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Sermons













# SERMONS

BY THE  
REV. THOMAS HOUSE TAYLOR, D.D.,  
FOR MANY YEARS RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, NEW YORK.

WITH A PORTRAIT FROM A PAINTING BY ELLIOTT.



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BY

THOMAS HOUSE TAYLOR, D.D.

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*THE CONSECRATION OF GRACE CHURCH,  
NEW YORK, MARCH 7th, 1846.*

*“The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts.  
“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former,  
saith the Lord of Hosts.”*

*Haggai 2d, 8th & 9th.*



THESE words were spoken by the Prophet to the enfeebled people of Israel, when, in a spirit-stirring address, he sought to rouse them from the criminal lethargy in which they slumbered, in regard to their high duty of rebuilding the fallen Temple of God. The language may be regarded as a direct assertion on the part of God, that the boundless treasures of the universe belong of right to Him who created them; and it conveys the cheering assurance to His earthly servants that the means shall never be wanting for the accomplishment of every wise and righteous design, for the advancement of His glory.

Although, my brethren, it may be safely said that outward splendor can never add anything to the overpowering majesty of God; and that the prayers of penitence and faith will rise as acceptably from the rude hut of the savage convert, as from the most gorgeous exhibitions of architectural skill, enriched with earth's accumulated stores of silver, and glittering with the gold and gems which the far-reaching arms of commerce may have gathered from the four quarters of the globe; yet, may it with equal truth be said, that we can never stand acquitted from the blighting charge of selfish and sordid ingratitude, if, in cold calculation, we set apart for devotion to the God of all only that which is coarse and mean; while, as faithless stewards, we continue to repose amid the refinements of cultivated taste, or to riot in the costliness of luxurious living. In every age of the world, men, either in obedience to the express teaching of their Maker, or else following the example of others who were so taught, have erected places of public worship, in admirable adaptation to their condition of advancement in intelligence, wealth, and power.

So, my brethren, ought it ever to be, and so do we trust it will be, in this wide and beautiful country of our love! While we were yet in our infancy—and wherever the population is yet scattered and feeble, it is to be expected that our houses of prayer should be of the simplest construction. But as fast as Christian communities gather strength, and God blesses them with prosperity, and extends their world-



ly trusts, then must the unslumbering sentinels upon the watchtowers of Faith stir up the hosts of the Lord to the solemn and ennobling duty of devoting the best of everything intrusted to them by the Master of all to that Master's use,—to the consecration of sanctuaries of religion, as monuments to His glory, of the most imposing and enduring magnificence! Yea, there must be nothing kept back of the best which can be given,—of science, of learning, of wealth, and of labor,—toward the erection of houses sacred to God, which, in their vast and harmonious proportions, shall fill the mind with awe—in their rich and chaste decorations, shall soothe us with those grateful emotions which the combination of beauty and grace so naturally awaken, and which shall stand through many generations as memorials of our national piety and high civilization; Yea, shall stand, amid the abodes of earthly strife and pollution, as stainless asylums, for the worn and weary victims of warring passions, pointing always to Heaven; and with their open doors inviting the bereaved and bleeding hearts of time to seek for the light, consolation, and healing balm, which comes only from God! My brethren, how barbarous, and destitute of everything calculated to inspire reverence and love, must that country be, where no sacred edifices of suitable magnificence meet the eye of the stranger, to relieve the pain and weariness with which he gazes upon the wide-spreading tokens of human guilt and misery!—where there is nothing to bespeak the ever-present sense of religion over

the hearts of the people—nothing to stand perpetually before the eyes of the young, calculated to train their fresh and ardent feelings into a channel of admiration for what is good and great, for what is beautiful in art, or elevating in the successful triumphs of architectural science, and thus building up that enthusiastic and unconquerable love of country which an early and intelligent contemplation of its noble monuments of piety and greatness is sure to inspire, while it familiarizes their thoughts with all that is transporting in the prospects which Christianity unfolds to the eye of Faith!

Let no man say, then, that it is but a vain thing to rear by the side of our thronged thoroughfare such a sanctuary as this. It is a common spiritual home, the completion of which calls forth the most earnest congratulations, and constitutes a bond of most indissoluble union to the people whose liberality, prayers, and toil have made it what it is. We have surely not now to learn how extensively national morals are influenced by the cultivation of the national taste; and how ennobling is the influence of the finer arts upon the grosser and lower nature of man. Friends, and Christian patriots! if you would refine, purify, and impart moral energy to the people who are to give character, power, and destiny to this young country, strive to diffuse widely, and in the most enduring forms, these models of excellence in all that is grand, harmonious, and beautiful—which through a long, long course of wasting time have contrived to command the world's admiration, in undi-

minished freshness. Above all things else, let nothing of supineness nor of selfishness deter you from aiding to the utmost of your power, in the highest and most solemn of all public duties, that of studding every corner of our land with houses of glory and beauty; upon which shall be inscribed in letters of light, "Holiness unto the Lord." Let us strive with an industry that never flags nor tires, to plant them on the streets and lanes of our cities, in the hamlets of our counties, and by the side of every highway and path, as husbandry advances its peaceful conquests over the ruggedness of the wilderness. Let us resolve, that so far as in us lies, they shall everywhere meet the eye in a fulness of stature meet for their position, and for their high and solemn uses. And never, my brethren, let us pass a sanctuary of the Lord, rising in its beautiful proportions, and in its vastness and chaste majesty admonishing us with silent impressiveness of the pollution and insignificance of man, without a silent ejaculation of thanks and praise that our land is blessed with a people who thus adore and magnify the God of nations; and that as countless blessings are thus won down for us all, no matter under what standard we may have enlisted in the army of Christ, yea, blessings won down for us ALL, as we and they who are to come after us shall continue to run a long career of national glory. So, too, may we meekly trust that with all our errors blotted from the book of God's remembrance through the merits of a common Redeemer, we shall all at last be found together at His

right hand, as friends and fellow-citizens in the city of our God.

I do not believe it possible for the humblest laborer who has toiled to lay these huge stones one upon another ever to look back upon the work he has wrought, with its "long-drawn aisles and vaulted roof," without a feeling of awe and veneration—without being lifted for a moment, at least, above the fascinations of base and brutal joys—without realizing a passing breath of inspiration, leading him to devotion—without a leaning of the weak and stained soul towards sanctity, and yearning of the worn and weary spirit for the rest of Heaven.

Who can estimate the value of such impressions as the subduing influence of ten thousand times ten thousand temples shall be felt, as they may be multiplied by all Christian sects, in continually increasing power and splendor, as the world rolls on its sweeping tide of passing mortals. But mark it, I say not that all churches which we are to build are to be enriched alike by the same unstinting application of the silver and the gold which God supplies. But I do say, that the wealth with which God may arm us for good, is to be applied without rest and without niggardliness towards supplying the stream of immortal minds which is perpetually flowing in upon us with houses of prayer, with solemn places of training for their duties to God and man. I say that these sacred places are always to be adapted, in the wisdom which prayer will win for us, to the condition of the people who are to use them.

The poor man, lifted by the expansive and liberalizing faith of Christ above the evil eye of jealousy, is so far from repining that his own lot should save him from the harassing cares of opulence, that he rejoices with grateful joy that although HE has not been thus charged, yet that instruments ARE employed by Heaven to bless and embellish society in its high places. I say that he is not only content to have it so, and to cherish a generous pride that his religion should be thus honored, and the country which his children are to inhabit be thus adorned, but he feels that it is his privilege and high duty, in the "liberty with which Christ has made him free," and in the boldness of a soldier of the cross, to cry aloud to his richer neighbor, and to admonish him of the expectation which the people cherish that he would employ his high trusts for usefulness LUMINOUSLY. That he should be forever active in setting forth before men the honor of the God he professes to serve; and so to set it forth, that the children of the poor, as their young eyes open upon these noble monuments of pious liberality, may glow with virtuous pride, and be early fired with a secret determination always to love what is great, holy, and divine, never to give up the religion of their fathers, and never to desert the country where these sacred feelings have been formed and cherished!

But the Christian man of low position in the scale of this earth's wealth must not stop here; it is indeed his duty to cheer on his richer friend to do all these great things with his great means, but then he, too,

must go on, anxiously to remind him that his work can never be done while life lasts. He must carry him to the narrow lanes of our city where poverty dwells, poverty ghastly with disease, and famishing in wretchedness. He must show him what an immense amount of spiritual ignorance and awful wickedness is congregated in our midst, which no light of Christian education has ever reached, and where no sound of the glad tidings of salvation is ever heard. He must show him in the startling colors of the most awful reality, how pressing is the necessity for him to be active in devising and executing schemes for dispersing moral darkness, for breaking the fetters of sin, for relieving human misery, and in providing institutions for the constant diffusion of the life-giving words of eternal truth.

O ! it is in this way that the labors of the poorest among men are oftentimes of priceless worth ; labors of persuasion and importunity, in unfolding evils to be corrected, in discovering wants to be supplied, and in leading others to accomplish what he convinces them that they should do. Ay, it is this way that the prayers and toils of the lowly disciple of Christ, although not so dazzling to the outward eye as the doings of some men, are yet of inestimable value to the world ; and perhaps not the less worthy of the highest rewards of that great day, when the rich and the poor shall meet together before the Lord, who is the Maker of them all.

It is in this way, my brethren, that I, in my simple earnestness, would seize upon this occasion of joyous

congratulation, to lead you on from one good and glorious work to another, perhaps more REALLY good, perhaps more truly glorious still. You have, indeed, provided for yourselves, and for the deathless spirits of your little ones, this place of prayer, in all of its soothing and subduing associations of solemnity and beauty ; and now have I come to persuade you to go on and provide for the spiritual and eternal wants of the poor, whom God has commanded to be always with you.

My object is to ask you—and I am made bold by the consideration that I have never yet asked anything and have been refused by you—my object is to ask, that you will give me the means of building, and preparing for the most efficient and the most immediate operation, GRACE CHURCH CHAPEL, a church in which the word and sacraments shall be administered according to our forms, and the sittings shall always be free, to all who will use them for their souls' good. My brethren, how graceful, how complete, how entirely satisfying to the heart of the philanthropist and the Christian, will be such a conclusion to this our noble beginning! Can any one doubt as to his duty in this matter, when I tell him that we are at this moment surrounded by more than 200,000 souls who are without any possible means of religious instruction and comfort. With a population of more than 370,000, we have but about 200 churches of all denominations ; and if we allow an average of 800 to each church, it will leave us with the enormous amount of 210,000 human beings for whom there is

no room, no sanctuary, to which they can retreat when fretted, fevered, and enfeebled by their conflicts with the enemies of Christian peace and salvation ; no fountain of spiritual light and comfort to which they can resort, when perplexed and stupified by the darkness and crushing difficulties of their lot, and when bowed and broken by a deep sense of guilt, and under the heart-wringing anguish of bereavement. Is this state of things to continue, without one Christian effort to amend it ? With a population increasing with a rapidity altogether unexampled, and destined, as I verily believe, to advance still more rapidly than it has ever yet done, shall our means for religious training keep no sort of pace with the perpetually advancing demands which will thus be made upon us ? Shall the swarms of children from these accumulating myriads of human beings continue to rise into life only to fill up the measure of their parents' wickedness, living in profligacy and degradation, setting light by father and mother, despising government, vexing the widow and robbing the fatherless, defiling the land with lewdness, and with their frightful profanity and shameless contempt for God's Sabbaths ; provoking God's righteous anger, until they shall draw down upon us His blighting vengeance, to wrap our dwellings in flames and bathe our homes in blood.

My brethren, the ear of our God is not heavy, that it cannot hear, nor His eye dim, that it cannot see, nor has His arm become powerless, that it cannot strike. He has not ceased to regard iniquity with



the same abhorrence which brought its sweeping desolation over the countries of old ; which gave the palaces of Tyre to the flames falling from above ; which purified the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah by the fires of hell bursting out from beneath, and rendered Jerusalem, once the chosen city of His love, no more than a proverb and a by-word—no more than a blasted monument of departed grandeur. “ The things which have been shall be.” With our God is neither “ variableness nor shadow of turning ;” only let the same cause exist, and the same result will be inevitable. Only let the flood of ungodliness go on increasing in volume and in violence, until it sweeps away every vestige of reverence for the God of purity and right, and the voice of supplication shall no more be heard in the land, and then will the flood-gates of God’s all-sweeping wrath be opened upon us, and all our boasted glory be no more than a tale upon the records of the past ! But, my brethren, will you not say with me that this shall not be so, if ten righteous men, in God’s forbearing justice, can save a city ? This shall not be so, if we are only permitted to plant temples of solemn worship wherever worshippers can be gathered, whose prayers and alms shall go up as a memorial for us before God. Their pleadings will be the bulwarks and safeguards of our people. They will reflect God’s moral image in beauty and brightness over the dark mass of pollution that swells around them, and we shall be spared and blessed for their sakes.

Only let the State be true to herself in imparting

to the children of her people the light of education, and then we shall not be true to ourselves, as the unshumbering disciples of Him who is Himself the light and the life, if we fail to show to the little ones thus enlightened "the way and the truth"—if we strive not to gather them into that fold from which they may no more go out—if we leave anything undone by which we may indelibly impress them with the true nature of that priceless blessing of liberty which is so well their boast—if we do not show them in the lessons of all human experience, that freedom does not consist in doing what they please, but only in doing what is right. Because, if all men were free to do just what their corrupt passions would lead them to do, without regard to the restraints of law and the sanctions of justice, then *no man* would long be at liberty to pursue the glorious path of honorable rectitude. Each one would soon find himself bound in the chains which are forged by the fires of hell. "Passion would be in the place of principle, and lust would be law"—every man's hand would be armed against his brother; the strong would be cruel tyrants, and the weak would be cringing slaves; all men would be enemies to each other, and all alike blasted outcasts from the glorious favor of their God. Yea, my brethren, well does it become us to teach it to our sons, that the only true liberty in man rests in that wise submission to the beautiful law of right, which leaves each one free from all other men, and, through the grace of God free from the bonds of his own sins and evil

habits, and thus left to do only what is pure, just, and true. This is the highest liberty in man; it is the liberty of angels; it is the liberty of God! This liberty is the boon of the gospel, not the purchase of the sword; and the weapons with which we must contend for it, in its fearful conflicts with the brutal passions and sordid interests of the world, must be polished for our successful use in the armory of God.

Now, it is for these high objects, as lasting as eternity, and as transporting as the sublime prospect of immortality can render them, I have come to ask your charity. I ask it in the name of Him whose solemn whispers of persuasion may be heard in every breast, giving utterance to that solemn truth, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine." You are the tenants, not the owners. You hold in trust, not of right. Give me of that which is mine, and by this act of free and ready obedience, lay up in store a resource of strong consolation for the remaining years of time, and which may serve to lighten the pressure of that sense of unprofitableness which may weigh heavily upon your last hour.

But to end as I began, let me recur to our text. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts." God grant it, brethren, that this assurance of our God, when applied to our present circumstances, may indeed be fulfilled in a far higher sense than that of merely outward splendor. And

yet who is there of us that can recall the many touching associations connected with that former house, where our fathers worshipped, without being melted with irrepressible feelings of sadness?

As a parish, our annals are brief and simple. Grace Church was organized less than forty years ago, by a portion of the congregation of Trinity Parish, for whom there was no room in the mother church. As our origin was peaceful, so has our constant progress been harmonious and steadily prosperous. No contentions have arisen to disturb us. No root of bitterness has sprung up to spread its poisonous influence through the atmosphere of peace and love in which we have lived. From our earliest existence as a parish, down to this very hour, have we been most pre-eminently blessed; and indeed, my brethren, our hearts should swell with boundless gratitude, while we tremble at the thought of the perils and responsibilities amid which we stand.

The first Rector of Grace Church was the Rev. Nathaniel Bowen, D. D., whose faithful, affectionate, and efficient labors continued through a course of more than nine years, and can only be forgotten when death shall have removed from among us the last of that devoted band of worshippers trained by him for their journey along the narrow way toward the gate of Heaven, and whose delight it was to cherish him as their pastor, counsellor, and friend.

In the year 1817, Dr. Bowen removed to South Carolina, and was soon afterward chosen to be the Bishop of that diocese. In 1839 he passed away

from the earth, amid the tears of his diocese, and, as we trust, in the sure hope of a glorious immortality.

In 1818, Dr. Bowen was succeeded in the Rectorship of Grace Church by the Rev. James Montgomery, D. D., a man of unusual powers, of fervent zeal, of transparent frankness of character, and singular purity of life. After a brief ministry of two years, Dr. Montgomery removed to Pennsylvania; and in the midst of a bright career of usefulness, and in the meridian of his days, he was summoned to his eternal reward! The next name upon this list of Rectors, is that of a gentleman whom I need scarcely name to this congregation; and with the expression of my regret that the delicacy which is due to the feelings of a present friend must restrain me from the utterance of panegyric upon a course of twelve years' pastoral service, so faithfully and successfully conducted as to be rarely equalled, I will only mention, as links in our historical chain, that the Rev. Jonathan M. Wainwright, D. D., became the Rector of Grace Church in 1821, and in 1833 he resigned his charge and removed to the city of Boston. In 1834 the care of this large congregation of souls passed into the hands of him who now so feebly addresses you. The amount of good he may have achieved, through the strength of Jesus, in this lapse of irretrievable time, can be known only at that great day which is before us, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. But one thing you will, in your clemency, pardon him for saying, and that is, that his insufficiency for the duties with

which he has been charged, could never have been perceived half so clearly by any one as by himself, and can never be lamented half so keenly by any heart as by his own. Brethren, my task for this day is done. We have consecrated this beautiful temple to the Majesty of Heaven—to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Henceforth let it be sacred, and preserved in holiness and beauty forever. Let nothing that is unclean ever enter to defile it. Let no feelings be cherished here inconsistent with the deep emotions of penitence—the transporting views of faith—the serene joys of hope, and the bland delights which spring with perpetually renewing freshness from the never-failing fountains of God-like charity. Let no voice ever be heard here other than in the language of praise and thanksgiving, the voice of supplication, of religious warning, and instruction. Let no shibboleth ever be sounded here only to summon cold hearts and fiery tempers into the rancorous phalanx of party. Let no bitter denunciation of other men's errors ever ring harshly against these harmonious arches. Let the banner which is here unfurled in the name of Christ be stamped with “the truth and charity.” Let us always remember that we war with principles, not with men, and that error in opinion may not always be damning crime. Let no boastful and offensive assumption of superiority ever be heard here, only to provoke opposition, to stir up the embers of prejudice and passion, and thus to deter men from advancing into the full, clear light of what we believe

to be truth. Let no cold indifference to the eternal sacredness of truth ever here take the prostituted name of LIBERALITY, only because it is wide enough to comprehend all opinions, and deep enough to merge and sink all creeds. Let no craven cry of adulation and subserviency to the vicious fashions of the powerful ever rise from the lips of mortal man, who may here be clothed in the mantle of a soldier and servant of the most high God. Let no man venture to minister here whose shrinking timidity or vacillating imbecility may render him an easy prey to the tempter, who is ever busy in seducing men to tamper with those unrelaxing laws of morals which were written in the lightning of God upon the stones of Sinai, and sealed with His thunder. Let neither frown nor favor, no consideration of earth or power of hell, ever lead here to the concealment of any one feature in that glorious covenant of mercy which was the object of faith and fountain of hope in fallen man, from the hour of his expulsion from Eden until it was confirmed on Calvary, when the shrouded sun and trembling earth, the bursting rocks and yawning tombs, attested God's love to man in thus redeeming him from the debasement and ruin of sin and evil. Ay, my brethren, it is to the diffusion of all the regenerating, sanctifying, ennobling and transporting influences which are associated with that covenant of grace and mercy, that we have consecrated our house of prayer. Here, then, let our little ones be brought, to be sealed as His own with God's own signet, while we make our humble prayers that He,

by His spirit, would keep them firm and fast in the same faith and fold in which our fathers fell asleep, and where they will find their best comfort in life, and only hope in death. Here, too, let us bring our dead, and while pouring forth the tears which may be wrung from our bereaved and bleeding hearts, let the associations of this place remind us of Him who is the “resurrection and the life,” and may we thus be consoled by knowing that the dead—even our own dead—shall “rise again,” and be clothed with immortality.

Brethren, may the glory with which this house shall be covered be not the glory of the silver or of the gold, but, bearing it in our honest hearts to the throne of Grace, may God pour out upon its worshippers, encircled in the humility of penitence, such abundant means of His spirit, that the peace, pardon, and safety which shall here be found may indeed pass all human understanding.







*THE REVELATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.*

*“Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said: How can I, except some man should guide me?”*

*Acts 8th, 30th.*



**S**UCH, my brethren, was the question proposed by Philip, the teacher sent by God; and such was the answer of that illustrious Ethiopian convert, who was meekly searching for the will of his God, in order that he might do it.

It is a question which every humble-minded Christian must frequently put to his own heart, no matter at what part of the sacred book he reads the words of his God. And the more that he reads, and the more that he prays, so much the more will the majesty and vastness of the themes open before him; and the more that the greatness, the depth, and the comprehensiveness of the truths are unfolded, so much the more will his humility of heart and distrust of his own powers be increased, and the more will he sigh for some man to guide him to a perfect understanding of all these things.

I have selected the words before us, as the basis

of my remarks to-day, not so much to draw your attention to the incidents with which they are connected, as to apply them in their spirit to the whole volume of Revelation. Believing, as I do, that upon the grand points of faith and duty the Scriptures are so plain, that it is impossible for the most simple-minded of the earth to err fatally as to what they must believe and do, in order to obtain salvation, yet I am persuaded, that there are but few of us but must feel, as we advance in life, that there is much more to be known in every part of the Scriptures than we have ever yet been able fully to master. And as the sun of our day of life declines, and our time grows hourly shorter, we become more anxious to avail ourselves of all the helps which God may graciously provide, to guide us to a full understanding of the words of immortal life. The more that we read, and think, and pray, the more are we sure to be made to see meaning where we saw none before. The more we are in this way permitted to know, so much the more are we desirous of knowing; and we are constantly led to exclaim, "How can I understand these things except some man should guide me?"

But while I urge you to meek and prayerful study of the oracles of everlasting life, let me at the same time warn you against the unreasonableness and folly of expecting too much, in the way of curious information, upon subjects not immediately connected with salvation. Because industry and learning, directed with meekness and prayer, may expect to be rewarded

with the discovery of many truths not lying upon the surface, nor always plain to the indolent and the careless reader, we are not, therefore, to expect that we shall ever in this life be permitted to know *everything*, or that our vain wishes will ever be gratified with regard to those mysteries in nature and in religion which our present faculties are incapable of comprehending—which it would be not only useless, but positively injurious for us to know—and which will, therefore, always remain as dark and impenetrable to man as they now are.

Our inquiries, therefore, must always be limited to reasonable and profitable exercises. Men may perplex themselves with abstruse and puzzling speculations, in trying to analyze the plans of Providence. But they forget that these subtle inquiries, if entirely successful, cannot sanctify the soul—they cannot renew the heart of man—they cannot bring the joys of Heaven any nearer to us than we have them.

It is easy to ask questions about the eternity of matter—the origin of evil—the place or part of the immensity of God where HEAVEN IS—and what is the nature of those employments amid which glorified spirits are rejoicing. But to what end is all this? How would we be better off by knowing the origin of evil? Is it not enough for us to know that if we would ever get to Heaven, we must resist evil in our own hearts? Why should we seek to know how IT IS that God will ultimately bring good out of all evil? Is it not enough to know, that God offers us all the help we can ever need, to subdue the evil

that is in us? Why should we seek to explore the length and breadth of immensity and eternity? Is it not enough that we have been born inhabitants of that immensity; and that, being made in God's image, we will endure throughout the endless cycles of that eternity; that our happiness there will just depend upon our conduct here? Why should we inquire into the lines and boundaries which separate free-will in man from fore-knowledge in God? Is it not enough that reason, conscience, and revelation combine to assure us that we are free to do good, and can always find strength to subdue evil? Why should we puzzle ourselves about the difference between MATTER and SPIRIT? Is it not enough for us to know that it will little avail us if we were to gain the whole universe of MATTER, and lose that little particle of SPIRIT which we call our own? Why should we inquire too anxiously into the local position of the home of the blessed? Or why should we ask to be told where the place of punishment is fixed? Is it not enough for us to know, that there is happiness without alloy and without end for them who are faithful to duty even unto death—and that crime and wrong-doing bring misery now, and must bring misery hereafter? Why should we pry too curiously into the employments of the saints in bliss? If the blue curtain of yonder skies were to be withdrawn, and the abodes of the blessed unfolded to our wondering view, would it not overpower us? Would not our thoughts and affections be absolutely and always AB-

SORBED in the contemplation? Would we not hasten, in rash impatience, to be ourselves partakers in a bliss so ravishing? Would not everything that detained us from it be looked upon as chains and prisons and torture? Would not all industry stagnate, and the wide earth become one vast scene of desolation, famine, and death? Why should any mortal desire to hold intercourse with the spirits who have already crossed the dark gulf of death? Can any one really and truly believe that such an extravagant wish was ever actually gratified, and yet that the privileged few beyond the lot of mortals would retain their sanity, and continue capable of the ordinary and tame occupations, the innocent enjoyments, and the imperious duties of life? The delusion in all such cases is never so complete—the certainty is never so free from doubt—but that it leaves its bewildered victims still the creatures of time and of sense, of passion and of sin. It may, indeed, minister to a morbid self-conceit, and foster an inordinate love of notoriety, but the delusion has never yet been known to increase the purity or the ennobling joys of earth, or to fit its victims better for their passage to the tomb. It cannot be supposed that so serious and imposing a departure from the ordinary providence and the constant laws of God, as the free intercourse of a spirit in glory with a spirit in the gross veil of the flesh, would be permitted by God without some good and sufficient end. But where has such high and holy object ever yet been manifested? On the contrary, have not the

occasions upon which all such fancied intercourse has been enjoyed been of the most trivial and showy character ; and have not the pretended revelations been so obviously without any aim or object higher than the vanities of the earth, as to throw ridicule and contempt upon the morbid and sickly fancies of presumptuous mortals ?

No, no, my brethren ; if our departed fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, children and friends, were permitted to hold audible communion with us here, then what frowning canon of God, what measure of care for the welfare of the earth, could restrain us from cutting the cords that bind us here, so that we might hurry away to be with them forever ? How would we shun the presence of our fellows upon earth, with their sordid, prudent, and irksome cares ! The whole business of life would cease, its laborious round of duties would be intolerable, and our powers, feelings, and faculties would be lost, in the thirst for the perpetual and transporting rapture of communing with the translated and unseen spirits of our love. Is it not, then, wise, merciful, and best, that Paradise—the invisible place, with its host of sainted spirits—should be most absolutely shrouded from our most anxious powers of observation ? Any further disclosure would most surely render the world a prison, and a place of torment. We would no longer walk by faith. We would act by constraint, not willingly ; nor would it be by “ putting our trust in God.” This world would be no theatre for the trial of virtue, or the discipline of faith ; and its wide and active career

of duties would cease! Let us, then, be content to wait for a further revelation of His dispensations in that higher state of being for which God is now preparing us. The development and explication will be the food and rapture of the soul, as ages roll on through our eternity of being. Angels and ripened saints will then be with us to guide and instruct us, while we "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." Yea, when death shall bring us into the society of perfect spirits, then shall we be furnished with the key which can unlock the mysteries in the deep counsels of God. As they are gradually unfolded, we will see with redoubled force the utter vanity of all our foolish repinings and doubting thoughts about the mysteries of nature, the ways of Providence, and the wonders of Grace!

The conclusion of the matter is, that after the example of our blessed Lord, we are to check all presumptuous prying into knowledge which would be only injurious to us. We must be satisfied with the grand doctrines, general truths, and practical precepts revealed to us in the gospel, and not care to dwell upon matters either of inferior moment, or else too high for human solution, and in no way connected with human salvation.

As long, my brethren, as we continue to see the wicked prospering upon earth, while the good are trodden to the dust—as long as we see selfishness driving through a long, reckless, and triumphant career, while hearts full of generous love are remorselessly lacerated and lie at our feet, torn and bleeding,

for their trustful tenderness—so long will human life continue to be a problem, enlisting our deepest feelings, and leading us to cry anxiously for some man to guide us to a wise understanding of the perplexing mysteries of our lot. The only solution to which any man can bring us is to be found in the teaching of the man Christ Jesus! He who, leaving the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, became God with us, that He might reveal the ways of heaven to man. That revelation is our only guide to human history and human destiny. It is a record of the past, a teacher for the present, and a light revealing the future. The future! Ah, who is there of us who would not know something of the future? How common, how insatiable, have ever been the cravings in the human breast to look into the future! How vain and silly have been the sources to which men have resorted for its gratification! Alas! there is nothing to be known, there is nothing to be hoped for in the future, beyond that which Christianity reveals. How anxiously and honestly then should we come to the study of its sacred, its transporting truths. In this matter, never suppose that *contented ignorance* is a Christian grace; never confound uninquiring indifference about religious knowledge with the excellences of the Christian character. The more the mind is informed as to the true ways of God, so much the more is it strengthened to encounter the perils and to discharge the heavy duties of life. The more that the vessel is enlarged with which we are to draw water from the “wells of sal-



vation," so much the more will we be disposed to advance knowledge, truth, and charity throughout the world.

To this study, then, let us meekly and devoutly come ; with all the means of grace, and all the light of guidance, with which our God may provide us. We will then see through the dark cloud of mystery that surrounds us—we will see the bright mercies of redeeming love, shining sweetly amid all the perplexing calamities of life. We will everywhere see evil working out good ; confusion generating harmony, and our Father's mighty plans moving steadily on, for the display of His own glory in the happiness of His creatures. When depressed, as we often may be, amid the disappointments, the bereavements, and the bitterness of our lot—we can here be sustained and refreshed by the sweet assurance of a Parent's almighty care, and a Parent's love, that never sleeps nor is wearied. And then, when for us the last hour shall come, and the grave is seen to be opening to receive us, we will here calmly learn that as the cross is the ensign of glory, so too is the tomb the birth-place of immortality to man !





### THE SAVING TRUTH OF OUR RELIGION.

*“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my words.*

*“Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?”*

*John 18th, 37th.*



OW simple and how holy is our idea of truth! How open and how honest is her aspect! How sweetly does she invite pursuit! How calmly and how surely does she reward her votaries! How pure, and permanent, and satisfying is the light which she dispenses!

There is around her no dazzling brilliancy to bewilder, no splendor to overpower, no sternness to repel, no uncertainty to perplex. All men must love and reverence the *poetry of truth*.

But yet, amid the ceaseless conflicts of human opinion, and while sick with struggling to free ourselves from the entanglements in which the jarring systems of parties and sects would involve us in religion, where is the thoughtful mind that is not perpetually led to exclaim in meekness, “What is truth?”

If she be so transparent, undisguised, and easy of access as we have fondly pictured her, why is it that in religion all men find her not? Oh! why is it

that the gospel of truth, instead of brining to all men the glad tidings of certainty and peace, should rather continue to fill the earth with perplexity, contention, and bitterness?

All men will admit that nothing can be more distressing to the human mind than continued anxiety and doubt in reference to the momentous interests of eternity. And it is equally certain that all of the conflicting systems of religious doctrine, which profess to rest upon the Bible, cannot be equally true. How then are we to test the caprices of private judgment? How are we to discriminate between holy truth and pernicious error?

My brethren, perverted as the Scriptures may have been by human ignorance, and by the licentiousness of individual caprice, yet the unerring oracles of God are our only standard of right; and the perfect exercise of that liberty with which Christ has made us free, in the interpretation of these oracles, can never be surrendered by us without subjecting the mind to the most intolerable and blighting of all the forms of human despotism.

I will venture, then, to assert, that the multitude of speculative opinions connected with religion, which are to be met with in the world, are not to be attributed to any real ambiguity in the Scriptures themselves; but rather to the mode in which the Bible is studied; to the improper purposes for which the Bible is consulted; and above all, to our disobedience to the acknowledged will of God, as the Bible reveals it.

There is nothing either in the revelation of God or in the nature of truth to occasion disappointment, or to create contention. But it is the impurity of the human heart and the restless perversity of the human passions which convert the clear lamp of God into the false lights which men pursue, and turn the stable foundation of our immortal hopes into the ever-shifting quicksand, which continues the more to change, to sink, and to fail us, the further that we advance upon it.

The Bible, my brethren, is an exposition of certain truths, which, as mere matters of fact, lying beyond the range of our observation, we must assent to upon the Divine authority of Him who thus reveals them. But along with this revelation of facts, the Bible contains such practical laws of holiness as address themselves equally to all classes of persons; and, speaking at once to the understanding, the heart, and the feelings of every reasonable being, they require only to be stated in order to be understood and appreciated.

God has given us a written code of doctrine and of practice as our guide to duty on earth, and thus to prepare us for Heaven. To this code, then, legibly and specifically written, must we continually appeal and inflexibly adhere in all of our religious investigations. The oracles of God—how read they? is the only question we are at liberty to propose, and the only one to which for ourselves we are bound to return a prompt, an open, and an honest answer, be our own feelings, wishes, and prejudices what they may.

Now, it is to the wide and manifest neglect of this most absolutely important principle of religious inquiry that we are to attribute the vast variety of discordant systems of religious faith which we see around us, and which, under the name of Christianity, have imposed themselves upon the world.

It has well been said, that in the pursuit of *religious truth* men have not yet learned to conduct their studies with that dispassionate temper, that sacrifice of anticipated inferences, and that unreserved acceptance of undoubted truth, which is the first and universally admitted condition in the investigation of truth in outward nature. Until mankind shall learn to treat the REVEALED BOOK precisely as sound philosophy has found it necessary to treat the book of nature, it is impossible that it should be otherwise than it now is. The searchers after truth in religion have as yet done little more than trace and re-trace, generation after generation, the same course of mistaken inquiry which enslaved the human mind in the pursuit of general knowledge, until the introduction of the philosophy of Lord Bacon. If, without a close analysis of nature and a stern adherence to facts, as given out by the material world, the systems of learned men of science would not now be precisely what we know that they were for so many ages,—highly-wrought, beautiful, and plausible theories, but yet in reality narrow, baseless, and unprofitable delusions,—so, too, all systems of religious faith which are not founded upon the certain, clear, broad, and full teaching of the inspired word, however plausible they may appear, will

still be as unsubstantial as the exploded systems of the schoolmen. What the material universe is to the student of nature, the Bible is to the student in religion. It is a magazine of truths, from the faithful, cautious, and full induction of which all sound knowledge must be deduced. Here I would that you should most carefully observe that it is not enough that SOME TRUTHS are taken from this sacred repository as the basis of our faith, because everybody knows that partial truth is oftentimes equivalent to absolute falsehood.

Nothing was so fatal to the philosophy of the olden time as partial induction ; and so, too, nothing has been so injurious to the cause of Christian truth in our own days, as the assumption of ISOLATED TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE for complete truth from God. It was not that the philosophers before the days of Lord Bacon did not consult nature for facts ; but the mischief was, that every speculative mind would begin by looking around for the sect or school of science with which to unite himself ; and then he would search the book of nature, for facts to support the favorite views of his own school. Precisely so has it ever been with religion. The various denominations of Christians have each read the book of God ; and each of them have found, as they supposed, enough to justify them in holding their own peculiar views. They have so found it, because they have read the Scriptures to measure *them* by their preconceived *theories*, and not to measure their theories by the teaching of the Scriptures. If every

disjointed text which may be found in the Scriptures is to be presumed to convey a complete truth in itself, then there is no absurdity which may not be supported by the Bible. And the wonder is not that we have so many sects in Christendom, but the greatest wonder is that they have not been increased ten-fold.

In the incident connected with the text, Pilate had inquired of Jesus whether He pretended to be a King. Our Lord, without replying directly to the question, proceeds to remark, with calm and solemn dignity, "To this end was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And what did He mean by this? Did he mean, as the pagan judge may have supposed, some new notion in philosophy? Did He mean, as fallible men in after-time would gladly have us to suppose, that the truth to which the Divine Jesus was come to bear His testimony in the agony of a cruel death, and in the triumph of a glorious resurrection, was the certainty and necessity of their own narrow, peculiar, and exclusive views of heavenly doctrine?

Did He mean to say, that the Truth for which He had been born, and which He would establish by His death, was inseparably associated with the supreme dominion of one of His followers at Rome? That it was to be identified with the impossible doctrine of transubstantiation, or with the more revolting, and, if anything can be so, the more impossible teaching, that without any regard to their works, the larger

portion of mankind were from all eternity condemned to everlasting torment?

My brethren, was it, think you, for any one, or for all of those shades of difference in religious opinion, about which vain and captious men have contended so bitterly, that the Divine Redeemer came to this earth, to water it with His tears, and to stain it with his blood? Or was it, more likely, that He, the Divine One, by the truth of which He spake, had a direct and simple reference to the grand, the pure, and the sublime doctrines of that religion which was of God, which was inseparably associated with His life and with His death, and which through His testimony would become the universal religion of mankind, in opposition to the blasphemous absurdities of Paganism? The TRUTH of which He spake was the existence of ONE GOD, the intelligent Father and Ruler of all: ONE REDEEMER from the consequences of human folly and crime, and who should forever be the "ONE MEDIATOR between God and man:" One Spirit of God, forever working in the hearts of mortals, and thus persuading them to holiness, and stimulating them to charity. Yea, the great and overwhelming truth which He came to bring to the clear light of human comprehension, from the darkness, obscurity, and doubt in which it then slumbered, was the all-glorious, all-consoling, all-controlling doctrine of HUMAN IMMORTALITY: the doctrine of an universal resurrection from the dead, and of an exact distribution of rewards and punishments, according to the deeds done in the body. Yea, it was the solemn and



startling truth that “the hour cometh in which all who are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Yea, my brethren, who is there that does not feel with me how completely, before the contemplation of such awful truths, all the points and shades between contending Christians (created by ignorance, continued by craft, and stamped by passion) sink into the most contemptuous insignificance ?

“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my words.” *Every one!* And what are we to understand by that? What else can we understand by it, than that every meek and earnest-hearted lover of truth ; every one who in true humility of spirit is ready to be made wiser and better ; every one whose heart is attuned to welcome tidings of celestial purity and immortal peace ; every one who, putting away from him the pride of understanding, the fascinations of passion, and the warpings of prejudice, is content to be guided as a little child through the darkness and the tangled ways of earth, to the light, purity, and peace of Heaven ? It is thus that every one who is of the truth heareth the words of the God of Truth.

My brethren, we have here instruction of inestimable value to every religious inquirer. We are taught that not only must our purpose be good in entering upon such an inquiry, but also that our

hearts must be disciplined, purified, and prepared for the reception of the teachings of Heaven. Not only must you pray to the Father of Light, that He would open the eyes of your understanding, but more especially should we pray that our hearts may be delivered from the cold insensibility of a worldly life. We must earnestly pray, and hope, and strive, that some true sympathy may be awakened between us and the object of our search; so that if we are permitted to find it, we may embrace it with fondness and with gratitude. For nothing is more certain, than that a veil of most impenetrable obscurity is thrown over the understanding of a man whose heart is not attuned to sympathy with the great truths which the Scriptures teach. The lovers of this earth's power and renown will lend a willing ear to him who expatiates on the pleasures of knowledge, and the enjoyments to be purchased by wealth, and secured by authority. But should you, with an angel's tongue, unfold the glories of an angel's dwelling-place, they will hear you with impatience, and quickly prove what an enemy to Scriptural knowledge is an heart incrustated with the selfishness and the cares of time. The Scriptures never afford their truth to the man who examines them only to find support for his own opinions. His labor is sure to be fruitless, because his purpose is evil. He meets with darkness in the daytime, and gropes in the noontide as in the night. But with the man of true humility of heart, the purpose with which he searches, and the reward of his labor, is far different.

He is "of the truth." He proceeds humbly, because he truly desires to be informed. With the purpose of true wisdom he proceeds, simply because he desires to be made wiser and better. He has no end to answer but that he may know the truth, and find peace in heaven; and the best commentary upon his reading will be his own heart.

The conclusion is, that if we would get truth from the Scriptures, we must read them for the single purpose for which they have been given to us; and we may rest assured that if we come to their examination from any other motive, then no acuteness of intellect, however rare, no learning, however deep, no information, however varied or extensive, can prevent you from being outstripped in your pursuit by men of far meaner capacity, but stimulated and enlightened by purer intention.

It is so, then, that if we would secure those fruits of truth which the Scriptures were designed to yield us, our purpose in searching them must be honest and earnest; and our hearts must be disposed and prepared for their reception. But this is not all; there is still another requisite, which is, as it were, the very key to truth. It is this, that our OBEEDIENCE must go hand in hand, and step by step, with our advancement in Scriptural knowledge. Without practising according to what we know, our knowledge is worthless, and more will not be given to us. The sacred writings abound with examples of the necessity of holiness of heart and life, in order that we may know the will of God. "If any man," said the

Saviour, "will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."—"What is truth?" asked Pilate, but neither his purpose in asking, nor the purity of his heart, nor the holiness of his life merited any reply. And precisely in the condition of Pilate must stand every unworthy inquirer after religious truth, to the end of time. If we keep not God's commandments, we are not to expect that He will manifest Himself unto us. If we feel a darkness of understanding in reading the Scriptures, it becomes us to inquire in what particular it is that our lives are not as they should be. If we are ever disposed to murmur because the truth does not burst upon us with the same cheering brilliancy as it seems to come to some OTHER MEN, let us pause and inquire at our own hearts whether we have not already as much knowledge as our PRACTICE EQUALS.

And, ah! my beloved brethren, how solemnly is this necessity for holiness of life, in order that we may know the will of our God, impressed upon us by the testimony which Jesus has given, to that most awful, most important, most certain of all truths, that "the hour cometh when all who are in their graves shall come forth." That God has appointed a day in the which He shall judge the world in righteousness. "That we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10). This is for us the truth of all truths. It is that which He taught in His life; sealed by His

death, and confirmed by His resurrection. It is that which stamps responsibility upon all that we have, all that we think, and upon all that we do. It is that, at the thought of which all the splendors of earth—the pride of genius and learning—the dignity of power—the brilliant achievements of the sword, and the luxury of wealth, lose their fascinations, because they are associated with the recollection of the fearful responsibility under which they are held. It is that which enables us to see and feel, with a vividness which nothing else can do, that wrong-doing is infinitely the most fearful of all things.

My brethren, let us hourly live and act under a calm and steady conviction, that if we would be happy with the wise and the good of all time, under the smiles of God, we must prepare for it by doing the will of God here. There can be no concord between a depraved and bad heart and that world of purity.

It has been my aim and object to show you, that to the pure in heart, the meek in temper, and the blameless in life, the will of God will always be made known. No human being who cherishes a fear of his God, and then humbly sets himself to use the means which that God has given to train his immortal spirit for its high destiny, need for one moment fear but that he will arrive at all the truth which it is essential that he should know. If it were possible for one sincerely honest and humble, man to err fatally in this, the most unutterably important of

all possible things, then it would be equally possible for ALL MEN to err without remedy. If I could believe THAT, Christianity, instead of being as it is, a message of celestial love, would at once become a cause of unutterable apprehension and dismay.

It is always wrong to speak of the exclusiveness and the singleness of truth—to say that there can be but one right and one wrong. This abstraction, this power of seeing and holding truth in its absolute simplicity, belongs only to the Deity, and never to us erring mortals, who are permitted “to know only in part.” The truth, sufficient, sanctifying, and saving, may be held along with a great mixture of error. Oh! that mankind would but remember this; what rivers of blood would it not have saved in times past! What rancorous bitterness would it not now dissipate! What foul stains would it not blot from the escutcheon of our faith! What disgraceful obstacles to the progress of Christian truth would it not remove!

Come, then, my beloved brethren, and let us resolve that we will always cultivate the most ardent, single-hearted, and enlightened zeal for truth; but never—no, never, let us forget that error may not be damning crime, and that as hateful as heresy may be, yet that the worst of all heresies is a bad and brutal heart and an uncharitable tongue. The leading, practical, saving truths of our religion, those which most affect the heart and control the life, are written for us in characters of burning light. As well might we complain of darkness in the blaze

of noonday, as of the want of evidence as to what we are to believe and do in order to salvation. That we may go on from truth to truth, and from grace to grace, let us strive to keep steadily before us the eye of Him who is Himself "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," and without whom we "can do nothing." Can we not fancy even now that we see *Him*, "*the Mighty One*," surrounded by our own loved spirits of glory, all bending towards us from their seats of bliss, while with one hand they point us to the dark page on the book of life on which our crimes and deficiencies are written, while with the other they show us the fountain which has been opened for all sin and uncleanness, and by which every mark and stain can be washed from the book of God's remembrance? Is there an eye undimmed, while in fancy it gazes upon the sight? Is there a heart that does not throb with anxiety to follow in life where the Saviour calls, so that in death it may be covered with the mantle of the Saviour's love?





### CHRIST OUR REFUGE.

*And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."*

*Isaiah 32d, 2d.*



HIS imagery of the Prophet is derived from the peculiar circumstances of Eastern life. In comparing the blessings of the Messiah's benignant reign to a place of refuge, and covering from the perils of a terrific tempest, his illustrations are drawn from the vast deserts of Arabia, upon which, when the whirlwind lights in its fury, the sun is darkened by the clouds of fiery dust that it raises; and which, as an overwhelming tide, rolls on its sweeping and resistless billows; while pilgrims and caravans, proud kings and armed hosts, disappear before it; leaving neither trace of their mighty pomp, nor footprint of their march, to tell where they so ingloriously perished.

In the text, the traveller is represented as shuddering before the terror of the rising storm; and as fleeing anxiously for an hiding-place to some strong rock; which in the midst of the far-stretching deso-



lation raises high its black summit, to part and throw back the rushing torrent of sand.

Nor is the whirlwind's fury the only danger to which the pilgrim is exposed in his passage through that wilderness of life. The glassy and burning surface of the desert may lie before him, without a zephyr to fan the dust, and without a cloud to dim the dazzling fervor of the brazen heavens, while the sun sheds fiercely down the intolerable glare of day. But no iron frame could long withstand this melting heat, or the exhausting fatigue of his weary way; and while his soul faileth within him for thirst, he is almost ready to sink down and die. How exhilarating at such a moment is the sight of some rocky hill, throwing its cool and grateful shade far across the plain! His languid limbs are nerved with new vigor; his fainting heart breathes more freely, and with what eager gladness does he press towards the place of promised rest and relief! How sweet to his ear is the first sound of murmuring waters, towards which he rushes to bathe his burning brow and satisfy his feverish thirst.

Such, my brethren, is the emblem. The reality is the Christian's passage through the wilderness of sin, and Christ is the hiding-place from danger.

The man Christ Jesus, in the splendor of oriental and prophetic diction, is the sheltering covert; the rock of refreshing shade, provided by Almighty Providence for the Christian pilgrim, in his passage through the wilderness of life; in whom, if he will but understand and use his privilege of access, he

will find abundant security and refreshment, under all of the fierce storms and exhausting toils to which he can ever be exposed.

I shall first, my brethren, draw your attention to the "Man Christ Jesus," as the believer's security amid all the storms of earthly agitation and bereavement. My brethren, we have not now to learn that this world is a restless and troubled scene; that its skies are not always blue, its lights always bright, its winds always balmy, nor its waters always smooth; but that it is a scene of ceaseless change, and oftentimes of tempestuous and frightful agitation. Swift as the winds of the desert, and oftentimes as fierce as they, do the elements of moral convulsion break loose upon the earth, and stir up the wide expanse of society into uproar and confusion. Not only on the broad theatre of public affairs, but in the narrow corner of every private heart, there is constant agitation. Beneath the calmest aspect, troubles are brewing and brooding, and amid the most smiling scenes of prosperity, trials, deep, agonizing, and desolating, are preparing for us. We know that when the sun is brightest, the elements are often only gathering strength for the tempest; and so, too, while smiles play upon the cheek, and gayety sparkles in the eye, it is too often only as the lightning, which flashes to dazzle for a moment, and then leaves the gloom which overshadows the spirit deeper and darker than before. It is as if the momentary sunshine of the soul had warmed into new life and rigor the hidden canker-worm of the heart, which

is to prey upon its peace, and turn all things there into dreariness, decay, desolation, and death.

Yes, my brethren, there may be much in the aspect of the world's history, and much in the prospect which spreads before our own most anxious hopes, that, to earthly reason and earthly feeling, is troublesome and alarming. There may be much that is so dark and threatening, so tempestuous and discouraging, that we are ready to lift up our weary and heavy hearts in the prayer of the Psalmist: "Oh! that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!" Ah! know you not, my brethren, that the wings of the Heavenly Dove are actually provided for you? That, upborne upon the wings of faith, guided and sustained by God's Holy Spirit, you can flee to the Redeemer's footstool and be at rest. You can there be relieved of all your solicitude, save the grateful solicitude worthily to adore untiring Goodness. You may "throw all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." You may repose confidently on His covenant faithfulness, His unerring wisdom, and exhaustless love. Thus staying yourself on Him, you will be kept in a frame so tranquil, and a peace so stable, that the firmest objects in creation can only by contrast shadow forth its stability. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Come, then, my brethren, and let us flee away upon the wings of faith to the Redeemer's gracious pres-

once ; and there we shall learn that we are all under the guidance of a better wisdom than our own, and that all things are working together for the most glorious and the most desirable ends. Ay, my brethren, we may there obtain a firm and steady hold of the cheering truth, that all things are ordered by Him who holds the supremacy for the truest and most permanent good of each individual soul that loves Him.

Who, now, is there that can know these things, without deriving from the recollection the strongest assurance of security and comfort amid the darkest aspects, and wildest and most terrific agitations of sublunary things? Who is there that can know these things, and yet not possess his soul in patience and peace?

My brethren, the revealed name of our Saviour God is indeed to us a "strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." On the power, wisdom, and faithfulness of our exalted Saviour the spirits of the faithful may repose, as in a serene and untroubled sanctuary. What though, amid the dark storms of the desert, some temporal hopes are blighted; yet are all the rich hopes of eternity promoted, brightened, and secured by the purifying commotions of external circumstances. And well may the Christian believer look to the all-ruling Son of Man as his hiding-place from the wind, and his covert from the tempest, when he has been assured of His pledged and covenanted friendship. How well and how calmly may he flee to Him amid the most appalling storms of Providence, and in every season of

danger and convulsion exclaim with the Psalmist, "Therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge until this calamity be overpast."

