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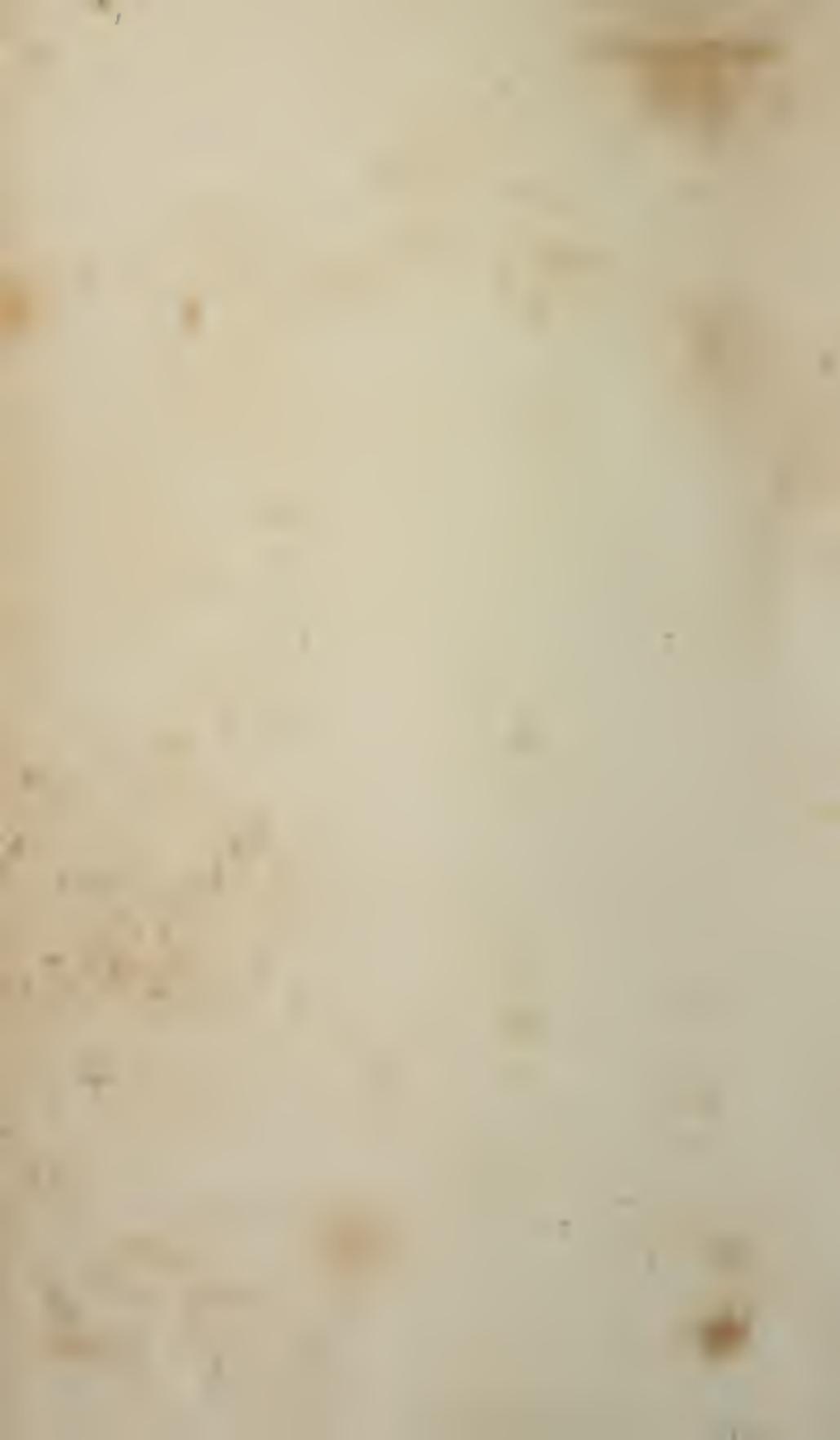
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COMMUNION
HOURS

By E. W. Barlow

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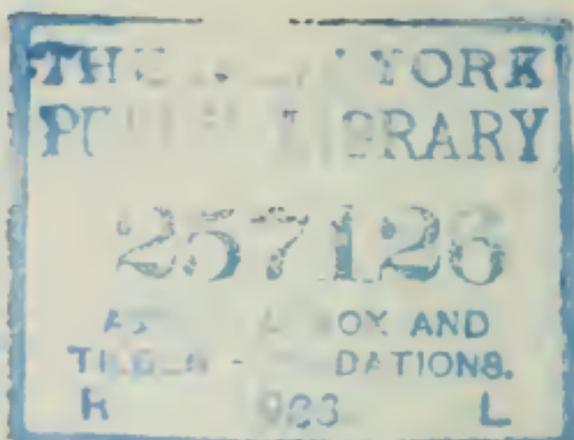
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

H O U R S
OF
C O M M U N I O N .

BY
EDWIN H. CHAPIN.

Abbott

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PREFACE.

THIS little work, it is hardly necessary to say, is entirely practical in its character. The author humbly hopes that it may be an agent, to some extent, in inducing that *spiritual culture*, that *growth in individual goodness*, which is the great end of all preaching, and the chief result of religion. What is meant by its title, "Hours of Communion," he has explained more specifically in the last chapter. It indicates that self-communion, and that communion with Christ, which are so essential to the formation of a truly religious character. That this is a great object, nay the greatest of objects for which mortals can strive, no serious-minded person will doubt. To this end it seems proper that, in the midst of this busy life, there should be seasons of thought and devotion—times set apart

for reflection upon topics which pertain to our highest welfare, to Christ and to God. At such times, this little book may be near when there are not better and more elaborate works of a practical religious character at hand; and may discharge a good office in suggesting thought and leading the mind out into a profitable train of reflection. Especially is it deemed appropriate for those seasons which may precede or follow the administration of the Lord's Supper. The author is not satisfied with the brief season which is allotted to that ordinance in our churches. He deems that a forenoon, or afternoon, should be devoted to it, and that it should be substituted for the regular public service of that portion of the Sabbath. Then there would be time for thought, for suggestion, and if the heart should muse until the fire burn, for speech and for conference upon those themes which pertain to that celebration of the life and death of our Saviour. But we have here no space to discuss the propriety of this method. Suffice it to say, that we can have such seasons of thought and communion at home before we enter upon the

public service, or after we have left it, and it was deemed that at such seasons this little work might be useful.

Of course the author does not expect that he has imparted anything very new, much less exhausted or even touched upon all the topics appropriate to such a work. Neither does he think that a lack of such works makes this little book necessary. But it may be in the way when other books of the same kind are not, and do its share of good; and it may suggest more and greater thoughts than it expresses. There is no special connection between the chapters. The book is fragmentary and indeed desultory.* But may it do something for God's glory and for human welfare! May his blessing rest upon it, and go with it!

E. H. C.

CHARLESTOWN, Nov. 18, 1844.

* It is proper to say that one article—"The Cross of Christ," has been published before, in a religious newspaper. But it was not deemed improper to insert it here.

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AN ARGUMENT FOR CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

“And he is the head of the body, the church.”
Colossians i. 18.

CHRIST “is the head of the body, the Church”—who, then, are the members? All who draw life from him—who are spiritually united with him. Union between the head, the body, and the members, is of itself of no worth, if there be not *life*. Indeed, as all sympathy and correspondence are dead without it, there is, in fact, no union. Christ may be said to be the head of the body, the Church, not merely because of his preëminence, but because he is the source of vitality. That vitality is the essential *condition*, as well as *bond* of union. The dead body and the living body differ in this respect—the one has life, a spiritual principle of commun-

ion, running all through its members, and connecting them sympathetically together—the other has equally fair proportions and harmony of organization, but it lacks the *life*, the spiritual principle of communion and sympathy. The great essentials of church-membership, then, are life and communion with Christ. If these be secured, if these be cherished, it is a secondary matter what church we belong to—or whether we belong to any church. Inwardly, spiritually, we belong to the Catholic Church, the Church Universal, of which *good men*, of all creeds, are members—the only true church—the church that shall endure when all human organizations have been dissolved—when earthly temples shall be no more needed—when the imperfect union of sense shall be lost in the full discernment of the spirit, and we shall commune more directly with the Father.

We say, then, if this life and communion may be secured, the organization to which we belong is a secondary matter. We shall not broach the controversy whether these can be secured without some organization, but

proceed to say—that they may be *best* secured in that way. There is such a body as the Church of Christ. Its members have already been specified as consisting of all good and Christian men and women—those who possess the disposition of Jesus—which they only can by communion with him—that is, by sympathy with his spirit, by imitating the goodness which he exhibited. Those, who live from the Christian Ideal, who make Christ's law—by him both spoken and lived—their supreme standard; these form the Church of Christ. It is, essentially, a spiritual distinction and privilege.

But how are this distinction and privilege to be obtained? We answer—by the use of *means*, by material agents, by ordinances. Men are prone to two extremes—a rigid formalism, and an abstract spiritualism. Neither position is right. We are not all matter. We are not all spirit. Matter and spirit, so far as they are available to us, exist together, act and re-act upon one another; nay, who shall draw the line of separation between them? Spirit is never manifest to us without matter—there is no matter in which

spirit cannot be traced. Nay, if it should be true even that matter is only a form of spirit, yet spirit, for its manifestations and for its efficacy, is dependent upon matter. To what conclusion does this course of argument lead, then? To this—that in order to be members of the *spiritual*, the true Church of Christ, we must seek the distinction and the privilege of membership by material agents—by forms and ordinances. Not that these forms and ordinances need be in every case alike; and this seems to be one error in such church establishments as claim the exclusive privilege of communion with Christ, and make it dependent upon peculiar forms. But thus much may be safely said—that we cannot be members of the Church of Christ by spiritual action exclusively. By inward sentiment and musings, by spiritual ecstasy, by rapt absorptions of soul, by these exercises alone we cannot have full evidence of discipleship. If we have the true spiritual life within, the genuine evidence of church-membership, we must, we will exhibit it in deeds—in outward acts. Moreover, our affections are excited and deepened by external things;

we acquire new motives from outward circumstances.

But if we thus admit the efficacy and the necessity of externals, why not admit the efficacy and necessity of the church organization? It gives us a form to act through, and it re-acts upon us. We may have the soul of discipleship, but we must also have a body—even the outward and visible church. We have within us good sentiments and right affections, but these need to be strengthened. The Christian may know that he has the approval of God—he may be conscious that he has within himself communion with and life from Christ; but he must remember that he has to act *outwardly* as well as *inwardly*—that he has to secure his Master's honor, and build up his Master's kingdom, not only in his own soul, but in the souls of others. In order to this, a *public and distinct confession of Christ* seems to be necessary. It needs, at least, that the world should hear him say as much as this—"I am a disciple of Jesus Christ!"

This confession of Christ is, in reality, the great object of church-membership. Each

one who joins the church, enrolls himself, or herself, as a disciple of Jesus—puts on his badge, as it were—becomes distinctly marked as his servant. The world is edified by this distinct confession of Christ, Jesus is made known among men, declared to be worthy and true, and the advancement of his kingdom is openly and specifically labored for. On the other hand, mere spiritual membership—that which is sanctioned within the soul, and of which none can take cognizance but God and the individual—does not give confession of Christ, open and distinct—a confession which honors him and attracts the honor of the world.

But not only has this public confession a relative influence—it has a personal efficacy. Every one knows how much force a resolution acquires by some outward form—how it deepens and stamps the sentiment in the bosom. When we make a resolution in the face of the world, we feel that the eyes of all men are upon us, and the fact that those will know our faithfulness, or failure, gives us a strong desire to maintain our character for consistency, if nothing more. But the reso-

lution that we make in secret, we may break openly, and the world not know that we ever made it. We do not say that the secret resolution is not just as binding, but this is its natural operation. And when we have taken an avowed stand, we become more identified with our resolution; it comes nearer to us, and our sympathies are enlisted in it. The temperate man feels and does more for Temperance, benefits himself and the world more, when he takes a pledge, and becomes an open and avowed soldier of the cause. So with the Christian. The act of joining the outward, organized church, is a peculiar confession of Christ—a public resolution to follow him—and it has all the force and all the efficacy of such confession and resolution.

But not only this—as we are affected by external things—as the *inward* draws life from the *outward*—so the ordinances of the church operate upon the affections and the motives, with a holy and elevating influence. We cannot be entirely independent of forms while in this world—they have a quick and subtle communication with the soul, and we grow better and more mighty because of them.

There is one other reason why we may best secure life and communion with Christ by joining the visible church, though it is comprehended in what has just been said about public resolutions. By that act of joining the church we feel more obligated to lead religious lives. It is not said that we *are* more obligated, but that we *feel* so; and we are not disposed to weaken that sense of obligation. Anything that causes us to realize more our responsibility and our duty, anything that endues these with more binding sanctions, is of great benefit—for we are too prone to forget and to neglect them.

Thus, then, while we acknowledge that the true seal of church-membership is *goodness*, and that all true Christians belong to the church, whatever their name or creed, and whether they have joined any outward association or not, still we affirm that that goodness, that life and communion which make good men, can best be secured by a formal membership with the visible church—the body of which Christ is the head.

But so far we have only considered the arguments or scruples of comparatively a few,

who object to joining the church—in many instances, no doubt, sincere and spiritually-refined men and women, who maintain this position, in fact, from an excessive spirituality. But we are now to consider two or three objections which more commonly prevail, and hinder many from becoming church members.

And the first arises from a feeling no better, nor higher, than *shame*. It is, we fear, a fact, and a melancholy one it is, that some are ashamed to become church-members. They mingle in the world, and they hear a good deal said lightly about religion—they hear a good deal of jesting about Christian professors, about piety, and seriousness. They think it betokens a weakness to become a church-member. There is a fear of what the world may do or say, and it fills them with shame and dislike. But suffer me to ask—of *what* should they be ashamed? Of professing to believe in Jesus Christ? No: they will avow this. They are not infidels. Of what, then? Of resolving to become a disciple of his—to strive to grow like him—for this we understand to be the great object

of church-membership—and are they ashamed of this? When they have been guilty of a wrong, they are not ashamed to say they are sorry for it. When they have been fettered by any vice, they are not ashamed to rise up and break from it, and say, “We will own its sway no more!” Of these things they are proud, rather—they feel them to be glorious and triumphant. Why, then, be ashamed to say—“We are imperfect creatures—we see in Christ a model of perfection—we are resolved to take him for our pattern, to imitate and become like him. We have done wrong—we will endeavor to abandon the evil; we would be good—we will choose and endeavor to abide by the right.” What weakness is there in this? “But we dislike to be thought serious.” Why so? Is not life serious? Is not death serious? Are there not a thousand occurrences of life that are serious? If it is a serious thing to live in this world—to battle with temptation—to commit sin; it is a serious thing to absorb all thought in things of time and sense. These things are all serious. Why, then, ashamed to be thought serious? Not

gloomy, not fanatical, not fearful—but serious. Every true man is serious. To be thoughtful is to be serious. He or she who is not serious, is thoughtless. What is there in becoming a church-member that you are ashamed of? Ashamed of following the best Pattern of Goodness? Ashamed of seeking for real, substantial joy? Of drinking at the spring of all true peace and consolation? Put by such shame! It is cowardly, and thoughtless, and ungrateful.

But there is another objection to joining the church. "If we become members of the church we must sacrifice many pleasures, and put by many enjoyments." To what does this objection amount? It is virtually saying this—that in order to secure virtue, and true joy, and peace, we must thrust aside all that interferes. For, unless we mean that by giving up these pleasures, we sacrifice something *sinful*, something *hurtful*, we cannot see that the objection has any foundation. Church-members ought to forego sinful pursuits. True. But who is there that ought not to forego them? Is a sin any less a sin out of the church than in it? Is this the

law—that we may sin so long as we do not protest against our sins, but the moment we do protest, then sin becomes sinful? What strange ideas seem to prevail upon this point! “Such a course is well enough for you, and for me, but it will not do for our neighbor.” Why? “Because he is a church-member!” But is the course wrong? “Yes, it *is* wrong, but then we are not church-members, and our neighbor is.” But because you are not a church-member, have you license to do wrong? Is this your excuse for doing wrong—that you are not a church-member? If so it is a very vulnerable excuse. Now we will not deny that it looks more inconsistent for church-members to do wrong—nay, to the sin of the bad act may in this case be added the sin of inconsistency—but is it, at bottom, any less a bad act whoever does it? To waive all nice casuistry upon this subject, are you excused for wrong doing because you are not a church-member? “I will not join the church, because if I do I must leave off some sins.” Is this, at the bottom, your excuse? But if you do not join the church, must you

not leave off these sins? What is the answer? So much, then, have we to say in reply to this objection, provided the pleasure or amusement referred to is sinful.

