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MACARIODOS ;

OR,

THE HAPPY WAY,

IN THE SHORT, BUT TOO OFTEN SORROWFUL,

JOURNEY OF LIFE.

BY

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ERRATA.

- Page 6 line 17, for "crush" read "crash."
" 17 " 24, for "the" read "then."
" 45 " 10, after "such" insert "a."
" 96 " 20, for "waits" read "wants."
" 106 " 7, for "comprehended" read "comprehend."
" 123 " 20, for "the" read "though."
" 124, last line, strike out "ask."
" 165, line 5, for "them," after "let," read "then."
" 181 " 9, strike out "so."
" 185 " 3, for "happiness" read "unhappiness."

3. On the inanimate works of creation.

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MACARIODOS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CURSE.

IN the beginning, when God created the heaven and the earth, He saw everything which He had made, and, "behold, it was very good;" but from this world, "once apparelled in celestial light," there is passed away a glory. On everything a curse is stamped; the flowers flourish but to fade, the grass springeth forth but to wither, the trees of the forest appear in their magnificence, but, oh! how soon is their attire changed into the "sear and yellow leaf!" testifying that on everything, which was once so beautiful, a curse has fallen deeply and indelibly:

1. On man, and on the child of man, in his best estate;
2. On every inferior living creature which exists in the earth and sea;
3. On the inanimate works of creation.

1. On man himself the curse has fallen most heavily, since, from his birth, he is familiar with tears and sorrows, and all the multiplied evils of a chequered life; racked by bodily pain, exposed to the "arrow that flieth by day, and to the pestilence that walketh in darkness," exhausted by sickness, "possessing months of vanity, and having wearisome nights appointed unto him," so as often to woo death as a friend, and to pray to God to hide him in the grave:—

And if on his body the curse be so deeply stamped, how still more heavily is it felt when it falls upon his mind; for what is bodily pain in its severest agony, in comparison with the suffering of the mind? and from which not even the young, the buoyant, and the most hopeful, are exempt; "the hard-hearted for their own, the tender for others' woe," ever finding their eyes ready to gush out with tears, some by reason of sad misgivings, regarding the weal of those who are bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh; and others from an undefined sense of loneliness in a peopled world, or from depression of spirits arising from no assignable cause, but from, it may be, a vague and fearful anticipation of some unknown, and as yet unfelt calamities which they fear are about to befall them,

since they cannot, any more than their fellows, expect to elude the never-ending vicissitudes of life.

In these sad thoughts the curse is felt indeed; felt keenly, felt poignantly, and felt almost to despair, and it sooner or later reaches us all; for it may truly be asked, who is there among us who is so insensible as not to feel the curse in all its bitterness, when the cries of the orphan, which he cannot hush, enter his ear, and through his ear penetrate into his soul? who so unmoved as to be free from sorrow when he beholds the silent tears of the widow and the fatherless, which he would, but cannot, dry?

Yes, in the decaying health of the young, and in the declining years of the aged, we feel the curse; and when committing to the dust the remains of those with whom in youth and in manhood we took sweet counsel, the curse penetrates our souls; and in the sorrows and feared privations of our soon to be bereaved children, it is doubly stamped on us; and in the blighted hopes of everything our hearts within us feel the heavy weight of the heaviest curse, viz. the moral ruin which has befallen the children of men.

With propriety we call this moral ruin the heaviest curse, since it perverts our tastes, corrupts

our minds, and enslaves our passions; a curse which hardens the heart, sears the conscience, and obliterates the fairest moral characters which there-upon were originally written; making man the wreck of himself, the wreck of what he was, when he came from the hands of his Maker in all his primæval innocence and sanctity, in all his devout and heavenly aspirations.

We call this the heaviest curse, since it is so baleful and so withering, as but too often to dry up the affections of the heart, and to render us dead to the calls of humanity, and to the gentle charities of our once better nature, so that man, who was created in the image of his God, can now make war his pastime, conquest his thirst, ambition his glory, and the lust of gain his disease, and himself a curse to those to whom he ought to have been a blessing.

2. On the inferior creation of animals the curse is also stamped, and they cannot by possibility escape it.

When our first parents gave names to every living creature, to the fowl of the air, and to the beasts of the field, how very different their natures, their state and condition, to what they now are! Where then their ferocity? where their savage and fearful propensities? and where the all but incredible

cruelties by which they are now tortured by man? who can feel, and keenly feel, the curse afflicting himself, but who cannot be restrained, from making it fall the more heavily on the beasts that perish.

Yes, in all its woe of want and torture, of terror and of death, the curse is made to fall on those inferior creatures, which, but for the mournful change which everything indicates, would once have permitted a little child to lead them, and the weaned child to put his hand upon their den.

3. Even on the inanimate works of creation the curse has fallen, for everywhere we perceive the withering hand which has touched them. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake,"—was the fiat of the living God when addressing him who has entailed so many miseries upon us,—“cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.”

Everywhere the indications are not few, that a mighty and deteriorating change has fallen upon whatever is material and inert, as well as upon what has animal life. On the mountains, on the plains, and on the forests; on the rivers, on the vast deep, and on the globe itself; for “the earth has trembled,

and quaked, and reeled to and fro like a drunken man."

We now behold not anything but what may be deemed to be the ruins of what was the fairest scene of this once fair world.

Where now the plain which was "well watered everywhere," "even as the garden of the Lord"? and which the man of God so wistfully coveted, when he lifted up his eyes and saw all its loveliness and fertility? and what is now the land, which once, and for generations, was all but literally flowing with milk and honey? Does not it, as well as the parched deserts of Africa, tell us in accents which cannot be mistaken, that the curse has no limits, tracking every nation and every clime? and do not the devouring earthquake, and the terrific lightning, and the crush of the thunder, utter the same voice, and echo it to the tempests of the deep? and all of them, as in fearful concert, do they not re-echo this sad truth, that the curse has fallen with a heavy hand on all that is visible and tangible, on all that is material, whether it be animate or inanimate?

Such were the conclusions at which one arrived, who, when the dreams of youth were passed, when the season of gaiety was fled, and when all the sad realities of life had crowded thickly in upon him,

withdrew for a season from the world, and all its occupations and allurements, to ascertain, if possible, why man in his best estate is the creature of disappointment and of sorrow; and why he is a stranger to abiding happiness, when even in possession of all that heart can desire of what the world offers to its most successful votaries.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE.

BUT, admitting the curse to have been as direful and as universal, as it is felt and described to be, would it thence follow that any individual would be justified in believing and in affirming that God's *design* in making man was that he should be miserable all the days of his life? and that this was the end for which he was created in God's image? If so, it may be asked, why were such wondrous faculties of body and of mind bestowed upon man? And why is he still possessed of marvellous capacities of enjoyment, if "pain and sorrow, disease and infirmity, accident and disappointment, losses and distress" were to be the final causes of his existence?

And why is the external world to him replete with objects the contemplation of which is calculated to minister to a very high degree of enjoyment?

If it be true that man was made to be miserable, why, then, do the heavens still declare to him the glory of God? and why does the firmament still

show his handiwork? Why does the light still shine, and the rain fall, and the earth bring forth its increase? Why do "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night," still continue to him, and minister to his enjoyment?

If man were created *to be cursed*, why do the mountains and all hills, the fruitful trees and all cedars, and the teeming valleys, with their all-beauteous array, abound with sources of delight? And why do the sounds which float in the air, come to man with inspirations of the grand and the beautiful, if misery be the object for which he was created?

And why do the rivers, seas, and oceans, and the air and the earth, "teem with delighted existence" if this be the purpose of his creation?

Even what is termed Natural Theology teaches us far otherwise, as is completely seen in the very attractive work on that subject, of one of the clearest writers of modern times, who successfully maintains that "throughout the whole of life as it is diffused in nature, and as far as we are acquainted with it, looking to the average of sensations, the plurality and the preponderancy is in favour of happiness by a vast excess;" that in our own species

the prepollency of good over evil, of health for example, and ease over pain and distress, is evinced by the very notice which calamities excite, and which things (in his opinion) show that "the common course is in favour of happiness; that happiness is the rule, misery the exception, and that were the order reversed, our attention would be called to examples of health and competency, instead of disease and want."

"That the world abounds with contrivances, and that all the contrivances, with which we are acquainted, are directed to benevolent purposes;" that though "evil, no doubt, exists, it never is, that we can perceive, the object of contrivance;" and he considers one great cause of our insensibility to the *goodness* of the Creator, to be the very extensiveness of his bounty, that "we prize but little, what we share in common with the generality of our species." That when we "hear of blessings, we think forthwith of successes, of prosperous fortunes, of honours, riches, preferments, *i. e.* of those advantages and superiorities over others, which we happen to possess, or to be in pursuit of, or to covet.

"That the common benefits of our nature entirely escape us. That these are the great things, and constitute what most properly ought to be accounted

the blessings of Providence." Such are some of the conclusions of the admirable Paley, from which conclusions no reasonable being can justly dissent.

And if *Natural Religion* bespeaks the divine benevolence, and clearly indicates that man was not *made* to be *miserable*, what does not the *written Word* make known to us on this important point?

Does it not tell us that God created man in his own image, "in the image of God created he him"? and can we believe or imagine that He thus created him for the purpose of inflicting a curse on him all the days of his life? if so, why was he placed in that paradise, in which grew every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food? and what designs were to be answered by his being created in that moral image? We read that God "saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was *very good*" (Gen. i. 31), which words clearly indicate the benevolent character of the Almighty. And all the blessings with which He visited our first parents even after their Fall, and the causing the world after the deluge to be peopled by the sons of a good man who for ever might have transmitted the truth to their descendants of every clime and country, and the promises which God made in after times to Abraham, saying unto him, "in thee shall all the families of

the earth be blessed,"—these sufficiently prove to us, that man's misery was not the object of his creation. Indeed, no one who is conversant with the contents of the Bible can fail to perceive how consonant blessing is with the character of the Almighty. The manner in which He directed Moses to tell Aaron, how he was to bless the children of Israel is a striking proof of unlimited benevolence: "on this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

"The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

This alone were sufficient to satisfy every thoughtful person that benevolence is strikingly the attribute of Him who made the round world and all that therein is; but the Bible abounds with passages, which declare most palpably the grateful truth that

"The Lord, the Lord God (is) merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth:"

"That he will bless his people with peace;

"That *happy* is the people whose God is the Lord;

"That the children of Zion are to be *joyful* in their king;

- “ That the earth is full of the *goodness* of the Lord ;
“ That the Lord is good to all, and his tender
mercies are over all his works ;
“ That he filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”

And in the New Testament (1 Tim. vi. 17) we are enjoined to trust in the living God, “ who giveth us richly all things to *enjoy*.”

We are also commanded to pray to Him, as to “ Our Father in heaven ;” how, then, can He take complacency in the miseries of his children ? Can He indeed have created them only to render them wretched all the days of their lives ? No, the revelation written with the pen, and the unwritten revelation of the great external world, speak the same language ; and from pole to pole declare, not only the glory of God, but his illimitable benevolence. Why, then, it may be asked, is the curse fallen so heavily upon man and the child of man, if his Creator is a Being of infinite benevolence ? to which question it may be replied, that possibly the hand of benevolence may be traced even in the curse itself, and in all its heaviest afflictions.

CHAPTER III.

THE DESIGN OF AFFLICTION.

FROM the evidence of natural theology, and from the written revelation, it has been stated that there is ample proof of the divine benevolence, and hence that man was made to be happy, and placed within the reach of all sources of enjoyment; and yet it cannot be denied that he is the creature of affliction and of misery; 'in the midst of life, being in death; in the midst of prosperity, being in adversity; in the midst of health, being in sickness; doomed to labour, but often not obtaining the fruit of his toil; trusting to the future, which never realizes his expectations; and reaping disappointment and vexation of spirit from all his plans and pursuits, and even from his so-called pleasures:—

Such being the fact, it may be useful to endeavour to ascertain why the "affliction and the misery, the worm-wood and the gall," so frequently enter into the lot, and make up so much of the experience of the human race; and if it be found that they are the means of effecting that which prosperity and earthly enjoy-

ments have never secured for us, we may well come to the conclusion that our Heavenly Father "though he cause grief, yet will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies;" and that "*willingly* he does not afflict nor grieve the children of men, to crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth."

What, then, is the design of the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall, which are so touchingly referred to by the prophet Jeremiah?

That our souls having them in remembrance, we may be humbled; and, being humbled, we may come to ourselves, like the prodigal son; and, recalling to mind, that it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, we may therefore have hope, since his compassions fail not, and having hope we may go unto Him, who, having redeemed our lives, has said, "Fear not;" and going unto Him we may be reconciled to our Father and our friend, the guide of our youth; and who is most willing to be the stay and solace of our declining years.

Such, no doubt, was in the mind of him, who in his deepest sorrow said, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." (Lam. iii. 19-21.) Words uttered by

him who affectingly said, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his mouth;" and in using these words, the Prophet has been justly considered as personifying the faithful, and bewailing their calamities; which were many and heavy, on account of their perverseness, their backsliding, their ingratitude and idolatry; for, like a broken bow, God's own people had started aside, each one following the devices and desires of his own heart; so that "the gold was become dim, the most fine gold changed;" and the stones of the sanctuary poured out in the top of every street; and the precious sons of Zion (in times past comparable to fine gold) were now esteemed as "earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter;" and Zion itself was made to bewail its own pitiful estate, in terms of the most affecting nature; for all the judgments which God had denounced against his rebellious people were now falling rapidly and heavily upon them, so that, in their affliction and their misery, they drank deeply of the wormwood and the gall; for "the Lord had accomplished his fury, he had poured out his fierce anger, having kindled a fire in Zion, which devoured the foundations thereof."

This language of the Prophet, when personifying the people, is singularly striking, nay almost over-

whelming ; it might be thought with one of old that
“ every letter was written with a tear ; every word
the sound of a breaking heart ; that the author was
compact of sorrows, disciplined to grief from his
infancy, one who had breathed but in sighs.”

“ He hath brought me into darkness ;

“ He hath builded against me ;

“ He hath hedged me about ;

“ He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone ;

“ He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for
the arrow ;

“ He hath filled me with bitterness, and made me
drunken with wormwood.”

Who can fail to perceive, in these words of the Prophet, the expressions of bitterness ? of bitterness but ill-suited to any one under the chastening hand of his Father and his God ; in giving way to which bitterness, hope appears to be gone ; but from the expressions first quoted, viz. “ Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me,” we learn the end for which the children of men are afflicted ; and when this end is accomplished, the hope follows, that hope which revives the spirit of the contrite and humble.

We have, then, in the language of the Prophet,

when personifying the people, 1st, affliction; 2ndly, bitterness of soul, the first, but not sanctified, result of affliction; 3rdly, this bitterness giving way to humility; 4thly, then hope following after humility; 5thly, afterwards resignation; 6thly, and confidence in the mercy and never-failing goodness of God; 7thly, and the goodness of God in all his dispensations vindicated.

Hence the question is without difficulty answered, Why do the afflictions and the misery, the worm-wood and the gall, so frequently await us?

Because without them we should never know ourselves; and, not knowing ourselves, should never be humbled; and, not being humbled, should never go earnestly to God; and, not going to Him, should never have hope, neither "in all time of our tribulation nor in all time of our wealth, not in the hour of death nor in the day of judgment." In mercy, then, it is that God afflicts us, and not because He has any pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures; and so long as He does afflict us, we have a proof that He has not forsaken us, but that his Spirit is still striving with us. With truth it may be affirmed that, sooner or later, we have had this proof of his goodness, for affliction is fallen upon every one of us without exception, and we all feel,

or have felt, its weight pressing heavily upon our souls.

Some of us have felt it keenly, in the death of friends; in the decay of health; in the disappointments of life; in the loss of riches.

Others have been deeply afflicted by the blighting of their fondest hopes; by the uncertain tenure of every earthly possession; by the coolness of former associates; and by the melancholy forebodings of the mind.

Some have felt the wormwood and the gall, in the irreparable evils of misplaced confidence; in the brevity of human life; in the prevalence of evil; in the remaining corruptions of their nature; in the never-ending contest between right and wrong; and in the unsatisfying nature of earthly pleasures, earthly pursuits, and whatever is done under the sun.

By all these things, and by all the unnumbered ills of our earthly career, God designs that we should be moved, and so moved, that they may minister to our humility, to the knowledge of ourselves, and hence to our best interests; for without them, we may be well assured that there would be no hope of recovering the moral image of our God, —that image so wondrously stamped on our first parents, but which so soon was effaced, and by the

effacing of which they have handed down unto us the sad inheritance of all the sorrows which have fallen so heavily upon us, and yet not too heavily, for without them there would, in all probability, have been no humility, and therefore no hope.

Experience, indeed, tells us, that long life, many and deeply-attached friends, unlimited possessions, a ceaseless flow of spirits, a refined taste, an ear into which the melody of sounds falls with little short of transport, and an eye that can all but pierce through the cloud which veils from us the glory of the great "I AM"—experience tells us that these things, in which we so naturally delight, and which we labour to preserve, are not so favourable to humility, to a contrite heart, and to holy and heavenly aspirations, as are afflictions and miseries, the wormwood and the gall.

Even the prosperity of our children, their health, their strength, their gladsome hearts and buoyant spirits, their elastic step, and eyes beaming at once with hope and intelligence, and, above all, their tender and winning affection—these, and all things of joy and gladness kindred to them, yes, even these, are but too often less beneficial to us than is the loss of them, as they are gradually removed one by one, and removed, it may be, to unteach us

that idolatry into which we so easily fall, and which is tenfold more seductive than the worshipping of images made with human hands.

Thus, in judgment God remembers mercy, and gives us hope, and more than hope, in affliction, the punishment of our sins being intended to lead the soul to have them in remembrance, and thence to apply to Him for pardon, whose property is to have mercy and to forgive; for who find the need of assistance but the miserable and forlorn? Who but the wretched require aid? and who but the distressed are likely to strive for a remedy for all their sorrows and sufferings, their privations and declensions?

The sick gladly hear of the physician who can cure their diseases.

The broken-hearted willingly listen to Him who is ready to heal them. The captive sighs for liberty, and is not long deaf to him who proclaims it.

The meek have no difficulty in receiving the doctrines of those who preach good tidings unto them, and whose speech distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb; and, oh! how wistfully do the distressed fix their eyes on those who, in every time of sorrow, can give them pro-

mise of relief; and when they hear that there is balm in Gilead, that there is a spiritual physician, who can recover the health of the daughter of God's people, and that it is He who has sent them their manifold trials and afflictions to humble them, that they may have hope, then their spirits within them revive, and they come to the just conclusion, that their God and Father "will not cast off for ever, to crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth."

To the best and most upright of God's ancient servants, to him "whose bow abode in strength," the cruel treatment of his fierce brethren was the particular affliction which made him trust more and more in his God, and in thus trusting, "his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob."

To David, misplaced confidence in Ahithophel, and the ingratitude of his too tenderly beloved son—to Nebuchadnezzar, mental alienation—were the trials employed for their individual benefit.

To Hezekiah, sickness, and to Naaman, the leprosy—to Habakkuk, the famine, and to Daniel, persecution, were the separate means best suited to promote their trust in God. To Solomon, the incapacity of finite good to give satisfaction, was

the affliction which taught him that all things are vanity and vexation of spirit.