This brings me to another, and far more important sense in which the "Man Christ Jesus" is the source of the sinner's security.

My brethren, the "Man Christ Jesus" is the believer's security against the storm of the Divine displeasure. And tell me what image—what emblem—shall rightly represent all that the wrath of Omnipotence implies, when it is spoken of as being let loose upon the soul? What image of whirlwind and of storm can be too strong to represent such a vengeance as is described in the literal statements of God's infallible word? This tempest, this horrible tempest, as it is called, is fast approaching for the unrepenting and the unfaithful. It is coming upon the never-resting, ever-hasting wing of time. Turn ye, then, turn ye to the Stronghold, to the Rock of Refuge—to Christ, the hiding-place. For towering high above the storm shall the Rock of Ages stand—even Jesus, who delivereth from the wrath to come; the predicted "hiding-place from the wind," and the promised "covert from the tempest." My brethren, if there be any truth in the delineation of God's spirit, the day is coming when the retributions of God will fall upon the earth, and His long-suspended wrath shall sweep its polluted lands with a burning surge. And shall we, although so constantly warned and warmly entreated, shall we continue to linger without the walls of salvation—without the city of refuge—until the gates

of entrance be closed against us forever? Shall we continue to loiter, with stupid infatuation, upon the narrow isthmus that is left to us, from the steadily encroaching ocean of eternity, until its dark waves break with overwhelming fury at our feet, and the ark of safety which we have refused to enter shall then be far, ay, far and hopelessly beyond our reach? God forbid that we should be content thus to continue, while the tempest thickens and the peril is hourly drawing nearer and nearer. Let us rather flee while we can to the sanctuary of the Saviour's mediation, and to the covert of the Saviour's protection. To believe and obey the Gospel is thus to turn and flee. To receive the offered Saviour for your own, with an humble submission of mind and heart, this is to enter the hiding-place, this is to pass under the covert, this is to repose under the rock of safety and unfailing refreshment.

Be persuaded, my brethren, thus to turn and flee; for the invitation is free. Be persuaded to obey without hesitation or delay, for the time is alarmingly short.

Why do you hesitate? After what do you search? Of what do you fear we may deprive you? Is your soul athirst for happiness? Is it for enjoyment that you seek? And do you fear that we shall rob you of the fugitive raptures of the world?

We grant you, that the soul's deepest, most insatiable, and most incurable thirst is for happiness. It is for satisfaction and repose that it pants with an ardor that is painful and absorbing; and after which it cries with a voice that is never silent. It is

for this that it eagerly explores all the vast range which is opened before it of sense, imagination, intellect, and affection. But amid the harvest of light and joy with which God crowns the industry and prudence of His creatures, there is still a felicity of ampler reach and loftier value—a chief good of which the soul always feels the need, and for which the world, and all its forms, is vain and unsatisfactory.

What the soul demands is an enjoyment that shall leave us nothing to want, and nothing to fear from deprivation or decay; which shall prove itself to be THAT for which man is made; suited to his nature, adequate to his capacities, and commensurate with his being. It is for this that all have sought; and it is precisely this that all have missed. It is for this that sages have toiled, with all the powers of sublime comprehension and subtle analysis. It is for this that sensualists have ransacked the fields of vision, and exhausted the powers of sense. It is for this that the wisest of men and the most powerful of kings—the man whose conception extended far beyond the reach of other mortals, and whose ability to test and try was as boundless as his heart was restless to devise and to desire—who had only to wish, and it was so—who had only to open his hand, and pleasures dropped into it—who satisfied his grasping intellect in boundless fields of knowledge; and satiated his senses with every variety of sensual joy—who put trouble and darkness far from him—clothed himself in brightness, surrounded him-

self with melody, and then sought to repose amid perfumes and beauty, that his dreams might be only of gladness. But he awoke to sickness of heart; for his flowers were faded, and their sweetness passed away. The voices of his minstrels were silent in death. The heavens were clouded in frowns. The earth was wet with the dewy tears of sorrow; and as his spirit sunk within him, he pronounced it all to be "vanity." Yea, he has left this testimony to all succeeding ages, inscribed upon the imperishable pages of truth, that "ALL IS VANITY!"

That man was permitted to make his wide and vast experiment, that all generations might know how hopeless is HIS labor who takes the world for his confidence and his portion; who seeks only here for what is to fill "the aching void," for the "rivers of water" to satisfy his undying thirst. Give to him all the world has to offer, but the "void" is still there, and he is thirsty still. Give to the man who is gasping for life, under the burning fever that is drying up the fountain of the heart, all of the glittering gems and jewels of the East, or the massy gold from the miser's hoarded heap, and will you meet his wants? Alas! alas! will he not bid you "away with your idle mockery?" Will he not tell you that the silver and the sumptuous fare will little avail him now; that he will gladly exchange them all for medicine to heal his sickness? So, too, is it with the man who has already realized all of good which the world has to offer him; but yet, how often does the morning light awaken him from the trance of feverish pain,



or to encounter anew the overwhelming pressure of despondency; and he perceives that the current of life is ebbing slowly away, and that the grave is opening before him, without ever being able to put to repose the ever-restless and most anxious craving of the heart. He sees that the world's fairest promises are no more than a cheating mockery. They are as false as the illusion which oftentimes, in the Eastern deserts, turns the reflection of the glowing sand into the likeness of a bright and breezy lake, to which the weary traveller hastens with hurried and feeble footsteps only to experience a keener disappointment, and to encounter new and unlooked-for suffering.

Ah! who is there that does not know that to seek for the soul's supreme felicity in this barren and fading world is to search for water in dry places that yield none. It is wilfully to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to pursue the desert's cheating visions; or it is to exasperate and not to relieve your thirst at its unsatisfying, and oftentimes bitter pools. Then, when disease or age have left you nothing to enjoy, in the hour of crushing sorrow, or in the stupor of despair, to sink unaided, unconsolated, unsheltered and untaught, into the dark, deep, and shoreless gulf of oblivion!

Oh! turn, my brethren, at the voice of Jesus, which, in the far-sounding and attractive call, invites all "who thirst to come unto Him and drink." Thus it is that I have now come to point you to where the happiness you have so long and so eagerly sought is

surely to be found. I point you to a portion that is full and forever satisfying, because it is infinite. The "INFINITE" and unchanging is what we want, in opposition to the finite, the mortal, and the fading. I, then, will guide you to a spring of living water, of which he who drinks will never thirst again. My brethren, this portion and this happiness is to be found in the FAVOR OF THE GOD OF THE SOUL. This favor is to be won through the believing acceptance of the Saviour. Here is the fulness of repose for a soul that has found the object of its search. To repose now upon the blessed HOPE, and hereafter upon the glad inheritance of immortal life. The foretaste now, and at length the perfection of enduring felicity. And what, my brethren, can you conceive better calculated to be a well-spring of rich and overflowing consolation and comfort to the heart, than to know that, prompted by INFINITE LOVE, INFINITE WISDOM has undertaken to guide and support us? that Infinite Power is engaged to defend us, and that all INFINITE attributes are pledged to be with us eternally? What is the condition of perplexity or peril, of prosperity or of threatening ruin, in which this conviction does not contain resources of abundant and overflowing consolation?—the conviction, my brethren, that through all the horrors of the gloomy wilderness through which we must pass, Jehovah's rod and staff will point out the way,—there will be for us a "pillar of cloud by day," and a "pillar of fire by night,"—that, finally, with God's right hand around us, we shall pass forever from this realm of darkness into that of unclouded and un-

sullied light. We shall enter on a world where the SHADOW OF DEATH hath never fallen—which, through all of its immeasurable regions, contains no valley of tears! where the variety in its scenery is a variety of bliss, and where, guarded by the tenderest and mightiest of friends, we shall pass forever onward, through richer and richer fields, watered by brighter and more sparkling streams, and redolent of sweeter flowers; perceiving, as we advance, that the immortal landscape is perpetually waxing more refulgent and more fair. We shall feel that our spirits, in passing from joy to joy, are translated from one region of our heavenly home to another, more exalted and more ecstatic still. Our happiness shall be that WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, and that INFINITY is before us to engage our powers and absorb our love.

I have thus, in explaining and illustrating the sense of the prophet, endeavored to show you that his allusion in the text is to the Man Christ Jesus, and that Christ is most emphatically the believer's hiding-place and rock of refuge,—his unfailing source of security and defence against all the depressing troubles and disastrous commotions of time. Still more is He our refuge and strength against the coming storm of righteous and eternal anger. Not only is He our hiding-place and covert, but, as sparkling rivulets of water are to the faint and failing traveller in the parched desert, and as the cool shade of a great rock is to the weary pilgrim when ready to sink down and die under the burning glare and dissolving heat of Eastern skies, so too is the Man Christ

Jesus, in the ennobling principles and the boundless and immortal hopes with which He inspires us, our all-sufficient and unfailing source of tranquil joy, forever and forever!

To Him, my brethren, be persuaded to come, if you would enkindle in the immortal mind the lamp of life and happiness, a lamp that, amid all the sweeping tempests to which we may be exposed, will still burn on unextinguished;—which even the dull and deadly breath of the last enemy shall not be able to quench; which, while we are passing through the shadow of death, shall suddenly leap out into an effulgence far brighter than the sun, and then enable us to begin our celestial and interminable progress of holiness and joy towards the still inaccessible Source of all bliss and all glory.





### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

*“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?”*

*James 2d, 14th.*



THE apparent discrepancy between the teaching of the Apostle Paul and St. James in reference to the influence of religious faith upon human salvation, has been the occasion of much perplexity to Christian minds. But as “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and as He is a God of unchangeable truth, it is evident that the difficulty of reconciling apparent differences arises from our own want of attention to the differing and distinct objects of the respective writers, and to the peculiar connections in which their language is used, rather than to any possible want of agreement and consistency in the divine teaching.

The doctrine of “justification by faith only” is taught too positively and distinctly by St. Paul, to be either misunderstood or resisted by the most superficial reader. My brethren, it is the doctrine of the Scriptures, and it is therefore the doctrine of your Church. But then the faith upon which the

Scriptures and your Church equally insist, for your present justification and your eternal safety, is an intelligent and productive faith. It is no idle gibberish nor senseless profession of the lips. The word is used to denote the living graces of the Christian character, and the rich virtues of the Christian life. Now nothing could possibly have been further from the purpose of St. James than to resist or confute this truth as it is in Jesus. His clear object was to strengthen and sustain it, by freeing it from the perversion and abuse to which impure minds had subjected it. That this was his object, and that the two Apostles were entirely harmonious and consistent with themselves and with each other, will appear by the slightest reference to the general design of the writers, and the class of persons to whom their respective epistles are addressed. St. Paul is writing to Jewish converts, who, from the narrow prejudices in which they had been educated, were almost irresistibly disposed to attach a most extravagant and saving efficacy to the merely mechanical observance of the Mosaic ritual. It was difficult to persuade them that oblations and animal sacrifices were no longer required; and still more difficult was it to impress them with a conviction of their inability to render themselves entirely acceptable to God by their own unaided and imperfect compliance with the requirements of the moral law. St. Paul, then, was contending against this prejudice of the times, and the sect, and he labored to show them how impossible it was for any man to be justified and delivered

from the consequences of sin by an unmeaning observance of the ceremonial law ;—that it was impossible for the blood of animals, when shed without regard to the thing it was designed to signify, ever to take away sin. He contended, with an irresistible power of argument and illustration, that all of these ordinances were but the types and shadows of other and far higher things ; that they were useful only as they were observed in faith, and as they served to keep alive the sense of religious obligation to sustain a devout confidence in the high promises of God. The shadow, he contends, was no longer useful when the substance had been received. The sign was no longer to be used, when the thing signified had been obtained. The instrument was no longer to be employed, when the end for which it had been appointed had been answered. If, then, they could no longer expect justification and acceptance on account of an idle observance of rites and ceremonies, which had ceased to be either wise or useful, so neither could they rest their hopes of salvation on their meritorious observance of God's moral law, as delivered from Sinai. The requisition of that law was nothing short of universal holiness—but holiness in motive and in action, in thought, word, and deed, is perfection, and perfection is manifestly impossible for an imperfect creature. “ Sin is any transgression,” or any falling short “ of the law,” and the certain “ punishment of sin is death.” How delusive and how fatal, therefore, are any hopes of salvation which are rested only on their own merits ! But, says the eloquent Apostle, in the tri-

umph of enlightened faith, "Where sin abounds, there doth grace much more abound," and "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He then goes on to prove that the only foundation on which the world can ever rest for eternal safety is on their faith in the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness as "the propitiation, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." And that the sincerity of such a faith was always to be attested by the meekness with which it led its votaries to persevere, with a caution that never slumbered and a zeal that never relaxed, in the straight and narrow way of holy living—such was the simple and direct object of St. Paul. St. James, on the contrary, was directing his pointed and withering rebuke against the blighting heresy of supposing that a profession of belief in the divine mission of Christ was inevitably to secure them eternal safety, without any consideration or care for the fruits of the Christian life. The infinite peril of cherishing this blasphemous and revolting persuasion he portrays in the most fearful colors. St. James is by no means denying what St. Paul had taught—that we are all and only to be saved by faith in the righteousness and atonement of Christ—but he goes on to contend against a ruinous perversion and abuse of that sacred truth. He insists, too, as St. Paul had insisted, that the sincerity of a Christian faith is only to be tested and proved by its ever-increasing anxiety to walk in the paths of purity and holiness, and thus to fulfil all righteousness. The very name of faith implies obedience to the beautiful law of holiness and



truth which Christ came to obey and fulfil. "As," says he, "the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It does not exist, and it is worse than folly to talk about it. "What doth it profit though a man SAY he hath faith, and have not works?" Can a faith that is only talked of save him? "If a brother or a sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace—be ye warmed and filled,' notwithstanding thou givest them not the things that are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

What a cruel insult is your hollow courtesy to the destitute and shivering petitioner for your bounty! And is it less a mockery, think you, to insult the majesty of God by an idle talk of faith, without any pretension to obedience? The faith of which St. Paul speaks, and for which St. James contends, "works always by love, and purifies the heart." "By their *fruits*," says the blessed Saviour, "ye shall know them."

I think, my brethren, I have said enough to satisfy you of the true intention and meaning of the two Apostles of Jesus, and that there is no discrepancy between them. But let me here beg you to observe that the term JUSTIFICATION, as used in the Scriptures, has two very different senses applied to it. A sinner is said to be justified before God, when he is reconciled and accounted righteous by his Creator. This is the sense in which the term is used by St. Paul, and is, indeed, its general acceptation. But it is sometimes used in another sense, and is made to sig-

nify the vindication of a person's character in the eye and the judgment of men. (Deut. xxv. 1; Job xxxii. 32.) Now, it is quite evident that St. Paul is speaking of justification in the former of these senses, and St. James in the latter. St. Paul is speaking of the justification of the sinner's person; St. James, of the justification of his faith and religious character. St. Paul was laboring to show how a guilty and condemned sinner might yet be accounted righteous, and rejoice in the gladdening smile of a reconciled Father. He speaks of mankind as having destroyed themselves by rebellion and crime; as being speechless under the irresistible evidence by which they are "brought in guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19); as having "all sinned," and as being utterly unable by all they can do to reconcile themselves to God, for to the last they will be no more than unprofitable servants: they will be deficient and still guilty, and still condemned. If, then, they can never of themselves stand before the throne of a righteous God as righteous and justified mortals, then must they consent to seek for their justification in some other way. And he faithfully and earnestly points them to the only way of acceptance with God: "Even through the righteousness of God which is by FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST." *All have SINNED, but all may be "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is by Christ Jesus."* (Rom. iii. 24.) St. Paul is thus teaching the way of salvation, through the righteousness and atonement of Christ. St. James, on the contrary,

is sternly rebuking the injurious and Antinomian professions of unsanctified and disobedient men. He declares that the faith which is to save us must stand forth to the eye of men justified and approved by its manifest results, by its meekness and its abounding fruits. It is no empty and speculative assent to speculative truth, but rather a deep and subduing conviction of the head and the heart, which leads to the most anxious diligence to enrich and adorn the character with the practical and ennobling virtues of Heaven. The profession of faith without the spiritual energy that leads its possessor to press on after purity and righteousness, to hunger and thirst for them with the avidity of one who knows that he will perish unless he attains them—the profession, I say, without the heartfelt affection which leads surely and inevitably to active obedience, is an abomination. It is a solemn mockery to the eye of Heaven, and must aggravate the sinner's condemnation. It is no better than the statue chiselled from the marble, and sculptured into symmetry and fair proportions by the accuracy of genius and the deceptiveness of art, but in which the soul is wanting. It is cold, motionless, and speechless, without life, and without power to proclaim, with the resistless eloquence of its example, the purity and excellence of Heaven-descended truth. My brethren, let me conjure you, then, to cherish the doctrine of salvation by faith in the righteousness and atonement of Christ as lying at the foundation of your religion, as being the very diamond pivot upon which turns the entire system of the gospel: it is the

very mainspring of active and stirring piety. But fancy not that this principle, which when received and sustained in its purity must propel to purity in practice; fancy not that it is taught by St. Paul so as to be justly liable to Antinomian perversion and abuse. When not teaching abstractly the plan of human salvation, not even St. James himself is more urgent and clear in insisting upon good works as being the only evidence of the sincerity of the Christian's faith, as being indispensable for the JUSTIFICATION OF HIS PROFESSION. My brethren, turn to the Epistles of St. Paul, and open them where you may; how full and how rich do you find him in his representations of the necessity of HOLINESS, as being the very highest end and object of our election and redemption. "God," says he, "has chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." He exhorts us to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." He tells us that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and that "Jesus came to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 14.) He tells us, too, that "Jesus became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." We thus see, my brethren, that Christian faith is the fountain from which the streams of goodness must flow to make glad the city of our God. *Good works*, you will observe, are not the *fountain*, but they are the streams which tell us that the fountain is there. They are not the foundation upon which we can rest our eternal hopes, but

they are the rich superstructure which tells us with irresistible power that the foundation which supports the temple of holiness is laid fast and firm in Christ Jesus. FAITH is the tree of righteousness, planted by the Lord's own spirit in the heart; and GOOD WORKS are the blossoms and fruits of holiness that grow upon it. FAITH is the PRINCIPLE by which our motives of religious actions will be tested; and GOOD WORKS are the witnesses by whose testimony we shall stand or fall, in that awful day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of His Son.

I say not, you will observe, my brethren, that any good works which we can do will purchase exemption for us from condemnation, in that tremendous hour of trial; but I do say, that good works are indispensably necessary in order to make manifest our possession of that saving interest in Christ Jesus which secures for us the blessings of the redeemed.

The sinner is justified before God by his faith in Christ Jesus, and then the measure of his reward will be just in proportion to the weight of testimony which shall be given in favor of the purity and sincerity of his faith by his witnessing WORKS. This view of the subject will at once make plain to your understandings not only the apparent difference between St. Paul and St. James, but also the seeming contradiction in different passages of St. Paul's own epistles. We are justified by faith, but yet shall every one of us receive hereafter according to the things

done in the body, whether they have been good or evil. What doth it profit, brethren, for a man to say he hath FAITH, while he hath not the WORKS by which alone our Lord hath told us that we are to show forth our faith to the eye of the world, or repose upon its saving efficacy for the peace of our own consciences. What profit is it, though a man *say* he hath faith, and hath not works; can his SAYING he hath faith save him? Such is the meaning of our text.

My brethren, it is a consideration which ought to be deeply engraven upon every thinking heart, that the motive must consecrate the action. Deeds, therefore, that are wrought without any regard for the will or the law of Jesus, can never purchase for us an interest in the atonement of Jesus. Works which are wrought without any consideration for the Almighty Lawgiver, and even while rebellion is nourished in the heart, and withering scorn is uttered by the lips; such works, although they may appear beautiful to men, are yet nothing worth in the eye of Him who "seeth not as man seeth." They will purchase no reward from the offended majesty and withering frown of the King of Glory.

Alas! alas! my brethren, I can fancy that I even now see the shame and everlasting contempt that is depicted in the aspect of the proud assertor of his own righteousness, when he shall feel the arm that he stretches forth towards "the crown of unfading glory" withered and paralyzed by the grasp of Satan, who claims him for his own, and exults in having se-

duced him from the shelter of a Saviour's atoning blood, and led him, in his own mad and rebellious pride, to exalt himself on the frail and ruinous pedestal of his own self-righteousness. And now, may the thought of this dreadful fate touch and subdue our hearts, and lead us to rest our hope of acceptance more completely and anxiously upon the justifying blood of our Redeemer. And then, while the spirit of God pours its melting consolations into our hearts, and beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God, so, too, let our constant walk in righteousness and true holiness give meek evidence to the world and to our own consciences that we are sealed unto the day of redemption. That day, my brethren, when HE in whom we have believed shall come in His own glory, and the Father's glory with Him, and while the guilt-stained universe trembles and melts away, we shall hear His own gentle voice declaring in sweetest accents, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and behold "I have caused thine iniquity to pass away from thee." And then attendant angels shall hasten to enrobe us in His own spotless vesture of righteousness, and amid the triumphant hallelujahs of seraphs we shall be welcomed to the "joy of our Lord."





*THE REVEALED REQUIREMENTS OF THE  
CREATOR.*

*“And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*

*Micah 6th, 8th.*



**I**N the striking and eloquent chapter from which these words are taken, the God of Israel is represented as calling upon the extremities of the earth, from the top of its everlasting hills to the depth of its strong foundations, to bear witness to the ingratitude and rebellion of his people. The Israelites are then represented as crying out in the wildest alarm before the indignation they had provoked, and praying to be guided to the means of appeasing His righteous anger. Should they come before Him with sacrifices and oblations; would thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil be accepted by Him? Or should they pour out the blood of their children, whom they loved as their own souls, as an atonement for their sins? These absurd and abominable suggestions represent most forcibly the effect of ignorant and superstitious terror upon the sinner's conscience. And how impious, how frivolous, and how cruel



have its devices ever been to secure the favor of the Deity, without faith, penitence, and purity ! The reply of the Creator to these monstrous and impossible propositions of the terror-stricken soul is given in the simple and impressive words of the text : “ He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ”

This beautiful text is sometimes misunderstood, and men are led by it to argue against the importance of doctrines of faith and the positive institutions of religion. Why is it, they ask, that the peculiarity of our faith and the forms of religion are so strictly insisted on, when we find it expressly written, that the Lord requires nothing more of us than that our lives should be marked with justice and benevolence to man, and an humble reverence to our Maker ? The dangerous fallacy of this reasoning will at once appear, when you consider how absurd it would be to suppose that the sacred prophets of God would be engaged in depreciating and destroying the very institutions which God Himself had established. In all those instances, therefore, in which the vanity of ceremonial observances is pointed out, and the necessity of moral duties insisted on, you are to understand the sacred teachers as laboring to free the positive institutions of God from the abuse to which the ignorant superstitions of men have subjected them. You nowhere find prophets teaching the people that the ceremonies of the law were not to be observed ; but with solemn earnestness they con-

stantly admonish them of the awful danger and folly of mistaking the shadow for the reality; the sign for the thing signified; the means and instruments appointed by God to lead to holy things for holiness itself. When therefore it is said, that God requires nothing more from us than the practice of the moral virtues, they speak truly, but yet comparatively. For while the love and practice of those virtues is the end and object of all the discipline to which God subjects us in this life, yet no man is at liberty to rebel against that discipline which God in His infinite wisdom has contrived and positively appointed for our advancement in holiness. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good." Where hath He showed it? In the sacred writings, surely; and upon their general teachings, then, must we rely, as to what we are to believe and to do. And although the final cause, the end of all their training, the sum and substance of their teaching, may be to bring us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God; yet surely we are not permitted to refuse to pass through the steps, or to despise the means, by which God, who knows our hearts, would gradually train and prepare us for this perfection of virtue.

Of a character similar to our text, and, like it, liable to misconception and abuse, are those well-known words of St. James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Will any sound mind argue from this that we are at liberty to throw

aside all the other teaching of God, as to what may be implied in the term religion ; and resolve that we will believe nothing and do nothing but just what this isolated verse points out ? The idea is too absurd to be refuted. We perceive at once, that the Apostle did not mean to give us articles of faith, or to lay down a code of morals ; and, in short, meant nothing more than to affirm that personal purity of character and active benevolence of life were leading duties of the religion of Heaven.

But to return to our text. “ What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ” Now, although a narrow and partial conception of these words may serve to flatter the indolent, the selfish, and the worldly, in their neglect of religious doctrine and ordinances, yet, when fully and fairly considered and explained, I want no other nor better foundation for everything essential to salvation. We are to do JUSTLY. A wide, elevated, fearful requirement. I ask you not to remember that it embraces what is due to God, as well as what we owe to man. I am willing that you should consider it in the restricted sense in which it is commonly received among us, and still it implies a vast and wide-spreading responsibility, a high and dignified measure of virtue. My brethren, it is a most exalted quality, and there is good reason to fear that it is too rarely exercised. But of this we shall leave you to judge, after we have explained what it fairly and properly means, and what He who knows and will judge the heart does now hourly exact from it.

We all know that there are certain violations of honesty which the laws define and punish, and the turpitude of which the world acknowledges. But I ask you to remember that every abuse of confidence is injustice. Every species of deceit, dissimulation, and evasion, in the dealings of man with man, is downright dishonesty, and is oftentimes a serious aggravation of the crime of taking what does not belong to us. The prowling robber, who creeps from his loathsome hiding-place under the curtain of night, to take by chance that which will not impoverish or destroy the loser, is partial in the mischief he creates in comparison with him who, under the disguise of integrity and fair-dealing, succeeds in dissipating distrust, and then preys upon the confiding. He is a monster, for whom no weight of punishment is too severe which universal detestation, derision, and scorn can inflict. Confidence is the golden chain that links the great interests of society together, that joins heart to heart, and thus softens human manners and sweetens human intercourse ; but he who, by dissimulation, impairs confidence, is the most serious of the enemies of human happiness. The effect of his mischief can hardly be calculated. He clothes life in coldness and suspicion, dissipates candor, and generates selfishness ; makes men timorous and reserved, chills the warmth of benevolence, and checks the working of the amiable virtues.

The robber by night lurks in secret by day, or flies for his life from the frown of society and the sword of the law. The abuser of confidence STEALS

in the smile of friendship, and with the cant of honesty he carries the fruit of his horrible iniquity in his hands at noonday, and bids defiance to detection and to punishment. The triumph of dissimulation and secret fraud may defy the light of time, but the light of eternity is breaking, which it cannot defy. The hour will come, brethren, ay, and come quickly, too, when he who has been unjust in small matters must stand before that Judge whom it will be impossible to deceive, and who will read to the universe the recorded history of our secret doings. Although we may now move lightly with the spoils of our wicked doings held closely to our hearts, the time is coming when, without repentance and prayers for mercy, they will lie with crushing weight upon our souls.

My brethren, the possible easings in which the laws of justice may be violated are innumerable; and however common certain deviations from the strict rule of right may be around us, however slight the consequences may be, and as gentle as the names may be by which they are known and marked, it is still the same crime. I would that he who boasts of his trust to be rewarded with the happiness of heaven, in return for his pure and just deeds on earth, should remember that he deals not justly when he avails himself of the forms of law to shelter him in the violation of equity. He deals not justly when, by any subtlety of management, he withholds or takes from any body, whether it be an individual or a society, the Government or the public, anything, be it more

or less, which is fairly their right. He deals not justly when, through reckless prodigality and extravagance, he deprives himself of the means of meeting his honest engagements. He deals not justly when he ascribes to his goods, either directly, indirectly, expressly, or by implication, qualities which he knows they have not, or conceals faults which he knows they have. He deals not justly who borrows upon false representations, or buys when he has no reasonable prospect of repaying. Alas! my brethren, no Christian can think of the extended requirements of the virtue without agitation.

Amid the excitement and ceaseless competition of a widely-extended commerce, our situation is replete with temptation, and it is to be feared that conscience is too often overpowered by cupidity, and the sense and shame of guilt is lost in the pride of acuteness and the thirst of accumulation. These dangers, and all other temptations in life, can only be resisted by solemn resolutions, constant vigilance, and earnest prayer; by measuring every action on the scale of eternity, and by the controlling help of God, fervently and diligently implored. However much men may flatter themselves as to the firmness and consistency of their uprightness, we admonish you that it is only that man who habitually feels that he is under the eye of Omniscience—that his heart is read by God, and his thoughts registered in Heaven, who is influenced by a steady regard for the will of his Creator and the retributions of eternity—he alone

it is who will be as faithful to the high principles of justice in solitude and secrecy, as in the midst of an assembled universe. He alone it is upon whom you can safely rely as one without guilt, and free from unhallowed deception, artifice, and subterfuge; and who will never "palter in a double sense," although it would be to realize the wildest dreams of ambition, and to induce wealth to pour its glittering tide at his feet.

But, my brethren, it is not enough that we *do justly*—it is not enough that we neither defraud nor offend in word or in deed—it is not enough even that our religious faith is clear and settled—if that religion leaves us cold and selfish; if our feelings rise within and return only upon ourselves; if we are content to walk in the narrow and confined circle of duty, rendering to all exactly their due, but caring not to diffuse light and dispense happiness, and leaving the track of our existence, like a barren spot in creation, neither irradiated by the sunshine of Christian love, nor refreshed by the showers of heavenly compassion. We must LOVE MERCY. It must be a cherished and ruling principle of our hearts. It is not enough that we give way to occasional and capricious flights of compassionate feeling; it is not enough that we pour forth luxurious tears over artful tales of romantic distress. We must remember that Christ descended from the mercy-seat, and took up His abode with man, that He might train the world TO MERCY. We must love mercy as the highest and sweetest attribute of Divinity. We must remember that we must be merciful, if we

would obtain mercy ; that our charity for the wants and infirmities of frail humanity must be no ostentatious softness of feeling, but a deep, strong, and imperative conviction of the duty we owe to our God and to our race. This is the charity that pardons, toils, and suffers—which no labor wearies, no ingratitude disgusts, and no honor sickens ; that treads in secret the paths of misery which no man sees, and which cares for no man’s praise, but which, like the great laws of nature’s God, does the work of God in silence, and looks to Him for direction and reward. My brethren, when we think of these things—when we think of the wide-spreading obligations which this law of mercy imposes—when we think of the purity and simplicity of heart in which our Lord has taught us to love and exercise it—and then look into our own hearts, and perceive their selfish and sordid indifference, their pride, vain-glory, love of human applause, and restless thirst for excitement, who will not tremble lest the incense which rises from our altars should be no more than a polluted offering to the Majesty of heaven ?

The third and last requirement of the text, my brethren, is, that we should “walk humbly with our God.” Where now is the proud and inconsistent boaster of merit on the score of humility ? I will ask you whether you have succeeded in tearing up by the roots every emotion of pride and self-conceit from your heart ? Under a sense of unworthiness, do you shrink into nothing in His awful presence ; and while bowing before His grandeur, His purity,



and the throne of His mercy, is every feeling of arrogance, of rancor, of envy, jealousy, and revenge, subdued? Do all human claims and worldly honors sink into insignificance? Are you so deeply imbued with the true spirit of humility, with love, reverence, and gratitude, that you are willing to submit without a murmur, and with cheerful obedience, to all of His dispensations, no matter how withering may be His rebukes, or how bitter may be the bereavement? Do you feel—as a child of frailty, error, and sin, drinking in iniquity like water, and fading before the moth born of the dust, and kindred of the grave—that your intellectual powers are feeble, and too much confined to the earth to penetrate the arena of heaven—that your love is best shown by an unrepining deference, in singleness of heart, to the well-authenticated declarations of His will; and in all mysterious and perplexing questions, by a calm and conscientious selection of that side which appears beset with the fewest difficulties, and in which our purest moral feelings coincide with the verdict of the intellect? But if nothing of this be true—if, while talking of humility to God, you are exclusively engrossed with conscious self-complacency, actually swelled into imaginary importance, and ready to throw out the most haughty disdain upon all the sources of spiritual instruction with which God has surrounded you; and so far from submitting your feeble and darkling intellect to the Divine teaching, you are actually, with the most daring presumption, picking among the demonstrable truths of re-

ligion, as to which you will obey or reject! Horrible mockery! Dreadful delusion!

My friends, let there be no mistake or concealment in this matter. The indolent, the sensual, the votary of this world, beings who pass through life in cold and supercilious indifference with regard to the most important of all questions—namely, the revealed requirements of the Creator; who close their eyes upon the stupendous and elaborate arrangements of the Christian dispensation which are working around them, and which are urged upon their attention, not more by the most cogent external testimony than by the cravings and necessities of their own moral constitutions—these men walk not humbly with their God.

The conclusion, then, to which we bring you is this: that those persons, who through some loose feeling of deference to the authority of the Scriptures have fastened upon some occasional text as the sum of their faith and the rule of their practice, to the absolute neglect of all other teaching, are not only guilty of the most unreasonable presumption; but, even when tried by their own principles, must inevitably be found wanting. The sweeping requirements of any one moral virtue are infinitely more than any one child of the dust can fully meet; and if we have no other refuge or remedy than the attainments of our own strength, we must prepare to brave the condemnation of our Judge.

In opposition to this, the course to which we would persuade you is to submit with a cheerful, un-

doubting, unreserved obedience, to all things taught or appointed us by God. Let our faith derive consistency, substantiality, and efficacy from our works, and let our works derive holiness and value from our faith; and thus form the only true and noble combination of moral excellence: separate them, and the value of each is lost. The one degenerates into turgid self-righteousness, without a heavenly motive and without heavenly worth; the other becomes offensive profaneness, by a horrible perversion of the sacred promises of Scripture to purposes of licentiousness. With anxious and humble spirits, let us gratefully avail ourselves of every ordinance appointed by God, as an instrument of holiness; and while we feel that our best works, when measured by the eternal standard of heavenly purity, are sadly defective, let us look back upon the "black and grained spots" of many a crime, and let us eagerly seek for safety in the stupendous atonement that Christ has made for all human sins.

I would lead you, my brethren, to Him who is able to deliver you, alike from the power and the punishment of sin; who can give you a meetness for Heaven imparted by His Spirit, and a title to Heaven written in His own blood. Yes, I would lead you to fix your hope of Heaven on a stable foundation, that when the tempest of God's anger shall blacken the earth, the sweeping rain shall descend, and the deluge of fire shall roll its heavy billows over every false foundation, and every refuge of lies, that then you may find yourself reposing in calm safety upon the everlasting "Rock of Ages."



*THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO THE YOUNG.*

*“I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding.”*

*Proverbs 7th, 7th.*



IN the Scriptures, the terms wisdom and understanding are constantly used to denote the *religion of God*. And so, too, where we read in the sacred writings of a fool, a simple one, and of a man without understanding, we are not to suppose that any imperfection or imbecility in the natural endowments of the individual is intended; but rather it is designed to impress us with the solemn truth, that the most awful perversion of the high powers with which God has enriched us is witnessed when men wilfully reject the teachings of their Creator; when they choose, under the influence of distempered passions, to wander amid the frightful perils of life, and riot amid its brief and debasing pleasures, while scornfully rejecting the guiding light and the ennobling counsels of that Celestial Messenger whom God has sent to the earth to direct their inexperienced steps.

Our text is taken from the writings of Solomon, and forms a part of his recorded experience of those

sad delusions under which men pursue the phantom of happiness, over the treacherous quicksands which everywhere lie so near the surface in this dangerous ocean of life.

Well and truly, my brethren, has it been said that the picture with which we are here presented is a most striking and affecting exhibition of many a scene in real life.

At the most interesting and critical season in the span of human existence, "a young man void of understanding" is brought clearly before us. At his right hand stands the GENIUS OF EVIL, arrayed in an angel's garb of beauty, and with seductive smiles alluring him to her home of impurity. Behind the youth I see in the distance, but advancing with sure and rapid steps, shame, remorse, disease, poverty, incurable misery, and eternal ruin! Above him I see the angels and spirits of the just, looking down from their abodes of light and bliss, with eyes full of the most anxious concern. On one side stands the FATHER of the young man: his gray hairs wave in the wind, and the brow which is thus left bare I see to be furrowed with care; while his bosom heaves with unutterable anguish, as he follows the object of his fondest hopes in his reckless career of ruin. But there is still another figure in the picture—it is a personification of Faith—it is the heart-stricken MOTHER of the "young man void of understanding." I can see her on her bended knees, with her streaming eyes raised to heaven, while in the smothered and broken tones of a grief too deep for utterance,

she supplicates the God of her hopes that He would save the child of her love.

God of mercy! how little do the young know how great the interest is which they excite in heaven and on earth. How little do they consider how deep, how very deep, is the cup which their conduct may fill with bliss, or else with bitter wretchedness.

My brethren, it is now my privilege to address the young; and here you will permit me to say, once for all, that in speaking of youth we confine ourselves to no particular sex. There are no pictures we can draw, there are no truths we can utter, there are no habits or qualities of character we can depict, as indicating a want of understanding in youth, which will not apply to the maiden as well as to the man. Indeed, if the want of all religious faith, all religious sensibility, all religious principle and control, be dreadful in man, it is infinitely more revolting and more to be dreaded in woman.

It is to woman that the world is largely indebted for the diffusion of that faith, which, as the preserving salt of the earth, serves to correct its deeply-seated tendency to corruption. But, alas! when the salt has lost its savor in woman, she is then but rarely fit for aught else than to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men, as a worthless and a loathsome thing. Women, my brethren, are rarely bad by halves. As in general they are far purer and better than men, so too, when we once discover them to be bad, they are almost sure to be very bad. When once the restraining sanctions of religion, and the sense of shame

before men, have lost their hold upon the heart of woman, she is no longer to be trusted save as a monster, hideously and fearfully stained with iniquity.

I repeat it, then, that if the "want of understanding," in the high sense in which the Scriptures use that phrase, is to be deplored in man, then more, and far more, is it to be deplored, as the most serious of all evils, in woman.

I will now go on to say, that the first mark of a want of understanding in youth, is to be discovered in their lending a listening ear to the sneers and specious objections of the base and the blasphemous of the earth, as to the truth of the religion of their fathers. My young friends, let me conjure you to remember that the great and the good of the earth have not been persons likely to be deceived by " cunningly-devised fables." They have reposed their clear and unwavering trust in the revelation of their Creator's will, because they saw that it contained truths of eternal importance; because it was that by which alone they could be consoled amid the bitter and crushing bereavements of life, and because it alone could sustain them when they should be called to lie down upon their beds of death. My brethren, the wise and pure in heart, throughout all Christian time, have reposed with the most unyielding trust in the religion to the profession of which I would now persuade you all, because its truth was supported by all the evidence that can well be given to anything; because it is supported by prophecies which are connected with all time, and which are rendered unques-

tionable by past, as well as by present fulfilment ; because it is supported by miracles which are most uncontestably proved, and because it is itself, in its whole nature and character, essentially miraculous. I mean, that it professes to be a supernatural communication from Heaven, and from the unearthly character of its teaching we conclude irresistibly that it never could have been otherwise produced. From its entire superiority to all the efforts of the human intellect throughout all past ages, we are bound to infer that the human mind would never have produced such doctrines in its ordinary exercise. And then in their absolute purity and excellence, and in their beautiful congeniality to our loftiest views, best sensibilities, and deepest wants, we must see that they are in every way worthy of a Divine origin. Oh ! suffer not yourselves, I conjure you, my brethren, to be beguiled by the seductive speculations of any of the tribe of misguided men whose labors are directed to poison, if they can, the purest and sweetest fountains of human happiness ; to deprive us of our dearest hopes and most elevated sources of joy ; to rob the sick of the consolations of religion, and to deprive the dying of their hope of immortality ; to lay the axe at the root of all moral obligation ; to throw open the floodgates of licentiousness, and to sap the foundations of social order.

Ah ! my young friends, if it be so, that so long as conscience retains her empire in the human breast, the stain of blood can never be washed away from the murderer's hand ; although the tears of repentance



may have blotted the record from the book of God's remembrance, yet neither the pardon of man, nor the forgiveness of God, can ever erase from the memory of the once guilty man the terrible story that is written there in characters of fire; nothing can remove the horror with which he gazes upon the hand that was busy in the dark tragedy, nor can anything ever drive away the gory phantom of the dead that haunts the murderer's retirement,—which is with him in the sunshine and in the shade, draws aside his curtains at midnight, and governs the current of his dreams; so too do I believe, that it is not in the power of the deepest repentance and the sincerest faith ever to cure the burning agony which will prey at the heart of him who has once acted the part of a corrupter of the young; who has successfully whispered his infidel precepts into the pure warm bosom of ingenuous youth; who with fiendish cruelty has put forth his hand to sever the ties of religious restraint, and has rejoiced to see his victim rushing headlong through the paths of licentiousness in the downward way of the destroyer. My brethren, he is a criminal of the deepest dye. He is a murderer in the worst and darkest sense in which the word can be used. The stain, the black, indelible stain of a brother's blood is upon him. He has not only been the slow but sure executioner of the body, but he has been the fell murderer of the IMMORTAL SOUL, and a murderer's fate is his; he has murdered his own peace forever. Whatever may ultimately be his own prospect for personal salvation, through the repentance that has humbled him, yet

the perdition that he sees and feels he has brought upon another hangs upon his heart, as a weight almost too grievous to be borne, and yet too heavy to be ever removed. The horrid, the blasting, the heart-withering prospect is before him, of hearing in that day when we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, of hearing the piercing shrieks of the souls he has ruined, falling in curses on his head.

Oh ! turn, my young friends, turn with shuddering from the presence of the scorner, who with horrid daring would mock at your Saviour, and deride the sacredness of your religious feelings. Those men, of every grade and class, are lying and seducing spirits with which God permits the earth to be cursed, for the punishment or trial of his creatures. Let it be enough for you, that all which is great and imposing, all that is tender and affecting, all that is sublime and terrific on earth, in heaven, or in hell, is now addressed to your hopes and your fears in the Gospel of the Son of God. On the one hand, there is presented to the obstinate and impenitent transgressor Divine Justice, arrayed in all the terrors of Almighty power ; and on the other hand, there is graciously held to the humble believer the atoning and peace-speaking blood of the Saviour. They who can remain uninfluenced by these considerations, who reject this Gospel, with its life-giving precepts, and who altogether spurn at its restraining discipline, must be deemed irreclaimable ; must be given over to their evil heart of unbelief ; and they will be found without

remedy and without excuse in their eternal and disastrous submission to the tyranny of the evil one.

But again. A second mark of a "want of understanding" in the young is when they are found professing an entire belief in the truth and sacredness of the religious principles of their fathers, yet studiously postponing their entrance on a religious course of life; and through a most unworthy timidity, or a criminal fear of the laugh of a guilty world, they carelessly neglect every sacrament and every ordinance to which their dying Saviour has called them, as the avenues through which He will impart His blessings and strength to them, and as being, at the same time, the appointed means and ordinances through which they were required to manifest their discipleship and obedience to their Divine Master. Oh! what can I say to rouse you to a proper sense of this ruinous insensibility to the loud calls which your Saviour God is making upon you for visible communion and fellowship, for a prompt decision and open avowal of the trust you repose in His power to bless and save you forever? Why is there so much of frigid indifference in a concern of such overwhelming importance? If your religion is worth anything to you, is it not worth everything? If you cultivate it not in life, can you expect it to afford you its consolation in death? Is it not the most extraordinary of all possible infatuations, that you should repose in the hope that you have the Almighty God for your Father, and Jesus the Son for your everlasting Friend, and yet that you should be ashamed to

profess this hope before dying men? You believe the Scriptures; you are shocked at the daring and mischievous incredulity of infidels; you think of the hour of death, and of your accountability in the future life, with the deepest anxiety; you believe that the Son of God came down from heaven to reveal the way to the eternal favor of the Creator, but yet you fear not to stifle all these momentous considerations; you fear not practically to deny, by refusing to acknowledge, the supremacy of Christ and all His requirements; you fear not to dishonor and provoke your God, but you do fear the sneer and the laugh of man, who TO-DAY IS and TO-MORROW IS NOT; you fear to profess the faith you cherish in your Almighty Redeemer, lest it should subject you to the ridicule—not of the truly great and good of the earth—not of the wise and pure in heart—but of the “young men who are void of understanding”—perhaps the most senseless, profligate, and abandoned of the earth.

My brethren, let me ask, with the most solemn earnestness, whether the everlasting judgment of a frowning God and the eternal safety of the soul can be put in the balance against a look, a word, a sneer from a poor, perishing, wicked creature of the dust, without the most egregious and infinite folly? Alas, alas! what a “want of understanding” is here.

My young friends, may the Spirit of the living God bring these things home to your consciences with His own almighty energy; may He enable you to balance wisely between the empty opinions of men and the eternal approbation of your God; and then

may you simply, modestly, and from the heart confess the faith which you have in Jesus the Mediator before the world, so that in the great and awful day which is to come, He too may confess you before His Father and the hosts of holy angels which are with Him! But if it must be, that all of the warnings of celestial wisdom are to fall upon you like idle sayings which you regard not; if the dread of unwise and wicked men is more powerful with you than the approbation of the good and the favor of your God, then tell me, what is there to secure you from showing still further your "want of understanding," by running with the licentious and the guilty into all the horrible excesses of debauchery? If, in your simplicity, you have in any way become the victim of the unprincipled and profligate, what is there to secure you from the still further effects of their enticing words, and all the seductive artifices by which thousands and thousands around you are daily lured on, step by step, through the orgies of folly, the haunts of vice, the abodes of pollution, and the yawning gates of present ruin, into the gulf of eternal death?

Yes, yes, my brethren, they who, in the language of the wise man, are so "devoid of understanding" as to forget their God, neglect the commandments of their Saviour, and to postpone, without reason and without excuse, the clear duties of their religion, have nothing whatever to secure them from the awful condition of the thousands around them who have utterly renounced all the obligations of virtue. They are of like passions with other mortals,

and vice is forever busy in spreading before the young her bewildering allurements. It is only high principle, it is the sense of religious restraint alone, which can secure us from the blight of her fascinating temptations. Let these be lost sight of, and, O God of my children, Thou alone canst tell how soon I may be called to pour forth floods of tears from my broken heart over the victims of the maddening riot of dissipation, the shameless frequenters of haunts of all that is debasing, and the mournful, heart-rending exemplifiers of all that is wildly dreadful in the gambler's home.

Let no infatuated youth who has been tempted to wander from the ways of the wise, and to depart from the path of understanding, here say, that HE will never go to SUCH LENGTHS AS THESE. As well might the charioteer who has thrown the reins from his hands, while drawn by his spirited and foaming steeds, still expect to control their rapid movements. As well might the enlisted soldier expect to be consulted as to the battles he will fight, or how long he will continue the contest, as for him who has once given himself up as the servant of sin to say how low he means to descend in the ways of profligacy, and how soon he intends that the blush of shame shall return to that cheek from which he has driven all the coloring with which ingenuous innocence gazes upon impurity and crime.

Oh, my young friends, let me warn you against the contagion of evil example. "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "Cease to hear the instruc-

tion that causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge." "Enter not at all into the paths of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Whenever the tempter would lure you with his blandishments, let the spectres of the victims, careworn as they are, murdered as they were, who were in this way beguiled to their destruction, rise up before you. Let the shades of your pious ancestors stand before you in the path; let reason proclaim your danger, let conscience whisper the awful guilt of yielding; yea, let the voice which speaks from the flaming throne of God be heard when it exclaims, "For all these things will I bring thee into judgment."

My young friends, I have no time to dwell longer upon the many considerations which have suggested themselves to my mind in connection with the many mournful exhibitions which we are called to witness, of the young who, in the language of Solomon, are "void of understanding." Permit me now to say, in conclusion, that if the call we so urgently make upon you for an open dedication of yourselves to the service of the God of your lives, was a call for separation from the pleasures of society; if religion was all sacrifice and no reward, all self-denial and no indulgence, all darkness and mortification, with no light and encouragement; still, if this were clearly the call and the command of God, then all of it ought to be endured, and endured with cheerfulness. If this path, so thorny and narrow, were the only path which could lead to the glories of immortal life; if this

avenue, so dark and dreary, were the only avenue which would open at last upon the bright and sun-clad regions of the celestial country, then should we promptly enter upon that way and pursue it joyfully without fear and without fainting. But so far is anything like this from being true, that God has most mercifully connected your duty to Him with your best and purest happiness on earth. Religion calls for no sacrifice which a true regard for your own best interests would not lead you to make. There is surely nothing austere or terrific in her aspect. "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor;" "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace;" "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

But one consideration more, and I must leave you. My brethren, as common-place as it may be, yet must I, in conclusion, suggest to you the awful uncertainty in which you hold existence. I know that you will all be ready enough to admit the possibility of your being cut off by death before the rising of to-morrow's sun. Let, then, the controlling thought, while yet it is present with you, lead you to resolve now to give your hearts to that God before whose tribunal you must so soon appear. Defer not until to-morrow—to-morrow may never dawn for you! Dream not that you are for one moment safe, when all human experience should go to satisfy you that every moment as it comes is fraught with danger. How many are the budding roses that you have seen



blasted before they could unfold their bloom ! How many bright mornings have you seen darkened by storms, before the sun has reached his noon ! And ah ! how many trophies have you known death to gather from souls in the morning of their days, while the aged and decrepit have been left to water the earth with their tears ! Ah, how many are the cheeks of early beauty which you have seen grow pale and ghastly with the fatal disease ! How many strong arms have you seen to fall languid, palsied, and lifeless ! How many eyes, kindling with love, have you known to be closed in death, and how many untimely graves have opened beneath your eye, to receive the ruins of youth, beauty, and hope ! Where, then, Oh ! tell me where, is the armor of adamant in which you trust, as proof against the darts of death ? Where, Oh ! tell me where, are your grounds for presuming that HE will spare you who spares none else beside ?

No, no, my young friends, you have no chartered exemption from the strokes of death. You have been granted no monopoly of life. Consent then to be warned of the necessity of doing that at once, which delay may forever prevent you from doing. Oh ! let not the shades of the many who have died as young as you are hover around you in vain ; let not the cries of the many who are hourly perishing in their youth reach us in vain ; let not the tears of the fathers and mothers who are following their children to their graves, be poured forth in vain ; let not our places of sepulture, crowded as they are with the

mouldering remains of the young, admonish us in vain ; let not Heaven unfold before the eye of faith the vast harvests it has gathered from the young and lovely, and thus appeal to us in vain. And Oh ! let not the hell that is beneath lay bare its places of torment in vain, while it leads us to think of the many who have been cut down by death in the midst of their wickedness, and while fancying themselves only in the spring-time and morning of their days !