But if it is *not* sinful—if it does not interfere with our growth in goodness—*why* must we leave it off because we join the church? I cannot help the convictions of others, but this I feel—that Religion is rich with glad influences; for it is a principle infinitely varied—it presides over the different phases of human life, and sanctions and hallows them all. Religion forbids folly, forbids excess, forbids an empty, frivolous living—and who wishes to live so? Religion bids us have a time for all things, and wisely live for a higher and purer destiny than any of this earth. It bids us not be profane, or indolent, or licentious, or wasteful. Who wishes to be so? But it does not strip us of one true joy. It forbids not one innocent amusement. Look up at the sky. Is not an expression of cheerfulness and joy *there*, blended with purity? Look abroad upon the earth—is not nature glad? Has not God dimpled the valleys into smiles, and thrown sunlight over

the waters, and crowned the hills with rejoicing? It is true, life has many and grave duties—different spheres in life have different measures of duty—and the true conscience must always consult circumstances without and the great law within; but pleasure, amusement—Religion forbids them not—it gives them a more genuine and delightful ministry than anything else can. But not only this. It sows within us the seeds of an undying joy that fails not when outward means of happiness fail—when animal spirits grow feeble and low, when sorrows darken and cares appall. This it gives us, shedding abroad a holy serenity in the heart, and imparting a calm lustre to the brow. It is a principle of truth, and therefore it allows us nothing that is treacherous and wrong; but all that makes happy, and grateful, and good, it opens for us in abundant measure. It reveals new sources of happiness. It makes the spire of grass and the star beautiful ministers of delight. And do we think that we must sacrifice pleasure by choosing Religion as our guide and our end? It is a sad mistake, as they well know who

cling to the chalice of sin, and drink the bitterness of its dregs. Do not hesitate to follow Christ, because you think your pleasures will be less. Every real source of enjoyment, every truly pleasant thing, it sanctions, and deprives us only of the evil—and even for this it far more than repays us. It may check a boisterous folly, but it bestows enduring peace of mind. It may forbid licentious excess, but it enkindles a glorious hope. It may put back the hand that reaches out after clustering deceits, but it lights the pale cold face with a smile in death. Nothing that is lawful now, will be unlawful when you join the Church of Christ. No true pleasure now will be less a pleasure then—it will be deeper and more beneficial.

One more objection—"I am not good enough to join the church." This feeling is to be respected, but is it not a mistaken one? They who are sensible of their unworthiness, at least evince humility, and where there is humility there is a soil for much good seed. But if not being good enough is made a plea for not growing better—if, moreover, it is a

plea that is continually urged, from year to year, with no effort to grow better—then it would seem as if the plea was made not so much from *humility* as *unwillingness*—not as an apology for imperfect action, but as an excuse for no action at all. You are not good enough to join the church? When do you propose to be? Or do you mean to hold this position as a constant excuse? If you are not good enough, why are you not? In this case you have two evils to remedy—your incapacity for joining the church, and your neglect to join it. We are arguing now on your own ground, and admitting that you are not good enough. Do you not see that this is no excuse? If you are not good enough, why not make effort to be good enough? It is in your power to remove this obstacle. Your excuse for not joining the church, itself needs an excuse.

But now we would ask—what standard do you propose as the point of perfection which will fit you for joining the church? *How* good must you be, before you can enroll yourself as a member of that body of which Christ is the head? Do you feel that before

you can join you must be *perfect*? This is a mistake. It is precisely because you are *imperfect* that you should become a disciple of the Great Teacher. By joining the church we do not signify that we are perfect, but that we are imperfect, and feel our need of communion with him who is the Source of life and goodness to all who obey and strive to imitate him. You enter the church that you may become good—that you may grow better. You enter the assembly of those who begin on earth that progress which ascends through the portals of this lower church far into eternity. It is because you are weak, and frail, and sinful, that you should come, and gather around the table of memorial, and draw nigh to the Saviour, and imbibe his spirit, touching the hem of his garment, leaning on his bosom, and growing from glory to glory to be like him. Oh! do not plead that you are not good enough, as an excuse for not joining the church. I urge it, rather, as the most cogent reason why you *should* join the church. It is too true that many who enter the church do not grow better, make its sacred profession a cloak for

sin, and take with unhallowed hands the elements of the communion; but this need not weigh to keep you back. If they resist the influences and appeals that bear upon them, you need not. There *are* influences, there *are* appeals that bear upon the professed disciple of Jesus, that will, if heeded, bless and make pure. It is the sinful, the erring, the tempted, that he calls to his arms, and bids to his lessons of holiness and feasts of love.

Thus have we considered some of the reasons for connecting ourselves with the visible Church of Christ. I deemed it advisable so to speak, in the commencement of this little work, devoted as it is to those who are accustomed to reflect upon subjects of personal spiritual interest, connected with communion with Christ. There is a great disparity between the numbers of those who sit in the seats of the sanctuary during the ordinary services of the Sabbath, and those who remain and gather around the communion-table. Why is this? Is it because of some of the excuses which have now been examined? Or is it because some cannot resolve to turn and follow Christ? And yet that resolution

should be made. The great end of all our preaching is not gained unless it is made. The great end of attendance on the public services of the sanctuary from Sabbath to Sabbath is not gained unless it is made. And if that resolution is formed, it should be declared openly—it should be set as a seal upon us, and become the main-spring of our conduct. Child of business, of trial, of many anxious cares—son—daughter of God—let not this matter be unheeded. Weigh it well. Do nothing with rashness, or irreverence. But do as duty, as conscience bids! And turn not away, from time to time, from the table of communion—but go and sit down thereat. It will be a good thing to do so—to sit at the feet of that Saviour whose life was purity and whose spirit was love. It will be a good thing, in youth's bright morning to write your name as a follower of Christ—it will be to you guidance and peace in the perplexed and toilsome career of maturer life—it will be to you an antepast of heaven when the light of life goes down, and in its calm, pensive evening you sit waiting for the morning of heaven. Why turn from the communion-table? Its

elements are not gloom and superstition—they are the tokens of a love that wrought its mission through sacrifice and tears, and sealed its devotion with blood! Why turn from the communion-table? It is the place where we meet to commemorate a Saviour's deeds—to draw new life from his example—and to depart with better hearts as from conversation with him. There are no shining treasures here, no wreaths of fame, no sensual delights. But here are influences that breathe from better realities—the inspirations of a lofty hope, the vision of a serene faith. Why turn from the communion-table? Would you not be a follower of Christ—of Christ, the good, the pure, the kind? Would you not be one among the members of his church? Behold! they are a great number. The good and the blessed of many ages—the saints above and the saints below—the holy and the happy. Like them, you may draw from Jesus life, and truth, and power. Oh! why turn from the communion-table? Be present at its seasons of prayer and praise, of peace and love, of meditation and resolution, bear openly the name of Christ in re-

membrane of whom it stands—strive to discern the meaning of its elements, to imbibe the spirit that lives in its forms, to draw nearer and nearer to the Master through its opportunities, until you pass from the symbolical and the earthly, to the spiritual communion, without a shadow and without a tear!



THE LORD'S SUPPER, CON- SIDERED AS A MEMORIAL.

“This do in remembrance of me.”
Luke xxii. 19.

THERE are few who die unremembered. Be they the lowliest and most obscure of earth, some heart aches when they are borne to the grave, and calls up their image long after the grass has grown above their sleep. There are different kinds of commemoration for the departed. Their memory fills a wider or narrower circle—the funeral is different, the monument is more lofty or low—more grand or simple. For the warrior who has shaken thrones, for the monarch, there are a flashing of torches, a train of sables, a gilded and pompous ceremony. Or they disturb the sepulchre where he has slept in peace, and where nature rears its own hatchments, to dig

up his ashes and lay them under the gorgeous heraldry that human vanity loves; as if the tread of many feet, the adulation and the wonder, were felt by the pulseless, mouldering heart below! And beneath the earth that shook at his tread, he slumbers like the meanest peasant, while his name fills up the stormy annals of the world, and the people cry—"Here sleeps a warrior, a monarch!" And thus is *he* held in remembrance.

And there are those who die in holy warfare; whose lives were full of blessed labors, and above whom weeps the dew of the martyr's grave. Humble mounds they may have, or high columns, but they need not these—for they live in glowing hearts, and are commemorated in moral deeds that move the world.

But these remembrances are more or less public—living on the popular tongue, or cherished in the popular sentiment. There are mementoes of a more private and of a gentler character than these. They are inscribed in the heart; the soul garners them among its sacred thoughts, and keeps them green with sweet and silent tears. But they

are memorials better than piles of stone and emblazoned carvings. And many are the hearts that have such monuments as these, of the loved and the departed. Coarse and despised in the world, perhaps, they were; living in nooks and corners of the earth—bending their backs in wretched drudgery—sleeping on ricks of straw. Such as these pass away from this thronged and busy life by legions, and the world notes it not, nor thinks of them. Yet there are those who *do* note it, who *do* think of them. They stood by their beds and took their feeble hands with an emotion that swept the heart-strings with an agony keen as that which sobbed aloud in the death-chamber of the rich and the great. And these humble ones cherish a memorial in their souls—something there is, kept like a holy thing, in those hearts that beat under coarse raiment, and throb among us unnoticed in the daily conflict of poverty and toil.

Yes: there are few, few indeed, who have no memorial. Who have gone down to their graves uncared for. Who sleep, and no one casts a thought upon their resting-place.

Thousands of living hearts are shrines of sacred memory, and while nature plants flowers upon this great sepulchre, the earth, cherished remembrances will grow around the tombs of the departed. And these are the spontaneous memorials of our common nature.

But we pass on to remark that memory gives us images more vivid and distinct, when excited by near and dear associations. We keep that memory safely lodged in the heart—we feel that it is there—and yet, perhaps, it is only when some peculiar spring is touched, that the shrine opens and reveals the relic. In plainer words, the memory of absent and departed friends is always with us, but not always vividly before us. It is well that it is not so. Our minds would become absorbed in regret for the past, to the neglect of the present. But when some peculiar train of thought is set in motion—when some circumstance, though remotely connected with the absent one is introduced—the whole crowd of recollections rushes in upon us, and fills our vision. A lock of hair, a ring, a garment, will call up a long series

of hours and days, in which the one to whom that lock, that ring, that garment belonged, will mingle first and foremost. It is a custom not without foundation in human nature, that we require or receive of a journeying or dying friend some visible token, that shall be as a key to the casket wherein memory will be sure to garner its precious recollections.

We trust, then, that it is not erroneous, or improper to say, that it was to this principle in human nature that Christ appealed, when he took bread and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, as a symbol of his broken body, and said—"This do in remembrance of me." The time of his separation from them, and of his death, was at hand. Doubtless they *would* have remembered him. Nay, after his departure, their zeal might have performed the work which they proposed to do on the Mount of Transfiguration, and build a Tabernacle for him. The recollection of his teachings and his miracles, would have remained in their minds, in the natural course of things. He knew all this. And yet, he takes those simple elements, and giving to each, says, "Do this in remembrance of

me;" establishing the circumstance of the passing hour as a simple and appropriate rite. And why? Because as often as, in the future, those disciples should gather around the table for the purpose proposed, and break the bread, their Saviour and Master would come vividly before their minds, and with him would come tender memories of his love, his life, his relations to them, and of that last supper of which they partook with him. Others would soon join in this rite, and receive from the original communicants those holy memories all fresh and deep, and so it would go abroad in the world and down to their successors; and thus, in all ages, the professors of Christ's religion, would, at their periodical assembling around the table of communion, be moved by the associations that attach and linger there, with a special memory of their Lord, and his labors for them.

Without entering into any other argument, then—without considering the Lord's Supper from any other point of view—we would rest the propriety and the efficacy of the institution upon this simple principle in human na-

ture—the power of association over the memory and over the soul. We contend that these elements are not only symbols, but associations, that bring before us the Saviour, especially at that moment when all his tenderness and sympathy, moral power and divine excellence, were concentrated in preparations for his great sacrifice for men. Surely, if the memory of departed friends steals with a calm and purifying influence over the spirit, the memory of Jesus and of those affecting moments that precedes the Cross, must have a melting and yet an elevating power upon every soul that loves him. There are those, even among Christians, who look upon the communion-service as a useless and cumbersome, if not a superstitious ordinance, that ought to be thrown aside with other religious forms which the error of the middle-ages attached to Christianity. Against these we would array this simple fact of its efficacy in moving and melting the heart by its sacred associations and suggestions. If they maintain that, in the natural course of things, the memory of Jesus, and what he has done for us, would

live in our souls, and be called up in hours of thought and meditation; we would ask if the memory of dear friends, for whom we have built tombs and sanctified a place in our hearts, is not quickened and made stronger by the sight of some simple relic—a ring, or a book, or a flower? And we would say, that so may our memory of Jesus be enlivened, and shed abroad a fresher influence, when we gather around the table, and break the bread, and partake of it, recollecting who said, and under what circumstances he said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

It is hard to understand the ground which some worthy men take as to this matter. It seems as if they do not sufficiently comprehend the difference between a cumbersome and empty ceremony, and a simple yet affecting ordinance. Here, as in almost everything else, there is a medium course. If this ordinance is surrounded with mystery and superstitious awe, it is true the mind will become bewildered, and the true beauty and efficacy of the rite will be lost. But viewed as an institution whose associations awaken the memory, elevate the thoughts,

purify the heart, and make it warm towards Jesus, it is no more objectionable than public worship, the prayer, the hymn, the rich melody of the organ, and the measured harmony of music. All these act upon the principle of association and suggestion, and if you abolish one, why not all? If one has been abused, so have all. If one quickens religious affections, so do all.

“But,” says the objector, “why not maintain the whole round of Romish observances?” To this we reply, that so far as they only suggest holy thoughts, and associate holy things, doubtless they might be preserved, and the stern hand of Reformation may have torn away some symbols and memorials that for the spiritual vision and the devout heart had meaning and efficacy. But so far as it can be urged against these rites of the old church that they were burdensome, we can only say of this ordinance of communion, that it is not burdensome—if they were performed in a strange tongue, this is not—if they had no plain efficacy or meaning, this has a simple and an affecting one—and if they were not instituted by the Lord,

this was, or, at least, was indicated by him. "But," says the objector again, "if instituted at all, it was instituted only for those particular disciples." There is no warrant for this limitation—no order for its abolition in the future. Moreover, Christ never said or did anything, the *reasonableness* of which cannot be seen, and the same reason which appears for the observance of the Lord's Supper among the primitive disciples and in the first age of the church, urges its observance among all disciples in all ages of the Christian dispensation.

On this one ground, then, without seeking for others, we rest the reasonableness, the propriety of continuing the observance of the Lord's Supper, and find an argument for presuming that Jesus meant it to be perpetuated among his disciples.

But enough of argument with those who reject the use of the communion. Let us say a few words to those who are accustomed to assemble around the table. Consider, then, that injunction of the Saviour—"This do in remembrance of me." Realize the true meaning and power of this ordi-

nance. It will indeed be a formal and useless service if we participate in it from time to time, mechanically and unreflectingly. Realize the facts it commemorates—the communion it signifies, the obligations it enjoins!

“This do in remembrance of me.” Of whom? Of Jesus Christ. And who was Jesus Christ? This may seem a strange question, but it is one of some force. For, are we accustomed to contemplate the Saviour closely and fixedly enough? Or, do we abstract him—place him at a distance, surrounded with a mystic halo like those we see in old paintings? This is not the way to study Christ, and to endeavor to comprehend his character. We must think of him as one who has actually lived and mingled among men—as a Being of the strongest love, the deepest sympathy for our race. “This do in remembrance of me!” That is, in remembrance of one who in his acts, his sufferings, his death, has left the mightiest claims upon our regard, and showed what kind of remembrance ours should be. Let this mandate not fall upon our ears without meaning and without power. Let us feel

who and what we are to remember. Let us gather around the table, with love burning in our souls for our risen Lord!

“This do in remembrance of me!” Through what does that remembrance lead us? To the low place of his birth—through the scenes of his labor. Over the bosom of Galilee, and into the woods of Olivet. Where he lifts the leper from the dust, and sits by the well of Samaria—where he opens the eyes of the blind man, touches the bier of the dead, supports the head of the beloved disciple, and blesses little children! And that remembrance leads us to the scenes of his suffering and sacrifice, to the garden of agony, the hall of judgment, the scourging and smiting, the mocking and thorns, to Calvary, the cross and the sepulchre.