To Job, the loss of his all, his possessions, his health, his children, these were the sorrows which made him feel that he was vile. To the widow woman of Nain, the death of her only son; to Martha and Mary, the loss of their brother; to the centurion, the wasting sickness of his servant; to Bartimæus, the want of vision; to the nobleman of Capernaum, the sickness of his son; these were the means of leading the several sufferers to rely for aid upon Him who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

And what were not fear to the gaoler of Philippi? poverty to the prodigal son? his little daughter's being at the point of death to Jairus? what were not these but their afflictions and their misery? and yet to what, but to them, did they owe the very best of all blessings, humility, sorrow, penitence, spiritual life, sanctified aspirations, god-like jealousy, and fear of themselves?

And shall we repine, when thus in mercy God visits us, "and takes away everything which makes us love earth, that we may love Him supremely?"

Who, then, that rightly considers these things, can deny, that (as we have already intimated) years

of prosperity are not favourable to seriousness and reflection? who has not found that they tend rather to harden, than to soften, the heart? who can doubt that the influence of health is not so salutary as is that of sickness? and that the continuance of every earthly blessing touches not so tenderly the heart, as its removal tends to chasten it? and who so simple as to be ignorant that the realizing of our brightest hopes brings not with it so much of wisdom and humility as does their total failure?

Hence, through sad experience, we may be led finally to see the hand of mercy in all the ills brought on us by the curse; and especially if (as in the examples already quoted), by their force, we should be brought to trust for help in Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification; in Him who could not refrain from tears when sympathizing with the sisters of Lazarus, and who, when He beheld the devoted city, wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Hence we conclude that man's best interests were to be promoted by the very sorrows of life, which were designed to lead him to have hope, and more

than hope, in Him who is emphatically "the resurrection and the life"; and this hope we assuredly shall have, if to Him we go in our deepest affliction; and if, in our saddest bereavement, we pray to Him to have mercy upon us, to sanctify all our sufferings, to alleviate our distress, to open the eyes, which until now may have been spiritually blind; to unstop the ears, which heretofore may have been deaf to the gentle voice of religion; addressing us in accents of mercy, to win us to the ways of verity and judgment.

Without doubt it may be affirmed of all of us, that hope will be ours, if earnestly and with perseverance we pray to this most gracious Being, to give us hearts attuned to his love, and minds which (with their wondrous powers of thought) can find no contemplations so suitable as the perfections of their Creator; for ours will be the "hope of salvation which will be for a helmet," when, seeing the hand of God in all our sorrows, we go to the Redeemer, in life to keep us as the apple of his eye; in death, and its dark shadow, to be our rod and staff; and in eternity, to be our unspeakable blessedness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTRIBUTE OF MERCY, AS EXHIBITED IN
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

HAVING deeply considered that misery was not the object for which man was created, but that his every affliction and sorrow was designed to produce beneficial results ; and learning from even a partial perusal of Holy Writ, that patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and persons of every rank and sphere, were blessed by means of their respective trials, he who is true to himself, and true to his God, will make a firm resolution *carefully* to examine, day by day, that blessed Book which is able to make him wise unto salvation.

The earnest inquirer after truth and happiness came to read God's Word in a very different spirit from that in which he formerly, and but occasionally, perused it; he acknowledged that his acquaintance with revelation had been as yet but very imperfect ; and he now thinks, that his views and opinions of the character and attributes of the Almighty were probably most erroneous ; otherwise

he never could for a moment have imagined, that God created man to be wretched, even though unnumbered sorrows await him in his earthly pilgrimage.

In his retirement, the inquirer carried into effect his resolution to read the Scriptures unceasingly; and in steadily so doing, a ray of light broke in upon his own mind, whereby he concluded, that the God who made him, and who has preserved him, and who never abandoned him, by allowing him to be happy in finite pursuits, is not that dread Being who is only to be feared, and whose name filled him with awe and alarm whilst he was only a votary of the world. He now begins to think, that the Almighty is the giver of every good and perfect gift; and he feels the force of the words of him who said, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace."

In like manner, in proportion as every morally-honest man becomes acquainted with the Bible, so will he be enabled to form sublime views of the majesty and infinity of Him who walketh in the circuit of heaven, and who sitteth upon the circle of the earth.

But, it may truly be asked, how can peace be the result of our becoming acquainted with the attri-

butes of omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, holiness, purity, truth ?

No doubt every attribute of God ought to excite feelings of devout adoration ; and his omnipresence may well lead us to exclaim with the psalmist, " Whither shall I go from thy spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? " but to whom, except to a good man, is the thought of God's omnipresence calculated to afford peace ?

The omnipotence of Him who said, " let there be light, and there was light," and who again said, " I form the light and create darkness," and of whom the psalmist affirmed, " the north and the south thou hast created," no doubt will fill, with deepest reverence, the hearts and minds of the righteous ; but on how many will not the thought of that attribute produce anything but peace ?

On the careless and worldly, the very notion of omniscience causes a horrible dread ; it is no gratification to them to believe, that there is a Being who knoweth the secrets of the heart, that his eyes are upon the ways of man, that He seeth all his goings, that there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Nor can the attributes of purity, holiness, truth,

and justice, be calculated to console any but the real servants of God, when it is remembered that He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, that He cannot look upon iniquity ; hence, the consideration of these attributes would indeed produce fearful misgivings, were it not that there is another attribute, viz. that of mercy, which comes to be the one which most engages the attention, and tends to inspire with hope him who has been impressed with the words, "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace"; and this attribute of mercy is most suitable to him who begins to believe that disappointment has been his in his highest prosperity, because he has been seeking for happiness in things finite, and employing his time in everything but what tended to the glory of God, and to the welfare of his fellow-creatures.

But the days of carelessness are gone, and temporal and fleeting objects no longer are to engage the exclusive, nor even the chief attention of the mind of him whose conscience, heretofore mute, now tells of opportunities lost, of time mispent, and of thoughts unchastened, and to whom, therefore, the attribute of mercy has unutterable charms ; hence, every passage of the Bible is now read with redoubled attention, to discover whether

indeed it be true, that man's permanent happiness is the distinct object of all the designs of his heavenly Father.

Will not, then, the heart of such a person leap with joy, when he perceives the full force of this declaration, "*it shall bruise thy head,*" when in that declaration is seen a prediction, that the power of man's great adversary should be destroyed; and in the clearer development of the attribute of mercy in the subsequent promise to Abram, that in him "all the families of the earth" should "*be blessed*"?

To the man whose eyes begin to be opened to the gracious designs of God's providence, the many acts of forgiveness manifested towards the twelve patriarchs, and to their descendants, will not fail to indicate the gracious character of Jehovah; for he will learn, that when "their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant" (Ps. lxxviii. 37), yet "He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath, for he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." (v. 38, 39.)

The setting up of the brazen serpent by Moses

at God's command, so that every one who was bitten should live if he looked upon it, and the standing of Aaron "between the dead and the living," and the acceptance of an atonement for the people, afford no ordinary instances of the exercise of this attribute of mercy.

Nor will any one fail to be struck with the indications of the same merciful character, in averting the threatened judgment on Nineveh, and in the wonderful cure of the Syrian, by which he was not only healed of a most afflictive disease, but by which he learnt to know, that "there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." (2 Kings v. 15.)

Nor will it escape notice, that the passages of the Old Testament are very many, and very decisive, on this point. The psalmist, in addressing his Maker, said (Ps. lvii. 10), "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds;" and again (Ps. lxxxvi. 5), he thus addresses that gracious Being, by whom he had been remarkably forgiven in his sad declensions, "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

In the prophecy of Isaiah (lv. 7), what cheering words are these: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him

return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"; and (in lvii. 19) "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" condescends to say, "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him."

The commission to Ezekiel utters the same truth when he is commanded to say unto the people, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live"; and of like force are the touching expressions in the book of Joel (ii. 12, 13): "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil": in which most beautiful words none can fail to perceive, that man's welfare, and not his wretchedness, is the thing promised, if he will but seek it in God's appointed method.

But if the passages of the Bible, to which we have referred, have done much to delineate the merciful character of God, what may not be ex-

pected to be the result of dwelling on the vivid representations of the prophets of Him who says, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Is. i. 18, 19.) "Fear not, I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

These are some of the passages in the Old Testament which are now read over and over again with the greatest attention; and every successive perusal of them gives increasing conviction of the truth, which now has obtained admission into the mind and heart of him who, for a time, quitted the world, with its occupations and allurements, to ascertain why so much of misery saddens the lot of the children of men; and, adopting the psalmist's language, he can now say, "the entrance of thy words giveth light." (Ps. cxix. 130.)

The parts, however, of the Old Testament which are now read with increased attention, are those which make known the coming, and the character, of Him who was so sublimely predicted by these

names: "wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace" (Is. ix. 6); who was to be a "covert from the tempest," "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (xxxii. 2); by whom the "eyes of the blind" were to be opened, and the "ears of the deaf" were to be unstopped (xxxv. 5); who was "to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house" (xlii. 7); all of which predictions and promises alike make known the merciful character of the God of heaven and earth, who has made such ample provision for the full and perfect remission of our sins, and the thought of whom should, therefore, fill us with unbounded love and gratitude.

For, though the Prophet could, with too much truth, represent the coming Redeemer as saying, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" and though he could foretell that, in man's estimation, He would grow up "as a root of a dry ground;" that He would have "no form nor comeliness" when they should see Him, and no beauty that they should desire Him; and that even, instead of loving and adoring Him, He would be despised and rejected of men, and become a man of sorrows, and acquainted

with grief; yet, with equal clearness, could the Prophet declare of our blessed Lord, that his every suffering would be the fruit of his illimitable love for a lost world; that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;" that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed" (liii. 5). Well, indeed, may we ask, What words would suffice to indicate the measure of that divine love, which caused his voluntary sufferings to be thus announced: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting"? (l. 6.)

Yet how beautifully and tenderly is every one that thirsteth invited to come to the waters! and how are they who "spend their money for that which is not bread," besought to "incline their ear, that their souls may live, and that an everlasting covenant may be made with them, even the sure mercies of David." (lv. 3.)

Can anything more truly declare the loving-kindness of the Lord, than his inspiring the Prophet to prefigure, in these terms, the office of Him who was to come on an errand of mercy: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;

he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"; "to comfort all that mourn"; "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (lxi. 3)? Such are some of the gracious terms in which the heavenly office is described, of Him who came "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, who was glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, of him who spake in righteousness, mighty to save." (lxiii. 1.) Even to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain was to be opened "for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. xiii. 1.)

To the mercy of God there is, therefore, no limit; and from the entire tenor of the Scriptures, it is palpable that God designs his creatures to trust in Him as their Father in heaven, who cannot take pleasure in the sufferings of his children; but who looks with complacency on their happiness, whenever that happiness arises from the love and practice of whatsoever things are truthful and holy.

The careful studying of even the Old Testament has awakened, and deepened, the conviction, that in judgment God remembers mercy; that He is

long-suffering, and of great kindness ; that judgment is his strange work ; that his “ property is to have mercy and to forgive,” which truth becomes more and more strikingly evident as the very many parts of the Old Testament are read, which exhibit the character and the office of the Redeemer, who in the fulness of time was to come in the flesh, to whom all the nations were to look for salvation, for reconciliation, and for peace, and in whom the Gentiles were to trust.

Even this partial acquaintance with God is not unaccompanied by some measure of that peace which the world never gave, and never can take away ; and, perhaps, soon will be followed by more than an anticipation, it may be a foretaste, of that real and heartfelt happiness which is laid up, even in this life, for those “ that fear God, and that think upon his name.” (Mal. ^fiii. 16.)

And he who was led to make these researches by the force of disappointment and of misery, when hope itself ceased to give promise of the future, and when the faint echo of human applause no longer fell delusively upon his ear, began to see, that in his own case, afflictions, the fruits of the curse, had been most salutary, because, by reason of them, the Word of God (heretofore neglected) was steadily

read, marked, and dwelt upon, to enable him to acquaint himself with God, and to be at peace.

In the midst of all that heart could desire, or the world could offer, of the things which are as fleeting and as evanescent as ourselves, the inquirer was "wretched and miserable;" and he, at first, came to the unhappy conclusion that he was so because man was created to be miserable, since a curse was fallen upon everything; but research and consideration caused him to conclude, that all the ills under the curse were sent in mercy; and he himself unreservedly admits that he is, and has been, a partaker of the beneficial end of affliction, because, by reason of its force, he was first led to quit for a time the all-engrossing occupations of the world, to try to find out why it was that disappointment and sorrow always overtook and attended him, even in his greatest prosperity, ere friends began to fail, while his eye was not yet dim, and before he began to think that the grasshopper would be a burden to him. The inquiry having been thus far blessed, he that made it was bent on pursuing it; and his further pursuit of it, in all the prophets, in the Psalms, and in the books of Moses, brought him to be better acquainted with all the attributes of Him who is, and who was, and who is to be—the great "I

AM"—the Maker and Disposer of all things ; whom he has discovered to be full of pity and compassion, long-suffering and of great goodness, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. iii. 9.) Peace, then, in an enlarged measure, became his ; and great good he enjoyed in his earnest endeavour to obey the injunction of Eliphaz, "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace."

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTRIBUTE OF MERCY, AS DEVELOPED IN
THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It has been maintained that an acquaintance with most of the attributes of God, as omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, holiness, truth, and justice, is calculated to alarm the mere man of the world, the votaries of pleasure, the lukewarm, and the careless; but that when they come to perceive, and to appreciate the attributes of love, goodness, and mercy, their fears may be dispersed, and that some measure of peace may be theirs, in the hope that there is forgiveness for them.

For who that ever dwelt on the gracious promises of pardon, on the assurances of reconciliation, and on the invitations of mercy, to which the inquirer's attention has already been drawn, can doubt that the sincere searcher after truth will thereby have a deep conviction of the divine benevolence, and that he himself may become a partaker of the blessings announced in the Old Testament?

And if this be the result of a careful and devout

examination of those oracles, of which our Lord said, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me," what must not be the hopes and the aspirations of the inquirer, when he comes, by reading the Gospels with equal care, to compare the type with the antitype, the prophecy with its fulfilment, the predicted Saviour with Him who claimed to be the Son of God? What, we repeat, must not be his hope, who, after a prayerful and earnest examination of the historical part of the New Testament, sees therein reflected, as in a mirror, the effulgence of that divine and adorable Being, who came to be at once a King, a Prophet and a Priest, and who took upon Himself the form and substance of a man, so as to undergo the penalty of our transgressions, and who is the great intercessor between the dead and the living?

Each fresh perusal of the Gospels gives additional prominence to the all-consoling attributes of love, compassion, and mercy, which are exhibited in every word, in every desire, and in every action of the lowly Jesus: indeed, his words, and his deeds proclaim these attributes in accents, which tongues the most eloquent and impassioned are powerless to express.

The very heavens themselves are called upon to sing, and the earth to be joyful, and the mountains to break forth into singing, when it is announced that "the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted" (Isa. xlix. 13), and now that He is a sojourner upon earth, "who in the time of his mortal life came to visit us in great humility," what in Him is every thought, but one of benevolence! and what in Him every deed, but one of beneficence!

How does his every act appeal to our best feelings, and to our inmost thoughts, and testify to the matchless, the all-surpassing tenderness of his nature! realising the glowing, but accurate, prediction of the prophet Isaiah, and which Christ himself declared was fulfilled in the ears of the people, when at Nazareth He so appropriately opened the book of the Prophet, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke iv. 18, 19.)

Nor can any one fail to perceive, that in his short,

but most blessed life, all these particulars were fully accomplished :

(1.) To the poor, especially to the poor in spirit, the Gospel in all its fulness was preached, and with a mild dignity and tenderness which were well calculated to cheer the drooping spirit. In the commencement of his merciful career, when Jesus "went up into a mountain," and opened his mouth, these were his first gracious words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.) In answering those who inquired whether He were the person "that should come," the expected Messiah, one of his beautiful observations was, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them," by which, as by his blessed deeds, John was to form his own conclusion, whether Jesus were or were not the looked-for Saviour.

The unlimited extent to which the offer of mercy was to reach, was afterwards declared, when He commissioned his Apostles to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, the full meaning and extent of which Gospel He had so strikingly communicated in these words: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14, 15.)

How touchingly did He preach the Gospel to the woman of Samaria! "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 14.)

To the multitude that followed Him to Capernaum, He affectingly preached the Gospel, when He said with unspeakable love, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35), and also when He added, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (v. 51.)

How admirably did He preach the Gospel, when He reproved the ill-considered zeal of James and John, when they wanted Him to command fire to come down from heaven, and consume the Samaritans, who would not receive Him, because his face was as though He would go to Jerusalem! "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke ix. 55, 56.)

Well, indeed, did the Psalmist say, when speaking

of Him whose message was entirely of mercy, "Full of grace are thy lips, because God hath blessed thee for ever" (Ps. xlv. 3); and of all the gracious words which He ever addressed to the poor, and to the poor in spirit, none ever exceeded in mercy those addressed to the sister of Lazarus: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." (John xi. 25, 26.) Such Gospel as this, and so preached by Him who came to save a lost world, could scarcely fail to be suitable to the wants of one, seeking rest for the sole of his feet, in a world of sin and sorrow! and the deeds of this adorable Preacher, in their amplitude and benevolence, are now meditated on with devout gratitude.

(2.). But he who can be grateful for such a Gospel, will be scarcely less thankful, when he discovers the manner in which the Saviour fulfilled the prediction, that He was "to heal the broken-hearted." We use the word "discovers" to signify the sense in which, for the first time, he who *was* a mere man of the world, saw the true spirit of benevolence influencing all the actions of the meek and lowly Saviour.

What moral music to the broken-hearted is not

to be found in these soothing words: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 28, 29). What so suited as this invitation to comfort all that mourn; and to heal the spirits of those who heretofore have spent their money, and their time, in procuring that which never spoke happiness to their souls, and which truly could never give the promise of it?

The "woman in the city, which was a sinner," and "who washed his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head," well knew the merciful character of Him who came to heal the broken-hearted, and felt it, in all its force, when He said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke vii. 48); her sins were many, and deep indeed must have been her sorrow for them; but she was spiritually healed by the great Physician of Israel.

Many were broken-hearted on account of their own bodily sufferings, or the sufferings of those most dear to them (some of which we shall hereafter specify), in healing the bodies of whom, Christ took away the sorrows of their souls.

The parable of the prodigal son strikingly exem-

plifies the manner in which the "friend of sinners" would heal the broken-hearted, and how ready He would ever be to receive them, and to rejoice at their return to their Father's house, saying of each of them, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." (Luke xv. 24.)

(3.) The Prophet also had foretold that He would preach "deliverance to the captives," in which, no doubt, was comprehended not only the captivity of the body, but also that moral captivity of the soul, whereby "we are tied and bound by the chain of our sins;" and in what way could He more palpably prove his benevolence and beneficence, than by delivering us from being the captives of Satan, of the world, of our prejudices, and of our passions, and captives by reason of the fear of death? Even captivity itself was to be taken captive by this all-gracious and divine Redeemer.

(4.) As a consequence of preaching, and of affording, deliverance to the captives, He would "set at liberty them that are bruised," bruised by their subtle adversary the devil, bruised by their own consciences, bruised by the "enormity and aggravation of their past transgression," the "remembrance of which would now be grievous unto them, and

the burden thereof intolerable," until set at liberty by Him who said of the "chief among the publicans," "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham." The occupations of Zaccheus had been but little suited to the exercise of self-denial and of justice; but how is he set at liberty from every selfish and sinful desire by the holy influences of Him who went to be "guest with a man that was a sinner" (Luke xix. 7); and what a satisfactory proof that the bruised conscience of Zaccheus was set at liberty, is afforded by his noble affirmation, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (v. 8.)

