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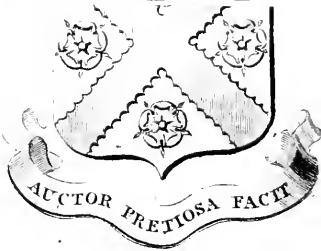
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

Princeton, N. J.

BV 4921 .P5 1835

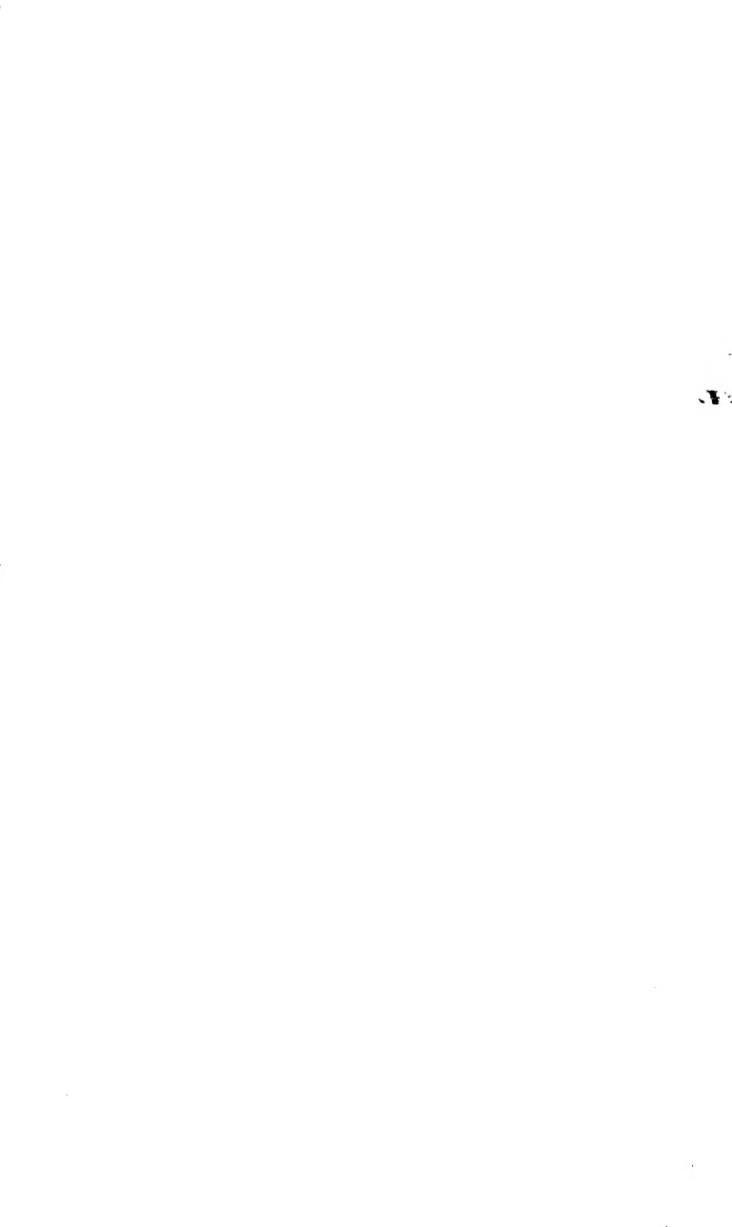
Pike, J. G. 1784-1854.

Religion and eternal life



James Lenox.





RELIGION AND ETERNAL LIFE,

OR

IRRELIGION AND PERPETUAL RUIN,

THE

ONLY ALTERNATIVE FOR MANKIND.

✓
BY J. G. PIKE,

AUTHOR OF PERSUASIVES TO EARLY PIETY, &c.

“ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.”

LONDON:

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1835.

PREFACE.

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

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

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

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

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. *Introductory Address.* Page 5.

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

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

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

CHAPTER III. *Religion described.* Page 39.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RELIGION AND ETERNAL LIFE, &c.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Eccles xii. 7.

(2) Mark, ix 43—48.

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

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

(1 1 John, iii. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

(1) 2 Cor. vi. 2.

(2) Is. lv. 6. 7.

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

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

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

CHAPTER II.

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Daniel, v. 23.

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

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

(1) 1 John, iii. 20.

(2) Daniel, v. 27.

(3) Psalm, xi. 4.

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

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

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

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

(1) Matt. xii. 36—37.

(2) Matt. v. 21—22.

(3) James, ii. 10

(4) Galatians, iii. 10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Jer. xvii. 10.

youth; and, if riper years have rolled over your head, have been a sinner through those years. You have sinned in thought, you have sinned in words; "for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."¹ "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."² You have sinned in actions. You have sinned by leaving duties undone; and you have sinned by doing what God forbade. You have sinned against your fellow-creatures, when not doing to others as you would that they should do to you;³ when not loving your neighbour as yourself.⁴ You have sinned against your own soul, in slighting its eternal welfare; in loving this world and trifling with a better. You have sinned in all these things; and, as far as guilt is concerned, have, above all, sinned against God. *You have sinned against the Father*, by abusing his mercies, his time; by slighting his word; by breaking his laws; by profaning his sabbaths. How many have you wasted or misimproved! You have sinned against him by slighting intercourse with him. How many prayerless mornings, and prayerless evenings, and prayerless days have you known! *You have sinned against the Son*, by slighting his dying love, and by treating with wicked neglect his claims upon your service and your heart. *You have sinned against the Holy Spirit*,⁵ by resisting the im-

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Luke, x. 27

(2) Rom. v. 12

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

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

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

(1) Rom. iii. 19. 23. (2) Rom. ii. 12. (3) Rom. vi. 23. (4) Gal. iii. 10

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

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

(1) Eph. ii 1—3. (2) Gal. iii. 13. (3) 1 Thess i. 10. (4) Col. i. 20.

(5) Rom. v. 10. (6) Heb. ix. 12. Eph. i. 7. (7) Rev. xxi. 8.

(8) Rom. vi. 23.

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

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

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

(1) Cor. vi. 9, 10.

(2) Gal. v. 19—21.

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

(4) Mark, x. 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) 1 John, v. 11.

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

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

(1) Col. i. 21.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Rom. i. 18. (2) Rom. vi. 23. (3) Gal. iii. 10. (4) James, ii. 10.

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

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

O sinner! think while you live without heart-

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

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

(1) 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

(2) John, xiii. 8.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

RELIGION DESCRIBED.

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

(1) Rom. iv. 7, 8.

(2) Rev.

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

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

(1) Prov. ix. 12.

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

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

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

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

(5) 2 Tim. i. 12.

(6) Matt. x. 37—39. John, xxi. 17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Luke, xv. 20. (2) Rom. x. 10. (3) Phil. iii. 9. (4) 1 Peter, i. 8 ii. 10.

(5) Gal. v. 6. (6) Acts, xv. 9. (7) 1 John, v. 6. (8) Gal. ii. 20.

(9) 2 Cor. v. 7. (10) 2 Cor. iv. 18. (11) Heb. xi. 16, 39.

(12) Heb. xi. 26.

(13) Heb. xi. 27.

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

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

(1) Rev. xiv. 4. (2) Matt. x. 37, 38. Luke, xiv. 26, 27.

(3) Luke, xiv. 33. (4) 2 Tim. i. 12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) Col. i. 27.

(3) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

(4) Gal. v. 20.

(5) Eph. iii. 17.

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

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

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

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

(1) Isaiah, xlv. 5.

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

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE NATURE OF RELIGION.

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Job, xlii. 6.

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

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

(1) Psalms, li. 1-5.

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

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

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

(1) Luke, xv. 21.

(2) Ezekiel, xxxvi. 31.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Is. lvii. 15. Is. lxvi. 1, 2. (2) Matt. v. 3, 4. 6. (3) Matt. xi. 27.
 (4) Luke, xviii. 14. (5) Luke, xv. 22. (6) Luke, vii. 48. 50.
 (7) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

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

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

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

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

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

(2) 2 Cor v. 17.

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

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

(1) 2 Peter, iii. 18.

(2) Phil. iii. 17.

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

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

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

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

(1) Matt. x. 37, 38.

(2) Luke, xiv. 26.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

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

(1) Eph. ii. 10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Psalm, cxxxix. 23. 24.

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

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

Maintaining habitual attention to the state of

¹) Acts, xx. 24. Psalm, lxxiii. 24—26. Psalm, iv. 6, 7. Psalm, xxvii. 4
²) 2 Cor. iv. 18. 2 Cor. v. 7, 8.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Heb. xii. 14. 1 Peter, i. 15, 16. 1 John, ii. 4—6. (2) John, xiii. 15
1 John, iii. 11.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V.

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

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

(i) James, i. 26

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1, 1 Thes. i. 3.

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

(1) Rev. iii. 1, 2.

(2) Rev. iii. 15--17.

(3) Matt. vi. 33.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1) Psalm. i. 2, 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) John, vi. 53.

(2) John, xv. 5.

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

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

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

(4) Matt. xiii 25.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. The Lord Jesus solemnly declares, "No

(1) Matt xiii. 23.

(2) 1 Kings, xviii. 31.

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

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

(1) Matt. vi. 24.

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you *could* go out of the world as you came into it, trifling and indecision might have some excuse, but this is impossible. As here there is no alternative presented to you, but religion or irreligion, so you must die, a happy saint or an undone sinner. And you must go hence, to become as happy as angels, or more wretched than guilty and miserable Sodom. You must rise to the happiest heaven, or sink to the deepest and most dismal hell. If you would follow what would deceive you, continue undecided and follow the world. If you would be left helpless in affliction, and in death, and in eternity, still trifle with Christ and follow the world. If you would be like the wretched and despairing when dying, then follow the world, and still refuse to surrender yourself to the Saviour. And if you would have your portion with the damned, neglect the Saviour for a little longer, and all will be accomplished, and the direful deed will be done. But if you would have peace with God; if you would possess well-founded hope; if you would be cheered with immortal prospects; if you would have an everlasting arm placed beneath your dying pillow; if you would meet the welcome, "Come in, thou blessed;" if you would be a child of God for ever — flee to the Saviour. At whatever loss flee to the Saviour. Whoever would hinder you go to the Saviour, and commit your soul, your heart, your all, to him, to be truly and for ever his. Would companions or friends endeavour to hinder you, had you no better renounce their friendship, than give up

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

CHAPTER VI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Micah, vii. 19.

(2) Psalm, ciii. 12.

(3) Isaiah, i. 18.

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

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

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

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

(2) Gal. iii. 13.

(3) Rom. viii. 1.

(4) Luke, xviii. 14.

Rom. iii. 24. v. 1.

(5) Rom. v. 1.

(6) John, xvi. 27.

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

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

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

(1) John, iii. 1. (2) Rom. viii. 16, 17. (3) 1 Thess i. 10. Tit. ii. 1, 2 Heb. v. 9. John, x. 11. 1 Peter, v. 5. Rom. viii. 34. 1 John, ii. 2, &c.

(4) John, xiv. 16. xvi. 7. Rom. v. 5. viii. 11. xv. 13, &c. &c.

(5) Heb. i. 14. (6) Phil. i. 21, 23. 2 Cor. v. 8. (7) 1 Cor. xv. Phil. ii. 21. Matt. xxv. 34. Rev. xxi.

were exposed to it all. Then lift up your thoughts to the heavenly world. Think of life without death; peace without pain; holiness and happiness without defect. Now suppose every moment of your life extended to ten thousand ages; that you had as many times ten thousand ages to live, as you have lived moments. Think of all these ages spent under God's frown, and transgression's load, amidst the horrors and despair of damnation. How awful the ruin! Think of a deliverance thus lasting, and of all these ages passed in the light and holiness and blessedness of heaven. How precious a salvation! yet you have not thought of eternal salvation. As many times ten thousand ages as there have been moments in your life, are but the twinkling of an eye compared to eternal salvation! O, think of this! Think and feel, that if you live neglectful of salvation, more than ten thousand ages of despair and horror, of guilt and gloom, await you for every sinful moment spent on earth; and that if you enjoy its blessings, more than ten thousand centuries of happiness and rest, of joy and love, await you in the heavenly world, for every moment spent in the Redeemer's service here. How precious is such a salvation!

6. How can man be just with God? How become an heir of heaven? How can such a good be obtained for a ruined and miserable sinner? Many ways for obtaining peace with God, have been devised by the blind and deluded children of men. Offerings and forms, and acts of austerity and penance, have formed the refuge, the ruinous refuge of many. Others have rested on penitence and charity; but penitence cannot

wash away innumerable transgressions ; and charity to man can never compensate for ingratitude and rebellion against God. Others have relied on human works, or freedom from grosser transgressions, and attention to some social duties, as expressed in the spirit of one of old. " I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all I possess."¹

If you believe some previous statements from the divine word, you must be sensible that all these are entirely insufficient, and cannot make you a partaker of the salvation just described. While the scriptures represent them all as refuges of lies, that the overwhelming flood of divine wrath will shortly sweep away, that blessed book declares, that salvation was obtained for men, by the merits, sufferings, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He " obtained eternal redemption for us."²

7. To accomplish this infinitely benevolent object, he came into this world, and the Son of God, appeared on earth as the Son of man. He, " being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."³ He was born at Bethlehem. The infidel and would-be philosopher, scoff at the idea of God incarnate. But what right have they to scoff ; that they should

(1) Luke, xviii. 11.

(2) Heb. ix. 12. See also x. 12. 19.

1 Peter, i. 18. Dan. ix. 24. Is. i. 3, &c. &c. (3) Phil. ii. 6-8.

assert that to be absurd and impossible which God himself asserts actually to have taken place

Ask such men, "What is matter?" They cannot tell you. "What is spirit?" They know nothing about it. "What binds the parts of matter together?" They cannot tell. What is their own body? What the soul? What the nature of the union of the two? Of all this, and of the plainest facts in nature, let them search as far as man can go, they know *nothing*; and yet they know so much about God, as to contradict what he declares; or to disbelieve the most precious truths of his word, because of their incomprehensible nature. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit: there is more hope of a fool than of him."¹ Let the infidel scoff then, if he will, in the greatness of his folly, but receive it as the most precious of truths, that He who "was with God, and was God,"² became for you a man of sorrows; and then atoned for sin and iniquity. He bore the curse for us. The Father "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."³

8. Contemplate the unbounded love that such a plan of heavenly grace exhibits. Think of the words soon uttered but never exhausted: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."⁴ "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."⁵ Think of the objects of this strange compassion. Miserable men! all sinners! all dead! all rebels! some

(1) Prov. xxvi. 12.

(2) John, i. 1.

(3) 2 Cor. v. 21.

(4) John, iii. 16.

(5) 1 John, iv. 14.

hardened, others heedless! Laden with mercies, and forgetful of the Giver! History tells us, that Augustus, having twice witnessed the ingratitude of one of his subjects, softened him when a captive rebel, and changed him into a friend by a third time bestowing peculiar favours on him. Thus the emperor's treacherous friend was soon won to him; but man is not so soon won to God. The Father has manifested forbearance; has uttered in his word entreaties and invitations; has borne with provocations, ingratitude, and insult; and yet is forgiving. To complete all he gave his best-beloved, the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."¹ He sent his Son; and thus, as it were, by one gift exhausted the treasures of infinite benevolence: for further in displaying love how could even God advance! The strange and matchless love thus manifested, he manifested also in the design he contemplated. He gave his only-begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. He would have manifested love, if he had consigned a world of rebels to non-existence; if, when indignation and wrath had been merited, he had permitted the sinner to forget his guilt and its punishment in everlasting nothingness, and rendered death, what infidels would like it to be, an eternal sleep. But such was the Father's love, he would, through the death of his Beloved, give life. And not a life like Adam's, lengthened to almost ten centuries, or ten thousand times as long, but eternal life; and delighting in the happiness of the pardoned rebels that become partakers of his salva-

(1) Heb. i. 3.

tion, he calls them to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, and will bless them with eternal freedom from sorrows and from sins. O wonderful love of God! and wonderful wickedness of infatuated man, that slights and disregards such patient and unbounded love!

9. The divine love manifested in the scheme of human redemption, was most gloriously displayed by the adorable Son of God. Though rich, he becomes poor; and says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."¹ He appears on earth as the babe of Bethlehem. Angels announce his birth; because of it they say, "Glory to God in the highest,"² and direct the astonished shepherds where to find the King of Glory. Where and in what state must the shepherds find him? As angels appear, with a countenance like lightning, and raiment white as snow? No: as a babe. Amidst royal pomp, for courtiers to honour and nobles to praise? Had this been the case, had he taken a monarch's throne, the love were infinite. But, no! he does not thus appear—he is a babe amidst poverty and want. The time of his sojourning below rolls on, and he says, "foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."³ At length he dies, and dies not a hasty, but a lingering death; not an easy, but a tormenting death; not in a chamber surrounded by sympathizing friends, but on the cross, beset by insulting enemies; with nothing to lessen its bitterness; his friends fugitives; his enemies scoffers; gall offered him; and in that hour of his extremity, the presence of the Father, that sup-

(1) Heb. x. 9. (2) Luke, ii. 9. (3) Luke, ix. 58.

port of martyrs and of confessors, withdrawn. It were love for a friend to die for a friend, greater love to die for a stranger; love still more exalted to die for an enemy; but love beyond description to die for an enemy, doomed through that enmity to die; yet of this nature was the love of the incarnate Son of God, though love far more exalted than could possibly be manifested by one mere human being dying for another.

How many were those sins for which he died! how ruinous! how aggravated! how multiplied! On him they met; he bears the whole load. He tasted death for us: when all were dead "one died for all."¹ He came "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."² He died for the sins of others; he had none of his own. He must die, or they must die eternally; and then he died to bring them near to God. "Christ died for the ungodly:"³ "died for our sins:"⁴ "died for us:"⁵ he "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world:"⁶ he is "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,"⁷ and "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."⁸

10. As his sufferings and their design were expressly foretold by prophets,⁹ so they appear to have been strikingly referred to in some of the dispensations of Moses. The passover furnishes an impressive illustration of the effect of the Saviour's sacrifice. The destroying angel was about

(1) 2 Cor. v. 14. (2) Heb. ii. 9. (3) Rom. v. 6. (4) 2 Cor. xv. 3.
 (5) 1 Thess. v. 10. (6) Gal. i. 4. (7) Tit. ii. 14. (8) 1 Pet. iii. 18.
 (9) *Psalmist*, Isaiah, Daniel, &c.

to proceed through the land of Egypt, spreading death and desolation. The paschal lamb was then slain, and its blood sprinkled on the Israelitish dwellings; and it was declared, the Lord himself would protect the inhabitants of the blood-besprinkled house from the destroyer.¹ Thus the Father justifies and protects the soul that flees for refuge to the atoning sacrifice of the Son. The two goats on the great day of atonement, appear to have pointed to the same sacrifice. One of them was slain, and his blood taken within the vail, to represent the Saviour's atoning sacrifice. Over the head of the other the high-priest confessed the sins of the people, and sent him away into a land not inhabited, to represent that thus the Saviour takes all sin away. Viewing him, the Christian sings,

“ My faith would lay her hand
 On that dear head of thine,
 While, like a penitent, I stand,
 And there confess my sin.
 My soul looks back, to see
 The burdens thou didst bear
 When hanging on the cursed tree,
 And hopes her guilt was there.”

A propitiatory sacrifice was called² *kepher*, that which *covers or hides*; for when the victim was offered, the fault, on account of which the offerer presented the sacrifice, was passed over.³ Hence, the victim might be said to hide or cover the sin; to cleanse the offerer from it. Thus Christ offered himself as a sacrifice. He “was once offered to bear the sins of many;” he

(1) Exod. xii. &c.

(2) Exod. xxix. 33. Dan. ix. 9. &c.

(3) See this repeatedly declared, Leviticus, Chapters 4 and 5.

“appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”¹

11. Through his sufferings sin is forgiven. In those ancient offerings there was no real virtue. The divine word declares, that it is not possible the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.² But of his sacrifice it is said, that he “by himself purged our sins;”³ that “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;”⁴ that believers are “justified by his blood;”⁵ and that “his blood cleanseth them from all sin.”⁶ Such is the atoning efficacy of his sacrifice. His blood cleanses from sin; from sin of all kinds; and in all cases where the soul is led to him. Precious as are his instructions, it is not these which are described as purifying the soul from sin; but his blood. Salutary as are his heavenly lessons, it is not these that heal the sinner’s wounds; but by “his stripes we are healed.”⁷ Thus by dying he conquered death. By poverty he secured for millions immortal wealth. By sufferings purchased for millions unfading happiness. Thus he OBTAINED for man eternal redemption. In vain had the loftiest of the angelic host tried to accomplish such a triumph. It could be effected by him only who was God manifest in the flesh. He came down from heaven, and obtained eternal redemption; then re-entered heaven, like a mighty conqueror, and lives to bestow the salvation he wrought out. When he came to earth the world was perishing; but when he returned the work of infinite mercy was accomplished; and redemption was secured

(1) Heb. ix. 28. 26. &c.

(2) Heb. x. 4.

(3) Heb. i. 3.

(4) Heb. x. 14.

(5) Rom. v. 9.

(6) 1 John, i. 7.

(7) Is. liii. 5.

for all that will ever listen to the invitations of his love.

12. This salvation, which is so unutterably valuable, which was secured at so expensive a price, and which displays such incomprehensible love, is the salvation which you want, and which in the gospel is offered to you. Regard the angelic message as a message to yourself—unto you was born a Saviour Christ the Lord. You cannot save yourself; nor blot out your own sins; nor change your own heart; nor write your own name in heaven; nor snatch your soul from the pit of woe, nor raise it to eternal bliss. But here is a Saviour for you, who has come to do all this. Were you in prison, how welcome would be liberty! Were you in slavery, how welcome would be a deliverer! And how welcome should a Saviour be! A Saviour from the load of sin; and from the reign of iniquity; and from remorse of conscience; and from the wrath of God, and from the damnation of hell. How welcome should that Saviour be! A Saviour, whose love flows, as it were, in streams of blood divine; and who confers mercy most valuable and most complete. An earthly sovereign, perhaps, spares the forfeited life of a condemned criminal; but the criminal becomes an exile, and wears out life in banishment from his country and his home. But this Saviour, when he forgives, forgives entirely; and takes the pardoned criminal, and makes him a child. He gives to the pardoned soul present peace, and the love of God and the glory of eternity.

13. Were you informed of a Saviour, but had cause to doubt whether he could save you to the

uttermost, the tidings would not be so gladsome. But this Saviour is an Almighty Saviour; God manifest in the flesh. He is equal to the task he undertakes: he came to conquer death and Satan; to open heaven and people it from earth; and he will do what he has undertaken to perform. He gives promises that none but a God could give, and will fulfil every promise. On him have millions leaned, and he has never failed one that trusted in him. His love was so vast that it brought him down from heaven; and his power is so great that it raises myriads there. His works on earth manifested his power: when the dumb spake; when the deaf heard; when the blind eye saw; when tempests listened to his bidding; when diseases fled at his command; and death resigned his prey; then was his uncontrollable power displayed. His miracles of power were emblems of mightier miracles of grace and love: he has opened hearts more blind than the blindest eyes; and taught tongues, more silent than the dumb, to speak his Father's praise. There are no sins so many and so vile, that he cannot blot them out; no hearts so hard that he cannot soften them; none so unworthy that he cannot welcome them; and none so weak that he cannot help them to heaven. Are not the tidings of such a Saviour good tidings of great joy?

14. Were you told of an almighty Saviour, but had cause to doubt his compassion and grace, the tidings would not be so full of unmingled joy. But this Saviour "can have compassion," and is full of love. Go to his manger; what laid him there but love? Go to the garden of

Gethsemane; what caused him to endure its agonies and bloody sweat, but love? Go to Calvary; what made him bear his cross and die upon it, but love? Hearken to his promises: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.¹ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."² What speak these but love? Again, hearken: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."³ What speak these sweet words of eternal life, but love? Go to facts in his conduct: behold the penitent woman weeping at his feet; the pharisees reprove him for his notice of her; but he says, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."⁴ What spoke that language, but love? See Canaan's widow; she entreats his aid for her afflicted daughter; he seems to turn a deaf ear, but it is that her faith may shine more conspicuous; and at length he says, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."⁵ What spoke those words, but love? O reader, as there are no sins so vile that he cannot blot them out; so there are none so vile and aggravated, that he is unwilling to take their load away. As there is no heart too hard for him to soften; so there is none so hard, that, when his help is sought, he is unwilling to bestow it. As there are none so unworthy that he cannot help them; so there are none that he is unwilling to help. And as there are none

(1) Matt. xi. 28. (2) John, vi. 37. (3) John, v. 24.