Oh! often, often let us visit these familiar scenes in remembrance of our Saviour! Familiar as they are, as we commune again and again with him there, they will open with a deeper and yet deeper meaning; they will melt into our souls with divine and sanctifying power; they will penetrate our moral nature, purify our affections, draw out our hearts

and thoughts to Christ, with a feeling that shall be no transient glow, but a permanent, controlling principle, changing the tenor of our lives and assimilating our characters to his.



OUR SAVIOUR'S PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” *Luke xxiii. 34.*

THESE are indeed memorable words. They have compelled the admiration even of the skeptic. They are filled with a beauty which is not of this world. No wonder that Paul gloried in the Cross of Christ! Indeed, the whole narration with which they are connected is written with an artlessness and yet a power that must draw out our assent to the divine authenticity of the record. He who reads attentively, will, if he be a man of ordinary sympathy, naturally find his heart full, and his eyes swimming with tears. What a wonderful *personality* runs through the whole description of those events, which gather around the close of our Saviour's mis-

sion! The forward, eager haste of Peter—how consistently carried through the whole narrative! Impetuous and confident, we find him resolved to follow his Lord to the death. In the garden he boldly smites off the ear of Malchus. In the palace of the High Priest, he angrily denies Jesus, and as quickly repents, goes out, and weeps bitterly. Consider, too, that description of John, leaning on the bosom of his Master, as one whom Jesus loved! How that intimacy appears to shine out in the peculiar spirituality of his Gospel! And, then, there come darker characters upon the scene. The traitorous Judas—how true to nature that betrayal with a kiss! And the vacillating Pilate, convinced that Jesus was innocent, yet moved by fears of a Jewish insurrection, and jealous for the honor of Rome. The scribes and Pharisees, malignant, disregarding all precedents of trial, hurrying on the death of him whom they hated, their hands stained with his blood—yet going not into the judgment-hall, *lest they should be defiled*, but that they might eat the Passover! And, then, that fierce soldiery gathering with insult around

the Saviour, parting his garments and casting lots for his vesture! How true, how life-like all! In the midst of these scenes is that meek, mild face, that ever bent with love over the couch of the sick, and lighted up the vision of the sorrowing—that meek, mild face, uplifted in agony through the star-light of Gethsemane, turning in gentle reproof upon Peter, trickling with blood from the thorny crown, spit upon and buffeted, looking with affection upon that mother and that disciple—“Woman, behold thy son”—and to that disciple—“behold thy mother!” Here, we say, is an artlessness, and yet a truth, that fraud could never conceive, nor imposture execute.

This truthfulness belongs to that class of proofs for the divine authenticity of the Record, termed Internal Evidences, which are, undoubtedly, the most convincing and immediate. We may, perhaps, unconsciously hide the full force of those evidences from our minds, by looking with a view too peculiar upon them. We may surround them too much with mystery and awe, and not bring to them the same untrammelled, comprehen-

sive mind with which we regard other books, and other narrations. But we may look upon these records in a free, expanded spirit, and yet not treat them irreverently, or thrust the sharp knife of our own conceit, here and there, wherever we list. What we mean by a free, expanded view of these New-Testament records, is that we should realize that they are narratives of transactions that have actually occurred—we should feel that those who are described there are beings who have actually lived and moved among men—having their affections, and their trials, and their conflicts. Not by vague impressions, not by mysteriously separating them from all other men and all other transactions, will we understand the events and the personages described in the gospel. But manners, customs, forms of speech considered, we must imagine men then as men are now, with the love and the fear, the joy and the sorrow of our nature. In this respect, precisely as we would read any other history, let us read the New-Testament. And doing thus, we repeat, we must be struck with the truthfulness, the life-like reality of the narrative

immediately connected with this Prayer of Jesus.

But if this is a record of truth, then he who could breathe such a prayer on the cross, must have been from heaven. He taught a system of universal love. But the *precept* is here completed by the *practice*. The whole life of Christ was a life of love. Good works, blessed deeds, by the wayside, in the temple, at the grave, crowd the record of his personal history. But it was not here alone that the spirit of love went out. He had separated from his disciples, he had passed through an ignominious trial, he had been mocked, beaten, tortured. And now he was suffering the most excruciating pain. It has been conjectured as probable—and it is a thrilling thought—that it was at the very time when the nails were piercing his hands and feet, and transfixing him upon the cross, that he breathed this prayer—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" However this may be, it was amid insult and agony that he prayed thus. And we say that it is an evidence of his divinity. To bear pain bravely has been deemed a

high test of heroic virtue. Jesus not only endures pain, but in melting tones of love and forgiveness prays for those who inflict it. There are those, too, who have died firmly, like the Grecian philosopher—have died amid the condolence of friends, the tears and praises of admirers. But in that thronging mass was there one to offer a cup of cold water to the lips of Christ? There were those there, perhaps, who at his voice had felt the freshness and vigor of health, whose sight he had restored, whose sick he had healed, whose dead he had raised. But, if there, was there one hand raised to soothe his anguish? One voice to speak in kindness to him? Not one! In that eager crowd, face after face passed by without sympathy, without tears—scowling, sneering—“Ah! save thyself,”—or else with apathetic curiosity. But with hate, envy, rage, all around him, he breathed that prayer—“Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!” Here was love, not spoken merely, but *lived*, victorious over the keenest wrong, breaking from that hallowed cross out upon the ears of the world, to convince

all men of the divinity of him who hung there.

In this great prayer is there not a rebuke for all hatred and revenge? Those emotions lie deep in the human heart, deeper than we may think. The wars that have sown earth with blood and fire have their sources in these emotions. The martyr's stake, the dungeon, the scaffold, how often have they been based upon these! But we do not find all the influence of a vengeful spirit and a hating heart, in these wide and public evils; but it is an influence common to us all. It is one of the most intimate and rankling passions of our nature, this feeling of revenge. But it is an unholy feeling, condemned by all the teachings of the Saviour, and rebuked by his prayer upon the cross. Ye who indulge it—ye who treasure up the memory of a wrong that it may one day be revenged—come now and consider this scene. An ignominious cross, a crown of thorns, a death of torture, and yet a prayer—"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

However much we may limit the application of this prayer—although we admit that

it referred only to those who were driving the nails—still it teaches us the lesson of love rising above all wrongs, considerate, forgiving, under all circumstances.

There is, also, in this event, a lesson for the afflicted and complaining. There are ills in life which are indeed hard to bear. They fall with a crushing weight upon our hearts—steal with a withering influence over our hopes—and, pained and wounded, we must cry out with anguish. Yet, do we not, too often, needlessly complain, with chafed, impatient spirits? A broken limb, a day's sickness, an aching head, will make us fret and murmur at our lot. And then, when heavier calamities come, and grief is stifling among our heart-strings, we may wonder that we bear them—that we do not sink in despair. Is there no lesson—no rebuke, or encouragement, as the case may be, for such as these, in the prayer of Christ upon the cross? What anguish of body hast thou borne like him? What grief oppresses thee that might not have oppressed him in that hour of ignominy, desertion and death? Ye hapless ones, almost broken-hearted, cannot

the same Power that sustained him at that awful moment, sustain thee? See! pierced and bleeding, with sharp torture thrilling every nerve, with the shouts of the multitude ringing in his ears, the heads of foes wagging scornfully, he is calm, he trusts, he looks to God. Nay, deep as his anguish is, he prays not for himself, but for others—"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!"

Beneath this prayer, too, Christians may well lay aside rancorous controversy, and feel their common bond of union. The cross of Christ!—that is the symbol of us all. The old Christians wove it into their banners, and reared it in their dwellings—the foot-sore pilgrim knelt to it by the wayside—and long, long, the dying gazed at it with their dim eyes, and pressed it feebly to their lips. We do not do this. We put by the symbol and search for the *spirit*—and yet our token is the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ! There centre our hopes, there die our fears, there fall our sins, there gushes our penitence, there beams the light of blessed assurance upon our tears. Our church may be the Catholic church, or our creed may be

the Orthodox creed, or we may live among men as poor deluded heretics; yet we feel that we have confidence to come here—to say, “No man can pluck this from me!” And so, though it may be by different paths, we all come to the cross of Christ. And coming there, surely we should learn the law of love and the spirit of consideration. If our brother errs, we learn here our duty—not to denounce, but to have mercy—not to wrangle bitterly, but, rather, to hear that blessed prayer—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!”

Finally; here is a truth for the *sinful* to consider. Here is a sign to dispel fear—here is a motive to forsake evil. Are you conscious of sin? Is your memory loaded with guilt? Hear this prayer of forgiveness! Is not the religion of him who breathed that prayer the same now that it was then? Is not the same spirit in it? And is not God, whose manifestation, whose express image Christ was, the same God still, ready, waiting to forgive? Let us not lose sight of this idea. Let us remember that if Christ was thus forgiving, God is so. Let not the

thought that we have done wrong, then, that we are guilty in his sight, keep us from seeking his forgiveness, his face, his favor.

We said, too, that here was a motive to forsake sin—the strongest that can be presented—even the overflowing love of God. What can prevail, what can move and melt us, if this prayer of forgiveness, full of the very love of God, does not affect us?

The cross of Christ! let us regard it as a manifestation of God's mercy to man—a place where he condescends to meet us with the great argument of love, to draw us from our wanderings—where he speaks and says, "Return!" And can we refuse to come? He says—"Do wrong no more!" and can we still do wrong? Can we yet sin against all this love—*sin!* with that prayer of Jesus thrilling through our hearts—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

What devotion, what humility, what yearnings of the heart, do we behold here at the death of our Saviour! Let us pause and look upon it. It is hallowing for us to linger here. Perhaps that love will, as we gaze,

move us to penitence, and fill us with a better life—perhaps we shall be constrained to cry out,

“Hear, shepherd! thou that for thy flock art dying,
Oh, wash away these scarlet sins, for thou
Rejoicest at the contrite sinner’s vow.
Oh, wait!—to thee my weary soul is crying,—
Wait for me!—Yet why ask it, when I see,
With feet nailed to the cross, thou’rt waiting there
for me!”



THE CROWN OF THORNS.

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns.—*John* xix. 5.

MOCKERY never degrades the just. The good cannot be shamed. The arrows of persecution—the sharp missiles of scorn—glance from them harmless; more than this—they illustrate their virtue. Though it be not true that the man makes the circumstances, it is true that the man gives character to the circumstances. The strong level all obstacles to their purpose. In trial, the good shine with a refined lustre. Wealth, nor power, nor adulation, can ennoble the mean. But the righteous turn ignominy into glory. They do not create, but they command. By a virtue that is in them, they subdue all accidents into tone and keeping with

themselves. Character is greater than circumstances, and may get the mastery over them!

The trial of our Saviour illustrates the truth which we have now suggested. Never did malignant hatred and heartless cruelty accumulate upon their victim grosser insignia of punishment and scorn. They scourged him, they buffeted him, they spit upon him; but this was not enough. In order to connect the idea of his sovereignty with the meanest ridicule, they tore off his garments, threw around his bleeding shoulders a purple robe, placed in his hand as a sceptre a miserable reed, and plating a crown of thorns, crowded it, with its rankling points, upon his head, and then, with mock humility and spiteful grimace, did homage to him. But though all this was meant to deride him, never did he seem more truly a king. We shudder—but it is at the sacrilegious spirit of his persecutors! We weep—it is because that brow of love is lacerated by cruel thorns! But not for an instant does Jesus seem to us debased, or contemptible. Vilely arrayed as he is, he stands there amid that brutal soldiery, amid

the malignity that peers upon him, a serene and holy CHARACTER, and everything feels its influence. A secret reverence thrills the souls even of those who mock him. And when Pilate brings him forth clothed in the purple robe and crown of thorns, and says, "Behold the man!" their angry response of "Crucify him! crucify him!" seems the ebullition of a mad consciousness that the more they seek to debase him, the more majestic he appears. To those mock emblems of sovereignty, his pure life imparts a royal lustre. They degrade not him, but he ennobles them. He comes forth wearing a crown of thorns. To us it is the same as if he wore a diadem.

But let us ask, ill-meant as was this crown of thorns, was there not after all a fitness in it? Did not these men, as is often the case, through an invention of wickedness, work out a signal propriety? Is there not a significance in that crown of thorns, that could not have been in a flashing diadem? We say that for two reasons, at least, there was such a significance, and we will proceed to exhibit those reasons. First: *Christ's life was*

a life of sacrifice and sorrow; and at the close, therefore, it was appropriate he should be crowned with thorns. Why should they set a kingly coronet upon him who had not where to lay his head? Why wreath with gems those locks that were wet with dews of the night? Why encircle with a golden band that brow that was pale with the agony of the garden? Christ came not to be our earthly monarch, and rule according to the conventionalities of outward things. He came to rule the soul, and, as our great Exemplar, to illustrate its worth and its triumph. And this is best seen in conflict and in suffering. Through temptation successfully resisted, through sorrow sanctified into strength, the soul wins its great victory. The work of spiritual advancement is no easy labor; it is a *discipline*—in overcoming those stormy passions within us, in subduing allurements and crosses without, in elevating right, and holiness, and purity, into the foremost and highest rule of our souls, we have no easy work to discharge. Often can we overcome obstacles only by painful effort—often will disappointment affect us to tears. For a soul

sincerely, *earnestly* engaged about this work of spiritual advancement, there are mountain heights of joy, and there is always a calm sky of love, but also are there seasons of watchfulness, days of strenuous labor, occasions of penitence and self-rebuke, that will sometimes bring it down into the valley of humiliation and the region of sorrow. At least it is a *serious*, though not a gloomy work. Not incompatible with cheerfulness is it, and with serenity. These we derive from our meditations upon God, while our effort and our tears come from our meditations upon ourselves. The moment we look out upon the universe, we see that it is bathed in the light of God's love, and that the full radiance of that love streams from the cross. Therefore our life is not to be spent in gloomy apprehensions and grovelling fears. No: it is *labor*, not *fear*, that we should exercise—strenuous effort, never despair. Yet, we repeat, life is to be spent seriously, thoughtfully. When we consider what goes on within us—when we consider the passions that so easily drown the dictates of conscience—the selfishness that urges to so

many sins—the evil thoughts and desires that lead us to disobey our Father and neglect his love; when we look within and consider all this, we shall find that verily our great work of spiritual advancement is to be wrought out through labor and through conflict.

Sometimes, too, our spiritual discipline is appointed not merely in conflict with moral evil, but with the natural ills of life. We lose our fondest possessions, we shed tears over our fairest hopes. We lay in the grave those in whom we have garnered up our dearest affections. They who meet these ills as they ought, will, no doubt, in the end, find them to be agents of the highest spiritual advancement. Away up, as from mountain heights, hear the great apostle, passing even then through storms, cry out—"Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" It is so with every one who meets the sorrows of this life with a right spirit—who learns resignation through suffering, and faith in mystery. This is one explanation of sorrow and suffering.

It is a key to the great enigma of life. By suffering, by sorrow, the righteous soul is purified and made strong.

To recur, then, to what we said a little while ago—the worth and the triumph of the soul, as we have endeavored to show, are best seen through conflict and suffering. But Christ illustrates the worth and triumph of the soul, and therefore, his life was a life of sorrow and of pain. He slept in the manger—he strove against temptation in the wilderness. Denied by his own, he drank the cup of sorrow after bitter wrestling of spirit, and he died the death of a malefactor, though he went about doing good. “A man of sorrows” was he, “and acquainted with grief.” True: but he came to be “the captain of our salvation,” and “was made perfect through suffering.” Not by royal apparel, not in kings’ houses, not upon David’s throne, could he have shown us the worth and power of the soul, and become our great Exemplar. This he did through conflict and through sorrow. Appropriate to his own life, then, considered as a personal history, and appropriate to that life considered as an illustration and an

example, did they, as he drew near its close, crown him with thorns. Thus was his discipline fitly completed and rendered significant. In this, far better than in a royal diadem, could he say—"It is finished!"

But there is another reason why that crown of thorns was most significant—and that is, because *Christ triumphed in conflict and over sorrow*. Not merely was it appropriate to the circumstances of his life—but to the *result* also. Not only did he drink the cup—he drank it serenely. Not only did he groan out—"Eloi, lama, sabbacthani!" but he said, with unfaltering trust—"Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit." Life's conflicts and sorrows are indeed thorns, but when we have gone through them victoriously, to use the simile of another, well may we convert them into a crown. The soldiery, in their blindness, did not see it—the Jews, in their eager hatred, did not think of it—but, in fact, they crowned him as the great victor, through whom *we* obtain victory, and more exactly appropriate was it, than if they had wreathed palm about his brow, or set a coronet of jewels on his head. He has tri-

umphed over sin, and sorrow, and death. Crown him with thorns then!—they are the fittest emblems of those evils which he has made his trophies.