But the most striking instance of setting any one at liberty, especially one that had been bruised mentally, spiritually, and physically, is afforded us in the life and sufferings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who, "though troubled on every side, was not distressed; though perplexed, was not in despair; though persecuted, not forsaken; though cast down, was not destroyed" (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9); who was "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (v. 10); yet "none of these things moved him; neither counted he his life dear

unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xx. 24.) Hence he so truthfully could say, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi. 10.)

(5.) Moreover, the New Testament makes known to us the recovering of sight to the blind, as well as the other manifold miracles of our Lord, all bespeaking his unwearied deeds of compassion; for what but compassion could have led Him, in so unobtrusive a manner, to have given sight to the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark viii. 22-26)? and what else but love to man could have caused Him to bestow the same blessing on him who was blind from his birth? (John ix. 1.) The giving of sight to Bartimæus, and his companion in suffering, was felt to be an act of such goodness that "all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God." (Luke xviii. 43.)

The cleansing of the leper (Matt. viii. 1); the healing the centurion's servant (v. 5); the curing of the man sick of the palsy (ix. 2); the raising to life the daughter of Jairus (v. 18); the restoration of the nobleman's son at Capernaum (John

iv. 47); the raising of Lazarus (John xi.); but especially the healing the daughter of the woman who "was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation (Mark vii. 26); these, and all the other miracles enumerated by the Evangelists, afford us irrefragable proofs of his love, and are not only the tests of his divine office, the credentials of his embassy, but they are the fruits of his mercy, and of his unbounded compassion, which are further evidenced by his commission to his disciples, to go forth, and to perform, in his own name, deeds of the same heavenly charity, thereby indicating that the removal of physical diseases was to be significant of his power to heal the diseases of the soul, and to restore man to his lost happiness. We cease, then, to wonder at what is recorded in the gospels, viz. that the ecstatic feelings of the witnesses of his deeds vented themselves in hosannahs to the Son of David, and in these words, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosannah in the highest!"

What, then, was the conclusion at which he arrived, who duly considered the words and deeds of Him who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles (Luke ii. 32), as well as to be the glory of (God's) people Israel"? That he could no longer

resist the manifold evidence thereby afforded of Christ's mission to save a lost world, to restore man to the moral and spiritual image of his Maker, and thus to remove all causes of gloom and despondency, so that he might no longer go on his way mourning, and be the creature of disappointment; but that his "warfare" might be "accomplished," his iniquity be forgiven, and that his troubled conscience might be appeased in the certain conviction that there is "balm in Gilead," that there is a "physician there," who can and will recover "the health of the daughter" of God's people, and make pleasant their way in the otherwise short and sorrowful journey of life.

When once the full force of these blessed truths was felt, and when it was no longer doubted that Christ came on an errand of mercy, that his object was to call sinners to repentance, to invite into his fold all of every age, and of every country, who have heretofore lived to themselves, and for merely worldly purposes—when once all this was felt, he, who heretofore had sought in vain for happiness in things finite, asked, Why he himself should not be a partaker of these blessings? why repentance should not be given unto him? and why pardon and salvation should not be his? and, considering that the

offers of mercy were unlimited, and that of Christ it was declared, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 31), and that Christ himself hath said, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10), he not only resolved to go, but did go, to Him that healeth the broken-hearted, to confess his unnumbered sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to pray to God to give him true repentance, to blot out all his transgressions, "and to endue him with the grace of his Holy Spirit," "to amend his life according to God's holy Word." And thus he gradually became a partaker of that peace and that contentment, the absence of which first led him, for a time, to quit the busy occupations of life, to inquire why he himself then was, and ever had been, even in the midst of health, power, and riches, an utter stranger to that tranquillity and that blessedness, the enjoyment of which, he heretofore imagined, could only have justified, or at least have explained, the creation of the human race.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION, AND WHAT
CONVERSION MEANS.

THE careful reading of the Word of God led to the happy conviction, 1st, that God indeed is a Being of infinite mercy, who "hateth nothing that he has made," but who rejoices in the happiness of his creatures, and has made ample provision for that happiness by sending his beloved Son to redeem them from all their transgressions, and to restore to them the lost image in which their first parent was originally created ; and 2ndly, that Jesus Christ came for the full and perfect exercise of the gracious attribute of mercy ; that He yearns over the sorrows of afflicted humanity, and provides a remedy for those sorrows. It has been observed that the hopes of the searcher after happiness became brighter in proportion as he realized to himself, in all its beauty and grace, this adorable attribute of mercy, by which he was induced to pray to God for reconciliation and for peace ; whereby he was enabled to

believe that "the voice of joy and health" is indeed "in the dwellings of the righteous." He became convinced that the religion of our blessed Lord is not merely a beautiful theory, promising unceasing happiness only in the world to come, but that it is something, the effect of which, even in this life, is visible, tangible, audible—a reality that is seen, felt, and heard by those who daily and devoutly meditate on that one matchless Exemplar of all that is pure, of all that is lovely, of all that is divine and heavenly, in spirit and in deed.

Another thought, however, entered the mind, causing the lively oracles of the living God to be read, and re-read, with increased anxiety, whereby it was clearly ascertained, 1st, that another divine Person was spoken of, who was styled the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the Comforter, who was to bring all things to remembrance which Christ had taught his disciples and followers; and 2ndly, that by the influence of the Holy Ghost, a mighty change was to take place in the hearts and minds of all who should rise to the resurrection of the just, since by man's Fall his nature was become corrupt, sinful, and totally unfitted for heaven and its unspeakable holiness; and thence, that holy and heavenly faculties must be his, who would be a companion of

angels and archangels, of seraphim and cherubim, in the future world of spirits.

The words of our Lord on this subject had, indeed, often been read, especially those addressed to his disciples, when he said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3); but their meaning had escaped the comprehension of him, who now rightly values the Scriptures. He had heard much of the doctrine, as it afforded an endless topic of controversy to polemics; but that all men, without exception, were to be converted ere they could enter into the kingdom of heaven, had never forcibly struck his attention till now. This truth, however, comes fully to be considered, and it assumes its proper importance in his estimation; he is sufficiently expert in logic and in physics to know that everything which exists has faculties suited to the state in which it exists; and, by analogy, he can perceive that the same law must hold good in things moral and spiritual; but the conclusions at which he arrives are now drawn from the Bible, and are the result of very careful examination; and of long-continued reflection, and are in perfect agreement with the conviction of myriads of holy men, who have found the Scriptures "pro-

fitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16), and who, therefore, have maintained—

1. That the words, "except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," were not addressed by Christ to the Greek, to the Gentile, to the heathen, but to his own followers, who claimed, as descendants of Abraham, to be the worshippers of the true God; and hence, that this conversion had reference to the heart of man, and not to his abandoning a false, and embracing a true religion; that the word "conversion" is by Christ used in the same sense in which He employed it when He applied the language of Isaiah, saying, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be *converted*, and I should heal them." (Matt. xiii. 15.)

2. That being in an unconverted state is, according to the various and oft-recurring passages of the Bible, the being dead in trespasses and sins; that it is having the heart deceitful and desperately wicked; that it is walking according to the course

of this world, the being corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

It is manifested by the wishing to serve, and the striving to serve, two masters ; by the anxious endeavour to have the all of pleasure, power, and self-indulgence, which this earthly state affords, and yet to hope that that far-off world will be ours, where the symphonies of angels and archangels are heard ; and where the voice of many waters, and the anthems of the redeemed, in grandest chorus, re-utter the song of Moses and the Lamb.

To be unconverted is to be the counterpart of him who was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day ; it is living without God in the world ; *i. e.* without making his will the rule of life—his honour, the object of all we think and do ; it is seeking our own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

It is to have the understanding darkened, the conscience seared ; it is living as aliens and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel ; it is seeking, and not striving to enter in at the strait gate ; it is putting the hand to the plough, and looking backward ; it is yielding our members as instruments of sin unto unrighteousness ; it is living to ourselves, for selfish pleasures, selfish plans, selfish pursuits ;

it is giving way to the worst passions of our nature ; it is to be dead in trespasses and in sins, which intimates the universal prevalence of corruption, for it has been well said that, “ there are no degrees in death,” since “ all things, of which it can be truly said that they are dead, are equally dead.”

What, then, was the full purport of our Lord’s words, and of the words of the Apostles on this subject ? Clearly, that the mind with its every thought, and that the heart with its every affection, were to be changed—to be converted from that state into which sin had betrayed them ; and the addressing of his words to his own disciples proved that Christ knew that their views of religion and its requirements were erroneous ; that their standard of spiritual excellence was low, and required to be elevated ; and that as yet they were in bondage to the spirit of the world and of selfishness ; and it was the constant aim of our adorable Redeemer, to bring them into the way of all truth, and to the practice of all righteousness, and through them to teach to coming ages the true and perfect meaning of Conversion.

In weighing our Lord’s expressions, and those of his Apostles, we shall at once see, that Conversion signifies nothing less than, “ the putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness

and true holiness (Eph. iv. 24); it is the being "transformed by the renewing of" our minds, that we may "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2); it is to be delivered "from the power of darkness" and to be "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. i. 13), so that it becomes our meat and drink "to do the will of God;" it is when "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened" (Eph. i. 18), we imbibe the very spirit of Christ himself, and live as He lived, in all self-denial, and meekness, and holiness.

When converted, new principles and new views, new feelings and affections are ours; our tastes, our inclinations, and our pursuits have undergone a great change; old things are passed away; the whole soul, the entire mind, and all our affections are God's; He is the first, the supreme object of our love, and we have now made no partial but a perfect surrender "of ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a holy and lively sacrifice unto him." We no longer persuade ourselves that we can serve God, and at the same time walk after the course of this world.

Nor will it be doubted, that what the really converted find to do, is done with all their might; that with them there is firmness, energy, resolution, which

are not inconsistent with all the amiable and engaging qualities of the heart.

Moreover, their estimate of Christianity is no longer erroneous, but in all its length and breadth and fulness they accept it, and live by it, as the rule of their actions; they know that it means much more than a respect for the principles of religion; much more than a mere attendance upon its ordinances; than a regard for its institutions, or than an admiration of its ministers, and a zeal for its propagation; for they but too well know that all these may exist, and that the love of the world may still be the supreme passion of the soul.

The truly converted know in whom they have believed, and by whose Spirit, they have been brought from darkness into marvellous light; the banner of their Saviour now becomes their standard; they know that they must not waver, but fight the good fight of faith; their courage is above suspicion; their allegiance beyond a taint.

Their loins are girt about with truth; they are now armed with the breast-plate of righteousness, and they take the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, well knowing that otherwise the battle against sin, the world, and

the devil, will not be fought—the conquest not achieved, the triumph not secured.

With those converted into the image of their Lord and Master, to enter the enemy's camp is to create suspicion; to parley with the foe is the first step to a surrender; to be friendly with the enemy is to betray their own cause, it is to be all but traitors.

As it is with earthly combatants, so is it with the members of the church militant, who acknowledge Christ to be their leader: their allegiance is undivided; their submission, entire; their readiness to obey his commands is perfect. They now undertake not anything in their own strength.

To be faithful and consistent is, with them, to be wise; they have counted the cost; they strive not for an earthly diadem; they breathe a new atmosphere; they are raised in the scale of existence, not being governed by gross and sensual faculties, but by high and holy principles.

They are moderate in all things, concerning which the world is immoderate; they value not things present, things unsubstantial, and things evanescent, above the salvation of their souls: they put not the approbation of their fellow-creatures in competition with the favour of their God.

They are far less anxious for the worldly prosperity of their children, than for their becoming trees of righteousness, planted of the Lord; they wish them to flourish, but it is in the courts of the house of their God.

The welfare of a fleeting existence is not more important to them than the realities of eternal ages: they spend not their strength for a shadow, nor their money for that which is not bread: the outward adorning of the body is not, in their eyes, equal to the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

The fascination of elegant manners; the beauty of form and of countenance; and the cultivation of all that can give distinction among the distinguished, is never for a moment compared with the holy and pure faculties, which will make heaven a state of enjoyment.

When the grave opens, where, they ask, will be, to the unconverted, all that to them constituted the ornament of society? where the polish, and the high bearing, and the dignified deportment? where the fascination, the beauty, and the distinction of all that is now to be consigned to dust and ashes? Alas! the thought of all these things creates but the appalling reflection, that for their sake an eternity of blessedness was lost, for they were cultivated

as above all value; whatever else was neglected, even the conversion of the soul, *they* were coveted and obtained, as being of surpassing importance.

It behoves, then, all men to follow the example of our inquirer, and to retire for a time from the world to ask themselves for what they are living?— for the glory of God? for the honour of Christ? for the blessedness of their children? for the ransom of their friends? for the redemption of the lost?—and if they can answer these questions in the affirmative, they may be well assured that they are the sons of God, that they are “ heirs and joint heirs with Christ, and part of that building fitly framed together unto a holy temple” to be the habitation of their Lord and his Christ for ever and ever.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO ARE TO BE CONVERTED ? AND WHEN ARE
THEY TO BE CONVERTED ?

THE questions having been considered, viz. What is meant by being unconverted, and by being converted ; and what are the principles and conduct of those who are truly changed into the moral image of their Redeemer, further questions arise, which are, 1st, Who must be converted ? 2ndly, When must they be converted ? 3rdly, By whom are men converted ? 4thly, How can this newness of life be obtained which is signified by the word conversion ?

And 1st, if it be true that all things which exist, are endued with capacities suited to the state in which they exist, the faculties of those which inhabit the air, and the great deep, being correspondent to their proper element, so that death is the result of being taken respectively from one, to be placed in the other ; and if it be true that even for the enjoyment of what may be termed the more refined pleasures of earthly life, such as are afforded by poetry, paint-

ing, and music,—that a taste and an ear for these things are pre-requisites, ere the soul can be enraptured by the pealing of the Hallelujah Chorus, or the eye be suffused at the sight of the touching creations of Raphael, or the mind elevated by the sublimity of him who soared far beyond the flight of ordinary mortals, the all but divine Milton; and if, moreover, for all science, physical and metaphysical, each one pursuing it with success, must take pleasure therein, by finding in himself faculties capable of nearly comprehending all mysteries and all knowledge;—if all these things be true, it will necessarily follow that every person, without exception, who would be happy in heaven, must have faculties suited to the element of that state or place.

It will readily be admitted that heaven is a state of purity, holiness, and godliness, the element of love, and of charity unfeigned; that there is no room there for emulation, for variance and wrath—for bitterness, strife, and oppression; that there are no enemies there to hate, nor any to hate the more bitterly because of their having first injured those whom they hate; that in heaven there will be none on whom to expend the outpourings of our wrath, or on whom to inflict the heavy injuries of our malice, rendered still more injurious by reason of

the calm, and unsuspected, and therefore unguarded-against, manner in which they were inflicted : that the whispers of calumny will find no entrance there ; nor the murderous weapons of those who would slay myriads of their fellow-creatures, rather than forego some claim of ill-defined right : that the curse of war, of ambition, pride, revenge, and lust, and all other curses, are unknown there ; and hence that the faculties in which such curses have their origin, can have no room for exercise there.

It is quite clear, therefore, since we are all the children of disobedience and sin, that a new and heavenly nature must be ours, if we would be happy in heaven ; and therefore that all must be converted, who would dwell with the spirits of just men made perfect ; that not only the openly profligate and immoral, the abandoned and unjust, the cruel and rapacious, but also the merely lukewarm and externally moral, and those formalists who, valuing supremely the ordinances, forget the entire spirit of religion.

Hence, since all are by nature sinful, and all are under the influence of evil passions, these passions must be subdued in all, and this sinful nature in all be eradicated ; and that all are thus wicked, is palpable from Holy Writ, which affirms that the heart of

man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" that "there is none that doeth good, no not one;" that we are all gone out of the way; that wickedness is bound up even in the heart of a child.

All, then, of every age, of every nation, and of every rank, must be converted into the moral image of their Lord and Saviour, if they would dwell with Him in the heaven of heavens: the high and the low, the learned and the unlearned; the Greek and the barbarian; the courteous as well as the unbending; the gentle as well as the stern; all must come under that mighty influence whereby they become the sons of God. Men of taste, and men of refinement; those who are outwardly moral, and charitable, in the world's sense of that word, will not be willing to admit this to be true, even though the Apostle indicates that a man may bestow all his "goods to feed the poor," and give his "body to be burned," and yet be destitute of that heavenly charity, which never faileth, neither in earth nor in heaven.

Not only must the oppressor, but also the oppressed be converted; the slave as well as his master; the poor as well as the rich; the grave as well as the gay; the calm as well as the violent; all who are meek by temperament, as well as all who are disdainful; all, without exception, must undergo a

change as great, and as all-comprehensive in its effects, as that which Saul underwent, ere he was admitted to be partaker "of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.)

The reason why all must be converted, including the Jew and the Gentile, the Scythian and the Greek, they who have, and they who have not the Gospel preached to them, is, that conversion is not only a national but a personal change, and that the universal church of Christ consists of the individually converted, of every nation, tongue, and language; and not of those, who having had all the advantages of living where Christ's religion is established, yet never, in any measure, partook of the spirit of that religion.

The reception of Christianity by Gentile nations has been thought, by some, to embrace all that is meant by the word conversion; but that is only a part of its import, since it signifies, as we have seen, an entire change of heart, of mind, of thought, and of desire; the putting off the old, and the "putting on the new, man" so that "old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

It is not bigotry to say, for it is what Christ and his Apostles say, that, without conversion, no man can see God; no one have Him for their friend

“who is the first and the last,” who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore. (Rev. i.)

It is not narrow-mindedness to affirm, for it is what the inspired Apostle affirms, that, without this conversion, to none can it ever be granted “to drink of the pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

It is not illiberality to declare, for the whole tenor of Scripture declares the same truth, that heaven itself would be as the blackness of darkness; that the light, which emblazons the throne of God, and the empyreal brightness of the presence of the great I AM, the Lord God Almighty, would be as clouds and darkness, and thick darkness itself, to those who are not changed and transformed, by the renewing of their minds, into the resemblance of his dear Son; for how, if not conformed to his spiritual excellence, could any be happy in that “city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it,” since the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof? or how could they desire to remain in that holy place, where “there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof”?

It may be asked, how can any persons express themselves so positively on things which are beyond

the ken of human vision, beyond the knowledge of finite faculties, beyond the comprehension of worms of the dust?

The answer, however, is, that they so speak and write, because they find these things to be written in the Word of God, as with a sunbeam; that they find them declared and re-declared, affirmed and re-affirmed, in every variety of manner and of expression; so stated and so affirmed that the wayfaring man cannot err, unless he be determined to err, respecting them: all of which statements and restatements of the same truth, in such a variety of terms, show the vast and all-surpassing importance of the doctrine, that without conversion no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It may be thought that such an assertion of such a doctrine is calculated to terrify men, and to convey gloomy views of religion; but surely, to announce, with all solemnity, to reasonable creatures, that they cannot be blessed in time or in eternity, without the possession of faculties, which are described with great clearness,—surely this is best calculated to induce them to strive to obtain those faculties, to hunger and thirst, nay to pant, after them!

Assuredly it is no hindrance to the happy termination of a voyage, previously to ascertain the num-

ber, and the situation, of sunken rocks; to know what currents and under-currents exist; what winds for a long time set in adversely to our destination; and what, at other times, are most favourable to our course: and in the voyage of life, are we to have no knowledge of the things necessary to be avoided; and of those which must be done? no acquaintance with the under-currents and adverse gales? Are we to continue to be ignorant of the hitherto unknown and unsuspected, because unthought-of dangers? Is not knowledge, in this as in the other case, the most probable method of avoiding the dangers, and overcoming the difficulties of our course? and of enabling us to reach the haven of rest, which to the righteous is the dwelling-place of their Father and their God?