My young friends, if you would ever know the full joy and peace of believing, give to God your heart in the days of your youth. In the bright and buoyant hours of health and early strength, listen meekly to the voice of celestial wisdom, and “let thine eyes observe the ways of understanding.” Then shall the bosoms of the parents who gave you being be filled with unutterable gladness. Then shall the Church on earth open her arms to welcome and to bless you. Then shall the angels in Heaven rejoice to become your ministering spirits of love. Then shall the Saviour God be ready to clothe you with His own spotless robe of righteousness ; and, if not wanting to yourself, in His own good season you will be called away to run with Him the immortal race of glory.





THE SACRIFICE OF ALL THINGS HURTFUL TO  
THE SOUL.

*“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

*“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee ; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”*

*Matthew 5th, 29th and 30th.*

**B**EFORE proceeding to what I have to remark upon these words, permit me to say, my brethren, that it is important you should keep in mind that our Lord had already expressly declared his intention to uphold the authority of the moral law. He had also openly rebuked the pretensions to righteousness on the part of the Scribes and Pharisees. He had most completely proved the extent and universal application of the moral law of which He spake, by showing the spirituality of its precepts ; while He had at the same time substantiated everything He had said against the Pharisees, by proving their insincerity, their hypocrisy, and the falsehood and insufficiency of their doctrines. He evinces most clearly that these evil-minded men sapped most completely the very foundation of true holiness, by confining the prohibitions of the

law to the outward deed; while they left free, and entirely uncontrolled, those inward dispositions of the heart from which all practical wickedness must proceed.

The words of the text convey an illustration of the most resolute self-denial and self-sacrifice in everything of a guilty nature. In the words of the text we are distinctly taught that we cannot cherish unhallowed and irregular passions, wilfully and perseveringly, without being in danger of the consuming anger of God!

Our Lord most plainly teaches that there is no alternative in the case. The cause of offence must be avoided and given up, or the loss of the soul is the inevitable consequence! He then goes on to compare a besetting sin of this fatal character to an incurable unsoundness in any part of the body. As, for instance, a gangrene or mortification, if neglected, in any one limb or member of the bodily frame, would most surely infect and destroy the whole body; so, too, and just as surely, will any one unhallowed passion or vicious propensity, cherished without restraint in the heart, ultimately and infallibly taint and destroy the whole soul! Just in the same way, as it is often found necessary, and constantly acknowledged to be best, to endure the pain and loss of cutting off a diseased member in order to save the whole body from destruction; so, too, is it just as necessary, and so, too, is it just as profitable and wise, to give up every bad passion, and to abandon every debasing habit, rather than to run the risk of losing the happi-

ness of the immortal spirit forever and forever! “If thy right hand or thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life having one eye or one hand, rather than having two eyes or two hands, to be cast into hell!” That is, if any profession or pursuit, any passion, habit, or tendency—if anything whatsoever be to you an occasion or source of sin, then, however dear it may be to you, or however essential you may esteem it to your present comfort, you must remove it forever. In the language of the Saviour, it is profit for you to do so; when the health and safety of the body is concerned it is what no man hesitates to do, and is it what you now hesitate to do when the eternal safety of the soul is at stake?

All that our Lord requires is, that we should show the same regard for the spiritual and deathless that we are ready to do for the material and dying part of our nature; that we should make the same exertion to secure the life which is to come, that we are ready enough to use to prolong the life that now is. For the sake of health and strength, men are everywhere seen to abstain from many indulgences which are calculated to yield them present delight; they submit to restraints which are annoying and painful; they resist the most powerful allurements to injurious gratifications; they will, to restore health when it is impaired, cheerfully employ the most unpleasant remedies, and they willingly undergo the most painful operations. Who would not gladly and thankfully give up a part of this wonderful cor-

poreal machine in order to preserve the rest from decay and death? Now, all that the Saviour asks is, that we should do as much for the sanctification and salvation of the spirit as we thus do for the perishing body. Can anything be more reasonable than this, or could the Saviour have required anything less from the thoughtless and ungrateful creatures He died to save? Have we not infinitely better reason to exert the spirit of resolute self-sacrifice in behalf of the soul rather than of the body? Which of the two is most valuable in itself, most exalted in its nature, most susceptible of improvement, and most fitted for happiness? Which of the two distinguishes you most from the other creatures of God's creation? Which is it that gives you the resemblance you bear to the divine nature? Which of the two is the anxious object of the Redeemer's care, and intended by Him to live forever in His own unfading kingdom? Is it not the soul? For which of the two, then, would you be willing TO DO MOST and TO SUFFER MOST? Is it not the soul? May not the question, then, be fairly put, whether you do bestow upon the soul your principal care, whether you ever allow it an equal share of your anxiety and your attention? You are careful enough, no doubt, for the health of the body. You avoid unnecessary exposure to peril; you avoid the contagion of infectious disorders; you are thankful always for friendly advice, and for useful and timely warnings upon these points. You are grieved when the health of the body has been impaired. You are alarmed upon the very first symptom of a dangerous

distemper, and you fly anxiously to the use of the remedies which may be within your reach. But again does the question occur: Are you as reasonably anxious for the health and safety of the immortal spirit, which is equally subject to disease, to the fatal effects of contagion, and to a moral death infinitely more to be dreaded than the dissolution of the perishing body?

My brethren! the question is, are you at pains to secure yourselves from the contagion of evil example, and the temptation of evil company? When the effects of sin begin to show themselves in your hearts, do you apply yourselves earnestly to be relieved from its debasing influence; are you touched with sorrow and alarm lest its sway over you should be permanent and fatal? Are you willing to receive warnings of your peril; are you grateful for the intimations which may be given you as to the way of escape from the path of the destroyer; and do you thankfully take hold of the hand held out to you from the skies, to lead you into the way of eternal safety? My brethren, are you willing to renounce everything which you know to be contrary to the will of God, and hurtful to your spiritual progress? Although it may be a source of pleasure, although it may be a means of gain, although it may be your stepping-stone to the honors of the world, although it may be as dear to you as the right eye, or the right hand—yet must you cut it off! You must count it as nothing in comparison with the hazard of losing the true life of the soul throughout the wasteless ages of eternity!

No one can deny but there is as much spiritual wickedness in the world, as there are bodily diseases ; and that there is as much risk of being corrupted by the one as of our being infected by the other. No one will doubt but that as many persons have suffered in their morals by wicked example as have lost their health by contagious disorders. Nor will any one for one moment doubt but that the consequences of exposing the soul to injury are infinitely more dreadful than anything that can befall the body ! How, then, my brethren, is the conduct of those persons to be excused who are known to shut their eyes, wilfully and perversely, against their greatest spiritual errors, and most imminent spiritual perils ; to treat such matters as if they were the most trivial of all things ; to go on their way in the downward road of their folly without consideration, and without the slightest apprehension of the consequences that may befall them, and, therefore, utterly neglecting all the means which their Creator Himself has graciously recommended for the purity, the security, and the eternal peace of their immortal souls !

How can conduct like this be reconciled in rational beings with the profession of any sort of religious principle ? How can any man complain of the severity of our blessed Lord's requirements, when He manifestly requires nothing more from them, in order to secure the welfare of the immortal spirit that animates them, than they themselves are perfectly willing to do for the body, which is hourly dying,—and must die inevitably, do for it—suffer for it—what they may ? Who now will pre-



tend to say, that our Lord's requirement in the text is "a hard saying," when He only tells us that we must be prepared to exercise the same attention, the same anxiety, the same resolution, and the same fortitude, in the case of the soul's eternal welfare, that we are always ready to exert in behalf of the body; when at best we can only hope to extend its being for a brief and fading moment of time! My brethren, it becomes us to lay these things seriously to heart. Who is there "without sin amongst us" in this particular of caring far more for the interests of the body than of the soul? Of being careful and troubled about many things, while we overlook the "one thing" which of all other things is most needful? Of acting well our part in all things else, while we neglect that "good part the fruits of which shall never be taken away from us!"

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that we must fear and avoid more carefully than we have ever yet done, not so much those things which can only hurt and kill the body, but rather those things which can occasion both soul and body to be cast into hell; that, however painful may be the sacrifice, and at what cost soever it may be to us, yet our plain duty to the God we serve must be met; it must be met cheerfully, calmly, and with a resolute spirit! Come, then, my beloved brethren, and let us this day resolve that for the future we will labor more earnestly, not so much for the meat which perisheth as for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life; that we will seek more diligently, not so much those things which are only profitable for

the life that now is, but for rather those things which are profitable also for the life that is to come ! Let us strive to cherish a more constant intercourse with our Maker, and to live always as if in His presence ! Let us abstain, more and more, from every practice and every pleasure which by experience we find to lessen our relish for divine things and to attract us inordinately to the present life ! And, my brethren, be constantly looking forward to the end, and ask yourselves, what labors, what sacrifices, what self-denials shall we regret in that mighty and imposing hour when we shall exchange our sackcloth of fasting for those robes that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb ; and when we shall hear our blessed Saviour say, " Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Lord."





ALL OUR TRIALS A SOURCE OF BLESSING.

*“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

*“Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”*

*John 9th, 1st, 2d, 3d.*



THIS inquiry of the disciples is remarkable, and to ordinary readers it may be hard to understand. It would seem to imply the possibility either of a man's having sinned before he was born, or that the sins of his parents might have been the direct cause of his blindness. With regard to the man's sinning before he was born, it will perhaps relieve the text of all difficulty, by considering that the doctrine of the philosopher Pythagoras was currently received before the coming of our Lord. The teaching of his philosophy amounted to this: that souls once created could neither be annihilated nor withdrawn from active existence in the present condition of things; but that they migrated from one body to another, as living bodies were successively cut down and mouldered into ruin. Some teachers appear to have held that the air was filled with these flitting

and unseen spirits, hovering anxiously around to be in readiness for the bodies which the gods might prepare for them; and that the change of habitation was either for the better or worse, as the spirit had used or abused its freedom in a previous condition of existence. It will scarcely be necessary for me to argue that this idea of transmigration was a ridiculous delusion; it is certain, however, that the doctrine very generally prevailed at that day, and there can be no doubt that the notion was present to the minds of the disciples who proposed the inquiry we are now considering. It is remarkable, too, that the same sentiments should even now be widely held by the Hindoos, and perhaps some other pagan nations. The Hindoos go so far as to judge with great pretended accuracy of the character of the crimes committed in a previous probation, according to the nature of the bodily infirmity to which they are now subjected.

It is enough for us to know that the doctrine is entirely at variance with the uniform teaching of the Scriptures on the subject of a day of general resurrection and final retribution, when we are expressly assured that to every "seed shall be assigned its own body." The body in which Christ appeared after His resurrection was precisely the same body in which He had been known to move on earth. With regard to Jacob and Esau, and in reference perhaps to this very philosophy, St. Paul declares, "the children, being not yet born, had done neither good nor evil." And our Lord promptly assured His

disciples, that it was not for any sins of his own that the blind man before him had been brought into the world in his present pitiable condition.

The second object of their inquiry is, perhaps, deserving of more attention. "Who did sin, this man or his PARENTS, that he was born blind?" Now, as extraordinary as it may appear that, in the arrangements of infinite benevolence, a child should come to suffering in consequence of a parent's iniquity, yet we are from hourly experience compelled to know that although so far as the child is concerned it may not be regarded in the light of *punishment*, yet that nothing is more certain than that the consequences of parental crime do constantly descend upon the head of his offspring.

In a temporal point of view we see it all around us, that the threatening of the law as it came from Sinai is not confined to the people of God's first love. With them the children never failed to reap the proper fruits of their fathers' sowing. If the parents chose to depart from the light, the elevation, the glory of the true God, the children were of necessity left to the darkness, degradation, and infamy that the practice of idolatry was sure to induce; and with us we see that the wicked principles of a parent are almost infallibly sown in the hearts of his children, and are as certainly productive of the fruits of bitterness and sin. The parent whose prodigality squanders the patrimony with which God has enriched him, most certainly bequeaths to his children the evils of poverty.

The poisonous draught from the cup of forbidden pleasure, which a sinful parent has dared to drink, not only saps and destroys the springs of his own existence, but the disease continues to run in a poisonous current through the veins of his children, circulating pain, misery, and premature death.

Because of Eli's misconduct in conniving at his son's wickedness, it was declared that all the increase of his house should "die in the flower of their age." Saul treacherously slew the Gibeonites, and his seven sons were hung. David sinned, and his child was struck with death. Ahab was wicked, and it was declared, not only that HE should be punished, but that in his "son's days evil should be brought upon his house." Jeroboam impiously trifled with the sacred priesthood of God, and the child of his love was blighted and withered beneath his eye. Indeed, not only the historical pages of SCRIPTURE, but the pages of ALL HISTORY, and our every-day acquaintance with human life, will furnish us with innumerable instances in which the consequences of parental folly and wickedness are inherited directly by those who are to come after them.

All of this, my brethren, is no more than a part of the mixed and admirably balanced system amid which we live. Wherever in this life there is pleasure, there will also be pain, and wherever there is a conspicuous source of good it will surely be attended by its corresponding train of evils.

As the character and fortunes of our parents are our own peculiar fountains of comfort and happi-

ness, so it is neither unnatural, unreasonable, nor unjust that we should inevitably partake of the consequences of their slothfulness, indiscretion, and crime. So much for the general rule as it runs. If the arrangement has its inconvenience, so it is attended with manifest and incalculable advantages. It is a powerful stimulus to well-doing, and the strongest bond that can bind communities together.

We have, however, the assurance of Christ that neither had this man sinned nor his parents. The calamity had not fallen upon him as a judgment for any particular sin, either in the sufferer himself or those who gave him birth. It came as a part of the general curse and ruin in which our fallen nature is involved. It was permitted, as all our evils are sent and permitted, to advance our ultimate good, to enable us to see and rejoice in the benevolence and power of God. The immediate end for which this particular case of suffering was permitted would be sufficiently important and striking were it only that it might be the occasion of manifesting the miraculous character of Christ to the world. And you will here permit me to say that in this view of it, the narrative affords us a most delightful evidence of the perpetual providence of God. No condition can possibly be conceived more utterly insignificant than that presented by this case; and yet we are assured that even this depressed and hopeless individual was cautiously preserved in his calamitous condition, to answer an important end in the mysterious economy of the divine government. It has been remarked,

with great pathos and beauty, that “no situation in human life could possibly have been more apparently useless, lost, and forgotten, than that of the blind man that sat by the wayside.” He was born in utter poverty, and born BLIND; his parents deserted him to the cold compassion of the world, and he sat upon the sterile wayside of life to implore it. It was accident alone that seemed to bring him within the notice of our Saviour. But as we follow the story to the conclusion—when we see that even over this seemingly deserted and hopeless individual the eye of Providence was immediately and steadily impending—when we see an important destiny which his calamity is about to fulfil—when we see that in him the works of God, and the omnipotence of the Son of God, are about to be manifested—when we see that the cure of an individual so deserted and obscure was to be the source of instruction and comfort to all succeeding ages,—there is nothing in language, nor in all the powers of reasoning, that can so forcibly evince to us the great and consoling truth of the perpetual Providence of God. It tells us at once that to His eye all hearts are open, and all sorrows known; that no secret suffering is hid from Him; that wherever the creation of God extends, there, too, the providence of God must be seen and felt.

If such, my friends, be the condition of our being that evil in some shape is to assail us, of what possible consequence can it be whether the evil descends upon us through the instrumentality of some persons rather than other persons; of our parents, or of some



other men. It is enough for us to know that the visitation is ultimately to be referred to the *will of God*. When things are measured upon the great scale of eternity, apparent evils are not necessarily to be regarded as misfortunes; and it is in this light that much of the natural evil which exists in the world should be viewed.

Facts, the most unimposing in themselves, and incidents apparently the most casual, may yet be destined to produce the most important effects upon individual happiness, and the destiny of empires. The peculiar purposes of God, in cases of individual deprivation and grief, are never to be too curiously sought for; but rather let us bow in unwavering confidence to the wisdom of Him whose all-glorious mercy will be manifested when we come to know as we also are known. Cheerless and helpless was the condition of the blind man who sat by the wayside, but how unspeakably fortunate was he whom Providence had thus deprived of the light of day, if it prevented him from pursuing the steps of those who were thirsting for the blood of the Lord of life, and if it were directly the means of winning for him the present blessing and eternal salvation of the Redeemer. Let us but suppose that he is now permitted to look back from the region of the blessed, upon the season of his blindness, degradation, and darkness, and with what unspeakable joy will he regard the calamity, and every circumstance connected with it, through which and to which he must attribute his present illumination and glory.

Thus too, my brethren, the period will come when we may all look back upon the trials through which we may have passed in life, and if we be not now wanting to ourselves, we will then rejoice in their purifying and sanctifying influence upon our ransomed spirits. Here, some of us may be blessed by the outward light of day, while our HEARTS are as desolate and dark as that of any blind and cheerless beggar who sits by the wayside of life; we have been bereaved, perhaps, of our children and our friends; the lives that rendered our own lives desirable have all passed away, and with them the light has expired which alone could render the world bright and joyous for us.

My brethren, it is not for him to repine whose affections have been effectually weaned from the infatuating joys of this dark, cold earth, and who is free to carry them beyond the gulf of death, and give them to Him who alone can fill and satisfy them, without change and with alloy. If there be any of us who are struggling with reverses of fortune, or who are groping alone the by-paths of life, in the darkness of penury, we may at least rejoice that we are delivered from the temptations, the trials, and toils of opulence. We may not have goods laid up for many years, but we can look down into the grave to which we must soon descend, and be glad that they will not be wanted there! Here, we may be poor in spirit, and doomed to toil our wearisome way under the clouds of misfortune, but we may rejoice that we are permitted to be rich in faith; and that

it is our privilege to look above the dust of time, and to repose in the hope that our hearts may be wisely fixed where our only treasure is. Yea, we may rejoice that it is permitted us to be RICH IN FAITH; and we can look cheerfully above us, for there is neither cloud nor darkness in those regions whither the soul will soon be summoned to wing its untiring and its triumphant flight.

If health has now forsaken us; if the rose has faded from the cheek, and the beams of hope play no longer in the eye—if the springs of life are relaxing, and the damps of death gather frequent and fast upon the brow, oh! let us rejoice with solemn joy in the kind and emphatic warning with which the King of terrors would prepare us for his coming. Let us lay aside promptly the vain thoughts and criminal toys of time; there will be no trifling in eternity!

We come now to throw out a few thoughts which have been naturally suggested by the subject before us, and which have reference to the most portentous and perplexing problem exhibited in the universe of God!

Wherever we move in life, we are perpetually summoned to witness scenes of melancholy, and to hear the cries of wretchedness—and every benevolent mind is instinctively led to inquire, why is it that evil is thus blended with the works of God? What benevolent end can possibly be answered by so much bitterness and sorrow in the arrangement of a scheme of infinite wisdom and goodness? The Stoics of old, in defiance of reason and common-sense, boldly asserted that what we call evil is not

really such, and that it was the part of wise men to despise suffering and the painful vicissitudes of life. Some infidel philosophers of Christian time, while admitting the existence of evil as it universally prevails, have agreed in regarding it as inherent in the nature of things—as existing independently of the Divine will, and as being that which no omnipotence in power can ever, by any eventual change in circumstances, entirely remove. It will scarcely be necessary for me to prove that the philosophy cannot be founded in truth, which is hourly contradicted by the lessons of universal experience; nor can that belief be better entitled to respect which is reconciled to the existence of evil, only because it supposes God to be too weak to counteract it. The Christian revelation stops not to inquire why God permitted evil to exist, but contents itself with teaching that this very perplexing mixture of good and evil is a preparatory contrivance for the production of blessings far exceeding everything that our darkened faculties are capable of conceiving. It asserts simply and explicitly that, constituted as human nature is, it can only be prepared for its advancement to the spiritual perfection and glory for which it is destined by a process of discipline in time; and that what we call evil is essentially connected with such a system of probation. There is one striking analogy between the works of God as observed in nature and announced in revelation, and that is, that the Great Creator never proceeds directly to His end by an instantaneous and unrestrained exertion of power; but

that in His wisdom He chooses to operate gradually, indirectly, and through the agency of cause and effect. So, too, has He ordained that positive and substantial good shall rarely accrue to man without some definite effort on his part; some exertion, some toil, some anxiety, some pain or peril is essential to win it down. The body is connected with this world only, and therefore the reward of toils undertaken for the good of the body must be reaped in this world. We accordingly find that in all TEMPORAL CONCERNS, the connection between cause and effect is clearly marked. Harvest follows seed-time, and industry secures the bread that sustains life. But this close connection between cause and effect—this open and manifest link between labor and its reward, is not discoverable in the system of moral retribution under which we live; and it is this seeming anomaly in the moral government of God that has constituted the insuperable difficulty in the speculations of philosophy. But how simple and satisfactory is the solution afforded by the Scriptures of Christian truth! They tell us that WE LIVE NOT ONLY FOR TIME, BUT ALSO FOR ETERNITY, and that our Creator has wisely marked our immortal nature by placing the recompense of our efforts to do His will beyond the narrow and perishable limits of this world. The reward annexed to every expenditure of honest effort for spiritual amelioration is as certain and uniform in the moral as it is in the physical world; but there is no necessary reason why that reward should be always palpable—should be always seen in the present life.

We are expressly directed to sow in time, that we may reap in eternity! And thus it is seen that the postponement of moral retribution, of spiritual rewards, beyond the present life, so far from marking any deficiency in justice or mercy on the part of the Creator, or any indifference to the moral conduct of His creatures, is most legibly stamped with wisdom and consistency.

Let us never faint, my brethren, in our struggles after imperishable good. If we reap not our reward in this life, let us steadily remember that it is only because we are passing from the earth, and this world is too gross, too transitory, too fading and narrow, to produce the full and exhaustless reward for the deathless soul. Let us cherish the conviction of the infinite goodness of the Creator, as the most certain of all certain truths. Let us rely upon the whole connected course of human events as abounding in positive sources of comfort and encouragement. Let us look upon every vicissitude of life as a means to be employed by infinite wisdom for the production of one grand result, one determinate purpose of spiritual happiness. If we are anxious to be true, enlightened, and cheerful Christians, this conviction should never for one moment be absent from our thoughts; it should never be suffered to slumber nor sleep. This world is no theatre of unmixed enjoyment; it is no state in which goodness has invariably its own reward, and wickedness its punishment. But it is rather a system wisely and wonderfully contrived for the single and distinct object of our spiritual

probation and discipline. The whole moral machinery of life is directed to this great end. There is not a single virtue that can adorn our characters, nor one active quality of the mind, nor one noble feeling of the heart, that can urge us on towards heaven, but must derive its efficiency and its worth from that mixture of evil with which God has attempered the condition of the world. Our obedience, were there neither difficulties nor temptations to seduce us from duty, would possess no worth. Without suffering, there could be no patience; and without the wretchedness of want there could be no exercise of benevolence; without ignorance and uncertainty there could be no room for faith, and without saddening experience of the WORTHLESSNESS of ALL WORLDLY ENJOYMENT there could be no longing after THE JOYS of ETERNITY. It is thus seen that the existence of evil is employed to call forth the loftiest qualities of our nature. It is the light of Christianity that enables us to see how the course of practical training to which we are thus subjected is most admirably adapted to fit us for that wide and harmonious circle of willing and obedient souls who are to derive happiness forever and ever from the great centre of purity and joy. Our Christian discipline is efficient when it is successful in breaking down the rebellious suggestions of the world and the flesh—in subduing our evil passions, spiritualizing our aspirations, and bending every proud feeling to a state of humble reliance upon the revealed will of our Maker. Let, then, these great ends but be accomplished, and

whether our allotment be to pass through good or evil fortune, as believers in Christ we will strive to possess our souls in patience and in the strength of God's Holy Spirit, to perform each task that awaits us with cheerfulness and hope.

But to return to our text: Let me in conclusion conjure you to remember that, like the beggar who sat by the wayside, we are all in a spiritual sense *born blind*;—blind to our duty—blind to our true source of happiness—blind to the danger that threatens us,—and blind to the only true path that can conduct us to eternal safety.

Christ has been sent into the world for our restoration to sight; He is the light of the world, without which no man can see. If our eyes have not yet been opened to the light, or if the light has been proffered us and we have refused to receive it; if we are wandering, benighted, hopeless, and guideless in the wilderness of sin; if we can see nothing behind to comfort or console us—nothing before to allure or to terrify us—nothing to charm or nothing to alarm—oh! then, let me arrest you by my cries of warning and entreaty. Jesus of Nazareth now passeth by. Oh! call upon Him while He is near, seek Him while He may be found, arrest Him in His progress by your prayers for help and salvation. He is ready and willing to hear, He is mighty to save, and has promised to be with them forever who will call upon Him in faith. Come, then, let us all confess before Him our infirmities and blindness. He will raise whatever within you is low. He will



illumine whatever within you is dark! He will point you to the avenue—straight and narrow, and stained with His own blood as it is—the only avenue which can lead you triumphantly to the splendid portals of immortal renown! He, too, will give you strength, and fire you with confidence; and when thus enlightened and animated, with the clearness of an eagle's eye and the steadiness of an eagle's flight, you may wing your way towards the eternal source of light and truth and happiness!





### THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR.

*“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

*Ephesians 6th, 13th.*

**I**N the Scriptures, the life of man is constantly represented as a condition of ceaseless conflict. From the dawn of reason to the night of the grave are we required to bear our armor, and be always on the watch for the assault of foes the most insidious and deadly.

When, in the humility of faith, we bring the infant of days into the presence of the Lord of Hosts, and seal him with the signet of the Great Captain in whose service he is thus enlisted, it is in token that hereafter he “shall fight manfully under His banner, and continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant until his life’s end.” And it is, too, in keeping with this view of our condition, that God is everywhere represented as having most abundantly provided the soldiers of the cross with the means of present security and the instruments of eternal triumph.

In the eloquent chapter from which the text is taken, St. Paul, after admonishing the Ephesian

believers of the perils to which they were exposed from spiritual and unseen foes, goes on to exhort them to array themselves in the perfect and invulnerable armor which God has so graciously placed within their reach, so that they might stand erect and unharmed amid all the shafts of their malevolent and invisible destroyers. "Wherefore," says he, "take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." "Stand, therefore, having your loins GIRT ABOUT with TRUTH." The allusion here is to the GIRDLE, a most important part of ancient armor, because it connected and compacted all the other pieces; and the propriety of the figure will be perceived when we reflect that the only bond of harmonious union in the points of Christian character, and the only ground upon which we can rest for consistency and firmness, is a deep and intelligent conviction of the TRUTH of the principles we profess. The Christian must stand encircled by the impervious panoply of truth. He must be true to himself; without guile and without hypocrisy; without specious and hollow pretensions; without doubt or misgiving as to the honesty of his own direct and simple purposes; and then must he rest in the firm and fast conviction that God is true—a living and unfailing "God of truth;" true in the covenant of His glorious promises, and true in the threatenings of His written word. Yea, he will thus stand, having all the parts of his Christian armor compacted and knit together, by the unyielding and life-giving per-

suasion that the eye of the all-searching God of truth is upon him ; that Christ is a faithful and true witness of all that has been done for man, and of all that is now required for HIM TO DO ; that the Holy Spirit is a " Spirit of truth," stirring up and persuading all men to what is true, pure, and holy.

But after being thus " girt about with truth," the Christian must put on the " breastplate of righteousness." Now, the object of a breastplate in armor is to protect the most vital part of the body ; and it ought, therefore, to be composed of materials wrought with the utmost care, and polished and tempered with the highest degree of skill, so that the weapons of the enemy may fall from it pointless and harmless at our feet. So, too, it is required of the Christian that he should toil most anxiously to prepare his breastplate of righteousness, so that when the dark and evil day may come, he may not be found utterly naked and defenceless. But while it is thus required of him to toil vigilantly and vigorously at his work, after the pattern which has been set for him by Christ, yet, in the end, he will find that neither his own strength nor his own skill will avail him to bring the " breastplate" to the measure of perfection required ; and he will rejoice to seek for the aid and direction of One who is higher, wiser, and better than he is. Then the righteousness in which he will hasten to cover himself, will be the righteousness of that One who alone is mighty to save. The Prophet of old, in describing THE CHRIST—THE SAVIOUR, affirmed of Him, that " He put on righteousness as a breast-

plate,"—and so, too, must we seek for Christ's righteousness, after having toiled to the utmost to follow the example he has left us,—we must, I say, betake ourselves to Him for the righteousness which alone can avail us in the hour of trial. Only let us thus fly to him, and thus trust in Him, and we shall possess a breastplate against which the arrows of the enemy, however admirably they may be aimed, will fall powerless as the drops from the clouds upon the roof above us.

But it has well been said, that all warfare is not open and visible; nor are the weapons employed by the enemy those only which are aimed directly at the more conspicuous and vulnerable parts. The "girdle" may be absolutely necessary to consolidate the armor, and the "breastplate" may protect the heart, but yet suares may be set for the FEET, so that he who treads heedlessly may be entangled in his walk, and therefore the soldiers of the Cross are required to have their "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace."

A Christian, my brethren, may be entirely sincere in his profession; he may confide in his Redeemer's righteousness, and not in his own—yet his Christian consistency may be often broken in upon, and his advancement in divine life impeded, unless he be cautious to take with him, wherever his feet may carry him, the spirit and temper of the Gospel of peace.

The Gospel we know is a Gospel of peace in more senses than one. It speaks peace from God to man,

and it is the principle of unity and the bond of peace between man and man. It proclaims God's readiness to forgive, and sets forth the terms of reconciliation. It calls upon its professors to "follow peace always" and by "all means," in our families, in the Church, and in the world.

I only ask, then, that the Christian should take with him in all his walks and conversation, the true and full spirit of the "Gospel of peace," and I am sure of his rising superior to those sordid, selfish, and all-contracting feelings which act upon religious character as the frost upon the opening blossom, and are everywhere blighting the buds and the ripening fruits of human charity. Not only so, but he will have, also, that sense of peace which results from the consciousness of the security in which he moves, who reposes his trust always on the everlasting arm of the One mighty to save; he walks amid thorns and briers, over traps and pitfalls as one who is SECURELY SHOD, and feels that he is in no danger from the treacherous character of the soil on which he treads; "for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."

I come next to that part of a Christian's armor which is, if possible, even more important than the girdle, the breastplate, or the covering for the feet. "Above all," says the Apostle, "take the SHIELD OF FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The great enemy, my brethren, with whom we have to contend, is provided

with instruments of attack, differing in their character and in the effect which they produce, according to the uses to which they are applied; and he always applies them with the most exquisite skill. Some of these weapons, from their more dangerous and penetrating power, are expressively called "fiery darts." From the attacks of these no believer must ever expect to be entirely free. The evil heart, leading to doubt and distrust, and to the most plausible sophistry to excuse the strong leadings of its wicked passions—this evil heart, however it may be disciplined, can never be rooted out or destroyed as long as life continues to be a season of trial. Now, it is through this evil heart that the enemy finds room to aim his keenest shafts. At the moment that the slightest circumstance occurs to shake our trust in God, he takes instant hold on the advantage to press his exquisitely skilled attacks. We have only, then, my brethren, to watch with unslumbering eye the secret workings of our own hearts, and as soon as we are able to discover the very slightest temptation to doubt that revelation which God has made of Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—to doubt the severity of the Divine displeasure against sin, or to distrust, on the other hand, the readiness of God to forgive and to accept the sinful, then let us promptly realize the danger to which we are exposed, and let us retreat at once behind our "shield of faith;" then, as fiery as may be the darts with which our enemy may continue to assail us, there is no fear but that they will all be quenched, and fall

powerless on our right hand and on our left. But then the faith through which we are thus secure must be implicit and unbounded. We must learn to trust God with all our souls. We are never for one moment to harbor either doubt or suspicion. We are to repose in the fullest and most confiding assurance that He, who has made us and always preserved us, can do better for us than we can do for ourselves. Far different, yea, very far, must our faith be from that which too often passes current in the world; a mere listless, heartless, negative, uncontrolling notion, which, so far from offering any effectual resistance to the arrows of the enemy, is sure to yield and be borne away by the first vigorous assault that is made upon it. The faith we need is that which keeps us steadily in the view of the All-gracious Disposer of our lot; and while it enables us to see and feel how completely our thoughts and doings are known by God, so, too, does it enable us to trace the cause of all present evils to that sinful and rebellious nature which needs to be disciplined and weaned from its idols, and brought to the true and living source of its happiness. It enables us to see that when the Father chastens the children of His providing care with earthly sorrow, it is only because He loves them. And it enables us, too, to see that as our exalted Saviour has redeemed us from the present evil world, so, too, is He ever ready in His loving-kindness to succor all those who are tried and tempted; and to assure us, in the fulness of His compassion, that there is no stain of guilt so deep that it cannot



be washed out by His blood, and no aggregate of iniquity so weighty that He cannot and will not endure it on our behalf. All of these things our faith sets before us in a light so clear, so vivid, and so strong, that our souls are raised superior to every present evil, and made more than conquerors over every foe to their peace. Thus it is that our faith becomes the impenetrable SHIELD, against which no darts of the wicked, however fiery or poisoned with malice, shall ever be able to prevail.

But I must pass on to the next piece in the perfect armor in which God offers to clothe the Christian. "Take," says St. Paul, "the helmet of salvation." The apostle will himself explain his meaning more fully if we will refer to a corresponding passage in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, where he writes, "and for an helmet THE HOPE of salvation." The Christian's hope of salvation is then the helmet, which, so long as he keeps it bright and strong, no sword shall ever cleave nor arrow penetrate. Like the breastplate that covers the heart, it is made up of the perfect and unyielding righteousness of Christ, and it rests on the word of Him who cannot lie, on the promise of Him who cannot deceive, and on the oath of Him who can never forget nor fail.

We come now to the last piece with which the Apostle exhorts us to be provided as an instrument of defence and means of safety: "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Yes, soldiers of the cross, if you would indeed be victorious in the arduous and awful conflict to which

you are called, you must learn to wield the same weapon which was used by the great Captain of your salvation in His well-known contest with the prince of the power of the air and the leader of the hosts of darkness. This sword has come from the arsenal of heaven, and is of celestial temper and power; it was wrought by God himself, and it is impossible that any weapon brought against it should prove stronger or better for the uses to which we are required to apply it.

The sword of the Spirit IS THE WORD OF GOD, and this sword must every Christian learn to use. You observe that the Christian must not only read "the word," but he must accustom himself to apply it to all the ever-varying necessities of his life, to the claims of business, and the seductive calls of pleasure. Weak as he may be in himself, if he will only study the true power with which this sword of the spirit was designed to arm him, he will have nothing to fear, although the combined hosts of hell were to direct all their concentrated efforts of malignity, subtlety, and power against him.

You are to go forth to the fight against principalities and powers of darkness with this sword of the Spirit ever ready for use, and your heart ever ready to be lifted up in prayer; then will the strength of the God of Hosts be yours, and you will hear His voice whispering those blessed words: "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. Yea, I will help thee—yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Such, then, is the armor with which the believer must stand clothed as in a panoply of strength, if he would withstand even to the end of the evil day of life; and if, after the enemies of his salvation have directed against him their fiercest assaults, and after he has done all that life was charged with, he would still be found standing.

My brethren, the period of our warfare is called by the Apostle an "EVIL DAY," and an evil day will the best and strongest of us most assuredly find it. Life is at the best a checkered and uncertain scene; everywhere subject to change and disappointment. Bright and beautiful as the morning sun may be, yet before the noon the horizon may be overcast with clouds, and the evening sky veiled in darkness and in gloom. To-day, the blessings of Providence may be descending upon us in an uninterrupted and unmingled stream, and we may be floating upon a current so placid and so noiseless, that we are scarcely sensible of our progress. But, how sudden and how sad are the changes which are perpetually coming over scenes like these. Calamity, sorrow, and sickness take the place of joy, gladness, and health. "Beauty is changed to ashes, the oil of joy into mourning, and the garment of praise into the spirit of heaviness!" As the aspects of the heavens are clouded and changed, so does the Providence of God change the hearts and the faces of men. There is no possible condition of our being, and no vicissitude in the ever-varying phases of our lot which does not bring with it circumstances to test our Christian

vigilance, and the steadfastness of our faith. It is precisely at such seasons of trial, whether in the deceitful calm of prosperity, or in the sinking of our spirits under adversity, that the assaults of the enemy are most likely to be made. If, then, we would that our hearts should stand fast and firm, no matter how thickly the darts of the DREADED ONE may be falling around us, let us feel that we cannot sustain or keep OURSELVES, but that there is One, and He the Almighty, who can and will preserve us, if we will only employ the means of safety to which He points us. God provides the armor, but we must put it on. God provides the armor; but if we suffer it to lie unused by us, and trust to the chance of arming ourselves when the hour of conflict arrives, we may discover too late that the fiery darts of the Evil One cannot be escaped from by the careless and slumbering soldier, and that they will enkindle a flame which can never be quenched. "Put on therefore" in season, the "whole armor of God," and be not, I conjure you, the less anxious to clothe yourself with it, only because you do not yet feel the necessity for it. Remember, that the "wiles" of your insidious foe may at this moment be exerted, and his devices extending themselves on all sides of you; he may now be busy weaving the web which is to enthrall you, and you may find yourself encircled and fatally entrapped when you least suspect it. Remember, too, that the armor of Christ once put on, must never again be put off while life lasts; but every part must be kept bright and sound, and you must ever be on

your guard to defend, for your enemy is ever on the watch to attack. By day and by night must your preparation be complete. Like the builders of the temple, in the olden time, you must work by day as if you were never secure from harm, and at night must you repose with your armor on, and your drawn sword at your side, lest in the unsuspecting and unguarded hours of darkness, Satan should inflict a deadly blow. Nor must you ever hope to lay aside your watchfulness, until the God of your salvation shall send His messenger to tell you that your warfare is accomplished, and that He is waiting to welcome you to the home of eternal triumph which He has prepared for you!

But now, my brethren, apart from figures of speech, or metaphorical illustration, permit me to say with all plainness, that the design of St. Paul was to teach us, that the great, all-controlling, elevating principles of our religion must be so completely embraced by us, and so entirely adopted as our habitual and universal rule of life, that every eye should see that we go forth to every duty and every enjoyment under their protecting influence. They must encase, as it were, our whole being; but at the same time, sit upon us so easily and gracefully as to free us from all stiffness and restraint. The outward and celestial habit which is thus exhibited, must indicate the form and shape which the inward spirit has assumed. It must be the index of its highest feelings and purest and best sensibilities. My brethren, it is only when the principles of our

religion, have thus become, as it were, identified with our whole being, so that they can never again be separated from us, that we can hope to move onward to our long home, unharmed by the attacks of temptation, before which so many thousand of our fellow-beings are hourly falling to rise no more. It is only when thus influenced that the dark storm of earthly affliction will beat upon us in vain; and the heavier that the blows are made to fall, so much the more will our powers of resistance be increased. While the bitter tears of anguish rise in the eye of the bereaved, so, too, will the clearest, strongest, most beautiful, and most consoling thoughts come thronging into our hearts as so many bright messengers of love, from the God of all truth and all consolation.

Since, therefore, death is an enemy whose fatal dart is ever poised before us; since sin is the foe whose poisoned arrow is ever fitted to the string; and since Satan is the seducing spirit, who never relaxes his vigilance in watching and plotting to bring you within the power of evil,—oh, then, if you would be safe, hasten to clothe yourself in “the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand!”





### THE CRUCIFIXION.

*“ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”*

*Luke 23d, 25th.*

**T**HIS, my brethren, is the language of consolation, not of command. It is an expression of exquisite tenderness, not of stern reproof. Our Lord had been arrested by the minions of perverted power; He had passed through the mockery of a public trial; He had been cruelly derided; He had been inhumanly scourged; and was now passing from the hall of justice, to encounter a cruel and ignominious death; He was faint from the oppressive burden of the cross they had compelled Him to bear; and He was stained and dripping with the blood from His lacerated body. In this extreme of misery He turned to look upon the lawless and inflamed mob which followed Him, when among them He recognized some of His own faithful female followers, bathed in tears. Always alive to the sufferings of humanity, He appeared for the moment regardless of His own sorrows, and in the warmth of His commiseration, He endeavored to alleviate,

by diverting their grief. Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but command your tears and your fortitude for the trials that await you, from the storm that now lowers over your devoted city. No, my brethren, our Lord forbids us not to weep for him. No, it can never be that He in whom our nature was perfect—He who knew all the sympathies and sorrows of humanity—He who Himself so pathetically deplored the desolation of the City of the Temple—He who “saw Jerusalem,” and wept over it—He who bedewed with His tears the tomb of His friend—He who, while He hung in the cold agony of death upon the cross, was still thoughtful of the necessities of His bereaved and wailing mother—it cannot be that He would wish to extinguish the sensibilities of the soul! It was natural, my brethren, that the daughters of Jerusalem should weep, when they were called to witness the sufferings and sad destiny of Him who had lived only to bless them; who had trained their children for Heaven; who had restored them from disease and rescued for them from death their fathers and friends, their husbands and brothers. And it is natural for us, too, to be sorrowful, when we bring fairly before our minds these melancholy circumstances. When we reflect upon the awful sufferings and death of the Son of God; when we remember the high errand of love upon which He came in the garb of humanity; when we consider His pure and harmless life; and then, when we travel back in imagination to the scene of His sufferings, and behold Him in the garden of Gethsemane, with a frame dis-



torted and convulsed by agony ; when we see Him betrayed by a wretched hireling in the person of His own familiar friend—one who had been cherished in His bosom, and should have been unto Him as a brother ; when we witness his dignified endurance of the scoffs and contumely, the insults and cruelty of His infuriated enemies ; when we see Him condemned to death by the very judge who had declared Him guilty of no crime ; when we see His temples pierced and lacerated with the thorns with which, in unfeeling derision, they had crowned His brow ; when we see Him drenched in His own blood, and staggering under the weight of the cross they had laid upon Him ; when we see Him unresistingly extended upon that cross, and His hands and His feet transfixed with nails ; when we hear the piercing tones with which, in anguish, He prayed to His Father ; when, I say, we witness all this—when we see the excruciating tortures of the man, endured with the sublime tranquillity of a God, it is natural for us to be sorrowful ! But then it is not meet, my brethren, that these mournful considerations should entirely possess our souls, for the sufferings of the Son of God are ended ! Our great Emanuel has triumphed gloriously ! It was not, however, until He had robbed death of its sting ; it was not until He had deprived the grave of its victory ; it was not until He had bound in everlasting chains the powers of darkness, that he exclaimed in rapture, “It is finished !”

In all the majesty of His own unaided greatness,

Christ achieved the work of our redemption. He despoiled His enemies and wrought out a pardon for the offending children of men, while he upheld the pillars of Jehovah's throne, and preserved the harmony of Jehovah's attributes. He then ascended with a retinue of adoring angels to His own throne in the heavens. He forever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Yea, my brethren, as a returning Conqueror, with all His captive and ransomed millions, He entered heaven's everlasting doors, while love ineffable beamed from His father's face, and ten thousand hallelujahs sent forth in loud harmony, rang through the eternal regions. We will, then, no longer weep for Him, but we may weep for *ourselves* and for *our children*.

We will separate our thoughts and affections from the occupations and pursuits of the world, and we will strive to form some proper conception of the dark enormity, of the mysterious nature of sin. We will endeavor to realize the deep malignity which must attach to offences against an infinitely holy God, when it was necessary to expiate them by so infinite a sacrifice. And then, my brethren, we will in faithful review assemble around us our numberless deficiencies, our sins of infirmity, and our sins of presumption, and we will weep for ourselves.

If, my brethren, we would but reflect upon the graces which shone so resplendently in the Son of God; His meekness, His humility, His forgiving temper, His boundless charity, His ardent desire to promote the happiness of men, and His inextinguishable zeal

to extend the glory of God: and then, if we will but be faithful to our own hearts, and seriously consider how much of impurity and imperfection has been associated with our very best services;—how often we have relaxed the vigilance that became us; how often we have suffered ourselves to be engrossed with the cares and the pursuits of this world, with its wealth and its pleasures that perish, and its honors that fade away; how often we have slumbered in indolence and inglorious sloth, when we should have been active in the duties that fairly awaited us; when, my brethren, we consider how entirely we have fallen short of our duty to ourselves, our fellow-men, and to God—oh! when we look back upon the days that are forever gone, and compare what we are with what we might have been, when we compare what we have done with what we might have accomplished,—who is there of us who would not weep for himself?

But we will weep not only for ourselves, we will look abroad upon the face of human society, and we will weep for the children of our common nature. As disciples of the Son of God, will we weep over the infatuation which would seem to have possessed so many of the great family of men with regard to their immortal interests. Yea, we may well mourn over the contempt and indifference with which they receive the great salvation that has been purchased for them! Yes, we will mourn, when we reflect upon the weight of punishment which might justly fall from the hands of a righteous and merciful God

upon the heads of those who have added to the criminality of violating His law, the guilt, too, of despising the saving provisions of His Gospel of Grace!

My brethren, the voice of nature in every breast, and the history of man in every age, will tell us of his mournful infirmity; of a perpetual tendency to evil, of sad debasement, and of the most positive and wilful criminality. Now, if there be any settled and immutable principle of right and wrong, then it is certain that no creature, disfigured by crime and pollution, can ever expect to be received into that kingdom whose laws proceed from a Being of infinite purity and perfection. A perfect law must require a perfect obedience; and whatever falls short of obedience is crime. It is, then, for the hosts of criminals around us of every sex, age, and degree, who are without remedy and without refuge from the frowns of insulted Justice, to think of these things!

My brethren, it is for each one and all of us to think of these things, because we must see and feel that upon each and every one of us, according to all the conclusions we can draw from the dictates of nature and the perfections of God, must the sentence of guilt and condemnation be pronounced, unless we will consent to avail ourselves of some interposition of infinite mercy in our behalf. The stern and unyielding law of right is frowning over us, and from every suggestion of reason we turn away in trembling and in doubt. We see that a measure

of obedience is required, to which no mortal can hope to rise; and that we must be left to the wretchedness of guilt, and the rigorous exactions of justice. We see that sorrow for the consequences which are to follow upon crime, are nowhere deemed sufficient to amend a violated law. Much less can such sorrow entitle us to transcendent rewards from the Lawgiver. We see from the very imperfection of our nature, from which our sins originate, that our repentance, too, must necessarily be imperfect and incomplete, and can never, therefore, be rested upon to satisfy the demands of infinite perfection. God alone can reveal to us how the violated provisions of His perfect law may be satisfied, and yet His immutable truth sustained. He has so revealed Himself, my brethren. He has so interposed in behalf of His frail and erring creatures. He has remitted nothing which was due to His inexorable justice; but he has consented to an equivalent which, in power, is far more than equal to the sacrifice of all created beings, throughout all time.

It was God, in the form of man, who redeemed us from the curse of the Law. It was His own Almighty arm that brought us salvation.

Such, my brethren, is the mighty mystery of our redemption; and who now shall penetrate into the secret counsels of the Almighty, and impiously presume to say that it is not so? There is surely nothing in the idea of Deity that confounds our powers of belief; but there is everything that sur-

passes our power of comprehension. And why may not the same self-existing Spirit, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, whose divine essence is necessarily one, but whose ubiquity is unquestionable; who may and does exist in all forms, or in no form—why, I say, may not that same all-creating and all-controlling Spirit, in His dispensations towards our race, assume, for His own blessed purposes of mercy, the human form? Or why may He not, for other purposes of mercy, manifest Himself in three distinct characters, and require our worship according to that manifestation? I will only say, my brethren, that this scheme of salvation is inseparably connected with the whole tenor and texture of our written revelation, and that all attempts to deduce any other form of Christianity from the Bible must involve us in the most inextricable difficulty and confusion: difficulties infinitely greater than those from which, in their proud and disdainful sense of independence, men vainly seek to free themselves.

Wonderful indeed, my brethren, in every view of it, is the stupendous sacrifice which your pious feelings have this day assembled you to commemorate. Wonderful indeed is the vast purpose of the Saviour's death, when it is considered in connection with all time, past, present, and to come, and if it be confined to this world of beings only. But who can say that our imperfect knowledge embraces all the relations of this stupendous ransom? Who can say but this world of fallen creatures may be the very lowest in the scale of created intelligences, and that the

emotions which this manifestation of the Saviour's love has awakened in us, may not at the same moment be acknowledged by endless millions of far higher orders of spirits, in a perpetual ascending series? Who can say but that angels, and principalities, and powers may at this moment be bending in deep humiliation before the memorials of the Saviour's sacrifice; and while they too, under a sense of their insufficiency, commemorate His death, they too seek for their share in the benefits of His atonement, and thus to secure some further advancement in a career of spiritual exaltation and glory! But however this may be, and whatever may be the effect of Christ's redemption upon other and distant worlds, we at least know that the Scriptures speak of the knowledge of our scheme of salvation having been disseminated among higher orders of intelligence. This is enough to bespeak its dignity and vast importance. Let us not therefore seek, in petulance and pride, to be wise above what is written; but let us rather wait, in meekness and patience, to see and understand all of its bearings and vast results at that final and glorious consummation, when we shall know even as we now are known.

Such, then, was the character in which the incarnate *Word* appeared, when, prompted by His own mysterious love, He gave himself for the Church,—when He delivered Himself up to death for us all!

And to what death? Let us never forget, my brethren, that it was the death of the cross! A death which was attended with the bitterest pangs of

agony, and over which hung a cloud of darker ignominy than over any other of the punishments that the ingenious cruelty of man has ever devised to be inflicted upon the basest and most enormous crimes! It was a death that, as the great Roman orator has most emphatically declared, deserved to be forever banished from the eyes, the ears, and the very imaginations of mankind.