Christ's religion is appropriately called "the religion of sorrow." Not that for one moment we would sanction the idea that it is a gloomy religion, or that it is only to be associated with death, decay and tears. It is the religion of sorrow, because in it alone the troubled soul can find consolation. It alone has answers deep enough to satisfy the soul of man in affliction. It is appropriate to every condition of life. It sanctifies our joys, and alone gives us a happiness permanent, serene, and pure. Still, the human heart more instinctively seeks its aid in the season of affliction. Its attractiveness is seen more clearly then, because the garish lights of this world are put out. The shadows of evening have fallen upon this earth, the cross and the sepulchre stand out in relief before us, and heaven reveals itself with all its orbs of light. We find that this world, to which we have so long confined our efforts and our hopes, is but a little sphere after all, and that

an eternity, full of vast interests, encompasses us. And the word of eternal life, the promises of the gospel, the teachings of Jesus, infuse better hopes and more enduring strength into our souls, and we feel that nothing can supply their place. For its fitness to the soul of man in affliction, then, while it is none the less fitted to him in prosperity—for its power and consolation in the time of grief—the religion of Christ is appropriately called, “the religion of sorrow.”

But we wish to remark, that it is the religion of sorrow, not for the purpose of soothing us into a delicious quiet, or making us merely happy. It is a religion not for children only, but for men. Not merely to still our nerves, to dry our tears, to allay the tremulous beating of our hearts. Merely to take sorrow as it comes, with an indolent resignation, is not so well, even, as to meet it with the marble resistance of the old stoic. We must learn “to suffer and be strong”—to draw from grief all its discipline, all its unction for the soul. Let no sorrow pass over us without making us better. Let us bear with it, not because we are weaker but

because we are stronger—than it. Let us not walk merely without complaint among its wounding thorns. Let us pluck them and wreath them into a crown. This we shall do, if every sorrow strengthens our faith, expands our hope, deepens the religious life within us, leads us up to God. But now, Jesus knelt in the garden. Darkness was around him. His disciples slumbered. His face uplifted to the star-light, glistened with full, fast tears. The still air was broken by his groans of anguish. And he prayed, yea he wrestled there, that the cup, so cold, so bitter, might pass from him. But he prayed in obedience and in faith. And though he must drink that cup, even *he* is stronger than ever now. And they have crowned him for it, and how proper!—have crowned him with *thorns*.

So be it with us when we are called to suffer. We may not deny our nature. We cannot restrain tears. In the impulses of our agony we may wrestle with our fate—for it is not a dark, unfeeling fate. But let our souls be made better by that affliction, be it what it may. Let us feel that sorrow has

now less power than ever to quench our hope, or shake our filial trust. Let us rise, with serenity in our tears. Let us keep a closer hold on God and heaven, seeing that all things else are demonstrated to us to be unstable. Let our affliction end in sanctification. And, though we win no other crown—though the world knows not the struggle that has gone on within us—God has seen us and blessed us; and we have won a crown of thorns—a crown of that, which, but now, pierced and wounded us.

And now do we not see the significance of that thorny diadem with which they mocked our Saviour? Oh! yes; *they* meant it for cruelty, and for shame, but we will hail it as a trophy of his triumph and his strength. Fitting is it that “the man of sorrows” should thus be crowned! Fitting is it that the victor over evil should thus be crowned! No less is he king and conqueror after all, but with even a greater significance does he appear to us to be so. Let us learn the sacred lesson! Let us emulate the great example! As Christ’s character converted the circumstances of infamy into a symbol of

glory—so let us, by our characters, ennoble all circumstances. As he passed through sorrow, with suffering and with conflict, let us not expect to be exempt, but when it comes use it as a discipline. And as in all that suffering and conflict he triumphed, let us triumph; and, though we wear no crown of thorns, yet every sin overcome, every affliction rightly borne, will shed a halo of light around our souls—will do more—will imbue them with an immortal majesty!

But one other lesson remains to be considered. “Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, ‘Behold the man!’” Ay, reader, “Behold the man!” He stands before us, methinks, even now. Stripped, and marked with cruel buffetings—his flesh smarting with brutal wounds—arrayed in robes of mockery, and crowned with thorns! “Behold the man!” not agitated by anger—not moved to vengeance. But gazing with resignation through all that shame; and, deeper even than this, with yearning pity. What brought him to this? What led him to endure the mockery and the blows?

What is it that stands there, crowned with thorns? LOVE! It is nothing else but LOVE! No other power in all the universe, but love, could thus endure. Only thus are its exhaustless riches and its divine glory manifested. Only in suffering and in sacrifice can it reveal its depths. When all else fails then it begins to shine. When all else gives up then it commences its work—its immortal, its triumphant work. Yes: that is love, God's love! that beams out from the face of Christ;—that, anon, will trickle in blood and be broken by nails. God's love! It endures long, but it triumphs, and therefore, in its greatest manifestation here upon earth, was crowned with thorns. Christ crowned with thorns! can anything else teach us so significantly the great truth of SUFFERING YET TRIUMPHANT LOVE? And love for whom? For whom was that sorrow borne? Oh! reader, let us not be dull-eyed, or hard-hearted—for you and me it was!



CHRIST WITHIN US.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.—*Gal.* iv. 19.

It may not be necessary to remark here, that the phrase "little children," is often used in the New Testament as a term of endearment, and is addressed to persons of all ages, being especially appropriate as used by the apostle Paul towards the members of the church of Galatia, since they were indeed his children—he being the instrument of their conversion to Christ.

In this expression of earnest desire there is opened to us a grand spiritual truth. The apostle shows us the great work that is to be wrought in the soul of man, ere he can become perfect and holy. He is to become, in his moral nature, like Christ—yea, the

expression is more intense than this—Christ is to be formed in him! We wish, in this chapter, to illustrate and impress this truth.

The glory of the visible creation is, or would be, a perfect man. There are beautiful creations all around us that manifest the wisdom and goodness of God. But the Father has given nothing so glorious and so precious as the human soul. The flower and the ocean, and the sunbeam, are the works of his hands—but this, the soul, is the representative of his very nature. The morning-star shines with a perishable lustre—the sea with all its strength shall be rolled together as a vapor and pass away—but a pure, righteous and loving soul, has in it the eternity and the likeness of God, and shall survive all outward and material things.

We may trace this fact in the clear distinction that is to be seen between the man and his works. What a discrepancy is there between the creation and the capacity—between the word that breaks upon the lips and the inexhaustible thought that gushes within! What is the finest masterpiece of art to the artist's ideal? What is the loftiest

reach of discovery to the earnest aspiration that stretches out for more? Music, sculpture, poetry, painting, these are glorious works; but the soul that creates them is more glorious than they. The music shall die on the passing wind—the poem may be lost in the confusion of tongues—the marble will crumble and the canvass will fade—while the soul shall be quenchless and strong—filled with a nobler melody, kindling with loftier themes, projecting images of unearthly beauty, and drinking from springs of imperishable life.

This is what the soul *is* of itself—what may be its best manifestations. But the manifestations of the human soul around us, are in much, much, dark, degraded and narrow. It is as vain to endeavor to palliate the great fact of moral evil, as it is to disguise it. The controversy about total depravity does not centre here. The fact of deep and radical sinfulness is not disputed. The whole earth is scarred by sin. The frame-work of society is clogged and weakened by the evil desires and passions that dwell in the human heart. And the individ-

ual phases of humanity are no less decisive upon this point than its social aspects. The most perfect man has his besetting sin. Sometimes the mind that soars the loftiest will grovel lowest. Who has not seen imperial genius brutify itself? Who has not seen men who seemed immaculate and serene in their virtue, fall from their high place, detected in mean iniquity and marked with sin? Who has not seen dark and fantastic contradictions like these, pass over the brightest manifestations of human nature—making it seem almost as if man had in him two elements: the one an angel struggling upward to the light, the other a lewd and hideous fiend, mocking at virtue, suggesting iniquity, sneering at faith, and laughing at the soul's best aspirations? No; no; we do not deny the fact of sin, penetrating, widely-diffused sin. With these appalling developments that break upon us every day—with the whole creation travailing in pain together—we *cannot* deny it.

The setting too low an estimate upon human nature, may have caused some of us in this age to exalt it too high. It is the

result of reaction upon the skeptic's doubt and the theologian's dogma. When man was made to be a merely selfish and sensual creature—when he was held as utterly depraved—then came vindications of that nature—then arose men eloquent in behalf of its capacities and its dignity. And this is true also. Side by side we must place man's capacity with his sinfulness—his dignity and his depravity—for both are true. For every circumstance of being, then, for every condition of society, for every course of human conduct, we have this criterion. Does it tend to develop and exalt the soul—that portion of our nature which is unlimited and immortal? Here is the true evil of ignorance, oppression, or vice. We would have man learn and know, in order that his ideas of his relations to the universe, to man, to God, may be enlarged—in order that he may realize more deeply the spirituality and dignity of his being—and not merely that he may collect facts and become familiar with details. When the mind becomes merely a receptacle of names and dates and facts—when it has only gained knowledge to repeat it by rote—it leaves

man a mere machine, narrow and formal, with but feeble inherent power, and little true advancement. True education is that which *draws out*, which develops, which opens in the deep places of the soul eternal fountains of thought and life. The more ignorant men are, in comparison with this, the more they are allied to the animal, and therefore do we lament their ignorance.

Here too, is the evil of all social or political oppression. It is not merely the body that is injured, but the soul is degraded and hurt thereby, and this is the chief wrong. So, as to vice and crime. The overt act is but a light thing compared to the spiritual evil. Here, then, is the true value of education, of efforts for social freedom and progress, for moral reform. They are valuable because they recognize the worth, and labor for the perfection and advancement of the human soul.

But do we not perceive that these and similar efforts are, in themselves, fragmentary, and that when joined they are still incomplete? They lack wholeness, they lack the unity of perfection. When a man has

developed the intellect, is socially free, and clean from vice or crime, something yet is needed to make him a perfect man, and to manifest in him the true ideal of goodness. Still, there is wanting something that intellectual education and philosophy cannot accomplish. In the elements of man's moral nature there is needed a divine life which these can never kindle there. The heart must be penetrated with a love and a holiness that shall illuminate the whole being, and subdue it, breaking out in every feature, living in every act—that shall be the great principle of motive and of conduct.

Oh! say, is not the spirit of Christ the element that is needed, in order to make the perfect man? Must it not be Christ, Christ within us, that shall harmonize and complete all that is good and spiritual in man?

Yes: here is the great truth at which we must arrive. In order to achieve the true end of our natures—in order to be perfect and harmonious beings, Christ must be formed within us. We must become like Christ. His spirit must mould our spirits, re-create them, as it were, until they are his.

We visit not the shrine of human philosophy in order to learn the true end of our being. We cannot discover it in mere books or written words. We cannot find that which shall deliver us from this thrall of sin—we cannot find what shall say to these waves of passion, “peace, be still;” we cannot find these unless we come to Christ.

Not with any love for novel expressions, not with any irreverence do we say, that Christ was the model-man. He is the model for that which lies deepest and aspires highest in our being—our religious nature. Christ did not come to bestow intellectual superiority. He did not come to establish forms of human government, or to make the laws of nations. But he established that which has a direct influence upon these—that which purifies and elevates intellect and brings it near to the throne of God—that which binds society securely together—that which is the great principle of all laws, and gives them their sanctity—their efficacy. He came to kindle in man’s soul a **DIVINE LIFE**. The divine life that is in him, through

him flows to us, and we become partakers of it as Christ is formed within us.

It can never be made to appear that Christ was merely as other men—as other good men—as Socrates or Plato—as the reformers or prophets of the earth. He is above them all, as the direct channel of divine life to man. He is above them all, as being greater than teacher, reformer, or prophet—as the agent of divine life, the Saviour from the sin that enslaves us, the passions that overcome us, the impure motives and desires that urge us. He is above them all, as standing upon that point where heaven and earth meet—where the stream of divine communion and life flows down from God to us.

“Little children,” said the apostle, “I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” Not alone were the members of the church of Galatia interested in the great truth contained in these words. All should give heed to them, for all are behind perfection, and, however low and sinful, all may have Christ formed in them. The soul! here alone is its true development and excellence. The soul! do we heed its value? Do we

realize its great end? Is Christ formed in us? Amid our endless round of toil, our schemes for gain, ease, or pleasure, our sorrows and our joys, do we still yield to the dominion of sin—do we absorb all thought and action in sensual life? It is a solemn question for us to ask. Would that there were tongues in every deed of ours—in every spot whereon we stand—saying to us—“until Christ be formed in you.” What do we say? There *are* such tongues! In every step we take, that admonition of an unfinished work speaks to us. Whence comes this restlessness within us? What is the purpose of this unquenched desire within the soul? We secure one end—but still seek for another. We heap up so much wealth, but ask for more. We increase in knowledge, and yet there is a void. We rise in reputation, but we are not satisfied. No; we cannot be satisfied with anything short of the true end of our being. We cannot be satisfied, until Christ is formed in us. This is the voice which comes from every work in which thy soul fondly hopes to rest—“until Christ be formed in you.” Wealth, fame, pleasure,

can give you no solid comfort—"until Christ be formed in you." To you, it may be, life's sorrows are a mystery, and death a darkness, and so they will be "until Christ be formed in you." To you there come temptations; you yield to sin, knowing that you do wrong, yet urged by a mighty impulse; and so it will be—"until Christ be formed in you." For you there can be no real rest—no serene, perpetual joy, "until Christ be formed in you." Not only do I utter this truth to you. Greater than I utter it. Your own experience speaks it. Awake! act for the true end of your being. The life that you should seek has been *lived out* for you, on the mountains and by the sea-shore, by the way-side, and on the cross. Let that life be ours! Let Christ be formed within us!



THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

—The cross of Christ.—*Gal.* vi. 12.

WHATEVER may be the speculative views of different Christians respecting the death of our Saviour, to all there is a mighty interest and a pervading sanctity in the scene of his crucifixion and the hour of his last agony. Around that once-accursed wood, now radiant with a glorious transformation, there cling associations original, affecting and sublime, that give to its representations by the wayside, at the altar, on the church-top, wherever worn, wherever used, an influence deep and holy, and make it the comprehensive symbol of Christianity itself.

The cross of Christ! May it not be appropriate and beneficial for us to consider some of the causes of its influence? To all

Christians there lingers around that death-scene enough to melt and win the heart. There is a consistency in that prayer of forgiveness, a serenity in that "It is finished," a pathos in that struggling humanity, a sublimity in that triumphant faith, an appeal in that great self-sacrifice, a power in that all-pervading love, that make the cross of the Redeemer radiant and holy—that give it a peculiarity and an influence that every mind must acknowledge, and every heart feel. The Roman centurion, in the darkness of his heathenism and in all the prejudice of his unbelief, exclaimed "Truly, this was the Son of God!" What must the Christian say, after a deeper insight into his Saviour's mission, and a closer study into his Saviour's character? It has been truly said, that "it is not the greatness of Christ's suffering which is to move our souls, but the greatness of the spirit with which he suffered,"—that in mere sensibility to his sufferings, there is "no virtue, no moral worth, and we dishonor Jesus, when this is the chief tribute we offer him"—that with the apostles, "reverence, admiration, sympathy with his sublime spirit,

swallowed up, in a great measure, sympathy with his sufferings." Let us, then, approach the cross, and behind the agony endeavor to discern something of the spirit that was manifested there.

The cross of Christ! We see there a manifestation of *unfaltering adherence to duty*. We say, *unfaltering* adherence. If Jesus shrunk from the bitterness of the last hour, if he prayed with intense agony that the cup might pass from him, he did not shrink from *duty*—he did not ask to be free from that. Perhaps, if that duty might be discharged without that poignant suffering, if it might be accomplished without the thorns, the scourging and the cross, he would have it so; but the "Father's will be done!" And, strengthened, he calmly rose from that hour of anguish, and went forward to the end! The rough palms could not deter him, nor the fierce mockery—all that Pilate, all that man could do, could not urge him to desist from the completion of his work. The sense of the presence and favor of God is the sustaining strength of the good, and perhaps it was in relation to this that he cried out,

“Eloi, lama, sabachthani!” But that thought remained but for a moment, and, in victorious assurance, he commended his spirit to the Father. His duty was done, accomplished through toil and blood, and that pale, bleeding face bore impress of the spirit’s lofty triumph.

Here, then, was duty unwaveringly adhered to—the allotted work performed, despite all trial. This is one lesson that we learn from the cross of Christ. Let it have its influence upon us. Let us remember that duty, at all sacrifices, is to be performed. To this we must cling, let what will fail, or threaten. And the triumph will come, at last. The dutiful spirit is ever the victorious spirit. No one ever went forward in duty, despite all obstacles, without reaping, in the end, an abundant reward. The moral coward, the time-server, the disobedient, is always the loser—the dutiful man smiles, triumphant, at the last. The light of God’s approval converts the crown of thorns to a diadem of glory, and his example becomes strength and victory to others.