(4) Luke, vii. 48—50. (5) Matt. xv. 28.

so weak that his strength is not sufficient for them; so there are none so weak but he is willing to help them till death and to heaven.

15. And, reader, all these tidings are for you. If he were all that has been described, but had no blessings for you, his power, his grace, his love would be nothing to you. But all these tidings are for you, if you will listen to the voice of his mercy. Whosoever will may "take the water of life freely."¹ The provision that is so ample, and so suited to your wants, is provided for you. Are you poor? in him are riches. Are you wretched? in him is happiness. Guilty? with him is pardon. Destitute and friendless? with him is endless good. Are you dying? in him is life. Through his poverty you may be rich. His life was given for your life. Would you be a slave for a slave? or impoverished for a beggar? or condemned for a criminal? yet the Son of God has done this for you. What you desire, if you are a penitent, the Saviour is willing to give. You have sinned, but he has suffered. You are unworthy, but God will accept you in the beloved. An ancient Christian writer remarks, "What could cover our sins but his righteousness? By whom could we, who were wicked and ungodly, be justified but by the only Son of God? O delightful exchange! O unsearchable contrivance! O unexpected benefit! that the iniquity of many should be hid by one righteous person, and the righteousness of one justify many wicked!"

16. If you are a humble penitent believer, the

simple and plaintive language of one who is now a saint in light, may express your feelings :

“ In that day, O grant I may
Find mercy, Lord, with thee !
Thro' him who kept thy holy law,
Without a blemish or a flaw,
Then died upon the tree.

“ Full of sin and guilt within,
No worthiness I plead ;
If thou iniquity shouldst mark,
Dismal my prospect were and dark,
Hopeless my case indeed.

“ Merit none I call my own,
But my demerits vast ;
Think of the merits of thy Son,
What he has suffer'd, he has done,
And I am sav'd at last.

“ Vile I am, but that blest Lamb
His precious blood has spilt ;
That blood, thou hast been pleas'd to say,
Can wash the vilest stains away,
And cancel all my guilt.

“ On Him I humbly rely,
All other help abjure ;
Jesus, to thee alone I flee,
This hope shall like an anchor be,
For ever firm and sure.”

17. While the careless presume, the penitent often despond ; and that great enemy, who tempts the former to disbelieve God's threatenings, tempts the latter to doubt his promises. If, with a humble and contrite heart fleeing from your sins, you are seeking pardoning grace, be assured, on the authority of all that is true and solemn in the gospel, that you will not seek in vain. The Sa-

viour says, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."¹

Thus he declares it to be his Father's will, that he should save every one, however lost or guilty, that sees his excellency, and believes on him for salvation. To this he adds his own most gracious promise: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."² Can words be more comprehensive or more expressive? Were the divine Saviour to say, "Form such a promise as will most effectually encourage your soul. Tell me what it is, and I will bind myself to accomplish all it expresses;" would it be possible to form promises more encouraging, than those thus given, and others to which reference has been made? "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?" No sins, however great, no guilt, however aggravated, shall prevent the penitent's salvation that comes to me. Not the continuance of transgression that has been prolonged through many rebellious years, shall keep the soul from pardon which comes to me. No meanness and insignificance shall cause me to slight the penitent that seeks salvation at my hands. No present unworthiness and lamented defects, if he come to me, shall cause me to cast him out. No want of ability to make a suitable return, shall prevent my exercising my pardoning mercy. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Elsewhere it is declared, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make inter-

(1) John, vi. 30.

(2) John, vi. 37.

cession for them.”¹ Thus you are assured, that he can save from the heaviest load of sin ; for he can save to the uttermost. He can save from the greatest extremity of danger ; for he can save to the uttermost. He can save amidst all the assaults or trials of time, and save with a salvation that shall extend through eternity ; for he can save to the uttermost. He ever lives to save. His saving power continues from age to age, unimpaired by the flight of time ; unweakened by the ingratitude with which millions neglect his great salvation. So earnest is the Lord Jesus to save, that he compares himself to a person standing and knocking at a door, and seeking admittance, that he may benefit every one who opens to him.² So earnest is he to save, that he has commissioned his servants to say, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”³

In other cases the poor beg of the rich ; here he, who is possessed of infinite riches, begs the poor to be enriched by him. Subjects beg the favour of kings ; but here the King of kings beseeches a rebellious worm to accept his favour. Criminals implore their judge’s mercy ; but here the Judge beseeches the condemned criminal to receive the mercy he delights to bestow. And can he, who condescends so much to benefit lost mankind, be unwilling to save a suppliant seeking mercy at his feet !

18. Perhaps you say, “I have wasted many years. They have all been marked with carelessness and sin. I have abused many mercies, and

(1) Heb. vii. 25.

(2) Rev. iii. 20.

(3) 2 Cor. v. 20.

grieved the Spirit of God by long-continued neglect." Allow it to be so; and if it is, you cannot be too deeply humbled for such aggravated transgressions; yet the Saviour says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" and of him it still is said, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

Perhaps you urge, "My sins are great and many." So were Israel's, yet God said to them, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."¹ So were Paul's: he persecuted the church of God, yet he obtained mercy, and declared, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."² So were those of many that became members of the Corinthian church. To them it was said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you;" yet vile as they had thus been, through heavenly grace it was added, "but ye are washed, but ye

(1) Is. lv. 7

(2) 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.”¹

Your sins are great, but they are not greater than God’s mercy. “For as heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”² Your sins are great; their vileness cannot be expressed, yet their vileness cannot exceed the infinite value of the Saviour’s atoning blood. “It cleanseth from all sin.”³ “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”⁴

Your sins are great; but the longer you wait the greater they will be. Every day in which you delay to trust yourself and your all to Christ, adds to the number of your transgressions. He is a great forgiver. Whatever you are, flee to Him. Are you young or aged, poor or rich, go to Christ. Have you been moral or profligate, go to him. If you have been a swearer, and a drunkard, break off your sins, and flee to him. If you have been the most moral of mankind, you still need him, or must die. When Joseph fed the famishing inhabitants of Egypt, the general direction for all that needed food, was, “Go to Joseph;” and for all that feel themselves undone, the direction is, “Go to Christ.” In his mercy there are heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, equal to all your wants. There are depths that will reach low as the depths of your guilt and danger, and reach, and save you from the edge of hell. There are

(1) 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. (2) Psalm, ciii. 11, 12. (3) 1 John, i. 7

(4) Rom. v. 20.

neights that will advance you to unknown nobleness and happiness, in the heavenly world. There are breadths that will cover all your guilt; and lengths that will flow on through the scenes of time, attend the soul to death and judgment, and then bless a whole eternity. And all this is ready to bless you. You may think with ecstasy, "I have not to obtain redemption by my feeble efforts. It is already obtained. The Lord Jesus Christ gained it for me. The work is already done. His blood can take away my sins. His righteousness can clothe my soul, and supply my want of righteousness. And, though separate from him I am nothing, and have nothing, yet in him is all I want."

19. All this good, and all the blessings of the Saviour's grace, you may have freely and fully. All the fitness requisite, is to feel your need of him, and be cordially willing to receive him, as he is set before you in the gospel. You want no previous preparation to render you less unworthy of pardoning mercy, but may come to the Saviour guilty and lost as you are. This is abundantly evident from his word. Consider the parable of the prodigal;¹ he went to his Father in wretchedness and misery, but at once experienced pardoning mercy. Look at the history of the publican.² When he prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" it was with that oppressive sense of his own unworthiness, that he would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven; but he went down to his house justified. Think of the case of the multitudes whose conversion is recorded in the second chapter of the

(1) Luke, xv.

(2) Luke, xviii.

Acts of the Apostles. They are charged with even the monstrous guilt of having taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain "the Lord of glory:" but when they, pierced to the heart, inquire what they must do to be saved, at once they are directed to the Saviour; and the same day which saw them broken-hearted penitents, beheld them rejoicing disciples. Consider the history of the gaoler.¹ He was a heathen and a persecutor. He was this over night. During the night not only were his slumbers dissipated by the earthquake, that shook the prison, but his soul was filled with alarm, from a sense of the danger of his state. With trembling and anxiety he inquires, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He is answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He welcomes the tidings; and he who in the evening was a heathen and a persecutor, and in the night a trembling penitent, before the morning dawns has received the gospel message, and rejoices in the Lord as his salvation. In all these cases there were no preparatives requisite, but a feeling of their want and guilt, and willingness to welcome the proffered mercy, by receiving the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and their Lord. Just as free is salvation to you; and to be enjoyed in the same way by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; a faith which humbly relies upon him, and includes the surrender of soul and body to him.

Conformably with these views the Lord Jesus is described as saving, and the Father as justifying, not the righteous, not the worthy, but the ungodly. "They that are whole need not a

(1) Acts, xvi.

physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”¹ “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”² “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”³ “When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”⁴

20. The death of Christ cannot be to you a matter of no concern. It will prove either a blessing or a curse. He died to atone for your sins. If you slight him, you will be banished further from God than if he had never died. He offers to deliver you from guilt and remorse, to save you from hell, and raise you to heaven. If you slight him, your guilt will be increased many fold; your remorse will be more tormenting; heaven will be for ever shut against you; and you will sink in the depths of a deeper hell. But if you welcome him, in him you will be completely saved, completely blest. You will know the Lord Jesus Christ as your all in all; and while a growing acquaintance with yourself may lead you to adopt the words of a dying saint, “God may justly condemn me for the best duty I ever did,” in him you will have peace. You may then with the happy apostle exclaim, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded

(1) Matt ix. 12. (2) Luke, xix. 10. (3) Rom. iii. 23, 24, 28. iv. 5.
(4) Rom. v. 10.

that he will keep what I have committed unto him against that day.¹ Yes, he will keep the invaluable treasure I have trusted to his hands. I expect temptations; I expect to meet the solemnities of a dying hour—but amidst all he will keep what I have committed to him. I expect to meet him at the judgment day; to look upon a dissolving world; to see the earth burning, the heavens vanishing away; to behold the Judge upon his fiery throne, and the universe gathered before him—yet amidst all these scenes of solemnity, he will keep what I have committed unto him.

If you have become the humble disciple of the Saviour, all this invaluable good he will effect for you. Still daily cleave to him, and let him be your all in all. Manna was to Israel, for a time, their only food; so Christ must be to you the only bread of life. Here rest—he gave himself for me. Is it inquired, What plea have you to ward off condemnation? The Lord Jesus has died. Why are you forgiven? Because the Lord Jesus has died. Why do you hope for mercy? The Lord Jesus has died. Why do you expect heaven? The Lord Jesus has died, and I have fled to him. No works of righteousness have we to atone for guilt that is passed, but the Lord Jesus has died. No merits have we in present obedience, to deserve divine blessings for the future, but the Lord Jesus has died, has obeyed and suffered in our place. No offerings have we wherewith to come before the Lord, and to bow ourselves before the high God, none to present that will deserve his notice, but the Lord Jesus

(1) 2 Tim. i. 12.

has died. Here Christian hope begins, here rests, here ends—the Lord Jesus has died. Regard

“This first, this last, this midst, and without end.”

21. A hymn by the late Mr. Newton expresses with peculiar felicity the Christian's feelings and hopes :

“One glance of thine, eternal Lord,
Pierces all nature through ;
And all the thoughts of ev'ry heart
Are open to thy view !

“Though greatly from my soul conceal'd,
Thou seest my inward frame :
To thee I always stand reveal'd
Exactly as I am !

“Since, therefore, I can hardly bear
What in myself I see ;
How vile, how black, must I appear,
Most holy God, to thee !

“But O ! my Saviour stands between,
In garments dy'd in blood !
'Tis he, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

“Thus, though a sinner, I am safe :
He pleads before the throne
His life, his death, in my behalf,
And counts my sins his own.

“What wondrous love, what mystery,
In this appointment shine !
My sins he takes, and gives to me
His righteousness divine !”

22. There are some so exceedingly wicked as to pervert the truths exhibited in this chapter, to their own deeper condemnation. Because the

foundation of a sinner's hope is a crucified Saviour, and salvation is the free gift of God, they make this grace an occasion for sin; and are careless of the very holiness in which this wonderful grace should render them daily anxious to excel. If you are ever tempted to indulge such a spirit, consider that it is the vilest, the most ungrateful, the most infernal, that exists out of the pit of perdition. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The principle that denies the necessity of Christian holiness, is one of the worst of heresies; and the individual who vaunts his prospects of heaven, and his confidence in Christ, while he turns the grace of God into licentiousness, and lives the slave of sin, appears, perhaps more completely than any other human being, the dupe and the image of the wicked one.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGION URGED BY CONSIDERATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE GOODNESS AND CLAIMS OF THE ETERNAL GOD, AND WITH THE GUILT AND EVILS OF NEGLECTING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1. IN several former chapters the design has been, to represent to you the nature of religion; to show you, from a scriptural view of your own state, how needful its blessings are to you; and, by exhibiting the Saviour's grace, to present the encouragements that exist for seeking this great salvation. And now, reader, as addressing you on a matter of life or death, of life or death eternal, I beg your attention, while some of these

solemn motives, which should engage your heart to the Saviour and religion, are plainly set before you. If you have already happily felt their power, it may revive past salutary impressions to review them again. But if you have not, if you are to the present moment a trifler with God and your own soul, then, by all that is dear to you, be entreated to read seriously, and to consider attentively, the solemn reasons that should urge true piety, as the one thing needful, on your immediate choice. This is the most important choice that can ever demand your attention. It concerns you now, as to the state in which you must pass the remainder of your days, whether in guilt or piety, in safety or in danger; it will concern you in death, as to possessing comfort, or sinking in distress; it will concern you when entering eternity; and will eternally make a distinction in your condition, as blest and saved, or lost and accursed. The blessings of the present world you need but for a span of time; but the blessings of religion for all eternity. These blessings are needful for both worlds. In the possession of divine grace, you might be happy though destitute of earthly good. So was Lazarus, when lying, though in the depths of poverty, at the very gate of heaven. But if destitute of religion, you can have no happiness hereafter, nor be truly happy here. Other things will not supply the want of this; but, as to what is most important, this would supply the want of all things. The soul that enjoys the Saviour's favour, belongs to the same family as the angels of light; and soon will be as blessed and as happy as they.

“ A Christian and an angel ; these between
 How thin the barrier ! What divides their state ?
 Perhaps a moment, or perhaps a year,
 Or if an age it is a moment still,
 A moment or eternity’s forgot.”

2. Consider to whom you are entreated to surrender yourself. To no mean possessor, no feeble Lord, no unworthy object of regard. But to God ; the great, the blessed, the eternal God ; to the God that made you ; that supports you ; that sees you ; that pities you ; that blesses you ; that would save you, or that will condemn you. To this great, and blessed, and infinitely holy Creator, you are entreated to yield yourself ; to the God that will smile and bless you, or frown and curse you ; whose love will make endless ages happy, or whose anger will make endless ages miserable ; whom you soon must meet, and with whom ere long you must have a most solemn interview. He is the God whose love renders saints and angels happy. He was the God of Abraham ; and Abraham has long been with him. He was the God of Paul ; and Paul welcomed martyrdom. The God of martyrs ; and they longed to die, that they might go to be with him. He was the God of believers now departed ; and they lived in hope and died in peace. He is the God of many that now sojourn on earth ; and they would not give up their hope in him for millions of worlds. *Shall he be your God ?* Why will you not give him your heart ? Could you enter heaven, and behold its happy inhabitants, could you then ask the angel hosts, “ Whence springs your happiness ? ” the answer might be, “ God loves us.” Could you put the

same question to the sainted spirits of the just, the same might be the reply, "God loves us." And could you inquire, "And can he love me?" the answer might be, "He can; such is his boundless mercy! He can, he will, if you seek all your happiness in him who died for your transgressions; if you listen to the voice of his mercy, and yield yourself to God." O yield to him, and then he will love even you with an everlasting love. Then he will love you with more than parental affection;¹ with love that will lead him to delight in bestowing blessings upon you.² And is it not reasonable to give yourself to this blessed God? Has he not a claim on you superior to all other claimants? Has he not a right to you? Is it not a base withholding from God that which is his righteous due, and thus a wicked robbery of God, to withhold from him yourself, your body, and your soul? Is it unreasonable, to entreat you to give to God the life he gives? the affections he implants? and the powers of body and of mind which he has bestowed upon you? Can you venture to say, "It is not reasonable that I should employ in God's service the life he prolongs, the time he gives, and the mercies he imparts. It is more reasonable I should employ all these in the service of Satan, and in neglect of God, than in his service." If self-interest move you, your own interest is concerned in surrendering yourself to God. How much you need from God! how little from the world! ere long nothing but a coffin and a grave! How long you will need bless-

(1) Isaiah, xlix. 15.

(2) Luke, xii. 35.

ings from God! how short a time from the world! then yield yourself to God.

3. If you are unwilling to comply with this entreaty, think of the guilt of slighting God, and of the numberless aggravations of such guilt. If you were to give food and clothing, for a single month, to some wretched beggar, would you not expect him to cherish gratitude and love? but what has God done for you! He gave you life, and would have you spend it in his own service; and will you not? He gives you mercies, and would have you love the Giver; and will you not? He gave his Son for you, to redeem you from death and hell, and bids you come to himself, by this divine Saviour; and will you not? O wicked ingratitude! O miserable sinner! What insults you heap on God, while he sees you prefer the merest trifles, the basest pleasures, or the most degrading sins, to his service and himself! Does God deserve such treatment from you? Better slight brother or sister, husband or wife, parent or child, than merely slight your God. That neglect were vile, but this is viler. Of that neglect, perhaps, you would not be guilty; but in this have been living all your days. And, perhaps, because not openly immoral, fancying that your heart and life were good, even while you were neglecting your greatest benefactor, with wicked ingratitude, every hour of waking life. Does God deserve such treatment! God, the source of happiness! the God of grace!

O sinner, how aggravated is your guilt! aggravated by the grace, and goodness, and excellencies of your abused and neglected benefactor. God so kind, and you so ungrateful! God so

compassionate, and you so negligent of all his compassion! Christ so loving, and you so basely neglectful of his love! his exertions on your behalf so great, and your neglect of him so obstinate, and long-continued! the Eternal Spirit so kind in producing serious impressions in your heart, and you so deaf to his still small voice, so unyeilding to his strivings in your breast.

4. For what is your God thus neglected? Here is another aggravation of your guilt. Not for an equal friend or benefactor, but for the world, and the flesh, and the devil. When God bids you turn, it is not to turn from what is good; but to exchange sin's base pleasures, or trifling neglect, for pure and solid delights, and serious attention to interests of eternal moment. It is not from a course of conduct that you can yourself approve; but from vile ungrateful neglect of the best friends, and of all that will long concern you. It is not from friends and benefactors, that have a righteous claim upon you; but from the pursuit of a world that is alluring you to ruin, and from the bonds of the wicked one that would sink you in the pit of despair and torment. Could a lost soul be snatched from hell, and then abuse this mercy, and neglect the God that delivered him, how vile, how horrid would be such ingratitude! O consider, you, while in your sins, are on the edge of hell! you are ready for that place of woe! you are all but there! God would deliver you, but oh, unhappy creature! you treat with base ungrateful neglect your compassionate Benefactor, and his invaluable mercy!

5. This guilt, in itself so aggravated, is aggravated still more, by all the mercies you neg-

lect or abuse; and by the love you slight; and by the means of grace you disregard; and by all that has been, and is, done to make you happy. Every careless day you live, adds to the heavy load of your transgressions. You have had another day in which to turn to God, and had it in vain. You have continued a rebel for another day. Every wasted sabbath aggravates your guilt. You have had another sabbath in which to turn to God, but had it in vain. Every warning addressed to you, every gospel sermon you hear, is another mercy lost upon you. Could they speak, your mercies might plead against you. Your sabbaths, had they voice, might say, "We shone on him, and he abused our precious hours!" Your weeks and years might complain "We furnished him with numerous opportunities to become wise unto salvation, but he slighted them all." The sun that shines on you, the earth on which you tread, might witness against you. These indeed have not speech, but your abuse of mercies will as much be remembered as if they had. Your Christian friends may have to witness against you, and to declare how often they warned you, but warned you in vain. Your minister may have to declare that he is free from your blood, for he has not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God. And God himself will be a swift and terrible witness against you. He will remember the mercies he gave, and the invitations he addressed to you; all he did to bless you; all which you slighted and abused. O, turn, turn to God!

6. Consider also the numerous claims which the Lord Jesus Christ, the brightest image of the

Father, has upon you. If your heart is not harder than stone, and cold as mountains of eternal ice, there are considerations in his character, and work, and love, that should bow you at his feet. Every god-like excellency appears in his character; and was displayed by him, when, as God manifest in the flesh, he sojourned below. And all those excellencies and attributes he would employ for your benefit, or to strengthen your consolations in himself. Think of all this, and should you not love him? Think of the greatness of his love. Imagine affection in its strongest forms; but his was stronger. Have you friends, that love you as life itself? Christ has displayed superior love. Those friends have not left a heaven for you! They have not trod through scenes of suffering and death on your account! Love you as much as they may, they have worn for you no crowns of thorns, and borne no cross of misery. They have left no throne, to raise you from the depths of woe, and laid down no life to ransom yours; but the blessed Son of God has done all this! He came from heaven to earth, to raise you from earth to heaven. He left his starry throne, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that he might give life to you. He agonized in Gethsemane, and endured the crown of thorns, that he might raise you, an undone child of man, to glory, honour, and immortality. He died on a cross of dishonour and misery, that he might raise you from death to life; and from condemnation to salvation; and from ruin to happiness; and from the deep debasement of sin to a throne of honour eternal in the heavens.

All this, reader, he has done as really for you, as if there were not another sinner that needed such stupendous mercy. And should you not yield your heart and your all to him? should you not love him with supreme and never-dying regard? Will you not, when none else can vie with him? Had some other friend done as much, or almost as much for you, had some other benefactor laid you under equal, or almost equal obligations, the guilt of neglect would be less atrocious. You might slight him then without such certain ruin, and without such vile ingratitude. If some other Saviour could say, "For you I left a heavenly throne; I stooped to deepest poverty on your account; I humbled myself, and became for you obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and for you I died: be mine"—if thus conflicting claims were made upon you, you might then slight the Lord Jesus, and give yourself to that other Saviour. But you know this is not, cannot be, the case; and will you not be his?