The assertion, and re-assertion, that all without exception must be converted, is for this purpose—that our fairest hopes, and brightest prospects, may not be wrecked; that we may not approach the vortex of sin, and death, and eternal disappointment, while believing that all is safe, and while thinking, without any ground for the thought, that happiness after death will be our portion. To be deceived on this point, till we have passed that bourn whence no man may return, is to be for ever

deceived; it is a deception, the bitter results of which will be everlasting. . . .

Having considered the full import of the term conversion, and that all, without exception, must be converted, we are next led to ask, When must this change take place; this emancipation from the power and dominion of evil be effected; this entrance into the family and household of God be secured? When are we to be delivered from the influence of the world—its censure and its applause, its discountenance and its favour?

To which this plain answer can be given, That all which is comprehended in this description of man's change of life and character, takes place during the brief period of his pilgrimage in this world; that if he be not converted in this life, he will never be converted in the life to come; that, as the tree falleth so it lieth; that death changes the place, or state, of the soul's existence, but that it does not alter a man's principles, his propensities, his nature; that these will cling to him through eternity; that if he be unrighteous at his death, he will for ever be unrighteous; that there is an impassable gulf between the abodes of never-ending sorrow and the mansions of happiness and peace, which is undeniably made known to us by our Lord himself, in

the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke xvi. 19.)

In the grave no accents of mercy are heard, no invitations to repentance given; the voice of prophets, and apostles, and of Christ's ministers, is for ever silent there: the time to obtain new and heavenly faculties is the time of life; we must "seek the Lord while he may be found," we must "call upon him while he is near." (Is. lv. 6.)

The whole tenor of revelation indicates that the season of probation, the opportunity of making our calling and election sure, the time of striving for the mastery over every corrupt inclination, and the becoming emancipated from ourselves, the world, and the powers of darkness, is before we are summoned hence, no more to have an interest in anything that is done under the sun.

It may also be observed, that the best time is the season of youth, health, and strength, when all our faculties are perfect, and when best they will enable us to serve God, and our fellow-creatures, and that, therefore, the offering of ourselves to Him then will be most acceptable, as indicating that the love of God, and not the vanity of life, has led us to seek for perfect peace and happiness, in becoming conformed to the divine spirit of the Saviour of Mankind.

The best time, therefore, to surrender our minds and hearts, and all our faculties, so that we may be made like unto Jesus Christ, is, unquestionably, the time of youth; to offer them to God only on a death-bed, would imply that they never would be offered at all if death were never to overtake us; and that then we offer them, not from the love of God, and all that is heavenly, but only to avoid the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched; exactly as all would in this life escape the penalty of sin, whose natures would probably still remain sinful, even after the pardon of their manifold transgressions.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY WHOM IS CONVERSION GRANTED? AND HOW
IS IT TO BE OBTAINED?

It may now with propriety be asked, By whom is this mighty result to be effected, which signifies the entire change of thought, feeling, and motive, in every one who is blessed in time and in eternity? And can any one doubt, that none less than the Almighty, the Lord of heaven and of earth, can take away the heart of stone, and in lieu thereof give a heart and mind capable of feeling and appreciating, and of being conformed to, all things divine and heavenly? We are all well persuaded that God alone could create light and create darkness; that He alone could call into existence all things physical and material; and give shape, form, and motion to material substances, animate and inanimate; and that none but He could stamp on man that intellectual essence which affords far higher indications of Divine power and goodness than all and every variety of material substances

and forms, whether of the earth, the air, or the great deep: hence we may fairly conclude, that if the minor, though vast and stupendous, works of creation, yet minor when compared with higher existing capacities, had God for their Author, most assuredly must the Almighty be the first, the last, and the alone Cause of the existence of the crowning work of creation, viz. the moral, the spiritual being, whose faculties were to be suited to the element of holiness, purity and love eternal.

How could any but He who, when the earth was without form and void, and when darkness was upon the face of the deep, said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" how could any but He say, Let there be spiritual light; let the light of the Gospel shine into men's hearts; let them be converted and transformed into Christ's image? how could any but He thus speak, so that the minds of men should effectually be created in Christ Jesus unto good works?

Even the construction of a leaf, the formation of a flower, the production of a tree, required nothing less than the hand of Omnipotence; how, then, can anything less than that hand be required in the formation of man? who is fearfully and wonderfully made, with the high endowments of reason

and intelligence, and, above all, with such spiritual faculties as may enable him to be the peer and compeer of saints and angels, of seraphim and of cherubim. Hence this holy being is the workmanship of Him who made the great and round world and all that therein is.

The Psalmist saw all things in this light; he never contemplated even a flower of the field, without considering its Maker, and the purposes for which it was created; and with a transition of thought the most rapid, he at the same moment considered who was his own Maker, and for what end he had been created; and this train of thought carried him quickly from the material to the immaterial world; from earth to heaven; from things perishable, to things durable; and he thus learnt to bless God, who had not only called him into physical and mental, but also into moral and spiritual, existence, having granted to him holy feelings and aspirations.

We however, who see not God in everything that is material, are apt to forget his agency in things spiritual, and therefore do not ascribe to Him the origin of "holy desires, good counsels and just works." We attribute them to our better principles, which we think are the fruits of education, and of

the solicitude and care of our parents ; or of the vigilance of our teachers and friends, in guarding us against sin and danger.

Even we are disposed at times to attribute our good qualities, and our attainments in religion, to our superior natures, so that we thank God we are not like other men, "extortioners, and unjust," quite forgetting the question, and what is involved in it, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer. xiii. 23.)

A wise man however, at all times, and in all places, sees the hand of God, and traces to it all creation, of whatever is or ever has been : at the rising or at the setting of the sun, at noon day or when the moon is walking in her brightness, to him that hand is visible ; when in his secret chamber, or when sauntering in the fields, in the cool of the day, he is perpetually reminded of it : when all things breathe peace and gladness ; in retirement, or when surrounded by dearest friends ; and in every vicissitude, he sees the hand of God : in the blade of grass, and in the flowers of the field ; in the trees of the forest, in the cedars of Lebanon ; in the fertile vale, and in the everlasting hills, that hand is ever to be traced : in the firmament of heaven, with its myriads of stars, and with its

planets ever rolling in their courses, the hand is seen to be divine which made them all: in the mighty deep, and in the devouring earthquake; in the loud, portending thunder, and in the terrific lightning, and in the desolations of the tempest, the hand of the Lord God Almighty is seen, moving mysteriously indeed.

But not in these only is the divine power and agency visible, but also in the still small voice of conscience, warning us of sin and danger, of misery and of death; in the preaching of the Gospel; in the never-ending afflictions of life; in the decay of health; in the blessings with which even this world teems; in sickness, wealth, and poverty, and in all the multiplied, though varied, methods which He employs to convert men to holiness, to purify their conscience from dead works, and to "cleanse the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit,"—in all these things can the hand of the Lord God omnipotent be discerned.

Hence the God of physical creation is the God of grace, and in the mind of all who understand the full design of revelation, what may be termed the physical attributes of the Almighty appear in all their grandeur and power, sweetly harmonizing with the moral attributes of holiness, truth, goodness,

mercy, and compassion, and all incessantly employed to influence us to become the sons of God, the ransomed of Christ, so as to be suited for dwelling "in the heavenly Jerusalem," and being admitted into "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven."

Having, then, seen that conversion is the gift of God, and that without it no man can see God, it remains for us to consider, How can we obtain this mighty, this entire, change of heart and mind, of feeling and of principle, on which the happiness of the future depends? how can we be enabled to "cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light," so as to be emancipated from the dominion of evil, to be delivered from earthly contamination? to which solemn inquiries the words of the Apostle may afford the most suitable reply, viz. by "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb. xii. 2.) By prayer, then, all these blessings can be procured; by prayer, the grace of the Holy Spirit may be obtained, to destroy in us all those evil natures, propensities, and passions, which till now have carried us captive, and have held us under their sway and bondage.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

WHO that has read the Bible can have any doubt, that if he ask, he will receive; that if he seek, he will find; that if he knock, it will be opened unto him; that if he ask for the bread of life, it will abundantly be given to him; that if he thirst for the wells of salvation, they will flow for him; that if he seek for life eternal, he will find it; that if he lift up his voice for understanding, if he seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure,—who can doubt, that then he will understand the fear of the Lord, and *find* the knowledge of God?—who can doubt, that the gate of heaven will be opened to him who so knocketh as to prove that he is determined it shall not be for ever closed upon him, —who can doubt this, when he calls to mind our Lord's words, who, in teaching his disciples to pray, stated to them, that though “a friend will not rise and give to him that requireth bread, yet that, because of his importunity, he will rise and

give him as much as he needeth,"—who that reads this, can fear that his own importunity for the bread of life shall not procure for him as much as he needeth? Who can read what Christ said about the unjust judge, and bear in mind his words, "that men ought always to pray and not to faint," and doubt that his own prayers for newness of life will be heard?

The unjust judge feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow (Luke xviii.) who went to him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary; "and he would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily;" avenge them of their adversary the devil, who so steadily and with such zeal endeavours to keep them within the duress of the "strong man armed."

That which is intended here, is to teach us constancy and perseverance in our requests for the spiritual mercies which we desire. When we are praying for strength against our foes, and against our passions, which are our worst enemies, we must

be instant in prayer ; we must pray without ceasing and not faint, we must tarry though the vision wait, and then shall we not seek God's face in vain.

Christ by this parable shows what is the power of importunity among men, who, even when uninfluenced by justice, equity, and the love of their fellow-creatures, and equally uninfluenced by mercy and compassion, will be swayed by importunity to do what is just and equitable.

The judge feared not God, and as a consequence of this, he regarded not man ; had he feared God, his religion would have taught him what was due to his fellow-creatures, due to himself, and due to his office, which by his injustice he was bringing into discredit ; the cry was, Avenge me of mine adversary, do justice to me against him ; but for a while he would not listen to her.

Incessant prayer, however, can do much, for by her continually troubling him, by her fixed purpose never to rest, nor to let the judge rest, till she were avenged, till justice were done to her, she obtained a favourable decision from one who would willingly have taken no notice of her, she being too poor to further her cause by those means which influenced unrighteous judges, and made it a proverb that the balances of deceit were in their hands (Hosea xii.),

as they had been in the times of the preacher, who "saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." (Eccle. iii. 16.)

But notwithstanding the widow's poverty, and her destitute condition, she having no friend to entreat for her; and notwithstanding the indifference of the judge to his own character and reputation, yet by importunity, by incessant prayer, by unwearied entreaty, she compelled him to listen to and to redress her complaint.

Now all this is said by our Lord for the encouragement of men, that they may pray fervently, continually, and with faith; and especially is it intended for the encouragement of those who wish to be delivered from every adversary which is warring against their admission into the number of the true Israelites of God.

"Hear what the unjust judge saith;" he cannot, he fully admits, any longer resist the prayer of the widow, by which we are taught to conclude that God cannot and will not resist the prayers of those who truly call upon Him, for this is the import of his own gracious question, "and shall not God avenge his own elect?"

What then, we repeat, is here taught us? that if

we pray without ceasing; if we be resolved to have the blessing; if we will not suffer the angel to depart till he have given us his benediction; if we will not give sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, till we be converted, and thus avenged of our spiritual adversary; that if we will not be satisfied, till we have been ransomed from the tyranny of sin, and until Christ be to us the resurrection and the life,—so certainly shall we find rest unto our souls; so assuredly shall we become the sons of God, and so undoubtedly shall the second death have no power over us.

And why is this? Because God has appointed prayer to be the means of procuring his choicest gifts; night and day must we therefore cry unto Him for mercy; and at noonday our entreaties must, like incense, ascend to heaven for the favour of God; and then it will be seen, by the urgency, the frequency and the faith of our prayer, that we value the blessing. When the Almighty said to his people, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and do them,” He added, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) That He would

give them the blessing, was to be learnt by the vision of the valley of dry bones, which was to be emblematical of their spiritual resurrection to life; and when there had been a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone; and when the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and when there was as yet no breath in them, the Prophet was commanded to *pray* for it, and to say, "Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live;" and when he had *prayed*, we read, that "breath came into them, and they lived."

It was once well said, "that prayer is the safety of all stations, and the consolation of all sorrows; the soul of piety, the support of faith, and the foundation of all true religion;" and who that ever found it piercing the heavens, and arresting, as it were, the attention of Jehovah himself, can doubt its power to cause spiritual manna to drop down from the clouds? who can doubt its efficacy to procure the "living bread, of which if a man eat he shall never hunger, and the living waters" of which if he do but drink "he never shall thirst"?

If any one can doubt that prayer will effectually obtain the blessings of spiritual life, let him but care-

fully attend to the prayers offered to God at the dedication of the Temple; which dedication was surely to signify, or at least to be emblematical of, the dedication of the heart and mind to God.

The answers to the prayer of dedication clearly show that prayers are heard in heaven, especially those prayers in which we implore blessings which God delights to grant to his creatures, viz. holy affections, spiritual desires, and heavenly faculties, from which flow charity, gentleness, meekness, long-suffering, goodness, faith unfeigned: these may well be termed the best gifts of our heavenly Father, and which He rejoices to bestow in the greatest abundance upon his children. In answer to Solomon's prayer, the Almighty said, "I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, and I have also given thee that thou hast not asked, both riches and honour."

What encouragement is here afforded to us to ask for a "wise and understanding heart;" to beseech the God of heaven and earth to grant us his grace, that we may be entirely conformed to the image of his dear Son! and moreover, how does the grant of worldly riches, not asked for, prove the wisdom of being "careful for nothing, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving, making our requests known unto God"! how does this show the benefit of seeking "the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness," as the first, the last, the chief, the greatest, nay, the sum of all blessings, in comparison with which every earthly possession is but a shadow; every temporal joy, vanity; and every worldly gratification, vexation of spirit, in comparison, indeed, with which, all other things are as unsubstantial as the world itself!

None will deny that the wonderful judgment of Solomon was the fruit of that "wise and understanding heart" for which he prayed, and which, in answer to prayer, was given to him: and shall we hesitate to ask the same blessing, of the willing Giver of every good and perfect gift? shall we refuse to pray to God, to bestow upon us those faculties whereby we may be enabled to inhabit a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"?

The dedication of the Temple was well pleasing to God, as emblematical, or indicative, of the dedication of the hearts of the people to Him; their prayer was accepted, as being the expression of their desire that the Almighty would dwell with his people, *i. e.* that He would "endue them with

his Spirit, and enrich them with his heavenly grace:" what the Ark contained, which was especially valuable, was the law; which law would be doubly valuable when written, not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not on "tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart."

In this manner ought the soul to be solemnly offered to God; and prayer to be made, that it may be the resting-place of Jehovah. The material Temple was but a type, a shadow of the spiritual Temple, for the building of which earthly Temple nothing was accepted which was not voluntarily given; which may instruct us to make a willing surrender of ourselves to God, and truly to pray for hearts to be dedicated entirely to his service, and to his glory and honour.

The dedication of the Temple was most solemn; the bringing the Ark into the Temple was done with extraordinary preparation and grandeur; the Levites with their sons, were arrayed in white linen (typical of purity); having cymbals, psalteries, and harps, as the work was of joy and gladness; and with them one hundred and twenty Priests, sounding with trumpets; and it "came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound, to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord," saying, "For

he is good ; for his mercy endureth for ever : that then the house was filled with a cloud" (the symbol of God's presence), "even the house of the Lord, so that the Priests could not stand to minister, by reason of the cloud : for the glory of the Lord had filled the house."

And if, when the material Temple is dedicated to the Lord, there be the symbol of his presence, and the glory, how much more glorious shall the ministration of the Spirit be, when that which is more valuable than all the temples of the world, viz. the soul of man, shall, by prayer, be brought as an offering unto God!—that soul, to which the Gospel of Christ having been a savour of life unto life, is now, without reserve and without hesitation, willingly offered, for the acceptance of Him who said to every one that thirsteth, "Come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Everything teaches us to pray for the spiritual blessings which have been enumerated. The presence of God by his symbol in the Temple is a type of Christ's presence in the heart of man ; a symbol of his presence, wherever two or three are met together, to pray to their God and Father in

heaven. He is ever the minister of his Church, and therefore ever present to hear, to accept, to bless; ever present to arouse, to convict, to convert; present to take the spoils of his warfare, because he came "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save." He is ever present, speaking in righteousness, and overcoming all obstacles, since "He alone has trodden the wine-press, for of the people there was none with him, therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him," therefore will He overcome all our adversaries, for the time of his redeemed is come; therefore let us pray and faint not—let us pray, as they who believe that "days without prayer are days without hope."

It remains to be stated, that, if we hope to have our prayers answered, we must indeed be willing to dedicate ourselves fully to God's service; we must be ready to make a total surrender of everything which stands between us and life eternal; everything which impedes our progress in religion, and which militates against all "holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works." The blessing God will give, but He will be sought for it; of itself we cannot expect it to come, any more than we can

expect the earth spontaneously to give its increase: it is in the moral, as it is in the material, world; there is a spiritual as well as an earthly husbandry; the means of grace are in our hands; the hope of glory is set before us; but if the chief means, prayer, be not employed, and constantly employed, the blessing will not be obtained, for he that soweth sparingly reapeth sparingly, as well in religion as in the products of the earth.

But since conversion is God's gift, it may be thought that till *that gift* be communicated we can do nothing, not even seek for it by prayer. To what, however, does our Lord liken his own kingdom, but to treasure *hid* in a field, which when a man has found (which implies *seeking* for it) he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field, since it is now of supreme importance in his estimation; and obtain it he will, though it cost him the sacrifice of all and every other possession in the world.

In this spirit, if we faint not, but pray to obtain conversion, it will be granted to us; but if we be indifferent to it, so indifferent as to be waiting, without prayer, till it come of itself, we show that we really do not wish to be changed; that we have no desire to be raised from "the death of sin unto

the life of righteousness." Unto him who asked what he should do to obtain eternal life, our Lord said, "If thou *wilt* be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." But alas! how many, like this young man, refuse to follow Christ, who yet wish to have treasure in heaven, after quitting this mortal scene!

Man's salvation, however, is spoken of in the Bible as depending upon his *striving* to "enter in at the strait gate;" and by the expression, "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able," surely they are meant who do it carelessly; they seek indeed, but not in sincerity; they would escape the doom of the lost, forgetting that this is but part of the salvation which Christ came to secure to his true followers: but there is yet something with them more valuable than salvation; some enjoyment, some present gratification, some earthly possession, of more importance than life eternal; they are like him of whom Christ spake, when He said, "so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

We feel, it may be, that we are not converted, and yet this feeling produces no disquietude, no misery, no agony, no fervent persevering prayer. We

know that without conversion no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven; and that, thus dying, he must be lost; we admit that death may overtake us, ere we are become the children of God in reality; and that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation:" we know all this, and yet are not alive to our great peril; are not daily bearing in mind that, when our sun is set, when our race is run, the opportunity will be gone for ever of making our calling sure. We are, it may be, enjoying the world, and God's temporal blessings, and so thoughtless as to be comparatively happy; and we thus go on, making no efforts to obtain new hearts and new minds: then is it not quite clear that there are other things, which to us, in reality, are of greater consequence than the favour of God, the love of Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit?