The cross of Christ. We see there a lofty

self-sacrifice. Not for himself, droops yonder sufferer. Not for himself, he wears that bleeding brow. Not for himself he meets that wounding spear, and dies. Christ died *for* the guilty, not *as* the guilty. He died for their good, for their everlasting welfare. He died that man might live—died thus, temporarily, died in agony and in shame, that man might have eternal life, and be won to know and love God. For these great ends, he lived also. It so laid in the course of his mission, that if he would teach men, would open the life, and the truth, and the way, he must die—he must come in collision with pride and ignorance, and hate and fear, and be crucified. Yet he went forward with that mission. He turned not from it. He hesitated not. His life was necessary to man. His death was necessary. We do not stop now to inquire in what respects that death was necessary, but it was for man's welfare, and in meeting it Jesus died for man. He sacrificed self for the good of the world. And as we look upon those pierced and outstretched hands, those cold pale lips upon which lingers yet the sanctity of prayer, that face

where holy triumph has softened the lineaments of anguish—let us realize that that blood was shed for us—was poured out freely for our race, and that flesh marred and broken that we might be better and happier. And let us learn therefrom the duty of *self-sacrifice*. Oh! how little of Christ's spirit is there in the world! We can endure but very little suffering even for ourselves, much less for others. We mourn if our schemes do not gratify self. We do not extend self until it becomes identical with our race. We do not labor and spare, and strive and give, that others may be blest. Or, do we thus? Do we ever sacrifice self for others' good? Believe it, whenever we do, we shall exhibit a portion of that moral sublimity which sheds a radiance around the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ! We behold there a *holy submission* and a *triumphant confidence*. There may be a shrinking from physical pain. There may be a momentary cry of anguish. But these are transient interruptions. The great spirit of that death on the cross, is submission and trust. Submission through tests of shame and pain; confi-

dence wrung from dying agony. "Mother! behold thy son." What a spring of human affections is opened here—here, upon the cross—here, amid all the tumult of the multitude! "Mother! behold thy son." How tenderly, how anxiously, these words drop from the sufferer's lips. And was there not anguish, a spirit alive to keen suffering, in him who spoke thus? Did not excessive thirst wring an exclamation from his parched lips? Was it not amid a sense of sharp endurance that he breathed that sublime prayer? Elevate not that cross, above the sympathies of human nature! There was suffering there—affliction of body and of soul! And yet—behold what submission! "Thy will be done, not mine." He did not once swerve from that pious sentiment. He did not strive against it. And, then, over his dying moments, gleamed that great *confidence*, like living sunlight. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" The victory was won. The pain of the body, the sorrow of the mind, could not triumph over the trust of the soul. So let us learn to be submissive and trustful. Let no sorrow

overwhelm us with despair—let no burden force us from obedience to the will of God. Remember Jesus and his dying moments. Let his faith and trust be ours. For even amid the darkness of the third hour, they lingered with holy light around the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ! We behold there *omnipotent and universal love*. This is the great attraction of that cross. It is an exhibition of love. No thunders break above that drooping head. All there is calculated to melt the heart of man, to win it, to smite open its affections, to draw out its sympathies with goodness and with truth. Even here, amid the sacred sorrow of the scene, breathes that benediction that a little while ago we heard from angel-tongues—"Peace on earth—good will to man!" Peace and good will! God speaks it, even in the marred image of his beloved Son. It is reiterated from the lips of bleeding sacrifice. Wisdom may limit its expedients. Power may refuse to condescend. But love knows no bounds to its efforts. Mightiest when it humbles itself the most, dying but to triumph, it cannot be

repelled, it cannot be quenched. With outstretched arms it rushes from the throne of God to the deepest abyss of human wo and degradation, and Deity speaks not in the awful serenity of justice, but pleads with bleeding side and crown of thorns. Love! this is the influence that breathes from the cross and attracts us there. Love! victorious over sorrow, shame and pain. Love! seeking the welfare of the world. Love! breaking out in prayers of forgiveness, and appealing in sublime silence to the testimony of its deeds. Oh! the cross of Christ is the exhibition of God's love to man. From the cross, that love shall triumph!

Thus have we endeavored to specify some of the lessons which come from the cross of the Redeemer. We have there an exhibition of traits and attributes that are calculated to excite deep interest and to stir profoundly the affections. We have there a manifestation of obedience, and devotion, and confidence, and love, amid scenes of gloom and agony, exerted for man's highest welfare. We do not say that there is no other meaning in the death of Christ. We view it as the great crowning

act of his mission—an act intimately connected with the great fact of his resurrection. Had not Christ died thus, and been exposed to the jealous scrutiny of his enemies, to the exhausting pains of the cross, then we might not have had that clear light upon his sepulchre, that transcendent triumph of his rising. Was it not meet that he should die thus, rejected, despised, crucified? Had he died in exaltation—had he been surrounded by triumphant and admiring friends, should we not lack the holy and beautiful lessons, the sublime teachings, that we now receive? Earth's heroes have departed amid the shouts of the multitude, with laurels around their brows. Others have passed away in the pomp of success, and the royalty of power. But Jesus of Nazareth, our priest and our king, dies amid brutal scoffs, pierced with nails and crowned with thorns. But should it not be so? Does not his character shine out in its power and attractiveness from this very fact? There is nothing to foil the divinity of his virtues. We are forced to acknowledge them. From the rugged wood they shine with a glory all their own. Royal

canopy, laurelled death-couch, could not have made them what they are. They convert the instrument of death and shame into a symbol of glory—an agent of victory.

That Christ's death should take place as it did, then, seems an essential fact in his mission. It appears to us that vital results are secured by it. It crowns his labors, by giving an authority to his claims, an expression to his love, a moral to his teachings, an opportunity for his triumph. And whatever efficacy we attribute to his death and his cross, there is, certainly, this great efficacy—that cross is a medium of moral power—it concentrates upon the heart of man the majesty of truth, the sublimity of virtue, the power of love. These shall appear clearer, and have a warmer and more direct influence, as men advance in moral perfection. The cross of Christ is the embodiment of Christianity—the manifestation of its true power. All human philosophies sink below it. This alone, marks the divine origin and proves the efficacy of the gospel. It is a moral appeal to a moral being. It aims at the affections. It addresses the heart. It

sets before man a model ; it shows him the depths of love. From that cross Christ *draws* men. He does not force them, nor bow them, by any physical power—he does not dazzle them by a greatness that belongs only to the intellect—but he *draws* them—binds their affections to God, excites them to the practice of goodness by its clear exhibition. By the cross, by the truth that was there vindicated, by the virtue that triumphed there, by the love that endured all and failed not—by these does the thorn-crowned and the crucified draw us unto him.

What is the salvation which Christ gives us ? It is not deliverance from material evil merely—it is not mere freedom from outward punishment ; it is deliverance from the evil of our own souls, freedom from our debasing passions, our impure desires, our sinful hearts. He raises us to a strong virtue and a blessed love. He saves us from our low appetites, our degrading fears, our gloomy doubts, and makes us happy, makes us good. This is the salvation of Christ, and this is the influence that emanates from his cross. Go there ! Bow at its foot. Drink in the

spirit of him who is struggling there with pain and death! Imbibe that holy obedience, that blessed confidence, that universal love—and then go forth, strong and free! Oh! often, often visit the cross of Christ, that you may feel its influences, and rejoice in its salvation!

The cross of Christ! It stands there. The body of the Redeemer has been taken away. The crowd have dispersed to their homes. The setting sun gilds it; the stars shed over it their holy lustre; and through the silent night, it stands there, an instrument of ignominy, and torture, and death. And when the morning light falls upon it, the people point to it as the wood on which the malefactor died. But it is an instrument of ignominy no more. From that hour when he drew his last breath, it became a glorious emblem, a sign of victory. Through the ages it stands, the guide of the sinning, the hope of the doubting, the rest of the weary. Through the ages it stands. Many suns shine upon it—night-like epochs roll their starry lustre over it—changes go on around it—but there it stands, the great manifesta-

tion of truth and love—the point of atonement between man and God. The cross of Christ! The hosts of steel, the powers of human wisdom, shall roll back and be broken, but here is a power that cannot be overcome—an influence that reaches the heart, that exalts while it binds the soul.

Christian, cling to the once-despised, the now-glorious cross! Let it be to you more than a symbol. Let its life and its spirit reign in you. Let him who hung upon it dwell in your soul. Cling to the cross of Christ—the sign of man's salvation—the instrument that reconciles him to God!



RELIGION FOUNDED IN CHARACTER.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.—*Matt.* vii. 18.

THESE words are significant of a great truth—a truth of the highest practical importance. They declare, as we understand them, that what we *are* is even a more essential fact than what we *do*—inasmuch as what we do must inevitably follow from what we are. They declare that *principle* is greater than forms of conduct, inasmuch as all forms are but scions, or branches, while principle is the root, or, rather, the very vitality of moral life. We may hesitate about the wisdom and propriety of this or that mode of conduct, but of one thing we may rest assured—a soul of radical goodness will dictate nothing wrong. We may graft a lively and precious shoot upon some debased stock, and

we shall have either a scant and sickly crop or no fruit at all. But "a good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit." There is a healthy vigor in it that thrills through every branch and leaf, and from the very quality of its nature, it *will, it must*, break out in a good and abundant production.

It seems as if nothing was so misunderstood as religion—its real advantages and its true objects. We are too apt to consider it as a *rule* or *form*. It is a principle. We think that we accomplish it in what we *do*; whereas its chief result lies in what we *are*. Men can pray, fast, give alms; and all this is easier than it is to *live*, and is nothing unless we live. They can abstain heroically and with most scrupulous caution from the commission of *wrong acts*, but this system of negation is far less difficult than to love and live and grow from what is *right*—to have a disposition of positive goodness, whose pulses throb through our very hearts, and from which we constantly draw the breath of life. Let us remember this, and strive to comprehend it, that we are religious in what we *are*—that religion is a thing of *character*, and

not of mere action. "*Be ye holy,*" is the great command. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." *To be!* There is a profound significance in this fact of *being*. It lies behind all forms. It is the cause of all things. Life is being, mind is being, God is being. When, with reverent curiosity, we ask of him his name—ask, "Who is this central, all-embracing spirit?"—from behind the summer-cloud, behind yon firmament of light, behind the ebb and flow of ceaseless action, behind his awful attributes, he sends back in majesty the comprehensive answer—"I AM!" Thus, too, do we defeat the flippant atheist. Behind these phenomena of nature, there is, there must be, *being*, else there could be no phenomena. In beholding this universal nature, whose constant and magnificent processions move all around us, the spirit intuitively feels that while something *does*, something *is*, which thrills in the bursting buds of spring, robes itself in the sounding waters, circulates in seas of light, and buoys up and penetrates this all in which we live.

And if God is being—if his nature is expressed by a name significant of this—then man, considered in his highest attribute, is to be considered as being—his greatest privilege is to *be*. By being, we have reference here to something more than mere vitality, or *sensation*, or *consciousness*. We do not refer to this element that goes out with the breath of our body, although no man yet has been able to tell what even this is. But we do not refer to organic life by which we are linked to the vegetable—nor to the animal life, which makes us one with the beast of the field—but to that which is related to man's spiritual nature. Man has a higher being than that which circulates through his physical organism, or lies in nerve and bone. Does not Scripture assert this? When he was moulded from the new-born earth, the peculiar and crowning act of his creation made him "a living soul." It is his being as a *soul*, as a mind, as a spiritual and intelligent entity, to which we now allude. And this, we affirm, is the highest and profoundest view that we can take of man. Viewed in this light, he is *being* in the same sense in

which God is being. He *is*—back of what he *does*. His works are a manifestation of what he *is*; but without that spiritual life within the tree there would be no fruit. In the consideration of man, then, that *being* becomes the all-essential point. Whatever tends to its welfare, its development, its beauty, its perfection, is *life* in a higher sense than mere sensation or consciousness—whatever degrades, contracts, pollutes this, is *death* in a more awful sense than the extinction of the breath and the stopping of the pulse.

Does not this view give an important meaning to some of the most prominent declarations of the Bible? How much is said by Christ about *life*, which we feel cannot be this mere life of the body! How much is spoken concerning *death*, which is not the element of physical dissolution, but a moral darkness and force which closes about the affections and powers of the soul! “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*.” “My son that was dead is alive again.” “You hath he quickened who were *dead* in trespasses and sins.” Here is the

meaning of that death—it is the death of trespass and sin—it is spiritual death. Men all around us are slumbering in the lethargy of sensuality, in the dust of the earth, wrapping their grave clothes about them still closer in their dreams. This is death—a deterioration of our highest being. It is subtraction from our spiritual power and enjoyment. It is a darkness of this world bounding our vision with the doors of the tomb, overcoming our faith by the shadow of these doors. It is a gravitating power plucking us downward from communion with God. It is a selfish temporality, cutting the cords that bind us to holy sympathy and universal love. It is a night, black as that which broods in the chambers of the sepulchre, driving us out from the presence of the Father—now cheating us with fitful gleams of pleasure, now shutting down in tremendous darkness—leaving us tossed by storms of passion, and frightened with a sense of alienation from God. When a man is in this state, look not for outward signs of dissolution—look not for the sealed eye, the dumb lip, the motionless hand. Look, if you can

into his *soul*—into his very being—and consider the state of *that*. He is *dead*!

And the *life* of which Christ speaks, is it not the reverse of this? It is not this life that throbs in the beating of our hearts, that thrills with joy upon nerves to-day, that ache in pain to-morrow. It is not this life that the weary pilgrim lays down to be at rest. It is not this life that the poor slug of sensuality deems the all—that the felon pants for in his hour of doom. It is not this life, so rife with pleasant things, so full of tender ties, and yet so changeful in its processions, passing through sunshine and shower, crowded in a narrow space, with departed hopes and coming fears hovering around it. The life that Christ came to bestow is the life of the soul—is eternal life. It is knowledge of and communion with himself and God. It is the unfolding of attributes within us, like those manifested in God, and which belong to His nature. It is the elevation of reason, the hallowing and expanding of love. It is that process by which the spirit, it knows not how, feels that it is stronger in goodness and in all true power; feels that sin

and sorrow and death have no victory over it—for it is intimately allied to the Deity.

That the *death* and the *life* thus spoken of are of the deepest importance, then, no one can doubt. Jesus evidently insists upon the last as a very prominent fact in his mission, and it is so mentioned throughout his teachings that we cannot call it a mere casual or metaphorical expression. It is, evidently, an essential element in the nature of the true Christian. “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life,” is his sorrowful rebuke to those who reject him—while, to those who obey him, his triumphant assurance is that whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die.

To apply this to what has gone before, we remark that *life* is the attribute of being—it *is* being. Our words, our deeds, do not *live*, in the strict sense of the term. It is *we* from whom these words flow, these actions originate, it is *we* who live. All the importance, then, which there is for us in this idea of LIFE, *eternal* life, upon which so much stress is laid in the Scriptures, applies to us not immediately in what we *do*, in

what we say, but in what we *are*—in our spiritual state—in the principles from which we live and act. We are in a condition of life or death, not merely as we do, or do not, this or that good act, but according as we are, or are not, in ourselves, essentially good.

We alluded in the commencement to mistakes that exist in regard to religion; and by recurring to this subject our idea may be made more plain and impressive. What, then, *is* religion? We reply, it is *goodness*—it is the right condition of all our affections and desires. But is it not too often the case that men are anxious about what they shall do, or rather how little they shall do, in order to be entitled to the name of being religious? Do they not set apart from general life, a certain round of duties, calling them *religious* duties, and when they are performed, deem that by the mere discharge of these duties they are religious? Do they always see clearly why they should perform these duties? Is not religion, with them, a vague idea, attached to prayer and fasting, and Sabbath-keeping, and creeds—and certain things that they *are* to do, and certain things that they

are not to do? Do they not speak of religion as though it were some inexplicable charm that penetrates and broods in the soul—a something isolated and mysterious—they know not what it is? We say to such that not in doing merely, but in *being*, does religion consist. Do we utter a strange proposition, when we say, you may go through the *formal* round of every duty incumbent upon man, and yet, in fact, be no more religious than he who neglects these *forms* of duty? The Pharisee stood up in the temple to pray, and repeated the long catalogue of his good deeds. He told of his alms-giving, his fasting, his tithe-paying. Ah! there was more *religion* in that single “God be merciful to me a sinner,” that broke from the lips of the publican. This was the moving of life—this was the outgushing of his very nature in penitence and prayer. It made its own forms. It chose no set rules. It came pealing from his lips and running from his eyes, and every tear was a sacrifice, and every word a prayer! Let us be careful what we *are*—let us see to it that we have the life within—and little fear is there but we shall

do right. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." "Make the tree good and his fruit will be good."