Often before this had God lifted up His voice, and that an awful and a startling voice, to proclaim the hatefulness of sin in His sight. But how faint and feeble were all His previous manifestations, compared with the overwhelming testimony that burst upon the trembling world from the hill of Calvary! Not the desolating plagues of Egypt—not the miraculous fires that fell upon the polluted cities of the plain—not all of the waters of the deluge that covered a guilty world—evinced so fearfully to mortals the great Jehovah's hatred of sin, as one single drop of the blood which was shed upon the cross. Could all the cries of all that have ever perished under the just judgment of an avenging God—yea, could all the cries of all the souls lost, that are at this moment lifting up their voices of wailing in the dark prisons of the condemned—could they all, I say, be at this moment combined into one wild piercing shriek of anguish, it would not strike upon my heart with half such convincing power to satisfy me of God's righteous abhorrence of sin; no, it would not appal me half so much as that cry which burst from the Saviour God amid the dark scenes of His mysterious



suffering—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

My brethren, while my mind is thus impressed and I look out upon the earth, which sin has made so full of "lamentation, and mourning, and woe;" and when, in imagination, I survey the gloomy depths of hell, where sin has kindled the unquenchable fires of remorse, anguish, and despair, I shudder at the consequences of evil and crime. But it is not until I turn to Judea, shrouded in darkness and trembling to earth's inmost recesses, while the everlasting rocks are rent, and the dark graves are opened, and I see through the gloom of the covered sun the Lord of Life and Light hanging upon the accursed tree, Oh! it is then that I realize in all its fulness the dark enormity of moral evil! It is then that I feel the odiousness, the black ingratitude and unpardonable guilt of wilful rebellion against the Giver and Ruler of our lives. Yea, it is then that I see that no blood could expiate its guilt, and no death could procure its pardon, but the blood and the death of Him who was "God manifest in the flesh." Shall we not, then, my brethren, shrink away with trembling and watchful solicitude from all contamination and from every contact with evil? Will you not consent with me to vow a vow promptly and cordially,—a vow of unqualified abhorrence and renunciation of all sin? Oh! may the everlasting Spirit of God, "without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy," enable you to resolve, and, by keeping your resolution, to show forth ceaseless praises to the God of holiness!

My brethren, when you fancy that you hear the merciful Saviour, in His absorbing devotion to the happiness of His creatures, exclaiming to the wailing mourners that surrounded His cross, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children"—let it be to your own hearts that he speaks.

From the awful hour in which the Jews invoked the blighting blood of Jesus to be upon them and upon their children, have they and their children's children, through a long and countless line, been afflicted and forsaken; an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations! It was a fearful imprecation, and most fearfully was it answered. That generation had not passed away, when such multitudes upon multitudes of that devoted people were crucified at Jerusalem, that there was no longer room for the crosses to stand beside each other; nor could they at last find wood to make as many as they wanted. Appalling fulfilment of prophecy!

The destruction of Jerusalem was but the emblem of the great day of the world, yet before us. Let us think, then, of the sins by which we have too often crucified the Son of God afresh, and let us weep for ourselves and for our children, when we think that the day is coming when not only over the land of Judea, but over the whole earth, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood; when not only the rocks of the earth shall be rent, but the powers of heaven shall be shaken; when not the bodies of a few saints shall arise, but all who

are in their graves shall come forth! when before the impious apostates of earth there shall be opened the immeasurable gulf that separates heaven from hell, and the last words of their angry Judge shall ring in their astonished ears, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" At the same time, my brethren, the awful veil in the temple not made with hands, the temple in the New Jerusalem, shall be "rent in twain," and the everlasting Jesus shall be seen in the true Holy of Holies, as the one High Priest of His people, having by the one sacrifice of Himself made eternal redemption for them that are His.

My brethren, let us think of these things for ourselves and for our children, and let us turn to Him who alone can deliver us, with weeping, and fasting, and prayer; that in another, a better, and a far loftier sense, His blood may indeed be upon our souls; that it may indeed be upon us in peace, and not in destroying wrath; yea, that His blood may be upon us and our children in all of its purifying, pardoning, and comforting influences; that it may be upon us as a mark of His covenant mercy, the token of His adopting love, so that when the destroying angel shall go forth to smite all the enemies of the Lord with an everlasting destruction from His presence, we may be passed over in triumph, as being sprinkled with the saving blood of the Lamb!





### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”*

*Colossians 3d, 1st.*



IN the Scriptures the power and proper tendency of the Christian faith to elevate its followers above the corruptions of the world is often compared to the resurrection of Christ from the grave.

In the undoubted and animating pledge which we have received of our own immortality in the rising again of the great Captain of our Salvation, we are regarded as being already above the world, as being dead with Christ unto sin, and alive with Christ unto God; as being **NEW CREATURES**, who are henceforth to live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. Thus are we constantly exhorted to direct the purest and deepest aspiration of our hearts towards our heavenly and eternal inheritance. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

Of all the subjects which can engage the powers of the human mind, its **RELIGION** is unquestionably the most important, because it relates to the imperishable soul rather than to the wasting body, and

to the eternal Creator rather than to the fading forms of creation with which He has surrounded us.

He who has once been convinced of the truth of this must surely return to the contemplation of such absorbing subjects of thought with perpetually increasing force and frequency; he must surely regard it as THAT for which everything incompatible with it must at once be sacrificed without awakening surprise, or creating any suspicion, even, of weakness or irrationality.

My brethren, if the certainty of another and a better existence than the present has been clearly revealed to us, is it not the most exalted distinction of our nature? Shall not all our best wishes be enkindled and our best powers be active in the pursuit?

Shall *man*, the lord of all this lower creation, and the heir of immortal glory, forget his truest dignity and neglect to employ his high endowment of reason when that reason might anticipate its noblest triumphs? While we leave nothing to hazard that belongs to this fleeting existence, shall we leave everything that pertains to ETERNITY to accident and chance? Oh, no! if we are all pilgrims of time, risen with Jesus from the dust and darkness and pollutions of earth, redeemed, disenthralled, and destined for the skies, then let us seek first and most anxiously those things which are above.

Let me here pray you to remark that, in the words of our text, the certainty of the resurrection of Christ is assumed as a *truth* beyond the possibility of dispute

or denial. And you will permit me to say in passing, that we cannot well conceive of anything more manifestly open to refutation, if it had been false. So, too, is it difficult to conceive of any fact in the whole wide range of historical truth which could by any possibility be fenced around by a greater amount of irrefragable testimony than is actually concentrated upon the great event which we this day commemorate.

If there be a God, He certainly never would allow the sublimest of all doctrines, and the purest and profoundest of all subjects of human faith and human hope, to be disfigured and trifled with by the cheateries of imposture. The certainties of eternity are too overpoweringly important to be allowed to rest upon vague tradition or upon the dim conjecture of philosophy, and we accordingly find that God in His mercy has added to the teaching of revelation the unyielding guarantee of one of the most completely ESTABLISHED FACTS in the whole compass of history. That great fact, thus established, established also the whole of Christianity. Brethren, it converts into certainty the sublime and transporting HOPE that every victim of death, every prisoner of the grave shall also hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. It is the stupendous FACT thus established that has fulfilled the words of prophecy, and awakened "the voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous."

It is this which has inspired the whole Christian

Church with a transporting animation, so that amid all the dispersions, and all the diversity of languages, and kindred, climes and sects, she still prolongs the joyous anthem of more than eighteen hundred years—"The Lord is risen," "The Lord is risen indeed!"

It is well and wise that this should be so, for the same causes for holy joy and spiritual triumph still remain with us, in all their force, and in all their freshness. The *certainty* of Christ's resurrection has not been in the least degree dimmed or diminished by the lapse of centuries. The ocean of time, as it rolls on its obliterating waves over the baseless structures of falsehood, has only served to render more conspicuous and more impregnable this rock of eternal Truth. It was because the doctrines of Christianity were thus supported, that it so miraculously forced its way over every obstacle that the iron power of the nations could array against it, until it triumphantly overthrew their religions, convicted their philosophers of folly, subdued the triumphant legions of haughty Rome, and clothed itself in her imperial purple! While Rome continued in splendor, Christianity, thus resting upon the mighty truth of Christ's resurrection, continued to rule and guide her spiritual hopes; and then throughout all the ages of her decline, and amid all the wasting confusion of unceasing revolutions—amid the changes of empire and the fall of nations—did Christianity still live, to triumph over the barbarism and Pagan heresies of the wild hordes of ruthless men who brutally contended for empire. Calmly, and surely, did she take possession

of each kingdom that arose in its turn. It was in this way that the Goth and the Vandal, the Hun, the Frank, the Saxon, and the Norman, yielded, each in his turn, to the resistless force of miraculous *truth*. Through gloomy ages of ignorance, and through bright times of classic refinement—through blighting reigns of religious despotism, and through seasons of liberty, civilization, and intellectual development—has Christianity, resting upon the stupendous fact of Christ's resurrection, advanced over the ruins of a thousand superstitions, and planted herself, as we now behold her, in a gigantic and gloriously illumined temple of EVERLASTING TRUTH!

I repeat it, then, that Christianity, with all its soothing and all its fearful doctrines, rests upon the certainty of the great event we this day commemorate! And then, while we consider how it has lived and advanced; how it has promoted the spiritual, intellectual, and political welfare of our race; how it has delivered us from the slavery of the sin, the debasement of superstition, and enriched us with the blessings of holiness and charity, can we for one moment suppose that it has done all this *without the Divine blessing* and without the *Divine power*, and that its wretched author now lies mouldering in the grave of the malefactor? Of all conceivable absurdities this would be the greatest!

Well, then, does it become us to join in the songs of joy, and soothing anthems of thanksgiving and praise with which the universal Church are this day offering adoration to their Divine Redeemer. "Now is Christ



risen from the dead," and because "He lives, so shall we live also." "It is appointed unto men once to die." A few more brief and hurrying seasons, and we all, my brethren, must yield to that universal law. A few more passing hours, and our voices will all be hushed in the stillness of death. The roses upon the cheek of youth; manhood in its strength, and with its fretting cares; old age with silvery locks, and its treasures of experience; all the pomp of wealth and all the glitter of station will have passed away forever. Brethren, it is a solemn reality. It is an overpowering thought. But ah! how supporting, how consoling, how enrapturing is it to know, that "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Glorious is the assurance that, although "the wages of sin *is* death, yet the GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST *our* LORD," "and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." Oh! how blessed is it to know, amid the waste and desolation of death, amid all the bereavements of our homes, and the disappointment of our brightest hopes—the blight that has fallen upon our hearts, and the tears which we have poured out like water over the memory of the loved and the lost of the earth—oh! how blessed is it to know, that "the dead shall be raised incorruptible!" that we all shall meet again; not as we parted, brethren, oppressed with care, worn with sickness, faint from grief, and faded by time, but all of us clothed with immortality and unfading glory. "Death is indeed

swallowed up in victory." "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

My brethren, these are impressive subjects of thought, and how extraordinary—how passing strange—is the practical indifference with which they are regarded by multitudes around us, who yet profess to wear the Gospel to their hearts as the charter of their immortal rights. If these doctrines were merely met as physical abstractions not bearing upon the business of this life, nor coming home to the bosoms of men in reference to their dearest hopes for eternity, we would not be surprised at the indifference with which they are regarded by thousands who would yet shudder to deny their *truth*. Of all the possible subjects which can be presented to the thoughts of men, Christianity is essentially the most PRACTICAL. It speaks directly to THE HEART, and to the most intensely anxious feelings of the heart; and through the heart it regulates the passions and controls the conduct of mankind. Christ did not descend to this earth to weep, to bleed, to die, and then to raise Himself incorruptible from the grave, only as a theme of useless wonder. It was not that He might exercise the acuteness of human intellect or feed the human mind with worthless subtleties. He did not come to fill the world with better reasoners, but rather to enrich it with better men. Christianity is no history of man's progress; it is no theory by which he may be restored to innocence and glory, but rather is it the preparation, the education, the discipline necessary to fit us

for the enjoyment of beatitudes to come. Christ did not come only to point us to the straight and narrow way that leads to the lost fields of glory, but rather was it to enlighten that path with His own unfailing light of life, and to extend His own helping arm of strength to all who, conscious of weakness, would meekly invoke His aid.

But what now has been the effect of all manifestation of boundless love, and these ceaseless efforts for our celestial training? Cast your eyes over the map of Christendom, and then turn to the regenerating and ennobling doctrines of the Gospel, and tell me, how are men influenced by God's purposes of everlasting mercy, and by the retributions which we must perceive to be reserved for the guilty and unrepenting of our race?

Alas! my friends, how terrific is the demonstration which is given of the debasing tendencies of the human heart, when we see how lamentably short and feeble is human practice, in comparison with what the elevating doctrine of our faith would have us to be! Indeed, my friends, Christianity is something more than a *name*. It has come from heaven, and it is armed with heavenly power; and if men did not resist it in their perverseness, and smother its fires by their wicked works, it would soon be seen and felt to be working widely and deeply. It would inspire our minds with an unconquerable energy in sacred purposes, and it would enrich the earth by raising to itself everywhere the most imperishable monuments of holiness, purity, and truth.

But alas! alas! how extraordinary is the anomaly which Christian lands will everywhere present, of thousands who yield their belief to the Christian records as containing truths of eternal importance, but who yet continue to live as thoughtlessly and as flagrantly negligent of all the duties of the Christian profession, as if no such controlling law of right existed!

I speak not now of *speculative infidelity*, but rather of practical disobedience. I speak of what I fear we all experimentally know—that while we are far from rejecting the sublime and all-consoling doctrines of Christianity, yet we suffer no impress to be made upon our minds and no direction to be given to our conduct by the regenerating spirit of the faith in which we profess to confide.

This, my brethren, is a common-sense view of the matter, and it has well been said that the senseless laugh of an idiot, when in the hurrying waters of a foaming and a fatal cataract, is but a feeble illustration of the infatuation which is so common around us, and which is credible only because it is so common. It could be looked upon with no other feelings than those of astonishment and sickness of heart if the contemplators of the scene were the inhabitants of some other sphere, and unacquainted with the secret springs which influence human actions.

Alas! my brethren, how else must the scenes of this world appear to those angelic beings who are the invisible spectators of our doings, when they see so many of us under the influence of the be-

wildering infatuation of which I speak! Although the curse of a broken law is hanging over us, and the frown of an angry God is lowering on us, and we are hourly tottering on the brink of eternity, yet the smile of reckless gayety sparkles in the eye, and the loud laugh of merriment bursts from the lips! and too many of us, in the thoughtlessness of guilty revelry, exhibit the spectacle of maniacs, dancing in their chains on the precipice's edge!

My brethren, it sometimes happens that the maniac, in the creative working of his disordered brain, converts the place of his confinement into a palace, his fantastic dress into royal robes, and the companions of his captivity into the attendants of his court. Tell him that you are come to release him from his confinement, and to restore him to society and to his friends, and he hears you without gratitude or pleasure, perhaps rejects with scorn your offer of deliverance; but point to the imaginary splendors which surround him, and he laughs and dances in the wild delirium of frenzied enjoyment. And know you not, my brethren, that for us an Almighty Deliverer has come down from Heaven to rescue us? He offers to open for us the prison-doors, and to give deliverance to every captive of the evil one. But so it is, that when the Deliverer thus comes, and offers to release us (victims that we are of bewildering imagination) from our degrading bondage to the powers of sensuality and sin, we turn from Him in cold contempt; refuse His offers with scornful disdain; rush again upon the seductive

joys of the world, and plunge with fresh zest into its scenes of frenzied riot! Soon, alas! with every power and faculty of mind and body absolutely enthralled amid its wild and delirious enjoyments, we lose all thought of Him the Mighty One; all recollection of His offers of mercy; of his visit of redeeming love; and of all His precious gifts of present grace and promises of future glory! Oh! there is no madness so stupid, so fatal as this!

Oh! that I could but arrest the attention of the heedless and open the eyes of the sinful, so that they might see the UNUTTERABLE RUIN in which their self-willed perversity must terminate!

Oh! that I could but induce you to listen to the persuasive voice of that celestial Messenger, who entreats with the tenderness of a Saviour's love that you would come unto Him, so that He might give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified by His spirit and saved by faith in His atoning blood!

But, alas! the power for this is not with me. I can only tell you, on the strength of God's promises of mercy to a guilty world (and may the Holy Spirit, whose province it is, carry the message with subduing power to your hearts), that no matter how far you may have wandered from your Heavenly Father's home, no matter how prodigally you may hitherto have squandered in the service of the world those talents which He intrusted to your keeping to be employed to His glory, yet, if you will but arise with Jesus from the death of sin, confess your error,

and ask for pardon in the name of His risen Son, He will not reject you—He will rather hasten to receive you with the overflowing tenderness of a Father's joy, and with the endearing expressions of a Father's forgiveness. He will invest you with the tokens of His covenant mercy; He will bring you under the sunshine of His smiles, and place you under the training of His Spirit, so as to render you meet to be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

My brethren, while death is everywhere defeating the calculations of human wisdom and advancing in cold and ghastly triumph over all human strength and human glory; while we see the beggar in his tattered covering, and the ruler of nations in robes and ermine of office; while we see the infant of days and the old man who little thought that he had fulfilled his days, all alike palsied by the blighting touch of Death, can nothing arouse us to a wise and enduring sense of our uncertain condition and absolute responsibility? Can nothing enable us to see through the blaze of enchantment the world throws around its votaries? Can nothing succeed in bringing the awful reality of eternity before our minds in all their tremendous proportions, so as to lead us to estimate things temporal at their true value? Oh, brethren, "if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above!"

As members and parts of the body of Christ, ye are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ! and it is thus that I would persuade you to think of your

high and holy calling—your true and loft destiny! It is thus that I would persuade you to maintain and manifest the character and feelings becoming the expectant of such an inheritance as is laid before you. Ah! what purity! what sanctity! what heavenly-mindedness! what true nobility of spirit, what stainless integrity of heart and character should be found in one standing in such a relationship with Divinity!

Come, then, and let us resolve that we will strive so to live, as men should live who hope soon to be with the angels, with Jesus, and the host of His redeemed, to be in the presence of our God! Yea, live hourly and continually with the land of our eternal inheritance steadily in view, as if we stood in waiting upon its borders, and knew not how soon we may be summoned to cross its charmed boundary!

Yes, brethren, “if we be risen with Christ, let us seek those things which are above.” Let us live with Heaven, our last and highest home, always in view—its inhabitants, its joys, its love, its glories—until the influence of Heaven so descends upon us as to form its temper within us; until all the tumultuous waves of this earth’s passions are calmed, and all the distracting feelings of our troubled hearts are tranquillized into that sweet and holy rest which is an emblem and foretaste of the happiness of the blessed!







### THE TRINITY.

*“Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labor do we find the things that are before us; but the things that are in Heaven, who hath searched out? And Thy counsel, who hath known, except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above?”*

*Wisdom 9th, 16th, 17th.*



ALL human knowledge is founded on belief. We must receive facts without being able to explain them; and adopt principles as of undoubted soundness, which yet, if pursued to extremes, will unsettle all truth and land us in absurdity.

Now, if this must be affirmed of everything which we call knowledge, can we expect to be relieved from the difficulty in our religious knowledge? Throughout the whole of nature, in every sphere of human investigation, there are innumerable phenomena presented, which we readily receive upon unquestioned testimony; and yet to any or all of these facts, subtle objections may be urged, which we are unable to answer, and difficulties may be presented which we pretend not to obviate. Yet we repose our confidence in these things with a tranquil and unwavering constancy. We know them as far as it is necessary for us to know them.

We reject them not as false because difficulties meet us in every view; because this may be said of all things, and some things must be true.

In religion God has revealed to us, as facts, many important truths in reference to His own nature, which He has not enabled us to account for, or explain in terms to other minds. But in this God has made no unusual exaction on our faith. We know not the essence of our own minds. We know not the union and distinction of its several faculties. We know not how it is that soul and body—united and yet distinct—make one man. We know not how our united and yet differing sensations are experienced. We know not how it is that the will controls the eye or moves the arm. We know not how it is that the vicissitudes of heat or cold are produced—how it is that bodies attract or repel each other. We know not what is matter, nor how it is that gravitation preserves the harmony of the outward universe. My brethren, we know not WHY our knowledge of nature is so confined—why it is that God did not enable us to comprehend nature in all the glory, grandeur, and beauty of her inscrutable mysteries. But this we do know, that our inability to comprehend nature in all the modes and reasons of her operation is no ground for disbelieving all the phenomena of nature; and surely we may be content to act in the moral world, and in matters of faith, precisely as we do in the natural world, and in matters of sight and sense—to receive everything which we are permitted to read and understand as coming

from God, although there may be curiosity awakened as to modes, circumstances, and degrees of knowledge, which we are utterly unable to gratify—I say that we are to receive what we can *understand* as *being revealed*—the FACT itself. More than that God does not require of us, and it is presumption in us to go beyond what He requires.

Here I will remark, that we cannot be guilty of more serious injustice than to say that Christianity requires us to believe what we cannot understand. The very language is absurd. To believe is to understand. And we assert fearlessly that Christianity never requires us to advance one single step beyond the rational dictates of that common sense with which God has endowed us.

When facts are revealed, the reasons or modes of existence connected with which are beyond our understanding, the FACTS alone are presented to our faith. Thus, in reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the responsibility of man in connection with the foreknowledge of God, or of prophecy in connection with the freedom of human actions, we are never required to quit the guidance of reason—we are never required to believe what we cannot understand. The facts themselves are presented upon the sure warrant of God's word. Their agreement with our ideas, and with the character of God, is not for us to determine, because we know nothing of the character of God. What is revealed we must receive, as we do a thousand things in nature, as so many ascertained facts. The mode is not revealed, and

what is not revealed cannot be a subject of faith. Now, my brethren, were a doctrine presented to us which we saw at once to be self-contradictory, and opposed to the clearest dictates of reason, nothing could make such a doctrine an object of faith. By no possibility can we admit that to be true which we plainly see to be false, for to admit anything contrary to our reason would be to destroy both reason and revelation. But if our assent be required to a doctrine full of meaning, and without inconsistency, undoubtedly assured in a revelation well supported, the mere circumstance of its being beyond the power of reason to follow and comprehend in all its bearings is no ground for rejecting it. In the revelation of God we believe many things which are above our reason; and so is the wide creation of God in every one of its parts above our reason; but who will therefore say that the creation of God is a contradiction, an absurdity, and inconsistent with reason?

In material nature it is utterly impossible that those objects which we perceive and know to be distinct should at the same time be one. But there is no analogy whatever between such a proposition and the simple revealed fact that the Divine attributes are manifested to the world in three distinct characters, a threefold manifestation of the same one, eternal, indivisible essence of Divinity. This is a proposition to be deduced clearly, as we think, not from a few insulated passages, but from the whole tenor of Scripture and the whole scheme of Christianity. It therefore demands our assent. But the mode

of its existence is beyond the power of our poor conception. Confusion follows every proud effort to fathom the mysteries of the Godhead. "He maketh darkness His secret place, His pavilion round about Him with dark waters, and thick clouds to cover Him."

So much, then, for mysteries in nature as leading us to expect mysteries in religion. We would go on to say, however, that we are far from admitting that every seeming difficulty in religion is a real difficulty. Some things are by some minds clothed in hues far darker than they really are, and others are presented in lights far brighter than they should be; in this way unmeaning words and unwarrantable notions are oftentimes added to the Scriptures, and they are charged with saying what they never meant to say. It sometimes happens that men who are far from rejecting the Scriptures, yet think that they do them an essential service by bringing down all their high mysteries to the level of human comprehension. Now nothing can be more dangerous than this habit of explaining things away,—of wresting the written lines from their obvious meaning, to fix upon them a more rational interpretation. The sacred authors are not to have a forced interpretation put upon them only to suit our notions. In our ignorance and conceit we are not to make the Scriptures speak what we please, in opposition to what they really deliver.

The obscurities of the Scriptures may be designed for the moral exercise of our understandings. We are to keep close to God's word. We are not presumptuously to exalt our reason against our Maker.

The obscurities of the Scriptures may be left so for the wisest motives. In the scheme of Providence we everywhere perceive the strongest evidence of designing wisdom and goodness; and yet are there not many things in nature, the utility of which we perceive not? Yet we never think of saying that these things are not the work of God; we never doubt but they are designed for good ends. And so, too, in the system of revelation; the general plan, in its evident bearing, is adapted to promote the Divine honor, and human virtue and happiness. But how some particular points may conduce to these ends we see not, yet we are not to doubt that these are parts of a system confessedly wise and good. And we are not to expect to comprehend all the hidden connections and references in God's moral government, which must extend to eternity, and may at this moment be extending to worlds far beyond our sight and knowledge.

My brethren, is it not the most unreasonable of all things to refuse to believe anything until we can know the reason and end of everything? Is it not the most revolting irreverence scornfully to reject the teaching of our Creator, only because we cannot understand all His reasons and trace His vast designs? With suicidal infatuation do you plunge into the dark, fathomless, raging, shoreless waters of unbelief, only because you are unable to measure infinity with the finite line of human reason?

But we must come now to lay down this truth, that there is no essential doctrine of the Christian Scrip-

tures which is without its practical influence and purpose. We will illustrate this by inquiring into the importance of the sacred manifestations of the Deity in the doctrine of the Trinity. Is it a mere theological subtlety, requiring us to prostrate the understanding without any influence upon the heart? On the contrary, my brethren, it is a discovery of the true, holy, and eternal character of God; and it just rests with you to determine whether the revelation of that character be not calculated to exert the most momentous influence over the whole moral existence of him who receives it. And it strikes me that to exhibit the Christian revelation without this doctrine is to rob it of its meaning and glory. It is the lifeless skeleton without the soul. Now, the great design of all revelation is to draw back rebellious man to his Creator. It is to rescue him from the impure fascinations of the outward world—from the debasement of his senses. It is to restore health to his diseased heart, to restore him to the image of his Creator, in which he was made, and to bind him by every holy and lofty association to a pure, heartfelt, and eternal allegiance. The man, then, who receives the Deity as I take it He is revealed in the Scriptures, finds himself encircled by the joys of everlasting love. He perceives God to be his Father, his Saviour, and unfailing Comforter. He perceives that rebellion had exposed him to its frightful penalties, but the Father has not abandoned him without hope to this merited forfeiture. That FATHER yields nothing of His jealous and inexorable regard for His own honor,

but reveals a plan of mercy which, while it infinitely transcends all our notions of clemency, overpowers us with its picture of the terrific enormity of human guilt. The Son is next seen assuming our nature; and while wielding all the high attributes of Divinity—omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence—consents in the form of humanity to present Himself as a spotless lamb for the sacrifice. And after this manifestation of the requirements of justice, after this exhibition once made of the eternal connection between sin and misery, God delights to dispense the fullest and freest mercy. He invites the degraded victims of transgression and the rebellious outcasts of every degree;—yes, they are now most tenderly invited to cast away their guilt, and their fears, and their hatred of the divine government, and to come back as repentant prodigals to the bosom of the Father, to be there welcomed and cleansed through the Spirit, and pardoned through the Son—to be reinstated in all the high privileges of children—to be made nothing less than joint heirs with Christ in the vast heritage of eternal felicity.

The Son is thus seen to be our Mediator, Saviour, and Intercessor: “The way, the truth, and the life.” We joyfully repose the burden of our sins and sorrows upon His atonement, strength, and life-giving virtue, and are sustained both as to the past, the present, and the future. In His hands the honor of God and the safety of man are alike secured. The claims of the law-giver, and the hopes, peace, and pardon of the offender, are equally and effectually recognized.



But although the full atonement has thus been offered, and a complete reconciliation effected between God and man, through the mediation of the Son, yet we are assured that we in whose behalf this mediation is instituted, would not, through the ignorance, pride, and degrading passions of our nature, accept these conditions of safety, did not the Holy Spirit pour His illuminating influence upon our understanding, and thus soften and subdue our hearts.

The influence of the Spirit is just as essential to our purity and eternal welfare as the love of the Father, and the mediation of the Son. Indeed, the whole efficacy of the Gospel is universally ascribed to the exciting, soothing, and restraining influence of the Spirit. The rule of religion is built up and sustained in the human heart, "not by power or might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is the Spirit which is forever working its way into the dark recesses of the bosom of guilt, and bringing forth there the fruits of faith, contrition, and holiness. It is the Spirit alone that can arrest attention amid the boisterous cries of passion, sooth the warring affections, open the history of redeeming love to the soul, stimulate it to prayer, lead it to obedience, and possess it with the abiding conviction that nothing can be so unspeakably precious to the wants, sorrows, and flickering inconstancy of the heart as the gift of Christ.

My brethren, how practical is the manifestation of the Deity! How intelligent, how pure, how consolatory, becomes our intercourse with such a God!

How essential to our happiness is this Father of unbounded love! How efficient to sooth the wild tumults which the reproaches of conscience create, is the record of the great atonement which the Son has made! How deep and healing the aspirations of prayer, while the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is breathing His whispers of peace to the subdued and sanctified heart! And tell me, now, of what part of this glorious exhibition of the Godhead would you rob us?

Let each one consult his own heart, with its weakness and its wants, its guilt and sadness, and then turn to this doctrine, interwoven as it is with the very texture of Christianity, and we fear not for the reply. Talk not to me of idle dogmas. Talk not of a dry and unprofitable subtlety. Can that teaching be unimpressive and nothing worth which unfolds to us the effective character of the Deity, and the unutterable value of the human soul?—which shows us the tender anxiety of God to rescue that soul from the perils of its degraded condition?—which shows us the fearful malignity of moral evil, and the sinner's sure refuge from its final desolation?

Ah! my brethren, let us be content to receive joyfully the great facts of revealed truth, although all reasons and methods of being, beyond those facts, are hid from our view. Yes, touched by the affecting tenderness of God—oppressed with the sense of guilt, weighed down by sorrow and convinced of the insufficiency of the world to make us happy, let us seek for safety and repose under the almighty Shield which is offered to us by the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!*



### THE SIN UNTO DEATH.

*“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.”*

*1st John 5th, 16th.*



THE explanations which have sometimes been given to this obscure passage of Scripture are so manifestly unsound and illiberal as to strike at the root of all moral responsibility, and destroy the first principles of human charity. Although it may not always be consistent with the modesty of true wisdom to teach with positiveness upon the mysterious and obscure allusions of the sacred writers, yet will it ever be the privilege of sound learning to expose the falsehood and absurdity of such interpretations of narrow ignorance as would cast a shade over the glory of the divine character, darken the human understanding, and chill the benevolence of the heart. Much of the obscurity to be found in the Scriptures is, no doubt, to be referred to their allusions to local circumstances, ever-changing customs, and to the peculiarities of a miraculous age. The difficulty which my text presents to the minds of ordinary readers is a

remarkable instance of this sort. In inquiring for the true meaning of the verse, it will be my object to show you that it has no reference or connection with eternal life or eternal death, but was written in allusion to the miraculous gifts which were bestowed upon the first preachers of the Gospel, and through which they were enabled to remove the temporal punishments of sickness and suffering with which sin was visited.

“There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it.” There is something terrific and appalling in the words, to every mind that makes a literal and universal application of every sentence of Holy Writ. What is the tremendous crime, they instinctively ask, which renders condemnation unavoidable, and to which the cries and prayers of Christian sympathy are utterly denied? That it cannot be any of the most notorious and daring of offences against the inflexible rectitude of the Divine law, or the most sacred institutions of human society of which we can conceive, is evident from the fact that some of the best men that have lived in every age of the world have been guilty of some of these crimes, but upon repentance and reformation have been forgiven, and planted as guiding lights to safety in the path to glory. There is no human being to be found in whose bosom the blossoms of innocence have not been blighted, or in whose life the rigors of virtue were never relaxed. And I lay it down as a maxim irresistibly clear from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, that there is no sin, how-

ever malignant in itself or aggravated by the circumstances of its commission, that shuts the door of the Divine mercy against the sinner, or excludes him from the possibility of pardon. The consequence which I deduce from this maxim is, that it is the duty of every Christian to pray for the forgiveness and salvation of every sinner, whatever may be the number or magnitude of his sins. It is impossible, therefore, to suppose that the Apostle ever meant to teach that the prayers of Christians were to be withheld from sinners. From a doctrine so inhuman, so uncharitable and blighting, the most pernicious and destructive consequences would ensue. Harmony and sweet peace would bid adieu to the habitations of men. The flames of animosity and bitter hatred, fanned by the breath of selfish conceit and spiritual pride, would rage through all the departments of human society. Every sect and division of Christian men, limiting the orthodoxy of belief and the purity of practice within the narrow circle of their own self-erected standards, would soon come to regard all others as hopeless and abandoned sinners and apostates ; and instead of pouring forth prayers from hearts full of the tenderness of Christian charity for their reformation and eternal felicity, they would rather, by the warrant of their doctrine, consign them, in the narrowness of blighting self-complacency, to the woes of everlasting perdition.

My brethren, there can be no question but that some feelings of this kind have served to diffuse their malignant poison of exclusiveness and secret hate

through the ranks of Christendom. It is from this cause that we have so often beheld humanity bleeding as a victim on the altar of cruelty, and the fair face of charity stained and bloated with the blood of persecution.

But the conclusion is instantly and irresistibly received, that no doctrine productive in the remotest degree of any such effects can ever be derived from that religion whose emblem and whose only end is charity, which requires us to live like one wide family, bound together in the bands of indissoluble love, and preserving always the "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

If, then, the Apostle did not mean to say that any human crime was so deadly as to place the wretched victim beyond the reach of everlasting mercy, as it has been purchased by the saving blood of Christ, and if he did not mean to forbid or check the generous impulse of nature which leads us to seek by prayer to enlist Almighty strength in aid of human weakness, and to secure pardon for human infirmity, then the question recurs as to the true meaning of the text.

I think, my brethren, that no one can read the chapter from which the words are taken, with judgment and candor, and with a constant recollection of the miraculous cures which were performed through the efficacy of prayer at that period of the Church, but must perceive that the Apostle is not treating of *future salvation*, but only of the recovery of sinners from such diseases as were at that day the direct consequences of sin.

“Thy sins be forgiven thee” was our Lord’s usual form of expression when, by the instantaneous exertion of His Divine power, He healed the sick, and by which we are not to understand spiritual deliverance, so much as the remission of a temporal punishment of sin. The words of the text, “let him ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death,” are precisely parallel with those of St. James (5th chap., 15th verse), “The prayer of Faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.” It is expressly promised that where the prayer of the ministers of Christ was attended by that faith in God, which, as a miraculous and extraordinary gift, was capable of performing the most difficult and extraordinary things, even to the removing of mountains, it would always be successful in raising up the sick from their beds of suffering. In connection with these words from St. James, it is also said, “And if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” Meaning clearly such sins as God is pleased promptly to chastise with bodily disease, as He did the members of the Church at Corinth, who on account of their disorderly abuse of the Lord’s supper were rendered sick and weakly, and many passed into the sleep of death.

Wherever, therefore, the sickness was in the way of chastisement, delivery from the sickness was an evidence of God’s forgiveness. While I thus strive to illustrate the nature of the deliverance which was at that time effected by the prayer of Faith, I cannot leave the fifth chapter of St. James’s Epistle without

seizing upon the occasion to draw your attention to that ancient ceremony of anointing with oil there spoken of, and from which a large branch of the Christian Church have drawn their "sacrament of extreme unction." It was a very ancient custom of Eastern nations to employ oil in the cure of diseases, and it would seem that the Apostle directed the natural remedy to be continued, with a constant reference to the Lord of Life, from whom alone the blessing was to come. But I must profess myself utterly unable to discover what foundation can be found to build up a perpetual sacrament from an accidental usage, only connected with extraordinary powers of healing the sick—a sacrament now deemed proper only for the DYING—from a ceremony employed to PREVENT PERSONS FROM DYING. How, I say, it is possible to derive authority for using EXTREME unction from an unction which was so far from being extreme, that it was expressly used to prolong life.

But I must return to our text. "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." These words, we repeat, have a direct reference to minor sins, which were visited with bodily sufferings. "There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it!" And what sin was that? Most probably, brethren, any sin to which the punishment of death was attached by the laws of the land. Christ did not come to arrest the laws of Cæsar, and the Apostle says no more than that he who, by the enormity of his offence, had forfeited



his life to the laws of his country, had no warrant for expecting deliverance, even through the miraculous prayer of faith. Or else it might have reference to the deadly sin of apostasy from the faith of Christ, and if God saw fit to visit the crime with sickness unto death, the Apostle only says that he knows not if it would be right in them to pray that he might be continued on the earth, only as an instrument of persecution and mischief to the Church. This I consider sufficient for the proper understanding of the passage. It is enough for us to know that it has a local and peculiar bearing,—has reference exclusively to a miraculous condition of things, and can by no possibility be made to apply to after ages or present persons.

Some interpreters of the Scriptures have supposed the “sin unto death” here spoken of to be the same as the sin against the Holy Ghost, to which a most fearful penalty was annexed by our Lord. But the error of this will be manifest when we remember that the sin against the Holy Ghost, as our Saviour states it, consisted in the daring impiety of making a wilful and blasphemous imputation of those stupendous miracles which they knew to be performed by the power of God, to the power of the devil. It was an obstinate and presumptuous resistance of the highest evidence God could give in support of the truth. It was a crime committed by Scribes and Pharisees, by Jews and Heathens, but never was, and never can be, committed by a Christian. But the sin unto death spoken of in the text is said to

have been committed by a brother—that is, by one that had embraced the Gospel, had been baptized, and made a public profession of the religion of Christ. And hence I conclude that the sin to which the text refers is altogether a distinct thing from the sin against the Holy Ghost. The one has reference to temporal sickness and death; for the other forgiveness was not to be expected, either in this world or in the world to come.

But now, my brethren, although there can be no application of this particular text to our times or characters, and nothing is found in it to check the rising prayer of Christian sympathy in behalf of the most debased and hardened wretch that ever gloried in his proud rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven, and gentle spirits are thus relieved from an unreasonable and groundless cause of alarm and anxiety, yet the occasion must not pass until I have pointed you to the long black catalogue of sins, against each of which the punishment of death has been written by the finger of Divinity,—a death infinitely more to be dreaded by every rational soul than that of which the Apostle spoke. It is the second death, the eternal death, the ir retrievable loss of the soul to all purposes of elevation and happiness! Here is indeed ground for the most constant and anxious fear in every bosom that hears me. Here is indeed the prospect of punishment, to avert which the most earnest prayers of faith, for ourselves and for each other, may well be addressed in piercing cries to the merciful ear of Heaven! But it is

a penalty against which no prayer can prevail, unless the subject himself shall consent to obey the gentle persuasion of God's Spirit, always working in his heart. To obey, I say, the gracious leading of the Divine Grace, so far as to break away from the sin that, in its deceitful witchery, is leading him to the awful precipice of everlasting degradation and ruin. The punishment of which we speak is that before which the wicked, while trembling in the hour of judgment, will raise their woful and vain invocation to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

How dreadful is this language of insupportable misery! How wild and startling is the ejaculation of settled despair!

So strong, my brethren, is the love of life in the nature we bear, and so terrifying is any prospect of annihilation, that while one ray of hope remains, no effort will be spared to save ourselves from destruction. What, then, can more strikingly evince the inexpressible horror with which the wicked will contemplate the destiny before them in the hour of judgment than the image of the Scriptures, in which they are represented as seeking to be blotted into absolute oblivion from the works of God! Life, which on earth was the supreme object of hope, becomes then the supreme object of dread. And death, which here was more to be avoided than all things else, becomes now the one great object of desire and prayer. All the

original instincts of nature are inverted and destroyed by the overwhelming consciousness of guilt and the proper desert that awaits it, and to which their eyes are now fairly opened. Even the strong principle of self-preservation is overcome by the hopeless apprehension of suffering. Oh! I can fancy that I see the wretched victim of crime, as he starts from his dream of folly, and awakening to a full sense of all that he has lost, and of all the bitter fruits that he is doomed to gather, as the return of his own vicious sowing; and in the vain rage of his tumultuous feelings and appalled imagination, he calls upon the deaf earth to conceal him in its hollow caverns, and invokes the everlasting rocks to crush him into nothing, so that he might escape from the corroding reproaches of conscience,—from the withering frown of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the reproachful eye of the Lamb, whose saving truths of gentleness and mercy he has despised—whose redeeming blood and persuading tears he has laughed to scorn. Who, oh! who are they who will thus seek to hide themselves in the dark caves of the earth, and cry to the vast mountains to cover them forever and ever? My brethren, they are the kings of the earth, and the beggars in their tattered raiment. They are the great men, and the men unknown to fame—the chief captains and the common soldiery in the battles of time; they are the scoffers and the hypocrites of every rank in life, and the common abusers of God's freedom and immortal privileges. They are all those who are here polluted with impurity, stained with the blood of

cruelty, and branded with dissimulation, injustice, and dishonesty. All, all of these must depart in speechless submission from the light, liberty, comfort, and glory of heaven, and descend into the darkness, the bondage, the sorrow, and infamy of debased and lost spirits. The splendor of diadems, the glare of wealth, the lustre of birth, the pride of learning, the renown of victories, and the pomp of power will avail them not against the eternal decisions of Unerring Rectitude, as it proceeds to vindicate the impartial justice of its outraged laws; and they shall all be compelled to give evidence even “to the teeth and forehead of their faults.”

Great God! who in the day of Thy wrath shall be able to stand before Thee, in a spotless robe of his own righteousness? Merciful Saviour! who may not thus stand before Thee, in garments of stainless white, if he will but be persuaded to wash them in the fountain which Thou hast freely opened for “sin and for uncleanness?” My brethren, there are sins unto death; and can it be conceived possible that any thinking being should know that the hour is coming when the unbelieving, the unholy, and the impenitent—the wicked of every class—shall be involved in shame, consternation, and ruin; that the presumption of the infidel shall be confounded, and the impudence of the profligate abashed; the hypocrite stripped of his mask; the secrets of all hearts laid open; and that all of the workers of iniquity shall go where furies dwell and devils rage; where the laugh of gladness is never heard, and no angel’s voice shall

ever proclaim a release or a jubilee—can it be possible, with this prospect before us, with a certainty from which no arguments of reason or religion can relieve us, that crime must at some period of duration meet with its desert—can it be that we will yet continue to live in the deliberate commission of those known sins which are thus to sink the soul?

Oh, no! my brethren, it is not possible, that if these things were kept steadily before the eye of faith, the blandishments of this false and fading world should any longer have power to seduce us from the paths of innocence and safety. The momentary pleasures of time would lose their charms, and the painted beauties of iniquity would glare hideously in our eyes. The impure transports of sensuality would shock the delicacy of our hearts, and the perversion of God's sacred gift of intellect to purposes of deception, corruption, and fraud would revolt every generous feeling of our nature. The lustre of gold would no longer make us covetous or dishonest; nor would the splendor of power make us criminally ambitious. Our own treasures of learning would not make us contemptuously proud, nor would the more brilliant attainments of others provoke us to the guilt of jealous hatred; the possession of wealth and power would not corrupt us to their abuse, nor would the remembrance of injuries lead us to revenge and cruelty; but rather would an abiding sense of the solemn truths of God—of the great realities before us—of the high and overpowering destinies of our nature, sustain us in a cause of consistent and unfal-

tering virtue. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man!"

My friends, upon a subject like this I would present you with no glaring images; I would startle your imagination with no exaggerated metaphors; I would labor at no horrid and terror-striking descriptions in order to fill your hearts with tumultuous alarm and dread; but I would come openly and frankly to your understanding; I would address the nobler feelings of your hearts; I would appeal to the laws of mind, the dictates of reason, and the strong instincts and analogies of nature, so to convince you of the vast importance of immortal truth, that conscience may be always awake to the insidious advances of evil, and that Christian virtue may be always strong, in the strength of God's Holy Spirit, to resist the torrent of folly and crime.

But alas! my brethren, it is so, that as the clouds which in a dark and wintry day are suspended over us and hide from our view the beauty of the blue sky and the gorgeous brightness of the sun, so the clouds of passion and of vice which, in this career of folly, are suspended over our souls, to fatally conceal from us the unchanging beauty of the Heaven of Heavens, and prevent us from feeding our sacred hopes on the unfading brightness of its glories.

But the hour is before us—the hour of sickness and death—in which the clouds will all be dispersed; when the clamors of passion will be heard no longer,

and the world, with its bewitching vanities, will fade from our eyes, and the broad, trackless ocean of eternity will be spread before us. It is then that we shall think of the inheritance prepared for the saints in light, of the society of angels, of Jesus the Mediator, and God the Judge of all.

May the Spirit of the God we serve be ever now present with us, so as to train our undying spirits with its exciting and restraining sanctions; that we may at the last dwell with joy unspeakable upon the boundless contemplation.







*CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES THE RULING MOTIVES  
OF OUR LIVES.*

*“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord  
Jesus.”*

*Colossians 3d, 17th.*



THIS precept of the Apostle is equivalent to an exhortation to Christians to make the great principles of their religion the actuating motives and all-controlling laws of their conduct. To do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” does not mean that every word we utter and every action we perform should be accompanied with an audible acknowledgment of our submission to the sovereignty of Christ. This would be the extreme of pharisaical ostentation, and a mournful exhibition of the wildest fanaticism. But the precept does mean that the ruling spirit and prevailing tone of our characters and our conversation should be formed and regulated by the teaching we have received as disciples of the Son of God. It means, that in every word and action of our lives, capable of being referred to the Divine will, we should strive to realize a wise sense of the Divine PRESENCE, and of our responsibility to Him

for all the light and all the privileges with which He has blessed us, as the redeemed spirits of His love.

My brethren, the precept means, that as beings bearing the name of Christ, it becomes us to be always alive to the necessity of illustrating the principles of our Divine Master in every word and action of our lives; that in the whole course of our conduct and conversation we should evince the most unfaltering determination to imitate and obey Him in all that He has done and in all that He has commanded. It means simply, that as Christians we must take care that Christian principles be the ruling motive of our actions. Now, surely nothing can be more reasonable and clearly proper than this, for if we are all the creatures of a common Creator, and the dependent subjects of one great moral Governor, then must our obedience be rendered to Him just in the way and manner in which it may have pleased Him to reveal His will.

If the mode of obedience and the motive of obedience have been clearly prescribed, then can it be for men to say that their doings will be acceptable to God, although they choose to live and labor without any sort of regard to the requirements of His law? If the principles of obedience which the Creator has prescribed be few in number, clear in their requirements, and powerful in their influence, then is the neglect of them more presumptuous and more inexcusable, and more dark and more dreadful must be the crime. I think that you must begin to perceive, my brethren,

that when the Apostle says, "Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," he lays down a proposition simple in its language, but broad and all-pervading in its nature. He lays down the Divine principle upon which every duty rests, as upon its true and proper basis. He tells us emphatically that whatever duties have been charged upon our consciences by precepts, and whatsoever practice has been enforced by example, it is through their union with the Christian faith that their moral obligation has been constituted and confirmed. It is thus that we are enabled to see how it is that the faith and the morals of the Gospel are inseparably joined together; how it is that they mutually support and confirm each other. We see that the connecting and indissoluble chain which binds the whole is the "name of the Lord Jesus." It is the spirit, the authority, the command of his Master and Redeemer, which in the breast of every Christian ought to bind precept with practice; the doctrine of faith with the duties of life in everlasting union, and giving reality to the whole; enriching faith with the power of practical obedience, and sanctifying the actions of every-day life as being the natural fruits of an humble and lively faith. Whatever, then, my brethren, may be the field in which we may be required to labor as the servants of the common Master—wherever our lot may be cast, in high life or in low, amid arduous or perilous scenes, or in tranquil and cheering duties—yet let every action be governed, every thought be controlled, and every duty enforced, by those eternal principles to which

the "name of Jesus" gives all-pervading authority and everlasting worth. Christian conduct, springing from Christian motives, was one great end which Christ descended to this earth to illustrate and enforce. It was for this that He toiled and taught. It was for this that He established His Church, enriched it with the high and ennobling doctrines of His Gospel, and appointed in it His perpetual order of ministering agents to extend its empire. How false and fatal then, my brethren, is the notion that, while the practical duties of Christianity are all-important to all men, yet that the doctrines of the Christian faith are not so decidedly essential. Now, if by the DOCTRINES OF FAITH be meant the varying shades of opinion in the Christian world—if they are to be judged by the amount of virtue which they reciprocally produce—do not differ essentially one from the other, I reply that I stop not to argue that point. But if, on the other hand, it be said that the reception of Christianity as a revelation of the requirements of God is not a matter of essential importance, provided the virtues of practical life be equivalent to what Christianity is seen to produce, then do I say there never was a more serious delusion. My brethren, if there be any principle in the heart leading to moral duties, then that principle must derive its power from the idea of the Supreme Moral Governor, and of the necessity of obedience to His will.

But how is any knowledge of the Deity sufficiently clear and distinct to influence the conscience to be obtained, without some revelation from Himself of

His nature and His will? Virtue and vice are terms strictly relative, and always refer to some standard right, and there can be no such standard independent of some law from the Supreme Ruler. Conscience is in itself a blind and uncertain guide—an arbitrary and capricious judge of duty. It is misled by education; it is deluded by fancy; it is stupified by habit; and it is perverted and destroyed by passion. If, then, a knowledge of the Deity, and of the requirements of His will, abundantly sufficient and satisfactory for all the ends of practical obedience, has actually been given to the world, can it be possible that any man is at liberty to denominate such a revelation a mere system of speculative and abstract doctrines, which may be received or discarded with impunity, as caprice may dictate or fancy direct? If the motive to obedience and the mode of obedience be both prescribed from above, then the wilful neglect of either the one or the other must be alike presumptuous and wicked. No man can come acceptably to God, or be an object of Divine favor, whose character is not formed on those principles which God has seen fit to prescribe as the rules of his life. Nothing, I think, can possibly be clearer than this. Nothing can be clearer than that to pretend to arrogate merit to ourselves before God for a course of life which we pursue, either without any regard to His will, or else in direct opposition to what he has required, is dark and flagrant impiety.

