at any dispensation of Providence.

The sinner is a child of the devil. He delights in sin. He is opposed to the simple plan of salvation as taught in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He rises up in the morning to sin against God, and all the day long "he rolls sin as a

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sweet morsel under his tongue." He thinks not of God but to blaspheme his name, nor of those things which relate to his eternal destiny. He listens to the voice of the tempter, and heeds the whisperings of his own evil heart, enticing him on in the way of sin, nor regards the admonitions of friends, nor the "still, small voice" within his own breast. He is enraptured, infatuated by the syren song of pleasure that is fast lulling him into an awful security which must end in his eternal ruin.

He may be an outbreaking sinner, regarding not even the moral law; he may revel in drunkenness and profanity; he may be found at the gaming table, risking the earnings of months upon the turning of a card; and he may visit places more fiendish and wicked, nearer akin to hell, if possible, than those we have mentioned. Sin leads a man to many places and by many ways that would perhaps at one time have caused the blush of shame to mantle his features. But you say that you do not belong to this class of sinners, and hurl back the insinuation with scorn and indignation. You *do* respect the moral law; you are not guilty of the sin of profanity; you never get drunk nor visit scenes of disorder and hellish debauchery—never even so much as play cards for amusement—and upon the whole you think you are not so great a sinner after all, and are inclined to think that there is more ado made about religion than is necessary.

Stop, my friend, if you please—not so fast. I did not say that *all* sinners would go to such lengths in sin. I know that there are many who lay great claim to morality and make great noise about it, expecting it to work great things for them, but even they are in "the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity;" and while the contrast with the Christian's life may not be so striking and not so easily seen by the casual, uninterested observer, yet a very great contrast cer-

tainly exists and is easily seen by unfolding the objects, aims and motives by which each is respectively impelled.

You, friend moralist, are depending upon your own righteousness, your deeds of benevolence, your honesty, your strictly upright and moral course of life; but while the Christian possesses all of these as well as you, and to a higher degree, yet he does not depend on them for salvation. He looks only to "the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin;" and throwing all his good works aside, hides behind Mount Calvary and holds up the cross, "all stained with hallowed blood," and pleads the merits of that atonement alone.

Your *heart* is yet unsubdued. You are in possession of the carnal mind, which is "enmity against God," as the apostle plainly declares. You are not born again, and our Saviour explicitly says, "ye *must* be born again." You have none of the mind that was in Christ, and consequently are none of his. The heart of the Christian is made anew. He constantly strives to "grow in grace," and to be nearer and more like his blessed Lord and Master.

And again—examine your heart and motives, and see if you are not impelled more in your course of life by temporal considerations, than by any desire to please God and glorify his name. Now be candid and honest with yourself in this examination. I wish to probe down to the bottom of your heart, and if possible lay open its blackness, corruption and deceit to you, that you may see what sort of a creature you really are. Is it really through respect to the Divine requirements that causes your morality and prevents your going to greater lengths in sin? or is it not rather through respect for yourself? You know that your reputation is at stake, and that the vile wretch who is guilty of the abominations mentioned above loses the respect of the good and the wise, and is thrown a miserable outcast from society. You could not

succeed in your plans, as well; your affairs would not prosper so well; and you would in all probability become poor and troubles would increase. I am inclined to the belief that the glory of God is very little consulted by the moralist who adheres so steadfastly to his good works, and pleads them as being a sufficient ground to expect the ultimate favor of God and a home in Heaven.

The Christian's first and highest aim is to glorify God. He labors for the advancement of His kingdom in the earth, and "strives to let his light so shine before men, that they, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father in Heaven." If in an evil hour he listens for a moment to the voice of the tempter and does something which may bring reproach upon the cause of Christ, he is filled with shame and remorse as soon as he reflects upon what he has done—not so much through fear of punishment as the knowledge of having displeased God.

When the moralist commits some sin which may alike dishonor God and himself, he is concerned, not because he has offended God, but because he has lowered himself in the estimation of other men, whose good opinion he wished to maintain. It cannot be otherwise. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and no man can know it until the reflection of the light of Divine grace shines in upon it and reveals it to him in its deceit and wickedness. The Christian is afraid to trust that wicked and deceitful heart of his, and ever seeks the guidance of God's Spirit.

The moralist glories in his own strength, and thinks he is able within himself to resist temptation, and consequently seeks no help from God, nor acknowledges his dependence on Him. He does not believe that he has a wicked and deceitful heart, the declarations of Divine truth to the contrary, notwithstanding. When told of it, he denies it, and immedi-

ately begins to recount his many virtues. "I am not as other men are—unjust, extortioners," &c., but render to every man his dues, give of my means to relieve the distressed, and contribute liberally to the support of the gospel, &c. Blinded by sin, he thinks there is great virtue in these things, which "are but filthy rags." What infatuation! what madness, to trust in that which has no merit, and which cannot give us the least favor in the sight of God! "O that men were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!"