Religion, then, consists in *being* good—in having right affections. It is a principle, a life within. All good deeds issue spontaneously from it, as precious fruit from the healthy tree. All natural results are spontaneous. The diamond sparkles without effort, and the flowers open impulsively beneath the summer rain. And true religion is a spontaneous thing—as natural as it is to weep, to love, or to rejoice. No stiff, cumbersome, artificial form can be substituted for it. The soul that possesses it, breathes it out in good words and good deeds, from a natural impulse. It rises to God in devotion, it flows out to man in kindness, as naturally as the dew-drop rises to the sun, or the river rushes to the sea. It acts not from mere interest, or fear. It is seraphic exaltation of being, throbbing in harmony with the will of God, from which right action follows as a matter of course. As God does good, because he *is* good, so does the truly religious soul.

Surely, it is not necessary for us to say, that we have not been opposing *forms*. If any fear this, let them turn to our first chapter, where we argue for the benefit and the necessity of forms. We have not been teaching antinomianism—but that forms are not, of themselves, religion. They are developed by it, they may re-act upon it—but they are not it. Wherever it exists, forms will appear. The fruit cannot exist without the tree, but the good tree will bring forth fruit. Apply, then, to your heart oh, reader, in this hour of communion, the great practical question—“What *am* I?” “What is my spiritual state? Is it love, and joy, and communion with God? Is it true and eternal life?” If so, then go forth and your *deeds* will all be right—your modes of conduct, will all be right. For “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit!”



THE GREAT EXEMPLAR.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.—*Heb.* xii. 2.

THIS is the Christian's aim and model. This is the object that, beyond all the rest, is set for his fixed regard and study. Life's experiences are various, but this must be seen through them all. In the season of prosperity and peace, still to this must we look. In the darker hours, in the garden of anguish, still must we look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; not alone for the sake of learning the great lesson of *endurance*, but, beholding the light that streams from the open sepulchre, we shall find that he has *consolations* too, that the world can neither give nor take away. In the battle of temptation, under the burden of sin, through the night of sorrow, in all the

soul's wants and discipline, look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith!

The great object of life is the discipline and perfecting of the soul. Let not this come to us as a dull truism, having no interest, if any meaning. We repeat, the great object of life is the discipline and perfecting of the soul. To many, what so real and solid as these material existences? The old mountains—the rivers that run continually to the sea—the palpable earth—the solar system. What more real than this bustling, every-day world—trade and commerce—gold and silver? To speak of the *soul's* interest, amid the tumult and apparent permanence of all these, does it not seem like speaking of some mystery for which we have little to care, and less to do? But could we unsettle our present notions, somewhat—could we escape from this iron habit of materialism that engirds our reasoning, and look upon what *is* real and lasting, our estimate of things would be much changed. We should discover that these outward circumstances are very uncertain and deceptive, and that the soul is the only real thing among them.

A shock—and this solid earth might be crushed to atoms—reduced to impalpable gas—with all its processions of toil and traffic, and all its seeming substantialities. By “a run of luck,” as it is sometimes called, your house is filled with treasure—by a shock of misfortune it is scattered to the four winds of heaven. And yet, you virtually call these interests real and supreme! Where is their reality? In what consists their supremacy? The soul and the soul's interests are real and supreme! The meat that perisheth not—the bread, eating of which we never hunger—these are real and supreme!

Has it ever occurred to you, my reader, that all this outward order of things derives its real value and significance from the existence of the soul? Has it ever occurred to you that these are important only as they instruct and discipline the soul? Did you ever regard your daily labor as filled with spiritual meaning—as a great moral lesson? Did it ever occur to you, that every time you resist a temptation, every time you prefer right to gratification, you confer upon your

own soul peace and dignity, that give you more joy and strength than any acquisition of money can impart? Yes; doubtless you have experienced this. At such times, *there, within*, you have enjoyed a reward that made the outer world, beautiful as it is, look brighter. Allow us to make use of this common experience, for illustration. If you have enjoyed once, or occasionally, such an experience, what would be the result, if always you should feel so, in the very depths of your nature? Would it not be a rich remuneration for sorrow, and sacrifice, and suffering? Would not your path be bright before you in the very hour of disappointment? Would not your heart be calm even though your eyes wept?

As is the state of mind, then, as is the soul, so are we, or are we not, truly happy and strong. The murderer cannot look up to the bright sky, and sympathize with its purity. The angry, hateful soul, cannot comprehend the love that pervades the universe. But, if outward things are real and supreme—if there is no soul, or if it is but little matter what the condition of that soul

is—why should the outward universe appear so strange and sad to those who are evil and tormented within? Surely if the outward world is the greatest reality—it will soon drown all qualms of conscience, all stings of guilt. But it is not so. The inner life, with its thoughts, its conscience, is supreme after all. Its voice is heard above all outward tumult—it projects its light or shadow upon the universe. The natural world is at once its instrument and its instructor. As we become true to our better nature, loving and good, so do we learn how to use the world aright—so do all the ordinances of life appear to be established for great and wise purposes. The day is not only for labor, and the night for rest; but every hour and every event is that we may learn to trust and adore God, and to love man better—that we may love the good and hate the evil—may have faith in adversity, humility in success, penitence for sin, strength in weakness, and support in death. This is the great end of life. Not that we may grow gray in toiling to heap up much gold, or in the pursuit of the honors and pleasures of threescore years and

ten. Threescore years and ten! Were all these adaptations created merely for a life of threescore years and ten? Are these heavens so garnished with beauty, is this earth so varied and fertile, merely to gratify that which, in a little while, will die and return to dust? Is it all to pamper a body that presently becomes weak and diseased and crumbles back to its elements? Or does this beauty without, speak to a capacity for beauty within? Do these wonderful works appeal to a power of knowing and progressing, that *shall* know and progress, when its mortal tabernacle shall be lost in the processes of change? If this life is all, much is there in it that is incomprehensible. We cannot comprehend why we should desire to know, and never be satisfied with knowledge—why we should be tempted and suffer. But if there is another life, we can discern a reason for these things. In the fact that we attain to no complete knowledge now, but only such as deepens the capacity and the thirst for more, there gleams out the deeper fact that we shall know more by and by. Powers are developed here until they are capable of higher development in other por-

tions of God's limitless universe—and suffering and temptation disciplinē the soul for a sphere where temptation shall no more be needed, and where the spirit shall go forward to practise upon what it has learned. Viewing this life, then, as the vestibule and preparation for another, we can account for many of its mysteries. But if not, why then does the body suffer from the wants of the mind? Why, if this world is merely a theatre for human fame, or human pleasure, merely a mart for the heaping up of gold and silver—why do we think of immortality or care for it? Why do the mountain-summits seem near to another world? Why, from the depths of night, from worlds of unapproachable glory, come influences that kindle aspirations for something higher and purer? Why do we fancy the loved and the lost walking upon some glorious shore with palms about their brows? Why do we truly honor an upright man more than a king, and see in patient endurance and forgiving love the highest dignity and the best victory? Why are prayer, and goodness, and faith, so much more worthy in our eyes

than mere bodily skill or beauty? Because, we do not cease to be, at the grave—the outward things of this life are not our chief ends—but our true end is spiritual perfection and immortal life!

We have dwelt long upon preliminaries here, because they are of the utmost importance. We must become convinced that the soul's interests are real and supreme, before we can act earnestly for the advancement of those interests. When we see that spiritual growth and perfection is indeed the great object of our being, when we realize this, truly realize it, can we fail to act upon it?

But now occurs the great practical question—how shall we act—what standard of excellence shall we adopt? The answer comes to us, "Look to Jesus, the Great Exemplar, the Author and Finisher of our faith." This is an injunction which we shall comprehend, precisely as we comprehend the worth of the soul. Nature could not lead men to the highest development of their spiritual natures. They needed, for this, a spiritual model, which, embodied in mortal clay and linked to human conditions, should

live out the great lesson of spiritual growth and perfection; should resist temptation; meet sin and overcome it; endure suffering and submit to the will of God; be hated and yet love its enemies; through the circumstances of earth hold communion with the Father; be surrounded by sorrow, and yet have faith; be despised, rejected, and crucified, and yet do good even to the unthankful and the evil. Therefore, Jesus came. Invested with divine authority, and anointed as the Christ, he laid his infant head in a manger. What a lesson of *humility*! He threw aside his personal attachments and went out to do his Father's work. What an example of *self-sacrifice* and *devotion to duty*! Poor, not having where to lay his head, he ministered to all the needy, lifted up the bowed down, comforted the sorrowful, healed the diseased, taught the erring, invited the sinning, and confirmed the penitent. What a *life of goodness*! At last he bowed his head to a thorny crown, submitted to a robe of mockery, and was crucified praying for those who pierced him. What a revelation of *spiritual greatness and triumph*! Three

days he lay in the tomb. The cross stood in ignominy over it—the shadow of an awful doubt lay upon it, and then he rose from the dead, threw aside its cerements, and opened its doors. His life became a gospel to all men. His cross was, henceforth, the symbol and the agent of reconciliation, the altar of penitence, and the hope of the sinner; and into his sepulchre the mourning look, like Mary, with tears, and like Mary go away comforted—and Faith stands there forever—and the believer sinks now into the arms of death as into the arms of sleep, because his Lord has risen. What a manifestation of the *triumph of good over evil—of the rewards of a perfect life—of the superiority of spiritual things!*

And thus to all men is the question answered, how shall we grow in spiritual excellence? Jesus is the great Exemplar! It cannot be too often urged upon us, that he is the manifestation of a true spiritual life, and as such is to be studied and imitated. Not merely what he *said*, but what he *did*—not merely his precepts, but his whole conduct—we are to place before us as a pattern.

This is the great revelation from heaven. Let us not read with dull apprehension his gospel—let us not merely learn by heart its moral precepts. Let us commune with his spirit. Let us study, with intense and constant interest, his life, his character. Let this be a frequent thing with us. In the hour of communion especially, when we are about to go to the Lord's supper, or when we retire from it, let us study Christ until we breathe something of his holiness, and discern something more of his spiritual excellence. Oh! in the maze of doubt and the din of controversy, the earnest heart often asks, "How shall I be religious?—what is religion? I feel the greatness, the supremacy of spiritual interests—how shall I advance those interests—how grow in divine, in eternal life." The answer is, look to Jesus! Not in human theories, not in complicated and mysterious expositions, but in his simple life are the standard and the rule. Study that life, strive to imitate it. Like him, be humble, self-sacrificing, true to duty. Like him, cherish love to all—even to the offending. Like him, bow meekly to your lot—

have faith in affliction Like him, go forth to be and to do good. And the reward shall be yours. Every act of obedience shall make the soul strong, every scene of trial shall become a field of victory, every instrument of shame shall be converted into glory. Your joys shall be sanctified to you—your sorrows shall be as ministering angels. And the doors of death shall open up to heaven!



THOUGHTFULNESS AND MEDITATION.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide.—*Gen.* xxiv. 63.

AND who will pass through the vicissitudes of this world, without meditation? The same universe that was around Isaac, is around us. We tread the same earth—the same heavens sparkle above us. And when the hush of even-tide shuts down upon the noisy world, and cares, and passions, and labors all grow still, often must there be excited, thoughts the same as those which sprung up in his mind three thousand years ago. He must be careless, indeed, who never meditates—who never calls in his thoughts from their wanderings and their daily occupation, and turns them into the channel of serious reflection.

And yet this is the true spring of sincere religious life. These "hours of communion" let in the air and light of heaven upon the soul. The cause of sin, of the lack of religious life and interest, may it not be found in the thoughtless habits of the many? Sin, generally speaking, is not premeditated; or, rather, it issues from lack of meditation. Take one wicked practice, for instance—profane swearing. Let a man sit down and reflect seriously upon the evil of this habit. Let him consider its absurdity, its ingratitude, the irreverence that it displays, the slight it puts upon God, its utter vileness as well as uselessness—let him frequently meditate thus upon it, and he would not swear so freely, nay, we venture to say he would leave it off. Every oath he should speak would be a rebuke, and many a blasphemy would be arrested ere its utterance. So with any habitual sin. Let it once become the subject of serious and candid thought, let it be revolved in the mind in the light of reason, conscience, and the word of God—and its power would be weakened and broken. At least, they are few who would

deliberately continue in it, or adopt it from avowed choice. We do not consider sin in its true light—we do not reason upon it—we do not bring it under prayerful inspection—we thoughtlessly yield to its impulses—we plunge recklessly forward without halting to consider our course, without reviewing our life—and it cleaves to us in our eager and restless journey, as the dust and the mire.

This lack of meditation, is, moreover, the cause of the lack of religious life and interest. We do not lack interest in other matters. We are busily engaged in our pleasures and in our daily enterprises. But religious life and devotion is an extensive want among us. We fear that they are comparatively few who act from the highest motives of religion—who make its ends the chief ends of life—whose great care is for spiritual advancement, growth, love, holiness, virtue. And the reason is that we do not enough consider the value of these things. We do not make them present and real to ourselves. They seem to us mysterious and abstract. We need, then, evidently, more thoughtfulness as to these matters. Surely,

if they are true, if they are real, there is nothing of so much importance. Our gains and pleasures are but little, compared to our growth in intrinsic goodness, in solid virtue. Those we shall lay aside in a little while, but these are possessions that we shall carry with us forever. God, heaven, eternal life, these are great truths—but are we familiar with them? In one sense, it is probable that we are familiar with them. We have heard of them from Sabbath to Sabbath—we have, perhaps, read of them from week to week, or even from day to day. But have we ever brought our minds to bear seriously upon them? Have we ever considered them as *verities*? Do we think of them *habitually*? Have they sunk into our souls and become familiar and practical ideas with us—truths of our own experience? How many depart, after hearing a sermon, to revolve in their minds its teachings—to think and act upon its personal applications? How many feel that the commands of the Bible were addressed to *them*—that Christ died for *them*—that all he taught and did was for *them*; and that by every motive of love they are called

upon to imitate him, to serve God and do their duty? We do not ask who *knows* these facts; but who *feels* them, intensely, habitually, practically. We answer—only those who meditate upon them—who devote some portion of life to thoughts upon their highest interests and most important obligations.

Meditation, then, is a most important exercise of the mind. It is calculated to check our sins and to fill us with a sense of the reality of religion. Indeed, it is necessary in all departments of life. The man of business devotes a portion of his time to meditation. He considers his means—he selects his objects—he examines, from time to time, his losses and his profits. Careless, indeed, would that man be deemed who should go to work without thought, and without thought carry on his affairs. The counting-room of successful enterprise is the scene of many an hour of intense meditation—which is the life and the efficacy of the after-action. And thus with all great deeds—they have been preceded by silent and earnest meditation. The works of art that fill us with admira-

tion—the glories of human power and intellect, these did not live for the first time in their present material shape. They were first in the mind of the artist, dismissed, recalled, brooded over, shaped, fitted, until at length, from the depths of profound meditation, the work was evolved—the pyramid grew—the statue rose in marble beauty—the poem spoke to the hearts of men. How long did Columbus *meditate*, before he launched his three small ships! How eagerly did he seek the evidences of a new world, and hail the drifting fragments of an unknown shore—ere he braved the sneers of men, the dangers of the ocean, and the fear and discontent of his companions! *Meditation!* It alone has generated great deeds. It has suggested the truths of the universe, and won the secrets of the stars. It is man's high prerogative to *think*—to examine, compare, and reason—to trace out glorious conclusions—to unlock, with patient thought, the mysteries of life and nature—to give significance to all he sees, and to reach through fragmentary and superficial hints, profound and ultimate truth. And so must we do, not merely as intellect-

ual but as moral, as spiritual beings—as those who value, or ought to value, our religious interests as supreme. If we would break from sin, we must *meditate*, often meditate. If we would grow in goodness, we must meditate. If we would live a true life and secure our own highest welfare, we must meditate.