Nothing, again, can, I think, be clearer than that, if the Divine will has been made known, it must be

promptly and unhesitatingly obeyed, and obeyed universally and always; not occasionally consulted as a temporary counsellor, but steadily followed as a perpetual guide. The Son of God has visited this sin-stained earth, not merely to instruct us in certain particulars of duty, but rather to shed the divine light upon the whole system of life. He did not come to excite us to occasional bursts of zeal, but rather to train us to steady habits of virtue. Being, then, thus taught of Heaven, he alone is the true servant of God who exercises a universal vigilance, and cherishes perpetually the full purpose of obedience; who guards the issues of his heart, and strives to bring every thought into subjection to the will of the High and Holy One. Such must be the mark we strive to reach; such must be the character after which we most earnestly aspire. In thus aiming we may often fall short of our object, and often be subjected to the most humiliating defeats and saddening disappointments; but the MEASURE OF OUR SUCCESS is not the question upon trial at the bar of God, but rather, if we have sincerely intended and constantly striven to obey. Perfect and undeviating obedience to God's perfect law may be beyond the power of frail and fallen man. We may at times be overpowered by temptation, or betrayed by unsuspected infirmity, and all this may be forgiven. But if we do not begin by resolving, through the grace of God, that we will wilfully offend in NO ONE POINT, but that we will strive and aspire to conform ourselves to the divine will in ALL THINGS—then, my brethren, I am con-

strained to say, that we are deficient in the most essential and vital principle of Christianity. We want the spirit which the Apostle so clearly and decidedly requires in the text; the spirit which would lead us in whatsoever we did—whether in word or in deed—to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” We are guilty, my brethren, before God, not because we fall short of our desires to be good and perfect, but rather because we never DESIRE to be as good as we MIGHT BE. We do not really intend to be as perfect as the Spirit of God is ready to help us to be; nor do we, in sincerity and in truth, wish to obey our Heavenly Father in all the actions of our lives. We are all ready enough to condemn the profane scoffer, who in profligate courses shows that he disregards the control of Heaven’s law; but the plain question here presents itself, is there not in all reason precisely the same ground for condemning every man who, in his general course of life, persists in an habitual disobedience to the simple and plainest precepts of the Gospel of his God, and thus evinces a determined disregard for the authority of his Redeemer and his Judge? Tell me why it is that every man will not be subject to condemnation, who employs his time, his intellectual gifts, his wealth, his power, and all of his privileges only according to his own sinful whims, and in obedience and submission to the corrupt fashions of the world, and without one thought, without one moment’s regard for the will or the requirements of the God who alone has thus given him richly all things to enjoy? No, no,

my beloved brethren, there is no safety—believe me, there is no safety for any man who does not in every part of his life endeavor at least to do rightly, as GOD HAS DECIDED WHAT RIGHT IS; who does not intend, at least so far as in him lies, to submit in all things to the Divine will; to obey the precepts and to imitate the example of his Redeemer and his God! This alone is CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY; this alone is CHRISTIAN SINCERITY. Now the only test of sincerity is consistency. No man can be relied upon for perseverance and uniformity in virtue, whose principles of action are not sound and controlling; and no man's principles can be uniformly controlling, unless they be founded on the fear and the love of God. There is no adequate rule for the government of human life in all circumstances of prosperity and adversity, of secrecy and in the public way alike, which is not founded in a religious reverence for the will and the power of the ever-present God. RELIGION, my brethren, is the only true foundation for MORALS. I speak not now in reference to SOME MEN, and at SOME TIMES, but with respect to ALL MEN, and at ALL TIMES! I am not saying but that, in a refined condition of society, the generality of men may conform to the decent usages of society, without much sense of religion in the matter; but I do say that, with the great mass of mankind, religious fear and religious reverence are absolutely indispensable to the security of peace and purity, and to the formation of the more elevated virtues of the human character.



Expediency may, I grant you, be a tolerably safe rule for a tolerably good man to go by. But I am not speaking of a man who in general or in certain particulars is a good man, but rather of one who is thoroughly sound in principle,—one who is able to sustain his purity and his integrity unstained equally at home and abroad, in secret and in public, in the solitude of the desert, and before an assembled universe. Now I say you must not expect to find any such man, unless it be one who is influenced by a steady regard to the will of God, and the retributions of eternity; who remembers that God hears him always, and that his word as well as his oath is registered in heaven; that his actions are all under the eye of Omniscience, and if he will only fear Him who reads the inmost thoughts, he surely need not fear the keenest inquisitions of his fellow-men. No, my brethren, there are no motives of action which this world can produce and sustain, capable of yielding the true fruits of those nobler sentiments which elevate us above the low calculations of mere worldly advantage; nothing of that integrity which can neither be seduced nor intimidated; nothing of that fortitude which will stand firm in a good cause under the assaults of ridicule and through every species of suffering; nothing of that true elevation of feeling which leads us to look down with pity or with contempt upon even the triumphs of him who elevates himself by wrongdoing, while we regard with sympathy and approbation the very worldly disgrace of another whose ennobling principles have

led him to believe that all the sufferings which the whole world can bring upon him are as nothing, so long as the torture of self-reproach are not among his sorrows. But not only is it utterly hopeless and in vain to look for the glorious fruits of this sublime degree of virtue in the life of him who is actuated by no higher motive than this world's expediency or interest; I will go further, and say that such motives are utterly inefficient in securing the world from the worst forms of vice. And to prove this, I beg you to consider that the calm flow of the tide in this world's ordinary affairs, where everything is tranquil and prosperous, affords us no test of the stability and worth of any man's principles.

The ship that rides safely upon the bosom of the unruffled sea may prove utterly weak and worthless amid the fury of the raging storm. And the house which rests securely upon the sand when no waters rise and swell, may prove but a false and treacherous home when the clouds gather over it, the tempest bursts upon it, the winds of Heaven exert their awful power, and the waves of the fathomless gulf yawn and swell to swallow it up forever.

So, too, the times to try men's principles are not those times when the passions are all at rest and no temptation is nigh; but it is rather when everything is in a state of excitement, and perhaps every interest is in jeopardy; when purity, honesty, and virtue can only be sustained by letting go present advantages. Aye, my brethren, it is in these moments, when the breast is agitated by anxiety, when

desire is inflamed, and passion is raging, when no eye can see you, and no tongue can tell of your doings; these, aye these are the times to test the sincerity and the strength of the principles by which you are actuated in the sight of that God who reads the heart.

Consider then, my brethren, that he who does everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” that is, one who is steadily influenced by a sense of his responsibility at the bar of the Lord Jesus Christ, while he has every motive to goodness that can act on the mere man of this world, has at the same time others also of a far weightier character, because he is influenced by a controlling belief that the consequences of his actions extend beyond the present world. The attractions to sin lose their power, and the motives to virtue are unspeakably dilated while he remembers that although he should seclude himself by bolts and bars, and walls of stone—though he should seek to ascend up into heaven, or to make his bed in hell, yet it would be impossible to escape from the all-searching eye of Him who can make the darkness of night to be light around him.





*SPRING AN EMBLEM OF THE RESURRECTION.*

*“ For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come.*

*Song of Solomon 2d, 11th.*



**I**N a rich and beautiful description of the Springtime of the year, the wise man has reference to the religion of the Messiah. The season which preceded the coming of our Lord was the moral winter of the world—a season of spiritual darkness and torpor—and in the enlivening, refreshing, and renovating influence of Spring, we have a just and striking emblem of the new light, animation, and happiness which was imparted to the world by the coming of the Son of God. It is in this view that the Gospel is so constantly, so fondly, and so poetically pictured by the inspired writers. It is the sun of righteousness and truth, rising upon them that sat in darkness. It is the morning light, spreading upon the mountains. It is the day-spring from on high that hath visited and cheered us. The desert has been made glad by it, and the barren and desolate wilderness of life has blossomed as the rose.

My brethren, what an exciting and joyous season is the present! It was but a short time since, that dreariness and death seemed to be brooding over the face of nature, and the breath of God was exerted only to chill and to destroy. But now, every element seems to be full of the principle of life. "Every breeze that blows calls up some new species of existence from the dark womb of nature, and every returning sun seems to glory with increasing splendor over the progressive beauty which his rays have awakened." The vegetable world is hourly bursting into life; "waving its gorgeous hues, and spreading its fragrance round the habitations of men. The animal world is marked by still deeper characters of life and happiness. Myriads of seen, and still greater myriads of unseen beings, are everywhere enjoying their new-born existence, and hailing with inarticulate voice the Power that gave them being."

My brethren, in this annual renovation of the earth man himself is renewed. The bright thoughts, and stirring feelings of his youth, are revived; his once ardent dreams of hope and visions of long-forgotten joy, reanimate his heart; the fountains of sensibility are unlocked; and as his softened affections expand to take in this wondrous circle of glory and joy, he is readily led to cherish with deep and adoring gratitude the recollection of the great Parent of existence, who has thus given him richly all things to enjoy. Oh! who is there that can look forth upon the green earth, exulting in the glorious livery of Heaven, everywhere dispensing its flowery per-

fume ; the painted insects revelling in their sweets ; the free birds carolling their songs of gladness, while they fan with their wings the fragrant air ; and then considers that all this system of beauty, order, and harmonious design was contrived for the happiness of man ; that it is placed gratuitously within his reach, and in its sounds of melody, and its beautiful forms and radiant colors, everywhere allures his pursuit and gladdens his enjoyment ! Oh ! who is there, that in calm and peaceful contemplation, can consider this, without turning with disgust and sickness of heart from the scenes of selfish rapacity, pollution, and crime, which deaden the heart to feelings of grateful piety, and darken the clear eye of reason to such deeply-written evidences of mercy and exhaustless goodness. Indeed, my brethren, I believe that SOMETHING at least of the grateful enthusiasm inspired by the return of spring is universally experienced. Poets have everywhere labored to illustrate it, and preachers of righteousness have anxiously seized upon it, to enforce their lessons of eternal worth ; “ nor has the most luxuriant imagination,” says a great moralist, “ been able to describe the serenity of the golden age otherwise than by giving a *perpetual spring* as the highest reward of uncorrupted innocence.”

Living, my brethren, as we do, amid the scenes of artificial life, and in the crowded haunts of selfish and jostling men ; our sensibilities when once enlisted, are, perhaps from the very circumstance of our confined existence, more keenly alive to the emotion

which this animating season is calculated to excite. It would, indeed, be strange, if none of these emotions were acknowledged by us. It would, indeed, be passing strange, if, when we are permitted to escape for an hour from these worn and wearying streets, these dark, close, and dusty lanes, which are the work of men, and are permitted to look abroad upon the impressive manifestations of the Creator's wisdom, power, and beneficence, with which nature will present us—it would, indeed, be strange, if our hearts were not lifted up in feelings of awe and grateful piety to Him, “whose are all these glorious works;” and who, as He wields the elements of nature at His will, so has He power to spread over our future prospects constant smiles, animation, and hope; or else to cloud it with darkness and desolating storms. Yes, my friends, while the fields and gardens are richly clothed in beauty, while the sweet and balmy air resounds with songs of gladness, while the hosts of animated nature are rioting in their fragrant realm, prodigal of joy, it would be dark and deep ingratitude if our thoughts were not attuned to praise and happiness. And just in proportion to the extent and elevation of our capacity for happiness, should be our relish for the promise and glory of this grateful season. Naturally and cheerily should our views pass on from this annual theatre of revivification and joy, and be directed to those perennial scenes of health and blessedness, which spread before the eye of faith in the immortal home of man! You must forgive me, my brethren, for having thus directed

your minds to some of the beautiful and impressive associations which the return of spring should always awaken ; and you must bear with me, too, while I go on to point out the analogies by which, at this season of renovated being, we argue the high probability, and sustain the reasonableness of the Christian's hope of renovated being for himself. Who can compare the promises of the Scriptures with the scenes of annual revival in all creation from the apparent dreariness of death—such a revival as that which will at this time meet our eye on all sides—without being struck with the wonderful analogies which they exhibit, and without receiving the strongest conviction that their Author is the same? Who can compare the complete and glorious restoration which this season gives to nature, without cherishing a similar hope for the destiny of man—without anticipating the time when the winter of death shall for us, too, be over, and the dominion of the grave destroyed;—when eternity, like an unfading spring, shall awaken the righteous to the joys of immortal day; where age shall put off its infirmities, and be renewed to the vigor of unfading youth; where the youth shall forget their bright visions of delight, in the surpassing realities of enjoyment; where the sorrowing shall cease to weep over misfortune, and mourners forget the cause of their anguish; where the lost shall be restored to the weeping, the wept greeted with new gladness, and the loved reunited forever?

I know, my brethren, nor would I teach you other-



wise, that it is to revelation alone—confirmed as it is in its teaching by the rising again from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ—it is revelation alone which can inspire a trust that never falters in the expectation of immortality. It is revelation alone which can enable us to know; to feel assured of that sublime and fearful truth. But notwithstanding that, I still delight to recur to the confirmation which our faith receives from the beautiful analogies of nature. And we all know that our Saviour Himself illustrated His teaching by a reference to these very phenomena. “Except,” said He, “a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” And *He*, my brethren, hath died, and the fruit which He will bring forth for the mighty harvest are all of those confiding souls who meekly strive to do the things which He commands. So, too, is it that the Apostle Paul replies triumphantly to him who thought it an “incredible thing that God should raise the dead.” “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die!” Who can ever behold the dry and lifeless seed committed to the earth, and then reviving out of apparent corruption and death, rising daily in beauty, and seeming to rejoice in its strength, expanding and waving its broad leaves to the sun of heaven, unfolding its rich and glorious blossoms, and spreading its perfume upon the air—oh who can behold it without being led to confide in the truth and the power of Him who has promised us that although this frail and

mortal body must be committed to the earth—"although it must be sown in corruption, yet shall it rise in incorruption; although it be sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory; although it be sown in weakness, it shall rise in power!"

Indeed, everything around me presses upon my thoughts the certainty of the Christian's hopes; and I am animated with enlarged perceptions and immortal aspirations. All nature bears the traces of Divine working, and is visibly stamped with the most beneficent designs. I look forward upon life, and see it full of vast responsibilities; and tending to infinite results. I look forward to THE GRAVE, and see it the GATE OF IMMORTALITY! I think of THE DEAD, and ask, where are they? And a voice from heaven whispers sweetly to my ear: "Already ripe, and gathered by the Lord of the Harvest for His own eternal purposes!"

Indeed, my brethren, we are at this season surrounded by everything that is bright and joyous in the outward creation; and our thoughts should be carried forward to those far higher scenes where "one unbounded spring shall encircle all!" Can there exist, think you, one human being who, with the explicit teaching of revelation in his hands, and with the almost demonstrative analogies of nature before him, can yet suppose that the Creator has endowed man with the noble faculties which distinguish him, only to fit him for this low, brief, and uncertain scene? Who looks abroad and above him, upon the horizon that bounds his view of earth, and then upon

the trackless canopy of the skies, and will tell me that these are all he can either know or care for? That this dreary region of woe, where the groans of anguish resound, and the tears of sorrow flow like a stream, and over which Death and Despair have stretched their iron sceptre, is his ONLY home? Who mourns for his dead, as one without hope; and looks forward to his own grave as the dark, cold pit of oblivion? Oh! if there, indeed, lives and breathes one such man, how deeply is he to be pitied! How cheerless and dark is the destiny to which he has been born!

My brethren, under the light with which Christian truth has covered the nations, I do not believe that this persuasion ever completely and finally prevails; although I do believe that, under the depraving influence of sinful habits, and under the hopelessness with which they feel they ought to view everything connected with God and futurity, there may be many hearts who secretly wish there may be NO HEREAFTER. Let me now turn to those of you, my brethren, who believe that there is another life than this; that we shall sink into the dust only to rise again, when all the wintry storms of time shall be over; who believe that there is a God, and that they have need of His protection and favor, but yet have none of the intelligent confidence of the Christian's faith that they shall hereafter enter joyously into His presence. If any such there be within the reach of my voice, let me entreat you to seize upon the present, to think deeply and wisely upon your con-

dition, your destiny, your danger, and your duty ! As you value your present and everlasting peace ; as you value the smiles and the power of God in seasons of sickness and calamity, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment,—listen to truth as we would persuade you to receive it, and be prompt and earnest in devoting yourselves to the reasonable and ennobling service of your God !

Cannot that bright and glorious sun, which shines so broadly upon your path, enable you to read the capitals in which your immortal destiny is written ? Raise your eyes to yonder skies, and cannot you see with me the heaven-born spirits of Truth, Mercy, and Justice, arrayed in their robes of uncreated light, bending towards you with their anxious smiles, while they point you to the clear, bright path of everlasting safety ?

But I turn to the young of this my own household of faith. To those of you I turn who have known the Scriptures from your childhood ; who know full well that there is no safety but in Christ risen from the dead ; that the harvest of eternity can only be secured by the repentance, the faith, the daily working of the renewed heart ; and that the sustaining and renovating influence of the Spirit is hourly to be sought for. Ay, it is to you I turn, and entreat you to remember that this is the spring-time of your life ; it is emphatically and precisely the season in which you are to sow and to toil, if ever you hope to reap in heaven. In this precious, this golden season, when the mind is throwing out its

brilliant creations, and clothing futurity with its hues of enchantment; when the heart is gushing out with fulness of feeling, and its pure affections—oh! this is the season when God is calling to you with a father's tenderness, and more than a mother's love, to seek Him early if you would ever find Him: "To receive His instructions and not silver; and his knowledge rather than fine gold." Your Redeemer is now clothed in smiles, and calls you, in a voice softer and sweeter than angels' music, to take of the water of life freely! Continue not to provoke Him with cold neglect, until the SEED-TIME be over, the summer ended—your face be covered with wintry wrinkles, and your head with the hoary frosts of age; when for you the harvest shall be forever past, and no fruit be found for ETERNITY! Let me repeat, then, that this, my young friends, is indeed the spring-time of your being. The blossoms of immortal hope are springing up in rich luxuriance around you. Oh! that with a siren's witchery—shall I say?—no, no, but surely and simply with the touching tones of sincerity and truth, would I persuade you to come with me, and let us gather the rosebuds of heaven before they wither! Let us transplant them to our own humble hearts, and strive to nourish them there from the chilling blights of this wintry world; and they will grow and unfold in sweetness and unfading beauty for life's eternal day!

It now only remains for me to remind you, my young friends, that in the changes of the seasons we have a faithful and touching picture of the changes

to which we all are subject. Time sweeps surely on, and has already overwhelmed much of the brightness and beauty, the eloquence and taste, the toil and the power of the past. It will bring, as you well know, a speedy desolation over all the rich verdure and gaudy hues with which the earth is now covered. My brethren, it will as surely bring dreariness over all your most cherished scenes of joy.

Spring, with its genial warmth, will soon give way to the parching heat of summer; summer will yield to the feebleness of autumn; and autumn will quickly be followed by the chilling winds of winter. So perish the roses of the peasant, and the flowers of kings!

“So fades, so languishes, grows dim and dies,  
All that the world is proud of!”

Impressive emblem of human life!





THE CHARACTER AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE  
ANGELS.

*“Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the  
Angels.”*

*Luke 20th, 36th.*

**T**HESSE words refer to the souls of the re-  
deemed at the resurrection of the just.  
My brethren, while death is steadily  
pursuing his desolating triumphs over the  
generations of our race ; while we see that none can  
escape his cruel ravages ; that the countless millions  
of nations that have covered the earth are all fallen  
into dust ; that the heroes who have guided the  
storm of battles, and the monarchs who have wielded  
the sceptre of empires, and devoted thousands to  
death, have themselves become his prey, and are now  
lodged in silence, their dust mingling with that of  
their slaves, and their splendor and pageantry all  
covered by the clod of the valley ; when we see the  
aged forms, before which we have bowed in reverence,  
and the little infant, smiling in innocence and help-  
lessness ; when we see the strong man glorying in  
his strength, and the gay companions of our days  
rejoicing in the sprightliness and the bloom of youth,

all cut down and falling to the earth like the morning flowers that bow their heads in death,—ah! my friends, how overwhelming would be the consciousness of these sad realities, if death were no more than one dark and everlasting sleep of the grave. But, with the clear and bright prospect of immortal life before us, with the strong assurance that when the soul shakes off the body as a useless shell, and leaves “this earthly load” “of death called life, which us from life doth sever,” that we shall neither know sickness nor death any more forever, but shall be as the angels, having perfection for our portion, and eternity for our inheritance, then, my brethren, though deep the “love we bear unto the dead,” yet we cannot mourn for them; they want neither tears nor lamentations; they have exchanged the fleeting span of time for the bliss of angels: and when the heavens and the earth shall be dissolved, they shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

You will observe that it is said of the souls of the faithful, that when once elevated, as the sons of God, to the place which Jesus has gone to prepare for them, that then “they can die no more, but are equal unto the angels.” Now, the question naturally presents itself—Who and what are the angels?

That there are in the universe of God orders of intelligent beings separated from matter, and therefore imperceptible to our senses, more elevated than man, purer in their aspirations, more sublime in their understanding, and bearing a nearer affinity to the



supreme and universal mind; that these beings were created by God, are subject to God's providence, and are perpetually engaged by Him in the government of the world,—are truths clearly revealed in the Scriptures, and are entirely consistent with the general analogy of God's works.

The course of reasoning, by which such an order of beings is rendered highly probable, independent of the direct light of revelation, amounts to this: We see, wherever the works of God extend, that various gradations of existences mark his operations. We begin with the inert and unorganized elements, ascend to the exhibitions of vegetable life in the living plant, pass on to the perceptive brute, and thence to the reasoning man—to the being who is alone capable of investigating the hidden properties of things material, and of tracing the nature and destiny of what is immaterial and divine. Now, having thus arrived at something immaterial, something endued with such powers and faculties as the human soul, can we suppose that the scale of being ends there?

Will it not appear reasonable to believe that between us and the Deity there must intervene beings possessed of power and excellence beyond our present experience or observation? As man, by his inferior and animal nature, is evidently connected with the brutes below him, are we not naturally led to suppose that in his intellectual nature he must be allied to the spiritual existence above him?

If the earth be peopled with beings capable of knowing and rendering glory to the great Creator,

can we, without the grossest stupidity, rest in the persuasion that anthems of praise rise only from our lips? Can we believe that the boundless regions above us, that spread far into the immensity of God, are altogether void of intelligences; and that no homage is ever rendered THERE to the great God of all?

How impressive is the supposition of a state of things in which no human being, no MIND, should move upon the earth! And yet, my brethren, it would not be more extraordinary than if the worlds upon worlds above us were without the understanding to be impressed with the wonder-working power of God!

The analogies of nature, then, would lead us to conclude that the immensity of God is filled with intelligent creatures, who as they are further removed from the impurities in which we are immersed, so are they more refined and excellent than ourselves, and far exceed us in their capacities of knowing and rendering homage to the Being who made us all!

The UNIVERSALITY OF THIS BELIEF is also a strong argument in favor of its truth. And whether we refer the origin of it to the remains of primitive revelation, or to the instructive teaching of nature, it does not lessen its force. Nothing is more certain than that, however they may differ on every other subject of belief, yet that nations of every age, who have entertained even the most crude notions of religion, have agreed that between ourselves and the supreme God there are innumerable orders of spirits.

But we are not left to arguments of probability or

conjecture. The Holy Scriptures are full and explicit, not merely upon the fact of their existence, but also with regard to the duties with which they are charged, in the care of the faithful in their progress towards the perfections of heaven.

The Apostle Paul, speaking of angels, affirms that they are all "ministering spirits" sent forth to minister to all such as shall be the "heirs of salvation." In the historical books of Scripture they are spoken of directly, and instances are oftentimes mentioned of their direct interference in human affairs. The whole history of our Lord presents a continued series of angelic manifestations.

They are called *angels* or messengers, as denoting the employment in which they are engaged in executing the will of God. They are called "CHERUBIM," or winged creatures of wonderful agility and swiftness of motion. They are called "SERAPHIM," or BURNING SPIRITS, to express their fervent zeal and love. They are called "SPIRITS," or immortal beings of a most subtle and attenuated substance. They are called the "HOSTS OF HEAVEN," and also THRONES, DOMINIONS, PRINCIPALITIES, and POWERS, because of their high dignity and elevation. They are called "MORNING STARS," from the splendor of their nature, and "SONS OF GOD," from the impress which they bear of His perfections.

With regard to their numbers, the Scriptures would impress us with their uncounted hosts. Daniel saw thousands of thousands ministering to the Ancient of Days. Our Lord speaks of summoning more

than "twelve legions" to His rescue. St. Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, speaks of an "innumerable company," and the Apostle John, when wrapt in prophetic vision, saw "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands!"

The POWER with which these sublime intelligences are endued, although it be strictly limited, is yet of prodigious extent, and the Scriptures abound with the most striking examples of its exertion. They are emphatically called the "MIGHTY angels;" they are said to "excel in strength." One of them passed through the land of Egypt in a single night, and destroyed all the "first-born" of the land, from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne, to the first-born of the meanest of his abject people.

Again, what an overpowering display of might was there in the sudden deliverance of Israel from their malignant enemies, by the overthrow of the proud army of Sennacherib—a miraculous slaughter of an hundred and four score and five thousand men in one night!

But again, these angels are immortal beings, living forever, without the fear of dissolution or decay. They are created in all their countless numbers by the exertion of Almighty power, and they will continue to endure after the sun and moon have been blotted from the heavens, even forever and ever. It is in this respect that the children of faith are to be "equal unto the angels"—equal in duration. Having been subject to the temporal punishment of death, and being purified by the blood of the Re-

deemer, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, they will continue to rejoice in the favor and the service of God while eternity endures.

Here I must pray you to remember that, while the angels are the most excellent of created things, still they are but creatures; and surely to no creatures can we, without impiety, offer the homage of our worship.

The angel that appeared to St. John in the Apocalypse would not suffer him to fall down before him, for the very reason that he was his "fellow-servant."

And again, my brethren, I must pray you to keep in mind that the Scriptures most distinctly teach us, that the providence of God in this lower world is in a great measure carried on by the instrumentality of angels. He who produced all things by the word of His power, could, no doubt, govern all things without the instrumentality of inferior agents; but it is enough for us to know that this is not His ordinary mode of operating. He works everywhere with instruments, and it must be for reasons full of wisdom and goodness that He employs the ministry of angels to accomplish the designs of His providence.

It is indeed a beautiful idea, that the harmony of the universe is sustained by thus connecting together in the tenderest bonds of mutual service, superior and inferior creatures, things visible and invisible. It is thus that the ties are endearingly cemented, which will forever unite angels and believing men with Christ, the Head of all splendid hosts.

My brethren, how will it fill us with grateful wonder to look back from the regions of the blessed, and see how early and how continually this celestial vigilance has been exerted on our behalf. From our tenderest years, through the vicissitudes of life, even to the dreariness of old age, have those sleepless eyes been upon us. In the vigor of health and in the languor of disease; in the gloom of affliction and in the sunshine of prosperity; amid the tears of sorrow and the smiles of joy; in the helplessness of sleep, and when we awake refreshed by sleep—equally in all times and in all places have the directing angels of God had their charge over us, and never for one moment will their vigilance be relaxed until we reach the Paradise of the blessed.

More especially are we to cherish the persuasion, that the care and vigilance of holy angels are steadily directed towards us, to sustain us against the mischievous designs of the powers of darkness. For of the existence of wicked angels we can no more doubt than of the existence of holy angels. We see that there are wicked MEN around us, and why should there not be wicked SPIRITS above us? If evil exists here, so too have we reason to believe that it exists in some shape everywhere. The Scriptures in their teachings proceed constantly on the presumption that the existence of evil spirits is universally known. Our Lord would never have worked miracles to confirm a delusion, and to the reality of their existence His miracles had constantly reference. But as Satan and his fiends perpetually compass the

earth, seeking whom they may devour, and are forever weaving the snares of temptation for the righteous; so the angels of God are ready to resist their assaults, by extending aid to the feeble whose humility may merit it. My brethren, they are with us in every peril and every conflict. They rejoice at the first sigh of repentance; and they eagerly sustain us in every step towards perfection, until the last struggle is over with the "King of Terrors," and then they mingle the song of triumph with the wailings of human affection, while they receive the disembodied spirit, and bear it exultingly to the home of the blessed.

My brethren, how consoling, how exciting, how salutary are reflections like these. How inexpressibly animating are the glorious models of moral beauty, thus brought before us. How rich are the examples of prompt and willing obedience, by which we too are inspired to do the will of God "as it is done in heaven!"

How awful is the reflection that, even in the darkest hours and most sacred retirements, that we are acting in the presence and under the inspection of the angels of light. Especially are they present with us when we are engaged in the worship of God. It is their own peculiar and most delightful duty, and they are especially anxious to bear up stainless offerings from sincere and humble hearts. Let it then control your wandering thoughts in every approach to your Maker, while you remember not only the greatness and majesty of the Being you adore, but

also the dignity, the purity, and fervent feelings of the celestial companions who surround us, and who would animate us with their own zeal and fill us with their own undying joy!

My brethren, it is only because we more readily retain the remembrance of injuries than cherish a sense of mercies, and are more willing to escape from the responsibility of our sins than to account for the means of grace and help that we have abused, that Christians are much more prompt to complain of the malice and temptations of Satan than to be grateful for the unwavering friendship of the Angels of Mercy. My brethren, if it be so, that God commands and commissions His own glorious retinue, the brightest and best of the orders in creation, to serve as guides and comforters to us, shall no gratitude swell our hearts, and no feelings of thankfulness burst from our lips? “Oh, that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!” “Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high!”

Such, my brethren, are the nature, the names, the employments, and the sources of happiness of those exalted beings, whom, through the strength of Jesus, we hope to equal in duration, and to resemble in character! Who is there of us, my brethren, with this



rapturous prospect before him, would yet desire to protract his stay amid these bewildering scenes of excitement and suffering for one moment longer than God is pleased to continue him in his stewardship? “If I live in the flesh let me strive to show the fruit of my labor,” but to “depart and be with Christ is far better!” Ah! who is there, as he wanders on through scenes over which sin has spread its blight and its desolation, and while he mourns over the destroyers of their own souls, and is hourly required to struggle with increased earnestness against the enemies of his own salvation, from within and from without, until faint and weary from the conflict, until bowed and almost broken with the sorrows and trials which he is made to feel from the strife, the hatred, the falsehood, the malice, and uncharitableness of men, and from the subtle temptations of Satan—Ah! who is there that will not lift his voice in meek prayer with the Psalmist: “Oh! that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest”? Oh! the joy of believing that this troubled scene is not my abiding-place; that I look for other and brighter scenes than these, scenes in which all capacities for pure, peaceful, and heavenly joys shall be filled and satisfied; where the toils and pains which now oppress me shall be known no more.

My brethren, we have here no “continuing city,” but we seek one to come. And who would have it otherwise? who would choose the world for his PORTION rather than for his PASSAGE; for his PLACE OF REST rather than for his SCENE OF TRIAL?

Who would live alway amid this abounding iniquity and general forgetfulness of God—where men's hearts are insensible to holiness, truth, and celestial joy, and where God's pleasure is known only to be despised? Where happiness is permitted to be sought, only to satisfy us it is nowhere to be found! That although it may glitter in a thousand propects, yet when pursued, it will retire before us, or terminate in vanity! That although it may seem to rest upon riches, or to hover over the haunts of pleasure, or to move in the paths of fame, yet have you reaped nothing in the pursuit but anxiety and disappointment. You have perhaps grasped the object of your fretful toil in every avenue in which you have pursued it, but it lies in your hand like flowers that are withered and dead, and you are ready to throw them to the ground from which they sprung, with their gay colors and bitter fruits! But come now with me, and I will carry you upon the wings of faith to the regions of celestial joy, and I will point you to the spirits of martyrs who have risen from their beds of flame, and to the sainted spirits of meek, retiring piety, who have risen from their beds of wasting disease—I will point you to the angelic hosts who, with rejoicing songs of surpassing melody and sweetness, are continually bearing up the souls of thousands who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!” No moment passes but some one is seen to enter. Blessed spirits! how glorious is the light which irradiates their course, as they contend upwards with

joyful wings, until they join the circle of "blessed voices uttering joy!" Yea, the circle of redeemed souls, united in glory, to go no more out, but to dwell forever with each other, and forever with the Lord!

Beholding these things, my brethren, what spirit shall be left in us? Shall we not be swallowed up with one thought and desire, that we too may enter into that blessed inheritance of glory? With this glimpse of the splendors of the beatific region through the open door of Heaven, how shall we be able with sufficient earnestness of feeling, with sufficient fervency of utterance, to pour forth our heart's desire and prayer to God, that we too may be saved?

My brethren, with this glorious vision before us, who would for one moment think of calling back, if he could, the departed spirits of our love? They have gone, indeed, from amongst us. They shall cheer us with kind looks and sweet words no more, but we can still see them clothed with smiles, which pain can never cloud! They shall never again kneel with us *HERE*, around the altar of a Saviour's love, but we can see them *THERE*, even at the very side of Him who has redeemed them by His blood! They shall no more sport with us in the bright beams of the summer's sun, but they have gone to "the city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof!"

No more shall they mingle with us the tears of sympathy in the hours of bereavement; but they are in a land where deaths are unknown, where there are no graves, no mouldering urns, nor touching epitaphs.

“Blessed indeed are the dead who die in the Lord!” “Even so saith the Spirit!”

My friends, I stop not to inquire into the destiny of the unrepenting, unfaithful, unpardoned, and unjustified spirits. It is enough that I suggest THE THOUGHT. It is enough that we know, if any perish, if any are driven away into the dismal shades of woe, upon their own heads and upon their own hearts be the blame. It is their own obstinate perversity and hatred of holiness that have rendered their fate unavoidable. It is not but that every means have been tried that infinite compassion and infinite wisdom could contrive for their safety. It is not but that God has given a proof of His desire for their salvation which amazes the angels themselves. Think of the tears and blood which have been shed on their account. Think of all the agonies—bitter, insupportable agonies—that have been endured for their redemption! Oh! think of the gift of the Son of God, for them and their salvation!

My brethren, with the close view of death and eternity before us, let us listen, I conjure you, to the offers of mercy which are held out to the guilty; let us listen to the offers of divine aid, freely made to all who need it; let us listen to the voice of God’s word, and to the warning of God’s providence

which are hourly repeated before us! My brethren, let us flee for safety to the refuge which God's mercy has provided; let us consent to lay hold on the hope set before us in the Gospel! Let us not bring destruction upon ourselves; but rather let us flee from the wrath, prepared not for man, but rather for the devil and his angels.





### THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

*“This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”*

*St. Luke 23d, 43d.*

**T**HESSE words of the afflicted and careworn Soldier of the Cross have often been echoed by weary pilgrims of time, and amid the ravages of death establish conclusively the continued existence of the soul. With the advocates of the blighting doctrine of absolute materialism we have nothing to do. With the men (if any such there be) who can contend that man is no more than we see him, and that death is the termination of existence, this is not the place to reason. But among the professors of the Christian faith there have been persons, and some of them of high distinction, who, while they have contended strongly for the doctrine of human accountability, have yet held to the gloomy notion that death was the suspension of consciousness until the period of the resurrection. The leading principle in this philosophy is “that man is simply a material being, and that what is called mind is merely the result of animal organization; that there is no foundation in

nature for the usual distinction between soul and body ; that mind, or the power of thought, is a mere quality of the brain—resides in it as its proper organ, and by it exhibits all of those phenomena that are denominated mental ; that when the human body is completely organized and combined, and all of the senses operated on by their appropriate objects, the result is the power of thinking—just as music proceeds from a complete instrument when struck by a skilful hand.” Upon this scheme, you will perceive that mind can have no separate existence ; demolish the organization of the body, and man ceases to be, until the almighty voice of God shall reanimate the unconscious dust, at the hour of universal resurrection ! “That then, the body being reorganized, the power of thought will reappear, consciousness will resume its empire, and the man will find himself the same person that he was before his dissolution !”

Now, my brethren, although this teaching may not be positively hostile to human virtue, inasmuch as it does not pretend to interfere with the doctrine of a minute retribution and the certainty of a coming judgment, yet it is a most dismal persuasion, and it is as manifestly repugnant to all sound philosophy as it is to the language of Scripture. It is enough that I say here, that to reject the distinction between mind and matter is to reject the distinction between cause and effect, and must ultimately plunge us into atheism. If there can be no mind apart from matter, then there can be no SUPREME

MIND—NO GOD! A greater discrepancy cannot be conceived to exist than that between the qualities of mind and the qualities of matter. The material universe is no more than a temporary modification of power, and power is a quality of mind. This world is, then, no more than an outward exhibition of the invisible grandeur and majesty of the spiritual God; and will most surely, when His purposes are answered by it, revert to its original immaterial and elementary source. How absurd is it, then, to talk of MATTER as if it were the chief thing in nature, when it is no more than Nature's dress. MIND is the only AGENT in the universe, and it is MIND that constitutes man. The body is no more than a temporary covering, connecting man with the present world; but which, when its purposes are answered here, will be thrown aside, and be succeeded by a body spiritual and indestructible.

But thanks be to God, that on a question so vast and so deeply interesting as this, we are not left to the dim conjectures of philosophy. We can confidently refer to the written words of God's unerring truth. And I think it impossible for the most superficial reader of the sacred Scriptures not to perceive that the distinction between soul and body is constantly referred to as a fundamental truth. "The dust," said Solomon, "shall return to the earth as it was; but the spirit shall go to God, who gave it." "Fear not them," says our Lord, "who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." "Lord Jesus," exclaimed the expiring martyr Stephen, "receive my



spirit!" When Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, they were at first petrified with astonishment, "supposing that they had seen a spirit." "A spirit," said our Lord, "hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." At our Lord's transfiguration there appeared "Moses and Elias, talking with him." This would have been impossible, if Moses and Elias had not been in existence in the spiritual world. And again, "God," said our Saviour, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" and as He declares himself to be the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," then are these holy men alive; they have survived the destruction of the body, and are now living with Jesus.

"I have a desire," said the Apostle Paul, "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Philip. i. 23). "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8). Now, if we are not to infer from all this that there is a distinction between body and spirit, or soul, and that the mind survives the destruction of the body, then it is impossible for language to be made to teach those truths. To the same purpose is the language of our Lord in that other text of Scripture: "Verily I say unto thee, TO-DAY shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It would seem, then, that as Christians we are relieved from all doubt as to the continued existence of the soul. The dreary doctrine of materialism, and the comfortless creed of a period of suspended consciousness, must alike be false. The soul can never

for one moment cease to be. But here another question, of the deepest interest to the heart, suggests itself, and it is one for which it will be wise and proper in us to search for such satisfaction as God, in His transcending goodness, has afforded to us in His word. If the soul neither dies nor sleeps, then where is the soul, and what is its condition, in the interval between death and the resurrection? It is not enough to say that the faithful and righteous are in Heaven, and the wicked are in Hell. To the inquiring and thoughtful mind the questions instantly recur, What is Heaven? What is Hell? How are these terms to be reconciled with much of the teaching of the New Testament? "To-day," said Christ, "thou shalt be with me in Paradise!" But where is Paradise? It is certainly where our Lord went as soon as He had fulfilled the condition of humanity here; and it is where He no doubt conducted the purified spirit of his justly suffering, but humble penitent. But that it is not the very "Heaven of Heavens," or where the throne of God is displayed in all its dazzling glory, I would infer from this: that our Lord, after His return to this earth from Paradise, commanded the affectionate Mary, who would have embraced Him, to touch Him not, for, said He, "I have not yet ascended to my Father!" He had been well-nigh three days away from this earth; He had ushered the spirit of the penitent thief into the society of the saints in bliss, and yet He had not been to His Father. Does not the conclusion seem to be irresistible, that the souls of the

faithful do not pass immediately from the trials of the flesh into the highest and unveiled presence of God, but that God has prepared for them a paradise of bliss, where, under the smiles and encouragement of their Redeemer, they repose in unruffled tranquillity, with the brightest visions of hope playing before them, and in the enrapturing view of continual advancement in glory? This, which has been the creed of the Church in every age of its history,—long before either Romanism, with its purgatory, or Puritanism, with its lack of reverence for antiquity, was ever heard of,—and has never been doubted until the want of deep learning in modern times has led men, in their horror of purgatory, to deny a most important fact in the history of redemption, and to pervert the plainest texts from their direct and simple meaning. In corroboration of this view of a Scriptural truth, permit me now to draw your attention to those very remarkable words which are quoted by the Apostle Peter from the Psalms (Acts ii. 27): “Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell: neither wilt Thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.” This means, say some commentators, that the body of Christ should not be left in the grave. But the Apostle is speaking of the soul; and surely the soul never goes to the grave; least of all did the soul of Jesus descend there. The design of Peter, in quoting these words, was to prove the resurrection of Christ. The words were spoken by David, but Peter goes on to show that they were not fulfilled in David; for, says he, “David is both dead and

buried ; and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." David, being a prophet in this as in many other instances, personated Christ. He spake, says the Apostle, "of the resurrection of Christ." It was His soul that was not left in Hell ; neither did His flesh see corruption. Now, if the soul of Christ was not LEFT in Hell, then it must have been there. What, then, are we to understand by this ? Why, we are to understand precisely the same thing as we do when we repeat our Creed, and say, "He descended into Hell," or the place of departed spirits. The whole difficulty consists in the idea which we now attach to the word HELL. Whenever it is used, we understand by it the place of torment ; the habitation of the condemned spirits. But in the olden times, in the days of Prophets and Apostles, it was used to signify the invisible place, the general mansion of disembodied spirits. The Greek word is "Hades." The Hebrew is "Sheol." Learned men tell us, that these words are never used to mean the grave or the place of punishment. They always designate the invisible place of spirits. The Hebrew word for grave is "Keber," and the Greek, "Taphos." The word which is used in the New Testament to designate the place of torment, as distinguished from the grave and Hell, is "Gehenna." Unfortunately, in our translation these distinctions are too often confounded, and the same word is sometimes rendered Hell and sometimes the grave ; error has thus been produced and perpetuated. But as soon as we come to understand that by Hades or Hell we are to con-

ceive of the invisible place of departed spirits, then we are no longer in doubt as to that part of the Apostles' Creed which says that Christ "descended into Hell." This place of spirits, according to the ancient Hebrew writers, was divided into Paradise, or the home of the blessed, and Gehenna, or the place of torment. Paradise is a place of security, of hope, of happiness, of unmingled but not of finished bliss. Gehenna is the prison of the profligate and rebellions. It is where they are reserved in their own corroding wretchedness, in their restless and moody anticipations, and in a fearful looking-for of the judgment and fiery indignation, when the day of the Lord shall come, when the trumpet shall sound, and the avenging God shall be revealed in His tremendous majesty.

Now, as our Saviour took on Him the whole condition of humanity, it became necessary, as a part of His wonderful humiliation, that He should share its whole destiny. Having done this; having gone where all men go at death; having there accomplished His work, in proclaiming His victory over the grave, and all the triumph of redeeming love, He returned on the third day and "assumed His body," so that it saw no corruption. And thus was it that the prediction was entirely fulfilled. His soul was not left in Hell, or the place of departed spirits, whither it was necessary it should go; nor did His flesh see the least corruption in the grave where it rested.

But, my brethren, there is another passage to

which you must let me direct your attention, as tending to illustrate the doctrine of the Church, that the present home of the departed is distinct from Heaven, their last and highest home. I allude to the following words, which are applied by the Apostle Peter to Christ, in the third chapter of the First Epistle, and eighteenth verse: "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." Commentators have been sorely puzzled by this text; and many of them, lest they should seem to countenance the exposition of the Romish doctrine in their views of purgatory, have gravely assured us, in direct contradiction to the words themselves, that Christ, by His Spirit, went in the days of Noah, and preached to the inhabitants of a former world. But by no possibility can the words be fairly made to imply any such meaning. They plainly declare that Christ WENT AFTER HIS DEATH, and preached, not to men in the flesh, but to SPIRITS; and to spirits that were in prison, or a place of safe keeping; to spirits which SOMETIME were disobedient; which infers that they were not always so. The sense of the passage I take to be this: when our Lord passed into the region of disembodied spirits, He there, in His ever-active mercy, proclaimed the glad tidings of His victory over death, and of the accomplishment of man's redemption. To the illustrious line of patriarchs, prophets, and

holy men of old, who had received the promises and died in their faith; and not to these only, but also to the disobedient men of the antediluvian race, whom the judgments of God had at the last reclaimed from their delusions—to all of these He proclaimed the triumphant tidings that the one great sacrifice was offered. “It was finished!” The claims of the divine law were satisfied; and eternal salvation was achieved for all saints. He proclaimed to them that He had vanquished him who had the power of death; that He Himself held the keys of Death and Hell, and that in His own good season He would open wide Heaven’s everlasting doors, and translate His chosen to their eternal seats of light and glory.

The reason why the spirits of those who had been disobedient in the days of Noah are so particularly mentioned has been reasonably conjectured to be, that we might be assured that the antediluvians were not uninterested in the work of redemption. It is delightful to the feelings of Christian benevolence to believe that although the general iniquity of the world was so great as to lead the Almighty to overwhelm it in the mighty waters, yet the spiritual condition of many is not to be decided upon from their temporal ruin. It is altogether probable that, although no more were preserved in life than the purposes of God rendered necessary, yet that very many, when they beheld the signs of the approaching deluge thickening and gathering upon them; when they felt the earth trembling and bursting under their feet;

when they beheld the fountains of the great deep breaking up ; when they saw the windows of Heaven opened and the floods pouring down, and in their wide, wasting sweep burying all in ruin, many of them repented, deeply repented of their enormous sins, and found refuge in the mercy of God. Although the flood took them all away, yet those of them who in repentance cried for pardon were accepted, and their humble spirits transported to the habitation of the spirits of the just.

Our ideas upon the subject before us receive, I think, additional strength from every allusion made by the inspired writers to the circumstances of the general resurrection and the future judgment. Is it not exceedingly difficult to perceive the necessity for any such solemn and general development as Prophets and Evangelists have so imposingly pictured, if the destiny of each individual is permanently fixed at death ; if the righteous pass directly to the very highest fruition of their joy ; and if the countless hosts of the redeemed have already been in the most unclouded and transporting presence of God for ages ? How, then, it may be asked, are we to understand the term "Heaven," which is so often used in the Scriptures ? And what, too, is meant by the presence of God and of Christ, to which the souls of the faithful are said to pass after death ? What means the Apostle, when he desires to depart and to be with Christ ? I reply, that by Heaven we are to understand no more than a place of unmingled bliss. But the observant reader must have remarked that



we are elsewhere referred to the "highest Heaven;" to the "Heaven of Heavens," and to the "third Heaven." It is there, then, and there only, that God unveils His face in perfect glory, and that our joy shall be full. So, too, when men are said to die and go to God—to go to where Christ is—we are to understand that God has removed them from the impurity of the world, and elevated them to a higher degree of bliss, and a nearer approximation to His own glory. It means that He hath transported them to mansions in His vast palace of happiness which Christ has prepared for them, and where Christ is forever manifested as the Redeemer to the hosts He has saved; where they continually feed upon the most transporting views of the celestial glory which He opens before them, and live in hope of what is yet to be revealed to them.

It is, then, I think, abundantly evident that in the interval between His death and resurrection, the spirit of our Lord visited the region which is peopled by the populace of buried nations; and it is there, too, that our own souls will be wafted, as soon as we are permitted to escape from the burden of the flesh.

That this region is not the highest Heaven, or the abode of final and finished happiness, has, too, I think, been sufficiently evinced. The final reward of happiness or of misery will not be made until the universal judgment, at the great and terrible day of the Lord. But until that day, in which the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed in His stupendous greatness,

to advance His chosen in the spheres of glory, and to condemn those who have scorned His offered safety to the punishment of the second death—until then, I say, the spirits of the pure are all preserved by the unslumbering vigilance and everlasting power of Him whose they are; they repose in the calm consciousness of peace and eternal salvation; they are cheered by the perpetual applauses of conscience, and they are animated by the new and ever-brightening visions of hope. The wicked are there, too, in their own proper horrors. They are tortured by the raving fury of guilty and debasing passions; they bow under the consciousness of degradation, and the stings of remorse; they are preyed upon by the corroding anguish of malignant envy, and the restless, dark, and unavailing thirst for revenge; and they are forever in fearful anticipation of some more dreadful doom. But what can be more dreadful than this ever-burning but never-consuming fire of the mind? Alas! alas! my brethren, the worst of all anguish, the anguish before which I chiefly shrink, is the anguish which may be wrought by the treacherous host of inward foes—the foes which wicked men, with an infatuation which is awful, cherish and nurture in their own evil hearts, until they grow strong enough to fan the fires of Hell into a deathless flame.

My brethren, the foes of which we speak can only be subdued in the strength of God's Holy Spirit; and for the illuminating and sanctifying influence of this celestial agent must we constantly ask in

faith. And if we are but true to ourselves in this asking, we shall most surely receive. The Spirit, if sought, will always be found of us, and it will do what it alone can do—open for us the gate of Heaven. It will lead us to Christ, and induce us to build all of our hopes of salvation on Him. It will manifest to our dull and worldly perceptions—it will apply to our frail and anxious hearts—it will render effectual to our everlasting safety—the redemption obtained by Christ, notwithstanding the perversity and waywardness of our inward host of rebellious passions. My brethren, let us submit to this training—let us turn our eyes to the illumination which is ready to beam upon us from the throne of God—let us, under the conviction of the peril that it unfolds, prostrate ourselves before the Divine mercy, in the humiliation of penitence, and then, in the confidence of a Heaven-inspired faith, let us cherish, let us feed upon a hope full of ardor, full of immortality. Yea, brethren, let us watch, and pray, and strive, that we may yet reign and triumph with Jesus in the kingdom of the Father. Let us doubt not, but earnestly believe that we shall pass through the avenue of death to be united to the society of the blessed from every kindred, and tongue, and people, who are engaged in mutual offices of ceaseless love. In that bright mansion we shall all rejoice together, from the patriarchal form, before whose honored and hoary head we shall remember to have bowed in our youth, to the infant innocent that we have lodged in the freshly-opened grave.

Then, my brethren, at the sound of the Archangel's trump, we shall be translated to the still higher city of the living God, where dwell an innumerable company of Angels and Archangels clothed in glory, and where God, the Judge of all, sits arrayed in light! Come then, my brethren, and let us ascend upon the wings of faith to the abodes of the blessed; and let me conjure you by all that is sublime, by all that is bright and blessed in Heaven, by its everlasting songs of joy and hallelujahs of thanksgiving, to come to the almighty Saviour who is waiting to receive, to pardon, to sanctify, and to save you. His offers of pardon, of grace, and eternal safety are indiscriminate and unconfined. Let, then, your eye be constantly glancing from the cross where He died to redeem you, to the throne of light where He is ready to receive you, and you will see the dark valley of the shadow of death through which you must pass illuminated by the light of His countenance, and then, when the Angel of Death shall appear to summon you to His presence, you will see Him throw aside the curtain before the open gates of Heaven, and the spirits of our own loved ones of the earth waiting to welcome us to their eternal home of glory.





### JACOB AND ESAU.

*“And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, Bless me, even me also, O my father!”*  
*Genesis 27th, 34th.*



MY brethren, is this the cry of vexatious disappointment, or is it the utterance of anguish, wrung from a wounded spirit under the sense of spiritual destitution and religious loss?