The Christian enjoys peace of mind. He is not haunted by the fear of death, but rather feels that "to die is gain." He looks forward to death as a relief from the many troubles and anxieties which he endures here, and anticipates a glorious entrance into the city of the new Jerusalem and an eternity of bliss.

The sinner knows not peace. He is constantly harassed with the fear of death. In his most joyful and pleasant hours, the thought of the grim monster arises like some ghastly spectre, and fills his mind with fearful forebodings. He does not think of Heaven as his home. He knows that he can never enter there in his sins, and he loves them too well to give them up. He feels that he has no right to expect any thing but the displeasure of God, and consequently punishment for his waywardness and sin. Such thoughts as these deprive the soul of ease, and fill the breast with bitter stings. But perhaps the most striking contrast is shown on the death-bed. There is no dissembling there. Every one feels then that death and the judgment are stern realities, and the Christian is prepared to meet them. It has been said that

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate  
Is privileged beyond the common walks of life."

And how true it is! Did you ever see a Christian die? Did you notice the heavenly gleam on his countenance? And even when the heart had ceased its pulsations, and the tongue was motionless, and the film of death had forever closed over the eye, and the hands lay still, and the limbs moved not, and a still, awful silence reigned around—the silence of the death-chamber—did you notice that an almost angelic smile lingered over the marble features, as if the cold and lifeless clay was rejoicing with the freed spirit in the paradise of God?

One evening last winter I was asked to go into one of the wards in Chimborazo hospital, where I have been laboring for several months, to see some young men who desired Christian counsel and prayers. In the ward there were several wounded and several sick soldiers, whom I had visited before, and it was some of these who wanted to see me now. As soon as I entered the ward, I was attracted by the most lamentable cries, proceeding from a young man suffering from gangrene, the result of a wound in his foot. "O my mother, my dear mother, my dear sister, if I could only see you again!" and such exclamations as these were made by him in the most touching manner, denoting the greatest anxiety. I immediately went to his side and spoke to him as kindly and soothingly as possible, and succeeded in getting his mind partially composed, when he readily entered into conversation with me. Upon asking him a few questions, I found that he did not expect to recover; and "O!" said he, "I would so love to see my dear mother and sister before I die!" "Yes," I replied; "but knowing that it is impossible under the circumstances, you ought not to think about it so much, and try to be as calm and composed as possible, as the excitement makes you worse." "It is but human nature, sir," said he, "and I cannot help it." Pretty soon I introduced the subject of religion, and asked him how he felt on that subject. "My mind

is quiet on that subject," he answered, "and I am not afraid to die." After talking further with him, and finding that his faith was well founded, he being so ill I thought it best at once to obtain from him his father's address. This done, I asked him if he had any message to send to his parents and sisters. "Yes sir," said he; "tell them that my last moments were spent in perfect peace." I visited him frequently after this, and always found him in the enjoyment of perfect peace. Not a fear or shadow of doubt of his acceptance with the Beloved ever seemed to cross his mind. Sometimes I would ask him, "Have you *no* fears of death?" when his invariable reply was, "None at all, none at all." Thus brightly burned his lamp to the last, reflecting the very light and glory of a future blissful immortality, and impressing us all forcibly with the beauties of that religion that has such comfort in it for its dying votaries.

This is but a feeble picture of the dying Christian. There is a sublimity not unmixed with awe investing such a scene, which is beyond the power of words to describe. But contrast this picture with the following, and tell me which of the young men had shown the greatest wisdom :

In the parlor of the magnificent hotel at the White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, used at the time of which I speak as a hospital for the armies of Western Virginia, lay a young man, pale, emaciated, feeble, suffering from the ravages of typhoid fever, and fast sinking into the cold embrace of death, without a hope to cheer him through the thick gloom that wrapped him, and was fast hiding this world forever from his sight. As thoughts of eternity came into his mind, and knowing that he must soon enter upon its dread reality, he was deeply anxious for his safety, and requested that I should come to see him. Upon reaching his bed-side, he said, "I have sent for you to see if you could give me any instruc-

tion in the way to be saved. I have but a few hours longer to live, and I want to go to Heaven." He told me that he had been thinking of preparation for death for some time past, but had not been able to find peace, having had no instruction, and not understanding fully the plan of salvation. I endeavored to point him to the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," gave him all the instruction I could, and commended him to God in prayer. He was deeply earnest, and did not want me to leave him; but my business prevented my remaining constantly with him, so I visited him at short intervals during the afternoon and evening, giving him all the instruction and encouragement in my power, and prayed with him several times. At my last visit, about nine o'clock at night, I saw that he was rapidly sinking, and I asked his father's post-office, and also if he had any message to send home. "I would like," said he, "if I knew that I could be saved, for you to tell them to meet me in Heaven. My mother and grandmother and some little brothers and sisters have gone before, and I want to meet them there;" and sometimes he would ask, "Do you think it is too late?" In a few hours his spirit was in the presence of his God.