And truly, there are subjects enough for meditation. If we walk out in the fields at even-tide, as Isaac did, they throng upon us. As the earth becomes veiled in shadow, and its objects mingle, our eyes and our thoughts are attracted to other spheres, and go abroad into the limitless firmament. Compared with them, how insignificant seems this life of ours! How minute is our “individual difference,” in a universe where such stupendous worlds seem like atoms of light! How do our pursuits and our cares shrink under the immensity of those suns and systems! And as this earth, comparatively, is but a dim speck, what is the worth of all our toil that begins and ends with it? And how short is the life that issues from its bosom, and sinks into it again, ere some of those

worlds complete their annual circuit! And yet, something within us speaks that we are of more worth than all those worlds—that we shall outlast them—that we shall rise higher and shine brighter than they. And we are led up to great thoughts of God and immortality, and we feel that “it is not the work we do, but the spirit we work in,” that makes us great or small. And shall we not descend from this meditation with serener spirits—shall we not be stronger for the next day’s temptations and cares? Shall we not work more wisely through all its hours?

But that even-tide opens to us another theme for meditation. It is the close of the toilsome, careful day. Through its busy hours we have *thought* and *acted*. We have been tried. And in all those scenes of action and of trial have we done nothing wrong? Have we kept our spirits pure through each conflict? Does the day’s close bring to us no account of the day’s conduct that fills us with shame and regret? Does its silence summon up no memories of wrong word, thought, or deed? Has passion had no

domination in our souls—has sin not entered there? Or, has it, on the other hand, been a day of improvement to us? Are we conscious of some temptation successfully resisted—some sin conquered—some good deed done? Blessedly will the shade of evening steal upon us then, and we shall lay us down to sleep happier than if we slept on laurels. At all events, how fit a theme for meditation is our growth or decline in virtue—how fit a time is the still even-tide! And how will its hour of meditation strengthen us for the morrow's action! It has indicated our short-comings that another day may correct them, and its breathings of penitence and pardon are full of peace for the future. Or it has opened to us wider reaches of thought, and deeper vistas of memory. It has lighted up the forgotten lapses of life, and we have beheld anew its strange vicissitudes. Dear forms, kind looks, now shrouded and in the dust, have passed before us—the sins and follies of life rush in upon us, not as messengers of wrath, but as agents of warning and repentance, bidding us turn from our evil ways and live. And another thought presses

upon us. The thought of death—of the last even-tide—that shall fold us in its shadowy embrace, and in which we shall lie down to our last sleep. Perhaps already we stand in the dimness of that even-tide, and must, we know not how soon, go out to meditate in other fields of being!

Though in this course of remark we have rather indicated the subjects and opportunities of meditation, than inculcated it as a duty, yet we find in the consideration of these opportunities arguments for the practice. We might specify other seasons appropriate for meditation. All seasons of opportunity are appropriate, and we should bear about with us a habit of thoughtfulness. This is the characteristic of the truly religious spirit—it is thoughtful—not gloomy or austere—but thoughtful, considerate as to the highest duties and interests of life. Yet while every day and every hour should bear a burden of thought, there are seasons peculiarly appropriate to meditation. Such is the period indicated in the words selected as the motto of our chapter. The Sabbath too, is an appropriate season, for then we put by our

secular cares, and rest. The time of affliction affords an opportunity for meditation. We should not suffer such a time to pass by without thought on our part. We do not mean the heavy thoughts of grief, for these will come spontaneously—but consideration of the purposes of affliction, the disciplinary nature of life, our own spiritual need of such discipline, and of the God who controls all things. The time of sorrow is peculiarly a season for meditation and prayer. So is the time of peculiar prosperity.

The communion season and the communion Sabbath, is a time peculiarly appropriate to this exercise. We have been, or we are about to go, to the table of our Lord. And is this a mere form with us—or do we live in communion with him? Do we only remember him, when we take of the broken bread and of the cup, or is he constantly in our thoughts? Are we his disciples indeed? Do we possess his spirit? Have we set him before us as our great model, and are we making it our chief aim to be like him? And how far below him are we in moral stature? Are we pained at the difference?

Oh! there are subjects enough for us to meditate upon as we come into his presence—as we approach or retire from the outward communion? Let us make the occasion a season of meditation—an opportunity and instrument of divine life.

Meditation! Let us practise it. Let us often examine our own hearts—our daily life—our relations to God and duty. Let us retire from the mingling cares of the world, the sensualities that engirt us and draw us so mightily, and think of those realities that pertain to us, and to which we pertain as spiritual beings. And we shall go forth from those hours of communion, strengthened and blest!



CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.—*Luke xxiv. 36.*

THE resurrection of Jesus took place, without tumult, and without ostentation. From the morning when he burst the bands of death, to the hour of his ascension, all was calm and natural. His interview with Mary, his revelation of himself to his disciples, and his after communion with them, close up his mission like a summer evening that lingers on the skirts of a day of vicissitude and storm. It *was* the evening hour to him. His earthly labor was over, and he spent the moments ere his departure to the higher world in the sweet communion of friendship.

To some, it may seem strange that his resurrection did not burst upon the world

like an earthquake shock; and that he did not go armed with his victory over the grave into the very heart of that guilty city, and, by his re-appearance to thousands, rebuke their faithlessness and their sin. "This was the crowning event of his mission," some one may say—"why, then, was it not the grandest in its effects? Oh! that the multitudes that saw him nailed upon the cross, could have seen him rise and shake off his grave-clothes, and come forth radiant from the shadow of the sepulchre! My faith, that sometimes wavers now, would have been confirmed thus by the united testimony of thousands." But, in reply to this, let us ask—is it certain that testimony would have been thus united? Is not skepticism, and of all things the skepticism of pride and self-conceit, always ready with its plausible explanations? Would not those who were unaffected by the preceding miracles of Christ, have rejected even this crowning miracle? The *reality* of his death would have been denied, or his *identity* would have been doubted; and to the testimony of the few thousands, who were all that could have

beheld it at the best, the unbelieving world would have said *then* that it was a fraud, a sham; and the unbelieving world would say *now*, that it was the folly of a superstitious age, and the tradition of a Jewish lie. For all *efficient* purposes, then, the testimony of five hundred is as good as that of five thousand or of five hundred thousand. It is not God's way to shed truth upon the whole world at once—to burst upon the universal mind with instant conviction. The revelation is committed, at first, to a few. And often must that few contend with all the fierce prejudices, and sometimes fall martyrs to the vindictive passions, of the race. Every great truth has, in its day, been a falsehood to the majority of the world. Why should we not also lament this fact, and deplore that the world could not have been convinced at once of all truth? We answer again—it is not God's way to reveal truth to all men, at once. A few are selected to be its witnesses and its martyrs, and it must force its way by its intrinsic power and harmony. Thus with the resurrection of Jesus. Enough was done to make it known to a few; they were selected

as its depositaries, to proclaim it as a fact, seen and handled, while the world at large was left to receive it from the credibility of the witnesses and from its intrinsic reasonableness.

The account of Christ after the resurrection, as we have it in the gospels, is admirably calculated to strengthen the credibility of that event. We see, at once, that his disciples were unprepared for his re-appearance. They seem to have had but a vague hope of his rising again. They are disappointed at his death, sorrow-stricken, hopeless. As Jesus walks with them on the way to Emmaus, they take him to be a stranger, and artlessly relate their fond but blighted anticipations, and hint dubiously at the report that he was risen from the dead. And although their hearts burned within them as they conversed on the way, yet their feelings did not suggest to them the truth that he who talked with them was the very Jesus whom they deplored. And even after the glad announcement had been made, the incredulity of one was removed only by laying his hands in the prints of the nails and in the wounded side. Here, then, seems anything but deliberate

fraud or overwrought fancy. The unostentation with which Jesus rose from the dead, and the calmness of his conduct, preclude objections that might have been raised, had he burst upon them in sudden splendor, and made them delirious with wonder. Their unconsciousness of his presence and their slowness to believe, testify to their credibility.

But it may be said, that this very account of their slowness to believe and of their artless unconsciousness, is written by the interested party, to whom, instead of his enemies, Christ is said to have appeared. In replying to this objection, we remark, that it is here we perceive the value of the narrative of which the words quoted at the head of this chapter, form a part. It is a natural narrative; and this argument from the *naturalness* of the transactions connected with the resurrection, we deem a very strong one. It appears to us that these accounts *cannot* be the work of imposture. And if they are not fictitious, then is the record credible; and if so, we must give our faith to the great event which it declares.

We say, then, that the narrative here is

perfectly *natural*. If it is a mere invention it is an invention of most consummate skill, such skill, we venture to say, as the writers of the gospels did not possess. Look at the remarkable manner in which the *identity* of Jesus is preserved. In him who utters with such tenderness the name of "Mary"—in him who speaks with such majestic earnestness—"Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father"—in that penetrating and convincing spirit which causes the hearts of the disciples to burn within them—in that poignant yet kind rebuke which he gives to Thomas—in all this, and more, we recognize the same Jesus that we have followed through the toils of a brief life, whose words we drank from the brow of Olivet, whose agony we witnessed as we stood on Calvary. Here, then, is a moral portrait, wonderfully like life, consistent and harmonious to the close, and it is either the invention of profound skill, or the simple truth. Here is either the most penetrating insight into character, steady and clear, unperplexed by the most exciting scenes, and preserving seamless the identity of a most wonderful personage from the

beginning of his history to the close, exhibiting to us the same essential characteristics, the same greatness and strength after the excitement of an awful miracle as before; here, we repeat, is either such a consummate skill delineating a character of the most wonderful moral excellence, far above the national and temporal ideal; or else here is a transcript from nature—here is the portrait of a real being. We can best account for the delineation by assuming the latter hypothesis. The character of Christ, which we trace all through the gospels, we believe to be nothing less than a transcript from reality. Certain indications, certain minute details, that never enter into a work of art, that are found only in nature, determine us to the opinion that the biographers of Christ did not invent him, but that his character created his biographers.* And we say that we have exhibited the same character after the resurrection as before. No bungler has

* See the whole argument upon this point admirably carried out in Mr. Furness' work, entitled, "Jesus and his Biographers." A most convincing book on the internal evidences of Christianity.

come in here and pieced out the harmony of a real life with the deformity of a legend. That history which flows so naturally to the sepulchre of Jesus, issues from it not in monstrous disproportion and with a different material. Calmly and with a celestial purity it glides into that place of shadows; calmly and with celestial purity it issues thence until it is lost in the brightness of his ascension. The same truth to nature that appears in that last scene on Calvary appears in that interview at the sepulchre with Mary.

For this reason, then, we value the portion of the New Testament narrative that comes after the resurrection. We value it for its *manner*—more than if it had recounted the wonder, and fright, and excitement of a rising from the dead. *That*, it is possible, some one might have invented, and added to the history of Jesus: but this calmness, this peace, this season of affectionate interview and counsel, is a manifestation of the self-same Christ—is truth indeed, imbued with the very spirit of Jesus.

And, after all, it is the spirit of Jesus, the character of the Saviour, that furnishes the highest proof of immortality. The *material*

act of the resurrection, could we have seen it, could we have felt it, could we have got there before the ground was moistened by Mary's tears and looked in, and beheld that awful change come over the sleeping Saviour, when upon that still mild face there crept the warm flush of life, when the rustling of his shroud affrighted the sepulchre, when, with a thrill that made death's pale kingdom shudder, he rose to his feet, and angels came and sat there—could we have touched him as he passed us by dropping his spicy cerements in the new vigor of his immortality—Oh! then, it is true, we should have had *demonstration* to satisfy this deep desire, this yearning hope within us. But now, as we have not that demonstration, it is, we repeat, the *spirit* of Jesus that makes immortality a truth to us. We feel—everything deep and holy within us feels—that Jesus could not die forever—that such love, and truth, and power are not of earth, are not the heritage of death—but are celestial, undying, greater than, triumphant over, all forms of matter and of evil. When skepticism would blight the hopes that spring up like daisies upon the green sepulchres of our dead—when it

strives to shake the rocky foundations of the Saviour's tomb—when it would take away the body of our Lord, and lay it, we know not where—we will fall back upon this truth, that the spirit of Jesus is immortal—has no affinity to earth—and that something that throbs in us, something that throbbed too in the bosoms of our dear departed ones, in sympathy with his spirit, assures us humanity shall be immortal also.

This, then, is why we value the portion of the New Testament that comes after the resurrection. It helps confirm our faith in that great event, because its exhibition of the spirit of Christ testifies to its authenticity. We may err, but it seems to us that Calvary could not consistently have been the last act of our Saviour's mission—even were it not for the demonstrative character of his resurrection. The crucifixion called out all our wonder, shocked all our nature, appealed to all our affections. But had Jesus left us thus, amid violence and darkness, we should not have had a full representation of his character, or a complete type of his mission. Neither could we have left him at the grave. Though around it, for all ages, should

brighten his assurance of immortality, and Faith and Hope should linger there to tell us "He *will* rise!"—better is it for us that we hear those other angels saying, "He *has* risen!" Better, not only because of the great Fact which it demonstrates, but because afterward there came a season of calmness and of love. Mighty was that scene of Calvary. Glorious was that unsealed tomb. But equally convincing are that walk to Emmaus, and that interview when Jesus said to his amazed disciples—"Peace be unto you." It was consistent with his great mission that thus it should be closed, not in terror and in darkness, but in sunshine and peace. It is right that we should thus discover that the holy and beautiful affections of our nature survive the tomb and go upward. And as he was heralded into our world with love and joy, so not from dark Calvary should he pass away, nor through the doubtful shadows of the grave. Not in *conflict* but in *rest* was his victory confirmed, and as he went upward in the brightness of ascension, his last words fell upon the earth in the peace of benediction.

CHRIST'S ABIDING PRESENCE INVOKED.

Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.—*Luke xxiv. 29.*

THESE words are in close connection with those which afforded occasion for our last chapter, and belong to the same general subject. They furnish us with an instance of that *naturalness* to which I have alluded as corroborating the whole narrative. They were spoken on the way to Emmaus. Two of the disciples, in their walk to this village from Jerusalem, were conversing together upon the great events that had recently occurred. It was natural that these should be the themes of their conversation. Their minds must have been wholly absorbed in the transactions of the few days past, and their

grief, their terror, their despair, would suggest nothing else. Under these circumstances Jesus drew nigh, and, unknown as he was to them, fell in with the topic of their conversation. He was, to them, a stranger, but they felt his power. As they confessed afterward, their spirits burned within them, so that they could not bear to separate from him, but constrained him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." How natural, we repeat, is all this. The face of Jesus was strange to them, but his *spirit* had all the power of old, and was familiar with every chord of their hearts. How often has the soul been stirred in this way! The memories of old friendship awakened by a tone, when the face is seared by change and time! How often has the intuition of affection detected its own in the voice, the manner, the sentiment, long before the more tardy perception has had sufficient evidence for recognition! Even with those whom we have never known there often springs up a sympathy: our spirit responds to something in another's spirit, we know not what nor how. When the prophet,

the true teacher, speaks to men, often their hearts burn within them, before they recognize his authority or assent to his opinions. In the instance before us, there were both the intuition of affection and the sentiment last alluded to—the sentiment that recognizes true worth and authority—the sentiment which the great mass of the people expressed, when they felt that Christ “spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” This description of their feelings, then, would hardly enter into a fictitious or artificial account. They knew not the stranger who came to them in their sorrow, but they felt that his words had power. And while their hopes were buried in the tomb of their Master, and their minds were disturbed by doubts and fears, here was one who could enlighten their minds by reason and by Scripture, and encourage their hearts by gracious promises, and therefore they felt that that stranger was something more to them than any ordinary man—that he had an influence over them, such as only one before had possessed—and their souls yearned for his companionship. They could not part

thus on the threshold of communion; they felt that he was the very teacher they needed in their desolation, and they exclaimed—“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”

Leaving, however, the argument for the truth of the record contained in the *naturalness* of this description, we purpose to make these words the foundation of a few practical illustrations. We have said that it was the *spirit* of Christ, identical before and after his resurrection, that moved upon those simple and affectionate hearts and caused them to yearn so for the seeming stranger. Reader, with that spirit we also walk, day by day. We see not the personal Jesus. We cannot hear his actual voice, nor lay our hands in the print of the nails or the wound in the side. But the same spirit—the truth and love that were in Jesus—all that gave him influence and authority over his immediate disciples—these are with us yet, waiting for our ears to hear, our eyes to see, and our souls to welcome and cherish them. Oh! that they may make our hearts to burn within us, until we say with these primitive

disciples, "Abide with us." For, we may say so now with as much propriety as they did then. It is true Jesus cannot enter personally into our houses and homes, as our guests and acquaintances do, and abide there in actual, visible presence. But, we repeat, the spirit of Jesus, his truth and love, may enter our spiritual habitation, our heart of hearts, and abide there forever. Blessed guest, blessed habitation, if it may be so!