Did we but think of what we are, and of what we soon shall be; did we but reflect that time is passing away, and that our opportunities of doing and receiving good are rapidly diminishing; did we but reflect that heaven cannot be a state of happiness, saving to those who have heavenly faculties, and that these faculties must be obtained in this life, and that prayer is the appointed means of obtaining them; did we but rightly reflect on time and eter-

nity, on death and on that which will follow after death ; did we but fully allow our minds to realise the thought that all which now ministers to our joy and to our pleasure, which raises our spirits and excites our hopes, that all will very soon be as though it never had been,—oh ! how ready should we be to abandon the sins which do so easily beset us, and how, like the importunate widow, should we be unceasing in our prayers to have our requests granted ! how should we strive, as in an agony, to be avenged of our spiritual adversaries, how pray to be visited by the Almighty, to have our minds enlightened, to have our natures changed, to have our hearts cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to have our “ consciences sprinkled from dead works to serve the living God.”

But it may be said that we do not thus feel, and cannot thus feel, prior to having received the very conversion of heart, which we are considering, and which is declared to be the gift of God ; but there are many things which we can do, and which we do not do, with adequate energy : we can read the Word of God, and thereby endeavour to ascertain his will, and the purposes for which He created and preserves us ; we can regularly attend the House of God, and hear the blessed Gospel of salvation

preached to those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death : moreover, we can peruse the works of those who have written with power and skill, with discrimination and with learning, with charity and with a catholic spirit : we can also learn from the experience of upright and holy men, of those who having felt the all of gratification which the world can offer, have found their capacities only satisfied with the contemplation of the eternal and the infinite, and their happiness only secured by their conversion into the beautiful image of the Redeemer ; by their having received the impress of Him who was the personification of integrity and purity ; of long-suffering and of charity, of gentleness, compassion, and kindness.

When any one wants rank, power, and promotion, and knows that by entreaty he can obtain them, he fails not to use all and every means to convey, to the giver thereof, his heartfelt desire to procure them ; and he who truly waits to be converted, will not fail to beseech the Lord of all power and might to grant him the grace of his heavenly benediction. If, however, we be already converted, we must still look to Christ, as not only the author, but the finisher, of our faith ; we must pray that we fall into no sin, nor run into any kind of danger ; that

we may be like a city set on a hill ; that our light may so shine that men, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven ; that by our conversation, our actions, our tempers, and deportment we may recommend to others the principles of Christianity ; that they, perceiving its power to produce in us high and upright motives of action, and to suppress in us whatever is selfish, may be led to embrace the same principles, and to apply mightily to God to be brought under their complete and all-effective influence.

When we thus adorn religion, we recommend it powerfully to others ; and though many hate it, because it tacitly condemns them, yet, in time, a consistent course of benevolence and piety, a career marked by unceasing acts of disinterestedness, followed by the animated joys thence arising, as well as by those which flow from holiness and purity, and the peaceable fruits of meekness and charity—all these may have an effect on some, who in searching for happiness in this life have ever been deluded ; who in pursuing after peace have never obtained it ; who in panting after rest have ever been mocked ; who in their every pursuit have reaped a harvest of sorrow and uncertainty ; and who, finding mutability stamped on all within their reach, have never been

so completely disappointed as when they have secured those very things, the possession of which they believed would secure contentment.

On such persons as those now referred to, a consistent course of religion, showing itself not less in cheerfulness of temper than in mildness of disposition and kindness of manner, may have a most beneficial result, and lead some to seek in religion for that peace, those joys, and that rest, which they in vain have yet panted after, and which the world can neither give nor take away; hence the benefit which others may derive from our obtaining the inestimable blessing of conversion.

We must also pray that we may bring no disgrace upon our profession, never forgetting the deep fall of David, of Solomon, and Hezekiah; nor the sins of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; nor the offences of even the very followers of Christ Jesus, such as those of Peter, John, and James.

He who would not only be blessed, but who has in him a right spirit, will earnestly desire the blessedness of others; and having felt the need of conversion, and having unceasingly prayed for it for himself, will offer equally fervent prayers for all who are near and dear to him, and for all mankind, that they may be brought into the fold of the great

Shepherd of Israel. Our example in leading men to love whatever things are pure, lovely, and of good report may do much, but when we would be instrumental in securing the salvation of others, we must pray and faint not.

When we are anxious for the weal of those whom we love in this world, whose earthly welfare rather than our own we would promote, whose happiness we would further at any cost of our own satisfactions, whose enjoyments we would extend by all and every means in our power ; then let us faint not, but pray without ceasing unto the author and finisher of our faith.

To wish for the salvation of others is good ; it is a prayer, because it is the desire of the heart ; it may not at first be reduced to words and uttered, but the wish will soon be followed by the ardent and oft-expressed prayer that the Almighty would hear in heaven his dwelling-place ; and hearing, answer and forgive ; and bless by the influence of his Holy Spirit ; bless by creating and making a new heart in all whom we love, and who having long been the tenderest objects of our regard, their salvation is become needful for the completion of our own happiness in this world.

Let us then pray and faint not, when we think of

Him, the great intercessor, who stands between the living and the dead ; let us take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put in incense, and go quickly into the congregation, and fall down before God, and say, " Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach ; spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood ; deliver them from going down quickly into the grave ; preserve them from the second death : by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation, spare thy people from blindness of heart, from pride, and hypocrisy ; by thine agony and bloody sweat, spare them from all deadly sin, hatred, and malice ; by thy cross and passion, redeem them from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; by thy death and burial, spare them from all hardness of heart, all false doctrine ; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension, oh, spare them in all time of their tribulation, in all time of their wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment."

CHAPTER X.

CAN THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST KNOW
THAT THEY HAVE PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO
LIFE ?

It has been well remarked by a powerful historical writer, that "Christianity, which seems to aim only at the happiness of another life, also constitutes man's blessedness in this ;" a truth the elucidation of which is one of the main designs of this work ; and which truth none will doubt, if they admit it to be probable that, real Christians may *know* that they have passed from death unto life (1 John iii. 14) ; since such knowledge must surely fill them with peace and joy in believing.

Have any men ever attained this knowledge ? and, if so, how have they attained it ? Yes, men have attained it, and have made known to others their attainment of it, in language the full import of which none can mistake. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans, said (viii. 16), "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God ;" and he afterwards affirmed, "that

the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He moreover said, in his own triumphant language, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Indeed it can scarcely escape the observation of an attentive reader, that all the Epistles of this holy and happy man were written under the conviction that his own name was inscribed in the book of life; for even when lamenting the remaining corruptions of his nature, by which another law in his members was warring against the law of his mind, yet he knew who 'would deliver him from "the body of this death" (vii. 24); and therefore he thanked God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and he then added, "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

The manner in which he commenced his Epistles is sufficient to prove that he was not hoping to be adopted of God at some future time, but that he then knew he was "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to

be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God ;” God being his witness that without ceasing he always made mention in his prayers of those in “Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.”

To the Corinthians he did not write in any doubtful manner concerning his own spiritual state ; but beautifully said, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (2 Cor. i. 3, 4.) Here there is one who speaketh of something which already is his, and he tells us who it was who conveyed to him this comfort ; for he says, “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” (2 Cor. i. 5.)

So to the Ephesians he exultingly wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath* blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (i. 3) ; indeed his language was ever that of *thanksgiving* for having received an unspeakable blessing ; and even when a “prisoner of Jesus Christ” how touchingly could he write unto “Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer,” and to the “beloved Apphia, and

Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house ;” and greet them in these terms, so expressive of the indwelling in his own heart of the blessedness of the redeemed, “Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philemon 3.)

But the Apostle Paul expressed himself not more clearly on this point than did the beloved Apostle John, who very boldly said, “We *know* that we have passed from death unto life” (and he gives an excellent reason for this knowledge; viz.), “because we love the brethren” (1 John iii. 14); which words help us to understand when it is that the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, “that we are the children of God,” viz. when we are living, as Christ lived, a life of love and mercy.

Again, the same Apostle, in enforcing brotherly love, admirably wrote, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we *know* that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” (1 John iii. 18, 19.) “And hereby we *know* that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (24). And in chap. iv. 12, 13, we have a repetition of the same blessed truth, that men may possess the knowledge of being enrolled among the true followers of the Lamb

of God: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby *know* we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." He had previously though incidentally spoken of the happy state of Christ's real children, when he said, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (iii. 1, 2). In this strain the Epistles were written, and they all fully testify to the abundant joy of those who were filled "with the peaceable fruit of righteousness;" for they had not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but they had "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15); and hence the Apostle Paul strikingly said, "We *know*, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.)

The happiness of the real followers of Christ was a present and not a prospective happiness; in life they were filled with peace and joy in believing; for millions of worlds they would not have lost the

peace of God which passeth understanding ; to them to live was Christ. If Paul were in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, yet how triumphantly could he say, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi. 10): he had already learned to comprehend, "with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," and was filled with "all the fulness of God." (Eph. iii. 18, 19.) His conversation was in heaven ; and in all his troubles and persecutions he looked "for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," who, he well knew, would change his vile body, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 21.) Hence with so much calmness, nay, with such serene happiness, he could speak of his approaching death ; nothing moved by the anticipation of the last conflict which was to precede it, the certainty of which conflict caused him to say, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righte-

ousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6-8.)

It may, however, be objected, that few Christians now obtain the knowledge that their sins are forgiven, and that their names are written in the book of life, since the Spirit beareth not witness with their spirits whereby they can cry Abba, Father : if such an opinion should, unhappily, be true, it would only prove that there are men who are satisfied with something far below what the Almighty has conferred, is conferring, and ever will, according to his revealed Word, confer on all who are bent on obtaining the full measure of that grace, and of those spiritual blessings, which are the inheritance of the redeemed of the Lord, of those who are come "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv. 13:)

It is indeed much to be feared, that but too many consider heaven to be a state of blessedness which is to be granted to them as a compensation for all the sorrows and sufferings of this life ; instead of looking upon it as the completion, the perfection of that happiness, which is abundantly granted to all, who, being "risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right

hand of God" (Col. iii. 1); to all who are "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 11.)

Unto such as are ever fighting the good fight of faith; who are true to themselves, and to their Lord, the Spirit of God will ever bear witness with their spirits that they are "the sons of God." In the language of a learned writer (Bloomfield), "the Holy Spirit, by his sanctifying grace on our hearts, confirms the testimony of our minds and consciences that we are the children of God."

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN AND HOW DOES MAN'S SPIRIT BEAR WITNESS
THAT HE IS A CHILD OF GOD?

AT all times when a man is labouring with his might to keep God's commandments, his own spirit will testify that he is a child of God; for, as the Apostle John admirably affirms, "he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we *know* that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John iii. 24.)

Every man truly in earnest will have the testimony of his own conscience, now enlightened by God's grace, that he is indeed a sincere follower of Christ Jesus, and therefore that he has "been planted in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. vi. 5, 6.)

With such knowledge, then, as this, who can be, who ought to be, unhappy? and such knowledge all may attain, long ere Death comes, to remove them from the church militant into the church triumphant.

To those, however, who are only *hoping* to be saved from the power and from the punishment of sin, and who scarcely can be convinced that already their past sins are blotted out, and that nothing shall "separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," these questions may fairly be put:—Does not your growth in grace, and increase of piety, your patient continuance in well-doing, and your nearer resemblance to Christ, show that you *have* "received a kingdom which cannot be moved"? Does not the realizing of God's presence, the abiding sense of his fatherly correction, and daily communion with his Spirit, testify "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"? (2 Tim. iii. 17.) Does not the adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity,—does not this convince you that the God of peace, "who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, will make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ"? And do not your ardent desires to persevere in

righteousness; and your aspirations after holier affections; your gradual emancipation from worldly customs; the diminishing effect of worldly influences; the estrangement of the mind from whatever impedes you in your journey Zionward; the alienation of the heart from the snares which heretofore militated against your best thoughts; and the casting away the sins which did so easily beset you;—do not all these things prove that the good work is begun in you, and will be perfected to the day of Christ?

By all these things the spirit of men may bear witness that they are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. ii. 19); and therefore they may well be filled with “joy and peace in believing.”

The being willing to part with that which is dearer than the right eye, or more valuable than the right hand, rather than offend against God; the seeing that to be wrong, which once and for long you believed, and wished to believe, was right; the selling all that you have to buy the field in which is hid treasure; the acting up to your new and clearer views of duty; the ceasing to parley with corrupt affections and inclinations; and your strict adherence

to your rule; assuredly are manifestations that "the God of peace is working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight."

The increasing portion of time which you give to visiting the afflicted; the greater exertions which you make to awaken the thoughtless to a solemn consideration of what they are, and what they soon will be; and the more frequent conversations into which you enter, to rouse or to encourage, to warn or to console, those whom you know and love, and who are committed to your care,—these things show that, "he who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in your hearts to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

The never-ending efforts which are made to conciliate others, to obtain their good will; and then to make that good will a moral means whereby to instil into their minds, as the gentle dew of heaven, holy thoughts, good counsels, righteous principles,—these efforts declare your "fellowship in the gospel, your consolation in Christ, your fellowship of the Spirit, and the fulfilling of your joy." (Phil. ii.)

The daily lessening of your temporal enjoyments, and even wants, many of them being artificial, that your means of doing good may increase with your

years, and that your deeds of beneficence may be more numerous, as the time of your sojourning upon earth is rapidly passing away; and the distributing to the afflicted members of Christ's church, to those who have enjoyed better days, but who in all their privations have stood spiritually unscathed by adversity; also the entire dedication of every faculty to God's service, and your increasing desire to do all the good in your power to the greatest number of persons,—this shows that the good work is proceeding unto perfection.

The tears of joy which are shed when any one is converted by your instrumentality; when, through your prayers and conversation, in any one instance, a multitude of sins may have been covered; your unwearied prayers that your children may be trees of righteousness planted of the Lord; and that the years of your parents may not end till their sins are forgiven; that their sun may not go down till their transgressions are blotted out; that they may indeed be "spared a little ere they go hence and be no more seen," spared till, from the four winds of heaven, breath shall be breathed upon them that they may live;—these tears and prayers afford fresh evidence that the seed sown hath not fallen upon thorns, but that it is bringing forth fruit unto perfection.

Your incessant pleading with the Holy Ghost, and your intercessions with the Lamb which standeth upon mount Zion, when you pray for "all sorts and conditions of men;" for the oppressor and the oppressed; for all that "profess and call themselves Christians;" for your own nearest and dearest connections, that all may be saved with an everlasting salvation; that they, with whom you dwell upon earth, may be united to you in the bonds of a friendship which shall be as holy as it shall be lasting; that you alone may not be partakers of the kingdom of heaven, but that with them unitedly you may hold communion with the Father of lights; that in your sojourning upon earth you may strengthen and build up each other in all that is pure, disinterested, and heavenly;—this will make palpable, that like "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks," so your souls pant after the living God.

Your supplications now are, that they who stand may be strengthened; that the weak-hearted may receive help and comfort; that God would raise up them that fall; that He would beat down Satan under your feet. Your aspirations are after greater purity, closer conformity to Christ; and thus you become "enriched in everything, in all utterance, and

in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end." (1 Cor. i. 5-8.)

Formerly you believed that man could repent when he liked, and turn to God by an effort of his own will; and that he was far from being so sinful and so degenerate as by many he is described to be; but now you are conscious that all men are liable to fall into sin, prone to run into danger; that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that the "frailty of man without God cannot but fall;" and you address your heavenly Father saying, "Keep, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy; deliver us by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation:" and your clearer views of man's Fall, and man's utter inability of himself to think, to desire or to do good, manifest not only an increase of knowledge, but of higher attainments in religion, in faith, in hope, and in charity.

At times you are depressed, because fearful that with so many remaining corruptions of human nature you cannot truly be Christians; yet still you

hunger and thirst after righteousness; it is your meat and drink to do the will of God; all lower desires are decaying; how cheerless to you now are earthly satisfactions; how vain all sublunary joys; how is everything abandoned which did harass and hinder you; and how is every weight laid aside, and the sin which did so easily beset you; how temperate you now are in all things, striving for the mastery; and how does all this bear witness that the man of God, in you, will be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 17.)

Indeed your own conclusions are often such as the Apostle arrived at when he said, "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. xii. 28.) And this indeed is the aim of your lives, and often you reap the reward of having sown early and late; of having, in season and out of season, exhorted with all long suffering, of having thrown your bread upon many waters, which "after many days hath not returned void unto you;" and you are convinced "that the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people." (1 Sam. xii. 22.)

Formerly you lived to yourselves, and for selfish

ends; but to the weak you are now become weak, that you may gain the weak; you are made all things to all men, that you may save some; you now rejoice with them that rejoice; the sympathies of human nature are no longer dormant, or simply confined to the narrow circle of your families and friends, but are excited by the sight of a world lying in sin and darkness; and especially by the sight of those who are hurrying, without any losses or any afflictions to arrest them, in their rapid career to that doom, where there is rest neither day nor night; and your anxiety for the weal of others, and for their salvation from ruin, may well indicate that the love of Christ dwells richly in you.

The greater renunciation of self, which is manifest in your being kindly affectioned to one another, in honour preferring one another, is a fair test of true religion; as is also the no longer minding high things, but condescending to men of low estate; the recompensing to no man evil for evil, and not avenging yourselves, but giving place unto wrath, is the result of having "by the mercies of God presented your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God:" and thus the entire man, with all his affections, imbibes the leaven of the Gospel, till it affects him completely, influencing his words, his

desires, and his deeds; and bringing him into the image of Christ, in all its force and amplitude, in all its grace and beauty. Hence it may well be affirmed, that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Ps. xvii. 11.)

The man of God takes no anxious thought for the morrow, no anxious thought what he shall eat, or what he shall drink, or wherewithal he shall be clothed; things which heretofore far too often engaged his thoughts when he was forgetting that the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment; now, however, his conviction is, that the robe of Christ's righteousness is the only apparel to be coveted; and that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, but that it consists in calm reflection on what we are, what we ought to be, and what we still may be; that it consists in preferring eternal joys to the transitory pleasures of sense; and in the persuasion that wealth and power, talent and philosophical wisdom, are not the constituent parts of a man's life, but only adjuncts of a pilgrimage through a world the fashion of which is passing away.

Blessed, thrice blessed, are they who thus think, and feel, and live; "joy and gladness" shall be in

their dwellings, "thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." (Is. li. 3.)

In times past, they were afraid of a man that shall die; afraid of his censure, his wrath, his power to do evil; fearing every day, as is the sad lot of millions, "because of the fury of the oppressor;" but now they fear Him only "who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth" (Is. li. 13), since high and holy fears have taken the place of fears which began and ended in weakness, in selfishness, and in irreligion.

With those who possess the Word of God's grace, and "have an inheritance among them that are sanctified," there is the habit of making a conscience of everything; they readily give up all gratifications which make the Spirit of God to retire, withdrawing from things which, though innocent in themselves, diminish the desire to pray; they take good heed, lest their "liberty become a stumbling-block unto them that are weak;" and, in the spirit of the Apostle, they determine to do nothing which tends to the hindrance of the weaker brethren; and thus they have an earnest of the goodness of God, who will so "replenish them with the grace of his Holy Spirit, that they may always incline to his will and walk in his way."

CHAPTER XII.

ADDITIONAL TESTS BY WHICH A MAN'S SPIRIT
BEARETH WITNESS THAT HE IS A CHILD OF
GOD.