7. Think of the good which this divine Saviour would bestow upon you: as he humbled himself and died for you, so he would bless and save you. Think of your poverty; he would enrich you. Think of your guilt; he would cleanse you. Think of the pit of despair from which he would snatch you. Think of the numerous mercies he would bestow upon you. Compared with him, your dearest and best friends are helpless benefactors, and miserable comforters. If you have friends so affectionate, as to be willing even to sacrifice life itself for you, what are they to him? You have sins; can they forgive them? Ah no! You have a corrupt heart;

can they renew that heart, and fashion it afresh? No, never! You are a feeble mortal; can they support you amidst a thousands snares and trials? They cannot. You have to languish in sickness and pain; can they brighten the gloom of a sick chamber, and fill it with celestial peace? Ah no! You have to die; can they cheer your departing spirit, and give it an abundant entrance into an everlasting kingdom? Ah no! You have to be judged; can they crown you with approbation, and welcome you to glory? Ah no! With you they must stand before the same solemn bar, blessed or cursed, as they have regarded or slighted him. But have you sins; this divine Saviour can take the whole load away, so that his Father's eye shall not see one unforgiven blemish in your character, or stain upon your soul. Have you a sinful heart; he can change the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. Have you to pass through, perhaps, years of snares and trials; he can guard you from every snare, and support you in every trial; he can do this, till time, and snares, and trials end together. Have you to languish in sickness and suffering; he can dissipate the gloom of suffering; can make sickness better than health, and even pain than ease. Have you to die; he can cheer your departing spirit, and can infuse strong consolation into your otherwise sinking soul. He can uphold you when flesh and heart are failing together; he can receive your departing spirit; he can present it faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. He can say, "Father, this spirit is mine; receive it into the mansions thy love has prepared." And when mil-

lions tremble at his bar, and all nations are gathered there, he can say, "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world." O reader! the Lord Jesus Christ can do all this for you, and none beside can do it; and will you not yield yourself to him? Should not you, who love earthly friends, love this infinitely greater Benefactor. Not only is he *able* to do all this, but if you become his he *will* do it all. Multitudes that no man can number, have already experienced in life, in death, and in heaven, his care. Behold these happy companies, as described to you by an inspired pen: "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."¹

8. O, could you view that blessed assembly;

(1) Rev. vii. 9. 14, &c.

could you see countless thousands happy in their heavenly home; could you behold the Son of God, crowned with celestial glory, and hear him then inviting others to the realms of rest, and saying, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" would you then not desire to listen to his voice, and to be one of that happy multitude? Could you, as successive years roll on, and as new pilgrims pass from earth to heaven, behold this divine Saviour exerting for each his power and his care; could you see him supporting the dying, and welcoming the departing spirits of the just—would you not then yield yourself to him? Could you see him, as he will be seen at another day, bestowing the crown of life on every one that is faithful unto death—would you not then receive him? These things you cannot see now, but if you become his disciple, will see and know hereafter. If on the other hand you slight him and his salvation, how, when too late, will you covet the blessings you slight! How you will wish for an interest in him as your shepherd! How you will desire to be welcomed by him in the moment of death! and when you meet your God, what would you give for him then to say, "This soul is mine!" And when you see him on his judgment throne, with what inexpressible earnestness will you wish to meet the gracious welcome, that awaits his humblest followers! Will you then love him? Will you be his? Inquire of the dying the worth of his love. Ask the dead, and how would they describe its value! No words can utter their sense of its importance.

9. If you are made a happy partaker of the blessings of the Saviour's grace, this will prepare you for every event. The soul then possesses pardon, peace, happiness; God as its portion, and heaven as its home. Life need no longer retain its charm, nor death its terror. You need not fear pain, nor sickness, nor death, nor judgment, nor Satan, nor eternal scenes. You may welcome your departing hour, and greeting angels and everlasting realities. The blessed apostle counted all things loss, that he might win Christ. If Christ is won by you, you are rich in poverty, and blessed in affliction; will ere long be a conqueror in death, and in a few short years, at most, an inhabitant of heaven. Eternal blessings await you there; and there eternal friends are ready to receive you. Had you worldly prosperity, this might leave you. Had you only worldly friends, the dearest and the best, they must die; but if you have the Saviour as your friend, the nearest will he be when others are most remote; and though you must die alone the Lord will deliver you from every evil work, and will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom. And are you then his? or will you be so?

His love is everlasting love. As to this world, the dearest ties are quickly broken. You may soon have to utter the lamentation, "My brother or my sister, my parent or my child, my wife or my husband, is dead. The heart that was never cold before, is frozen by the cold of death;" but never would you have to say, "The Saviour's heart is cold, his hand has lost its power to bless." Rather, if his disciple, you might triumphantly exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹

10. Thus all that man deems excellent, is exceeded in the Saviour and in his salvation. Here are better friends than this world ever gave, and friends whose love entails no disappointment, and dreads no end. Here is better liberty and better wealth, than the liberty or the wealth for which millions have laboured or died. They who yield to him are infinite gainers; and will you not be his? should you not love him? Can you, will you, practically, though not in profession, prefer Satan to him? When you are invited to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are invited not to an uninterested spectator of your way, but to the kindest of Friends; not to a feeble benefactor, but to the Giver of eternal good; not to one to whom you are not indebted, but to a Saviour who has every solemn claim upon you; not to one whose favour will always be to you an indifferent matter, but to Him whose favour will soon appear of such value, that if possessed, worlds would not buy it from you; and if wanted, you would, did you possess them, give worlds to gain it. Think too, you are not now invited to a friend, who will for ever wait:

(1) Rom. viii. 35, &c.

there are limits to his patience and mercy. If you delay, he may swear in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest. Are you then willing to be his? Will you be so? Should you not love him? Will you consecrate yourself to this Lord of glory, who clothed in love, and possessed of eternal treasures, would guide you in life, cheer you in death, and conduct you to heaven? O reader, what is your choice?

II. Notwithstanding the excellencies of the divine Saviour are so great, and the blessings of his salvation so precious, no sin is more common than neglect of him. Many, who may read the preceding pages, when they reach this will, it is to be feared, be still neglectors of the all-compassionate and gracious Son of God. Perhaps you are one of this number; if so, be entreated to meditate on the guilt and folly of your conduct. The Lord Jesus in two parables represents the sin of neglecting himself and his salvation as the most common of sins. Describing the conduct of mankind, in reference to the message of heavenly mercy, he says, "They made light of it;"¹ "they all with one consent began to make excuse."² This sinful neglect is found among all classes, and all characters but one; the class composed of his devoted disciples. Some sins are confined to profligates; but not this. Of this the moral are as guilty as the profligate. Some sins are those of youth, others of age; but this is the sin of both. Some sins are the sins of poverty, others of wealth; but of this the rich and the poor are equally guilty. Some sins are the sins of the openly wicked, of the sabbath-breaking and pro-

(1) Matt. xxii. 5.

(2) Luke, xiv. 18.

profane part of mankind ; but this is the sin of millions that frequent the house of God, as well as of millions that neglect that sacred place. This is the sin of multitudes that avoid profaneness, as well as of the openly profane. Open crimes kill their thousands, but neglect of Christ kills its ten thousands. No question is more solemn than, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"¹

12. But when is salvation neglected? This precious boon is neglected when it is not earnestly and perseveringly pursued. "Strive," said the Lord, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."²—It is neglected when it is not the subject of our first and chief concern: "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness."³—Salvation is neglected when worldly concerns form an excuse for trifling with the interests of the deathless soul. Thus the Lord Jesus describes neglectors as acting: "They went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandize."—The Lord Jesus is neglected when he is not loved and valued more than every friend, and when, as far as the preference of the heart is concerned, all is not sacrificed for him: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."⁴—Neglect was the guilt of Capernaum, which exposed them to denunciations of awful

(1) Heb. ii. 3. (2) Luke, xiii. 24. (3) Matt. vi. 33. (4) Luke, xiv. 33.

woe: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."¹ The Saviour was not opposed and persecuted in Capernaum. We do not read of his fleeing thence, or being driven by violence away. But neglect was their sin. They heard; they were desirous of hearing the gracious words that dropped from his lips:² but they profited not. They embraced not the great salvation. They listened to his warnings, his threatenings, and his promises, and thronged to hear them; but heeded them not. Hence, no effect remained. How often, alas! is this the case. The gospel is heard, but not embraced. The swearer hears it, and is still a swearer; the drunkard, and is still a drunkard. The sabbath-breaker listens, but continues a sabbath-breaker: the covetous preserves his avarice: the worldly pursues his vanities: the careless young man and the trifling young woman continue careless and trifling, and the great salvation is thus neglected.

13. O reader, how little can you feel aright the guilt of slighting such a gospel and such a Saviour! The gospel exhibits a plan devised by the Eternal Father, and executed by the Son in human nature, to bestow the richest blessings upon lost mankind. A scheme of mercy devised by an Almighty Judge, to save a ruined malefactor; by the King Eternal, to redeem a wretched rebel!

(1) Matt. xi, 23, 24.

(2) Mark, ii, 2.

This gospel is adapted to preserve you from the depths of hell, and to bestow on you unfading happiness; yet this is the gospel you neglect! This plan of heavenly mercy was executed by him before whom demons tremble; at whose voice the dead arose; and at whose dying cry the heavens grew dark, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent: yet this is the gospel you slight! To secure and bestow this salvation the Lord of Glory came down from heaven, and laboured, and died; and yet you neglect the blessing! The Eternal Spirit exerts his influence to carry on the work of mercy; and yet you disregard this great salvation! Millions in heaven enjoy its blessings; millions in hell wail the want of them: and yet you on earth can trifle with them! Angels, with adoring wonder, would look into the mysteries of redemption;¹ and yet you, a dying mortal, treat those wonders with infatuated indifference! Wretched creature! that in doing this, art slighting a Saviour's love; his dying sorrows; his atoning blood; his living care; his promised blessings; all he has done; all he is doing; and all he will for ever do for those that listen to his voice!

14. O reader, what is the guilt of such neglect! Behold the Lamb of God! Behold the once suffering, now glorified Saviour! Why should you slight him! Does he deserve this at your hands! Has he for you done so much; endured so much, does he offer you so much; and have you no return to make but wicked neglect! Is he willing to do so much eternally for you; and should he be slighted! Does not he deserve

(1) † Peter, iv. 12.

your heart! Unhappy creature! He would bless you, and you in effect refuse to be blessed! Cruel enemy to your own soul! He would save your deathless soul, but you will destroy it; while you receive not him whom every saint in heaven received, and by slighting whom every lost sinner to whom the gospel has gone has perished. Many are the aggravations of such guilt. The cause of this wicked neglect lies in your unwillingness to be truly his. So he said to some of old, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."¹ The guilt he charged on them was unwillingness to be his: "Ye will not, (ye are not willing to) come to me." While you neglect the gospel, the same heavy charge lies against you. Oh the guilt of such a state! He has every claim upon you; and you not willing to be his! Follow him in your thoughts from his throne to his manger at Bethlehem, and to his cross at Calvary, and think, all this was for you; and you not willing to come to Him! Think of the eternal Father's goodness in giving such a Saviour, when "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;"² and you not willing to receive him! Think of his design to save you from the wrath to come, to raise you to glory, honour, and immortality; and you not willing! O horrid load of guilt! O exceeding wickedness! A God willing to receive you as a child; and you unwilling to become one! A Saviour willing to make you his own; and you unwilling to be his!

15. The neglect of Christ binds all your other sins upon you, and increases tenfold the load of your transgressions. Did you receive him, your

(1) John, v. 40.

(2) Rom. viii. 32.

guilt would all be blotted out; but as you slight him, it will be all charged against you hereafter. Then it will be seen, that you were the man that sinned against infinite goodness with a high hand, and slighted every admonition to repentance; or that you were the woman that rebelled against the God of love, and would do evil in his sight; that you were the thoughtless youth, or the careless girl, that lived in the midst of privileges, but abused them, and refused your heart to him, to whom they were meant to lead you; that you, perhaps, had a house of prayer near your dwelling, yet wasted your sabbaths at home, or, if you entered the sacred courts, trifled with all that is most solemn. What confusion will overtake you when all this is known! Your wicked neglect of Christ, weightens all your load of other guilt; binds every curse upon you; fits you for hell, and soon will sink you there. For to receive the grace of God in vain, is the worst abuse of mercy. It is bad to receive in vain, and to render useless by wicked neglect, the gifts of food and raiment, liberty and health; but, far worse, to treat with indifference God's love in his only-begotten Son. This is the finishing crime in human guilt. It is viler ingratitude, than all other ingratitude of which you can be guilty. When persisted in, it fills up the measure of the sinner's iniquities. His other guilt might all be blotted out; but this sin fixes all the rest upon him, and makes the cup of his wickedness overflow. Thus, in reality, it is the sealing act to the soul's damnation. So long as you live without receiving the Lord Jesus, you are lying in all your guilt; and your danger is extreme. You

are always in danger. Do you laugh; it is on the edge of hell. Do you wake; you are nearer to waking there. Do you sleep; you are nearer to the place where you will never sleep. Do you rejoice; your joy will soon be changed to sadness, and your laughter to eternal mourning. While you are neglecting Christ, your life is sin, your years a curse, and your death will be perdition. Neglect is that sin which the lost will have to remember with infinite remorse, while eternity endures. The despairing soul will be tormented with the reflection, "I would not come to Christ. Had I come to him, the guilt that has undone me, would all have been forgiven; but I would not come. I caused, by my neglect, the Lord of Glory to say of me, with guilty millions, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not!" O sinner, these words may ring in the hearing of a lost soul through eternal ages! "Ye would not come to me." And still will the wretched criminal have for ever and ever and ever to feel, "I am out of heaven, because, I would not go to the Lord Jesus Christ; I *would* neglect him. I am in hell, because I *would* not yield to him; I would neglect him." And every pang the miserable immortal feels, may revive the tormenting recollection, "I endure this pang, I am here, because I would not go to Christ, but fixed all my other guilt upon me, by wicked neglect of him."

16. In slighting Christ, you are doing just what Satan would have you do; and are gratifying his infernal desires for your own destruction. The choice of heartfelt religion, is a choice

which is approved by angels, and by their great Sovereign, God. It is that which the dying and the dead approve. It is a profitable one in youth or age; in health and sickness; in life and death. It is a choice, which all will wish at length to have made, and of which no one will ever repent; but it is a choice which is opposed by the world and the devil. Satan does his utmost, to prevent unhappy men from receiving the Lord of Life, and salvation through him. He takes away the seed from the careless heart,¹ he hides the gospel, by his infernal influence, from the benighted mind; for, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world, hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."²

Consider, reader, who it is that would keep you from Christ—Satan and his blinded slaves; and while you neglect the gracious Saviour, you gratify the cruel wishes of the wicked one himself. You accomplish his end as effectually, as if you seriously designed this result. You destroy your soul as completely, as if you could sell it to "your adversary the devil, who, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."³ You would not be so infatuated as solemnly to vow, "I will be the devoted slave of the wicked one; I will not be the follower of the Lord Jesus; I will not learn of him; I will not give him my affections, nor commit to him my soul; I will live careless of his salvation; I will call him Lord, but will neglect him; and treat with equal indifference,

(1) Matt. xiii. 19. (2) 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. (3) 1 Pet. v. 8.

his invitations and his threatenings, his favour and his anger. I will not have pardon from him, nor receive any blessing from his hands; but I will perish, and deliberately do I adopt as my own, the awful language of the dying profligate, 'Come, O devil, and take me.'"¹ But though you would tremble to utter such expressions, be solemnly assured, that while you neglect Christ, you gratify the desires, and accomplish, as to yourself, the designs of Satan as effectually as if you expressed such horrid resolutions. This is indeed the dreadful fact. Be not so deceived by the wiles of the wicked one, as to imagine that something less decidedly ruinous is connected with your neglect. This is the case, whatever you do, if from your heart you receive not the Saviour. Only stop short of coming to him, and Satan's designs are accomplished. It will matter little in the view of that infernal enemy, that you may respect religion, and be less immoral than some others; for while you commit not yourself to the Saviour, you will still belong to his dark kingdom; and still be guided by him, according to the course of this world.

17. Dreadful as is the guilt of slighting the Saviour's claims, not less deplorable is the folly. In neglecting the Lord Jesus, you are neglecting with him blessings of everlasting worth; all the blessings of eternity. Behold them! view those mansions of peace! that better country. those rivers of pleasure at God's right hand for evermore! those crowns of glory, which await the just! and all the tranquil peace, and serene delight, of one unbounded, eternal day of happi-

(1) William Pope.

ness! In slighting the Redeemer, you slight all this. Ask angels and saints in light, the value of these blessings, and would they not tell you, that the wealth of a world were insignificant compared with the *smallest* celestial treasure! But what are *all* those treasures, yet you slight *all*! Yes, in slighting Christ, you are slighting all this precious world of blessings. Not only are neglecting him, but every good with him, and in losing him are losing all. O wretchedness extreme, but self-incurred! Ruin everlasting, but wilfully chosen! for how soon will all, for which Christ is lost, have left you for ever! You are not his. Unhappy mortal! what a load of guilt and ruin is upon you! Yours is an unutterable loss, and an everlasting one; the loss of all the benefits of the Saviour's toils and death; of all connected with his everlasting love. It is enough to break the heart, merely to think of such a loss; what will it be to suffer it! How would you feel if every earthly help and good were lost! if you were deprived of every possession and every friend! if helpless, houseless, starving, and naked, you were turned adrift to pine and die! But it is a far worse loss to lose all the Saviour bled to secure; all that gladdens martyrs, saints, and angels; all that enraptures heaven, and brightens and blesses eternity. Thus you are your own worst enemy, a worse enemy to your own immortal soul than even Satan can be! He can but tempt you to follow the world: he cannot compel you to neglect the Saviour and die. It is you, that by refusing to come to Christ, choose to perish. The blessed effects of conversion are great beyond expression.

Think of one ransomed soul, arrayed in the garments of salvation and victory. Had that now saved soul been lost, could it have shed one tear in a century, it might have shed a sea of tears, and yet have been no nearer to an end of sorrow and despair, when the ocean were full than when the first tear fell. That one soul may enjoy in the unmeasured expanse of eternal ages, more happiness than the united sum of blessings, which all the angels of light have ever yet enjoyed. That one soul, in which sin would have reigned unto death, in which every hellish disposition would eternally have flourished, shall now for ever bear its Creator's lovely likeness; and flourish in all the beauties of holiness, and the glories of immortality. Thus blessed and happy, reader, might your soul become; but slighting the Lord Jesus Christ, you slight all this inestimable good. What would others give for the blessings you thus madly slight! what would the dying! what would a despairing soul! what would a spirit just quitting the body, and sinking into the abyss! what would a lost soul! what would you in death or judgment, and through eternity! O think, reader, how dreadful is your infatuation, while you neglect the Saviour! and think how transient, sinful, ruinous, and hateful, are the objects for which you neglect him. Place, as it were, on one side, the Saviour and salvation. All the blessings of his love; all the treasures of eternity; the eternal God as your portion, and mansions in heaven as your dwelling. Place on the other side, all this world can give, all your sins; all your vanities; all your pleasures; all that ensnares and bewitches your

soul to perdition. Poor sinner. Do you prefer the latter! Wretchedly blinded and guilty creature, do you for these sins and follies, slight the eternal God, the only Saviour and all those blessings! O if you do, devils might gaze on you with delight! the saved with grief, and the damned with wonder! How deservedly if you persist in such a course, will you sink to the abyss of hell! and what will be your remorse there.

18. Neglect of the divine Saviour not only robs the soul of every blessing, but with a deadly malignity changes every present blessing to a curse. You have God's mercies; you had better never have had them, for every mercy will increase your condemnation. The more gracious God appears, the more guilty are you for neglecting him. When a dying profligate was reminded that God is merciful, he answered, "Or I could not have been thus guilty." You have life; you change by your neglect life itself into a dreadful evil; you had better never have been born, than come into existence, to live a few guilty years, in trifling and folly, and then be for ever hateful and wretched. You have rational and immortal powers. If you neglect Christ, you had better have been a serpent, or a brute, a crawling worm, or a loathsome reptile; than, through your own sin, to be immortal, only to be wretched, and rational merely to be guilty. Reptiles and worms are laden with no sin, and no ingratitude; they treasure up no wrath against the day of wrath; they fill the place in which their Creator has fixed them, and neither render him ingratitude for mercies given, nor

have cause to fear his displeasure. But you, possessed of a rational and immortal spirit, raised far in nature above the mere animal creation, are sinning against goodness unbounded, and excellence that is infinite. O happy is the serpent from which you start with horror! happy is the worm you tread under your feet! nay, happy is the senseless dust, on which you walk, compared with yourself, while you neglect all the excellencies and all the love of the Saviour. You have many privileges, and sabbaths of inestimable worth; but by abusing them, you change the medicine to poison, the honey to gall. You had better never have had them; had better have been a heathen, wretched and miserable, his food the wild roots of the wilderness, his house a cave, his god a serpent or a stone, than live in the midst of Gospel light, and yet neglect the Author of salvation. You would have been foolish then to look at the lights of heaven, and the scenes of earth, and yet say to a stone, "Thou art my God;" but you would not have been so foolish, as you are, if possessing the bible, and having salvation set before you, you slight that great salvation. You would have been guilty then, to worship the inanimate block, instead of its unseen Creator; but not so guilty, as in the midst of gospel blessings to neglect the Giver of them all. Tyre and Sidon were guilty heathen cities; but more guilty were those that heard in vain the Saviour's voice. To some of them he said, "I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for

you.”¹ The name of Christ has been proclaimed to you ; but if you neglect him, you had better never have heard that name, which gladdens the hosts of the redeemed. The love of God has been displayed to you ; but while you neglect his Son, has been displayed in vain. Though the Father has done so much to bless you, you are still lost. Though the Son has suffered so much for you, you are still unforgiven and unchanged. Though the Spirit has manifested such kindness to you, you reject all by slighting the Saviour, to whom he would lead you, and thus resisting the Holy Ghost. And all this mischief will soon be irreparable. Your blessings changed to curses, will be curses to eternity. The blood of Christ imparting to you no salvation, will be on you to aggravate your everlasting condemnation. Days and years will have been given in vain to you ; the last will have departed and left you in your sins. Heaven, once within your reach, will be for ever closed against you ; and escape from hell once easy and sure, will for ever be impracticable. What might you be if you listened to the Saviour ? A child of God and an heir of happiness ! What will you make yourself by slighting him ? A child of wrath, an heir of ruin, an inhabitant of hell !

19. In neglecting the Lord Jesus Christ and Salvation, you neglect the *only* Saviour and the only Salvation that can benefit your immortal spirit. Were there another Saviour, and another salvation, this guilt and folly would not be so appalling ; but there is no other God to pity you if you slight the grace the God of the gospel

(1) Matt. xi. 22.

has manifested; there is no other Saviour to die for you, if you slight him who suffered on Calvary; there is no other heaven open to you, if you neglect that to which he would raise you; there is no other deliverance from the power and malice of Satan, from the curse of the law, and from eternal death, if you slight that the gospel exhibits. Were there but one physician that could relieve a sick man, how foolish would it be to slight that one! Were there but one arm strong enough to help an endangered man, what madness would it be to slight that one! Ah! there is but one physician that can cure your dying soul! There is but one arm strong enough to help you from death to life, from ruin to heaven; and but one short life, in which to receive the life that never ends. Slight that one physician, and all cure is hopeless; neglect that one arm, and all help is impossible; waste that one short life, and life eternal is for ever lost; do this, and where for you ere long can help be found! The universe cannot furnish it, and thou, great God, wilt not.

20. As neglect of Christ robs you of all good, and does to your deathless soul irreparable mischief, so it exposes you to evils numerous, most dreadful and unavoidable. Not one lasting good can be possessed by you; not one evil shunned. Your state will be ere long wholly evil, and eternally evil. If you could be partly happy, partly holy, your condition were not so deplorable, but without Christ you can have no happiness, no holiness, no God, no Saviour, no heaven. Not one sin is forgiven you! No mercy is found by you! No blessing is waiting for you! Eter-

nity is before you, but no good for all eternity. You are exposed to the wrath of God and of the Lamb, for of neglectors it is said, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation."¹ "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."² "Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me."³ How awful will be that wrath, when love is changed to wrath! and mercy to vengeance! while you have no Saviour. Who is your Father? The wicked one. Mr. Whitfield relates, that a minister visiting a young woman near death, said to her, "Where do you hope to go when you die." She answered, "I do not care where I go." "What," said he, "do not you care whether you go to heaven or hell?" "No," she replied, "I do not care whither I go." "But," said he, "if it were put to your choice, where would you go?" Her awful answer was, "To hell." "Are you mad?" said he; "will you go to hell?" She answered, "Yes, I will." "Why so!" he exclaimed. "Why," said she, "all my relations are there." O reader, think that while you are unconverted, your eternal relations are there. "Your father, the devil, is there;" infernal spirits and lost souls; "your brothers and sisters are there;" and you, while careless, are hastening to join them.

21. Perhaps you treat these warnings with indifference; but "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Indifference cannot bless you, nor carelessness alleviate your ruin; for the end is coming. Pretending to fear

(1) Heb. ii. 3.

(2) Heb. x. 31.