I know that it is usual to represent the character of Esau as being but little worthy of the Christian's sympathy. I know that it is usual to regard him as a “profane person,” but little influenced by the restraining sanctions of religious fear, and holding cheaply the entrancing associations of religious hope. But, at the same time, I know human nature too well not to understand how difficult it is for a heart which has been early under the discipline of religious training, and is steadily surrounded by religious associations and religious examples, entirely to escape from shuddering thoughts connected with religion. As little sympathy as that heart may have by nature with spiritual truth, yet there will be seasons of darkness in which it will be found

bowing beneath the subduing influence of the Spirit, and in which it would most gladly exchange all the most coveted triumphs and treasures of earth for a warrant to yield its confiding trust to the peace-giving promises of God! Esau was probably a man but little swayed by the religion of his fathers. Feebly animated by that flame of divine love which had glowed in the bosom of Abraham, and but rarely yielding to that dread of the divine anger which had controlled the life of Isaac, still, however, as the first-born of his mother he was of right the priest of his father's house, and the direct channel through which, to all human expectations, the all-glorious promise of the Messiah should descend and be realized. Although it is entirely in keeping with such a character that, in a moment of fretful impatience, he should consent to barter away these high privileges of his birth for a momentary gratification which he coveted, so also is it entirely characteristic, that in the solemn hour in which his aged and decaying father had alluded to his approaching death, and had touchingly reminded him of the necessity of his receiving, in the solemnity of a religious rite, the awful trust of preserving the knowledge of a Redeemer, and of bequeathing the promise to posterity; it is altogether in character, I say, that the same man should be smitten with a sense of his insane and impious folly—that he should evince the most absorbing anxiety to retrieve, if possible, the consequences of his thoughtlessness, by securing the blessing from the divinely-

commissioned lips of his departing parent, and that he should utter the most bitter and piercing cries of anguish when, in utter desolation of heart, he found, as he supposed, every religious prospect darkened, and all religious hope entirely blighted forever.

The portion of Scripture with which our text is connected is as intricate in its bearings, and perhaps as perplexing to ordinary readers, as any other in the whole volume of revealed truth. The history of Jacob and Esau has been assailed by the scoffs of the infidel, and it has embarrassed the faith of the believer; and yet is it susceptible of the most satisfactory explanation, and in every part is it replete with lessons of impressive worth to all the generations of our race. The first rule that I would venture to suggest, as being highly important for our guidance in examining the characters in sacred history, is this: that we are never to suppose that God approves of all the doings of those frail creatures whom, in different ages, He has selected as instruments by means of which He was to carry out His purposes of mercy to mankind. In employing them to deal with men, He employed them as men; He did not make them angels; they did not cease to be human, or to be exempt from human weakness. Imperfect as they were, free to fall as they were—and fall as they did, grievously and again—yet were they the best of their kind, and amid all their infirmities they were still endued with qualities and attributes of character most admirably adapted for the great ends they were designed to

promote. In selecting them from the great mass of corruption and idolatry which covered the earth, as the foundation upon which God would build up His spiritual house—the Church,—God no doubt did wisely and for the best, but in doing so He did not take from them their moral liberty, nor is He ever to be understood as sanctioning and approving any of the follies and crimes into which the abuse of that liberty might lead these His responsible creatures. Amid general irreligion and wickedness, these men were IN GENERAL luminous models of faith and righteousness, to be revered and imitated; but OCCASIONALLY they became as striking examples of the uncertainty of all human virtue; and as such they are to be marked of all men, most cautiously shunned and humbly lamented.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Solomon, and Peter are names most intimately associated with the true and lasting glory of God upon the earth; but yet we are never to suppose that these were sinless men, or that their sins were ever suffered to be unrebuked by their Maker. From the earnest penitence and deep humility of soul under which they sought to rise from the debasement and misery of their sins, they were still recognized as the friends of God; and God, in consideration of their steadfast fidelity to His worship amid an almost universal idolatry, was not, as the Apostle has it, “ashamed to be called their God,” notwithstanding their occasional and mournful lapses from virtue.

This brings me to the suggestion of the *second rule*



which I would that you should keep in mind in all your examinations into the characters of sacred history. The rule is this: that you are to understand commendations which are so constantly and sweepingly bestowed upon these characters, as having a direct and almost exclusive reference to their freedom from the all-withering sin of idolatry. It is difficult *for us* to enter into the spirit of the sacred writings in reference to that particular sin, unless we will consent to remember that the very object of all the dispensations of God to which they relate was to preserve the world from its dreadful influence. When, therefore, the ENEMIES of GOD are spoken of, idolaters are alluded to; and when the FRIENDS of GOD are named, the allusion is to men who were not idolaters. If one King of Israel is said to be a man after God's own heart, although his life may have been deeply stained with moral guilt, the commendation has reference only to his freedom, as a king, from the guilt of idolatry. If another king, Jeroboam, for instance, is represented as being one who above all others "made Israel to sin," although the nation were as morally corrupt as they well could be before his day, then are we to read the condemnation as reaching to his abominable tendency to the worship of false gods.

We can only understand, brethren, why it was that this sin eclipsed all others in the sight of God, by reflecting that the direct tendency of idolatry is to disturb all moral distinctions, to confound virtue with vice and by obliterating from the human mind

every standard of purity and right, and all sense of law, with its restraining sanctions, it leaves the world without security from the wasting influence of violent and debasing passions. I come now to the particular case of Jacob and Esau. Jacob had been selected by God as the channel through which the entrancing promise of the Messiah was to receive its fulfilment. It had been so announced to his mother; nor are we at liberty to doubt the propriety of the divine choice in this respect, when the religious characters of the two men are fairly weighed. He was, indeed, the younger son, but the general rule that the elder should take precedence in spiritual matters carried with it no binding force in opposition to superior fitness in the character of the younger man. Before the days of Jacob, Seth had been chosen as the keeper of the promise, before either Cain or Abel; Shem before his elder brother; and Isaac himself before Ishmael, the first-born of Abraham his father. The fact, then, had been most clearly revealed to Jacob, that in him should the promise rest. "In him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed." The accomplishment of this promise was the great thing to which the good men of the earth had looked from the earliest ages; and in the religious bosom of Jacob it seemed to have been cherished with an intensity of feeling which consumed all other considerations. In this was exhibited his frailty, and from this proceeded his folly and his crimes.

My brethren, how important, how solemn is the lesson which is thus conveyed to all human consid-

erations! How imposing is the reflection, that even the holiest motives and the soundest principles of faith, if their exercise be not kept in check and subjection by a vigilant regard to God's laws, may at any time lead us into the most blighting errors of conduct, or to the perpetration of the most enormous crimes! The whole history of our race will go to prove the truth of this. Men in every age, when burning with religious ardor for the accomplishment of high hopes, have too often, in the vehemence of their feelings, passed every bound and barrier, and because their *end* was good, they have too easily forgotten that the means to which they have resorted were unholy and absolutely blighting; that although their motives were not depraved, yet that the deeds to which those motives led were every way unsanctified and darkly criminal! Ah! who does not know how constantly, in small things as well as in great matters, "good men and true" have forgotten that the "end does not sanctify the *means*," and that "we are never to do evil that good may come from it!"

The great and peculiar excellence in the character of Jacob was the religious faith with which he cherished the Divine promise of a REDEEMER, who should remove the curse and repair the ruin wrought by the FALL. The striking and ruinous defect in the character of Esau was a reckless indifference to all the controlling motives and transporting associations connected with this high and holy promise—an indifference which led him to evince contempt for the

promised Saviour in despising the birthright which led to that Saviour, and afterwards to forsake the worship of the God of his fathers through the forbidden alliance with the heathen daughters of Heth.

With such differing and conflicting attributes of character as these, is it at all a subject of surprise or complaint that the frail and guilty Jacob should still in his faith be more an object of the divine care, and be more extensively employed to carry out the divine purposes, than Esau could possibly be, who, although an injured brother, was a faithless and irreligious man?

And this brings me to the most interesting division of our subject: it brings me to consideration of the doctrine of a retribution for sin, even in the present life. It brings me to the duty of showing you that although, in the wise economy of God, we may be blessed with the highest and most precious of spiritual privileges; although, in the use of those privileges, we may be devoutly zealous, and while thus acting we may be instrumental in winning down an inestimable amount of good for our fellow-men, yet never let us suppose that any departure from the unbending and eternal law of right can ever go without its proper and sure return of misery. No matter what may be the MOTIVE which leads to wrongdoing—no matter how effectually the sin may be blotted out of the book of God's remembrance for eternity, in consideration of our present humility and penitence—yet I believe that it is impossible from the very nature of things but that WRONG-DOING

SHOULD PRODUCE SORROW. So, at least, I think that saddening experience must have taught every heart that hears me. So, too, must we all read the recorded dispensation of God's righteous providence in His dealings with our race. In the remarkable history before us, all and every one were sinners; and so too did each one receive the punishment due to his measure of guilt, and in a mode most strikingly analogous to the nature of his crime. *Isaac*, the father, to gratify a foolish partiality for his elder son, would have counteracted, if he could, the designs of Almighty Providence. *Esau*, the elder son, after having in irreligious levity bartered away the high spiritual privileges of his birthright, would yet have iniquitously retained the blessings and benefits pertaining to that birthright. *Rebekah*, the mother, contrived a scheme of fraud in order to defeat the intentions of Isaac and Esau, when she should have relied, in the confidence of faith, upon the sure workings of God's just providence. And Jacob became the co-worker and willing instrument for carrying out the subtlety of his mother in a scheme of wicked deception which he knew to merit a curse rather than a blessing. Thus were all of them sinners, and so too did each one reap the bitter fruits of his unrighteous sowing. God, in visiting upon each one precisely the measure of suffering which his offence required, has vindicated before angels and men His unyielding respect and support for what is virtuous and good, and His absolute hatred for what is wicked and evil. An examination of that most exqui-

sitely dispensed retribution will, I trust, impress upon our hearts the caution and solemn warning which our proneness to evil demands, while the MERCY which we will find most beautifully mingled with the judgments, will sustain the hope which ought to save the most guilty from despair.

If, my brethren, it has been impossible for us to trace anything in the development of this history sufficient to satisfy us that any punishment had fallen upon these guilty agents on this side of the grave, yet would it have afforded us no ground for distrusting the retributive justice of Heaven. For while the Bible represents the practice of holiness as having a general tendency to secure serenity and happiness, even in the present life, yet does it at the same time caution us against the error of supposing either that this world's outward prosperity is to be the reward of goodness, or that the practice of iniquity is to be necessarily attended with all sorts of evil fortune. On the contrary, the Scriptures uniformly exhort us to look to eternity rather than to time for the full development of God's retributive justice. Although, if we could but read the heart, I am quite sure we should discover that outward prosperity was no index of happiness to the guilty mind, yet here, to all outward appearance, "the same events too often happen alike to all," and we are taught to look to futurity for the reward which shall be openly annexed to each man's deeds. The wicked may now seem to flourish, amid all the changes of time and the revolutions of the world,

which bring dark misfortune upon other folk; yet must we look forward to the retribution which awaits them with shuddering and horror—and most anxiously should we warn them of the necessity of averting, by faith and penitence, the recompense that awaits the guilty and unrepenting at the resurrection of the dead.

The principle, then, to which I cling is this: that RETRIBUTION FOLLOWS CRIME;—to the heart and secret feelings of the sinner it is always so, EVEN IN THIS LIFE. To the superficial observation of others, this may not always be apparent here; but as surely as there is a God that judgeth the earth, just as certainly will the beautifully proportioned arrangements in the retributive justice of that God be seen and known of all men in the great day of account that is before us!

In the history we are considering, as it has been written for the instruction and warning of all men, so may all men see the Divine Providence vindicated in the punishments which clearly follow upon the crimes of each of the agents in the scene,—punishments which were not only speedily inflicted, but which were in the most striking harmony with the nature and measure of their offences. The crime of Isaac consisted in his permitting his heart to yearn with a misplaced and overweening fondness upon a less deserving child, and in seeking to bestow upon that child a religious blessing, notwithstanding the child's religious disobedience and waywardness, and the divine teaching to the contrary, miraculously

given. His punishment consisted in the bitter disappointment he experienced in finding the long-cherished purpose of his heart frustrated and defeated forever, at the very moment of its fancied fulfilment. Ah! how dreadful must have been the anguish of wounded feeling in the bosom of the poor old man, to find that, while he supposed he was manifesting his tenderness for the son of his love, and conferring upon him an inestimable blessing, he was absolutely (and through the execrable duplicity of the wife of his bosom) alienating "the promise" from Esau forever, and pouring out the warmest and weightiest wishes of his dying heart upon the head of Jacob. Upon the erring and guilty mother the punishment was as direct, and far more severe! The purpose of God with respect to Jacob even her wicked devices could not be permitted to defeat, but the very success with which her subtleties seemed to be crowned became to her a source of incurable wretchedness and desolation of heart. From the hour of her guilt, the child of her heart's best love, long and anxiously as he had been cherished, was separated from her forever. He was driven as a fugitive and houseless wanderer from the home of his father; and never, no, never did the eye of his loving mother light upon his face again! With the rejected and injured Esau was she compelled to make her home. He was the ruler of his father's house, and the heir of his substance; but from him she had no right to expect sympathy or consolation. As a child so deeply injured, she could scarcely look to



him for either confidence or affection. In the midst of her dark desolation and the multitude of her sorrows, she had no one to comfort her. In the feebleness of her waning years, she could weep at the recollection of the loved and the lost; but she could only weep “unpitied and alone!”

We come now to glance at the influence which his crime exerted upon the after-events in the life of Jacob. We have already seen him flying as a criminal into the vast and howling wilderness, and toiling his anxious way towards distant lands; without friends to succor or servants to guide, without tent, and without camel; as a lonely “Syrian, ready to perish,” with his staff only did he pass the waters of Jordan. And then, as we continue to trace his movements, how continually and how wonderfully did each remarkable misfortune of his life serve to bring back upon his bleeding heart the recollection of his *fault!*

“By subtlety he had imposed upon his father, and by subtlety did Laban, the father, impose upon him! He had betrayed his father into the acceptance of the less beloved instead of the more beloved son, and by a father was he himself betrayed into the acceptance of the less beloved instead of the more beloved daughter! Isaac supposed it had been Esau, and he blessed him. Behold it was Jacob, and yet he was constrained to confirm the blessing! Jacob himself supposed it had been Rachel, and he married her. Behold it was Leah, but yet he was constrained to confirm the unwilling choice!” In a most important and deeply interesting matter he had wounded

the affections of another, and so, too, in a matter the most important and deeply interesting of his life, were his affections wounded in return. Late was Rachel gained, and early was she lost; and as he had caused his father to grieve at beholding the promise descend to Jacob's, and not Esau's seed, so was he also grieved at beholding the same promise continued in Leah's, and not Rachel's line. It was to Judah, and not to Joseph, that the sceptre was given. Instead of being "*Lord over his brethren,*" as the literal reading of his father's blessing would have led him to expect, he lived to bow down in abject humility before his brother. As his crime had brought dissension into his father's family, and inflicted upon the venerable old man the misery of seeing his sons at enmity with each other, the elder seeking for the blood of the younger, so also was dissension brought into his own house, and hatred, variance, and bitter strife were the sad portion of his parental days.

Our limits will not permit me to trace him through all the sorrows of his life, but the wonderful propriety and appropriateness with which his punishment followed upon his crime cannot escape even the most thoughtless reader of the sacred pages.

Jacob himself appears to have been most deeply affected by the sadness which had given its hue to his lot in life; and the pathetic testimony which he bore, in the evening of his days, to the melancholy which had covered them as they rolled away from him, is worthy of more attention than mere words of

course from a repining old man. "Evil" as well as "few," said he, "have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been!"

Now, my brethren, when we thus see how surely and appropriately retribution follows upon wrongdoing, even in the greatest and best of men—if we see that even the elect of God, they to whom appertained "the adoption, the glory, and the covenants," were made to suffer long for the evil they had done, then let us not suppose that the seeds we may have sown in the fields of the wicked one will ever fail to produce their proper return of sorrow and of shame! And, oh! let us heed the warning that is thus loudly spoken to our hearts against being beguiled anew into the deceitful ways of sin!

But conscience-stricken as we may be under the reflections which these suggestions are calculated to awaken, yet how comforting is it to know that it has ever been the way with God "to dress with His own hand the wound which the sins of His creatures have compelled Him to inflict," and so to prove that He smote them with a Father's love. Scarcely had Adam fallen when He hastened to publish to him the method He had appointed for his recovery. It was thus that the RUIN and the RANSOM entered Paradise together. Scarcely had Nathan uttered his parable of keen reproach to David, when he was taught to add, "The Lord hath put away thy sin!" Scarcely had Peter denied his Lord, and wept bitter tears in the humility of his repenting heart, when Jesus sent him merciful tokens of His forgiveness. And so, too,

in that forlorn moment when Jacob, as a wretched wanderer, had not where to lay his head in the cold and desolate wilderness, did God, even the justly-offended God of his fathers, open the Heavens before the outcast, to assure him that He had not forgotten to be gracious, nor had He shut up His loving-kindness in everlasting displeasure; that perverse as his way had been, and loudly as it called to Heaven for the punishment it would receive, yet still the bruised reed should not be broken, nor should God's favor be cancelled forever; that, notwithstanding God's displeasure for a season, yet might the sufferer find cause for triumph and cheer in the blessed assurance of his final interest in a Saviour to come. Ah! how delightful it is thus to be able to vindicate the merciful dealings of our God with man! And although, my brethren, we may here be troubled on every side, never, while the bow of promise spans the heavens, will we be distressed without *hope*. We may be perplexed, but we will not be in despair. We may be persecuted, but we will not be forsaken. We may be cast down, but never—no, never, through the strength of Jesus, will we be destroyed!





### REPENTANCE.

*“Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

*Luke 13th, 2d, 3d.*



WHO these Galileans were whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices history does not tell us. It is presumed, however, that they were a set of factious men, professing to be the followers of one Judas of Galilee, who taught that the Lord was the only King of His people, and that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. A party of these men Pilate had surprised and slaughtered, while engaged in the solemn offices of their religion. And to show his contempt and wrath for their seditious doctrines, he had caused their blood to be mingled with that of the animals they were consuming in sacrifice. Because this butchery was permitted by Providence, the Jews regarded it as a strong manifestation of the Divine anger, and as a direct judgment upon the sufferers for their great impiety. But when the circumstance was mentioned to our Lord, He promptly rebuked the popular but mistaken view of it, as being neces-

sarily a direct judgment from Heaven upon more than ordinary wickedness. He tells them that the visitations of God's providence are not always to be construed into punishments for flagrant iniquity, nor are we with spiritual complacency to draw conclusions as to our own superior righteousness because we are exempt from such calamities. "These Galileans were not sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things," nor were those upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell and slew them, greater sinners than other men in Jerusalem. "I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!"

The first important truth with which I would seek to impress you from these words is this: That we are never to conclude that we are better than other men only because we do not suffer so much. The habit of forming private judgments as to the end and objects of the Divine providence is delusive and dangerous, and calculated to foster spiritual arrogance. That the occurrences of time are regulated by Him who will rule through eternity, it would be impiety to doubt or deny. But who can suppose that we should be permitted to understand the end of His doings from their beginning; or that the final cause, the design of the Deity, in the operations we witness should always be known by the weakest, the most ignorant, and the most fallible of mankind? Yet to draw the most absolute conclusions as to the Divine approbation or displeasure from the apparent manifestations of His providence is too

often considered to be the legitimate dictate and duty of religion, and has too often been the occasion of self-righteous and malignant persecutions, but little consistent with the humility of the Christian faith.

Although, my brethren, the moral retribution for crime is far more certainly and more extensively felt, even in this life, than superficial thinkers are apt to imagine, yet it is in general a secret and personal experience; and so far as the eye of the world is concerned, this life is not the season for the necessary and manifest punishment of guilt or the reward of righteousness. It is precisely because we do not perceive a regular system operating here in the distribution of happiness and misery that the human heart argues so strongly for a future and more perfect system of existence—where the rewards shall be reaped for which our present discipline is preparing us, and the happiness we enjoy shall be proportioned to the discipline we have cherished, and the works of holiness and charity by which our lives have been marked.

If we accustom ourselves to believe that serious misfortunes in this life are always judgments sent from God, we must, of course, come to regard success as the measure of merit, and agree that a cause must be just which for the moment is triumphant. But how dreadful would be the teaching of this philosophy! Who does not perceive that it is indeed pregnant with evils, against which true religion has never ceased to frown and to protest? That “God will prosper the right” is strictly true, if it be con-

sidered in reference to the ultimate and final consequence of actions. But the maxim is sinful and impertinent if it be applied to the petty and impure contests for power, or to the passionate struggles for triumph in the sublunary world. Nothing can be more directly contrary to religion than to suppose that the Deity should immediately manifest the intention of His doings to the demands of human curiosity. It, on the contrary, constitutes the very test and triumph of religious faith, that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His judgments as ours.

Joseph, as the slave of Potiphar, and in the darkness of his prison-house, was to all human appearance an unfortunate and degraded man, nor could any human wisdom have predicted that he should so soon have become the lord of all Egypt. And so, too, the outlawed and condemned Daniel was raised, by the almighty providence of his God, from the den of ferocious beasts to the enjoyment of the princely magnificence of the East. It is thus that God mocks and defeats the calculations of human wisdom. But goodness does not always rise upon the ruins of crime in the present life. The pure spirit of the martyred Stephen reaped the only reward of faith and of a cruel death with the Lord Jesus in heaven. And the example of the Lord Jesus Himself should surely be sufficient to satisfy us that, according to the measure of God's justice, virtue is not always to look for its triumphs in time.

Oh, no! this earth is not the inheritance of the just! Many, very many have been prepared for



heaven only through humbling vicissitudes and heart-rending bereavements. In common, my brethren, I fear we all talk too presumptuously of the dispensations and designs of God.

Narrow, selfish, and superstitious notions of the Deity and of His providence are in every way mischievous. Alas! my brethren, with the history of the world before us, and with our own observation of every-day life, who will venture arrogantly to pronounce upon this thing, that it is a blessing, and upon that thing, that it is a curse? That this man God is exalting, because the sun now shines on his path, and that another man God means to depress and destroy, because present misfortunes cloud his path with gloom? Who can ever know how far God designs to discipline us by apparent prosperity, or when or how we are to be advanced to future exaltation through the ministry of present sorrow and pain?

But one thing we may know, and that is, that while in humility and patience we are to commit our souls, with their immortal interests, to Him who has formed them for His glory, and from whose knowledge no littleness can escape—whose power no magnitude can resist, whose kindness no ingratitude can exhaust, and of whose goodness every creature partakes—we are never at the same time to demand that He would evince His approbation or displeasure to suit the vain or captious fancies of conceited man.

It was once, as we know, a part of English law

that miraculous support should be the test of innocence. And the judge who calmly expected that the trembling prisoner before him should prove his innocence by walking harmlessly over red-hot iron was not more irrational than the enthusiastic sectarian of our own times, who contends for the truth of his peculiar doctrines only because they have met with a temporary success in the world. There is no absurdity so glaring, there is no superstition so blighting, there is no heresy so seriously injurious to the progress of truth, that may not at some time or other have been sustained, if tried by a test like this!

But a second lesson, my brethren, which we are at liberty to draw from this portion of the Scripture is this, that the visitations of God's providence, whether they be designed as immediate punishments for personal transgressions or not—a matter at no time within our province to decide—may yet, always and at all times, be ordered to exert a salutary influence upon other minds.

The man who is cut off by a sudden and violent death may not have been MORE CRIMINAL than other men; but it may be that his God removes him in mercy, just when He perceives that he is as good as he ever would be. It may be that he is at that time better than other men, and therefore better prepared to go; or it may be that he is perversely and hopelessly wicked, and therefore deserving of any fate. But however this may be, who is there of us that can at any time see a fellow-creature

overwhelmed in a moment, and consigned to his great account, whether it be in youth, in manhood, or in age; whether it be in virtue or in wickedness, without being instinctively led to inquire, Why have I been spared while he is removed; am I prepared to go? Who is there that has reached half the term of human life, and when he looks back upon the catalogue of the associates of his early years, and asks, where are they? but must feel a sense of desolation chilling the life-blood of his heart, and is not instinctively led to ask, Why am I thus alone in the world, of all the warm friends of by-gone times? Why am I not with them where they now are? My brethren, mark this: we may have been spared, not because we are purer and better, but because we were more impure and defiled, and less prepared to go. We have been spared, it may be, in God's forbearing mercy, that we might reform our lives; or it may be that we are preserved to be made use of as instruments for the discipline of others; and then perhaps, if we reform not, to be ourselves the more conspicuous monuments of the folly and infatuation of perverse and sinful courses.

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!”

Let us never then, my brethren, dwell with complacency upon the guilt or the misery of others. Let us rather contemplate all calamity with pity, and all flagrant wickedness with shuddering and with horror. Let us always pause with solemn feelings before the extraordinary manifestation of God's providence,

and on the instant, faithfully communing with our own hearts, let us strive to discover what we have of ourselves to answer at His awful bar, if our summons should now come. Ay, every visitation that overtakes others is a warning to ourselves to consider the condition and fate of humanity. They require us as rational beings to recall our scattered thoughts, to examine our past conduct, and to ponder the consequences of our actions, to repent of our iniquities, and thus to prepare for our summons, lest we perish eternally.

My brethren, it is the property of true wisdom to draw from all human experience something for our own improvement; and if our observation of the orderings of Providence are not directed to this end, they are worthless. It would rather seem, however, from the practice of mankind, that they used the merciful warning which God is affording them in the fate of others only as food for their self-righteousness. They too often silently attach merit to themselves because they have not been visited with calamity; and they learn to magnify the frailties of the unfortunate, that their own deficiencies may be concealed by the comparison. Now it is against all this that I would most anxiously warn you. My brethren, we know not the hearts of other men; we know not the ways of God; but this we may know, that if God should be extreme to mark iniquity against us, we must *all die!* Let every heart realize its own responsibilities and its own deficiencies, and then let every ear drink in the solemn declaration of

the text—Except ye repent ye shall all perish! My brethren, it is a guiding maxim of inestimable worth! Let us then engrave it on our hearts, and carry it on the palms of our hands. Let us write it upon our door-posts, and upon the foreheads of the children of our love, that we may read it with the morning light, and with the shades of evening. It reduces us to the very point from which the first step in the way of salvation must be taken. Repentance is the “strait gate” through which we are to enter into life. If the way be narrow it is *plain*. It requires no acuteness or discrimination, no unusual share of intelligence to discover it. An honest mind and a sincere heart can be at no loss about it. It requires no deep learning nor profound philosophy, no acuteness of perception to read aright this simple message from God—“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” The issue, then, is fairly before us. Will we repent? will we forsake our evil ways? will we accept of God’s offered grace, and cast ourselves on His mercy in Christ? or will we resist His spirit—neglect His offered salvation—hold on to our sins, and thus defy His power and brave His eternal wrath? If such be our decision, then must God cease to be everything that He now is before we can be saved. His holiness, His justice, and His truth must be destroyed before He can confound innocence with guilt, or bestow the rewards of virtue upon profligacy and crime!

To the impenitent and unbelieving, the idea of a God of holiness is fearful! But the terrors of the

Lord sleep in forbearance that men may be allured to righteousness. Christ has banished from the throne of the Eternal the lightning which might be made to play around it. He has banished the thunders which might appall the guilty soul. He mingles the beams of mercy with the splendors of omnipotency, and in soothing accents of pity He invites the penitent to safety and to repose. My brethren, there is not one of us whom the Saviour would not gladly receive into the arms of His mercy. There is not one of us over whose repentance the angels of heaven would not rejoice. Oh ! come, then, before the heart be utterly seared by the hardening influence of crime ; before the day of salvation be past—before death overwhelms us forever—let us consent to lay hold on the glorious and entrancing hope that is set before us !

By the sacredness of your religious hopes and by the value of your eternal peace would I exhort you, to compare your hearts and lives with the precepts of the God you profess to adore. Think of your open offences and your secret sins. Think of your omissions of duty and your violation of express commands. Think of all your broken resolutions and abused mercies, and then let the warning of the Saviour ring in your ears—“ Except ye repent, ye shall perish ! ”

If there be a heart among you that feels its need of repentance, that feels the necessity of doing something in the matter of preparation for eternity that it has never yet done, and yet postpones its duty to God as if times and seasons were its own, and as if

you could command the arrows of death, that are flying so thick around you as to darken the very atmosphere of life, and which are hourly prostrating thousands without notice or warning—without perhaps one moment's time for repentance, or to offer up one single prayer for pardon ;—thus, I say, to feel the need of repentance, and yet *repent not*, is no more than weak and wicked trifling. It is a plain and awful mockery of Him whose smile is Heaven, but whose frown is Hell!

There are but few men upon the earth who have not, in some hours of solemn thought, resolved upon future repentance and reformation of life. More than this; I have the strongest persuasion that if we could but penetrate the dreary abodes of the lost, we would find but few there who had not at some time or other cherished similar intentions, but the convenient season never came. And if you, my brethren, continue to withhold from God in your days of joy and health, it is awful to think how easily you may be seduced from Him in your short and bitter intervals of languor and disease. Even after health and strength have departed and the fever of death is at work in the veins, yet amid the flattery of hope and the inspiring wishes of friends, how many are swept away by death before they well could realize that they were mortal and must go! How many are buoyed up by the desire of life and the expectation of recovery, and wait to devote the soul to the Creator until the very moment that it is quivering to escape from their lips! By all that is

important in eternity, by all that is truly peaceful and tranquillizing in time, by all that is consoling and by all that can be terrific in the hour of death, would I conjure you not to postpone the repentance that is due to your God until your life has been exhausted in the ways of sin, until for you the LAST DAY has arrived, and your garments are folded up, and the sun grows dim, the elements grow thick, and the earth reels and trembles, and then opens to receive you! My brethren, I deny not the possibility of a saving repentance upon the bed of death; far, very far be it from me to limit either the power or the mercy of God. Yea, I believe in that charity that hopeth all things. I believe, and I rejoice in believing, that very many whose professions of penitence were only made in that last and solemn hour, are now numbered with the blest. Yea, my brethren, I do believe that even when the strength of the body has been palsied, and no utterance is given to the tongue, and the mind seems to be wrapped in stupor and darkness, that even THEN the consciousness of the over-working presence of God may be fresher than it ever was, and while the senses are locked up to all outward impressions, that the renovating work of God's Holy Spirit may be going on within. Yea, my brethren, I glory in believing that the same Almighty power and mercy that could release Lazarus of old from the chains of death, can also release the sinner from the chains of the prince of evil ones at the very moment that he trembles on the brink of eternity! I believe that



He who carried the spirit of the penitent thief triumphantly to Paradise will also bear away in triumph the spirit of every penitent sinner, no matter how late he turns to Him for reconciliation and safety, provided that He who knows the heart better than the world can ever know it, provided that He perceived the penitence to be sincere and the faith to be full and humble! But while I am thus far from denying the possibility of a polluted soul being washed in the waters of life in the very last hours of its trial, yet am I persuaded there never was a deathbed penitent who, if his cry could have been heard over the world, would not have admonished his fellows, by all that was entrancing in the hope of immortal life, not to presume upon the continuance of time, nor to put off the work of repentance for the seasons of sickness and death.

My brethren, have you ever stood by the bedside of the dying man, and marked his emaciated frame, and his pale and livid face; the most active energies, how powerless; the fires of the brightest genius, how clouded; and failing reason waxing dim and fitful, like the wasted taper flickering in its socket—when the only effort and anxiety is to allay the remaining pangs of death, which are now coming hard and fast upon him. Oh! is this the time, amid the throes of expiring nature, when the strength of the body is gone, and the energies are gone, and when he has only the dregs and lees of a guilty life to offer—is this the time for him to begin to work out his salvation? Is this the time for him to begin the great

work of self-examination, and for memory's weeping eye to linger upon the dark catalogue of his sins? Is this the time for him to begin to ask for the aid of the Divine grace to enable him to burst through the chains of evil habits made strong by time, and to break away from the iron grasp of the tyrant who, with active and jealous vigilance, has watched him as his devoted prey? Oh no! the hour of death, in which all the consoling lights of religion and all the strength of faith are necessary to support the soul against the doubts, fears, and anguish that oppress it, is not the time to begin to seek, in utter darkness and ignorance, for the rod and the staff of God, on which we must lean for support as we pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death. My friends, we may turn from all these powerful motives; we may resist all of these subduing considerations, and, absorbed with the business or bewildered amid the fascinations of the world, we may think little of eternity and less of the sins that degrade us; but it is still the emphatic declaration of the Saviour, that unless we REpent, WE SHALL PERISH! If, then, amid all the smothering influences that press upon us, there be yet left one spark of piety in these cold hearts of ours, let us at least resolve to watch it, as that by which alone we can be lighted to the courts of Heaven. Let us guard it, feed it, and strive to kindle it to a brighter, steadier, and holier flame. And let us keep alive the alarming conviction that if that spark ever expires, WE DIE!



### THE PRODIGAL SON.

*"Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee."*

*Luke 15th, 18th.*



OW delightful is the illustration our Lord has given us of the Divine mercy to guilty mortals, in the beautiful parable of the "*Prodigal Son!*"

How consoling is it to know, that our Heavenly Father regards His frail and erring creatures with all of a parent's tenderness and love; that He is always anxious to recall them to obedience and happiness—always ready to pardon and to bless them!

My brethren, we can never think too highly of the redeeming love and unfailing mercy of our God; but, at the same time, we must steadily remember that Christ has given us this affecting display of His tenderness to encourage us to repentance, as well as to touch our hearts and conciliate our love. While, then, we dwell with rapture upon the tenderness of the Parent who forgives, we must never forget to identify ourselves with the humiliation and the penitence of the son who is forgiven.

By the elder and the younger sons our Lord de-

signed to represent the JEW and the GENTILE, and to expose the malignant jealousy which the Pharisees had evinced, because God, the equal Father of all, had shown His readiness to receive the prodigal but penitent Gentiles to His everlasting favor.

The great truth with which I am anxious to impress you from this portion of Scripture is this, that while there are none of us whose sins do not so far resemble those of the prodigal son as to call for deep humiliation and heartfelt repentance, there is, at the same time, no human being so vile and abandoned but that, if he will sincerely return, he will find his Heavenly Father all-merciful to pardon, and all-powerful to save.

These truths, so important to human salvation and so delightful to the dearest hopes of man, are beautifully illustrated by our Lord under the fictitious character of the ungrateful child of a doting parent's love. The younger son of a tender father, impatient under the wholesome restraints of parental authority, spurning the endearment of parental affection, closing his ears and steeling his heart against the warnings of parental love, and renouncing all confidence in his father's wisdom as his guide to happiness, launched impetuously upon the world's wide sea, a heedless wanderer from the home of his friends. Under his restless sense of independence he rushes upon every pleasure, however gross, and upon every form of vice, however revolting; plunging from excess to excess, and hurrying from crime to crime, until time, property, constitution, character, are all sacrificed at the

shrine of folly and of guilt. "He began to be in want," but still he thinks not of repentance; he is not yet awakened to a sense of his crimes; he cares not to think of the true source and nature of his misery, nor does he yet think of an humble confession of his errors, nor of returning to his forgiving parent. He was still confiding in his own wisdom and his own strength, and he "went and hired himself to a citizen of that country." But there was a mighty famine in the land, and he would fain have filled himself with the "husks that the swine did eat." What a close to a career whose dawn was heightened by hope, and whose meridian sun beamed to ripen a harvest of joy! Where are now the companions of his unhallowed hours? Where are the boisterous friends of his days of prosperity and riot? Alas! some are sunk in wretchedness equal to his own, and some are false and shy when they can no longer feed upon his prodigality. He is rejected and forsaken of all; "no man gave unto him." He is reduced to the last stage of human misery—to the last and lowest depth of wretchedness and despair. Oh! I can fancy that I see him in this state of joyless, hopeless desertion, with the terrors of a horrible and lingering death before him. I can see him prostrate in feebleness upon the earth, with dishevelled locks and garments tattered, with no covering from the warring elements, while the tempest rages and the lightning glares and falls around him, as the ragged and destroying messenger of an angry God! I can now fancy that I hear him, from this condition of abject and terrific

humility, crying out under the stings of remorse, "I have sinned against the Lord!" "I will arise and go unto my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" receive me, Oh! receive me as a profligate and an hireling! My brethren, in the expressive words of Scripture, he "had come to himself;" earthly disappointment and earthly wretchedness had brought him to a sense of his real guilt and misery—to a wise and deep conviction of his self-abasement; and it was not until then that he was led to acknowledge his errors and to fly for refuge to his father's mercy. It was not until then that he felt sincerely that no degradation was too low, no office too humble, by which he might testify his contrition for the past, and his anxious desire to render obedience to his father's will!

Such were the sins, and such was the repentance of the prodigal son. His return, you know, created joy throughout the paternal domain. He was speedily clothed with the richest robe, he was enfolded in the arms and reposed in the bosom of his father!

The moral, brethren, of the beautiful story is this: that if we too will but feel and confess our errors; if we too will abandon all hope of redemption and safety by our own wisdom and strength—if we too will but come in humility to the footstool of our Father and pray for acceptance through His mercy in Christ, there will for us too be joy throughout the celestial home of the just—we too shall be clothed with the rich robe of the Redeemer's righteousness—we too

shall be folded in the arms and repose for wasteless ages on the bosom of our Father and our God!

And in proceeding with our remarks upon the first truth which the parable was designed to teach—that there are none of us whose offences do not so far resemble those of the prodigal son as to call for deep humiliation and heartfelt repentance—I must entreat you to remember that the particular mode of guilt manifested by the prodigal is not by any means the only mode by which the criminal temper that actuated his conduct can display itself. We are not by any means to confine the application of the parable to him who wastes his substance in riotous living—who abandons himself to profligate courses and lawless sensuality. His guilt originated in a spirit of disobedience to his Heavenly Father's rule, and in the alienation of his heart from His service. And every human being in whom the same spirit prevails partakes of his guilt, and will be exposed to his misery. It is, then, for him who spurns the control of Heaven's law, shakes off the restraints of religion as rigorous and irksome, and places happiness in following the unchecked and fickle impulses of his own undisciplined will, and in the unbridled indulgence of his own degraded passions—it is for him to see how exactly he corresponds with the character of the prodigal, who broke away from parental control only that he might follow his self-directed judgment, and give scope to every evil impulse of his evil nature. If, my brethren, it ever happens in this life that instances of filial disobedience and in-

gratitude are brought to our view—instances in which all the demonstrations of parental affection are received with cold insensibility—where the most munificent favors of parental love fall upon a thankless heart—where the child scorns and rejects the parent whose unfailing love and weariless exertion has nurtured and protected his worthless infancy, and by whose bounty he now subsists—where all filial reverence is utterly forgotten, and the counsels, commands, and simple wishes of the parent are alike trampled on and despised, would we not draw back in shuddering horror from such a revolting monster of ingratitude and guilt? It is, then, for him who regards with utter insensibility all of the munificent displays of God's love in the ceaseless bounties of nature and rich dispensations of grace—whose heart and affections are not given, in the meekness of a little child's love, to his Father in Heaven, but rather to the base, sordid, frivolous, worthless, perishable objects of the god of this world—who lets day after day and year after year roll on without once lifting up his heart in grateful thanksgiving to the Father whose sleepless bounty gives him richly all things to enjoy, and who rebels with proud disdain against every law by which that Father would check his downward course of degradation and destruction, and every ordinance and contrivance of love by which He would lead him back to submission. Oh! it is for you to consider whether every form of ingratitude to be met with on earth—whether the guilt of the prodigal son be not equally conspieu-



ous in him who, although the child of God, yet lives without God in the world; forgetful of His being and His works; thankless for His favors, regardless of His laws, and disobedient to His will. Again, my brethren, if a child were to receive from his father the title-deeds, written with his own hand, by which the child was to establish his claim to an inestimable inheritance; and if the document contained not only the proofs of his right, but the conditions upon which he was to obtain it, and the rules and counsels by which his life was to be regulated, so as to be able to fulfil those conditions; and if this object of his parent's solicitude were to continue so utterly and incorrigibly heedless as never to read this writing of inestimable worth—never, perhaps, to open this document upon which HIS ALL depended—but to go on in unthinking neglect of every condition and in open violation of every rule upon which the security of his inheritance was suspended; could he expect any other fate than to be cut off in his senseless negligence and rebellion, and be left to irretrievable wretchedness and ruin? And now, tell me, have not each of you received from your Heavenly Father the depository of His will, the charter of your immortal inheritance, the guide of your religious duties, the rule of your life, and the foundation of your eternal hopes? Has it not been written with His hand, and sealed with the blood of the only and almighty Saviour of dying men? And now, tell me, has this charter secured your reverence—has it been faithfully studied—have you submitted to its

teachings—is it the rule of your practice—do you make it the standard of right in life, and the light of hope and confidence in the coming darkness of death? If nothing of this be true, what else can you expect than to be shut out in your hour of destitution and woe from the glorious inheritance which you now so proudly, wickedly, slothfully, senselessly, madly disdain to secure?

But again. If a father of boundless resources were to tell the child of his overflowing love that if he would but approach his presence and open his heart in unlimited and confiding trust, his wants should be all supplied, his ignorance instructed, and his perplexities removed; if he was repeatedly told that, no matter how dark and serious might be the extremity to which he should be reduced, if he would but ask he should receive—if he would but knock, “my heart and my door shall be ever open unto you”—yet this child, although sinking under want and feebleness, and distracted with ignorance and doubt, never resorts to his parent for relief or instruction, but is ruinously resolved, in his self-sufficient and blighting pride, to live or die in his own wisdom and his own strength, and therefore rejects day by day the pressing invitations of parental solicitude, never draws near his father’s presence, and never returns the coldest acknowledgments for his multiplied favors,—what could such a child expect but that, being permitted to follow the counsels of his own heart, and to reap the fruit of his own ways, he should be left to perish in his own devices!

My brethren, I write no explanation of this picture. There is no heart amongst you that will not apply it for itself. It is enough that I remind you that you too have been most tenderly invited "in all things to make known your requests" unto your Heavenly Father; and "whatsoever ye ask in My name," said the Lord of your life, "I will give it you." Now if it be so, that instead of living in communion and confiding intercourse with your God, and letting a spirit of faith-inspiring prayer consecrate every day of your lives to humility and religious vigilance, you are actually living like the base brutes that perish, never lifting up your heart from groveling upon this earth, thankless for mercies, and fearless of judgments, you drudge on like soulless slaves of worldly cares and fading appetites, then tell me, what catastrophe can be too serious for conduct so rebellious and undutiful, for hearts so callous, so proud, so obstinate, so dead to filial piety and love, so absolutely debased and brutally incorrigible?

Oh! wait not, my brethren, until the heavy hand of God shall fall upon you in anger before you rouse yourself sufficiently to turn from a course which must terminate in eternal ruin! Wait not, like the prodigal son, until the accumulated wretchedness of earth, until the fading away of all your earthly hopes, shall leave you nothing to enjoy before you confess the folly and misery of having weaned your heart from its Creator's love, and sought to fly from His presence.

Humiliating is the thought that there are hearts

around us whom nothing but the bitterness of sorrow can soften, and nothing but the beating storms of calamity can awaken to a sense of their ingratitude and guilt. And dreadful must be the condition from which it is a visitation of mercy to be rescued even by the severest sufferings.

My brethren, disregard not my feeble voice of faithful warning, when I tell you to trust not to youth and strength,—trust not to the prosperous scenes that may now smile upon you. Think not that your house is so strong that it can never be moved; let but the storm of crushing calamity burst upon you suddenly, let but the cold hand of disease, as the harbinger of death, be laid upon you, and you will then feel that all of your eager graspings after wealth, and all of your thirst for the power, fame, pomp, and dignity of the world are as unsatisfying to the immortal mind as the worthless husks with which the wretched prodigal would have appeased the cravings of famine.

But I must hasten to my conclusion by just drawing your attention to the second lesson, to which we have alluded as being so beautifully and emphatically taught in our parable. It is this: that there is no human being so vile and abandoned but that, if he will sincerely return in penitence and faith, he will find his Heavenly Father all-merciful to pardon and all-powerful to save. Let but the penitent soul who feels, like the prodigal, that he is perishing while absent from his Father's home; that he is suffering under an absolute destitution of all real good, and

that none but his Heavenly Father can supply his wants; and then let him remember that the prodigal neither lingered nor tarried, but “arose and went to his father,” with the cry of humility upon his lips; and then let him lift up his heart with the same meekness, and he too may be assured that his prayer will not be rejected. He too will be seen and hailed with joyous welcome, “while yet a great way off.” Yes, it has well been said, that although millions of worlds intervene between the throne of our Father and this dim and distant speck of earth, yet even here, even now, the eye of His love discerns the first movement of every returning penitent. He marks every tear that moistens the cheek of self-accusing guilt. He numbers every sigh that bursts from the self-accusing heart. He meets him on the way, embraces him in the arms of His mercy, whispers comfort and consolation, continues to impart strength proportionate to his need, and instruction according to his ignorance; until, restored to the full dignity and privileges of the children of God, He presents him to the rejoicing hosts of heaven as His son, who “was dead but is alive again, who was lost but is found!”

Come then, and let us, with the promptness of the prodigal, arise and go to our Father, and lay before Him the pollutions of our hearts and the offences of our hands. Let us call up to recollection each violated law, each mercy, each despised warning, each broken resolution, and each inexcusable relapse; and as your sense of unworthiness increases, so will

your abhorrence of guilt be increased, and your resolutions of amendment be confirmed. As your self-conviction is sharpened, so much the more precious will the message of mercy appear, as it is delivered by the ministry of reconciliation, saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to SAVE SINNERS"—to purchase pardon for the guilty—righteousness for the ungodly—redemption for the ruined—salvation for the lost. The most abandoned are alike warranted and alike welcome to come to Him for a free, full, and everlasting salvation! The penitent Magdalen and the pious Mary are alike welcome to sit at His feet, and hear from His lips the words of eternal life.

My brethren, I speak to sinful men, and I conjure you to wait not until you have made yourselves purer and better before you come to Christ for salvation; begin the work by accepting Him for your Saviour, and coming to Him for pardon; and then will you be justified by faith—then will you be roused by vigilance—and then will you be strengthened for conflict—then will you be renewed unto holiness! Yea! you will then be sanctified by His spirit, and saved with His own everlasting salvation!





### SELF-DENIAL.

*“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*

*Matthew, 16th, 24th.*



IN the time of our Saviour the phrase to “take up the cross” was used as a proverb, to denote submission to great suffering.

Crucifixion was a common and most ignominious mode of execution ; and as the criminal was always made to carry his own instrument of torture, so, in common language, to “take up one’s cross” was used to denote preparation and readiness to submit to sorrow and shame.

In the text, our Lord meant to say that no man was worthy to become His disciple who had not a conviction so deep and abiding of the truth and everlasting importance of his religion, that he would be ready to endure every temporal sacrifice, and subject himself to scorn and to death itself in its defence.

We know that this saying of our Lord, for the want of wise caution, has led men to pernicious error, and filled the earth with blighting examples of self-

sacrifice in senseless austerities, and a worse than useless abstraction from the duties and cares of active life.

My simple object this morning will be to inquire, in the exercise of a sober judgment, into the just limits of Christian self-denial; and in the course of my remarks I shall study to show you how entirely every precept and every requirement of the Scriptures upon this point is in keeping with the universal teaching of nature, wherever the intellectual and moral powers of man have been elevated above the low and brutal passions of his nature. "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Did our Lord mean to say that every one, throughout all time, who would become a disciple of His should evince the sincerity of his faith by seeking martyrdom, and prove his loyalty to duty by denying himself every gratification that can be won from the powers and instincts of his nature, and that he was to subject himself to perpetual and voluntary torture? Surely not. No idea can be more pernicious, and none more false, than to suppose that God would require self-destruction from His creatures, or the destruction of any passion or principle which He has Himself implanted.

Our nature is beautifully and wonderfully contrived. It is most perfect and most admirable when left just as God has formed it.

"Our nature," it has well been said, "is a whole, and a beautiful whole, and no part can be spared. You might as properly and as innocently lop off a



limb from the body as eradicate any natural desire from the mind. All our appetites are in themselves innocent and useful, and ministering to the general weal of the soul. They are, like the elements of the natural world, part of a wise and beneficent system ; but, like those elements, they are beneficent only when restrained."

The self-sacrifice, then, of which our Lord speaks has reference to the appetites and feelings which we have in common with the inferior animals, and to the exercise of our higher powers in connection with this world, and this world only. In these things we are to exercise a most vigilant and habitual self-control. We are not, you will observe, to labor for their extermination, but rather to hold them in strict subordination to the high laws of reason and religion. That these qualities of our animal nature, which we possess in common with the inferior orders of existence, have need of control and restraint, will be apparent when we reflect that they are no more than blind impulses ; merely undiscerning instincts which will clamor for incessant gratification, although it be to impair soundness and health, enfeeble the intellect, and widely diffuse wretchedness and ruin. In the blindness of desire we hunger and thirst for what is injurious as well as for what is wholesome, and unless the nobler powers be perpetually exerted to control they will themselves become enslaved, and soon lend their energies to base purposes of degradation.

My brethren, there is truth and eloquence in the declaration, "that the very nobleness of human nature

may become the means and instrument of its ruin. The powers which ally us to God, when passed into the service of desire and appetite, enlarge desire into monstrous excess, and irritate appetite into fury. The rapidity of thought, the richness of imagination, the resources of invention, when enslaved to any passion, give it an extent and energy unknown to inferior natures. And just in proportion as this usurper establishes his empire over us, all the nobler attainments and products of the soul perish. Truth, honor, virtue, religion, hope, faith, charity die! Here we must see that the need of self-denial is urgent and continual. The lower principles of our nature not only act blindly, but, if neglected, they grow indefinitely, overshadow, blight, and destroy every better growth. Without self-restraint and self-sacrifice the proportion, order, and harmony of the spiritual nature are subverted, and the soul becomes as monstrous and deformed as the body would become if all nutriment were to flow into a few organs, and they the least valuable, and then to break out into loathsome excrescences; whilst the eye, the ear, and the active limbs should pine and be palsied, and thus leave us without guidance or power."

Ah! my brethren, the struggle between reason and passion, between conscience enlightened by religion and the temptations of the world and the devil, is a fearful struggle, and never can we escape from it while this life lasts. But then God has proportioned our strength to our need; and if thousands perish in the conflict, and sink ingloriously into the

dark gulf of ruin, yet it is only because they have yielded in ignominious sloth, and in a dastardly desertion of duty. It is only because, in craven timidity, they have utterly failed to employ the powers and instruments of victory with which God has most graciously armed them.