OTHER evidences there are to which men can appeal, to enable them to ascertain whether they are already walking in the way of life everlasting; and they are here specified by way of showing that there is no part of God's commandments which good men ever intentionally or habitually neglect; but that it is their delight to observe them all, to the utmost of their power, well knowing that they were redeemed from dead works to serve the living God. Hence another source of happiness to them is the frequent perusal of God's holy Word; the finding that "the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;" that the law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul, which happiness is augmented by feeling, that "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether," that they are

“more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb:” hence the converted, instead of receding, or being weary in well-doing, behold “with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

When they were under the influence of things secular, what related to time only received their attention; but since eternity, and whatever is included in that solemn word, has engaged their attention, they exhibit a manifest preference of religious writings to works of art and learning, of talent and of genius, which, however calculated to exercise the mind, and to purify the taste, do but little to amend the heart and to chasten the feelings. Their habits are now fixed, one of which is, the making all science, and all knowledge, and all tongues, subsidiary to the science of religion; esteeming the power to tell the number of the stars, to measure their distances, and to understand their laws, as secondary to the ability of comprehending so much as is revealed of the omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity, and goodness of Him, who though He made “darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about with dark water,” yet

has emphatically declared, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Is. lxvi. 2.)

Happy, indeed, are they who thus value all secular wisdom and all scientific pursuits as only good when conducive to the reverence of the First Great Cause, and also conducive to the well-being of those creatures which are the workmanship of God's hands; they have then in themselves an evidence that they have built their house on a rock, which will not fall when the rain descends, and when the floods come; for truly they have built on the rock which has withstood the shocks of time and of every tempest, which has triumphed over principalities and powers; triumphed, not now to be overcome, stood, not now to fall; sunk deeply, not now to be blasted by the fury of the tempest.

The real Christian has learnt to value all things according to their proper estimate; he does not now believe that things temporal and evanescent are worth more thought, and deserving more consideration than things durable, than those riches which render not only himself wealthy, but which enable him to be instrumental in making all others equally wealthy, who are willing to partake of them, and to

receive at his hands those treasures which give present joy, and the promise of joy eternal; and when thus occupied, a good man is conscious that God is pouring upon him the "continual dew of his blessing."

The conduct of most men regarding their children is a test of their principles and character; a righteous man knows whether he is more anxious for their eternal welfare, than for their temporal prosperity; "in all things, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving," he makes his requests known unto God, and prays, "that the Almighty would endue them with his Spirit, enrich them with his grace, embrace them with the arms of his mercy, and bring them to life everlasting:" he well knows that God will provide for the temporal wants of his children, and he is now equally convinced that, in answer to prayer, all things will be granted which will tend to their weal in time and in eternity; and though friends be few, and animosities be rife; the health fail, and earthly possessions vanish; "although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stalls: yet he can rejoice

in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation."
(Hab. iii. 17, 18.)

Admirable religion, indeed, which enables you to trust yourselves, your children, your friends to God's care, under the firm belief, that He who has ministered seed to the sower will both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; that He who hath clothed the grass of the field will not forsake you; and as a consequence, that, having food and raiment, you ought therewith to be contented;—surely this significantly bespeaks that you are walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; that you are continuing in the faith grounded and settled; and that you are not moved from the hope of the Gospel, but are increasing in the knowledge of God.

If any one would, indeed, know what spirit he is of, he may ascertain it by the fact that he begins no work or conversation without first asking God's blessing; and that he constantly watches the suggestions of the heart, to ascertain the motives of his conduct, and to see if he be influenced by lurking self-seeking, or by the love of his fellow-creatures. Let him also ascertain what are his thoughts and feelings respecting the brethren in Christ; ask, Is he

partial to their society? Does he respect their persons, and is it ever his desire that their characters for integrity, for candour, honour, singleness of mind, and high and holy motives of action, may be apparent to all men? that they may shine as a city set on a hill? If these things exist in him he has that which well betokens the spirit of his Lord and Master.

In all good men there is the heartfelt desire that the ministers of religion, who stand between the porch and the altar, may have their hands strengthened; that they may be illuminated "with true knowledge and understanding of God's Word, that both by their preaching and living" they may adorn the doctrines of the Gospel; that they may faithfully speak God's Word, whether men will hear or forbear; that, as true watchmen in Israel, they may warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; that they may not cry, Peace, peace, where there is no peace, nor allow men to hurry to perdition while believing themselves to be in a state of salvation; but that as a shepherd seeketh out his sheep, "when they are scattered," they, the ministers of Christ, may seek out the sheep, "which have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day; that they may bring again that which was driven away, and bind

up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick, that the flock may be saved, and that they may be no more a prey." Such desires, such fervent wishes of the heart, for the success of Christ's ministers, are pleasing tests that men have put on the armour of light; "that the redeemed are coming behind in no gift, but that the God of all grace hath called them unto his eternal glory; they being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

An additional proof that men are already gathered into the fold of the Great Shepherd is to be found in the augmented and still augmenting exertions, which, in unison with their prayers, are made to place in the hands of the Jew and the Greek, the bond and the free, the barbarian and the Scythian, the glorious Gospel of Christ: what was done is not felt to be enough; more must be done, and more is done; greater exertions are made; larger portions of their possessions are contributed; and others likewise are brought to aid in the great work, in causing the light to shine where there was no solace in sickness, nor consolation in pain, no support in death, no hope beyond the grave, because no Saviour was known, and therefore none applied to for re-

demption ; no Holy Ghost addressed, in prayer for conversion of heart. That this sad state, however, may not continue, but that there may be support for the weary and consolation for the heavy laden, and that there may be hope beyond the grave, the prayers of the righteous are unceasingly offered to God in behalf of the heathen ; and exertions suitable to those prayers being made, the heart of him who thus prays and acts is filled with peace and joy in believing, and he goes on his way rejoicing ; for he is conscious that he is fulfilling the law, having put on the Lord Jesus ; and becoming daily more like his blessed Master ; possessing in a greater degree the desire to live as He lived, for the benefit of others ; he is persuaded that God " will prevent him and further him with his continual help," since all his works are begun, continued, and ended for the glory and by the power of Him who " proclaims liberty to the captives, giving beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Is. lxi. 1, 3.)

The growing attachment to religious ordinances, as a means of grace, is another test of a man's real principles and character ; for none but the true servants of God can find " how amiable are the dwellings of the Lord of Hosts ;" none but the soul of

such an one "hath a desire, a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord;" his heart and flesh rejoice in the living God; to him one day in God's courts is better than a thousand, and he prefers being a door-keeper in God's house, to dwelling in the tents of ungodliness. He rejoices when his friends say, "We will go into the house of the Lord, our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem;" and he responds to their invitations when he says, "O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee; peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." It is not grievous to him to be thus employed at all times, much less is it grievous to be so employed on the Sabbath day; which he truly keeps holy, calling it "a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable," and honouring Him, "not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words;" and not finding the services of religion to be wearisome, but most refreshing to the soul. By him now there is the banishment from the mind of secular thoughts, and the devoting the Sabbath to holy exercises, to self-examination, to reading God's Word, to instructing children or dependants in the principles of Christ's religion; to cultivating that charity which suffereth long and is kind, that heavenly

principle which, when prophecies shall fail, when tongues shall cease, when knowledge shall vanish away, shall remain in the redeemed for ever and ever.

In not repining at losses, sickness, or any other adversity, or by reason of the declining friendship of those once concerned in your welfare, and whose regard was a source of much enjoyment; but being tranquil by knowing that your light affliction, which is (comparatively) “but for a moment, worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;”—in this there is the assurance that you have already passed from death unto life; as also in not envying other men’s prosperity; in using this world as not abusing it; in being less excited than formerly by the moving events of the world; if poor, being satisfied, if so be that you are rich in good works; if wealthy, considering yourselves to be but simply stewards of Him whose is the silver and the gold; in the diminished fear of death; and in the confidence that you shall fear no evil, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, that valley already trodden by so many of your friends, the companions of your youth, and the desired and hoped-for stay of your declining years; all these things abundantly signify that already Christ is to

you a "refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat," and you may well be convinced, that He will swallow up death in victory—that, having waited for Him, He will save you, because you are glad and rejoice in his salvation.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOUBTS AND ANXIETIES OF SINCERE MEN
REMOVED.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been advanced on this head to enable conscientious men to ascertain whether they are or are not actually the servants of Christ, there are some who, it may be, are still doubtful whether they have truly the love of God in them; for often when they would do good, evil is present. Let them then compare themselves with what they were years ago; let them consider their former indifference to things holy and upright, their exceeding love of those pleasures which they now esteem but lightly, and which they try altogether to abandon; let them likewise bear in mind how great is their gratification when they hear of the good which is being done in the world, and when they find those to be thinking aright, feeling aright, and doing aright, in whose welfare they have a deep interest.

Others there are who believe, or fear, that all is not well with them, because they go on but slowly, making only slight advances in religious knowledge;

gloomy views are theirs, because they do not always feel delight in the ways of religion ; hopes and apprehensions alternately affect them ; they have no abiding sense of God's presence and of the witness of his Spirit ; they are not filled, as many are, with joy and peace in believing ; they have not always found the ways of religion to be ways of pleasantness ; fears and misgivings, and anticipations of evil, beset them continually ; they feel but little spontaneous lifting-up of the heart to God in secret prayer—in-
deed, prayer itself is sometimes wearisome, and their devotions almost lifeless.

It is indeed a common thing for the best men to feel that the mind is never fixed ; that it continueth not in one stay ; that, like a broken bow, it starts aside ; that the most trifling things can and do withdraw the attention, even when in God's house, from the holy and graceful character of Christ ; and thus sincere men write bitter things against themselves, and their souls " refuse to be comforted."

But if there were no love of God in the heart, would there be depression of spirits in men because they themselves are no better than they are ? would there be grief that they make so little attainment in holiness, vexation of spirit that they cannot completely overcome the world, sorrow that they are

not more holy, distress of mind because they cannot closely follow Christ's example? would there be pain because their tempers are not milder, their dispositions more placable? would there be disquietude because the light of God's countenance does not always shine upon them? and would there be agony because they are not what they wish to be, and what they gladly would be?

All these sorrows and griefs, all this disquietude and agony, instead of being so many proofs that the love of God is not in them, are palpable evidences that they have made far greater progress in piety, far greater advances in religion, and that they have far more of the spirit of God influencing them, than they ever yet believed or imagined themselves to have.

To hate sin is good, to avoid sin and evil-doers is better, and to walk closely in the footsteps of Christ Jesus is still better; to love the brethren because they are the brethren, and not from any worldly feeling, or from the hope of any earthly advantage, is a test that the work of Christ in the heart is not only begun, but hath taken deep root; and bespeaks that it will be continued and ended by the influence of Him who first implanted in it holy aspirations.

Reflection and calm thought, prayer and self-examination, will do much to give good men right views on these points, and enable them to form an accurate estimate of themselves, and of their actual condition; yet some believe that they are never so rightly minded, never acting so consistently with the spirit of Christianity, as when they are thinking ill of themselves, believing ill of themselves, and writing bitter things against themselves—condemning equally all they do, all they say, all they think, and all they desire; and thus their souls refuse to be comforted; they “remember God and are troubled; they complain and their spirit is overwhelmed:” but surely it cannot be right that they should always be thinking only of their sinfulness, their depravity, their cupidity, pride, and hatred; there are better things than these to think of, far better things than these to dwell on; and which, if thought on and cultivated, yield the fruits of peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, patience, meekness, godliness, brotherly love, piety, and purity; and fruits like these ought to yield comfort and happiness; and this happiness ought to be enjoyed, yea, and enjoyed as the gift of God’s Spirit.

If any have enjoyed, and are enjoying, the happiness referred to, it is not wise in them to diminish

its full effect by any gloomy and melancholy anticipations that they may not always equally possess it ; for how can they know that they may not always be as happy as heretofore in the love of Christ ? how can they tell that their present joy will suffer diminution ? how tell but that it may be increased ? how be confident that, before their happiness is on the wane, their spirits may no longer inhabit a world of sin and misery ? how can they know but that, in a very short time, they may be placed beyond the power of falling into sin, and of running into any kind of danger, because placed beyond the grave ?

Let not, then, the followers of Christ think only of the evils of their nature ; but let them reflect also on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, if so be that they are his temple ; let them remember God, and not be troubled ; let them rejoice while they can rejoice ; let them joy because God will continue to “ pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; ” and “ then shall they know, if they follow on to know the Lord, ” that “ they who wait upon him shall renew their strength. ”

Let religion have its proper effect on your minds, if ye be Christ's ; let the buoyancy of your spirits, the cheerfulness of your tempers, the bright expres-

sion of your countenance, and the animation of your manners, all declare, with a force that cannot be misunderstood, that your minds are no longer overwhelmed, but that the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts ; that this love is not only cheering you, but is also exciting you to all that is pure and benevolent, and leading you to pray for others to possess the pearl of great price, to partake of the same confidence, and to enjoy the dew of God's heavenly blessing ; so that the air may bring on its wing, to them as to yourselves, inspirations of happiness from God, and the sky minister to holy feelings of devotion, and the earth become also to their perceptions vocal in its thanksgiving to God, and the mighty waters send into their ears voices of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord God Almighty.

When thus you feel, all things of earth and air, of sea and sky, administering to your happiness, because speaking God's praise, then will you understand the ecstatic feelings which religion produced in the Psalmist, which prompted him to call upon "angels and archangels, and the sun and moon, the stars and light, the heavens and the waters which were above the heavens, fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, mountains and all hills, to

praise the Lord." If any have a right to be happy, they are they who in religion have found a remedy for the various ills of life ; they are they who, being converted into Christ's faith, possess the sources of real and unfading joy ; theirs is now an imperishable crown ; they have built upon that rock which the wide waste of waters shall not move, nor the tempests of the world shake, nor the dominion of evil invade ; they have been redeemed by the Lamb which was slain, but which now standeth on Mount Zion ; they have been buried with Christ unto death ; they are dead unto sin ; and as their Lord rose quickly from the dead, and ascended into heaven, so are their souls raised from death, so are their minds ascended unto his Father and their Father, unto his God and their God. Their hearts and their treasure are in heaven, therefore let them no longer refuse to be comforted, but let them rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; let them rejoice beyond measure, because the Almighty has affirmed respecting the penitent, " it was meet that we should be glad, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

There may yet, however, be persons, whose souls still refuse to be comforted, because their temptations are many, and they are not always able to

resist them ; and because at times they grievously offend against their own clear convictions of what is right : but the commission of these sins never makes them like them, or cleave to them ; no good man feels satisfaction in his thoughts or peace in his conscience for having committed sin ; on the contrary, he abhors himself on account of sin ; he feels that he is vile, unclean ; and in dust and ashes repents of his misdeeds ; his prayer is, " Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness, according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences."

But if it be said, What can be the meaning or the value of conversion, if it will allow a man thus to sin ? what advantage arises from being of God's family, if the members of it can thus offend ? there is one simple answer to such a question, viz. that the characteristic of God's people is, that they avoid sin, hate sin, and love all that is contrary to it ; and that if ever they do sin, it is not from deliberation ; from a preference of evil to good ; from a love of criminal indulgences ; otherwise, why would there be subsequent abasement ? why the stings, the goads, of conscience ? why the penitential tears and deep heartfelt sorrow, and the almost unutterable prayers, that the light of God's countenance may not totally be withdrawn from them ?

A good man cannot sin willingly; he cannot allow himself to continue in sin, and yet have the approval of his conscience; sin is not his element, his meat and drink; and whenever he sins through the weakness and frailty of a body of sin and death, he forsakes his happiness, and his happiness forsakes him and will not return, until he arises and goes to his Father, and implores and obtains of Him forgiveness and a renewed spirit. As water is the element of one great class of created beings, and air the element of another class, so is holiness the element of the redeemed of Christ; in no other element can they exist; it is to them the medium of life, it is life itself; and as impure air debilitates the material man, so every admixture of evil weakens and injures the spiritual man, and makes him hurry from it as from the pestilence; in truth, it becomes almost as instinctive in good men to avoid sinful propensities as it is instinctive in the lower creation to avoid poisonous and noxious plants. Change in their outward circumstances may indeed await them everywhere, and mutability may be stamped on all around them, and the earth under their feet may seem as about to give way; yet they know that there is an Almighty God in heaven to whom change is unknown, and with whom is no variableness nor

shadow of turning, and they become persuaded that He will preserve them in every adversity, and that in their deepest affliction He will keep them as the apple of his eye, so that finally they will fall into no sin, nor run into any kind of danger.

The conclusion, then, at which every sincerely good man may arrive is, that happiness ought to be the possession of all who read God's character as revealed in the Scriptures, and who see his power in the firmament above; of all who trace his benevolence in the dew of heaven, and in the teeming productions of the earth, and who see his beneficence in the sun that shines, in the rain that descends, in the tender grass of the field, in the vicissitudes of the seasons, in the spontaneous production of all that sustains the myriads of creatures which exist in the earth, the air, and the sea; and who have felt that, in man's affection for his own offspring and in his care for their welfare, there is an emanation of God's own love to his children. Such a man now sees goodness, bespeaking design and contrivance that all things may abound in blessing, for those who are the workmanship of God's own hands.

In the midst of all his trials, privations, and sorrows, the result of man's Fall, there are often in

him undying, nay undecaying, faculties of enjoyment; there is a sense which ministers peace to his soul and calmness to his feelings. The whisperings of the trees bring music to his ear, and the sounds which float in the air come to him with inspirations of the awful and the grand, and transport his thoughts from earth to heaven, and almost make immaterial that which is corporeal and perishable; there are cadences, indeed, which might make him weep, but for the calm and tranquillizing thoughts which they bring, but for the hopes of the future which they inspire, but for the far-off regions of holiness and purity to which they transport his mind, regions which promise rest to the weary and consolation to the heavy laden, consolation ever required when this wide waste of human misery and desolation forces itself on his attention.

And who that has this faculty, almost divine—who that has chords responding in his soul to the outward sense—can fail to believe that it is one of God's gifts to help him in his pilgrimage? and if outward forms and substances, and the melodies of sound, can contribute to his happiness, how much more must the love of Christ minister to joys unspeakable and full of glory! and point to the place where hallelujahs are the unceasing employment of those

arrayed in the robe of Christ's righteousness, and whose souls drank deeply of the inspiration of the moral harmony, of which external sounds, in all their grandeur and elevation and depth, in all their sweetness, flow, and cadence, are but the type, the symbol, the faint and sensible echo!

Who that is born of God can be deaf to this moral harmony, and untouched by these heavenly joys, which will find their full expression only in the anthems of the redeemed, who, casting their crowns before the Lamb, and veiling their heads from the ineffable splendour of the Lord God Omnipotent, with one mighty voice fill the heaven of heavens with ascriptions of praise, glory, honour, and power unto Him that was, and is, and is to be?

With such faculties, the life of the good man is a life of happiness, and he no longer regards death as an enemy, but as a friend, for eternity is his home: poor he was when he lived without God in the world; but since he feared and loved God, incomparable riches have been his; his physical eye may become dim, and the hearing of his ear, by which he listened to the sad music of humanity, may be impaired, and the perceptions may be clouded; but the mental eye, and the divine faculty, and the moral perceptions, are not weakened, not obscured;

unlike the physical faculties, which, being of the earth earthy, are impaired as they verge to their home the grave, the spiritual faculties, as they approach their home, the dwelling-place of eternal truth and eternal equity, the abode of all that is pure—they, the spiritual faculties, will expand according to the expansion and infinity of the objects which will for ever fix the attention of the ransomed of the Lord: here, indeed, they see through a glass darkly, but in heaven they will behold their Redeemer face to face; here they know in part, but there they will know even as they are known; they will see Christ as He is, and, beholding Him, will be transformed more and more into his image; and knowing this, the peace of God which passeth understanding is now abundantly theirs.