(3) Luke, xix. 27.

nothing will not prove you happy, or make you safe. On the verge of bankruptcy some have seemed most prosperous ; and on the edge of hell many a miserable sinner has been careless and cheerful : but the end was at hand. What will the end of neglect be ? What to you ? Conscience, now asleep, will then awake to all the horrors of remorse. Satan, now an unseen tempter, will then be a visible tormentor. Sin, now beloved by you, will then bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. Departed hours of sinful merriment will come to mind again ; but, O, how changed will they appear ! What hours of guilt and madness ! Sinful companions, now desired associates in folly, will then seem more like devils than friends ! Oh, think of this when slighting Christ ; when quenching the Spirit ; when running into sin ; when reveling with the vain and the worldly ; think of the end ! What shall the end be ? Then how changed too will be the sinner's views of mercy now abused !

Even when dying, an alarmed neglecter said, " O ! that I had been wise, that I had known this, that I had considered my latter end ! Death is knocking at my doors : in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp ; and then judgment, the tremendous judgment ! how shall I appear, unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God ! How shall I endure the day of his coming ! O ! that holiness is the only thing I now long for. I have not words to tell you how highly I value it. I would gladly part with all my estate, large as it is, or a world, to obtain it. Now my benighted eyes are enlight-

ened ; I clearly discern the things that are excellent. What is there in the place whither I am going but God ! Or what is there to be desired on earth but religion ! O ! if the *righteous* Judge would try me once more ; if he would but relieve, and spare me a little longer ; in what a spirit would I spend the remainder of my days ! But, alas ! why do I amuse myself with fond imaginations ? The best resolutions are now insignificant, because they are too late."

If the prospect of death produces such a change of view, what, when the last conflict has ended, will be the feelings of millions, when all the effects of neglecting Christ are seen, are felt ! One may exclaim, "Woe is me ! Did I think of this when I laughed at piety, and treated all its blessings with contempt !" Another : "Did I look for this end when I slighted the admonitions of pious parents, and all their entreaties to seek God and happiness !" A third : "Alas ! was I hastening to this ruin when I refused to listen to the Saviour's voice ; when I talked of liberty and followed pleasure ! Was this the liberty I chose ! and this the pleasure to which I hastened ! Miserable wretch ! God called, and I refused ! now I eat the fruit of my own ways, and am filled with my own devices !" O reader, could you feel, for one moment, what it is to be lost, with the full sense of being lost for eternity ; could you longer neglect the Saviour ? Not to have one mercy, not to be one moment safe ! Oh, what a condition ! Are you then willing to flee from poverty, sin, hell, to the arms of heavenly mercy ? Would it be madness, if starving, to refuse an estate ? if drowning, to refuse

help? would it be distraction to run into a burning volcano? to go unarmed into a lion's den? to throw yourself in a tiger's path? It is worse distraction to slight a gracious Saviour's love; and by doing so to bring huge, intolerable, and everlasting evils upon your soul. And to do this when time with you is already so far spent; when eternity is so near; when the rewards of sin are so poor; and when salvation must be found now or never. Compared with salvation nothing deserves regard. Life to the condemned, help to them in a house on fire, food to the dying, are not worthy to be named in comparison with this blessing. If you were condemned, or in the midst of flames, how welcome would be deliverance; but this salvation is more worthy of acceptance; and will you neglect this?

22. In addition to all that has been already urged, it is an awful consideration, that while you neglect the Lord Jesus you are actually associated in dreadful rebellion against God with all the vilest of mankind, and with all the evil beings in the universe; and thus must live and die laden with horrid ingratitude. You may not be an infidel; but with infidels are a rebel against God. You may not be a murderer; but with murderers must be classed now and will have your future portion. You may not be lewd, or dishonest, or a drunkard, or profane; but you belong to the same miserable family, as all the lewd, and drunken, and profane, and dishonest. You are not a devil; but, while an impenitent sinner, with devils are a rebel against God. Thus with them you are united in sin and in conduct, and soon, unless grace happily deli-

ver you, will be united with them in misery. O reader, how wretched and how odious is such a character! how hateful must you be in the sight of all God's holy and devoted subjects! How hateful while unwilling to yield to so good a God, to so kind a Saviour! and if you continue what you are, this will mark your character for ever. Hereafter you will be known as one so wicked, that you would not yield to God. This will be known in the day of awful judgment. The mask of delusion or deception will then be torn away. All the excuses you now form for your guilty neglect, will have vanished like a dream. The cause of your neglect of all that is good, will appear to have been the vileness of your own depraved heart; and you will stand before the universe branded with the guilt of refusing to love your God and the Saviour. Even in the abyss of despair you will be known as one that would not love God. Thus, if you continue neglectful, *laden with ingratitude and sin, you must live.* While you live, could angels weep they might weep over you. "There," it might be said, "is an immortal being that should be aspiring to heaven, grovelling in the mire, with but one span of time for mercy, yet wasting that one; invited to everlasting life, yet utterly careless of the invitation; possessed of an immortal spirit to which God is most kind, and himself most cruel."

Under *this load you must die.* When your last hour arrives it may be said, "there lies and dies one to whom God has given a thousand mercies, but who has abused them all. The blessings that should have trained that departing

spirit for heaven, have all been bestowed in vain ; and now that unprepared and long-neglected soul is going, covered with guilt, to its final account, and to its direful home." And when you are in the grave it may be said, "There lies one who enjoyed through many years the means of grace and the tidings of mercy, but who went down into the dwelling of the dead unpardoned and unchanged. That poor dust once loved the world, and for it slighted eternal good. The world has left that dust to moulder there till the resurrection day, insensible of pleasure or of pain ; and the ruined soul that once inhabited that mouldering dust, is gone where griefs for ever live, and sorrows for ever multiply, and remorse for ever reigns, and darkness and despair for ever dwell. O miserable purchase ! O foolish choice ! that gained some trifles from the world and ruined a deathless soul !"

23. Reader, life or death are before you, according as you regard or slight the mighty Saviour. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life."¹ If you continue to neglect Christ your doom must be death and only death. O choose not death but life ! Welcome now the long-neglected Saviour ! and how different will be your state ! He will blot out your sins, and enrich you with every good. Then it shall be said, "The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."² His broad shield is ever over thee, and his love will for ever bless thee. The promise belongs to you, "Fear not : for I

(1) Deut. xxx. 19

(2) Deut xxxlii. 27.

nave redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."¹ The Saviour of myriads will then be your Saviour and your Shepherd. The good Shepherd's care will bless you; and you may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."² He will guard you and fulfil the promise; "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He will keep you and train you for heaven; he will enable you to subdue your corruptions and lead you to immortal life. What now is your inheritance? the home that angels have, the heaven that they enjoy. Who are now your future companions? all the first-born sons of light! all the spirits of the just made perfect! all whose names are written in heaven. They loved the Saviour, and they followed him. Their dwelling will be yours, if their Lord is yours. And will you not be his? Then your character, which else would have been for ever hateful, will be for ever lovely: will shine in a fair though humble resemblance of your Lord's, and thus will shine for *ever*. Choose then this day whose you will be, and whom you will serve.

(1) Is. xliii. 1-3.

(2) Psalm, xxiii. 1-3.

CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGION ENFORCED BY THE SOLEMNITIES OF
DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

1. WHEN the scriptures describe the spirit and conduct of the early disciples of the Lord Jesus, they are represented as those who were *waiting* for the Son of God from heaven;¹ who were looking for the Saviour;² who loved his appearing;³ and who thus were familiar with the solemnities of death and eternity. Insufficient attention to these solemn subjects, lowers the piety even of the pious; and keeps from safety and peace many that might otherwise be led, by the impressive sense of their dying condition, to seek eternal good. It cannot then be unappropriate, while pressing heartfelt piety on your devout attention, in addition to the many allusions to these solemn subjects, contained in the preceding pages, more expressly to beg your attention to them. O regard them as solemn motives, for the unhesitating and unfeigned consecration of yourself to him, who hath brought life and immortality to light. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment."⁴ All must die, but a wide difference exists in death. Many die unforgiven, unchanged, unblest, unprepared for eternity.

(1) 1 Thess. i. 10.

(2) Phil. iii. 20.

(3) 2 Tim i. 1, 2.

(4) Heb. ix. 27.

This in the case with all who die uninterested in the Saviour's grace. But his friends die, some peacefully, some exultingly, *all safely*. They die forgiven, renewed, and blest. How will you die?

2. *You* must die, and the dying hour must inspire feelings unknown before; the value of the Saviour, and the worth of the blessings of his grace, will never be fully known till then. Christ is all in all for the day of death. His love cheers with immortal hopes life's last solemn hours. How solemn is the dying hour! The body sinking under the violence of disease. The powers of nature rapidly failing. The pulse fluttering and about to stop for ever. The spirit just going to take its everlasting flight. Mourning friends surrounding the dying sufferer, and observing with breathless silence the last struggles of mortality. And ministering angels, or infernal spirits, as unseen visitants, watching near the dying pillow. Perhaps some violent convulsion seizes the sufferer, and the struggle is soon over. Perhaps, while the soul retains all its consciousness, death steals gradually upon its mortal tabernacle. The coldness of the grave seizes the hands and the feet. Now speech fails. Now sight is gone. Now the breathing becomes weaker, and weaker, and weaker. At length the heart ceases to throb, and all the tale of life is over. What are the thoughts and feelings of an immortal spirit in such a situation! what its views of a life of sin! what of a life of poverty or comfort! what of a life of piety! Can language describe what its feelings must be, respecting the unutterable vanity of every posses-

sion and every pursuit excepting heartfelt religion! A pious lady adding a few lines to a letter she had begun, but which the approach of death prevented her completing, wrote, "I fear I cannot finish. O my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have *now*, you would see as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death. Let it be so with you."

Solemn as is the dying hour, the presence and support of the Saviour are sufficient to impart strong consolation. An aged minister, eminent in his day, being at the funeral of one more eminent, a friend said to him, "Well, Dr. Grovesnor, you have seen the end of Dr. Watts, and you will soon follow: what think you of death?" "Think of it," he replied, "Why, when death comes, I shall smile upon death, if God smiles upon me." A dying Christian said, "O the joys I feel! my heavenly Father is carrying me to heaven in his arms; I am going thither *on a bed of roses*. I feared this hour, lest my pains should extort an impatient word, or cause that I should seem to be uneasy under his hand; I have often wished to die praising God; how kind is he who gives me leave to do so! trust my God; he will not fail those who put their trust in him. O the comforts I feel."¹

Suppose yourself just about to die. Before you stretches an immeasurable eternity. Behind you is the now ending span of time. What *now* to you are friends, possessions, pleasures! All that once agitated, pained, or pleased, is vanity; but the Saviour's love assumes new importance. He now is all in all. If you have

(1) Thos. Reynolds

him, you have every thing ; without him nothing. Suppose yourself just launched into eternity. The scenes of time are ended ; you have closed your eyes to open them on earth no more ; the latest pang is over ; the last conflict finished, and eternal scenes have opened upon you. What now appear the world, youth, health, prosperity, pleasure ! what idle dreams ! what now are friends, whose love once seemed almost as important to your comfort as life itself ! It is nothing now. What now are earthly possessions, comforts, or sorrows ! They are equally and infinitely insignificant. Whether your way was painful or pleasing, matters nothing now ! Whether reproach or honour, wealth or poverty, were your lot, is all one now. Nothing now avails you any thing but Christ. All you want is in him. The frowns or smiles of mankind no longer concern you ; all depends on his. If he smile none can frown ; if he frown none can smile. Who can reject you if he welcome ! who can welcome if he rejects you ! In that hour, at the furthest not very distant, how much you will desire the blessings of the gospel !

The closing of the scenes of time, is to every soul, the commencement of unutterable solemnities. When absent from the body, you will be present with the Lord, or numbered with the lost.

3. The solemnities of eternal judgment should prompt you to surrender yourself to the Saviour. None can conceive what will be the solemnity, the joy, or the terror of the great day. Nor are the scriptural statements on this subject poetical figures, but a description of solemn

facts. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God."¹ "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." He shall come to be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe.² "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."³ "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."⁴ According to these infallible testimonies the archangel will descend; the trumpet will proclaim the Judge's coming; and such a sound be heard through all the regions of this lower creation, that, compared with it, the shouts of an assembled world, or the roar of ten thousand thunders, would be stillness; for all mankind will hear. The Lord will then visibly descend. He will come with his mighty angels

(1) *Thess. iv. 16.* (2) *2 Thess. i. 6.* (3) *1 Cor. xv. 52.*

(4) *Matt. xxv. 31, &c. &c.*

in flaming fire. He will come in the glory of his Father, and in his own. He cometh with ten thousands of his saints. Now "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."¹ The righteous rise to glory, honour, and immortality; but the unrighteous also hear his voice. In their case that which "was sown in corruption, rises in incorruption," that it may endure a death that can never die. That which "was sown in dishonour," rises to dishonour more aggravated, "to shame and everlasting contempt." That which "was sown in weakness, is raised in power;" strong to endure immortal misery. That which was sown a natural body, rises a spiritual body, to become the accursed dwelling of that immortal spirit that prostituted its powers on earth to folly, vanity, and guilt.

4. The scenes of final judgment advance, and, amidst their solemnities, "the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein are burnt up!"² O, reader! in meditation anticipate this day! View it as come! Think you hear the cry, "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand!" The sun, moon, and stars have ceased to shine! The heavens have passed away. The cares and businesses, the pursuits and delights of earth have vanished like a dream. The tumults of nations, the contentions of statesmen, the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of joy or of weep-

(1) John, v. 28.

(2) 2 Peter, iii. 10.

ing, are heard no more. The oath is sworn that time shall be no longer, and all its scenes are ended. The dead are raised, the Judge is come. There he sits in majesty, and at his bar the nations are collected to hear their doom. He sets the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. The righteous meet him with rapture; the unrighteous are dragged before his awful bar. Within them gnaws the worm of conscience that never dies. All appear in their real character; there is no deception and no mistake here. There is no middle condition. There is no mingling among the pious if not pious; the ungodly often mingle with the pious now, but not then. There myriads of angels observe the solemn process, and wait and watch the conduct of their King. Above opens the higher heaven to welcome his redeemed. Below burns the pit of fire and darkness prepared for the devil and his angels, and ready as the prison of the lost. All are about to rise or sink for ever, and you and I are there. Long has this day been spoken of; long believed, long disbelieved; but it is come. The believer and the infidel alike believe in it now. It is come. The last day of man's probation is over, and all are assembled for their eternal doom. It is come. The Judge is seen; how different from what he once was seen! how changed from what he then appeared! how changed are all his followers too! and O how changed his foes! Where is now their unbelief? their pride? their haughtiness? their scorn? It is come. Time has rolled its last year, its last hour away. This day seemed slow to come; the day of mercy

lasted long, but it is over, and this judgment day is come.

5. The Judge eternal now pronounces man's unchanging doom. He says to them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." He owns their humble services of faith and love; and according to his solemn promise, confesses them who confessed him. O, sweet words of eternal life! they are pronounced, and suspense, and doubt, and fear are vanished for ever. Now, indeed, the righteous come to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads; now, indeed, sorrow and sighing are fled away. What a recompense is this for tears, and toils, and sorrows! What thinks the Christian now of these! The Saviour allowed his followers once to toil in sorrow and persecution; but now he changes toil to rest, and sorrow to unending joy! He let them endure grief; but now he gives the crown of life and honour. The great day of wrath is no day of wrath to them; no fears, no alarm, will now disturb their tranquillity more. Many of them toiled in poverty, and were afflicted and trodden down of men; but all this is past. Their conflicts are changed for the victor's palm. What will be the humble Christian's feelings while gazing on his Judge? "This is he to whom I fled! This is he after whom I struggled, at times with almost fainting steps! This is he whom the world would fain have had me leave! This is he to whom my heart was devoted! This is he, about an interest in whose love I often felt painful anxiety; but he is come, and I am his I

know it now, and anxiety and enemies shall vex me no more."

O reader, would you be thus blessed? If you would, remember these things are no cunningly devised fables; and, as in the view of death and judgment, now embrace unfeigned religion.

6. But hearken to a different sentence. Behold a different scene! Besides those on the right hand, there are myriads on his left. What says the Judge to them? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."¹ Oh, the horrors of that sentence, and of that day! If you should be among them, how will you meet that day? What will be the terror of beholding a long-neglected Judge? to see him on whose decision hangs life or death eternal? to see him on whose smile or frown heaven or hell depends? And to recollect what he once was? what he once would have been to you? and with what base neglect his love was treated? And what will be the terror connected with the disclosure of unnumbered crimes, when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing?"² Should you die in your sins, all your transgressions will then pass in direful review. Secret or open guilt will alike be visible; crimes shrouded in privacy and darkness, will be open to universal view. God says of men, "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."³ We may forget our own offences; others may forget them; multitudes of sins are unobserved; and multitudes more for-

(1) Matt. vii. 23.

(2) Eccles. xii 14.

(3) Hos. vii. 2.

gotten. Time weakens or wears out the impression of the evil of many transgressions; but God remembers all. They glare always before him in all their hideous deformity. Oh, if you should live careless of your Judge, and a stranger to his pardoning grace, how will you meet him then? "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God,"¹ but how will you give up that account? If a prince were to employ a servant to transact some weighty business for him in a foreign land, and, on his return, calling for his account, should find so much time spent in singing, so much in dancing, so much in novel-reading, so much at the play-house, so much in foolish merriment with gay companions, so many days idled away, and so many played away, and the very business for which he was sent entirely neglected and undone, what would be thought of such a servant? Would not his master justly cast him off for ever? God has entrusted to you talents, privileges, and mercies; has given you life that you may glorify him, and be prepared for everlasting life. But if the great concerns of religion are neglected, all this is left undone; and what must be your account, when, like the wicked and slothful servant just described, you have to render one to your injured Master? How will you account for your numberless sins? for abused mercies? for privileges neglected? for admonitions disregarded? for preferring trifles to God, Christ, and religion? for thus insulting the Father, and rejecting the Son, and grieving the Spirit?

And what will be the terror of the wrath these crimes have merited? Thousands of years of

(1) Rom. xiv. 12.

mercy will have rolled away, and every sinner had his day of grace and mercy, but all will now be changed to vengeance; to vengeance deserved for mercies abused, and for love despised; deserved for slighting God, neglecting Christ, and resisting the Holy Ghost. Patience will long have waited; but patience will have given place to wrath. The Lord will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,"¹ upon all that have not obeyed the truth. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."² O, reader, if you continue uninterested in the Saviour, this will be your lot. However thoughtless or unbelieving, you *must* appear before his bar. There you will be seen confounded, trembling, and despairing. There you will stand with all the impure and the profligate; the vile and the infernal; with all the monsters of iniquity that the earth ever bore, and that meet there laden with unpardoned sin. The Judge's lightnings will flash, and his thunder roll; you will hear your doom, and that doom will be the damnation of hell. The doom of that day will be final. There will be no after-change. The blessed will never be cursed; the cursed will never be blessed. When man was created, Satan entered Eden, and Adam fell: Christ came to earth, and the fallen rise; but no tempter will enter heaven, no Saviour will visit hell. Wrath then experienced will never be appeased. Through the days of heavenly mercy, the Saviour was full of compassion; prayer was heard and pardon given: but not then. There

(1) Rom. ii. 1.

(2) Psalm, xi. 6.

will be no sacrifice to atone for unpardoned guilt; no prevailing prayer; no intercessor. The ungodly will cry to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."¹ Alas! vain refuge! yet the rocks would sooner hear their cry than the inexorable Judge. If through irreligion this should be your lot, "Lord, Lord," you may exclaim, "have mercy on me." No: the day of mercy is past; that prayer might have been heard once, but cannot be heard now. The gate of salvation is shut, and you and others despairing cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." No: the door shut once never opens.² No, sinner, never! no, never! Eternal truth has said it! no, never! for you would neglect the Lord of life and salvation; you would not be his disciple. When the Lord invites you to come to him and be happy, you can refuse; but when he says, Die, you cannot refuse to die; and when he says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," depart you must. Into that abyss may devils drag you, and enmity to God will make you like a devil there.

7. Should you be exposed to all this, what will you think of the present warning? Should you be at his left hand, or see some you know among the blest and be among the lost, what bitter regret will then distress your soul? What joyous meetings of the saved will there be on that day! What solemn partings where some have known Christ, and others slighted him! What solemn partings between neighbours and congregations! What eternal separations between

(1) Rev. vi. 16.

(2) Matt. xxv. 10.

fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, friends and companions, some ascending to glory, others sinking to destruction. Of the lost, whose heart would not break on that day, at that separation, if a heart then could break? but that will not be. Whatever your friends do, let this be your concern, to secure the Judge's welcome and everlasting life. But what can give you the certainty of this? Nothing but possessing an interest in his salvation. Then you may indulge a cheerful confidence, that, when on his judgment throne, he will justify you; and who shall condemn you? That he in effect will say, or act as if he said, "This soul is mine. It was committed to my care. I blotted out its transgression and guided its way. It was mine in its pilgrimage on earth, and now is mine for ever." Will this be said of you?

And now the trumpet is hushed. The judgment is passed. The judge has left his judgment throne, and all are gone to their eternal abodes. The lost are howling in agony, and wailing in despair. The blest have entered their rest. Eternity is now their day. Its cloudless sun has risen upon them. Its vast expanse stretches before them, and is all one scene of rapture, tranquillity and praise. Their home is heaven. Their father is God. Their rest is with him who died. Their friends are the angel hosts, and all the blood-bought myriads of the redeemed. Their holiness is perfect. Their happiness is endless. The former things have passed away. Reader, where is your home? where will it be for ever? Shall you be one of these?

CHAPTER IX.

DECISION IN THE CHOICE OF RELIGION URGED BY
THE RUIN AND MISERY THAT AWAIT THE IMPE-
NITENT.

1. AN old writer remarks, that sermons concerning "hell may keep many out of hell." Religion or ruin is the only alternative presented to you. Think not that the most awful displays of your danger, if you are a trifler with religion, are inconsistent with the indulgence of that spirit of love which the gospel enjoins. The Lord Jesus was full of compassion; and because he was so, he uttered the most awful representations of future ruin which the New Testament contains.

2. Consider that it is not more certain that you live, than it is that you will perish if you do not turn to God. Indulge not the delusive expectation that God will be less strict, and more merciful, than his own word represents him to be. God is merciful, but he is also just and true. God is a tender parent to the penitent that seeks him, but he is a consuming fire to his enemies. Though to the contrite in heart, his mercy is as great as the heavens are high above the earth; yet against the impenitent his wrath will burn to the lowest hell.¹ A deception that would bring you to the gallows were dreadful; but a decep-

(1) Deut. xxxii. 22.

tion that would sink you to hell is infinitely worse. Be not then deceived, "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."¹ Repeating this solemn warning the inspired writer, when referring to the works of corrupt nature, declares, "I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."² "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."³ Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."⁴ Thus there is not a hope, unless, with reverence be it spoken, God could prove false, that you can be saved without true piety. A millstone will not more surely sink when cast into the waves, nor a mass of lead thrown from the top of a precipice more surely fall, than you will fall, and sink, and perish, if you pass through time a stranger to the Saviour's grace. The Father declares that the impenitent shall die. The Son confirms the awful truth. The old Testament and the new repeatedly inculcate the solemn sentiment. The law dooms them, and the gospel adds to the awful doom.

3. Consider the dreadful descriptions which are given by the God of truth respecting the sinner's misery. A great variety of the most terrific images are employed to represent this horrid ruin. Hell is described as "a furnace of fire," into which the unrighteous are cast, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth;⁵ as "a lake which

(1) 1 Cor. vi. 9. (2) Ga. v. 21 (3) Luke. xiii. 3

(4) John, iii. 5—7.

(5) Matt. xiii. 42

burneth with fire and brimstone ;”¹ “ the second death ;”² as the vengeance of eternal fire ;³ as outer darkness ;⁴ as the “ blackness of darkness for ever ;”⁵ as “ chains of darkness ;”⁶ as the place of torment where the sinner is tormented in the flame ;⁷ as “ wrath to come ;”⁸ as “ the bottomless pit ;”⁹ “ the second death ;”¹⁰ “ destruction ;”¹¹ “ everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ;”¹² “ everlasting punishment ;”¹³ “ a prison ;”¹⁴ “ where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”¹⁵ How terrific are these descriptions ! but what must be the dreadful reality ! As much worse than any conceptions we can now form of such wretchedness, as being torn limb from limb would be worse than the pricking of a pin.