My brethren, how mournful and saddening is it to cast our eyes around upon the wrecks of intellect and moral power with which this earth is covered! But, thanks be to God, we can at the same time turn to the bright examples furnished by all time of men who, amid the fiercest assaults of temptation, from their own passions and from the allurements of a world steeped in guilt, have yet never faltered in their allegiance to conscience, to duty, and to God!

If at times, in the wanderings of imagination, I fancy that I can see and hear the dark throng of wretched victims who wander in hopeless anguish through the gloomy regions of despair, yet am I quickly cheered by the glorious array of spirits clothed in light who have been tempted and tried as we are, and who have all passed through the same ceaseless warfare with the passions, but who, in the strength to be won by prayer, have denied and subdued themselves, and by the stern sacrifice of all low and seducing interests have fairly won their crowns of immortality! I can then no longer yield to gloomy and desponding thoughts—I will no longer complain of the Creator, nor murmur because of the frail nature He has given me. I no longer repine that

my lot is cast amid trials to virtue, amid perils and obstructions to righteousness which render the path of duty "a narrow way." I see a light thrown over our present condition of existence which more than reconciles me to all its evils. I see, indeed, a wide field of conflict spread before me, and I know that the enemies with which I must contend are subtle and insidious beyond all calculation, and deadly in their triumph! But I would not change these appointments. I would not escape from the conflict before me while in the world, even if I could. I stop not to inquire why God has made me thus, or why He has placed me here. It is enough that I can easily and fondly reconcile this constitution of things with the Divine goodness. I look at the illustrious examples of triumphant virtue with which the history of our race is rich, and whose memories, watered by the tears of admiration and reverence, will grow and flourish throughout all ages. I think of the glorious orders of the redeemed in Heaven, who now wear in wasteless bliss the crowns they won in conflict. I think of these, and learn to rejoice that God has placed me in a school so noble, and so admirably adapted for the formation of that character which it would seem can only be produced amid temptation and self-denying trial.

You perceive then, my brethren, that the self-sacrifice to which the text calls us does not mean that we shall, with a capricious and ungrateful fancy, refuse to use and enjoy with a rational and enlightened freedom the good which God has created this

earth to yield us ; but that we should steadily toil and pray so to employ the higher, nobler, and all-directing faculties of our nature as to keep all the mere earthly impulses, together with the proud and rebellious feelings of our hearts, under the steady guidance and unyielding control of reason, as reason is enlightened by the revealed will of God.

I have endeavored to show you that God has given us the means and the capacity to cultivate spiritual power, so as to frame and form ourselves for His service and His blessings ; and that it is as unwise as it is ungrateful for us to complain that God should have endowed us with passions which are so readily trained to yield harvests of joy, and subject us to trials of faith and moral energy, through which alone that enduring virtue can be formed which is inseparably connected with happiness in time and in eternity. If men choose, with the light of all experience blazing before their eyes and burning its way to their own hearts, and with the light of God's Spirit illumining the path of immortal glory in which it would guide them—if, I say, notwithstanding all this, they choose to give way without a struggle to every base impulse which lures them to evil, and to abandon all self-control, and all the dignity which belongs to moral energy, and thus to sink down as the imbecile and shameless victims of subduing sloth, selfishness, and sensuality—are they then to complain if dissatisfaction and loathing wretchedness, with all that the world can afford them, be the fruits of their doings here, and that the loss of the unspeakable

and transporting rewards of eternity be visited upon them hereafter, on account of their voluntary want of fitness for the reception or enjoyment of these high blessings?

My brethren, I have said that as to the dignity and necessity of self-sacrifice and control, as we have considered the terms, in elevating and advancing our nature, the teachings of Nature and Religion are the same. To satisfy you of this, let me ask you to reflect upon the history of your race, and tell me to whom and to what is it that mankind has ever been most ready to pay the homage of their reverence; and to what is it that you instinctively yield your especial admiration? Is it to the pampered lord of millions, who has lived only to indulge himself; who, in yielding to the dominion of his passions, has forgotten the claims of justice and the good of the young and the innocent; or who has been content, amid the flowers of peace that bloomed around him in the atmosphere of affluence, to sink to his eternal repose without having given a single lesson of virtue to the world? Is it to such men you yield your hearts' warmest love, and by the example of whom you would seek to fire the opening and ardent imaginations of your children?

Or is it rather to the bright and beautiful examples of heroic and self-denying virtue; names which have spread an enduring illumination upon the pages upon which they are written; men who have steadily pursued good and great ends, at every sacrifice of personal ease and present interests; men who

have lived to promote human happiness and virtue; who have died for their country's freedom and glory; men who adhered to conscience and to duty through baffled hopes, blighted promises, and protracted sorrows; ay, who have held fast to truth even in death, and bequeathed it to posterity under the seal of their blood? Thus it is seen and felt that all *great virtue* bears the stamp of self-denial; without it there would be nothing in the struggles of our race to thrill us with admiration. All mankind who are rationally employed are hourly exerting the spirit of self-sacrifice with a view to some future advantage. Turn your eyes to the children of this world, who are wise in their generation, and do you not see how they deny themselves; how they mortify their inclinations and constrain the will, only that they may accumulate a precarious and perishing treasure? The Christian profession would be unlike all others if its rewards were to be thrown away upon the folly of selfish impatience, the stupidity of idleness, or the utter unprofitableness of enervating pleasure and selfish indulgence. As the prize it holds out to us is unspeakably the richest, so is it reasonable that it should subject us to a longer probation and a severer trial. I repeat, then, that the Scriptures and Nature—as Nature is heard in our own hearts and in all human experience—speak precisely the same language. We can know no lofty and inspiring virtue apart from the spirit of self-sacrifice.

The Divine Jesus and all human philosophers

agree in declaring that while happiness is the object of all human pursuit, yet that it is attainable only in the path of duty and virtue, and that this path must be unfalteringly pursued and adhered to, although we may be assailed by the severest sufferings in the most hideous forms that outward circumstances can assume.

In those early ages of Christianity for which our text was more directly spoken, the Disciples were required to take up their cross in every conceivable variety of suffering; their religion was at once an unbending principle of the judgment and a supreme preference of the affections. In all times and under all circumstances the genius of Christianity must remain the same, and the principle under which the Christian must now act is the same principle of entire self-sacrifice, and of the most complete and absolute resignation to the will of the Saviour. But, then, my brethren, let it be remarked that it is not now by outward sufferings, or by any peculiar and separate acts, that we are to take up our cross, and manifest the sincerity of our devotion to the Saviour's cause. It is not, I say, upon great occasions, or amid striking perils and heavy sorrows, that this is expected of us, but rather in the constant feelings and disposition of our hearts, and in the common tenor of our lives; not so much by enduring persecution, as in denying our own will and evil passions, and in giving ourselves up to His reasonable service. We must daily bear our cross, although the only enemy with which we have to contend lies hidden in the



deep recesses of our own hearts; we must crucify the evil nature within us; we must bring every guilty passion into subjection to a higher principle; we must teach and train every faculty we possess to work only as the guiding spirit of holiness shall direct. It is not to a personal, local, and outward sacrifice to which we are called, so much as to a condition of mental and spiritual submission and control. It is not in this one thing or in that one thing, in this practice or in that, in this pleasure or in that indulgence, that we are especially to deny ourselves; but rather are we to cultivate the habitual mind and spirit which was "in Christ Jesus our Lord." While in the world you must "walk as He walked;" you must remember that while He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," yet He did not abandon the world, nor the work which was given Him to do in the world. He did not affect any morose singularity in things indifferent in themselves; He did not provoke the enmity of mankind by anything needlessly offensive in His manner of life; but He mingled freely and readily with all classes of men, that He might promote their benefit by His example, and by imparting to them His immortal lessons of truth and righteousness. He gave no countenance to sin, while He manifested no idle austerities in His own conduct; He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, while He habitually cherished and steadily illustrated that sublime spirit of self-sacrifice which ultimately led Him to the denial of every human interest and passion, and

to submit without a murmur to the shame and the agony of the cross. To this pure and perfect Example, Christians, must we bid you look as your standard of heavenly-mindedness and of holy living.

You will observe that I do not invite you to sit calmly down and occupy your anxious minds with nice cases of conscience, balancing for a precise adjustment of the measure in which you may lawfully join in this or that indulgence. You are not to go on sounding at every step how far you may proceed without getting beyond your depth in the whirling gulf of human follies. You are not to be forever calculating how near you may approach the pestilence of this world's wickedness without receiving the deadly infection. The rule I would give you is more general, more elevated, and more certain in its operation. I tell you to begin with the HEART; let that but be purified and renewed, and animated with the spirit that was in Christ Jesus, and it will teach you with unerring and instinctive certainty what is duty—what is saving truth. You will not then be troubled to decide how low you may descend toward the fashions of the world and the lives of the worldly; but your chief anxiety will be to see how high you can rise toward the likeness of the Son of God. “Be ye transformed,” says the Apostle, “by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!” This is the only law I can consent either to acknowledge or to enforce in this matter. In that precious liberty in which Christ has made us free, one man's

conscience is not another man's judge. You will do well to remember that with a martyr's firmness you are to pursue the narrow path of duty, as it is illumined for you by the spirit of God, in spite of every peril and all seducements to draw you off from it. But to forsake the world is not to rise above its pollutions. To fly from society is not to triumph over its temptations to evil. You are to live in the world, but yet above the world. It is not a local and personal separation from it to which you are called, but rather to mental and spiritual elevation, that lifts you above its blandishments.

But I must be done. If there be any among you who have thrown from their hands the reins of self-government, and who allow their inclinations an unbridled course; who suffer their passions to run to all the excess of riot, and who are ready to say to the monitor who would admonish them of the smiling death that lures them on in their mad career: "Stand off! these passions are natural to me, and must therefore be innocent. The Author of my being has implanted them within me, and they hurry me irresistibly along the path I pursue." Alas! my brethren, if there be any one spectacle more pitiable than another in the endless anomalies and phases exhibited by our moral nature, it is that of a rational creature with all his lordly and immortal powers thus lost to reason—thus benighted at noon-day—thus bewildered in a plain path. As well might the charioteer, drawn by spirited coursers, throw the reins from his hands, and suffer them to

carry him wheresoever they will, and then excuse himself for the ruin he occasions in his wild and lawless way by saying: "I have not control over my movements; I have no guiding power in my hand."

Let no man deceive himself. In looking at one part of our nature, let us not at our peril forget the other parts. He, my beloved brethren, who gave us appetite and passion, gave us also reason, conscience, and the steadily burning light of His law. He who will remember that we are but dust, will remember also that His inspiration gave us understanding.





### CHARITY.

*“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.”*

*1 Cor. 13th, 13th.*



THE chapter from which these words are taken is among the most beautiful specimens of impressive eloquence to be found within the scope of written language.

It is surely a most remarkable circumstance in the history of languages, that our translation of the Scriptures and our book of Common Prayer should have come down to us in a style so chaste, and yet so forcible; so simple, and yet so rich; so pure, so touchingly beautiful, and so true to the wants of our nature, throughout all the changes in the complicated structure of society, that they even now are as fresh as they ever were, and as peculiarly adapted to every variety of taste, and to the deep cravings of all hearts; while all other compositions of the ages in which they were prepared have long since been lost amid the ponderous tomes of a barbarous, harsh, and forgotten literature. The consideration should never be lost sight of by the thoughtful and pious

mind which delights to trace the finger of God as it passes over each link in the vast chain of His providence.

The object of St. Paul in this striking passage is to impress the Corinthians with the infinite superiority of true Christian holiness over all those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which, in the wise arrangements of Providence, were profusely scattered among the members of the infant Church. In connection with the subject before us, we shall always do well to remember that the introduction of the Gospel was nothing less than a total moral revolution, in the accomplishment of which the powers of heaven and earth, in the language of Scripture, appear to have been shaken to their centre. It was essential that some overpowering and preternatural testimony should be given from Heaven, in order to engraft the self-denying doctrines of Christianity upon the impetuous passions of men. The result, we know, was in accordance with the mighty means thus employed. The world was roused from its spiritual lethargy, and the invincible barriers of its prejudices were broken down. They who were ready to turn away in contempt and scorn from the subduing doctrines of the cross, were yet overwhelmed with awe by the miracles through which those doctrines were sustained. And thus it was that the success of the first generation of the emissaries of our faith was in itself one of the most striking miracles of that supernatural age. In the course of thirty years, and at a time when the refinements

of human sensuality and the universal prevalence of the grossest corruption had spread a deadening influence over all spiritual sensibility, the Gospel was carried triumphantly over the wide area of civilized society. It insinuated itself through all the various and minutest channels of life with a rapidity to which after-experience has afforded nothing like a parallel.

But after the end for which miraculous gifts had been given was thus answered; after the hallowed dispensation of our love had thus been planted deeply in the best soil of the world, and had grown so as to overshadow the nations with its branches, then the especial and miraculous Providence that had fostered its growth was withdrawn. Miracles were heard of no longer, and secondary causes resumed their course, in all their original and rigid inflexibility. Now, my brethren, that which was a merely accessory and provisional arrangement, introduced for a specific temporary end, and which was withdrawn as soon as that end was answered, however dazzling it may be to the eye of human vanity, yet could never have possessed a superior value inherent in itself. The Scriptures, while they record as an historical fact the temporary existence of miraculous gifts, yet they uniformly speak of them in terms of depreciation. They were never for one moment to be compared with the meek humility of confiding "*faith*," with the animating brightness of heaven-directed "*hope*," or to those cheering, ennobling, and expansive fires of "*charity*" which the breath of God alone could kin-

dle, and which will be as undying as His own eternity!

My brethren, how impressive is the lesson which the history of those early times may afford us, of the awful facility with which the choicest gifts of Providence may be perverted from their design, when placed as instruments in the hands of poor human nature.

In the first age of the gospel miraculous gifts were poured out on the followers of the faith, that each one might lend his aid in advancing the regeneration of the world. But instead of being impressed and morally elevated by the distinction with which they were marked, and trembling with holy solicitude under the responsibility with which they were charged, how humiliating is it to perceive that their extraordinary powers were valued chiefly for the imaginary importance which they were presumed to confer on the possessors; and that they were too often employed rather for the indulgence of personal emulations than for the promotion of Christian piety; that their assemblies for public worship were too often the theatres for ostentatious display, and the scenes of clamorous and unholy contention! It was, then, against abuses of this character that the indignant Apostle hurled his withering rebukes, and it was well and wise that God, so soon as His own good purposes were answered, should withdraw His miraculous gifts from creatures so weak and erring that they could rarely use them for the good of others, save to their own injury. Yea, it was well and wise that God



should drop the veil which separates spiritual things from temporal, and leave us with the Bible in our hands, and the Holy Spirit abiding silently but surely in our hearts, to tread that path of PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS which leads to heaven as certainly as if tongues of fire were our directing guides, and we were girt about from harm by visible legions of angels.

Such, then, was the object of the fearless Paul, in the eloquent passage which is the subject of our thoughts. It was to correct the vain error of supposing that the temporary possession of miraculous gifts was more intrinsically valuable than that universal grace of holiness which springs from the love of God and the love of the creatures whom God has formed. The universal diffusion of this grace was the very object for which those boasted gifts were given. It was the end of all the laws, the instructions, and the examples that have come from God.

You perceive then, my brethren, that by *charity* in the text you are to understand the great moral law of the Gospel—love to man, founded on the love of God. It is that principle which unites all holy and intelligent natures to God, as the centre of being and the source of love, and then unites them to one another in Him. It is thus the bond of spiritual union to the universe of God, and will constitute the supreme felicity of Heaven through the wasteless ages of eternity. Now, says the Apostle, while all momentary distinctions are passing away, there will still abide, as long as the discipline of earth

continues, Faith, Hope, and Charity—these three. And it was for these that Christ descended from the skies, poured forth His immortal precepts to men, and sealed them with His own most precious blood. These three; but the greatest of these is CHARITY, because it is the end and object of both Faith and Hope.

Faith receives the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of lost men, and then leads us to accept His Gospel as the rule of life, which rule is to train and build us up in Charity. *Hope* animates the believer to obedience, by picturing in entrancing colors the immortal rewards of duty; of which rewards, the essence and sum will be such as spring from the enjoyment of Charity. The Redeemer of men, in the course of His benevolent life, was a personification of Charity. It is the image of God; and when God would restore His likeness in the souls of degraded men, He sent forth the spirit of Charity, in the person of His Son. It would seem that after the atonement He was to offer, and the immortality He was to reveal, the great object upon which He expended the force of His inspiring Spirit was to kindle and cherish the holy fires of Charity in the bosoms of the faithful. He did not unfold the mysteries of nature; He did not lay bare the secret chain of causes in the universe; He did not gratify the vanity of science, or deprive the human intellect of the pleasure of investigation, or the rewards of laborious research; but He toiled to unite mankind in one harmonious body by the bands of love, and to

connect Heaven with earth by the ties of beneficence. It is to this grand result that the Gospel is now steadily tending, and if we will but submit to its training, it will continue to advance our nature nearer and nearer to the felicity of the Supreme and All-Perfect Mind, as we rise from glory to glory in the everlasting kingdom of the just.

My brethren, our religion is one vast temple of Charity; and sooner shall every stone be separated from the "Head of the Corner" upon which it rests, than the holy fires of love, which were lit by Christ upon the altars before which we serve, be extinguished by the hatred of the devil and the selfishness of the world. The abstract truths of our faith have, no doubt, their vast importance, and the outward ritual, that gives to those doctrines their form, and name, and influence, is not without its high value. But that which stamps the religion of Jesus with its priceless worth is the spirit of *happiness* that pervades it; and that happiness is placed chiefly in the exercise of a mutual and universal charity. This is the heavenly principle which, in the heart of a good man, the Apostle ranks above all intellectual strength, and above all the graces and virtues of the character. This is the principle that never fails nor changes, while all things else are altered and pass away. Immutable and eternal as the nature of Him to whose glory it would assimilate us, it is, like Him, ever active in doing good. It delights in the contemplation of happiness, and labors to promote it. Neither the weariness of fa-

tigue, nor the raging of the elements, nor the sighing of the icy wind, nor the perils of the pestilence, nor the desolating storms of human passions, can deter it from meeting the calls of duty in behalf of humanity.

But the charity of which we thus speak is the charity of sentiment as well as of action, which gives its prayers and its sympathy to the wickedness which it cannot reclaim, and the sorrows which it cannot reach. It is that charity which wears no man's livery, and knows no boundaries of sects or party. It respects the motives while it pities the mistakes. It bears with the failings while it relieves the sufferings of frail and erring humanity. Oh! this is the charity that never fails, and without which we are nothing. For the laurels of victory shall fade upon the brow of the conqueror, and the loudest notes of his triumph shall die away; the dazzling gems of monarchs shall grow dim, and their lustre shall decay with their strength; the splendid trophies of learning shall be forgotten, and the proudest monuments of genius shall moulder beneath the dust of passing time; the generations of men shall sink into the forgetfulness of the grave, and the arm of all human power shall be palsied, but *Charity* shall endure forever!

Faith shall ultimately be lost in sight, and Hope swallowed up in fruition, but Charity shall constitute the happiness of Heaven through the deathless ages of eternity.

The emissaries of this heaven-born Charity are now

braving the dangers of a desolate and howling wilderness in the West, the snows and storms of the North, and the pestilential air and burning sands of Africa and the East, that they may bear the lamp of divine truth into the dark and cheerless regions of idolatry. And it is the same Charity which has adorned all Christian lands with its munificent monuments of mercy : its hospitals for the maimed, the diseased, and the dying ; its asylums for the aged, the helpless, and the destitute ; for penitent guilt and helpless infancy ; for the infant of days and the old man who has not yet fulfilled his days. It gives intelligence to the deaf and language to the dumb ; it opens to the blind ten thousand sources of enjoyment, and guides them sweetly in the narrow way which leads to Heaven.

It is thus, my brethren, that it gradually advances the moral amelioration of our race, and relieves an immense amount of human wretchedness. Oh, think of the cruel and remorseless usages of savage life, and the refined selfishness of all pagan civilization, and then turn to the regenerating movements of Christian charity, and tell me if you are not fired with faith and hope in the advancing destiny of our race. Indeed the scene of its action is as boundless as human misery, and the variety of its operations is as vast as the diffusion of human want and human woe. It traverses the dark and narrow lanes of your cities where poverty dwells—poverty ghastly with disease and famishing with wretchedness ; and while it carries with it to the hovels of the destitute the

necessaries of life, and to the deathbeds of the departing the consolation of religion, it snatches from the nurseries of crime, from the abodes of penury, ignorance, and vice, swarms of dependent infants, before their hearts are contaminated with depravity, and before their hands are familiar with deeds of enormity; and it schools them for society—trains them for Heaven. But again: it goes to our prisons, where guilt is enchained for the public safety, and while it carries consolation to the victims of misfortune, and would persuade the criminal to penitence—while it proclaims the offers of pardon to the sin-stained soul—it is at the same time busy in reforming the monstrous abuses to which cupidity had for ages subjected the captive. And more than this: the genius of Christian charity has pervaded and is pervading the halls of legislation in all Christian lands, and while it contrives such means for the prevention of crime as may be most likely to reform the criminal, it silently and compassionately sweeps the statute-book with the wing of mercy, and blots out the laws which past times had written in blood. Who does not perceive that by elevating and ennobling the moral principles and feelings of our race, it is gradually modifying the causes which led in past times to the brutal butchery and sweeping havoc of war? Surely, there never was a time when the glowing declaration of the Apostle, that “Charity never faileth,” was so forcibly illustrated to the dulness of human comprehension as it is at present; for where is the spot so cheerless in this vast wilderness of woe

that has not been illumined and refreshed by the genius of benevolence? what is the species of wretchedness it has not contrived to reach and to relieve? Never was there a time when the Bible was so generally circulated, when the ignorant were so generally instructed, and when so many schemes were executed for scattering the darkness and breaking the fetters of the human mind. But before leaving this head of our discourse, bear with me while I throw in one word of solemn caution. In following the instincts of that heavenly principle of life upon which we have dwelt, and which cheers the heart that cherishes it while it gladdens society, we cannot too steadily remember that warm charity, the general friend, may become the general enemy, unless she consults her head as well as her heart; that if without solemn, prayerful consideration she follows the mere instinct of pity, she may easily, by an imprudent generosity, create evils far more injurious to society than any which she partially remedies; and while she pleases herself with the idea that she is daily feeding hundreds of the poor, she is actually preparing famine and want for thousands by exciting unreasonable expectations, and inducing habits of indolence and shameless dependence. This leads me directly to another suggestion of the highest importance towards the proper elucidation of the text. You will remember, my brethren, that we have defined charity, as spoken of by the Apostle, to mean love to man founded on the love of God. The love of his Creator is, with the Christian, the mainspring of action, be-

cause it is to a likeness to the lovely attributes of God that he strives to bring himself, and every being of his common nature; thus the difference between the philanthropy of the Scriptures and the philanthropy of natural religion is most distinctly marked. The Christian, in his good-will towards mankind, is influenced rather by what is substantially and eternally good than by what is casual and transitory, and consequently he makes the will of his benevolent Creator the rule and standard of his social affections. The votary of natural religion, on the contrary, by following the mere impulse of kindness without any regulating and correcting rule of right, by overlooking all the high ultimate purposes of our present state of moral trial, and by acting only under the low, debased, and fluctuating standard of momentary caprice and expedience, is as likely to be useless as beneficial, and the result of his doings is too often darkly and fatally injurious. Turn, my brethren, to the history of the world, on the stained pages of which the characters of infidel philosophers are written in ominous capitals, and there you may learn how utterly delusive is the hope of erecting any broad and secure structure of happiness upon the merely earthly basis of human feelings and motives. However plausible their theories may have been, yet nothing but bitter and deadly fruit has been produced from the rank and untrained weeds of scepticism. An innate kindliness of feeling and a facility of temperament which yields easily to the wishes and wants of others is often united with great indolence of mind



in maintaining the high and everlasting distinctions of right and wrong; but the good deeds of such a man are very different things from the practical, habitual, and all-controlling philanthropy of the Gospel, because they have not the love of God for their source, nor the faith of Jesus, with His all-seeing eye and His coming judgment, for their constraining motive, nor the impulse of Paul's bounding hope for their ceaseless and unflinching action. Never, then, my brethren, confound the God-like principle of Christian charity with that easiest and cheapest of all virtues, indolent good-nature. Let your eyes be directed in love to the Author of all blessings, while you open your hands to receive the good you are to dispense to others. Labor to diffuse widely the deepest, most solemn, and most abiding impressions of the ever-active presence of God, for without that the fabric of social order will be loose, and always uncertain.

Administer to men's temporal wants always with reference to the training which is to prepare them for their immortal condition. Study to impress them with the consoling and ennobling truth, that as God is the author of every blessing they enjoy *in time*, so He alone can furnish the rod and the staff upon which they must hope to lean, as they pass onward through the mysterious ages of *eternity*!

Depend upon it, brethren, that the Scriptures, in resting the love of our neighbor upon the love of our God, have evinced a knowledge of the deep principles of human nature, and of the intricate relations

of moral truth, far more profound and extensive than human and unaided philosophy can ever equal.

It was a part of my plan to illustrate the text further, by showing how our polluted and disfigured world has suffered from the dark criminality of men in failing to cultivate that charity which our Lord came to teach, and for which He was scorned and hated ; for which He wept, and toiled, and died ! But for this I have now no time. I have no time to point you to the scenes of butchery and blood that have stained and deluged the earth ; to remind you of the blighting curses and far-sweeping desolation which the shrieks of chained heretics and the flames of expiring martyrs have brought down from Heaven !

Oh ! let me point you to the bickering and barbarity, the bitter feuds and private jealousies—to the pride, envy, hatred, malice, and revenge—which you may hourly see exhibited around you, in all the hateful forms in which the bad passions of our nature display themselves ; and then let me tell you that all this is only because the weeping genius of Charity has found no home in the bosoms of rebellious men.

Ah ! my brethren, how fair a scene would this earth present, if, instead of the ferocious scowl of jealousy and hatred, the beams of mutual kindness were to be reflected from every face, and Faith, Hope, and Charity were to be read in letters of sunshine in every heart ! The reign of universal benevolence would then cause the wilderness and the soli-

tary places of the earth to be glad, and our moral deserts to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

If, then, you would claim the title, if you would cherish the *Faith* and aspire after the *Hope* of a Christian, you must walk in the temper in which your Master walked on the earth; you must repent—you must believe—you must obey—you must bear the fruits of the Spirit in the humility of penitence, and so fulfil the law of Christ in love and devotion to God, and in gentleness, goodness, sweet Charity to men!





*THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.*

*"We bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told."*  
*90th Psalm, 9th verse.*

*Prayer-Book Translation.*



THE Psalm from which the text is taken is excelled by no human composition in propriety and richness of thought, and beauty and tenderness of expression. In comparing the passage of our years to a light and brief tale that is told, it is designed to illustrate the egregious folly of mankind in seeking only to fill their hours with momentary and fading amusements, utterly regardless of the infinite importance which their bearing on eternity would give them.

How saddening is it to reflect, that we are just about to take an eternal leave of another of the years which make up the span of human life!

The custom which converts such conspicuous points in our pilgrimage as the commencement of a new year into a season of social relaxation and joyous greetings had, no doubt, its origin in a sense of gratitude to God, that amid the cruel desolation which the sweeping progress of time is effecting, we

have yet been spared for a further enjoyment of His bounty.

Who is there that can look back upon the history of his doings, upon the errors which he would gladly blot from the records of the past, upon the talents neglected, and upon the fields of duty which are yet unimproved before him, without lifting up his heart in prayer to the God of the living, "Oh, spare me a little before I go hence and be no more seen."

My brethren, another of our years is about to be merged in the vast abyss of departed ages! There is something solemnly interesting in the recurrence of these stated memorials of time. They are the resting-places for the pilgrim who is pursuing his way through the wilderness of life, at which he is invited to pause from the fatigue and hurry of his journey, to survey the tract through which he has passed, and to prepare for the measure of duty which is yet before him. And we all of us, my brethren, are pilgrims toiling through the wilderness of human life. Our path has been pointed out to us by the finger of God upon the map of revelation, and reason and conscience, enlightened by the unerring Spirit, are the guides that are to secure us from the dangers of the way.

The season, then, at which we have once again arrived invites us all to look back upon the theatre of our past movements, to determine how far we have advanced, and to estimate the difficulties and the duties that may yet await us. The season, in short, invites us all to solemn reflection. It invites

us irresistibly to review the career of our lives ; to mourn over our errors and infirmities, and to renew our wise and virtuous resolutions. Let the retrospect be faithful, and, I think, if we find somewhat at which to rejoice, we will find much for which to be sorrowful before our God. For who is there of us that has never deviated from the path in which reason, enlightened by the ever-working spirit of God, would by its gentle and persuasive whispers have conducted him ? And who is there who has never been heedless to the admonitions and the checks of conscience ? Who is there that does not perceive that in despising the guidance of God, he wandered in a maze of error ? or who ever refused obedience to the calls of conscience except at some sacrifice of his tranquillity ? Alas ! my brethren, I fear that a faithful retrospect of the year that is past will bring with living freshness before the best of us many things for which we should be sorrowful ! Who is there who can direct a faithful examination into the motives of his conduct and the issue of his labors, but must perceive so much of imperfection in the one and feebleness in the other as oftentimes to fill him with pain and humiliation ? If we find not the record of our doings stained and dark with deeds of flagrant iniquity, yet have we not, in instances without number, neglected the accomplishment of good which might have been effected had we not slumbered in indolence ? Have we always applied the powers and means of usefulness with which we may have been intrusted to

wise and wholesome ends? and have we advanced in faith, and knowledge, and holiness as far as our opportunities would have warranted? or have our precious trusts of time and talents been senselessly wasted? Who is there that has effected anything, and does not at the same time perceive that he might have effected more? Oh! who is there that can look back upon twelve months of his life without a most saddening consciousness of how much he has been wanting in his duty to himself, to society, and to his God?

But, my brethren, these retrospects of past years are valuable, if they serve no other purpose than to impress us with the rapid flight of time. In prospect, time is always long. In retrospect, our existence is as shadowy and delusive as a dream. To look through the dim vista of futurity, there appears a vast space between the infant of days and the old man who has not yet fulfilled his days; but go to him who has reached the utmost limit of human life, and he will tell you that were it not for the changes that have occurred around him, he could scarcely realize the lapse of time.

We are gliding, my brethren, upon the bosom of a mighty stream, which from its vast and shoreless depth leaves us little to mark the frightful rapidity with which it is sweeping us into the ocean of eternity. Look back, my brethren, upon the long succession of years that have past, and tell me, where are the countless millions of men who once were busy upon the face of the earth? They are, my brethren,

where we soon must be ! They were swept into the vortex of the current of time, and are now wrapt in the oblivion of ages.

My brethren, the dying year is about to unite itself with the days beyond the flood ! How many of our fellow-mortals, who began it with hopes as fair and prospects of health as flattering as any of which we now can boast, have been hurried to their dread account, and are now numbered with those who have lived. “ We bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told.” It appears, indeed, but as yesterday since we were assembled thus upon the Sunday that ushered in the year, but within that period the most of us have witnessed changes in the circle of those whom we knew and loved, at the recollection of which the heart is saddened and sensibility weeps. Yes, my brethren, the startling truth has been brought home to our bosoms, that neither guileless infancy, beside whose cradle parental fondness watches with unslumbering eye, nor the vigor and elasticity of youth, nor the caution of mature age, nor wealth, nor health, nor strength, can one moment secure us from the arrest of death. We must see that our days on earth are at best but a shadow, as a vision of the night, as a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. The whole period of time in which we shall have lived will in a little time be no further remembered, save as it shall form a connecting link in the historical chain of ages. Great God ! “ so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”



In connection with these reflections, which the day is so well calculated to call forth, while I thus invite you to present your offerings of gratitude to God for having thus far extended the season of our probation, and while we mourn together over the consciousness of sins and infirmities which have rendered us unfit to die, while the changes which attend the flight of time remind us of its brevity and its value, let us yet a little closer review the circumstances in which we may have been placed in connection with the events of the past year, that we may distil wisdom from the lessons of experience. And while "our years are brought to an end, as it were a tale that is told," let us renew our vows of trust in Him who "liveth forever and ever."

Standing as we do upon the ashes of departed time, and before the altar of the God of our undying spirits, let us pour forth our prayers to Him, that He would strengthen us with His strength, while we resolve to enter anew upon such a career of righteousness and faith as we shall hope to look back upon without shuddering or regret—such a career as can afford us stable comfort in life, and unflinching confidence in death.

Shrink not, my brethren, from a review of the departing year. It will be well thus to commune with it, for it will be memorable in our country's history. It is mournfully pleasant thus to commune with it, for its incidents are consecrated in the register of our affections; and it is pious thus to commune with it, for who will not perceive in how many instances

the warning and restraining hand of Providence has been laid upon us in tenderness and in wisdom!

Whether, then, it has been amid the ravages of death that our spirits have been crushed and humbled, or else in the visitation by which the darkening cloud of adversity has been thrown over our advancing fortunes, so that our hearts have trembled lest the grim visage of penury should descend into the household of our love, let us at once recognize the appointments of a Parent's love. Let the suffering prompt us to inquire at the bar of conscience what, as individuals, or as Christian people, we have deserved at the hands of God. If we have been bereaved in our love, or deprived of our earthly substance, have we not still much left of which we might have been equally deprived, if God's justice had been extreme to mark remissness against us?

No truth, my brethren, can be written more clearly in the whole experience of our race, than that neither the physical nor moral condition of our nature can long bear an excess of temporal prosperity. Intellectual beings may possibly exist in the wide universe of God, whose moral faculties have at once been rendered fit to be exercised in completeness and perfection without the rough discipline which is necessary to call forth our energies upon earth. It is certain, however, that all of our better qualities must be forced out of us in spite of ourselves, or else they will remain forever dormant. And it is to this end that the multifarious evils which assail us in life are all ordered. They are prescribed by un-

erring wisdom, and come to us stored with health for the soul.

The exercise of our moral faculties is the great object of our creation ; but if human society existed in undeviating innocence and tranquillity, without any of the reverses and sorrows which now mark our lot, then practical morality, in its strict and enlightened sense, could not possibly exist. It is only our contact with profligacy, impiety, and injustice that can call forth our virtues, and give value to purity, to piety, and to meekness. If there be any worth in *FARRU*, then we should be content in our limited knowledge of eternity ; for who does not perceive that a little more knowledge would do away entirely with all the advantages resulting from that humble and confiding disposition of mind. And a little less of personal disappointment and suffering would but too probably have left many a mind, which these visitations have spiritualized, too closely attached to the good things of this life, and utterly regardless of the next. Now, the curse which seems to me to hang over the wide country of our love—the threatening peril before which I tremble—is that of *EXCESSIVE PROSPERITY* ; and if this is to be said of the whole country, more especially must it apply to the fair and wondrous city in which we dwell. My brethren, it is time that the thoughtful among us should rouse from their lethargy with regard to the great moral lessons of warning which are written in the analogies of nature and the operations of Providence, and which may be read in the history of all

ages and nations. Nothing which rises rapidly under the excitement of undue or excessive stimulants is ever sound and enduring in its perfection. The wealth that is won by chance or hazard, or through forced and unnatural circumstances, without the self-sacrifices of enduring industry, is rarely the source of real felicity to the possessor, and can never be relied on as the stability and strength of a country.

My brethren, I am most anxious to impress every Christian heart with the deepest conviction that the circumstances in which this proud city is placed, so peculiarly favorable to the most rapid strides in apparent prosperity, are always to be watched with the most prayerful vigilance. The dangers to which these same circumstances expose us are most imminent and deadly. Just in proportion as our corporeal excitements are increased, so is the scene of our moral trial enhanced. Boundless natural facilities for increasing wealth may be dispensed by Providence ; they are never to be coveted by us. It is not amid the bland and bright climates of more southern regions, where the rich and cheerful sun carpets the earth with flowers, and ripens its fruits with abundance, without the wearying toil of man, and where imagination is inclined to picture to itself abodes of luxurious repose and undisturbed enjoyment—oh ! it is not THERE that true wealth, true strength, and the most precious knowledge have wielded their enduring power. But rather has it ever been amid the sterile soil, the cruel frosts and most searching winds of colder and sterner climes. It has been where

difficulties and obstruction have roused men to excessive and incessant exertion, and exertion has added power to physical endurance, and given increased elasticity to spiritual aspirations. It is where the triumph of success has perpetually stimulated men to fresh struggles with perpetually recurring difficulties.

Providence everywhere showers down blessings upon the earth; it is for man to gather them with industrious caution; to use them with grateful moderation; and thus to grow in wisdom, holiness, and strength for the enduring ages of eternity. Or he may, if he chooses, wait in indolence and inglorious sloth until pleasures shall fall into his open hand; or he may abuse the bounties that are showered upon him to intemperance and impiety; but in so doing he must sink into effeminacy, imbecility, wretchedness and eternal degradation.

I want you to pause at this comparatively quiet season—a season peculiarly propitious to solemn and sound thought. I ask you to consider for one moment the direct and certain tendency of a career of unmingled temporal prosperity. Is it not to wean us from everything but the palpable and gross things of the present life? Is it not to make a spurious and dangerous expediency the full and only measure of the noblest, purest, and most sacred feelings of the heart? Is it not to train the young to a conviction that our most sacred instincts, our purest moral impulses, and our finest domestic charities are all to be weighed in the coarse material scale of their nego-

tiable value? that they were to be estimated only as they had reference to the increase of our worldly store? I can conceive of no tendency more to be deplored—I know of no philosophy more dreadful than this! It is the unalloyed philosophy of a cold, carnal, and worldly selfishness. How can we conceive of the intense and infinite value of those sacred and ennobling social sympathies which are the foretaste of the communion of heaven; or of the importance of those spiritual energies which are planted in time that they may bear fruit in eternity? How, I say, can we estimate them, whose daily habit and all-absorbing thoughts lead him to see neither truth nor value in anything which he cannot measure by the power of arithmetic?

My brethren, the sure tendency of a glowing and uninterrupted career of worldly prosperity is to eat like a canker into the noblest sensibilities of our nature. In the hurry, scramble, and eager graspings after the golden apples of earth, all high and generous breathings are smothered; lofty rectitude of principle, and all ennobling spiritual considerations—considerations more stern than that of profit or loss—are all lost sight of; enslaved and overwhelmed in the base love of the world, we can only glory in rivaling the brutes in their low and sensual joys! Indeed, how serious and fearful is that inexorable tyranny of fashion under which our souls, identifying themselves with perishable things of earth, forget all that is sublime in their intellectual nature, and become indifferent to even the coldest perceptions of their immortality!

How dreadful is it to walk with the chains of the world around our necks ; and whenever our eyes would be raised to purer and better scenes than these, to find ourselves instantly drawn back again to the pollutions of earth ! It cannot be otherwise ; if we make the riches of the world the god of our idolatry, we must submit to the tyranny which he imposes.

But again, my brethren, there is yet another evil inseparable from that condition which is unchecked by difficulties, and stimulated by uninterrupted success ; and it is this : that the exhibitions of religious truth which it will bear are such only as consist either of dry and heartless disquisitions of philosophic morality, or else of boisterous rather than of fervent appeals to the feelings ; of fantastic and paradoxical rather than of simple and heavenly-minded delineations of scriptural teaching. All experience will go to prove the truth of this.

But we must conclude with the expression of the heartfelt prayer, that we may not forget the wise and restraining corrections of the God of mercy, come in what shape they may.

My object has been to inspire you with that ennobling confidence in the wisdom and mercy of every dispensation of God, that you may always be submissive in adversity, and cautious and temperate in prosperity.

The year, my fellow-mortals, is about to close ;— and to what purpose has it been applied ? Impressive thought ! Who can say that he will live to see

the end of that upon which we are about to enter? Who can say but the earliest flower of the approaching spring may bloom upon the sod that covers his grave? Nay, who can say but that the earliest beam of to-morrow's dawn shall play on his pallid cheek, already cold in death? And is there nothing of preparation yet to be made by us? "He is a fool who says he will be wise to-morrow." Oh! leave not your eternal interests for one moment hanging "loose upon the point of every wavering hour."

You have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ that you might live with the pure forever. Oh! continue not, then, to think and act as if you knew nothing of the lofty destiny that is opened before you, and as if the dust was your only abiding-place, and this poor, checkered, and fading life were the sum of your existence. Shall we acknowledge nothing of the ennobling hopes and animating prospects of the Christian? Shall we be content to bury our affections in the gross pursuits, the low and vulgar joys of vulgar life! Alas! alas for those on whom these days of darkness have already fallen; who must plunge without guide or guardian into the gathering gloom of death, and struggle with its horrors as they best can!







### THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

*“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

*2 Timothy 1st, 7th.*



PECULIAR excellence of Christianity is to be seen in the elevation its principles are calculated to confer upon the minds of its intelligent votaries.

It relieves us from the abject and debasing fears of ignorance and superstition—gives energy, activity, and perseverance to the will—calls forth the deepest affections of the heart, and directs their undying fervor towards the noblest objects. It gives clearness and worth to the decisions of the intellect, while it enlists its powers in the advancement of the most glorious and boundless ends. No, my brethren, the spirit with which Jesus has enriched the world is not the narrow spirit of servile and senseless fear, but rather the spirit of MORAL POWER—of victory over temptation and evil; and of strength to do the will of God. It is the spirit of love—of confiding trust in the unwavering goodness of God—of devout, inexpressible gratitude for the ceaseless exertions of His transcendent attributes in advancing human

happiness ; and we are thus impelled to tenderness and charity for the creatures of God, who are partakers with us of the unslumbering care and bounty of our common Father. It is, too, the spirit “of a sound mind”—that is, of a mind exalted and enlightened by Heavenly Wisdom ; purified and wisely regulated ; excited in due measure, and directed to the *fittest* objects ; free from all the perturbations of passion, and the warpings of prejudice ; elevated into a superiority to unworthy and worthless motives ; always anxious to discover duty, and steadily keeping alive the sense of responsibility. It is thus that the Apostle declares that God has not given us, as the disciples of Christ, “the spirit of FEAR, but of POWER, and of LOVE, and of a SOUND MIND.”

My brethren, it is a noble declaration, and it fills me with vast, ennobling, and consoling thoughts ! But, before proceeding to the grounds upon which I rejoice to rest my confidence in our religion, as animating us with the spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind, permit me to remark that the SPIRIT of FEAR of which the Apostle here speaks, as being opposed to the true spirit of the Christian, is not by any means that reverential fear of God which the whole compass and force of revelation goes to enjoin, and which so justly becomes beings who are conscious of their infirmity, aware of their constant exposure to sin, and anxious to guard against transgression. “Happy,” in that sense, “is the man who feareth always.” But by the “spirit of fear” in this place is meant a prevailing timidity of disposi-

tion—such a slavish dread of God as our Judge, and of man as our cruel foe, as destroys all holy confidence towards our Heavenly Father, and incapacitates us from meeting duty in the fear of opposing men. Now, it is in opposition to this timid and abject spirit, that the Apostle asserts that the spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of courage and power; that its tendency is to banish fear from the heart of man; to inspire him with a love which nothing earthly can enfeeble; to illumine his path with the light of wisdom; and to carry him on his way with rejoicing and confidence! But here the question presents itself, How is it that this power is conferred upon the mind—the power which is thus to make us victorious over sin, over ourselves, over the downward and debasing tendencies of our nature, and over all the pain and peril which the outward powers of the universe can inflict?

It is easy to give utterance to high-sounding declamations upon the ennobling tendency of the Christian faith. The richest coloring of a gorgeous and florid diction may be thrown over the capabilities of the human mind, as it is expanded, liberalized, and strengthened by the developments of Christianity. But if the power thus depicted—with all the glow and glitter that can be gathered from the fields of poetry and fiction—amounts to no more than the power of example, in the stainless model of perfection exhibited in the life of Christ, and the extent to which the feeling of self-sacrifice should be carried, as it is exemplified in His cross; oh! if THIS

be all, it is indeed mournful to think that the solemn feelings, the deepest wants, and the eternal hopes of mankind are thus to be trifled with by the high-sounding but empty rhetoric of a teacher of this world's treacherous philosophy,—the philosophy that insists upon resting man's sufficiency in himself, in his own worth and energy, in the strength of his moral purposes, and in the purity of his spiritual aspirations; the philosophy which, in the face of all human history, in the face of all observation and all personal experience, would set forth the sufficiency of example to subdue passions, to correct all tendencies to evil, and to arm the soul with such an unconquerable love of purity and truth, that all temptations of pleasure and applause, of gain, interest, and safety, in opposition to suffering and scorn, to loss and calamity, to peril and death, are to fall powerless before it. This, I say most fully and emphatically, is the philosophy of the insidious and blighting god of this world! It is the philosophy of pride, of self-sufficient and vainglorious boasting, in opposition to humility and self-distrust. It is the philosophy of wilful independence, conceited self-reliance, and disdainful neglect of the Divine guidance and aid, in opposition to the spirit of devout meekness, of anxious submission and obedience, and of the most perfect, unwavering trust in the constancy of that light, direction, and strength which is above the world, for which Christ has told us to look always, and without which none of the hopes with which He has enriched us, nor the principles He has

taught us to cherish, can be either fed or retamed by us. Here, then, you are enabled to see where it is that the "spirit of power," of which the Apostle speaks, is truly derived, and through which the soul is ennobled and refined, and enabled to break away from the chains of passion and sense which clog and enfeeble it here, and may destroy it eternally.

Our limits will scarcely allow me to present you with all the thoughts which press upon my mind in connection with this branch of our subject, or nothing would be easier than to show how admirably this doctrine of DIVINE INFLUENCE bears upon the real necessities of our nature, and how it serves to develop the noblest of our moral energies, precisely when, to a hasty observer, it might seem calculated to induce indolence, and a supine abandonment of our natural powers. That the doctrine of the persuasive influence of God's Holy Spirit upon the mind of man is one of tremendous importance, the uniform solemnity of the language of Scripture in every allusion to the operations of the Spirit is enough to satisfy us; and that it is at the same time a subject full of difficulty to the unsanctified curiosity of the human intellect, the endless speculations which have been advanced in connection with it will be sufficient to prove.

It is enough for me that the Scriptures were not intended to satisfy us upon subjects of curious subtlety and useless speculation. Wherever, in subjects of the kind, we were dark before, revelation leaves us so. Its great object is happiness and practical purity. With a serene and tranquil dignity, it

moves directly to the great moral end in view. It stops not to perplex the understanding, while seeking to improve and invigorate the affections of the heart. It appeals directly and strongly to the deepest wants and instinctive feelings of man's nature; and the responsive thrills with which those feelings—the best, the purest, and most unerring of all the powers and affections that can animate and move us—the responsive thrill with which THEY meet the teachings of Jesus, is enough to assure us that the language we thus hear is the language of Heaven and of Truth.

My brethren, it is the same language which tells us what we all feel and know to be true—what no man ever thought of doubting until, in seeking to be wise above the privilege of mortals, he became a fool;—it tells us that we are all free to choose and to pursue the path of righteousness and immortality, and that we are of course responsible for the use or abuse of this freedom and capability. But it tells us something more than this, and here too, alas! its instruction is hourly confirmed by our own humiliating experience; it tells us that although we are able to discover and free to pursue the “better way,” yet that the native tendencies of our constitution are not to purity and holiness; that although we may possess within ourselves an instinctive admiration of what is pure and good, and readily sympathize with all that is celestial and really great—all that is just, generous, and beneficent—yet that there is in our nature a principle of gravitation which, like the

great law of the natural world, turns everything to the earth. Notwithstanding all the instincts of our better nature; notwithstanding the coloring and drapery which the imagination may throw over the ideal images of virtue it delights to create; notwithstanding the strong and thrilling aspirations after something higher and better than the world, which the most of us have sometimes known, and which bespeak our alliance with a loftier spirit; notwithstanding all this virtue and excellence, in THEORY AND IN MUSING, yet in practice we are too much disposed to forget and resist all of these better thoughts, and, in spite of the chidings of conscience, to abandon ourselves to the empire of passion, while we sacrifice every interest, temporal and eternal, to yield ourselves without a struggle to appetites which we despise, and to vices which we condemn!

Such is no more than a faithful and humiliating picture of human nature, as it is exhibited in the history of all time. There is no such depravity exhibited as to render us insensible to the authority of reason or the obligations of conscience; but their sanctions are acknowledged only to render our deviations from their rule more portentous and more inexcusable.

Inexplicable by any principles of philosophy as the infatuation may be under which mankind are found to rush into crime and ruin, yet the power of the fascination cannot be doubted; and what, under these circumstances, will the chatterings of scholars and schoolmen avail, with all their dogmas as to

the elevation of poor human nature, and their glittering show of pure examples in stainless morality? My brethren, they will be worse than feebleness itself in resisting the impulse of passion and breaking the spell of evil propensity. Sensuality and the love of the world will still sit proudly on their thrones, and laugh to scorn the impotence of such philosophy. Men thus taught, after a few ineffectual efforts to shake off the degrading encumbrance of appetite, will soon come to regard it as THEIR NATURE, and will submit with unresisting listlessness to a destiny which they suppose it impossible to control or resist.

It would then appear that if there be any limit at all to our moral freedom, or to our moral power over THE WILL, the limit is imposed on our liberty and POWER TO DO RIGHT; and it is precisely here where our foe is all-powerful and we are helpless; where the spirit may thirst after good, but is overcome, pressed down, and smothered by the perverse inclinations of the flesh. It is here that the Divine Spirit comes graciously to our aid, and enables us to struggle with our evil nature, our soul's enemy, upon at least equal terms; to run fairly the race that is before us, and to strive for the glorious prize of salvation with confidence inspired, hope roused, and energies invigorated!

So far, therefore, is the power which we derive from the Holy Spirit from being inconsistent with our moral liberty, that it may with more propriety be considered as the source from which that liberty, properly understood, is derived. In his natural



state, man may see and admire duty; but he is too feeble, and too much the slave of passion, successfully to pursue it. To counteract, therefore, the otherwise irresistible tendency to evil and guilt, and to endow us with the perfection of freedom, the aid of which the Scriptures speak was absolutely required; it comes, you will observe, only proportionately to our wants. It comes not, like the whirlwind, to sweep away our natural powers, and to hurry us irresistibly onward, we know not where or how, but rather like the propitious breeze, to waft us gently through the narrow way, and amid the clouds and darkness, the storms and the perils of life, towards the haven of eternal safety.