The happiness of the redeemed is strengthened by their never-failing trust in their Saviour; He is their life, their light, their portion; He is their counsellor, their friend: the Ancient of Days is the author and finisher of their faith; by Him liberty was preached, salvation offered, freedom from the dominion of evil promised, and emancipation from the works of darkness communicated; and, therefore, they rest in peace, since their warfare is accomplished by Him who came to save a lost world.

CHAPTER XIV.

REASONS WHY SOME PERSONS DERIVE NO
HAPPINESS FROM RELIGION.

IF, after what has been stated, it should still be maintained by some persons that the bulk of men are unhappy who profess to be governed by religion, may it not be suggested of such men that possibly their views of religion, its doctrines and its duties, are and ever have been erroneous? Probably their great desire is to be saved, and, it may be, they trust they will be saved; but to the death of Jesus Christ, perhaps, they do not look exclusively for salvation; they would, indeed, like the Syrian of old, do some great thing that they might be saved, and they would look to the grace of God and to the merits of Jesus Christ to make up the deficiency of their own good works!

Naaman wanted to be healed, but was not willing to use the means appointed for his recovery, because they were too simple and gratuitous, and, therefore, did not gratify his pride, which required that the

Prophet should "come out and call upon the name of the Lord his God;" his servants implied that if the Prophet had bid him do some great thing he would have done it, and in this he was the type of but too many who would be healed; but it must be by some other means than those which God has appointed. How, then, can they be happy? They must do some great thing, or some great thing must be done for them, in a way of which they approve; by the free grace of God they do not want to be saved; their salvation, in part, must be the result of some acts of their own, of some deeds of charity, forgetting that, if they be the real disciples of Christ, all their charitable acts are the fruits, and in no measure the cause, of salvation; as the light of day is the result and not the cause of the rising of the sun; yet, notwithstanding the clearness of the Scriptures on the important and decisive doctrine, that we are saved only by the mercy and grace of God, as secured by the merits, passion, and death of Christ, they still want to do something, or that their priests should do something for them, as a counterpoise and atonement for their manifold sins and transgressions.

None, however, can do this; for though they have the gift of prophecy, and understand all

mysteries, and all knowledge; and though they have faith so that they could remove mountains; and though they were to bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and were to give their bodies to be burned; this, and much more than this, cannot save them; austerities unheard of cannot redeem them; nor can unnumbered sacrifices save them; nor the erection of magnificent temples; nor the endowing of churches; nor the building of hospitals; neither can a man by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, "so that he must let that alone for ever."

In the language of the Prophet, each one may truly say, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah vi. 6, 7.) and yet, notwithstanding these and similar questions, who, to be freed from the upbraidings of an accusing conscience, does not want to do some great thing to recommend himself to God for mercy?

Who, to be possessed of the peace which passeth

understanding, to be delivered from the punishment of sin, to lose the melancholy forebodings of the future suggested to the mind when it knows not what will follow after death—who, to be assured that the moral leprosy is cleansed, would not do many great things, if it were in his power to do them? But when God says, “Wash and be clean,” who is willing to gain such an advantage by such simple means?

Few are desirous to be delivered from the punishment of sin, and to be cleansed from its pollutions, unless some great thing be done by them or by those whose deeds are imagined to prevail with their heavenly Father; but it may with much propriety be asked, Has no great thing already been done for them? Is not the opening a fountain for all sin and uncleanness a great thing? Is it not a great thing, that the blood of Christ has been poured out for the sprinkling of our consciences from dead works to serve the living God? Is it not a great thing, that He who is mighty to save came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation, that for our sakes He was despised and rejected of men, and that for us He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Is it not a great thing, that a ransom has been found, that help has been laid upon one that is mighty, that He who came

from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, was mighty to save? In comparison with which things, what are all burnt offerings and sacrifices, and rivers of oil, and votive gifts, and dedications of wealth, and the building of temples?

When men, however, are told these things, they too much resemble Naaman, who went away in a rage; and frequently there is no one at hand to suggest to each one as to him, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" As it was, however, with him, so it is with us; his was the leprosy, so is ours; but ours is of the mind and the heart—mental, moral, and spiritual leprosy; and we are unhappy, because we have no reason to hope that all which we can do will avert the just punishment of our sins.

Why, then, should we not be willing to accept the truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures? why not be willing to be saved in, by, through, and according to God's appointed way of salvation? We may rest assured that we shall never be happy till God's Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and it never will so bear witness

until we know that there is no remedy for us but in the atoning blood of Christ.

For Naaman there was but God's method; no alternative but to wash and be clean, or to continue to be a leper; and at last he felt this, through the force of his disease, which was palpable, visible, and hateful, tainting his life's blood and goading his soul; he therefore at last consented to be healed in any way whatever, however unsuitable to his pride; and listening to the suggestion of those around him, and to their touching expostulation, he went and washed in Jordan, and was cleansed of the leprosy, and then, and not till then, was he happy, for only then it was that he could say with truth, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kings v. 15); and it is only when cleansed from the spiritual leprosy, that we can assuredly know there is no redeemer but the one Saviour, who died that we might be saved everlastingly, and in believing this we shall have peace.

Let us, then, like Naaman, feel and know that we are lepers, lepers in mind, in heart, and in desire; let us think of the end to which our leprosy is carrying us, the second death, banishment from God, from Christ, from heaven! Let us, like him, desire to be healed, and then let us go to the spiritual

Jordan, to the fountain open for all sin and uncleanness, and no longer attempt to hew out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water; let us go to the Lamb of God, and no longer depend on our own fitness, or on the number of our alms-deeds, or on the austerities of our later days, for the cancelling of the transgressions of our lives.

The God of Naaman is our God; He took no pleasure in the misery which the leprosy occasioned him; nor has He any pleasure in the miseries which follow our sins: the Friend of Naaman is our friend, though we perhaps know it not, as Naaman, for a long time, knew it not, though God was sending him the leprosy, and its attendant misery, for his good, when he was most elated with his own worldly success.

What Naaman did to be happy, we must do, viz. we must wash and be clean; not simply to be freed from the guilt of sin, not merely to be ransomed from the punishment due to our transgressions, but to be cleansed from evil desires, to be purified from dead works, to be freed from the love of iniquity, and to be emancipated from its power; no longer to be tied and bound with the chain of our sins; no longer to be the slaves of passion, the victims of cupidity, and the bond-slaves of concupiscence; but

to become like our Master in meekness and in gentleness, in long-suffering and self-denial; like Him in purity, moral dignity, and heavenly-mindedness; like Him in benignity, and in deeds of compassion, as well as in feelings of sympathy.

If, however, we do not want such a salvation as this, but desire to sin, and then to be forgiven; to sin again, and again to be pardoned; to neglect Christ, and yet to have Him for our Saviour; to disobey God, and then to look up to Him as a friend; to grieve the Holy Spirit, and then to rely on Him as our comforter; how can we derive consolation from such a religion as ours must then be?

If we have been unhappy and have never possessed the peace of God, let us carefully examine ourselves, to ascertain whether we wish to serve the world, and follow its pomps, its vanities, and never-ending gaities, and yet hope to be blessed by Him who emphatically said, "Ye cannot serve two masters;" whether we are ready to deny our Lord, and to be ashamed of Him, and yet hope that He will acknowledge us; whether we are desirous of being the ministers and servants of sin, and yet hope for the joys and blessedness of those whose conversation is in heaven; and whether we banish God from our thoughts, and then imagine that ours

will be the peace which he possesses who has set God always before his face ; if so, then shall we be disappointed indeed.

If, however, our grief have been thoroughly weighed ; if our calamities have been laid together in the balances ; if the arrows of the Almighty are within us ; if the poison thereof have drunk up our spirits ; and if the terrors of God have set themselves in array against us ; if the burden of our sins be intolerable ; if the remembrance of them be grievous ; if we have been brought to feel the need of the great Physician ; and if we have prayed to Him in all truth and earnestness to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, then shall we be brought to know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel ; no Saviour but the Lamb which standeth upon Mount Zion ; no alpha, no omega—no beginning, no end—but He whose Spirit invites the weary and heavy-laden to go unto Him, and who further says, “ Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Thus, when we give up all hope of being saved by any other than God's own appointed method of salvation ; and when in truth we actually go to

Christ, as the Israelites went and looked up to the brazen serpent, and as Naaman went and washed in the river Jordan,—then, indeed, happiness will be ours, especially if we remember that sin is no more to have an influence on us, as the leprosy had no more an influence on the Syrian after he washed in the river Jordan and was made clean.

On no other ground is happiness promised to Christians, than that of being saved by God's mercy through Jesus Christ, and by their being thus redeemed from dead works to serve the living God.

CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER REASONS WHY SOME PERSONS DERIVE
NO HAPPINESS FROM RELIGION.

OUR blessed Lord, in addressing his disciples before his final sufferings, said to them, "Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth give I unto you ;" and one of the signal fruits of his religion is that peace which the world neither gives nor takes away ; but then it is a fruit which none can expect to obtain who do not love God with all their hearts and minds, and souls and strength ; and if there be many who never partake of that peace, who yet are disciples of Christ, and the children of light, may it not be because the fault is entirely in themselves ? They live below their privileges ; and one reason of their so living is, that they do not always forsake everything which militates against their growth in grace ; they often covet, and strive to obtain, things as means of enjoyment, the love of which is a snare to them ; and hence they resemble those of whom our

Lord spake, when He said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light;" hence the happiness which belongs to those who forsake all to follow Christ is unknown to many who still may be comprehended in the expression "the children of light."

Not that our Lord conveyed the idea that the children of this world are ever absolutely wise; for He well knew that a wise man proportions his exertions in obtaining an object according to the magnitude, importance, and duration of that object; and that he indicates a sad want of wisdom who bestows immense pains and labour in procuring things which are trifling in themselves, or which lead to no useful results.

That the children of this world are not absolutely wise, is clear from the solemn denunciations of our Lord against their love of money, which is the root of all evil, and against their extreme regard for all those things which minister to vanity, to pride, and to ambition. Wealth, and the pleasures of this life; rank and high station; power, good connections, and human knowledge; fame, ease, and indulgence; are the things for which the children of this world live, and for the attaining of which they use every effort; but never were they praised for loving and

striving to obtain these things. For what, indeed, will wealth do for the children of this world? It will procure for them friends, who will flatter them so long as their wealth lasts; who will blind their eyes and consume their time, often keep them from prayer and from self-examination, and lead them to try to be independent of their fellow-creatures; wealth, indeed, will give great care and anxiety, sleepless nights, and days of disquietude.

Wealth not seldom makes its possessor a mark for adventurers, whether it be in the hands of age and decrepitude, or of youth and inexperience. The grave has often prematurely been opened for those who but for their wealth might have attained to a great age, receiving and dispensing blessings. Alas! how many beings have existed, who but for their immense possessions had never been unhappy, nor tasted the bitterness of subsequent indifference and neglect from those who, having won their affections, should have been their protectors; and how many have survived every hope of enjoyment at the hands of those whom they enriched!

Wealth will not enable a man to redeem his brother, nor himself from death, the remembrance of which is indeed "better to him who is at ease in his possessions."

Hence there is no wisdom in loving wealth ; nor is there wisdom in living for the pleasures of life, for it may be asked, Do these pleasures leave no sting behind them ? are they never followed by weariness and disgust ? will the tabret and the harp, the lute and the viol, always cheer the heart ? will earthly pleasures satisfy the young, the gay, the hopeful, much less the aged, the sorrowful, and the hopeless ? will pleasures, so termed, remove the ills of life ? will they give any satisfaction, when we apprehend that the means of indulging in them may probably be taken away for ever from us ? Hence the love of pleasure is no indication of wisdom. And what will rank or high station do for men ? Will it place them beyond the reach of infirmity, insure domestic happiness, remove trials and afflictions, silence the voice of censure, prevent the death of their first-born, secure them from dying childless so that their inheritance and rank go not to strangers ? will it remove diseases, prolong life, speak peace to the conscience when the overflowings of ungodliness make man afraid ? and will it remove the fear of judgment to come ? Will power give happiness, secure contentment, and thus answer men's early expectations ? make them just and upright ? Is power certain, never on the wane,

and if retained never so long, is it followed by respect, admiration, and regard? Are its possessors long, if ever, the objects of reverence and esteem, and not of dread and suspicion? Is not crime but too often the only way to power, and one man's sway not seldom the cause of a nation's calamity? If, however, a man be born to power, he will even then, if wise, not cling to it as a thing greatly to be desired and delighted in.

The children of this world are extremely anxious to form good connections, and ensure the elevation of their children; but will such connections secure happiness even in this life, much less in the life to come? Will they procure an entrance into the kingdom of heaven; fit us for being numbered among the spirits of just men made perfect; make us suitable companions of apostles, prophets, patriarchs, angels; and render us capable of enjoying the presence of the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever?

As to human knowledge, which is the passion of some men, will it keep them from sinning against God, change the heart, purify the affections, elevate the thoughts, ennoble the mind, make men kind and benevolent, cause them to be humble, single-hearted, placable? Will it remove selfishness and

vanity, pride and ostentation? We are told that "in much wisdom is much grief," and "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

And what will fame do for men? and where will be the monuments of their greatness, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and the books be opened, and they shall be judged according to their works? What will the applause of the world have profited its votaries, when time shall be no more, if, in the presence of an assembled universe, God shall say unto them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"? Hence none were praised by reason of their love of these things; yet it is much to be feared that the children of light are very much influenced, at times, by the love of some or other of them; and hence theirs is not the enduring peace which they would enjoy if they were "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

But if the children of this world be not absolutely wise in the objects of their choice, in what sense can they be wiser than the children of light? In the skill with which they adapt the means to the end, in the unwearied diligence with which they strive for that end, in the unceasing labour which they employ to obtain the objects which they pant

after, in the unconquerable resolution to overcome every obstacle which impedes the success of their efforts; for to procure the possessions, power, pleasure, distinctions, and honours of this life, they exert themselves with an energy not often known to, and not often exhibited by, the children of light, whose object is of transcendently greater importance, and whose exertions ought to be correspondingly greater, instead of being very often far less than those of the children of this world, whose wisdom is ever conspicuous in their pre-eminent diligence; and diligence indeed is theirs, for they rise up early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness: they are not satisfied with hoping to gain the things which they desire; they are not content until they know that they have obtained them; they compass sea and land, forsake their highest delights and most endearing attachments, the companions of their youth, the partners of their early and later joys, their brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, nay, wives and children, when by so doing they are the better enabled to "add house to house, and field to field," and the world praises them for their energy.

If glory be their passion, "which it is dreamed can be gained by war," then they endanger their own lives, and perhaps the lives of their sons,

and that, too, sometimes in wars of very questionable justice, that their names may be handed down to posterity in remembrance of their prowess and valour; the cry of the widow and the fatherless stops them not in their fearful career; fame they must have, at all and every cost.

Others risk station, happiness, and life, and hazard the repose of the world, rather than forego some vague and ill-founded claim of power and prerogative.

When planning their success, what restlessness and disquietude do the children of this world manifest! what devotion is given to their cause! They allow not even the thought of death and judgment, of heaven and hell, to embarrass them, in the pursuit of the objects which they love supremely. Whatever they desire, they desire with all their hearts, and whatever they endeavour to obtain, it is with untiring labour and zeal.

When, however, do we now hear of the children of light forsaking fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, friends and country, or even the customs of life, for Christ's sake and for the sake of his Gospel? When do they abandon their high delights and powerful attachments? When do they risk station, happiness, health, and life, rather than hazard

their salvation? Where their vigilance and zeal, their caution and earnestness, when seeking after the riches of eternity? where their anxiety? their disquietude? Are they not but too often comparatively cold and formal, in their efforts to obtain eternal blessedness? While the children of this world employ much time, great labour, and often stupendous talents, that they may secure the things of time and sense, and that they may obtain the empty distinction of being greater, more learned, and richer than others; but how little of their time, and what a small portion of their possessions, will some of the children of light sacrifice, and how little of conformity to the world will they renounce, that they may become more and more like their blessed Lord! Hence how can they wonder that neither joy nor peace enters their dwellings? how be surprised that happiness in this life is never their portion?

Let not religion, however, bear the blame of this, but let such men see and know, that *they* go mourning because very different is their estimate and Christ's estimate of religion and its demands, and because they are continually lowering the standard of holiness, and because they endeavour to reconcile that which Christ has declared to be irre-

concilable, the love of the world and the love of God.

The world may blame them for being too precise, for being too much concerned about a future state, nay, for being righteous over-much; but our Lord blames them for not being sufficiently watchful and self-denying, and for being far too much concerned for food and raiment, and all other things pertaining to time; and He not only blames such persons, but, as a severe punishment, withholds from them that peace and those joys in believing which He abundantly bestows upon all who are true-hearted, single-minded, and who do everything to the glory of God.

It was well observed of old, "that our Saviour, in comparing the Gospel to a merchantman, who found a pearl of great price and sold all to buy it, has brought this instance home to our present discourse. If we did as verily believe that in heaven those great felicities, which transcend all our apprehensions, are certainly to be obtained through the death and merits of Christ, by leaving our vices and lower desires, what can hinder us but we should, at least, do as much for obtaining these eternal glories as the children of this world do for obtaining a perishable reward, if, indeed, they do

obtain it ;” and if we did thus act, where would be the lamentation that the ways of religion are paths of gloom and dissatisfaction ?

Misery, however, must be the lot of the unstable, for they oscillate between their duty to God and their love of this world ; the many objects of ambition are of far too much value in their estimation, and if they could be happy in the pursuit of them, there would be but little hope of their final salvation. Blessed be God, however, “ Ambition,” as was forcibly declared by an eloquent prelate, “ is full of distractions ; it teems with stratagems and is swelled with expectation, and sleeps sometimes as the wind in a storm, still and quiet for a moment, that it may burst into an impetuous blast ; fears when none is nigh, and prevents things which never had intention, and falls under the inevitability of such accidents which either could not be foreseen or not prevented. It is an infinite labour to make a man’s self miserable ; and, therefore, there is no greater unreasonableness in the world than in the designs of ambition ; for it makes the present certainly miserable, unsatisfied, troublesome, and discontented, for the acquirements of an honour, which nothing can secure, and, besides a thousand possibilities of miscarrying, it relies upon no greater certainty than our lives.”

Hence, if this be true, how can even the men of this world be happy in such pursuits? how, by possibility, can the children of light expect to be happy when seduced from their allegiance to Christ to follow after them? Let them all, who would be blessed in time and in eternity, imitate the energy, the skill, the unceasing perseverance of the children of this world; let them be wise in time, and wise in the best wisdom; let their loins be girt about, and their lights burning, and let them be like unto men who wait for their Lord; let not the eternal world of spirits be to them of no more consequence than the duration of this perisbable globe; let them remember that the Judge of quick and dead will require a solemn account of all their time, their talents, their possessions, their visitations of mercy, and of the means of grace by which they might have been kept in the ways of verity and wisdom, of peace and joy, if they had been true to themselves, to their duty, and to their Redeemer.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO DO WITH OUR MIGHT, AND WITHOUT DELAY, WHATSOEVER OUR HANDS FIND TO DO, SINCE "THERE IS NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE, NOR WISDOM IN THE GRAVE," WHITHER WE ARE HASTENING.