4. All this indescribably dreadful ruin is declared to be everlasting. This the scriptures solemnly assert. “ Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”¹⁶ “ He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”¹⁷ “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”¹⁸ “ These shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.”¹⁹ In the first of these passages, and in the original in

(1) Rev. xx. 8. (2) Rev. xx. 8. (3) Jude, 7. (4) Matt. xxii. 13.
 (5) Jude, 13. (6) Pet. ii. 4. (7) Luke, xvi. 23, 24. (8) 1 Thess. i. 10.
 (9) Rev. ix. 2. (10) Rev. ii. 11. (11) Matt. vii. 14.
 (12) Matt. xxv. 41. (13) Matt. xxv. 46. (14) 1 Peter, iii. 19.
 (15) Mark, ii. 44. (16) Dan. xii. 2. (17) Matt. iii. 12.
 (18) John, iii. 36. (19) Matt. xxv. 46.

the last of them, the same word that describes the unending nature of the happiness of the righteous, is employed to describe that of the misery of the lost. The Lord Jesus, in what precedes the solemn declaration, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment," has been representing the scenes connected with man's final doom. Were an earthly judge to address a prisoner, "Your life or death is now to be decided; if convicted you must die," would it not be deemed madness for the prisoner to slight the means of acquittal, under the hope that the judge would not be true to his word, nor adhere to his declaration? And is it not worse infatuation, when the Lord Jesus declares, that the unrighteous shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, to indulge the hope that he means a period of suffering infinitely less than eternal.

"The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." On this expression Dwight remarks, "The phrase commonly rendered 'for ever and ever,' is used, if I mistake not, eighteen times in the New Testament. In fifteen instances it is applied to the continuance of the glory, perfections, government, and praise of God. In one (Rev. xxii. 5.) it is said of the righteous in the future world, that 'they shall reign for ever and ever.' In one of the remaining two it is said of the impenitent, that is, of those among them who worship the beast and his image, that 'the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.' In the remaining instance it is said of the devil, who deceived the nations, of the beast, and of the false prophet, that 'in the lake of fire and brimstone they shall be tor-

mented day and night for ever and ever.' Now let me ask, whether a man, even of moderate understanding, could be supposed to write with scrupulous integrity a system of theology, and employ this phrase sixteen times to denote an absolute eternity, and twice to denote that which was infinitely different; while these were the only instances in which the phrase was applied to a given subject, and that of immeasurable importance to those for whom he wrote? But if such a man cannot be supposed thus to use language, nor vindicate it when used in this manner, can such conduct be attributed safely to the Spirit of God?" Besides those passages in which the expressions everlasting, eternal, for ever and ever, are employed to represent the duration of the sufferings of the lost, there are passages that in other phraseology most solemnly assert the same awful truth. The Lord Jesus, admonishing his disciples to suffer any thing rather than lose the soul, repeats this dreadful truth no less than five times in a few sentences. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm

dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”¹ Can a warning be more solemn, or language more decided, than there “**THE FIRE NEVER SHALL BE QUENCHED.**” To these passages others might be added ; but if these are disbelieved, so would all the rest.

5. Thus guided by the infallible word of God, consider the situation to which those who die in irreligion will be reduced. They lose all present good. When you leave this world, you will have left for ever all the comforts and pursuits of time ; and then, if you have no heaven to welcome you, you will be poor beyond expression. Think of a lost soul. The poorest beggar is not so poor ; the most miserable criminal not so wretched ; and perhaps even devils themselves not tormented with such remorse. In the case of such an unhappy creature, the satisfactions of the present world are all over. Its guilty pleasures are finished ; its innocent comforts are ended. Whatever gratification might once be enjoyed in the pursuits of life ; in friendships, in connexions, in the love of parents or of children, all is past. While these continue the sinner may find some satisfaction without the blessings of religion ; but what will he do when these shall all have left him. An old writer² relates, that a vain ungodly man was lying sleepless on his bed, and being weary, and finding no rest, he began to think, would any be hired to lie thus for two or three years in darkness without friends or amusements ? Would any one be willing to be bound to a bed, though it were a bed of down, and never stir abroad ? And he thought, no one

(1) Mark, ix. 43—48.

(2) Drexelius.

would. Then he reflected, that the time would come, when willing or unwilling he, unless snatched away by a sudden stroke, must lie upon a bed of sickness and death; and he thought, "But what bed shall I have next, when death shall thrust me out of this? My body must rot in the earth; for this is the condition of all men after death. But what shall become of my soul in another world? Surely all men do not go to the same place after death. Do not some go one way, and some another? Is there not a hell as well as a heaven? Woe and alas! What kind of bed shall the damned find in hell? How many years shall they lie there? In what year after their first entrance shall the flames cease and be put out? Assuredly Christ doth not only in word threaten to cast the wicked into everlasting fire, but will also cast them in indeed." These thoughts followed him, and he could not rest. Eternity still run in his mind. He tried to banish the solemn impression amidst companions and sinful delights, but in vain. Conscience, if seeming for a while asleep, soon awoke, and inflicted fresh stings upon his soul. He thought, "I am not certain whether I shall live till to-morrow or no: daily funerals sufficiently prove this. Oh eternity, if thou wert not! Oh eternity, if thy place be not in heaven, though it be on a soft down bed, thou canst not but be bitter and unpleasant!" At length he fled from the paths of sin, and lived and died a pious man. Happy they who thus seek the ways of peace. The impenitent, with all their worldly comforts, will lose all which in life yielded some support. All false hopes expire. The delusive

expectations of the wavering and the undecided ; of the formalist and the self-righteous, are no more. Eternity is before them without a comfort or a blessing : but this is only the beginning of sorrows. "Hast thou seen this, O son of man ! turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater 'sorrows' than these."

6. The sinner dying in his sins is banished from God, the only source of light and joy. He has forfeited his Creator's favour and love. In the love of God the blessed rejoice ; and in it angels find their heaven ; but, unhappy creature ! it is lost to him. He is exposed to his Creator's frown ; to the liveliest sense of the wrath of God, whose frown is so dreadful, that a dying profligate exclaimed, "O thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God ! hell itself is a refuge, if it hide me from thy frown." But hell will not hide the sinner ; he must bear that frown continually. There too he feels not only the loss of all he once loved, but the everlasting loss of all the saints enjoy. Does he look to heaven ? It is lost to him. Does he think of pious friends or pious parents ? They are forever parted from him. They dwell in life and rapture, and he in death and misery. Does he think of sabbaths and seasons of mercy ? He had them once, but they are forever gone from him. Religious mercies are at an end. All that were given to help the soul to heaven, and that were neglected and abused, have finished. His state is a state of utter friendlessness. There is none to love him, none to pity him, none to help him. No friend to cheer one hour in an eternal night of woe ; no merry companion to

laugh away a single moment, or to stifle for the twinkling of an eye the stings of a tormenting conscience. Around him all are equally wretched, and equally guilty with himself. Among the myriads of the lost, that he may meet, the crowd that once thronged the downward way in merriment and folly, or contempt of piety and scorn of God, he sees not one cheerful countenance. There are the lewd, but now they gnash their teeth with the companions of their guilt. There is the drunkard ; once he boasted of his crimes, but now his boastings are changed to wailings, his glorying to agony. There is the swearer ; and all his swearing prayers are answered in his utter condemnation. There is that child of the devil, the liar, gone home to his father's house. There are the prayerless ; once they would not pray, and the time for prevailing prayer is passed. There is the infidel ; but he now too late believes. There is the blasphemer, now more blasphemous. There are players, but no play-houses ; and lovers of dissipation, but no dissipation to please them. There are the opposers of humble piety, who hated religion upon earth ; and now with vain but malignant hatred, they hate its Author more than ever. There are they who had privileges and mercies in vain ; who were once raised to heaven by blessings, but are now brought down to hell. For them all no Christian prays. On them no sabbath shines. Before them no hopes bloom. To them no mercies come. Hope is gone. Mercy is gone. Grace is gone. Sin cannot be forgiven. God has forgotten to be gracious. The compassion of a Saviour never more will reach them.

There is the horrible society of the devil and his angels. Every hellish spirit for whom that place of woe was originally created, is there, his own torment, and the tormentor of his fellow-sufferers and fellow-rebels. What must such society be! It is heart-rending to think of it, what will be the woe of being mingled with it continually! There will doubtless be a dreadful variety of miseries; none of them light, but each of them distressful beyond present apprehension. The eye will see sights of woe. The ear be open only to shrieks of despair, and yells of blasphemy and misery. The immortal and incorruptible body will feel the torments of the fire that never shall be quenched; and the lost but immortal spirit will endure the worse tortures of remorse and despair that never can die. The memory will torment the sinner while he recollects the past, thinks of the sins which brought him there, and of the mercy which he once abused, and of the vanities for which he sold his soul and lost eternal life. Looking backward, he will see amazing displays of divine grace, and horrid manifestations of his own ingratitude and folly. Apprehensions for the future will be less tormenting than recollections of the past. Forward he will see guilt, and gloom, and punishment, and darkness, and despair; guilt, and gloom, and punishment, and darkness, and despair. And still his prospect will be for ever unchanged; it will still be guilt, and gloom, and punishment, and darkness, and despair. All these sorrows will be not occasional, but constant. Sorrow on earth has its intermissions; pain has its hours of ease, or at least of lighter pain: but

the sorrows of the lost are unmitigated and unintermitting sorrows. The compassionate Saviour has taught us this dreadful truth. He describes a lost sinner as soliciting the smallest possible alleviation of misery; not a day's deliverance, not an hour's ease; he only prays, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." What could be less? what alleviation more trifling? what intermission of misery more insignificant? yet even this was too much to be granted to a lost soul. The answer not only contained a refusal, but declared that such alleviation was impossible.

7. How awful is the change from earthly comforts to this deep poverty! From the family circle, or the company of gay associates, to the utter friendlessness of hell! From privileges once abounding, to the dwellings of despair! From having a Saviour displayed, to the hopelessness of unceasing and unmitigated wretchedness and ruin. For all this heart-breaking load is not transient, but eternal. The prison of the lost is an everlasting prison. Earthly prisons cannot long detain their captives; time rolls by, and if none else open the prison doors, death comes, and sets the prisoner free. When a devoted martyr was confined in one of the prisons of a persecuting king, long since dead, and he had declared the prisoner should never have his liberty, a nobleman once said to him, "Jenkins has got his liberty." "Ah;" said the wicked monarch, "Who gave it him?" "A greater than your majesty, the King of kings." But no King of kings will open the prison doors of those

who are eternally lost. Some of these prisoners have been there already four thousand years;¹ but no year of release has come, and none will ever come. Hell they chose when they chose sin; and what they chose they must for ever have. Time brought an end to their earthly sorrows; they had their last; but eternity will bring no end to the sorrows of perdition. Time brought an end to their pleasures; they had their last delight, their last vain pleasure, their last hour of sinful merriment, a last laugh as well as a last sigh; but of their present ruin, no one will ever say, The end is come. If ten thousand years hence the question were asked, Where are they who neglected God, slighted Christ, loved the world, and died in sin? and how are they employed? The answer might be, They are helpless captives in the prison of the lost; there they are blaspheming their God, and weeping, and wailing, and suffering; hateful, and hating one another. And if ten thousand years beyond that period, the question were again proposed, the answer must still be the same, and the same would it be for ever. Their last change was a final one. Help cannot reach them. Now, Christian, if you can, tell those hapless souls of peace, tell them of your Saviour! O, you cannot; he can never be theirs. Now, Christian minister, proclaim your message; proclaim pardon through atoning blood! Ah! you cannot; though once, perhaps, some of them sat beneath your ministry, yet as to them your work is done; your commission is over; you have no message to bear to them no pardon to proclaim, no Saviour

⁽¹⁾ 1 Peter, iii. 19, 20. Jude, 7.

to display. O, be zealous while you may ; not long can you help any to heaven ; they will be out of your reach, or you removed from them.

8. Their state is unchangeable, for their character cannot be renewed. They went out of the world unholy, and thus hateful and hellish ; and such they must for ever remain. No change will their hearts ever know. No love to God will ever be found within their breasts. No alteration will ever take place in their relative condition as to God and Christ, to saints and angels, or to the devil and the lost. Of God and Christ they would be neglectors, and thus were enemies, and enemies they will for ever continue. With the blessed family of saints and angels they had no connexion ; they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise ; and such they will eternally remain. They were the children of the wicked one, and did his will in slighting mercy and persisting in rebellion ; and now they must be his helpless captives. No change can they know as to sin and condemnation. Unpardoned sins fixed on them, when they died, must load them for ever ; their condemnation then was sealed. The darkness of the fall might be removed ; the stains of guilt might have been effaced ; but the darkness of hell can never be dissipated ; the load of guilt once felt there, must sink the soul eternally beneath its intolerable weight. For them no rest remains ; no rest from sinning and from suffering. Their absence from God is everlasting ; their enmity to God will be everlasting ; and their sufferings beneath his wrath will be everlasting. Their dwelling with accursed friends

and miserable associates in guilt will be everlasting. Earthly sorrows know nothing of such wretchedness. In pain or agony to-day, we hope for ease to-morrow ; but there will be no to-morrow of ease to be hoped for there. If languishing in disease now, a few days may bring recruited health ; but the disease of sin will never be removed. When thousands of years of woe are past, the sinner will still have to lament his fatal choice. If he had chosen God and Christ, religion and heaven, he would not have been this destitute, forsaken, friendless wretch ; but he chose the world, and sin, and folly ; and all he loved has left him, and only the bitter fruits of his fatal choice remain. A disgraced courtier once said, "If I had served God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my grey hairs." Every lost sinner may say, "If I had served the Saviour, as I served the world, if I had given the heart to him which I gave to the world, he would not have left me to be the victim of devils, and the prisoner of hell, in utter sorrow and endless poverty."

9. Reader, if you are careless of salvation, be entreated to consider your own concern in these solemn truths. These are not cunningly devised fables. Even demons dreaded the gulf of sorrow ; and when permitted, for a little while to rove on earth, prayed for transient relief from the abyss. They besought the Lord that he would not command them to go into that deep.¹ Did demons dread hell, and will you rush into it ! Did they, when deliverance was hopeless, beg for a moment's absence from the pit, and

(1) Luke, viii. 31.

will you slight eternal deliverance ! Did devils pray, and will you not pray ! At this very moment, multitudes unknown are in the world unseen, suffering the torments of guilt, perdition, and despair. While you slight salvation, they who have slighted the gospel before you burn. While you laugh, perhaps at this warning, they wail at the recollection of warnings once scorned. While you talk of liberty, they groan in the prison, to which such liberty leads. At this moment, could you behold their sorrows, and hear their groans, their cries of misery might fill you with consternation, while the thought forced itself on your mind, "I am travelling to the same abode." They lament while you neglect ; and suffer for sins while you commit them ; but if you pursue a careless course, what must be its termination ? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?"

10. Think, what if you continue to slight the gospel, will be your future lot ! Picture your future self. Suppose you follow the world ; you love it, you have it, and you neglect your soul. Thus you go through life ; at length the end comes ; sickness seizes you, and you lie stretched upon the bed of death. Alas, you are not prepared for the great change ! Did you do well to neglect the only Saviour ? Eternity is before you, and you are not ready to meet, with comfort, its amazing solemnities. You look backward, and can think of vanities, follies, pleasures loved and prized, yet ended ; but you cannot think of piety, of sweet seasons of prayer ; of Christ welcomed ;

and a deathless soul committed to his hands. You can think of serious impressions, but this deepens your anguish, for these impressions were quenched. You can remember desires after God and holiness once felt, but those desires were stifled; the Spirit was resisted, and sin and folly chosen. You can think of sabbaths, whose profanation added to the enormous load of your transgressions. Unhappy they, who must lie upon a dying bed indulging such reflections! But you must if you will not turn to God. From looking backward, you look forward, but all the prospect is dark and distressing. Perhaps, some false hope bears you up a little; but your case seems dreadfully doubtful at the best. At length you die, and doubt is over. Your lot is decided now; you are in eternity, and all your sins upon you. What will then be your torturing feelings! What different views will you take of this world! of your own conduct! of your guilty choice from those you cherish now! What different thoughts will force themselves upon you, of your present pleasures! of your abuse of God's mercy and patience! of Christ's love and your neglect! of his long-continued goodness and your long-continued indifference and ingratitude! What then will seem youth, riper years, and, perhaps, age spent without God in the world! But regret will come too late, the deed will be done that cannot be undone.

11. Think of yourself now, going to your dismal prison. Infernal spirits have seized your miserable soul. There is none to help you. Through many long rebellious years you slight.

ed him who would have helped you, and saved you from the pit. Think yourself entering the place of sorrow. How horrid is the place! how deep the darkness! how unutterably dreadful the prospect! Now what is your remorse for mercies past and wasted! Now what do you think of sabbaths broken! of sabbath work, and sabbath amusements! Now what do you think of the warnings, that Christians and ministers once addressed to you! Will you now say they were too plain? Now what do you think of the house of God, which you would not frequent! of your careless days and guilty nights; and all your scenes of worldly festivity and merriment! Now how do you review stifled convictions, and neglected calls and invitations! O that you could have them again! O that now some helping hand could be stretched out, to prevent your going into the deep! but there is none! O that prevailing prayer could now be offered! but there is none. The day for prayer is over; and the prayerful will never more pray for you. Now you may groan out, "Is this my fancied wisdom! Did my ways lead to this! Is this the ruin from which the Lord would have saved me! and to which I rushed so heedlessly and madly!" What will you do! Fly to seek refuge among the pious you once despised? You cannot. Almighty power engaged against you, forbids the hope. Escape the wicked one? You have served him, you have done his will in sin, or in wicked neglect of the Saviour, and you cannot escape him. Will you repent? pray? Ah it is too late! Now you may pray. You may go to Christian

friends or Christian ministers, or search the sacred page for instruction and advice; but then you cannot. Go you must into your dismal prison. Oh the groans of your sinking despairing soul! You may laugh at these things in wealth and strength, in the present world, though God himself has said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."¹ In hardened sin, or trifling folly you may laugh while here; and treat these awful truths as bugbears invented to frighten you; but entrance on the infernal prison will produce, too late, an inconceivable change in all your views of these solemn subjects. When your neglected soul wakes in torments; when round you is the horrid glare of hellish fire; before you the dreadful forms of hellish tormentors; on you all the wrath of God; and in you all the tortures of despair; then will you know what it is to go into the deep you dread so little here. When God has left you, when Christ has left you, when mercy has left you, when there is not one to pray for you, none to fan your false hopes, none to amuse you, then will you know what it is to neglect the Saviour, and sink into the dreadful deep of hell! O awake! awake! and flee from the wrath to come. Awake! awake! and welcome the Saviour of the lost!

12. If you will not listen to this entreaty, O hear one warning more. According to the views given from God's word, your ruin will be endless. The writer once travelling, fell into company with a young man, just released, after eighteen months' confinement, from a well-con-

(1) Psalm, ix. 17

ducted English prison ; whose governor was distinguished for kindness to his prisoners ; yet this young man remarked, that it seemed to him almost like heaven when out of gaol, to walk about the streets of the town. It was remarked to him, that a prisoner might come out of an earthly prison, but if he went to hell he would never be delivered. A poor negro made the same observation to a number of his countrymen, “ If you go to gaol you soon will come out again ; if you go to hell you never come out.” Now is this so in your case, as in the case of other impenitent transgressors ? Not only is hell everlasting, but if you go to it, it will be *everlasting to you* ? And can you dwell with devouring burnings ? can you dwell with everlasting fire ? What would you not, when too late, give for even a moment’s respite ? Will one moment come through endless years, in which a lost soul will not view, with bitter remorse, the day of salvation wasted ! Will one pang be felt, amidst the sufferings of a whole eternity, that will not bring to remembrance mercy abused ; grace despised ; Christ neglected ! salvation slighted ! and sin and folly preferred !

12. Ere this warning close, O reader, again be entreated to think of the agonizing reflections that will force themselves upon you, if by neglect of salvation you sink yourself to final ruin. When help is at an end ; when they who prayed have done praying for you ; and they who wept have done weeping for you ; when the Christian has ceased inviting you ; and the minister yearning over you ; when the Saviour has done waiting on you ; and even the wicked one has done tempt-

ing you, because his end is answered, and no one can save you ; then how will you contemplate the past ! How many were your mercies once ! but they are over. You had convictions ; they are stifled and past. Invitations ; they have ceased. Hopes ; the last glimmering of hope is gone. You heard sermons ; they are ended. You had days, weeks, years, sabbaths of mercy ; they are all finished. Many would have had compassion on you ; the Father pitied you, and called you to himself, but he has ceased to call. The Son died for sin, and invited you to come to himself for happiness ; but he invites you no longer. The Spirit strove with you ; but he has ceased to strive. Ministers preached to you, and displayed the wonders of redeeming love ; but they have ceased to bring to you the message of salvation. The followers of Christ longed for your conversion ; but their anxious solicitude is ended. These mercies followed you through successive periods for many years. Of many it may be said, “ You had all these blessings in youth. Then the Spirit strove with you, then the Saviour’s love was displayed to you ; but the Spirit stroved, and the Saviour invited you in vain. The years of youth passed ; its latest day departed, and left you unconverted, even further from God and happiness, than when its opening morning dawned upon you. Then came riper years. Through these too the Saviour’s love was slighted, and eternal life disregarded. They ended, and left you further from God than ever. Then, perhaps, came the declining years of age, and, like those of youth or middle life, passed unimproved away. Through

all these periods mercy followed mercy, sabbath succeeded sabbath, blessings trod, as it were, upon each other in constant succession. One invitation was scarcely rejected before another was given. One year of abused privileges hardly ended before another commenced. But at length the last arrived, and the last departed unimproved. God called for the last time, and, like all his former calls, the last was disregarded. The Spirit strove for the last time, and was for the last time resisted, and left the heart for ever. The Saviour for the last time displayed his love, and offered his salvation, and, like all the rest, this last display was vain. The harvest passed, the summer ended, and you are not saved.

Not saved ! What horrors those few words express when descriptive of the state of an immortal spirit fixed in the eternal world ! Not saved from the ruin of the fall ! from the curse of the law ! from the captivity of Satan ! from the wrath of God ! from the load of sin ! from the torments of hell ! O reader, should this ever be your condition, vain then will be anxiety and remorse. Vainly will you wish you had your time again. Vainly will you exclaim, " O those mercies ! those neglected mercies ! could I have them again I would trifle with them no more ! O those sabbaths ! those broken sabbaths ! that they could but once more return, and bring the blessings they offered heretofore ! O could I have those wasted years again ! and hear one invitation more to the compassionate Saviour. Shall I not have one !" No, unhappy creature not one ! God called, and you refused. When Esau despised his birthright, and afterwards felt

his loss, he wept and prayed, " Hast thou but one blessing for me, my father ! bless me, even me also, my father !" but vain were his entreaties. " He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears ;" and equally vain hereafter will be the agonizing cries of all who trifle the day of grace away.

14. The subject of this chapter, if considered aright, is full of instruction to the most pious, as well as to the irreligious. While the ungodly should think of hell, that they may feel their danger and flee from the wrath to come ; the pious should remember hell, that they may recollect what was once their desert, and what are their infinite obligations to redeeming love. If you are a Christian indeed ; if you are a partaker of grace ; if you are delivered from all fear of everlasting death, and can even read in the brightest characters your title clear to mansions in the skies ; even if all this is your happiness, still forget not the awful subject of this chapter. Stand as it were on the edge of the infernal pit, and, in your meditations, look down into that abyss of guilt, and shame, and woe ; then reflect, What must be the evil of sin that has deserved such a doom ! *deserved* it, for a God of boundless love would never inflict such punishment if not deserved ! If sin had not deserved the doom, justice as well as compassion would forbid its infliction. Has sin therefore deserved this dreadful doom ? is this death, not an arbitrary and unreasonable punishment, but its *wages* ? then what must be its evil ! How little can we possibly comprehend the malignity of sin !