So much, then, for the SPIRIT of POWER, in which it is our privilege to rejoice as the gift of God. We come now to the Spirit of Love.

I have already said that one of the most striking peculiarities of the religion of Christ is its continual appeal to the affections. It stands distinguished from all other systems of religion or philosophy by introducing LOVE towards our Heavenly Father as one of the principal motives to obedience. It exhibits Christ as the Saviour God—as partaking with us of a common nature—with a view not only to display a perfect and exalted model of goodness for our example, but also to awaken in us more effectually those feelings of devout, grateful, and affectionate attachment which it would not be easy to entertain towards God as the unrevealed and invisible Author and Governor of the universe. In beautiful con-

formity with this plan, these feelings are required to manifest themselves in a dutiful regard to His will. "If ye love me," said the Saviour, "keep my commandments." "And this is His love," said St. John, "that we walk after His commandments." Here we have set before us the true principle of Christianity, and the best application of it; the purest motive, and the most perfect practice. Here, in short, we are told what our conduct ought to be, and from what source that conduct ought to spring. The love of Christ, as our revealed God, is the proper ground of our obedience, and the only test of our love for Christ is the keeping of His commandments.

I know but too well that the history of our faith has been stained and disfigured by too many humiliating mistakes upon these important points. Persons have too often been found to profess a most fervent and zealous love for their Redeemer, are weighed down with a sense of their obligations to Him, are always ready to weep at the recital of His cruel wrongs, and are easily wrought up to a determination to pour forth their blood like water in defence of His cause; yet they are so far from giving the simple, direct, and every-day proof of their love which the Saviour has required—the keeping of His commandments—that they seem to imagine that the very warmth of their feelings, the glow and fervor of their devotion, is an excuse for the carelessness of their practice, and as affording them a kind of license for giving way to evil tendencies. This

mournful perversion of Christian truth in some persons has had, naturally enough, the effect of inspiring others with aversion or contempt for all sentiments of affectionate piety. Its clear tendency has been to bring into utter reproach the Gospel motive of love towards the Redeemer, as savoring of dangerous fanaticism, and leading to the substitution of enthusiastic feelings for a virtuous life. But the mistakes and perversions of men afford us no ground or reason for concealing the high or generous motives of action with which the religion of Jesus would enrich and animate the soul. Nothing can be clearer than that the stirring exhortations of the sacred teachers to the most unflinching devotion to practical duty, to the most sleepless anxiety in cultivating purity of heart, and the discipline of the passions, are founded on the love, gratitude, and reverence which we ought to feel towards our great Redeemer. These are the sentiments which they are constantly striving to keep alive, and to constitute, as it were, the main-spring of their system. They appeal, indeed, to fear and to hope, to rewards and punishments, but they "knew what was in man;" they knew that his feelings must be enlisted to secure his ready obedience. They knew full well that, as paradoxical as it may seem, yet it was not enough to convince the understandings of men as to what was their true interest, for man will not follow his interest if his affections go not along with it. The heart must be warmed, as well as the reason convinced. Our Lord, therefore, did not make

His religion a mere matter of cold and prudent calculation, but rather of earnest and affectionate zeal. Those warm affections which God has implanted in the heart He never means to destroy, but rather to direct and fix them upon the noblest objects. Reason may satisfy us as to what we ought to do, but it is another thing so to excite us that we actually do it. To think rightly about religion is one thing; to feel and act rightly is quite another thing. The clear, cold moon may shine brightly upon the fields of human duty, and, under its softening light, the wide landscape may be really beautiful, as God has checkered and enriched it; but still the mild light of the moon is powerless to rouse men from the stupor of senseless slumber, and it is not until the glorious sun bursts upon us in his might, to WARM while it illumines and adorns, that we start from the couch of indulgence, and press onward with fresh vigor in the career of duty to which God has called us. So, too, the conviction of the understanding is as the light of the cold, chaste moon—we slumber while we know that the field of duty is before us, and it is not until the sun of God's Spirit shines into our hearts, warming us with the love of Christ, filling us with admiration for the blended majesty and loveliness which is revealed in all that He hath suffered and in all that He hath won for us, and irresistibly constraining us to live no longer for ourselves only, but for Him who hath loved us and "given Himself for us," that we press anxiously onward in every path of meek and practical obedience. To love, thus awa-

kened, every task is light, and every sacrifice easy. It sustains the heart amid its sufferings, and animates it to meet every toil. It inspires the self-denial of the saint, and the self-devotedness of the martyr, and leads us to manifest to others, whom we see as the brethren of Christ, the love we profess to cherish for Him, the Brother, the Almighty Brother, whom we have not seen—to manifest it in tenderest exhibitions of sympathy, and in the most unwearied offices of kindness.

Such, my brethren, is the spirit of love which God has given us, and thus is it seen to be “the fulfilling of the law.”

But I have not yet done, and I begin to fear that I have left myself but little room in your patience for even the most brief illustration of the third point of the Apostle’s glorious declaration, that “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a SOUND MIND.” This last expression means the same thing as enlightened prudence, or sound and sober judgment. The true influence of religious principle in this respect is much greater than may at first sight appear. It is heavenly wisdom exalting and enlightening common sense, and blessing the world with the proprieties of religion—with everything that is calm and rational, with what is sober and dignified, in opposition to the extravagances of folly, to what is wild and fanatical, and to all the wanderings of the soul under hasty impulses into the dark and trackless path of absurdity and error. Only reflect for one moment upon

the religious history of our race ; consider how difficult it is for men to arrive at truth amid the rash and silly speculations with which human reason has contrived to embarrass and perplex it, and then who will not pray with me that God would indeed bless us with the spirit “ of a sound mind ? ”

See now, my brethren, the beautiful consistency and union of these ingredients, which together make up the atmosphere of our spiritual life. The spirit of power, if it were not humanized and softened by the spirit of love, would harden into revolting austerity ; sheer fervency of character, forgetful of the gentleness of Christ, has too often consumed goodness in the execution of duty. The spirit of love, without power, would sink into soft imbecility. The spirit of a sound mind without power would degenerate into a slothful perception of what was right, and without the spirit of love would be little more than the cold calculations of selfishness. Without a sound mind, all is foolishness ; without love, all is savage ferocity ; and without power, all would be feeble and worthless aspirations after what is beautiful in holiness and truth. Thus it is that we must feel the grasp of duty, in its wide compass, upon our spirits. Thus it is that we must be as wise as serpents, while we are as harmless as doves. Thus it is that, with eternity steadily in our view, every faculty and every feeling that God has given us must be brought into action for the divine glory, and for the happiness of men.



### THE ATONEMENT.

*“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”*

*1 Cor. 1st, 22d, 23d, 24th.*



IN the epistle from which these words are taken, the Apostle has declared that he did not intend to introduce any new system of philosophy to the world, or to gratify any vain or useless curiosity ; nor was he laboring to captivate their hearts with the charms of eloquence. His great and simple object was to unfold the important truths of God and immortality, and to enforce and illustrate the solemn duties with which these truths were connected. He then goes on to declare his own unfaltering resolution of adhering to this, the absorbing purpose of his life, in spite of every obstacle which prejudice, pride, or power might raise against it.

In the verses of the text, as we have read them, he sets forth the different kinds of proof which were demanded in matters of religion by the Jew and the Greek, according to the difference of their national character and religious education. “The Jews re-

quire a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." The Jews require a sign, that is, a MIRACULOUS SIGN. The Jews, from the very infancy of their history, and through every period of its advancement, had been familiar with miraculous operations. Their very origin as a people was miraculous. The separation of Abraham, their great ancestor, from the ignorance and idolatry of the nations, was effected by the supernatural interposition of the Almighty. The preservation of Moses, their great lawgiver, was by an extraordinary interposition of Divine mercy. The publication of their law was miraculous. It was by a miracle, that they were delivered from the chains of Pharaoh, and the oppression of Egypt. By a miracle, the first-born of Israel were saved; while the first-born of Egypt perished in a night. By a miracle, the sea opened them a passage to their native country; while the hosts of the pursuing enemy were overwhelmed in the deep. By a miracle, they were conducted through the pathless wilderness; the pillar of cloud serving them as a compass by day, and the pillar of fire as their guide by night. By a miracle, food descended from heaven to satisfy their hunger; and at their cry of necessity, water gushed from the flinty rock. In short, from their perpetually witnessing the most astonishing display of a miraculous providence to uphold their polity, and carry onward their destiny, they came to consider some miraculous sign absolutely essential to establish a doctrine as being from God. And thus it was that "the Jews required a sign."



The Greeks, on the contrary, were a refined people, much given to the abstruse disquisitions of philosophy, and utterly incredulous of everything pretending to supernatural interference. They demanded conviction through the progress and power of argument—of argument conducted according to the frivolous and arbitrary rules of the prevailing philosophy of the times; and it was only deductions thus wrought out that they would consent to dignify with the name of wisdom.

To a people thus intent upon the exercise of intellectual acuteness and skill, every doctrine was sneered at as mean and contemptible that was not introduced by a splendid parade of rhetoric, sustained by the subtleness of logic, and adorned by the flowers of eloquence. In this sense it was that the "Greeks sought after wisdom." To both of these classes of persons, the Gospel of Christ could not have been otherwise than distasteful. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The Jews, from the promises made to Abraham, from the types of the law and the predictions of the Prophets, had cherished the faith of a Messiah. But it was a faith colored and formed by the impure aspirations of worldly ambition. Departing from the infallible standard of Divine revelation, and listening to the uncertain reports of human tradition, they cherished a fond and foolish expectation that the Redeemer of Israel would soon appear from the skies as a mighty and overpowering monarch,

clothed in the resistless panoply of Divine strength, and going forth to rescue His people from their disgraceful vassalage to the Roman power, and to make Judea the seat of universal empire. Such were the swelling and lofty anticipations of a vain ambition. When, therefore, they were required to receive one as their Messiah who did not descend visibly and miraculously from the skies; who was not raised in a moment of time and by the word of Omnipotence from the dust of the earth; who was not even born in a palace, and surrounded with the pomp of royalty; who did not move in the lustre of triumphant power towards temporal dominion and supremacy, but, on the contrary, coming into the world among the lowest of the low, dwelt always in the vale of obscurity, and preached humility, meekness, patience, and charity; who called them to purity and holiness—not to earthly power and dominion; although they were filled with astonishment at the excellence of His doctrine and the greatness of His works, and were led to exclaim in wonder, “Whence hath this man this wisdom?” yet it very soon recurs to them that this is “the carpenter’s son”—“and they were offended at Him.” Even His own chosen disciples, whenever He began to speak to them of His approaching suffering and death, immediately in their darkened and worldly minds began to rebuke Him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.” Amid all of their discouragements, while their faith was staggering and their hopes drooping, there was

still one bare possibility with which they seemed to have fed and flattered their pride; and that was, that as the sun is often seen to break out suddenly, and to shed its unexpected glories upon the world from the dark bosom of a cloud, so this, their long-looked-for Messiah, would yet emerge suddenly from the cloud of contempt and poverty in which He had chosen to enshroud Himself, and, taking up the sceptre of David, He would wield it in the pomp of majesty over prostrate kingdoms and kindred of the earth. But when at last they beheld Him betrayed, insulted, covered with contumely and derision, condemned, nailed on a cross, expiring in agony, and actually buried in the tomb—then indeed were they overwhelmed with despondency. Their proud hopes were buried with Jesus; for they trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.

Thus was it that Christ crucified was “to the Jews a stumbling-block.” But again, my brethren, it is said that the doctrine of Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness. Yea, brethren, to a people founding their faith in the religion of nature; confiding in the abstruse and subtle speculations of human reason; entertaining no expectation of a Messiah, and strangers to the hope of a divine revelation, the story of the life of Jesus might well appear as a tale of idle romance. That men should look for the resurrection of the body and an immortality of existence from the power of a being who was born in penury, lived in suffering, and died in ignominy, was a conceit of credulity too extravagant

for philosophic thought. Thus was it that the cross of Christ was to the Greeks foolishness.

Brethren, we come now to show that the cross of Christ ought not to have been a stumbling-block to the Jews, nor to the Greeks foolishness. The only mirror into which the Jews could possibly look for the features of the Saviour's character, was the book of the Prophets; and what shadow of ground had they for supposing that the Messiah was to appear as a temporal and triumphant prince? The prophets nowhere say that He would appear in pomp and splendor, but rather that "He should have no form nor comeliness;" that He should be a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The prophets nowhere say that He should be followed with the respect and applause of the world, or that He should be exempt from reproach and suffering; but, on the contrary, they most expressly declare that He should be "despised and rejected of men;" that He should "give His cheeks to shame." The prophets nowhere say that the Messiah should escape death, the common lot of humanity; but, on the contrary, that He should be "made like unto His brethren;" that He should be "led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." He would be "taken from the prison and the judgment, and be cut off out of the land of the living." But the Jews, careless of these minute and distinct intimations of the prophets, require a miraculous sign from Heaven for the confirmation of their faith. Now, was not this afforded

them, and in their own way, too? What greater evidence could possibly be given of the immediate interposition of the power of God than was afforded in the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ?

His whole existence was a continued series of miraculous signs, at least as conspicuous, brilliant, and convincing, as those by which Moses of old confirmed the truth of his commission, and ought, to every reasonable understanding, to have carried home the demonstration that Christ was the "Son of God" with power.

So, too, we say that the cross of Christ ought not to have been foolishness to the Greeks. Turn to the doctrines of Jesus, in which He points to the perfections of God, the certainty of a future state, and the way by which that harvest of glory was to be won by man. Turn to the precepts in which he prohibits pride, injustice, malevolence, intemperance, and cruelty, and in sweetest accents enjoins humility, rectitude, moderation, humanity, and universal love—and then tell me, where are the marks of fatuity or folly? Are they not founded upon the soundest principles of true wisdom? Are they not stamped with the true excellence of Divinity? Are they not in every way worthy of God? every way suited to the nature of man?

The SUFFERINGS of Christ ought not to have been derided by the Greeks, for their own revered teachers of wisdom had taught that suffering was not only consistent with innocence, but necessary even to illus-

trate lessons in high virtue. Socrates and Plato, Aristotle and Epictetus, had long before agreed "that the greatest friends of the gods might, in this state of promiscuous distribution, be exposed to the greatest calamities. Nay, if one were to be a reformer of the world, he must of necessity appear in the form of a sufferer; because without suffering there could be no display of patience, magnanimity, and resignation."

Even the death of Christ, when considered in connection with his resurrection from the grave, had surely nothing in it of foolishness; for although to hope for immortality through the power of a man who was himself under the dominion of death might be a weak delusion, yet the hope of immortality—founded on the strong assurance of one who had claimed divinity for Himself, and then suffered Himself to be crucified, that all nations might attest His truth by the exhibition of the most alarming prodigies, and then that He might evince His own power over death by raising Himself from the grave—is a sentiment that has no alliance with absurdity, because it not only evinces His own superiority over death, but at the same time yields us the most irresistible confirmation of the certainty of future existence.

Thus have I proved, my brethren, that as Christ ought to have been to the Jews the "power" of God, so ought He to have been to the Greeks the "wisdom" of God. Thus, too, do we implore the Holy Spirit of God to enable us to prove to every heart

amongst you which has been called to know the way of life, that to us, too, Jesus is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. He is the power of God, inasmuch as His works are the glory of old, and His works of grace and peace in every believing heart throughout all time evince the omniscience of God. He is the wisdom of God, inasmuch as the glorious plan which His gospel reveals for the salvation of our guilty race from the curse of a violated law, while it preserves the harmony of Jehovah's attributes, is stamped with the seal of Jehovah's wisdom.

Now, that the pure and wise Author of the universe should have imposed permanent laws upon His moral, as we know that He has upon His natural creation, and that one of these laws should be the eternal difference between right and wrong, in their nature and in their consequences, is a proposition so far from being incredible, that the understanding must assent to it at once as an obvious truth. And if this be so, then it surely may be more consistent with the attributes of an infinitely moral being to attach irremissible penalties to sin, even though He may choose to pay those penalties Himself, rather than to adopt the opposite alternative of destroying the primary and eternal distinction between right and wrong, by attaching rewards to both vice and virtue. By what possible arrangement, other than that of the Christian atonement, could those eternal laws of right and wrong be left to operate, without involving the direct personal responsibility and consequent ruin of the whole

human race? If, then, Almighty wisdom has contrived a plan by which our nature, with all its fearful phenomena of evil, may be finally rendered perfect and acceptable in the sight of eternal purity, it surely is not for us to quarrel with a system of such extreme benevolence, merely because it attains its object without indulging our impatient curiosity as to the mode by which that object is reached.

The great mystery of God's creation is unquestionably the existence of evil, the deep stain of sin, and consequent misery, which has penetrated into the very essence of every element; and that mystery the wise, the good, and the thoughtful have in all ages attempted in vain to solve. "Wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" is the agonizing cry not only of the Christian Paul, but of every human being who reflects at all upon the disease and degradation of his moral nature; and the remedies suggested have been as many and various as the caprices of a perverted and terror-stricken fancy.

The indolent and careless among you, my brethren, may strive to forget this. The obstinate and hardened may deny it. The timid may labor to charm it away by narrow conceits and superstitious devices. But the enlightened and faithful Christian will neither close his ears to the voice that speaks from Heaven, nor shut his eyes to the light with which God would illumine him, nor harden his heart against the entrancing motives by which a Father's tenderness would win him to obedience; but, cherishing the



deepest conviction of the infirmity and utter helplessness of his nature, he will look for his final restitution to purity, happiness, and perfection, not to himself, not to the efforts of beings weak, ignorant, and contaminated like himself, but to the united power, purity, and wisdom of an INFINITE agent—to the purifying influence of God's Holy Spirit—to the saving strength of a Divine atonement—yea, to the sublime and awful doctrine of "Christ crucified"—of Christ, my brethren, the power of God and the wisdom of God! Let no man say that he is not conscious of criminality, and therefore cannot admit the NECESSITY of the intervention of a Redeemer. I know full well the frightful lengths to which the deceitfulness of our selfish hearts would carry us. I know full well that, entangled as we are in the pollutions of the flesh, our souls too easily become reconciled to the grossness that surrounds us, and we become insensible to the evil which we see and the evil which we do.

We gaze so habitually upon sin, that, if it does not become beautiful in our eyes, we at least lose all sense of its deformity. But, notwithstanding all this, there is still one appalling truth, which I am sure is as strongly demonstrable in the hourly experience of every human being as it is clearly written in the whole history of our race, and explicitly taught by Scripture—and that is, that "the heart of man is evil from his youth." With, then, the full and fearful history of man's moral imperfections spread out before us, shall we deny the doctrine of our atonement and redemption? With the disease before us, which, in

its full and unchecked virulence, may consume every soul of man, shall we reject the only theory which has ever suggested a probable reason for its existence, or pointed us to an adequate remedy for its cure?

You may, if you please, in blindness and caprice, abjure the atonement of Christ; but you will not, in so doing, relieve yourself in the least from the perplexity connected with the present condition of our moral nature. We cannot move one step upon the surface of this sin-deluged world, without finding ourselves involved in the depths of a most mysterious problem, which we can only get rid of by falling back into the horrors of infidelity, or else by advancing forward to the light that streams upon us from the Cross of Christ!

In conclusion: to the man who tells me that he needs no Redeemer, I will say that my answer is one not so much of argument as of individual, practical experiment. I will begin by asking him to meditate much and deeply upon the ennobling convictions of the infinitely pure, holy, and beautiful, which, as hidden seeds of Paradise, are to be found in every heart; then let him again retire to his closet, and meekly implore his Maker to give him light—to help his unbelief—to correct his faith, if IT BE WRONG—to teach and soften his heart, if it be hard; then let him from hour to hour faithfully scrutinize the motives of his very best actions, and measure those actions by the tremendous capabilities of his immortal nature; and then I will ask him whether he does not begin to discover more of moral deficiency,

more of the moral positive leprosy of sin adhering to him, than he had before the slightest conception of; and if he will but go thus far, I fear not but that, under the overwhelming consciousness of his inability, he will rejoice to seek for help where only help is to be found. He will seek for it at the very fountain-head of holiness, purity, and strength. Yea, he will seek for it from a Divine Redeemer; he will seek for it from "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God!"





*THE DUTY OF OBSERVING THE SACRAMENTS.*

*“Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.”*

*Matt. 10th, 32d.*



NO attentive reader of the Scriptures can avoid being struck with the frequency with which the Saviour insists upon an OPEN CONFESSION of the sentiments we may entertain of His character. And it will be well to remember, that the necessity of this confession was thus sternly insisted on at a time when it was certain to be attended with public derision, and to be at the imminent peril of property, liberty, and life! Nothing can more clearly tell us of the high estimate in which the character of Christ is to be held, and of the infinite superiority of the truths which He came to reveal to everything connected with this world.

From the words of the text, I will first endeavor to show to you what I conceive our Saviour to have meant by confessing Him before men—and from which confession we may hope to be acknowledged by Him before His Father in heaven.

Now, to constitute this saving confession, it is surely not enough simply to admit that He had an

existence upon this earth; and that the system of religion which takes its name from Him was actually dictated by Him—but to confess Christ before men is to acknowledge our belief in all the essential attributes of the character in which He is revealed to us,—the character which he arrogated, and which he supported by exhibitions of unearthly wisdom and omnipotent power. It is to confess Him as the image of the invisible Divinity—as “God manifest in the flesh,” by whom all things were created that are in heaven and on the earth, visible and invisible—who is before all things, and by whom all things consist. Then we must confess that God was thus in Christ, that He might reconcile the world unto Himself—that there is no other name given under Heaven, but the name of Jesus, whereby we can be saved—and that on the merits of His full and sufficient atonement we are prepared to rely!

It will thus be perceived that to confess Christ before men, with the effect upon which the Scriptures insist, we must acknowledge Him as that Divine Being who, according to the Scriptures, breathed into us the breath of life; who has been our constant preserver; who took upon Him our nature, redeemed us by the sacrifice of Himself, and who steadily sends to us the influences of His own Holy Spirit, to strengthen within us whatsoever is weak, and to sanctify within us whatsoever is impure. It is thus that we acknowledge that His presence is ever with those who ask it, to bless, preserve, and defend them; to instruct them by His word, to

edify them through His ordinances, and to comfort them by His promises of glory, so that they may be entirely prepared to commend their departing spirits to His most holy keeping.

We confess, too, that He alone can raise our vile body, and make it like His own glorious body, and that He alone will pronounce that last and irreversible sentence by which we will be admitted to realms of transporting glory, or else condemned to an eternal exclusion from the light and comfort of our God!

In short, we must confess our Christ to be the beginning and the end—the Author of all blessings, past, present, or in prospect—the one great object of reverence and love!

While we confess Christ with this pre-eminence, let it not for one moment be supposed that we derogate from the glory due only to the one Supreme God, the FATHER; because it is the will of God, expressly declared, “that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” The “Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;” and of the Son it is declared that “He thought it no robbery to be equal with God.” It is the end of all offices sustained by the Son, ultimately to glorify the Father. “Father,” said He, “glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee.” His mediatorial work is intrusted to Him for that purpose. It was intrusted to Him that He might repair the ruins made by sin in the kingdom of His Father, and restore the creatures He had made to

the end of their creation. When this shall be accomplished, "then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;" "then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1st Cor. 24th, 28th.) The economy of grace will then be superseded. The ministrations of the Son and of the Holy Spirit will cease; and the Godhead, more plainly revealed in unity, will rule the wide universe of love!

In the second place let it be remarked, that such a confession of Christ as this, such an acknowledgment of Him as our Creator, Sanctifier, and Saviour, implies, at the same time, an acknowledgment of our sinfulness, feebleness, and utter inability, in and of ourselves, to please or to conciliate our offended God. We confess, in short, our only hope of salvation is through the righteousness and atonement of Christ, and such fitness for the society of the saints as the spirit of Christ may enable us to attain. But in our best estate we must still feel that we are sinners; and we can only hope to be saved as SINNERS. We can never approach the mercy-seat of God in any confidence derived from our own merits, or in any strength imparted by our own good works. There is no one of us that liveth and sinneth not. There is no one of us who can offer such a measure of righteousness to that God in whose sight the very heavens are unclean, that it is possible for Him to smile upon. Yet we know that He will smile upon us if we will only approach Him in the way

that He hath marked out for us; if we will but come confessing our unworthiness, but pleading the sufficiency of Him who for our sakes has fulfilled all righteousness.

It is, then, my brethren, the truth from God that we are saved "by faith" in Christ Jesus; and it is strictly necessary that we should confess this to be true. But, at the same time, it is of the very last importance that the nature of this faith be neither misunderstood nor misrepresented. It is, indeed, most sacredly true that we are saved by faith in Christ; because we most surely believe that if Christ had not visited us in His humility and in His power, it is impossible that we should ever have been saved. But then this faith, the only saving faith, invariably works by love, and purifies the heart. Good works are its necessary fruits; there is NO FAITH rightly understood where they do not abound. It is the necessary result of the Christian's faith, that he strives after holiness; because he well knows that without it no man shall see the Lord. It is the object of all his solicitude to be delivered from the corruptions that are in the world, so that ultimately, with the divine image restored to his bosom, he may become with Christ a partaker of the imperishable nature of divinity. He consequently hungers and thirsts after righteousness; he presses on after it with the earnestness of a man who feels that he will perish unless he attains it. But to the last he will feel his infirmities pressing heavily upon him; and he will rejoice to bring the feeble measure of his attainments to the



footstool of the only Deliverer, and in deep humility to confess his utter unprofitableness. Yea, my brethren, our Bible tells us to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It tells us, too plainly to be ever mistaken, that stainless purity of intention should so mark the doings of every Christian, that his character as "a living epistle may be read of all men!" It is true that there is much in the character of the devout follower of Christ which the eyes of them that are without can never see, and therefore can never sympathize with. There is the soothing and consoling influence of devotion; there is the transporting rapture imparted by his vision of faith; there is the sweet serenity with which the spirit enables him to sustain the painful vicissitudes of life; there is an utter distrust of all the cheating vanities of the world, and an unyielding confidence in the promises of the Gospel. There is all that is unseen and which is eternal in the religion of Jesus—which the world may sneer at and denounce as visionary, but which the Christian feels to be real—which he feeds upon as the nutriment of his spiritual life, and cherishes as the most sacred and sublime of all the realities of his being! On the other hand, there is much in the life of the Christian, while living upon the earth, that comes directly under the observation of all men; and he is most sadly false to himself, and false to his Master's cause, if in everything that he is called to do, his uprightness is not so transparent that no cloud can darken it, and no

heart can refrain in honesty to yield its admiration. Indeed, my brethren, it becomes us to remember, that although the eye of the world can never penetrate the recesses of the heart, nor read the capitals in which we have written there the precious truths of our faith, yet that eye is always fastened with a keen, a scrutinizing, and a malignant jealousy upon the doings of our lives. Men will not now offer their homage to the cut and color of our garments, or to the unmeaning sanctity of our countenances—nor, unless they can see that we are living without offence, that we are frank, amiable, and guiltless in social and in public life; that we are stainless in honor, disinterested in justice, alert in beneficence, and unwearied in all the virtues which can bless and embellish society—unless, I say, with all our pretensions to an unearthly guidance, we exhibit nothing better in our lives than the low and brutal spirits of the earth, then it cannot be otherwise than that they should regard us with feelings of unmingled detestation and disgust!

I have now evinced to you how it is that Christ our Saviour requires us to confess Him before men; and I have also unfolded the obligation that rests upon us, in consequence of our relation to Christ, to the exercise of a most sleepless vigilance in cultivating the most stainless purity of intention, the nicest chastity of principle, and the loftiest aims in active virtue.

But again, my brethren, if we are willing to confess Christ before men, we surely should be willing to adopt those methods of confessing Him which

the present condition of His religion renders practicable and proper. At the present day, the only direct and unequivocal mode of professing the Christian faith—the only mode of doing so which is at once public, and yet unostentatious—is by observing the appointments and the ordinances which are peculiar to Christianity. The mere circumstance of our being born in a Christian land, or of our being occasionally found in public assemblages of Christians, is surely not enough to make us Christians; but if we acknowledge the authority of Christ, by submitting ourselves or our children to the ordinance which He has appointed as the door of entrance into His household upon earth, then do we profess ourselves to be His followers.

Why should we observe the sacrament of baptism, if it be not in obedience to the requirements of Christ? And do his requirements go no farther than that? If we confess that His laws and His commandments are obligatory in one case, are they not equally so in all cases? Is not the observance of the Lord's Supper a command of Christ, plainly to be read? Do you not recognize it as an ordinance of His appointment? Why, then, should you neglect it? I appeal to you as to wise men, and I ask you to give me one solitary reason why it is that a rite so distinctly enjoined, and so expressive of attachment and discipleship, should be treated by you with indifference? My brethren, this strange inconsistency can only arise from heedlessness, or from the want of information, or from mistaken

scruples as to the nature of the sacrament, and the degree of preparation necessary for a worthy observance of it.

My brethren, if the obligations imposed by the authority of Christ and the profession of Christian privileges be fearful and sacred—if eternity, with its awful associations, can excite our hopes—if the eternal Spirit of God ever gave energy to the voice of His warning minister—you will at once be aroused from the stupor of indifference; you will awake from the deadly sleep of criminal neglect; your plea of heedlessness shall avail you no longer.

But is it of the want of information that you complain? Then let me remind you that the sources of instruction are on every side of you; the light of knowledge is shining broadly upon your path; the Master will not much longer delay His coming, and He will require you to account for the talents He has intrusted to you for improvement! Remember, oh! I charge you to remember, that if the door be once shut upon you in “the outer darkness,” it is shut forever! No cries for light will then be heard! The darkness which will envelop you will be more intolerable than an everlasting night of death and the grave! What, then, I say unto you, I say unto all—Watch! Arise, my brethren, and let us be stirring!

But again: what is there in the nature of this sacrament, or in the preparation necessary for its observance, that you should refuse to observe it? Do you tell me that it is a solemn thing? I grant you

that it is so. But is it less interesting or less important upon that account? Prayer is a solemn thing—but can it therefore be securely neglected? The public worship of the Creator is a very solemn thing—but can we therefore with entire immunity forsake the assembling of ourselves together? Death is unquestionably among the most solemn of all possible subjects of human thought—but are we therefore to neglect a wise preparation for the hour of our departure hence?

Solemnity, my brethren, is one thing, and revolting frightfulness is altogether another thing. Why is it that you will insist upon clothing this most interesting solemnity in colors of terrific gloom? Surely, there was nothing like the thunders of Sinai attending its institution. No frightful lightning flashed around the mild Lawgiver, while in tenderness and in majesty He established it. There was nothing of gloom or of awful mystery connected with it, but everything was social, affectionate, and touching.

The first Christians do not seem to have regarded it as appallingly solemn, for they as regularly observed it as they regularly assembled themselves together on the first day of the week.

The early converts at Corinth do not seem to have been appalled by its solemnity, for they very soon converted it into a riotous festival. The Apostle Paul, you will remember, rebuked them with severity for this shameful abuse—but in doing so he does no more than tell them, as he tells us, that any wilful

and monstrous perversion of sacred things must surely bring us a righteous condemnation.

I have alluded to the preparation which is supposed to be necessary for a participation in this feast. Here then you will permit me to inquire, how is it that we are to arrive at any just conclusions upon a question so nice? And who is it that Christ has empowered to determine the precise measure of preparation that will be acceptable to Him? Where, I have a right to ask, where have we the example or the authority for insisting upon this formal routine of preparatory discipline—of sounding this loud and long note of preparation, which conceited and fallible men have in these latter times affected to esteem so important? At its institution, Christ administered the Sacrament without allowing His disciples any time for preparation; and the first Christians, by weekly observing it, evinced clearly that the only preparation which they deemed to be essential were those general habits of holiness, that humility of heart before God, and that honesty of intention, which every one who recognizes the authority should most anxiously cultivate.

My brethren, let me here entreat you to pause amid the hurry of life, to reflect, to consult your own good sense, and then I will ask you, if you are unprepared to join in the interesting solemnity to which I this day invite you, then are you prepared to present yourselves in the presence of God, in the solemn and public worship of the sanctuary? Are you prepared to present yourselves before Him—

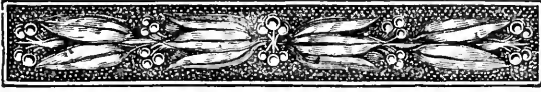
He and you alone in the retirement of your closet? Are you prepared to come, with the children of your love in your arms, to devote them to His service, and to implore for them His favor, at the font of baptism? And, last of all, are you prepared to leave the scenes which now engross and delude you, and to stand with your heart uncovered in God's awful presence in the world beyond the grave? Alas! my brethren, if you are not prepared to join with your fellow-mortals in commemorating the death of your common Saviour, and to seek in the way of His commandment an increase of spiritual light and strength, how can you rest coolly in your estate as being prepared to pass through the gates of death into the unclouded presence of God, there to join with the saints in heaven in celebrating the praises of the Lamb forever? If you have no real desire to obey the commands of God, then all excuses are idle. But if you really do profess to receive the religion and to acknowledge the authority of your Redeemer, then must you remember that your Christian obligations remain unchanged, whether you commune or whether you refrain from communing. They are not in the least degree either increased or diminished by the observation of the sacrament; but your conscience will tell you that you have something more to answer for as long as it continues to be neglected.

If tenderness of conscience restrain you, as I know that it restrains so many, then let me entreat you to remember that the command for the obser-

vance is positive, but the measure of preparation or fitness is not defined. You are not to wait until every scruple is satisfied, and every difficulty vanishes, before you come to the simple ordinance which God's love has prescribed as the means of keeping alive human faith, and for obtaining spiritual light and strength. An honest desire to comply with the requirements of our God, and "to fulfil all righteousness," is all that is necessary. The question is not, how good you are, but rather is it, how good you would gladly be? If you sincerely desire to be steadily advancing in holiness and truth, you cannot at the same time wish to escape from any restraining influence of religious ordinances, or any additional inducements to watchfulness and caution which religious professions may impose upon you.

May God grant it, my brethren, that those of us who shall this day, through a solemn sense of duty, first contribute as God has prospered us to the necessities of the poor, the sick, and the destitute, and shall then assemble around the altar of our common Lord, to commemorate His death until His coming again—may indeed find ourselves more and more animated by the refreshing influence that proceeds from the presence of God! May we find ourselves refreshed, and our strength renewed, to run with more alacrity the race that is set before us; to press onward with fresh earnestness toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus!





*THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.\**

*"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."*

*1 Cor. 15th, 51st.*



MY brethren, what a ceaseless circle of change is nature!

There is nothing in regard to which we can affirm that it will be to-morrow what it is to-day! Every object that meets the eye appears to be already hastening towards the assumption of some new form of matter. The universe appears to be endued with powers only to carry it on to other conditions of being, and it exhibits everywhere a perpetual and most wonderful system of transmigration, decay, and renovation.

The seed which to-day is dry and lifeless, is to-morrow the green and growing herb, destined to rise into the strength and beauty of the forest, or to ripen into golden harvest, to make glad the heart of man. The bird which is soon to float among the clouds is now lifeless in the shell; and the insect that flutters before us so gayly in the sunbeam, has

\* This was the last sermon delivered by the Author, but a few days before his death.

just emerged from another form of life in the secret places of the earth.

Thus it is with the creature man! He is not now what he soon will be. At no two fitting moments of time are the particles of matter that compose his body precisely the same; while the spirit that animates him, in its absolute essence, is alone the image of Divinity—unchangeable amid perpetual vicissitude, and imperishable amid universal decay. Yet in its present connections it is everywhere marked with the evidences of change, with the signs of release from the mouldering prison of the body. Our present condition, my brethren, is manifestly subordinate and ministerial to another and far higher development. What is now corruptible in our relations must soon be changed into incorruption; this mortal must soon put on immortality!

Surely, my brethren, there is nothing but experience could ever persuade us of the wonderful revolutions that nature is perpetually exhibiting. That the seed, which is now so entirely without vitality, should so quickly exhibit all the mysterious phenomena of vegetable life, is infinitely more astonishing than that a restless and aspiring being like man, with his boundless and ever-growing powers, wishes, hopes, and fears, should be destined to LIVE FOREVER.

In the grain there is nothing from which we might be led to conjecture that it is not always to be what we now see it. But the powers and wishes of man have led him, in every age of his history, to argue an existence after the death of the body; and

this sacred notion of immortality is in itself a strong presumption that the soul, although subjected to change, can never be destined to destruction !

Our earnest and anxious wishes—shooting far beyond the ruin of the body, and leading us to thirst for affection, for remembrance, and for honor, long after the visible form has mingled with the dust of the dead—were never given to man in cruel mockery. And again: our universal discontent with the present course of things is a part of our nature, and has been thus implanted in *wisdom* and in *mercy*, and is designed to enable us, amid the stupefying witcheries of the world, to be continually thirsting for *higher* measures of purity and perfection. It is designed, too, constantly to remind us that our present connections cannot always endure ; that it will scarcely be wise in us to fix our hearts with a deathless affection upon objects that are always fading and failing us.

The design, then, of this peculiar and striking provision of our nature is seen to be worthy of the Creator's goodness.

Can any other reason be conceived, why man should be forever thirsting for a measure of excellence and glory of which he ever conceives, but nowhere realizes ?

If we had been destined for this world alone, we should have been content with what the world affords us. But there is now something deeply and inseparably wrought into our hearts, which tells us that there are fairer and better things than these ; that there are elsewhere grandeur and beauty, happi-

ness and glory, far surpassing anything which we now behold or enjoy.

There is something in human nature which instinctively leads us to create a moral world of our own,—a region without storm or tempest, of perpetual peace and endless love, free from the perturbations of warring passions and all perversions of justice. This power of creating what we enjoy not marks us for futurity.

We have thus an idea of happiness which is perpetually receding from our grasp.

Why is it that man should be thus perpetually driven from the present to the future, which, when it comes, beckons him on to a future beyond it?

In childhood, it is to be youth; in youth, we shall be happy in manhood; in manhood, we hope to find it in the quiet and repose of a serene old age. But alas! in youth we find that pleasure exhausts without satisfying. In mature life, power, wealth, and care fret and fatigue us. In old age, pain and weakness oppress us, and our hearts are made to bleed under the ravages of death, until man, wearied out by the long delusion, sees plainly that if he would ever realize the bright vision of happiness he has so long pursued, he must be content to follow it over the dark gulf of death.

Now, I contend that God would not thus have endowed the heart of man, if its sacred affections be perishable and mortal! O no! if our love, our hopes, and our creative aspirings are to flourish nowhere but here, then there is no such other incon-

sistency in all the works of God, where intention and design are everywhere manifest, and everything is adapted to its peculiar use. Surely it was the *same Omniscience* that contrived the creature man and fashioned all visible and outward nature. Surely it was the same God brought into being the MINUTEST INSECT and the STUPENDOUS MIND. And must we not, then, look for the PURPOSES of Providence everywhere? Bodily organs and mental qualities have each their specific design and use. No creature is furnished with wings, that is not destined to fly. And if we ever witness appendages, the present use of which is not obvious, we conclude that the creature is destined to advance to another and a higher condition of being; that it is to undergo some change that will justify the works of God and bring every endowment into action. Thus the half-living insect, in which we evidently discover the rudiments of wings; although it now only crawls upon the earth, we yet conclude that it will not always be so, but that those wings will expand, and that it will throw off the shell in which it gropes, and rise into the more elevated condition of an inhabitant of the air. Thus, my brethren, experience teaches us to reason of nature; and thus, too, we should reason of the *nature of man*. We see him most wonderfully and exquisitely constituted, admirably fitted with powers and qualities bearing upon his present destiny, and calculated for the present scene; but along with these he has other instincts and qualities, most strongly pointing to another condition of being. Our idea of

God, our ungratified notions of excellence, our sickness and impatience of the *present*, our ceaseless desire for *change*, our unsatiated appetite and thirst for the *future*, these are the embryo wings which indicate the flight for which we are destined; these are the signs that mark the change that is awaiting us. These things belong not to this world; they are useless here, and God does nothing uselessly. They point unerringly to immortality, and they are at the same time the instruments and organs which enable us to detach ourselves from this world, to break through the affinities that bind us here, and to rise to far greater measures of purity, freedom, and happiness.

It is thus that nature cherishes the profoundest and brightest hopes, and suggests to the anxious heart the entrancing PROBABILITY of a DEATHLESS EXISTENCE.

It was for Christ to give assurance to hope and fruition to faith. Nature dictates that it MAY, that it MUST BE SO. Christ revealed precisely how it SHALL BE.

To a certain extent philosophy conjectures rightly; but it was for the inspired Apostle of Jesus to teach the world upon the unerring truth of God, that although this body, the present shell and covering of the soul, shall be thrown aside and moulder into dust, yet shall the spirit, strong in the undying image of Him who created it, continue to advance steadily towards the boundless source of light and life, and is destined to flourish forever amid the

ransomed and incorruptible spirits who have been made pure in the blood of the Lamb.

Now, my brethren, it is to this change that is before us—this throwing off of what is mortal and corruptible—that the Apostle alludes in the text. He was engaged in enforcing the great and important doctrine that the body was no more than the temporary covering of the soul, and that we are no more to argue the loss of THOUGHT, SENSATION, and AFFECTION, because all things SEEM to perish in the grave, than we are to conclude that the seed is lost because, in obedience to a great law of nature, it must die, and change to the eye, before it can be quickened and vastly multiplied.

Then the Apostle goes on to teach that ALL MEN shall not DIE ; that is, that when the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come, some men shall be found alive upon the earth. “The dead in Christ” —those who have been already called to pass through the purifying process of dissolution—shall first be gathered around the “Son of Man ;” and then, by the omnipotent fiat of God, the same ennobling, refining, and elevating CHANGE will, in an instantaneous moment of time, be passed upon all who are yet breathing the air of mortal life ; the change, brethren, from what is mortal to immortality—precisely the same change as is in others effected by death and the resurrection. “We shall not all sleep” the sleep of death, “but we shall all be changed ;” changed from what is gross, mutable, and fading, to what is ethereal, incorruptible, and eternal !

And here, my brethren, the question presents itself, as to the effect the change wrought in us at death is to have over our present sympathies and relations.

As to the precise period when the purposes of God shall be answered in the economy of the universe, and the mighty angel shall descend from the skies to proclaim the end of time, it is not for mortals to know. It is enough that the change through which we must pass is before us! It is enough for us to know that in a little span of time—alas! who can say how awfully short it may be!—and although the sun may not be blotted from the heavens, yet that these bodies shall all be blighted, debased, and mouldering under the touch of death!

Where then shall be the deathless spirits? The SOUL, with its warm and gushing tide of sacred affections, where will it be? How will it exist? Will the ties which now unite us be utterly dissolved? Will memory and recognition be lost in death? Will we never look back upon the scenes through which we have passed? Will we know not the spirits with which we are engaged in mutual offices of love? Shall we no longer be blessed with a kindling interest in the joys, sorrows, trials, and crimes of the family still on this earth, and in which our own charities while here were all bound up? Shall we never be so present with them as to see and hear the sighs which their heaving bosoms throw out in prayer for comfort, for holiness, and for knowledge?

AM I SO SOON TO DIE! —and is this frame—the curi-



ous and wonderful work of God—to be borne to the dark tomb, and to the appalling ruin which the worm will work ?

And then will this heart be so shut out from this world, that its burning love can no longer spend itself upon the objects of its present and its tenderest thought ?

My friends, it cannot be ! What is death ? What is the soul ? What is heaven ? I answer, that DEATH is no more than the release of the soul from its embryo restraints in the prison of the body. To destroy THE BODY is to refine, to purify, to elevate, and to ennoble THE SOUL. It is not to darken or contract it ! But what is THE SOUL ? It is the seat of immortal power. It is thought—affection—intellect—everything that dull, inert, corrupting, loathsome matter is not !

If the soul is to be improved, exalted, and enlarged in heaven, will not thought be expanded, will not affection be quickened, will not intellect be invigorated ? And all this with reference to this theatre of its preparation and trial. Of what use is this world, if its recollection is to be blotted out at death ? To suppose it is to subvert responsibility ; for how can we talk of retribution for that of which we have no consciousness ?

But it will not be so. We know that we must account for the deeds done in the body ; and that the soul, in its last and highest estate, with its sacred energies quickened and expanded, will be powerful enough to embrace the past with the present ; to

look back with the tenderest sympathy upon the scenes it has left, even when smiling amid the raptures of its far happier home.

But what is that home? What is heaven? It is the abiding-place of Jesus, the Head of His body, the Church! And is not Jesus present always with the objects of His love upon this earth? Has He not told us that He is thus present with us? Surely, then, where the Head is, the body must be also.

Nothing, I think, can be clearer, than that we are to see and know the happy spirits of all those just men who have been made perfect by the blood of Christ. It is most certain that there is to be a general knowledge and communion among the saints in heaven. The Apostle Paul most clearly expected to know and to be known of his converts, who were to be his "crown of rejoicing at the coming of the Lord." It was with this hope that he labored instantly and incessantly, that he might "be able to present them perfect in Christ Jesus."

This cheering and consoling hope is the common property of ALL who strive to attain to a triumphant resurrection of the dead! The parent may then present the children of many generations he has been the instrument of bringing up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The pastor shall present the flock he has fed with the bread of life, and guided through the difficulties of the narrow path that leads to the kingdom of heaven. We shall be all known to each other, and to all men, from the least even unto the greatest; and the recognition shall fill us

with the fulness of joy, of which this world can afford no conception or parallel.

In this connection, you will permit me to say that I have heard with surprise the doubts of pious minds as to the sympathy of the faithful in Heaven with the struggles of the faithful on earth. On that point I ask not for the explicit teaching of inspiration. If God does not tell me in His word that the clear, strong, purifying instincts of nature are wrong, I rely upon them as the impress of Himself, eternally and sacredly true. But it strikes me that if the language of the Scriptures upon this point be not minutely explicit, yet it is so fairly a deduction from the whole scheme of Christian doctrine as to render further teaching useless. How is it possible for men to say that neither the Scriptures nor the light of nature throw any illumination upon the question of the knowledge possessed by the spirits of Heaven, concerning the things of earth? Surely, the Church is spoken of by the sacred writers as the ONE FAMILY OF CHRIST, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH! There is a communion and fellowship of all saints too constantly spoken of to be reconciled with the idea that the disenthralled and exalted spirit was ignorant of the line of spirits with whom it is allied. Does not the Apostle Paul expressly tell us that the hosts of the redeemed, who have preceded us in our career of faith, are now surrounding us as a "cloud of witnesses," anxious for the constancy and steadiness with which we are "to press onwards towards the mark of our high calling in Christ Jesus?" We are

told too, in the parable of the "rich man and Lazarus," that the thoughts of those who are EXCLUDED from the presence of God may be enlisted in behalf of their earthly brethren; and can we believe that the sufferings and interests of time will attract LESS REGARD in the REALMS OF TRIUMPHANT GOODNESS than they do in the REGIONS OF WOE? Are we not told that there is joy in HEAVEN over one sinner that repents ON EARTH? But it is said, that to give this knowledge of the lower world to Heaven-born spirits will be to endue them with omniscience! Not so; I only claim for them a continued knowledge of the scenes through which God has called them to act. I only ask that while you admit the elevation and expansion of the soul when released by death from the shackles of the body, you will not at the same time say it is robbed of its most precious and enriching power—that it is deprived of memory—that those joys are denied to it which flow from the exercise of the social affections, pure and exquisite as we know them to be, and *eternal* as we have thought them, because implanted by God, encouraged and illustrated by Christ, and fed and purified by the Spirit.

But we have not yet done with this entrancing topic, at which we thought only to glance. It is objected, that to bind the world of spirits to this world of sin by ties of affection and knowledge, would be to subject them to humiliation and pain from the sight of our sufferings and degrading impurity! I reply, that this is the conclusion of an earthly and narrow view of the condition of the departed,

and of the nature of their spiritual love. While in the flesh, the sight of guilt and woe is painful, because we cannot see the designs of God, and because it is associated with our own frailty and liability to suffering. It is wisely so ordered, to quicken our sense of accountability, to stimulate us to virtuous effort, and to a more resolute self-government. But the Church of the first-born in Heaven fear no sin and think not of sorrow. The excitement of virtuous sympathy is not suffering. To participate in the intense love with which Christ is bound to our race—to penetrate the *design* of all the discipline to which God subjects His creatures—to see excellence and joy everywhere springing from apparent evil—to see goodness perpetually developed—to become themselves ministering agents in the vast and eternal schemes of beneficence—Oh! this is neither humiliation nor woe!

I know, my brethren, that to many minds of gross and material texture, immersed in the mists of time and sense, this communion and interest of unearthly spirits with the struggles and aspirations of living men may seem no more than the conceit of an enthusiastic fancy. I can only say I can conceive of no delights yielded by the treasures of time—I know of no satiating joys of sense half so real, half so enduring, as I find in the persuasion that the ties are eternal which bind together pure spirits in the career of immortal love—the career of immortality which we begin on this earth.

My brethren, I most firmly believe that it is an

interchange of sympathy and interest which suffers no interruption ; and I am sure that it is of the very last importance to human happiness and virtue to cherish that persuasion ! For what truths can philosophy give us, half so affecting ? What themes can poetry furnish, half so thrilling ? What other sanctions can religion throw around us, half so likely to touch the sensibility and to feed the vigilance of these cold, earthly, and sensual hearts, as the solemn, imposing, and ever-present conviction that all our doings are hourly read, and all our sacred aspirations echoed back, by the departed spirits of our love ? Glorious, entrancing, and controlling thought !

My brethren, let us cherish these sacred reflections. But let us beware lest we consent to any presumptuous perversions of this doctrine of the communion of spirits. *However much may be known by the family of Jesus in Heaven, we, so long as we are covered by this veil of flesh, can neither see nor know.* Let us, then, cling with closer fondness to the hopes which Jesus inspires. Let us not repine that we are to fall into the dust. "We must all be changed," but the faith of Christ will "change this vile body like unto His own glorious body." And our dear and virtuous friends will be changed and clothed anew as we are with spiritual bodies ! Death will then have no more dominion over us, but, bright as the angels, and exulting with them in their triumphant songs of joy, we shall run our endless race of glory !

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