It must be admitted that the happiness, which is mentioned as belonging, even in this life, to the real servants of Christ, is never to be dissociated from perfect obedience to the law of Christ; and that it is promised to none but such as are always living in the performance of every moral and spiritual duty; indeed, it may with propriety be affirmed, that the path of duty is the path of happiness, and that none therefore should expect it, who do not do with all their might what they have to do; otherwise they may soon go from bad to worse, till their consciences become seared; and then, as a consequence of self-delusion, they will endeavour to lower the standard of religion and its requirements.

There are in the world but too many who name

the name of Christ, and depart not from iniquity; if such could be happy, their doom would be all but fixed; they try hard to serve two masters, God and Mammon; and, bearing the name of Christians, they imagine they love God because they do many things to please Him; it may be they keep, or imagine they "keep, the commandments from their youth upward;" but the one great thing which stands between them and life eternal they will not renounce.

It may be that, in the ardour, and more than ardour, in promoting their worldly advancement, and in their keen anxiety to outrun all their competitors in worldly prosperity, they may occasionally have misgivings that all is not right, especially when they read these awful words, "I went by, and lo, he was gone: I sought him, but his place could no where be found" (Ps. xxxvii. 37); but they cannot be brought to see and feel the moral madness of being lukewarm, and of putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. In worldly affairs they are consistent, and believe that no man is doing with his might what he has to do who systematically omits any one thing which is essential to success, or who continues to do, or to retain, anything which militates against success. No happiness, however, can be theirs who

endeavour to reconcile the greatest amount of worldly possessions, honours, and pleasures, with the hope of life eternal; and who maintain a system whereby many solemn warnings of the Bible find no entrance into the soul, or are only admitted theoretically and for the sake of argument.

They object to such a severe religion as, in their opinion, is made to consist of negatives; quite forgetting the first negation and all that therein is comprehended, viz. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17); forgetting, also, that eight of the Ten Commandments are negations; and that other things besides theft, murder, and false witness are forbidden, so that men are not to love the world and the things of the world, not to call evil good, and good evil, not to condemn that they be not condemned.

If, however, nine commandments be kept, and the tenth be broken, men are not, in religion, doing with their might what they have to do.

What happiness, then, is to be looked for in a religion so morose as this, which would banish all cheerfulness, all joy, and all vivacity from the world? All false joy, all deceitful cheerfulness, all that

laughter which resembles madness, Christ's religion would banish, nay, is designed to banish; but the serenity, the love, the joy which is to be found in the dwellings of the righteous, it never banishes.

One thing is perfectly certain to him who derives his religion from the Scriptures, viz. that there can be no real fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness; no actual communion between light and darkness; no concord with Christ and Belial; no part with him that is an infidel and with him that believeth; no agreement with the temple of God and idols. (2 Cor. vi. 14-16.) Men may, indeed, turn a deaf ear to these solemn truths; they may invent or embrace any system, or any number of systems, of religion; but by the standard of Holy Writ they will be tried, when they stand at the bar of God's tribunal; and Holy Writ most severely denounces every attempt to substitute man's standard of what is right in lieu of God's solemn requirements, which are, that we are to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.

Of the *once* faithful city, it was said of old, "it *was* full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers;" its silver was become dross, its wine mixed with water; every one loved gifts and followed after rewards, so as to occasion

the affecting exclamation, "How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!" and this because of the worse than unstable mind of the people, because of their perpetual backslidings, and this by reason of their having failed to do with all their might what they had to do, which was, steadfastly "to cleave unto the Lord their God."

Can it, then, occasion wonder, that the Almighty should have said to them, "Bring no more vain oblations"?—vain, because not offered in the only spirit in which any oblations are pleasing to God, *i. e.* in the spirit which makes the love of Him the supreme affection of the soul: the lukewarm are his abhorrence; He describes them as being loathsome in his sight; and by the Apostle James, the double-minded are said to be unstable in all their ways; and the waverers are compared to a "wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed."

To the grave the children of men are all hastening; and they will do well to bear in mind that *there* they can do no work to escape the second death, to flee from the wrath to come, to become like Christ, to obtain the apparel of the redeemed: no work, by which to do good to their fellow-creatures; no work, by which the Gentiles may be brought to the light of Christ, and kings to the

brightness of his rising ; no work, by which those who never heard of a Saviour may be led to dwell under the shadow of his healing wings.

To all things now there is a time and place ; but long before men reach the grave, from many of them may be taken the power of doing with their might what they have to do : daily they are approaching nearer and nearer to it, which is another reason for doing with all their might what is to be done ; and they know not what final good or evil may be the result of their doing, or of their not doing with all their might what they have to do, and what they ought to do, to answer the purposes for which the grave has not yet been opened for them. But when once consigned to its darkness, no more invitations of mercy will ever be heard by them, and no warnings to flee from the wrath to come will reach them there ; the voice of Christ's ministers will there be as silent as the dust to which their bodies will be reduced ; neither Prophets nor Apostles will there call upon any in the name of the Lord, saying, " Turn ye, turn ye ; why will ye die ? " no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, find entrance there ; no plans are ever there formed and carried out for the accumulation of wealth, the extension of power, the attainment of

rank, or for the acquirement of knowledge; even the tabret and the harp, the lute and the viol, utter no harmonious sounds there. The weary are at rest there, and when consigned to it, man's warfare is accomplished, or his doom is fixed for ever.

While, then, there is time, while our lives last, let us be earnest for the salvation of our souls, and the souls of all mankind; let us abandon all things which do so easily beset us, and let us be true to ourselves, to our God, and to all around us; let us be assured that energy in the pursuit of a valuable object commands respect; that decision of character is most praiseworthy, whilst carelessness in the attainment of the same object is reprobated, as betokening a sad want of firmness of purpose: and in our endeavours to obtain those things which fade not away, shall we be deficient in that energy which alone can bring success, and alone prove that we are carrying on an unsparing warfare against that sin which is the greatest hindrance in running the race that is set before us? And shall we postpone till a future day the doing with our might whatsoever our hands find to do? Assuredly not, for the time of our sojourning here is short, and very short, in all probability, will be the portion that remains to us: to all, indeed, the time is short,

both to the good and the bad ; to the latter the time is short, to sin and make a mock of sin, to grieve the Holy Spirit, to trifle with conscience, to neglect the means of life eternal, to despise the dispensations of mercy. The time is short, to turn the Gospel into a savour of death unto death, to crucify afresh the Saviour, to put off the day of repentance, to fill up the measure of our iniquities. The time of trial and probation is short ; the time to laugh at the upright, to attempt to serve two masters ; the time to amass wealth, to build, to sow, to plant, to reap, is short ; and also the time of self-indulgence is short indeed.

To the upright, also, and to those who would be wise, the time is short ; the time for prayer, for self-examination, and for contrition, is short ; the time to obtain a new heart and a right spirit, the time to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and for growth in grace, is short. The time to serve God ; to labour in the vineyard of the Lord of hosts ; to make our peace with the judge of quick and dead ; to combat with the world, our own passions, and Satan, is short. The time is short to obtain the robe of Christ's righteousness ; to put on the armour of light ; to hear the sound of the Gospel ; to listen to the accents of mercy ; and to

hear the invitations, rebukes, warnings, and entreaties of those who labour for our eternal welfare. The time of divine patience is short; and the time to benefit others; to circulate the Scriptures; to awaken our friends to a sense of their danger; to weep over our own and others' declensions, is short; the time of adversity, sorrow, and sickness; the time of Satan's power to tempt; the time for death to do his work; for the grave to open; and the time of separation from endeared friends, who have died in the faith and fear of the Lord, is short indeed.

Let it, then, be employed rightly; let us so number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom, and then great happiness will be in store for us: let us strive with all our might to obtain an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away; let us secure an eternity of blessedness; let us pray unceasingly for such spiritual faculties and capacities, whereby the presence of the Lord God omnipotent, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the friendship of the Lamb, and the love of the spirits of just men made perfect, may constitute our happiness from eternity to eternity.

Let this be the grand object of all our thoughts; to this end let every energy be directed; for the accomplishment of this purpose let every nerve be

strained ; for if we fail in this it had been better for us that we had never been born, or that a millstone had been put around our necks, and that we had been cast into the sea, in the first moment of our existence.

To be born to die eternally ; to be rich in this world and to be everlastingly poor in the world to come ; to be polished and graceful in person, and to be deformed and loathsome in soul ; to have the mind cultivated, and the heart untaught, undisciplined, unchastened ; to have friends and adherents for a few years ; and for ever to be the companions of the lost ; to have had life and death offered, and to have preferred darkness, gloom, and everlasting mourning, to the bright and empyreal Presence of Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain ; to have had set before us the ways of sin and disappointment, and the narrow road which leads to endless happiness, and to prefer the broad road which leadeth to destruction,—this is surely a moral insanity far more dreadful, far more terrific, far more direful, than that mental madness which casteth on every side “firebrands, arrows, and death” (Prov. xxvi. 18) ;—this is an insanity which might make angels weep, and the eyes of all men run down with rivers of tears !

To be accursed of God, when through Christ we might have been blessed eternally; to be doomed to the worm that dieth not, when we might have had our robes made white in the blood of the Lamb,—is surely what none of us propose to ourselves as the end of our earthly career!

To be driven to the regions of despair, when we might have stood before the throne of God, serving Him day and night in his temple; to be consigned to blackness, and darkness, and eternal sorrow, when the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, might have caused us to hunger no more, nor thirst any more,—cannot assuredly be the final object for which our lives are continued to us.

Instead of having the seal of the living God in our foreheads, to be cut off by the sword of Him who is faithful and true, when He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of Almighty God; to die the second death, when we might, through the great Atonement, have had part in the first resurrection,—is indeed an insanity far more deplorable than the fury of the maniac, than all and every mental alienation, than the madness which blights and blasts all of man in which he was created superior to the beasts that perish.

The gate of mercy is still, however, open to us,

for God is a God of mercy and long-suffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" hence it is that the world is still poised in space, and the sun continues to shine, the rain to descend, and the earth to give its increase; hence the moon, in its silent majesty, is still appointed for certain seasons, and the heavens still declare the glory of God; but the ruin "which yet awaits the world will come, and, whenever it arrives, will be universal." The grass will then be withered for ever, and the lilies of the field will no more be arrayed in their glory; the fig tree will not again blossom, nor will fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive will then fail for ever; winter and summer will return no more; the stork in the heaven will no longer know his appointed time; the mountains and the everlasting hills will then be shorn of their splendour, and all that is gorgeous and sublime in creation will pass away, and no more awaken the attention of man, nor direct his thoughts to Him who laid the foundations of the earth; man will no longer go forth to his work and to his labour till the evening; his occupations will end, his toil cease; the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, will no longer occupy his thoughts; all earthly pleasures will be ended

for ever; the voice of harpers and musicians, of pipers and of trumpeters, will be heard no more at all in his feasts, for, as a leaf falleth off from the vine, so shall the host of heaven be dissolved, and "the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll;" and as the fig tree casteth her untimely figs when shaken of a mighty wind, so certainly will the "elements melt with fervent heat." Then, indeed, will be literally fulfilled that which was to the Prophet a figurative vision of the world being reduced to its first chaos, which he predicted; when he said, "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger." (Jer. iv. 23-26.)

The windows of heaven will not again be opened, nor will the foundations of the great deep again be broken up; but the ruin of the world will be universal, and by an element far more searching and far more violent in its operation than that by which the old world was overthrown; "for the

day of patience will have its period, and the day of retribution will come, and that suddenly and irresistibly."

"Seeing, then, that these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" Reflecting, moreover, on the brevity of man's life, and of the great work, which he has to perform in it, we shall be wise if we examine ourselves, to ascertain whether we are nearer to heaven as we are nearer to the grave; whether we have truly been converted, and whether we are influencing others for good or for evil, or whether we are still attempting to serve two masters; still desirous of enjoying the greatest possible amount of earthly satisfactions, with the hope of being considered the followers of the Lamb of God; ever bearing in mind, that after the dissolution of this world there will be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and that our capability of entering into these new heavens will depend upon the faculties which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon us, and on the manner of persons which we have been in this life.

Soon there will be to us the ushering in of eternity, the thought of which is surely calculated to raise our minds from earth to heaven; from the

ever deceitful allurements of this lower world to the consideration of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; and to lead us to reflect on what we are, whither we are going, and what soon will be the termination of all our plans, projects, and exertions. The stamp of eternity is fixed on us; we can now never cease to exist, either in the body or out of the body, or when the material and immaterial parts of man shall be reunited. For us there never can be the cessation of consciousness; from everlasting to everlasting our faculties will be exercised, and without end we shall be happy or miserable: miserable if, having sown unto the wind, we reap the whirlwind; if, having sown unto the flesh, we reap corruption; if, having heard the Gospel, we have despised its all-gracious offers; but happy, if, having sown unto the Spirit, we reap the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, and meekness; happy, if, having believed that all the things which were foretold by the Apostle would come to pass, we have been diligent, "that we might be found of God in peace, without spot and blameless."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONCLUSION.

IT will be borne in mind, that the object of these pages has been to lead into the way of happiness such as heretofore have been entire strangers to the peace of God, by exhibiting to them the conduct of one who, having been in the possession of all that this life can offer, quitted for a time the busy haunts of men, to endeavour to learn why vanity and vexation and utter disappointment are so stamped on all things finite, so that they who live in them, and for them, are utter strangers to real peace of mind and to enduring happiness.

The first conclusions of such a person were, that a curse was stamped on all things animate and inanimate, of the earth, the air, and the sea; and for a time he believed that the Creator of them had made them to be cursed; but further inquiry led him to perceive that the indications of benevolence in the outward world, and in man's capacities, were too many to allow him to continue to believe that the great Creator of all things could have called

rational beings into existence that they might ever be miserable. That a curse had fallen on everything could not be denied, but did it thence follow, he inquired, that all things were made to be cursed? From the evidence of natural theology, but especially from the evidence of revealed religion, proofs manifold were soon discovered that everything was very good in its original creation, but that subsequently a curse had fallen upon it. The question then arose, "Why was this curse sent, and why do affliction and misery so frequently enter into the lot of man, and make up so much of the experience of the human race?" To answer which question our inquirer determined to examine, day by day, the ancient records of God's people, by which records he clearly saw that the design of every affliction was to bring men to themselves, and to the knowledge and service of their Maker, for "that willingly" the Almighty "does not afflict any of the children of men."

After arriving at this conclusion, we have seen how such a person employed all his time in becoming acquainted with the will of God as revealed in the Old Testament; and that gradually he became more and more acquainted with the attributes of the Almighty as therein made known to man,

but especially with the attribute of mercy, as indicated in the predictions respecting our blessed Lord, and afterwards in the history of the same blessed being, as recorded in the New Testament.

We have likewise seen that his views and opinions, by such steady perusal of the Scriptures, became changed, and that he began to think that his misery, and the absence of all happiness in his worldly career, were in mercy designed to arrest him in his progress to ruin, and to bring him to the knowledge of all that man requires to make him happy, and thus the contents of the Bible became of the greatest importance in his estimation, for therein he discovered that there was a gracious Being who would be rest to the weary and salvation to the lost.

Hence the inquirer came to comprehend rightly the purposes for which he was made, for which his life had been preserved, and the purposes for which Christ came upon earth, viz. to redeem him and all men who panted after salvation.

He further became acquainted with the truth, that not only are man's sins to be forgiven, but that his nature must be changed, ere heaven can be a state of happiness to him ; and that there is a Being spoken of in the New Testament, by whose in-

fluences that new nature would be given to every one striving to obtain it; and by the conduct of persons whose history is related in the Bible, he discovered what were the lives, the deeds, the desires, and the words of the redeemed of Christ, what they did, and what they avoided; what they loved, and what they abhorred.

Gradually he came to the conclusion that happiness in this life, as well as in the life to come, may be and ought to be the portion of every truly good man, since the Spirit of God bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; that the Apostles and disciples of Christ had this two-fold witness, and that it is promised to all who in spirit and in truth walk in the footsteps of their Lord and Master, the habitual conduct and deeds of good men being to them their evidence, or enabling their own spirits to bear witness, that they are the children of God, on the principle that "by their deeds ye shall know them," and that good fruit cometh not of a corrupt tree. That the means are thus afforded whereby a man may know whether he be, or be not, now in a state of salvation, as they were afforded to the Apostle of old, who said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

That many men are not happy in religion and by religion, he always knew to be true, but he now believes that their happiness was not to be traced to the principles of Christ's holy faith, but to their not having had right views and opinions of that religion; but that, as of old, "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3): they have believed in Christ, but have not looked up to Him solely and entirely for salvation; and hence their consciences have not allowed them to be at peace, nor will they ever be at peace so long as they think that their own good works are to be in part the efficient cause of their justification before God.

Furthermore, that many are strangers to peace, who in the main are good men, but who are not always consistent; for though they may not put their hands to the plough and look backwards, yet they have sufficient yearnings after the perishable things of this life to bring them within the censure of our Lord, who said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light;" and hence they go mourning all the days of their lives, often wondering whether they are, or are not,

Christians, and having fears and misgivings that the light of God's countenance is withdrawn from them.

Such were the separate and successive conclusions at which he arrived, who, by the stress of the world's inability to speak peace to his conscience, withdrew for a time from the occupations and pleasures of life to ask why he, and all around him, were perpetually pursuing a shadow; and it will be seen that, in his retirement, and by reason of his researches, new views and a new sense of duty became his, and that peace and comfort accompanied him, and became more and more his possession, as he progressed in his now blessed employment; and that he became fully persuaded of the unlimited benevolence of the great Creator of all things, of the undying love of the Redeemer, and of the readiness of the Paraclete to visit with his holy influences the children of men, so as to bring them into the spiritual image of Him that made them.

With such sentiments, and after such conclusions, the result of many prayers, and of repeatedly studying the Scriptures, it will not be surprising if the rest of the inquirer's life were employed in God's service, and for the well-being of his fellow-creatures; and that, when so employed, he should truly have walked in the way of happiness, even in the

short, and but too often sorrowful, journey of life, especially after it became the rule of his remaining day, to do with his might whatsoever his hand found to do, he well knowing that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither" man goeth; and thus he avoided the rock on which many have all but made shipwreck of faith, and have "pierced themselves through with many sorrows," instead of always living in perfect acquiescence with the will of God. Let us, then, at once do with our might what we have to do, and let us lose no time in following the example of him whose wise conduct is held forth to imitation in these pages: the way of happiness he knew not; he sought for it in the world, but found it not; he sought for it in the Scriptures, and there he learnt by whom, through whom, and in whom it was to be found; he prayed for it unceasingly, and his prayers were heard, and an answer of peace was vouchsafed to him; he lived for some years in the service of his God, and ever found the ways of religion to be ways of pleasantness; and when he quitted this mortal scene it was with the joyful hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through the merits and atonement of the great Redeemer, of Him who came to seek and to save the lost.

Let us, then, unhesitatingly follow his example, and quit the allurements of the world to examine carefully the Scriptures, to learn what our duty is, and what our wisdom is; let us not, for the sake of things finite, be untrue to ourselves and to our God; let us anticipate our separation from all which is dear to us in this life, and think of our rapid departure from those scenes in which we might still be a blessing to all around us; let us live no longer for the sake of things material and perishable, but let our treasure be in heaven. By the grace of God's Holy Spirit may we so live, that by our prayers, and by our exertions, the capacious mansions of the redeemed may receive the ransomed souls of all who are intrusted to our care; let us hasten the coming of our Lord, by living to his glory, and by furthering the kingdom which He is establishing; and then will our lives have answered the end for which they were given to us; and then, by our example, by our holy conversation and godliness, we shall, probably, have caused many to go to Christ as their Lord and their Redeemer, their only Potentate, their mighty Prince, to reign in their hearts world without end. Amen, and Amen.



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