But, Christian, look down into that abyss again, and bring the awful subject nearer to your own bosom. Not only had sin deserved this doom, but each may confess, "I had deserved it. I as a sinner had merited this dreadful wrath. O wretched condition! wretched past imagination! But I am delivered. O what a deliverance! how stupendous! how precious! how incalculably valuable! how inexpressibly great! Had I to linger for a year in pain, how welcome would have been relief! Had I to linger for ten, for fifty years in misery, how welcome would be a deliverer, that should save me from fifty years of pain! how great would be my obligations to him! had I been doomed to toil in the deepest poverty for fifty years, how much should I owe to a benefactor that might relieve that poverty, and give me fifty years of wealth and plenty, instead of fifty years of penury and want! Had I been doomed to spend fifty years in some horrid dungeon, how much should I feel indebted to him, that might open my prison door, and make those years, years of rapturous freedom, instead of miserable captivity. But I was doomed to a prison worse than earth's most dismal dungeon, and doomed to spend not fifty years only, but eternal ages there. There I must have endured eternal heart-ache, and eternal poverty. But the Saviour delivered me. He has given me hope, instead of despair; heavenly wealth, instead of hellish poverty; and all the blessings of the Father's favour, instead of all the terrors of his justice. What do I not owe him! Such a salvation exceeds all human comprehension, and much

more transcends all earthly praise. Yet never can I feel the value of that salvation aright, nor my obligations to its Author, but when I feel from what a hell he has snatched me! and to what a heaven he would raise me!

CHAPTER X.

DECISION AS TO RELIGION URGED BY THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEAVEN.

1. Most pleasing are the representations furnished in the undecieving word of God, of the blessedness of those who rest in Christ. "Absent from the body," they are "present with the Lord,"¹ and enjoying intermediate blessedness, while their mouldering dust lies, unconscious that it once was man, in unknown and forgotten graves. It is pleasant to think of those, who, in past ages, trod the paths of humble piety. Where are they, who formerly in deep poverty loved the Saviour, who were unnoticed and despised, who lingered in chambers of affliction, and wasted away on beds of suffering? or whose course if not so afflictive has long since ended? Where are they? where they are no longer poor or despised, suffering or mortal. They have entered into rest, and "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."² They had their trials; but these are ended. They had their pains, and fears, and tears, their days of languishing and hour of dying, but all this is over; "the former things are passed away." They had dangers, but

(1) 2 Cor. v. 8.

(2) Rev. xiv. 13.

these are escaped; temptations, they are vanquished; conflicts, but the warfare is ended, and the victory sure. They were weak, but received strength sufficient to reach heaven. Their Father chastened them, but the last chastening is over. Their Saviour led them through trying scenes, but the last is ended. They felt unworthy, yet are glorified. The "work of faith and the labour of love" are finished. The "patience of hope" has endured to the end, and is no longer needed. Satan tried all his arts to undo them, and was baffled. The world employed all its snares, yet all were escaped; sin made all its assaults, yet all were overcome. Blessed was the day, when they were brought to the Saviour's feet! more blessed that when they landed in the skies! "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."¹

2. Consider that *without decided piety, you cannot possibly become a partaker of the blessedness of heaven.* Far more reasonable would it be to expect the king of England to fill his palace with condemned felons, than for you to hope for admission into heaven, if you continue a stranger to the Saviour's grace. Could you persuade some timorous friend, to admit blood-thirsty tigers and poisonous serpents into his chamber? Not for a world. Yet it would be more easy to effect this, than to prevail on the holy God, to admit an unpardoned and impenitent trifler into heaven. But should heaven be lost to you, all is lost for ever.

3. Heaven is described as the Christian's future

(1) Psalm, cxv. L

happy home. Many expressions are employed to furnish some faint ideas of its excellence and blessedness. It is represented as "a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God."¹ A city adorned with unutterable splendour, whose walls are founded on precious jewels; whose streets are gold; whose gates are pearl, and whose light is the glory of God. These images are designed to represent the glory of the heavenly world. To it will apply the prophet Isaiah's expressive language: "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."² Heaven is represented as a "better country," purposely provided by God for his redeemed;³ as a kingdom which he delights to bestow upon his children;⁴ a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.⁵ It is described as the Eternal Father's house,⁶ in which are many mansions; dwellings of peace, of tranquil, and continued stay; and in that happy home, in the presence of God, "there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."⁷

4. Contemplation on the blessedness of that

(1) Heb. xi. 10. (2) Is. lx. 18—20. (3) Heb. xi. 16. (4) Luke, xii. 33.
 (5) Matt. xxv. 34. (6) John, xiv. 2. (7) Psalm, xvi. 11.

better country, may be assisted by viewing the excellencies of the present world; and by considering that this was formed for a span of time, that for eternity itself! This world displays its Creator's eternal power and Godhead, and wisdom, and love. How beautiful and goodly are many of its scenes! The verdant spring with all its flowers; the blooming summer with all its promise; and the autumn with all its fruits; valleys green with perpetual herbage; fields covered with corn; hills crowned with woods; mountains piercing the skies; streams fertilizing the plains; and rivers pouring their torrents to the ocean, perpetually flowing and never exhausted; stupendous oceans always full, yet never extensively overflowing; the opening morning, and the calm evening; the sun by day, diffusing light and warmth from age to age; by night the moon and stars shedding a feebler but more solemn light; the land and the water abounding with numerous creatures, supplying food, or ministering to the comfort of mankind. All this, with much besides, shows forth the might and goodness of the world's great Creator. Yet the world thus adorned, and crowned with good, was formed for man's accommodation, through a short period of time, a period that, compared with eternity, is like nothingness, what then must be the eternal world! What shall we suppose the beauty and glory and splendour of that country, which is designed to endure through eternal ages! If the inn for dying pilgrims be so magnificent, and princely, so full of excellency and glory, as this creation is; what must be the palace of the

Eternal King, in whose many mansions his beloved shall reign in joy and immortality !

An early Christian writer has a soliloquy to the following purport : “ O Lord, if thou for this vile body of ours, givest such great and numberless benefits from the firmament, from the air, from the earth, from the sea : by light, by darkness, by heat, by shade, by dews, by showers, by winds, by rains, by birds, by fishes, by beasts, by trees ; by many herbs and various plants, and by the ministry of all thy creatures : what manner of things, how great, how good, and how innumerable are those thou hast prepared in our heavenly country, where we shall see thee face to face ! If thou do such great things for us in our prison, what wilt thou give us in our palace ! If thou givest so many blessings in this world, where the righteous and the evil are mingled together, what hast thou laid up for those who will be all righteous in the world to come ! If thine enemies and friends are so well provided for in this life, what shall they who are all thy friends receive in the life to come ! If there be such great comforts in these days of tears, what joy shall there be in that day of marriage ! If our prison contain such great treasures, what shall our country and kingdom do ! ”

5. The fulness of joy of the redeemed, springs from various sources. One important part of their happiness, yet in reality the lowest part, is, exemption from all evil. Mere exemption from evil is not positive delight, and must be regarded as the lowest portion in the scale of heavenly blessedness ; yet it is the source of varied and

unspeakable good; and what then must be the nobler blessings of the redeemed? Were all evil banished from this world, even this would be a Paradise. Were pain and sorrow and sin extinct, were disease and sickness unknown, were no groan or sigh ever uttered, and no tear ever shed; even earth would form a kind of imperfect heaven. But all this, which will never be realized here, is realized above. The scriptures declare respecting the redeemed, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."¹ "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."² "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."³ What varied and inconceivable good will flow from such entire exemption from all evil! The cares and anxieties incident to the present state, no more distress those happy conquerors. God has wiped away their every tear, and dried up every source of sorrow. They have no toilsome days, no wearisome nights. The head never aches, the heart never throbs. Pain and sickness are alike unknown. Instead of feeble, emaciated, withered forms, all are beheld happy beings, vigorous with immortal health, and clothed with celestial loveliness. Here the loveliest

(1) Rev. vii. 16, 17.

(2) Rev. xxi. 4.

(3) Rev. xxii. 3.

fade, like a flower; but the flowers that fade on earth, if once transplanted to heaven, will there never fade more, but will bloom through everlasting ages in unwithering beauty. With pain and sickness, death too will cease. When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortality immortality, death will be swallowed up in victory. The sublime language of the Redeemer will be accomplished: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."¹ There shall then be no more death; no more will that last enemy daunt the children of God by his approach, nor will they ever again dread his power. The languors that precede the hour of dissolution will never be felt; the painful separations that death frequently occasions, will never be known. None will be summoned by death to leave the friends they love, or the happy country where they dwell.

6. The state of the blest in heaven, is a state of perfect safety. This world is a scene of danger, and of frequent conflict. In all its changes and in all its states, temptation is found. Prosperity tempts the soul to love the world; adversity, to repine at the dealings of God. Youth and age, poverty and wealth, health and sickness, have all temptations peculiar to themselves. Even the zealous discharge of Christian duties, and the possession of elevated Christian graces, may be connected with temptations to those odious sins, self-righteousness and pride. And, while in every circumstance temptation may

(1) Hos. xiii. 4.

exist, the great enemy of God and man, "like a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;"¹ but in heaven no inward corruption distresses the soul; no anger, no shame, no envy, no ambition is ever felt. No temptation harasses the redeemed. They left danger and sin behind when they left the precincts of mortality. Now, tempter! thou canst not grieve that peaceful soul that once was harassed by thy dire suggestions; thou canst no more break its peace, nor rob that humble conqueror of sweet tranquillity. The peace of earth might be interrupted by hellish arts; but not the peace of heaven. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest."² The sufferer has forgot his sorrows; the endangered is for ever safe. Here Christians struggle for important victory; there they possess the crown and wave the palm of triumph. Here Christians run the race that is set before them; but there the race is ended. Here they are, as it were, on a battle-field, struggling against numerous foes for life and immortality; but "there are no fields of battle there." Here they are tossed on a stormy sea; there in the pleasant harbour. In that better country they hear no complaints, shed no tears, dread no dangers, feel no corruptions, anticipate no evils. Instead of sin, there is holiness; instead of danger and temptation, safety; instead of weakness, strength; instead of languishing, beauty; instead of painful partings, eternal unions; instead of sorrow and death, unutterable joy and never-ending life. They *were* with us, they *are* with Christ; they were in the church below, they are

(1) 1 Pet. v. 8

(2) Job, iii. 17.

in that above. How great such a change from the scenes of earthly care and labour! from the toils of the factory or the field, the shop or the counting-house! How great to many the change from the company with which they had to mingle in fields or mills, during daily toil, to the company of perfected spirits, and the blessed society of holy angels.

7. The happiness of heaven will be augmented by the perfection and holiness of its blessed inhabitants. The general assembly and church of the first-born is composed of the spirits of the just "made perfect."¹ The Lord Jesus will "be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."² He will change their vile body, the body of their humiliation, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."³ As they "have borne the image of the earthy, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly."⁴ "It doth not yet appear what" they "shall be; but when he shall appear," they "shall be like him, and see him as he is."⁵ He will present to himself the whole company of the redeemed, as "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" but "holy and without blemish."⁶ He will present them "holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight."⁷ He will present them "faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy."⁸ How rapturous will be this scene of holiness and happiness! An immense assemblage of happy beings, forming one glorified family, in the presence of their God and Redeemer. Angels and

(1) Heb. xii. 23. (2) 2 Thess. i. 10. (3) Phil. iii. 21. (4) Cor. xv. 49.

(5) 1 John, i. 2. (6) Eph. v. 27. (7) Col. i. 22. (8) Jude, 24.

saints now brethren in Christ Jesus; their abode, their pleasures, their employments, and their character for ever the same. Not one defect among them all; not one blemish in the character of countless millions; not one error in their conduct; not one defective disposition; not one unkind feeling ever experienced; not one unholy thought ever known. Every countenance glowing with heavenly beauty, and every heart full of heavenly love; every eye the index of a soul adorned with all the lovely excellencies of its redeeming Lord. All in their measure resembling him in glory. All like him, and all so resembling him in character and disposition, that his all-piercing eye shall not discern one defect in all his happy family; but even in his sight they shall be unblameable and unreprouable. Happy they who form part of such a family! Reader, shall you be one of its members?

8. All this however does not complete the happiness of heaven. The scriptures describe that happiness as great and varied. There is the noblest enjoyment of God's presence, and the richest enjoyment of his everlasting love. The "pure in heart" "shall see God."¹ "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."² "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he

(1) Matt. v. 8.

(2) Rev. xxi. 3.

that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”¹ The blessings of the divine Saviour’s love and care, shall eternally enrich his humble flock. “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”² They shall behold his “face in righteousness,” and “be satisfied” when they “awake in his likeness.”³ They have followed the Lord; and shall be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world.”⁴ They “shall ever be with the Lord.”⁵ They “have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”⁶ “Honour and glory”⁷ are designed for them. They are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” and if they “suffer with him shall also be glorified together.”⁸ Their inheritance is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away.” It is “reserved for them in heaven.”⁹ They shall “receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away;”¹⁰ a “crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give” to all that “love his appearing;”¹¹ “a crown of life” given by his own hands to them who are “faithful unto death.”¹² The sufferings which they here endure “are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in”¹³ them. Long years of affliction upon earth are, compared with their future blessedness, “light affliction, which is but for a moment,” and work for them “a far more exceed-

(1) Rev. vii. 14, 15.

(2) Rev. vii. 17.

(3) Ps. xvii. 13.

(4) John, xvii. 24.

(5) 1 Thess. iv. 17.

(6) Heb. x. 34.

(7) 1 Pet. i. 7.

(8) Rom. viii. 17.

(9) 1 Pet. i. 4.

(10) 1 Pet. v. 4.

(11) 2 Tim. iv. 8.

(12) Rev. ii. 10.

(13) Rom. viii. 18.

ing and eternal weight of glory.”¹ “The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”² They “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and as the stars for ever and ever.”³ They shall be pillars in the temple of their God, and “shall go no more out;”⁴ but

“Shall bear in those bright courts above
Inscriptions of immortal love.”

Shall, like pillars in a sumptuous temple, be for ever monuments of his grace who fixed them there, and ornaments to that bright and happy world. Exalted to the highest honour, they shall walk with Christ “in white, for they are worthy.”⁵ He will grant them “to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is sat down with the Father on his throne.”⁶ “The God of all grace has called” them “to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”⁷ The Saviour gives them eternal life, and the end of their course “is everlasting life.”⁸ Once fixed thus in their celestial home, they will enjoy in a manner now inconceivable the presence of their God. Of their celestial dwelling, besides what has been already introduced, the scriptures add; “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth

¹) 2 Cor. iv. 17. (2) Matt. xiii. 43. (3) Dan. xii. 3. (4) Rev. iii. 12.
⁵) Rev. iii. 4. (6) Rev. iii. 21. (7) 1 Pet. v. 10. (8) Rom. vi. 22.

do bring their glory and honour into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."¹ "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."²

9. How little can the mind comprehend the happiness described in all this expressive, though in some instances figurative language! What is it to see God and dwell with him! What is it to be led by the Lamb to living fountains of immortal blessings! to be satisfied in his likeness! to possess fulness of joy and pleasures for ever more! to enjoy incorruptible and unfading inheritances! and to be honoured with crowns of righteousness of glory and life that never fade away! What is it to possess a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, a glory too great to be described by the boldest expressions heaped on others equally bold, and continued to eternity! What is it to sit down as a happy and honoured conqueror by the Saviour's side! What is all this! and all this additional to other blessings already contemplated! to perfect safety! to per-

(1) Rev. xxi. 22, 23, 24. 27. (2) Rev. xxii. 1, 2. 5.

fect holiness! to perfect freedom from every ill! from every vexing disposition, every unholy feeling, every pain and every sorrow! What is it to *be all this, and possess all this*, not for ages or centuries only, but for periods, compared with whose duration the whole of time, from the creation to the judgment day, would be the twinkling of an eye! Reader, what is all this! No tongue can express; no heart can conceive; but, *you must have it all or lose it all! gain it all in Christ. or lose it all by slighting him!* Many already possess these blessings. They have reached their home. They mingle with better friends than any this world ever gave. They possess what formerly they sought. Eternity opens to them no prospects, but prospects bright with gladness and joy, in infinite succession. And who are these? and whence came they? Some of these were the benevolent possessors of wealth and plenty; but many of them toiled in poverty; yet in poverty they were rich. They laboured in the field or the factory; in the mine or on the road. They wept; they languished; yet in affliction they were blessed. They watched; they prayed; they fled to Jesus; they followed him; and he has fixed them in their heavenly home.

10. You, reader, are now in this world for a little while; and the alternative is before you—religion here, and this blissful heaven hereafter or carelessness here and hell hereafter—religion and eternal life, or irreligion and everlasting ruin. Make your choice. Decide as in God's sight; but know you must decide; and the decision is for eternity. Behold that eternal good, which God, in his word, has graciously unveiled to your

contemplation. See those mansions of peace! those crowns of life! that blessedness which flows in an eternal stream! Behold those happy immortals! many of them once poor, despised, and suffering, now so changed! Hearken to the praises which they render! to the anthems of delight they sing! Witness their raptures in perfect safety! Belonging to Jesus leads to all this. Will you be his? or will you madly and wickedly refuse? Would not heartfelt piety be gainful to you beyond expression? Would it not be gain for you to dwell with God? to appear cleansed by the Saviour's sacrifice from every crime and every fault? and to be presented by him faultless before his presence with exceeding joy? Would it not be wealth for you to possess immortality? to call heaven and all its blessings your own? to have your low employments changed for the blessed activity of heaven? to have your feeble and soon dying voice raised in celestial praises? Would it not be blessedness for you to mingle, not with earthly but celestial friends? to join angelic bands? their Father yours; their dwelling yours? Would it not be gain for you when "absent from the body to be present with the Lord?" when a hundred years hence forgotten in the grave to be a happy saint in light? Would it not be ecstasy for you to meet the Judge eternal with unmoved tranquillity? to hear the approving sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Would not all this be gain to you? and will you slight it all by slighting Christ? or secure it all by seeking salvation in him? Would you not "be wise for yourself," in counting all things loss

that you may win Christ? Would it not appear that you were so, when welcomed to his kingdom? Then, if some one that loved you, and mourned your departure, could say, "Come back, departed Christian, come again to earth and to us," what would bribe you back? And if such a request could possibly be made, and an answer given, would you not say, "No, it is you must seek to join me in heaven; for worlds should not bribe me back to earth?" and will you embrace religion and secure that heaven? or trifle with religion and secure ruin? *One you must do.* Which will you do? Is it difficult to you to become decidedly pious? Will not eternal life compensate every struggle? Are your enemies many, must your sacrifices be great? still what are they when compared with the blessings of eternity! How small is the loss of what you soon must leave for ever! How rich the gain of blessings you will never lose! How momentary the loss! how eternal the gain! Even now the hope of heaven would give you blessings far greater than any the world can ever give; while you would be looking forward to still greater good hereafter. How sweet now is the anticipation! what will be the possession! "O ye blessed scenes of perfection and peace, shall ye be mine! and mine soon! and then mine for ever! 'Thou happy heaven! glorious abode! where for me eternal love has prepared a mansion of peace, and where for me elder brethren wait; shall I soon see thy walls of salvation, and thy gates of praise! Ye happy angels! shall I, a poor traveller on earth, soon be equal with you, as blest, as rich, and as safe as you! 'Thou Lamb of God! once

slain for my transgressions, and now my life shall I soon, Lord! see thee as thou art, and wear thy lovely image! Shall I have done with toil and care, with worldly labours and earthly sorrows; and all to me be rest, and peace, and praise! the enduring calm and the victory of heaven! Shall all this be mine, when "a few more suns have rolled their cares away." Then what need I fear the trials of this wilderness! To thee, my Lord, and to the heaven thy love has prepared, will I look with many a longing desire. There shall I see thee as thou art. There praise thee better through eternal days.

"Yes, when these lips shall cease to move,
And death shall close these eyes,
Then shall my soul to nobler heights
Of joy and transport rise;
Then shall her powers in endless strains
Their grateful tribute pay:
The theme demands an angel's tongue,
And an eternal day."

11. If instead of being a decided Christian, you are a vain follower of the world, what is there in all your delights that gives the satisfaction inspired by such a hope! Will you seek it? Some, who love Christ, and are the possessors of this hope, have it indeed amidst doubts and fears; but many with brighter evidence, and all that live to him, will soon possess, in the eternal state, all they anticipated, and more than all. How rapturous will be the shout of praise that will ascend, when all the redeemed of any one period meet in the perfect security and triumph of heaven! there with feelings now inconceivable, will they ascribe their salvation

to God and to the Lamb. The inspired writer says, "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended," the day of grace is gone, but they are saved. What gratitude will fill the soul, while heavenly love is the theme of praise! Every saint in heaven will pay to the Saviour the tribute of praise for salvation. "I had never been here but through thy love. Grace taught my wandering feet to tread the path of peace and life; grace led me on, and grace fixed me here." Happy conqueror, that has done with the imperfect services of time, and commenced the nobler ones of eternity; whose sabbaths all are ended here, but to whom an eternal sabbath has arrived! Will this be your happiness?

If you are a Christian indeed, how deeply should these views impress upon your heart your unutterable obligations to your adorable Redeemer! Contemplate the ruin from which he has delivered you. Contemplate the blessings he has in store for you; and what do you not owe him for such a rescue, and for such treasures, of whose value eternity will be for ever making fresh discoveries! That these blessings should be designed for one so unworthy, and so weak, renders the love still more wonderful, and demands praise and gratitude still more ardent.

12. In the preceding pages your attention

has been directed to scenes of woe, or blessedness, between which the difference is never to be fully comprehended ; but it is eternity which will complete the misery of the former, and the happiness of the latter. When he leaves this world, "man goeth to his long home." Strive to impress upon your heart the truth, that whether your future abode be hell or heaven, it will be a long, an eternal home. You will not long be here. Foes or friends will soon be left behind. Your present dwelling will know you no more. The comforts and pains of life will alike be ended, and alike be insignificant ; but eternity, with all its overwhelming scenes, follows this momentary span of time. Think of eternity. In the light of that amazing duration, what is worth one thought, except religion ? Suppose yourself dead and fixed in eternity ; now what concerns you except salvation ? Suppose yourself dead for a thousand years, that a thousand years had passed since you closed your eyes upon this world ; what now are its concerns, its pleasures, or its pains ? Are they not vain as a broken bubble, and lighter than vanity ? The time will come, when, for a thousand years, you will have been mingled with the dead ; what then will this vain, busy, ensnaring world matter to you ? The leaves that fell from the trees a thousand years ago, are not more insignificant now, than this vain world, with all its interests, possessions, and cares, will then appear to you. But go forward in your thoughts, millions of years beyond that period, and what will the world be to you then ? How blest will

you then be if eternal life be yours! how wretched if that good be lost!

13. Eternity is a duration that is long beyond calculation and beyond comprehension. Think of the years that have elapsed from the days of Adam to the present day—eternity is longer. Think of those that may pass from this day till that when the judgment trumpet shall sound—eternity is longer. Look at the ground adorned with its green carpet, covered with innumerable millions of blades of grass—are the years of eternity as many? They are more—eternity is longer. Look at the leaves that clothe the trees with verdure—are the years of eternity countless as those leaves? They are more—eternity is longer than such a period of ages. Add to these years others as numerous as the drops of morning dew—do these describe eternity? No—eternity is longer. Count the drops of the sea—will their number represent eternal ages? No—eternity has ages far more countless. These, compared with it, are like a drop to an ocean. Repeat these calculations, yet eternity is longer. Millions by millions multiplied, give no idea of its duration; and all the years that human thought can heap together, compared with it, are insignificance and nothing—beyond them all eternity still stretches forth its immeasurable duration. This eternity awaits you.

Eternity is a duration that nothing can shorten and that never can end. Time has an end; eternity has none. The period daily approaches nearer, when the end of time shall be announced. The last spring that shall cheer the earth with its bloom, will have passed away;

the last summer will have ended; the last autumn have finished; the last harvest this earth shall ever produce be reaped; and the last winter have concluded. Time's last year will have arrived; its last day; its last hour; its last minute; its last moment; and time shall be no more: but no such end will arrive to close eternity. Let thousands of ages pass away, eternity is not shortened. Let millions more, and worlds of millions roll along, eternity remains the same. As long, as blest, as happy or as dreadful and miserable as ever.