What a difference in these two deaths! This young man may have found peace in his last moments, and I sincerely hope did; but to say the least, there is much uncertainty in such a death.

What a difference in the messages sent home! One so full of comfort and strong confidence—the other filled with doubt and uncertainty. The one was the language of the dying Christian—the other of one who had devoted his life to the pleasures of earth. While the one had been in health striving "to enter in at the strait gate," the other labored only "for the meat that perisheth." Sinner, which proved in the end the wisest course? Let your own heart answer.

Ah, my friend, the death-bed of the Christian presents a powerful contrast when compared with that of the sinner. I have seen the sinner raving and dying, filled with despair, without the least shadow of hope; but I preferred to give you the picture of the death of the sinner in the most favorable light possible. The Christian "leans his head on Jesus' breast, and breathes life out sweetly there;" and we all exclaim:

How blest the righteous when he dies!  
 When sinks a weary soul to rest,  
 How mildly beam the closing eyes!  
 How gently heaves th' expiring breast!

So fades the summer cloud away;  
 So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;  
 So gently shuts the eye of day;  
 So dies a wave along the shore.

While

Scenes of horror and of dread  
 Await the sinner's dying bed;  
 Death's terrors all appear in sight,  
 Presages of eternal night.

His sins in dreadful order rise,  
 And fill his soul with sad surprise;  
 Mount Sinai's thunders stun his ears,  
 And not *one ray* of hope appears.

Tormenting pangs distract his breast;  
 Where'er he turns he finds no rest:  
 Death strikes the blow—he groans and cries—  
 And in despair and horror dies.

But the contrast does not stop here—it reaches beyond the grave. We may not lift the veil that hides futurity from our eyes, and see the full bliss of the beatified saints; or upon the other hand gaze upon the writhings of those miserable lost sinners that people the regions of endless wo—nor are we

able to conceive the bliss, the glory, the felicity that the saints in light enjoy in "our Father's house;" and it is equally impossible for us to imagine all the horrors that seize upon the guilty soul when it has received the sentence of eternal banishment from the presence of God—yet revelation teaches us enough for us to know, in order to make Heaven more desirable than all else besides, and to cause us to try to shun hell.

The case of the rich man and Lazarus is in itself sufficient to show us something of the "wide extremes 'twixt heaven and hell." Widely different in their manner of life, in death, and even in burial, they still remain separated in eternity. "Lazarus died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom," there to "banquet forever on celestial bread." The rich man also died, and alas! in hell he lifted up his eyes, and seeing Abraham afar off with Lazarus in his bosom, he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and 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 a difference in their conditions! A short time ago, a rich man, "faring sumptuously every day," now *too poor to buy a drop of water*. A short time ago he probably would have disdained to speak to the beggar at his gate, now begging a favor from him, and apparently how small a favor! Who of us would not give even a cup of water to one in distress? But this favor cannot be granted. He must suffer in the horrid flames, and Lazarus no longer a beggar, but rich in eternal glory. What a change, too, for him! how glorious! how sublime!

And this is not all—it is an *eternal* contrast. The happiness of Lazarus must increase to all eternity, and the misery of poor Dives will not decrease while eternal ages roll on. Alas for any one who chooses this world for his portion and rejects the blessed gospel!

Now, dear reader, you have looked upon the two pictures, but poorly portrayed—for the half has not been told you—and it only remains for you to decide which you will choose as your ground of action. You must figure in one or the other. You must live the life of the Christian, die the death of the Christian, and enjoy the heaven of the Christian; or else you must live the life of the sinner, die the death of the sinner, and endure the hell of the sinner! Choose between the two. You have life and death before you. "Choose ye this day whom you will serve."

In what confusion earth appears—  
 God's dearest children bathed in tears!  
 While they who heaven itself deride  
 Riot in luxury and pride.

But patient let my soul attend,  
 And, ere I censure, view the end:  
 That end how different!—who can tell  
 The wide extremes of heaven and hell?

See the red flames around him twine  
 Who did in gold and purple shine;  
 Nor can his tongue one drop obtain  
 T' allay the scorching of his pain.

While round the saint, so poor below,  
 Full rivers of salvation flow;  
 On Abrah'm's breast he leans his head,  
 And banquets on celestial bread.

Jesus, my Saviour, let me share  
 The meanest of thy servants' fare:  
 May I at last approach to taste  
 The blessings of thy marriage feast.

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