"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." This, at least, we may say at the decline of every literal day. When the din and the fever of business are over—when our pulses have become calm, and in the peace of our homes we sit us down to reflect—when we think of our responsibilities and our weakness, our sins and our wants, are we not ready to say, "Abide with us?" "Abide with us, that we may feel that our sins are forgiven—abide with us, for we see in the past our follies and our faults and would do wrong no more—abide with us as we lie down to gentle sleep, that it may be pleasant and refreshing to us, that pure thoughts may keep the portals of our

dreams, and God's blessing hold watch over us!"

Or, while we are out in the activity of that busy world—mingling in its thickest conflicts, perilling conscience in its mazes of passion—when the still voice within is almost smothered by the atmosphere without, and reflection is lost in the impulses of the moment—*then*, when the good resolutions, the moral vigor with which we started fresh in the morning begin to grow faint—when the length of the day has sorely tried our principle, and its afternoon labors and cares are beating upon our weary souls, *then*, do we not need succor, moral succor, a reinforcement and reinvigoration of principle, that we may hold out and not give way at the last? In the latter part of the day, it seems to us that the best-braced spirit, the purest mind, becomes entangled in various interests and cares, and heated by sensual contacts; and then, let us lift up our hearts, seeing how near we are to a day's triumph, seeing that if God will help us we shall soon lie down on our pillow with the consciousness that we have held out for righteousness and truth—

then let us lift up our hearts and say, "Abide with us, O Jesus, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent!"

And in other seasons, connected with the evening hour, we may breathe this desire. When in that still and shadowy time, we pour out our spirits in prayer—when we are pitching the tent of another day's journey, and would lift up our souls to Him who looks upon us, and whose purity is above us like that pure heaven—when we would have an hour of communion that shall kindle better life in our hearts; we may say to Jesus, "Abide with us; for the day is far spent." So shall this prayer be a will for our future lives, or the aspiration of our spirits, should no earthly sun ever again meet our eyes.

"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent!" This is peculiarly a prayer for *old age*. Already the long shadows fall before its tottering feet, and the sun sinks lower to the horizon. The pulses of desire beat more feebly. The plans of young ambition have been realized or broken. The relationships of life have been formed, and many of them have been severed. The

contriving mind is growing weak, and the vigor that could second its enterprises has departed. The voices that the old man heard in his youth, have, one by one, become still, or if a few speak yet, it is with the discord of superannuation. The hands that grasped his so heartily, in days long past, are now formless dust, except, it may be, a few, which taking his with paralyzed tremor like his own, say plainer than words—"My brother, it is death that shakes us so!" The narrow valley declines before them. Old father, mother, thou must tread it! Thou canst not even carry with thee thy dust-worn sandals, nor thy staff. Ah! if thou hast Christian faith, we know thy answer now. "I am not alone! I have one affection in my bosom that cannot be disappointed. He whom I love has sustained me when I knelt upon familiar graves. He has drawn nearer and nearer to me, as my aged eyes have become dim, and all else seemed vanishing before me. I know in whom I have trusted! His loving kindness will not fail me now. I see, I see, my sands are almost out and my feet halt among unbroken shadows. I will cling

to him the closer. 'Abide with me, oh Christ, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' "

There is still another season in life when this desire is peculiarly appropriate—a season that does not always wait until the time of old age, and that sometimes gives no warning, even by a shadow, of its coming. But when we see that shadow coming, falling deeper upon our hours, veiling the lustre of life with its fearful certainty, and drawing the curtains of evening about us, then do we need the truth and love of Jesus—for it is the evening of *death*, sometimes overshadowing life's very noon-tide. When we lie on the bed of sickness, and hope is given up—when they say to us—"Take your last farewell of earth, for you may tread its green bosom, and breathe its fresh air, and enjoy its pleasant light no more,"—when they that look out of the windows are darkened, when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few—when the silver chord of life becomes loose, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher lies shattered at the

fountain, and the wheel is broken at the cistern—then, then, it is time for us to say—“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” But shall we wait until then? Who knoweth but that it is toward evening now, though not a shadow dim the air? Who knoweth but that the day is far spent with us, though not many of its golden sands may have fallen? And look up! though life may yet be young, see how high the sun is, already! Take the scale of threescore years and ten, and see how many degrees of that circle you have run. One half almost, have you not? One third? Perhaps you are fast running towards the close! These years, these years, they fly swiftly from us! The day is far spent. It is *towards* evening. The sun *makes* that way. It goes not back. While we speak, it goes forward! And soon beneath the night-shadow we must lie down and sleep. “Oh! abide with us, blessed Saviour, now and evermore!”

Or disappointment and death are fast settling, or have already fallen, upon some cherished object, some garnered hope of thine.

“Passing away” is written legibly upon it— or, perhaps, it is gone! Ah! thou hast but one resource as thy sorrow comes rushing down upon thee. Thy day-dream vanishes— thy pleasant light is darkened. There is One, oh! mourner, there is One, oh! sinking heart, who is watching over thee. Nay, long, perhaps, he has waited for thee to heed him. Now cry to him, as the day of thy happiness passes away, and the night of desolation comes—“Abide with me! Abide with me! My hopes are crushed and gone. Abide with me, for it is toward evening, nay, it is night with me—the day is far spent, *is spent!*”

“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent!” Thus, as they drew near the village, said the disciples to the stranger who had joined them, and from whom they now grieved to part. They knew him not, but their hearts yearned towards him. He had thrown around their spirits the old spell. He had spoken as their Master used to speak. He had kindled the light of hope upon the darkness of despair. He had calmed their perturbed spirits with the breathings of divine promise. And now they

stand, weeping tears of memory and gratitude, and in the glow of emotion pressed their earnest invitation. He entered, and in his "Peace be with you!" revealed himself, the Saviour whom they loved. But, my reader, to us he wears no strange aspect. To us he is already known. And yet do our hearts burn towards him? Are our hopes centred in him? Does our life come from him? And do not sorrows, vicissitudes, death, linger around us? Do not the evening hours, in some form, approach for us all? There is Christ, risen from the dead—come back from the struggle of Calvary and the victory of the sepulchre—waking among us even now, though not visible, yet in influence of truth and love. We know not when or how the evening cometh, but we know, oh! Jesus, that in this perplexing, uncertain, trying life, thy presence is always needed, and we will open our hearts to thee. Abide with us now, and evermore!



HOURS OF COMMUNION.

WE now draw this little volume to a close. But we trust, reader, that its influences and suggestions will not close with its pages. We have hope that it may be the companion of many serious hours, but we feel how inefficient it is to supply the wants and to complete the work that these hours will suggest. We trust that in the heart of every reader there will be written thoughts which have been suggested in these Hours of Communion, with a durability and an influence greater than that which can be printed in books. Let those topics upon which we have dwelt so briefly and imperfectly in this volume, be the subjects of meditation, when this is laid aside or forgotten. Let our hours of communion be frequent and habitual.

“*Hours of communion!*” We mean by

this, times set apart for reflection and contemplation especially of ourselves and of Jesus Christ—not excluding all those topics which pertain to our spiritual concerns. The propriety and the necessity for this course, have already been pointed out in the chapter upon "*Thoughtfulness and Meditation.*" Upon the benefits of self-communion and communion with Christ, we wish to say a little more. And first of *self-communion*. There is no knowledge of such immense importance as knowledge of ourselves. Without this, we can have no clear knowledge of God, of immortality, of all those elemental truths which constitute the high themes and sanctions of religion. We cannot know the worth of that religion—we cannot comprehend its warnings—its promises, without this. These are addressed to an awful spirituality within us, whose depths we must sound by a searching introspection.

That this lack of self-communion is the cause of sin, we have suggested in the chapter already referred to. Recovery from sin is gained by reflection, falling back on reason and conscience, enlightened by the truths of the

Bible. When the prodigal began to repent and to think of a return to his father, he is said to have "*come to himself.*" And, indeed, we always sin against our better self. Sin is a kind of moral insanity, and if we would only reflect upon the soul's true interests and ends, we should see the intrinsic evil of it. Sin, then, will hardly be broken off without self-communion. And not only the man who wallows in vice, or breaks out in violent guilt, but those who live from day to day and from year to year, without serious and profound thought upon themselves, they are beside themselves, morally speaking. Every thought of theirs, every desire, is bound up in something of this earth—some worldly gain or pleasure. And yet, within them are immortal souls, souls that claim heaven, that will be satisfied with nothing beneath the stars. We feel this at times—all men feel it. We do sometimes ask these momentous questions—"What are we?" "Why are we here?" "Whither are we going?" Some shock of disappointment, or some hour of thought, sends us in to ask these questions of ourselves. Death strikes

down some beloved object that lately lived among us. We look with tearful eyes on the pale face, we wonder at its marvellous stillness. We ask—where has that life gone?—where that love, that thought, that excellence, which we admired and which blest us so? And then the curtain that surrounds the grave and shuts us in to these narrow materialities, is drawn apart, and our thoughts go out to God and eternity. And the lingering hour of sickness, with its hours of painful watching, calls us to thought upon our spiritual affairs. It may be the hand of mortal disease, the season of death, steals over us. Our eyes grow dim to the things of this world, and we ask why we have lived?—and whither do we go? That hour comes surely on. The hands go not back upon our dial. Its shadow projects towards us! Then we shall begin to ask questions and to probe realities within us that we have neglected amid the busy rush of life. Yes: there are times like these, when all feel that they are greater than this life and surrounded with mysteries—that every star above us indicates something beyond for us, and

every exhibition of true power and goodness awakens moral capacities and desires within us. Why not make this communion with our spiritual self and with the spiritual realities to which it is related, habitual and frequent? Why not often consider these relations, these powers, these wants within us?

I do not mean, by this habit of self-communion, that we should indulge in that morbid anatomy of motives and affections which, we fear, has given character to so many religious diaries, and overcast religion itself with a gloomy complexion. The evil of this course has been set forth by the author of "The Natural History of Enthusiasm."

"There are anatomists of piety," says he, "who destroy all the freshness and vigor of faith and hope and charity, by immuring themselves, night and day, in the infected atmosphere of their own bosoms. Let a man of warm heart, who is happily surrounded with the dear objects of the social affections, try the effect of a parallel practice;—let him institute anxious scrutinies of his feelings towards those whom, hitherto, he has believed himself to regard with unfeigned love;—

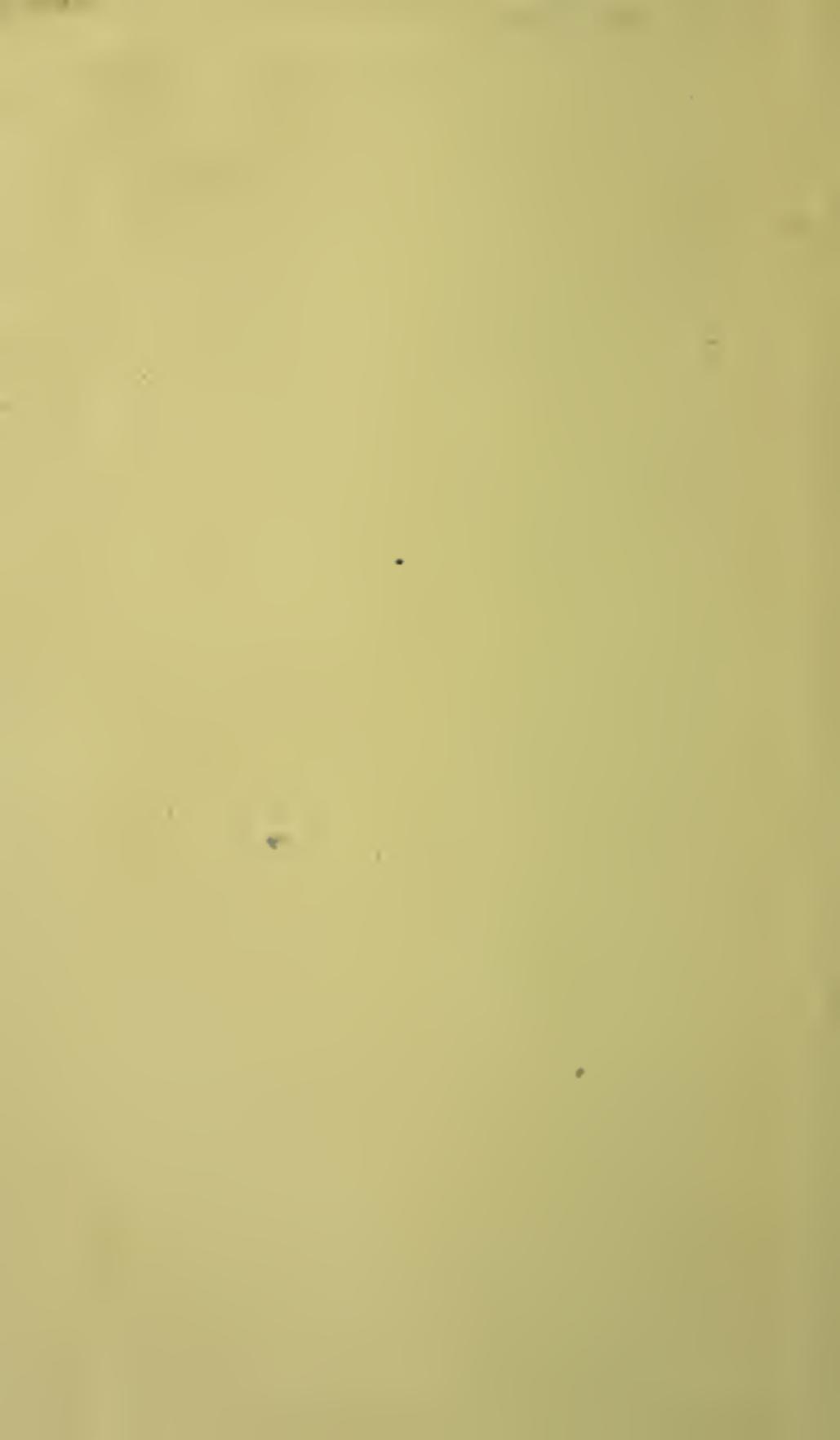
let him use in these inquiries all the fine distinctions of a casuist, and all the profound analyses of a metaphysician, and spend hours daily in pulling asunder every complex emotion of tenderness that has given grace to the domestic life; and, moreover, let him journalize these examinations, and note particularly, and with the scrupulosity of an accountant, how much of the mass of kindly sentiments he has ascertained to consist of genuine love, and how much was selfishness in disguise; and let him from time to time solemnly resolve to be, in future, more disinterested and less hypocritical in his affection towards his family. What, at the end of a year, would be the result of such a process? What, but a wretched debility and dejection of the heart, and a strangeness and a sadness of the manners, and a suspension of the native expressions and ready offices of zealous affection? Meanwhile the hesitations and the musings, and the upbraidings of an introverted sensibility, absorb the thoughts. Is it, then, reasonable to presume that similar practices in religion can have a tendency to promote the healthful vigor of piety?"

This, then—this nice dissection of every motive, this scrupulous examination of every phase of thought and feeling—is not what we mean by self-communion. But we do mean the knowledge of our moral wants, capacities, and relations. We do mean the referring of all our actions to reason and conscience. We do mean a supreme care and diligence in keeping and advancing through every action of life, the purity, the development, the discipline of the soul. To that end let us frequently pause, reflect, and examine ourselves.

But, when we look in upon our spiritual condition, we must feel the need of a guide and a pattern, to which we may conform, and in the contemplation of whose excellence we may put off our imperfections. We need an influence of truth and holiness that shall subdue our evil passions, weaken and break the bonds of appetite, communicate unto us spiritual life and power, and draw us upward to our highest capacity. To this end we must look out from ourselves and commune with Christ. This is one great end for which he came—nay, this is the method by

which he saves us. He is an example of what we should become; and as we strive to imitate him, as we grow like him in disposition, in character, we are saved from sin and from moral imperfection. We must commune with Jesus, then. We must take hours of silence and opportunity, and study his character, and examine ourselves by his standard, and pray and strive to imbibe more and more of his spirit. Then we must go out to discipline ourselves, out to trial and to practice, in the various spheres of duty where we are called to labor. For, our hours of communion are not to breed in us an anchorite habit, but to make us stronger for the trials and labors of life, through which alone the spirit that we seek can be developed and made perfect in us. Let our lives, then, be made up of hours of holy communion, and hours of loving action, or preparation for action. Let us not live as entirely of this world—let us not live as entirely apart from this world. God grant, dear reader, that this little book may be the means of some good in your heart and your hands! And when the last hour of communion is past—when neither at the table of our Lord we commune through earthly symbols with his truth and his love, nor yet in the hour of reflection examine and prepare for life's varied conflicts—when these conflicts are all over, may we meet in a more open, a clearer communion—a communion of higher spirituality and beatitude with each other, with the just made perfect, with Christ, and with God!





Primo
C. P. W.