14. As it is with the duration of eternity, so it is with its blessings and its sorrows. The joys and sorrows of time have an end; but those of eternity have none. Time brings an end to the Christian's sorrows; but eternity will bring no end to his joys. Did he sigh? there was a last sigh. Had he pangs of grief? there was a last pang, and a last grief. Did he weep? there was a last tear. Had he struggles? there was a last struggle. Did he pine in poverty? there was a last day of want. But in eternity there will be no last joy; no last rapture; no last song of praise; no last thanksgiving for redeeming love. On earth, among Christian friends, time brought a last meeting, and a last parting; a last dying look, and a last farewell: but eternity will bring no last meeting, no last look, no dying eye.

As it is with the pious, thus, but in an awfully opposite manner it will be with the ungodly. Time will bring to the sinner a last trifling day or festive night, a last pleasure, and a last hour of sinful gaiety; but eternity will bring no last pain, no last sorrow. The sinner's pleasures will end,

but not his pains; his joys, but not his griefs; his gain, but not his loss. O reader, think of this solemn eternity! and in the view of it choose that good part which should never be taken away from you! You may look forward, and in imagination see yourself leaving this world; your funeral over; your body in a coffin, and that coffin in the grave; and after a few years yourself so forgotten there, that no one on earth will know you ever existed; but then you will be in eternity. Before your friends have laid you in the grave, your immortal spirit will have begun to experience the joys or sorrows of eternity. Happy they who enjoy the Saviour's grace! and who, when they quit this world, are welcomed by him to "everlasting habitations!"

CHAPTER XI.

SERIOUS QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO NEGLECTORS OF RELIGION; AND THE FOLLY AND INEXCUSABLENESS OF DELAY.

1. PERHAPS, reader, you are one of that unhappy multitude that still crowd the broad way which leads to destruction; and upon whom all that has hitherto been urged, has been urged in vain. Let the writer then, before he leaves you for ever, earnestly beg your attention to a few plain questions connected with the subjects of the preceding pages, and with your eternal interests.

Is not your soul worth saving? That precious treasure for which the Son of God shed his blood,

and whose conversion would raise new joy in heaven, is it not worth your care? If it is, why do you treat that deathless soul as if it mattered nothing whether it be saved or lost, blessed or cursed, to all eternity! Yet this you do, while refusing to commit your all to the Saviour's care.

2. Is not God's love worth having? That love perfects the happiness of saints and angels. In it they rejoice and ever rejoice; and the want of that love insures the hopeless misery of the lost. If the world were yours, you would be an undone creature without that love; and if stripped of every earthly good, would be happy if possessed of that treasure. And will you, a poor dying mortal, that will soon, unless you repent, be a dead sinner, and a condemned sinner, will you treat that love with as much disregard as if it were deserving only of infinite contempt? yet this you do while you will not turn to God.

3. Is God's heaven worth possessing, and his salvation worth enjoying? or is it not? If it is, why do you madly neglect so great salvation, and obstinately slight that blessed heaven? Would you wish God to swear, in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest? and that whoever may enjoy salvation you shall have no part in its blessings? Would you not think this a direful doom indeed? yet is it not as bad to deprive your own soul of salvation, by wicked carelessness, by open sin, or by halting between two opinions, as it would be for God to shut you out of heaven? Rather is it not worse? Will not such a wilful loss of salvation be connected with more bitter remorse and more self-accusing agony, than its loss in any other way could pos-

sibly be? Will it not deepen the gloom of eternal night to remember, that the fair inheritance of heaven was lost to you, not because God was unwilling you should be saved, but by your own sin and folly, because you would not seek salvation.

4. Is the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Saviour and a friend, not worthy of your regard? Perhaps you would exclaim, "God forbid that I should indulge so wicked and horrible a notion!" But while you refuse him your heart, you treat him as if you indulged it; and though you will not say, with your lips, that he is unworthy of attention, yet you, as it were, say this by a careless ungodly life; and by persevering, in spite of warnings and entreaties, in making light of this great Saviour. When you make light of earthly objects, it is of trifles, not of treasures; of persons mean and inconsiderable, not great and honourable: and when you make light of Christ, whatever you may say, or may profess to mean, you are guilty of the horrible crime of treating the Lord of heaven, as if he did not deserve your notice, though you are but a dying worm; and of *practically* despising, as unworthy of regard, the Author and Giver of salvation.

5. Is God's anger so trifling, and his indignation so harmless, that escape from them is not worth your care? You will not assert that this is the case; why then, unhappy mortal, trifle with that dreadful anger? and play, by neglecting salvation, with that fiery indignation? Nothing is so dreadful as the deserved anger of a long patient but incensed God. Though he is love itself to the penitent, who seeks his mercy,

to the careless neglecter he will be a consuming fire; his wrath will burn to the lowest hell. If once the flaming sword of divine justice be let loose against you, hope and escape will for ever be impossible. If once the long gathering tempest of divine wrath, break on your guilty and devoted head, it will "beat upon your naked soul in one eternal storm;" and God will, for ever, "render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" to you, an unhappy worm, because you would not receive his proffered mercy, welcome his beloved Son, and become his happy and obedient child. Oh if, through sin and folly, this should ever be your unhappy lot, you will know too late that all which man esteems most appalling here, is mild and harmless compared with the deserved wrath of a just and holy God!

6. Is it not worth your while to escape from hell? is that place of torment so little to be feared, that you may heedlessly rush into its undying flames? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Will the pleasures of sin, and the pursuits of folly, recompense you for enduring the flames of damnation? Before you rush into those flames try to ascertain. Put one finger in a candle's blaze, and hold it there till the flesh is consumed, and the bones appear. For what would you do this? Not for a trifling reward. But for what would you hold your hand in a fire till it were consumed? or for what would you rush into a blazing furnace to perish in its flames? Would you for the whole world? Yet what is that fire, that would be extinguished in an hour, to the fire "that never shall be quenched?" So surely as God is true, while you slight

religion, thither you are going, whether you mean to win perdition or mean it not; and if you do not turn, there will you soon lift up your eyes in torments. Unhappy mortal! if you should, surely the remembrance of abused mercies and neglected warnings, will complete the bitterness of your cup of misery. Hell, in every view, will be horrid, but surely it will be a dreadful addition to its horrors to be compelled to reflect, "I sunk myself here. I need never have come to this place of misery. God waited on me, but I would not listen. A Saviour died, but I would not give my heart to him. I chose the path of death, and the sorrows that I now endure."

7. What then do you mean in neglecting the salvation of your soul? Perhaps you mean to repent hereafter; but before that time comes, you may be in the grave; or God may have given you over to a hardened heart, and may have no mercy for you. He may have sworn that you shall not enter into his rest. What do you mean? Perhaps you mean to follow the world, and unite religion with its pursuit. Alas! you cannot do this. No man can "serve God and mammon." You may keep the world and hell with it; but not the world and religion with it.

8. Do you mean to perish? Have you made up your mind to sink to hell, to "curse God and die" eternally? No! you have not; you have no such intention. But you might as well design this, as take the way to perdition. You may not mean to perish; but if you slight the Saviour you *must perish*. You may not design to be damned; but if you neglect religion you must. You may not intend to lose heaven and burn in hell; but if

you do not turn to God you must do both. What you mean will weigh nothing at the judgment bar. The inquiry will not be, "Did this sinner mean to go to hell?" but "Did he take the way thither?" "Did he intend to lose heaven?" but "Did he make light of the only Saviour, that could raise him to eternal life?" If you set out on a journey to London, but took a road that led you further from that city, it would be vain to say, "I intend this road shall take me to London," when every step left you more distant than the preceding; and if a friend were to say to you, "Every step you take you are getting further from the place towards which you profess to travel," it would make you seem beside yourself, to be offended with your friend, and to affirm, "I am travelling towards London," when all who knew the road saw you were getting further and further away. Just as vain is it, to hope to go to heaven while you slight the only Saviour; and not to intend to go to hell, while you take the way that leads to that abyss of woe. You might as well at once mean to perish; make up your mind to be lost; and seriously and deliberately choose everlasting perdition; as trifle with God and eternity, with the Saviour and salvation; or live in an undecided state, halting between the Saviour and the world. You could but perish in the former case; and you will surely perish in the latter. If you do not feel your danger, insensibility will not ward it off. While you are without Christ you may sleep; but your judgment lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not.

9. If you do not mean to perish, and if inde-

cision will ruin you as surely as if you did; Can you be saved as you are? If you are still the character addressed in this chapter, this is utterly impossible. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent."¹ Let God be true if every man be a liar.² But if God is true, it is not possible for you to be saved without repentance, for the Lord has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."³ "The wicked shall be turned into hell."⁴ It is not possible, for you to be saved without conversion, for He who is the truth, has said, "Ye must be born again. Verily verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."⁵ Therefore to hope to be saved in an unconverted state, is a desperate and wicked hope indeed. It is to hope something so horrid, that resolution is needed, to bring the pen to write it down. It is, with reverence be it spoken, to hope that the God of truth and love will prove a liar, to save a sinner in his sins; and to save a sinner *in his sins*, that might be saved *from them*, but *that will not turn to God*. O what a desperate and wicked hope is a hope that includes all this! Yet this is your hope if you hope to be saved unconverted as you are. Surely Satan has begotten and now nourishes your guilty hope.

10. If you cannot be saved as you are, can you find another way of salvation? Blessed be God! in the Gospel there is one equal to all your wants and state, but that one you slight. You are not willing to receive the Saviour in his

(1) Numb. xxiii. 19.

(2) Rom. iii. 4.

(3) Luke, xiii. 3.

(4) Psalm, ix. 17.

(5) John, iii. 5. 7.

own way. Is there then another path to heaven? Ah no, "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."¹ The scriptures represent the salvation of every one that slights the only Saviour as hopeless. "He that believeth not shall be damned."² "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus:"³ there is no escape if we neglect so great salvation.

11. If you knew this were your last day, would you continue to slight this precious salvation? If you had reason to believe that when at night you close your eyes to sleep, you would wake in eternity, could you then pursue your guilty course of sin and folly? Yet little as you expect it, this may be the case. Not long ago, the writer knew a tradesman apparently vigorous and to be feared a man of the world, who was on a journey. He spent the evening at an inn. He was fond of company, was cheerful that night and sat up later than usual. In the morning he did not rise, and some one entered his chamber. There he lay a corpse. His bed was unruffled, and he appeared to have died without a struggle; probably while asleep. How solemn the change! Such has been the lot of multitudes, and it may soon be yours. And if it should, with what awful surprise, will eternity open on your unpardoned spirit! Multitudes every morning awake on earth, in one place or other, that before the evening comes have finished their course, and are gone to meet their God. Every setting sun, many are found inhabitants of this world, who before that sun rises again, are fixed

(1) Acts, iv. 12.

(2) Mark, xvi. 16.

(3) 1 Cor. iii. 11

beyond hope or fear in an eternal state. More than eighty thousand human beings are supposed to pass into eternity every four and twenty hours. How soon among these crowds, may you be one!

12. If God were to number all your sins, and to set them all in array before you, would you say, "I scorn pardon, I will keep them all?" One of them unpardoned would undo you for ever; what will all the load! Yet, if they are not forgiven, God at another day will set them all in array against you. You would not say, "I scorn pardon, I will keep them all." Yet you might as well solemnly and deliberately declare this, as slight the Saviour and neglect his pardoning grace. Were you to be so infatuated as to make such a declaration, you could but keep all your sins; you could but perish in them: and if you will not come to Christ you will keep all your sins; you will assuredly perish in them; and where in the end will be the difference? You would tremble to express such a horrid resolution as that of scorning pardon, and clinging to your guilt; yet you do as bad; and will be as deeply ruined, merely by *neglecting* or *refusing* to yield yourself to the mighty Saviour.

13. If you could have seen the Saviour suffering on the cross, could have beheld his overwhelming sorrows, his bloody sweat, his thorny crown, his pierced hands, feet, and side; and could then have heard him utter the mournful cry, "My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" if after this you could have seen him bow his head and die; would you have slighted his dying sorrows, and still have treated him with

wicked disregard? If God would now present to your view, a miraculous representation of these sorrows of his Son, and would say to you, "Sinner, all this was borne on thy account." Would you say, "I know it was; but I will receive no benefit from it all? I will return this Saviour nothing but ingratitude: He shall be no Saviour to me, nor will I ever be a follower of his?" Surely nothing would bribe you to utter such a declaration; or if you tried, your trembling tongue would hardly be able to express the horrid resolution. But did not Christ die as really as if you saw him die? Were not his sorrows as heavy, as if you had witnessed them? Was not his love as great, as if you had seen its displays? And will it not be the same thing at last, to refuse him your heart in one way as in another? *If that dreadful deed is done, it matters not whether you do it by insulting words, or a careless or ungodly life.* If you do not unfeignedly receive Christ, he is in effect refused by you: *and it is that wicked refusal, not the manner in which it is made, that must seal all your guilt upon you, and undo your soul for ever.* If a physician offered his help to two persons ill of the plague, and one, with insult, rejected his aid, and the other complimented the physician as his friend and benefactor, yet completely disregarded his advice, and slighted his healing medicines, the one would die as much unaided and as certainly as the other. So whether you slight the Lord Jesus Christ's sufferings by open scorn, or slight them by neglecting the great salvation, the effect will be the same. You and the scornful are going alike to the same place of

ruin; though you are taking rather different ways to hell; and what will be the difference at last? If one man suffer death for committing a hundred murders, and another for committing one, the gallows is the same, and death is the same; nor would it avail for the less guilty criminal to plead "I have not sinned to the same extent as my fellow sufferer." So if some perish for blaspheming Christ, and you should perish for neglecting him, the heaven lost to them and you will be the same; the hell incurred will be the same; the death that never dies will be the same; then where in the end will be the difference? O receive Christ entirely, or you can have no part no lot in him!

14. If you had seen the solemnities of the judgment day, could you continue careless of the Saviour's favour? If you had seen the earth burning; the heavens vanishing away; the dead rising; the Judge descending; the millions of the saved exulting in his favour and lifting up their heads in triumph; the millions of the lost wailing in utter despair, and longing to be hidden by burning hills and melting mountains, would you then make light of the Saviour's grace? Would you then say, I will be content to have the pleasures of sin for a season, and after this to stand at the Judge's left hand, and wish for rocks to cover me, and wail in infinite despair? If you had heard the eternal Judge utter to the two divisions of mankind the solemn and decisive words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world;" and "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the

devil and his angels!" could you then say, "I am willing to hear the sentence 'Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire,' if I may but follow the world for a few short years?" Yet you will see all this. "Behold he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him." You will hear the solemn and decisive words of final doom spoken to you; and will you not then seek the Judge as your Saviour and your friend?

15. If you could see hell opened to your view; could behold the outer darkness; the burning flame; the tormented captives; the infernal spirits, that toss and howl in misery there; would you then be intent on taking the way to that abyss of agony? If some angelic messenger could say to you "*Look* at those flames, hear those curses, hearken to those groans, these are the curses and groans of neglectors like thee;" Would you say, "And I will join them soon; I will not escape this flaming prison, I will have my portion there?" You would rather tremble with horror and dread lest you should be cast into that pit of despair. Yet you might as well make such a declaration as merely neglect and slight the Saviour. You could but sink to hell if you vowed to go there, and neglecting Christ, if there be nothing worse, will conduct you to the same abode. You cannot see these regions of misery and these sights of woe; but if you continue a careless impenitent sinner, so surely as God speaks true, you shortly *must*. Yes, *you must embrace Religion, or you must shortly see it all*; and more than *see it*, must sink into the pit.

16. If you could see the wicked one, furious

with infernal rage, and could hear him say, "You are mine, you are doing my will; you are accomplishing my purposes, and you will soon be with me;" would you not almost die through fear of dying the slave of such a horrid tormentor? Yet will you not believe God, as readily as Satan? and if you will believe God, you must believe, that while you have no heartfelt piety, you are a child of the devil. You are doing his will in a life of carelessness and sin. He seeks the damnation of your soul; and while you slight Christ, you are accomplishing his infernal desires. Every prayerless day you live; every warning you slight; every sabbath you break; every conviction you overcome; you are doing the will of the wicked one. Could he speak to you, he would tell you to disregard this volume; and to slight all the advice and warnings it contains. And shall Satan have his way? or will you disappoint his hellish desires by turning to God?

17. If looking into the pit of perdition you could hear the lost, amid the wailings of their distress, address you, and say, "We were once like you, and you will soon be like us; you are taking the way which brought us here; and shortly you will join us, and be all that we are now;" could you hear this, would you still go on in carelessness? But will you not believe God as soon as a lost spirit? He tells you in his word, that if you do not turn you must die; and that if you die in sin you will wake in hell; and will you not believe Him? and if you do believe Him, why flee you not from the wrath to come?

18. If you could see heaven, and it could be

said to you, "Follow Christ, and this shall be your home;" would you say, "No, it shall not, I will have hell in preference; let those who like it seek the kingdom of God, but hell and its horrors are my choice?" But is not heaven as truly the world of happiness as if you saw it? and are not many now enjoying its blessings? and will you not as really lose it by neglect, as if you were to say, "I will have no home there?"

19. If you could see the saints in light, could behold their peaceful mansions and unfading crowns, and could witness all their unalloyed happiness; and if one of them could say to you, "Follow Christ, and you will soon be like us;" would you say, "No, I will not follow him; I will never seek either your Saviour or your home?" Would you, for the world, utter in words such a declaration? Yet it will come to the same thing at last, whether you resolve never to go to their home, or live careless of him who would lead you thither. Would such a view, and such a declaration from a saint in light, induce you to seek the Saviour's grace? and will you not seek this, when the God and Father of those saints tells you of a happy heaven; and promises, that if you receive his Son, that heaven shall soon be yours? will you not listen to his words of mercy?

20. If you had not merely *seen* heaven and hell, but had *felt* for one hour what the blest enjoy, and what the lost suffer, would you then think any thing too hard to be endured, or too valuable to be resigned for Christ? Would *one hour spent in heaven, or one hour in hell*, work such a change in you, and will you not let the consi-

deration, that you must pass not one hour only, but *all eternity* amidst the raptures of heaven or the horrors of hell, have any effect upon your mind? Is it not as certain as God's truth can make it, that you must soon be in one or the other of those opposite worlds? And shall this weigh nothing with you? Will you exercise no forethought, when eternal interests are depending? Some insects in summer prepare food for their winter supply; and will you exercise no care, when an eternity without one blessing is before you, unless you secure those blessings now? Will you never so believe in hell, as to have a concern to flee from it, till you are sinking into it, or till you feel its fire? Will you never so believe in heaven, as to seek its blessings till you see those blessings lost for ever, and the impassable gulf fixed between you and happiness? O debase not thus the rational powers that God has given you! nor thus ruin your own immortal soul!

21. Is the service of the devil so good, and honourable, and profitable, that you should be unwilling to renounce it? What is the honour? Perhaps the applause of a few deluded and, in truth, miserable beings, led captive by Satan at his will. What is the gain? A few brutish pleasures, suited to a debased and fallen nature; or a few years of carelessness and trifling gaiety. And is this all that you gain? Yes, all, the very utmost. And what is the gain of Satan's service hereafter? Remorse and despair; wailing and agony; eternal night and the depths of hell. And is this the service you are so backward to leave? And what is the loss connected with this service?

The favour of God ; the love of Christ ; the joys of heaven ; glory, honour, and immortality ; all that blesses angels in light ; all that enriches saints in glory. And will you encounter all this loss, *to all eternity*, for the low reward that Satan's service can give you, through *a moment of time* ?

22. Why then are you so loath to yield yourself to God ? so backward to welcome Christ as your Lord and Saviour ? This is what all the saints in light have done. And why should you be backward to become what all who have been, bless God for eternally, and think they never knew one happy moment till they knew that grace ? Why should you be backward to be what all the inhabitants of heaven approve, and only devils condemn ? The cause is not in God, but in yourself. It lies in your own sinful heart. But what a horrid unwillingness and backwardness is this ! How sad your state while under its influence ! while you are backward to love and serve a God so good and kind ! backward to follow such a Saviour ! unwilling to leave the infernal spirit's service ! unwilling to be holy ! backward to be happy ! unwilling to take the only way that can raise you to heaven, and keep you from hell ! in fine, unwilling to leave all that God hates, and that the devil loves ; and that has already ruined millions ! O, what cause you have to deplore before God this wicked backwardness ! this horrid unwillingness to be pious, and thus be blest ! O, what cause you have for confessing, that your heart is indeed desperately wicked !

23. But perhaps your purpose is *delay*. You

cannot bring yourself to think of always living, and at length dying without God; but you hope to seek him hereafter. You are perhaps young; or if not young, vigorous and full of business; or you look forward to a future time, when you may repent and turn to God. This is a fatal delusion. No time will be better than the present. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."¹ Think therefore:—

24. Have not millions sunk to hell through delaying? Are not multitudes now in hell, that never meant to perish, but only meant to do what you are doing, to delay a little longer? They did so. Some were cut off in an unexpected hour, others grew hardened in carelessness and sin; and the ruin they would not flee from when they might, at length overwhelmed them. O seek religion now! The longer you delay, the more hopeless will be your condition; the more hardened your heart; and the less the prospect of your finding mercy.

25. Have you not delayed long enough already? How old are you? Perhaps you have seen forty or fifty years; perhaps not more than fifteen or twenty. Whatever has been the length of your past life, has it not been long enough for the service of sin and satan? Has it not been long enough for heaping up wrath against the day of wrath? and is it not time for you to awake from the dreadful sleep of sin? As remedies against this delusive evil; consider that—

26. Delay is useless. You cannot expect an

(1) 2 Cor. vi. 2.

easier way to heaven. God will not widen the strait gate and the narrow way, that you and other careless sinners may keep your carelessness, and yet travel in the path of life. He has declared, in passages already quoted, that you must repent or perish ; be converted or shut out of heaven ; turn from sin or be turned into hell.

Do you expect him to alter those solemn declarations ? and to lower his terms of mercy till they will suit your love of the world and folly, your indifference and neglect ? O be not so deluded ! God will not change. It is you that must be changed. If every human being were to slight the proclamation of Gospel mercy, God, notwithstanding all his love, would rather let every human being perish, than change his gracious overtures to adapt them to the vices and the lusts of men. He is the unchangeable God ; and his Gospel is the everlasting Gospel, like its Divine Author, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Nor can you ever reach heaven, unless you are willing to tread the same narrow path of humble piety as martyrs and departed saints have trod. If you want a religion adapted to the taste of worldly men, you may delude yourself with the notion that you possess it, and will then die and find you had “a lie in your right hand.”

27. As delay is useless, so it is inexcusable, and connected with dreadful guilt. As you have been reminded, till you are decidedly a Christian you are a rebel, an enemy to God and the Saviour ; and an enemy without excuse, for there is nothing in God to excuse your delays. If he were unkind, unlovely, ungracious, you might have some excuse. If his favour brought no good,

his love no blessings, you might be less guilty in delaying. But you have no excuse of this kind; God is infinitely lovely and gracious. He has been infinitely kind to you; his mercies have been numberless, and his claims upon you are as numerous as those mercies. His favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. There is not one harsh feature in his grace, not one defect in his excellencies, to *justify your neglect of him for a single hour; nor one cause in all he is, to excuse your delay for a single moment.* He has always deserved your affections and service. He has always been worthy of them. He has always justly claimed them, and every hour you delay to turn to him is an hour of ingratitude and guilt.

28. There is nothing in the Saviour, to keep you from closing with his invitations of mercy, and giving him all your heart. In him appears every divine excellence, and all that heavenly goodness, which would win any heart, except a heart embruted by sin, and governed by Satan. If, notwithstanding his goodness, there were any defect in him, to make him less deserving of confidence and admiration, you might have some excuse for delay; but there is nothing. All he has done, and all he is, and all he says, bids you come at once, and makes every hour of delay an hour of guilt, for which there is no possible extenuation.

29. There is nothing in irreligion so good or so gainful, as to excuse your continuing in an irreligious state. Every hour of an irreligious life is an hour of sin, of black rebellion against a good God and gracious Saviour. To have lived many

years in such a state is awful; to refuse to turn from it, and to perish in such a course, is, if possible, still more awful.

30. There is nothing in the devil so lovely, as to excuse your delay in forsaking his service. You do not yourself think there is. Every hellish deformity, every infernal passion, exists in that great enemy of God and man. How inexcusable is that miserable man, or woman, or child, that will not leave the service of this hateful master, for that of a good and gracious Saviour!

31. There is nothing in your own state so good as to excuse your delay. Were you possessed of good friends and great blessings, which by delaying you might keep, but by deciding must lose, there would then be some excuse for your conduct; and though very blameable, you might still be pitiable; but this is not the case. While delaying to turn to God, you possess not one real blessing. You have no Saviour; no title to heaven; no Father there. You have no pardon; no well-founded hope; no bright prospects for eternity. Your state is one of guilt and condemnation, of wretchedness and ruin. O fall upon your knees, and beg of God to bring your mind to decision, and let you delay no longer!

32. There is nothing in delaying itself so good as to excuse you. Delay insults God, who tells you that now is the day of salvation. Is ungrateful to Christ, who became man, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man,"¹ and who cannot too soon possess your heart. It grieves the Spirit of God. It deprives you of comforts, and blessings, and hopes that you might

(1) H. b. ii. 9.

enjoy. It prolongs your days of guilt and rebellion; and increases the already heavyload of your transgressions. It hardens your own heart; trains you for hell, and, if you go on, will soon fix you there. O can you find an excuse at the bar of God for that which does all this accumulated mischief, connected with not less aggravated guilt?

33. As thus there is nothing in God or the Saviour, in irreligion or Satan, in your own state or in delaying itself, to excuse you; so there is nothing in your unwillingness to turn to God, that can in the smallest degree palliate your guilt. The cause that you do not come to Christ *lies in your heart*. You are not willing to come to him. But this unwillingness, instead of being an excuse, is the highest aggravation of all your guilt. You are not only careless and wicked *outwardly*, but more wicked *inwardly*; and that is the fountain whence flows your outward wickedness. To delay to turn to God is a great sin; but to delay to turn to him, because you are really unwilling to do so, is a greater. Suppose you knew a child that was continually rebelling against his parents, and disregarding all their commands; would you not think it an aggravation of this child's guilt, if he were to plead, "Father, I disobey you, because my heart is estranged from you. I break your commands, because I have no love whatever to you?" This would be a tenfold aggravation of rebellious conduct. Yet such is your case; you will not turn to God, because you are estranged from him, and this aggravates all your sin.

34. Thus while you delay you are a rebel, and a rebel without excuse. God looks upon you as

an enemy ; and an enemy's lot is yours. You are exposed to numberless and intolerable evils ; and *you deserve them all*, through your former sins and your present *wicked delay*. O trifle not with the declaration, to which compassion for your soul must give utterance ; *you are deserving of hell for every hour in which you delay to turn to God*.

35. While such is your condition, delay is connected with extreme danger.

Nothing keeps you out of hell but God's long-suffering and patience ; and how long, while living in such aggravated sins, can you depend on being thus kept ? You have not one claim on him to spare you. Can you point to one ? You have not one promise that he will continue to spare you, nor one reason justly to expect it. Why should he spare you ? that you may sin longer ? that you may rebel longer ? that you may abuse more mercies ? trample on more grace ? insult him longer ? treat Christ with more ingratitude ? grieve the Spirit more ? and serve sin and the devil longer ? Can you justly expect that God will spare you to do all this ? Can you depend on his sparing you to do this, when he sees you unwilling to turn and do any thing else ? And though you may be youthful, vigorous, and healthful, he wants not instruments to cut you down. He can in a moment send disease into your frame ; stretch you on the bed of languishing ; lay you in the grave ; and call your spirit to his judgment bar.

This is not all, your state is even worse than this. As has been represented to you in a former chapter, you are, while uninterested in the

Saviour, a condemned sinner. Then you deserve to be cut down. And while you have no claim on mercy, and while your *desert is judgment*, how soon may the awful doom go forth against you! While you look for life, death may come. God has been merciful and spared you, that you might repent; but, perhaps, this may be the last year of offered mercy. The door of salvation may to you be shut before this year shall close; and should it be so, how changed ere long will be your state. If you still delay, how dreadfully changed. This year then you will meet your God. This year all your hopes will end in black despair; and all your worldly comforts will have fled away for ever. What will you do? Will you yield yourself to Christ? Will you go to a throne of grace and seek mercy to be entirely the Lord's? Will you lay this book down, determined by divine grace to become a child of God? Or will you still delay and die a child of Satan? O decide! O pray to become what you will wish to be for ever!

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUDING ADDRESSES—TO YOUNG WOMEN,—TO
YOUNG MEN,—AND TO READERS GENERALLY.

I. You have been shown that there is no alternative between heartfelt piety and eternal ruin; what is the effect of the truths presented to you? The most solemn and the most important event in human existence, viewed as embracing both time and eternity, is the committal of the soul, with the surrender of the heart, to the Lord Jesus.

Is your soul committed and your heart devoted to him? Then the lost and undone pass from death and misery, and Satan's power and condemnation to hellish horrors, into life, and light, and liberty, and peace, and salvation. Have you thus passed from death to life, and gained every blessing at the Saviour's feet? The contrast is great indeed between what the Christian was when a careless sinner, and what he is when become a humble believer. Sin then unpardoned is now forgiven. Then he had no hope; now every hope is his. Then this life was his all; now it is a comparative nothing. Death was a curse; but now it is a blessing. Then he was the enemy; now is the child of God. Then Satan's slave; now the friend of Christ. Then the heir of hell; but now of heaven. Then in his prospects all was darkness, gloom, and death; now they are bright with life and immortality. All these blessings are enjoyed through an interest in the Lord Jesus. Are all these blessings yours? If so, how memorable is the day when such treasures were secured! If not, how pitiable is your condition while destitute of them all!

II. TO YOUNG WOMEN

1. What has been written in the preceding pages, has been addressed indiscriminately to irreligious persons of either sex and of any age; but there are some classes that it may not be unsuitable more expressly to address. Let the writer turn first to young women.

My young female friend, are you a stranger to true piety? How sad then is your condition!

Religion is the brightest ornament among the many that adorn your sex. And among females religion finds the greater part of its decided votaries. Women were among the most affectionate and faithful of the disciples of the Lord. They watched beside his cross when his own apostles forsook him and fled. They were last at his cross, and first at his sepulchre. And what they were to the Divine Master, they have since been to his feeble servants labouring in his work. The piety and consistency of Christian females has been a chief source of encouragement and comfort to the ministers of the gospel; and probably of the truly pious two thirds are women.¹ But you, my young friend, want that chief glory of an immortal nature.

Oh, how can you trifle with your God, with your Judge, and with your deathless soul! Perhaps you are so timorous that a flash of lightning alarms you. You would be frightened by meeting alone an ill-looking man upon a lonely road, and yet you can trifle with the terrors of God's wrath and the horrors of Satan's reign. Alas! if you persist in slighting humble piety it may soon be said of you, when dead and gone, "Here lies one who loved the world, but it has left her for ever; who lost her soul for its gaities and pleasures, and its pleasures are for ever over. Unhappy girl, how different her lot from theirs who loved and followed Christ the Lord!"

2. How many are thus unhappy! Look at a young woman who is openly irreligious. She is false; without remorse can violate the law o.

(1) Professor Dwight states, that Jonathan Edwards remarked, that in the American churches about two thirds were females.

truth. She is perhaps profane; was nursed up in sin and loves it. She scorns true piety, and laughs at its restraints. Wretched girl! little does she think to whom she belongs, and whither she is going! Her Lord is Satan, and her home is hell.

Behold a prayerless girl! like the brutes in the field she rises and lies down, careless of the God that gave her being, and before whose dreadful bar she must shortly stand. She seeks no blessings for eternity, and she has none. No heaven is hers; no peaceful rest awaits her. She is without God, and without Christ, and without hope.

See a third! her idol is dress and display. She thinks much of adorning the body, but nothing of adorning the soul. A new garment fills her with delight, and puffs her up with pride; but she slights the robe of righteousness. The body that must soon mingle with the dust is all her care. The soul that must live for ever is utterly neglected. Whose is she? what must she shortly be, when the grave is her home, and her only suit a shroud? Then must that idolized body be a loathsome mass of corruption and decay, hidden from the sight of men; and that neglected soul, without one ornament of grace, must be for ever deformed, and hateful, and hellish amidst the poverty and gloom of perdition.

A few years ago some particulars were related to the writer respecting a young woman who had died just before. This unhappy girl was what thousands are, devoted to the world. The love of dress reigned in her breast. Dress was

her idol. The time for a fair was approaching, and she had a new garment in which she designed to attend its scenes of dissipation. Part of several preceding sabbaths had been employed in preparing some of her apparel, as she usually left this work for that sacred day. On Saturday evening before the fair she was not quite well; the next morning however she attended to some worldly business. In the evening of that profaned sabbath she became ill, and soon sunk into a state of insensibility. Thus she continued till Friday, the day of her anticipated pleasure; but on that day about three o'clock she expired, at the very time when she would probably have been in the fair, had not disease and death disappointed her expectations. Some time before she died the hair was shaved from her head; she was then sufficiently sensible to say, "Not my hair, not my hair, I am tormented in my soul!"

Behold another! She feels convictions of her sin and folly, and listens to pious instructions; but she will not give her youth and herself to God. She goes forward, sinning against light and knowledge, till she gets into a state of hardened indifference. Ah, whose is she? What are her prospects? The God she trifles with will soon cease to pity her. The Spirit she resists will soon cease to strive with her. The Saviour she slights will soon cease to invite her. The heaven she neglects will soon be shut against her. Then what will this poor trifler be for ever?

View one young woman more. She is very different from those already described. In disposition amiable; in conduct commendable. She respects religion, and esteems its friends;

yet she is not its possessor. She is but almost a Christian. Then what is she? still, like others, a perishing creature. What are her prospects? Alas, as dark as theirs. Soon, unless she become a Christian indeed, she must be shut out from that heaven of which she often hears; she must be separated eternally from those whose piety she respects but does not imitate. Unhappy girl, to be so near the kingdom and yet to come short at last!

A pious minister relates that he visited a female on her dying bed, who had indulged false hopes of heaven; and listened to her awful regrets for time past, and to her prayers that she might not die. "I cannot die, I cannot die!" she exclaimed. "My bible will rise up in judgment against me. I've forgotten God and served the world, and now he is taking me away for ever. Oh! I cannot die." Vain exclamations, she could not flee from death.

My young friend, what are you? Is either of these representations a description of yourself? But we will view some of an opposite character.

3. Behold then a young woman whose heart is intent upon winning Christ, and obtaining the blessings of religion. She is humble and penitent; though never immoral, yet in her own esteem the chief of sinners. She is watchful and prayerful while struggling after the Saviour. Whose is she? the Lord's. What is her portion? blessedness; for he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger

and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.”¹

Behold another. She has gone further in the path of peace. Not only has she come out from the world, and given up its vanities, but she has avowed herself to be the Lord's. His vows are upon her. Her treasures are above. Her home is there ; her heart is there. She is learning of her Lord ; growing in spirit and conduct like him ; looking for him, and following him as her guide to glory. Happy girl ! the treasures of empires are poverty to her wealth ; and all the science of philosophers folly to her wisdom. Now she is “a daughter of the Lord Almighty,” and soon will be his favoured child in his immediate presence.

How wide the contrast between these and those first described ! wide now, but how much wider will it be when the first shall have left the world they love, and the others shall have reached the heaven they seek ! when the first shall have exchanged their dress and their youthful bloom for the shroud, the grave, and hell ; and when the last shall have left their conflicts, their doubts and fears for perfect peace and endless victory ; and shall have exchanged the fading bloom of youth on earth for the immortal glories and unfading beauties of heaven !

To which of these two opposite classes do you belong ? If to the former, by all that is dear to you, be persuaded to listen to the admonitions addressed to you in this book ! and pray for grace to become now what you will else eternally wish in vain to have become, the humble follower

(1) Matt. v. 3, 4. 6.

of the Saviour, and thus a "daughter of the Lord Almighty."

III. TO^o YOUNG MEN.

Perhaps the writer is addressing some irreligious young man. If so, my young friend, harden not your heart against the admonitions, that might, if regarded, do you good for ever. Among young men there is much wickedness; much daring wickedness; much open wickedness; and a greater proportion of them than of the other sex are wicked; and they harden each other in wickedness. Thus multitudes act. Every sabbath is profaned. Perhaps its morning spent in the fields, with their dogs and their wicked companions; and its evenings at the tavern or the alehouse; where they are, as it were, uniting to train each other for the pit of perdition; and they too fatally succeed. Were this their object, they could not accomplish it more effectually than they do. Look at the course of many young men. Some are lewd and drunken; the tempters of the other sex, the disgrace of their own, and the destroyers of themselves. Is their state a safe or happy one? Ah, no! it is one of accumulating guilt and constant danger. Many die the victims of youthful lusts. Others meet death in some drunken fit, and are suddenly hurried from the company of the alehouse to the society of devils. So common is this, that frequently, in a single week, the public prints record several instances of persons thus in the midst of their sins snatched into eternity. Lately an account appeared of two individuals riding home intoxi-

cated. One fell from his horse and was killed on the spot; the other fell on him, and was found lying asleep by his dead companion, but so injured as to leave little hope of his recovery. In the same week another public print mentioned, that a waggoner driving down a hill in the dark, heard a noise, and thought one of his wheels was cracked; but looking for the cause, he found that a wheel had gone over a drunkard's head who was lying on the road, had smashed his skull to pieces, and left his corpse a horrid monument of the effects of drunkenness.

From viewing such characters turn to another. Behold the affected infidel. Though he knows little or nothing, and perhaps has never read the bible in his life, he is too wise in his own conceit to listen to its sacred truths, and dares to despise that book which Milton, and Newton, and Locke, and Sir M. Hale, and the greatest and wisest of men have revered as divine. He scorns instruction. But what is his condition? is it one of peace and safety? Ah, no. God will bring him into judgment.¹ He cannot live always; nor always sit in the scorner's chair. He cannot always jest at religion. He may laugh now at its solemn truths; but laughter will not drive death and hell away. What is his peace and support? let those who have been like him declare. A devoted Christian,² who when a young man was an infidel, remarks, "I was a professed infidel, but then I liked to be an infidel in company rather than alone. *I was wretched when by myself.*"

A visitor to one who had scorned the bible

(1) Eccles. xi 9.

(2) Cecil.

states, I found him in the full possession of his mental faculties, but much agitated and alarmed by a sense of his great sinfulness and approaching misery. About six months before the time at which I saw him, he had been deprived of his wife by death. To suppress the sorrow occasioned by this loss, he went frequently to a public-house; there he found companions whose mirth caused him to forget for a moment his troubles. At first he was surprised and shocked at their profaneness, but he soon proved that 'evil communications corrupt good manners.' These men were infidels; and it was not long before they persuaded their new associate to imitate their example, in abandoning the profession, and casting off the restraints of religion. On Sunday mornings they met to encourage each other in all manner of wickedness; and on one of these occasions, according to previous agreement, they together committed their *Bibles* to the flames, and vowed never again to enter a place of *religious worship*. 'All this,' said the wretched man, did well enough while I was in health, and could 'keep off the thoughts of death.' Now, however, he was stretched on a bed of sickness, and conscious of his near approach to eternity; in this state, forced to reflection, his guilt and danger excited the utmost horror and alarm: despair had taken full possession of his mind. When I spoke to him of the mercy and forgiveness which the most heinous offenders are encouraged to seek through the mediation of a Redeemer, he hastily exclaimed, 'What's the use of talking to *me* about mercy?' When entreated again and again to 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sin of the world,' he said, 'I tell you, it's of no use now; 'tis too late—'tis too late.' In reply to my exhortation to *pray*, he said, 'Oh! I could pray *once*, but *now* I can't pray;' and after a pause, 'I *will* not pray.' These expressions were subsequently several times repeated, 'I *cannot* pray, I *will* not pray.' Two men having entered the room, whom I understood to have been leaders in the guilty company by whom this poor man had been deluded, he hastily turned his face from them with obvious disgust and terror; and after they had addressed to him some blustering expressions, by which they hoped to rally his spirits, he raised himself on his bed, lifted up his hands, and in the most deliberate and solemn manner called on God Almighty to *blast those wretches to all eternity!* They almost immediately left the apartment, uttering a profusion of oaths. Some time afterwards three others of the wretched men entered, and occasioned a repetition of the imprecations, which it was impossible for any to hear without shuddering.

"After I had been with him about two hours, during which time he frequently repeated such expressions as have been stated, he became quite indifferent to what was said to him, rolling about on his bed, and now and then ejaculating, 'My *Bible!* Oh! the *Bible!*' His eyes were for several minutes fixed on me, but he seemed not to hear the questions and entreaties which I continued to address to him. He then concealed his face by turning it to the pillow; and after having remained in this position perhaps a quarter of an hour, his whole frame was violently convulsed; he groaned, and then again was still; and whilst

I was speaking to the by-standers, he expired. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'"

2. See a young man that ranks not thus openly with the enemies of holiness. He spends his sabbaths in worldly company; on the newspaper, or mere worldly science. He neglects all piety. He lives a prayerless life. In vain for him opens the house of worship, he enters not that sacred place; or if occasionally there, goes in only lifeless form. In vain for him the Christian minister proclaims the tidings of heavenly love. He treats those wonders on which angels gaze astonished, with utter indifference. But what is his condition? Is he safe and blest? Ah, no! Ruin, only ruin lies before him. He is exposed to utter danger, to eternal destruction. Yet he is vigorous, and fears no ill. True; but health may soon leave him. It has left millions once as fearless and vigorous; and they, guilty and ruined, have sunk into the grave. Insensibility lessens not his guilt nor his danger.

Behold a young man different from all these. He respects religion, treats its truths with reverence, its friends with kindness. No open profanity or vice marks his conduct. As far as the outward observance of many divine precepts is concerned, he can say with a young man of old, "All these have I observed from my youth." He is regular at the house of God; and is generally esteemed and beloved. Yet his heart is not given to Christ. He has not surrendered himself and his all to the Saviour. What is his condition? Alas! with all that is so promising, he is still perishing. Though he joins not the scoffer and the

drunkard, still while he receives not the Saviour he belongs to the same wretched family as they. Unhappy youth! with so much that is commendable and promising, yet to want the one thing needful. Unhappy youth! that meets with Christians, yet has himself no part in Christ; that shuns the place where scorers and blasphemers meet, yet has no more interest in the Saviour than they, and is hastening to the same dark dwelling of despair.

3. But see a young man different from all these. He is the humble and devoted disciple of the blessed Jesus. If once a profligate and a sabbath-breaker, he now hates all the paths of sin, and loves the sabbath he profaned. If brought up strictly, he now feels much more than the mere influence of habit or education; he has unfeignedly yielded up himself to God. Religion is the element in which he lives. Prayer his pleasure; the bible his guide; the friends of Christ his beloved associates. Youth cannot beguile him with its delusions. Whatever prospects of opening life are before him, he looks to brighter prospects and to fairer scenes beyond the limits of earth and time. God is his God. The Saviour is his all; and heavenly mansions his expected home. Happy young man! He possesses the good part that shall not be taken away from him.

Which of these very different characters do you resemble? If the latter, give God the praise. If any of the former, ruin is before you. O, flee from the paths of youthful sin and folly! or you will find, too late, that the way of transgressors is hard.

CONCLUSION.

IV. And now, reader, before this address closes, let the question once more be pressed on your attention, What are you? Are you yet undecided? If so, what have you to object to embracing religion? Would you lose by turning to God? Would it render you unhappy? Would you ever repent of doing so? Can you find another Saviour or happiness elsewhere? If not why continue undecided? Would not committing your all to the Lord Jesus, make this the best and happiest year of your life? Would it not prepare you for all events, to live on earth, or to die and live in heaven? Why then continue but almost a Christian? Why thus be ruined by what ruins multitudes? Probably few expect to perish for ever. Some delusion props up their hopes, till death and eternity sweep all delusive hopes away. Some speak of minding religion, but not, they allow, *as they should do*; when the fact is, they have never from the heart embraced the gospel. Others hope to become pious hereafter. Thus some are undone by one delusion, and others by another. But will you allow the deceitfulness of sin thus to ruin you? The Lord says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate;" and will you not strive when eternal life is depending?

2. Reader, before you are left to God and your own conscience, bear with one more warning against trifling with religion, for trifling would undo you eternally. Only make light¹ of Christ, and you will resemble a criminal whose state is

(1) Matt. xxii 5.

hopeless and who is left for execution. Only make light of Christ, and your life will be sin, your death despair, and your home hell. You are already a condemned sinner, make light of him and you seal that condemnation. No remedy will then long be presented to you, only make light of salvation, and all hope will be soon over. Nothing worse is needed to ruin you for ever. To be shut out of heaven, only trifle with the Saviour's claims, and the deed is done. Only stop with being but almost a Christian, and you destroy your soul as effectually as you could do by infidelity itself. To sink to hell you need not be a drunkard, or a swearer, or a liar, or lewd, or dishonest, only make light of Christ, and this will sink you there. To live and die laden with iniquity, to murder your own soul with the undying death, you need not keep adding open sin to sin, and transgression to transgression, only make light of Christ, only neglect decided religion, and the deed of destruction is completed, and the soul is undone.

Dying child of man ! what will you be ? whose will you be for ever ? The most important choice you can ever make is now before you. It is not, who shall be your companions, or what your employment for a few short years ; but who shall be your companions, and what your employment to eternity. Will you have a part in the blessings of salvation ? or will you have no part nor lot in the matter ? Will you have the supports of a Saviour's love ? or will you neglect his grace and have them not ? Will you make the choice which under divine grace millions have made and none ever lamented ? or will you not ?

4. What will you be? Decide by God's help now. Your last day is coming; your body will soon be in the grave, and your soul gone to meet its God. If these events were never to come to pass, you might trifle; but they will arrive, and then you will see religion as with other eyes, and feel its importance as with another heart. Will you become a child of God instead of continuing a guilty prodigal? and will you have an interest in his promises and favour? Will you become a partaker of his grace? Shall his everlasting love bless you? O trifle not longer with such blessings! Will you come to Christ and rejoice for ever in heaven? or follow the world and wail for ever in hell? *One you must do, which shall it be?*

O yield yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus become as blest as they that have already reached his heavenly kingdom; thus learn to live as safely, and to die as peacefully. Thus follow him who will teach you to sing the song of victory, and soon unite you to their happy bands. O come! O yield! and when death comes it will be gain; and when you are in the grave, your spirit will be with the Lord; and when you are forgotten in the dust, you will still be with him, and with him for ever.

What will you do? "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."¹ God's message is delivered to you; he waits your answer and the Saviour waits. The question is, Will you be indeed Christ's disciple? What is your answer? the answer of

your heart? "Yes, Lord, I will!" Blessed be God if this is your reply. You will have to bless him through eternal ages for the grace that inspires this answer, "Yes;"—then Satan has lost his prey and hell its victim! "Yes Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest!" Praise to the Lord! The Saviour is thine, and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over thee, a repenting sinner.

Is it so, reader? is it so? Is "Yes," your answer? Perhaps you say, "I long to be his, but I fear he will not welcome such a sinner." Away with such unbelieving fears; if you are willing, he is more willing: it was his grace that made you willing, and he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; ¹ him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out."²

But is, "Yes, I will, in the Lord's strength, be Christ's disciple," the heartfelt answer of all the readers of this book? It is to be feared not. Perhaps it is not yours. What then, reader, is your answer? There is no medium between Yes and No; between decided religion and eternal life, and irreligion and everlasting ruin. You are not willing to be quite the Lord's. Then do not deceive yourself; but speak plainly what the Lord regards as plainly done. At once say, "No, I will not be the Lord's." Is this your answer either by words or by conduct? Then for you the Son of God will have no blessings. "No:" then Satan exults, you are his victim still. "No:" then shall you deplore eternally your fatal resolution. "No!" Abide by this answer and your doom is settled, and your damnation sealed.

(1) Matt xi. 27.

(2) John, vi. 37.





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