

SPIRITUAL COUNSEL
AND ENCOURAGEMENT



REV. J. W. GABLE



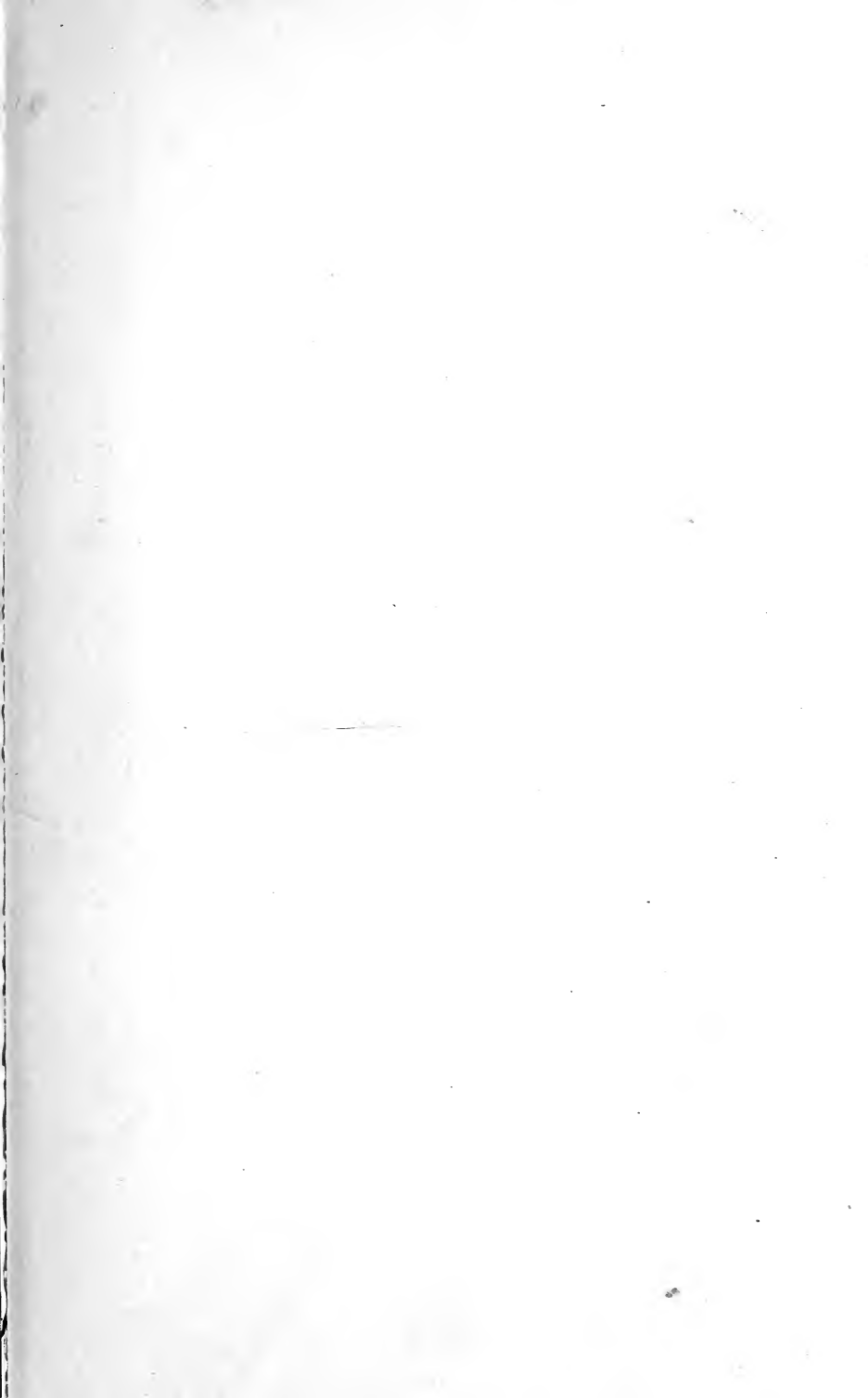
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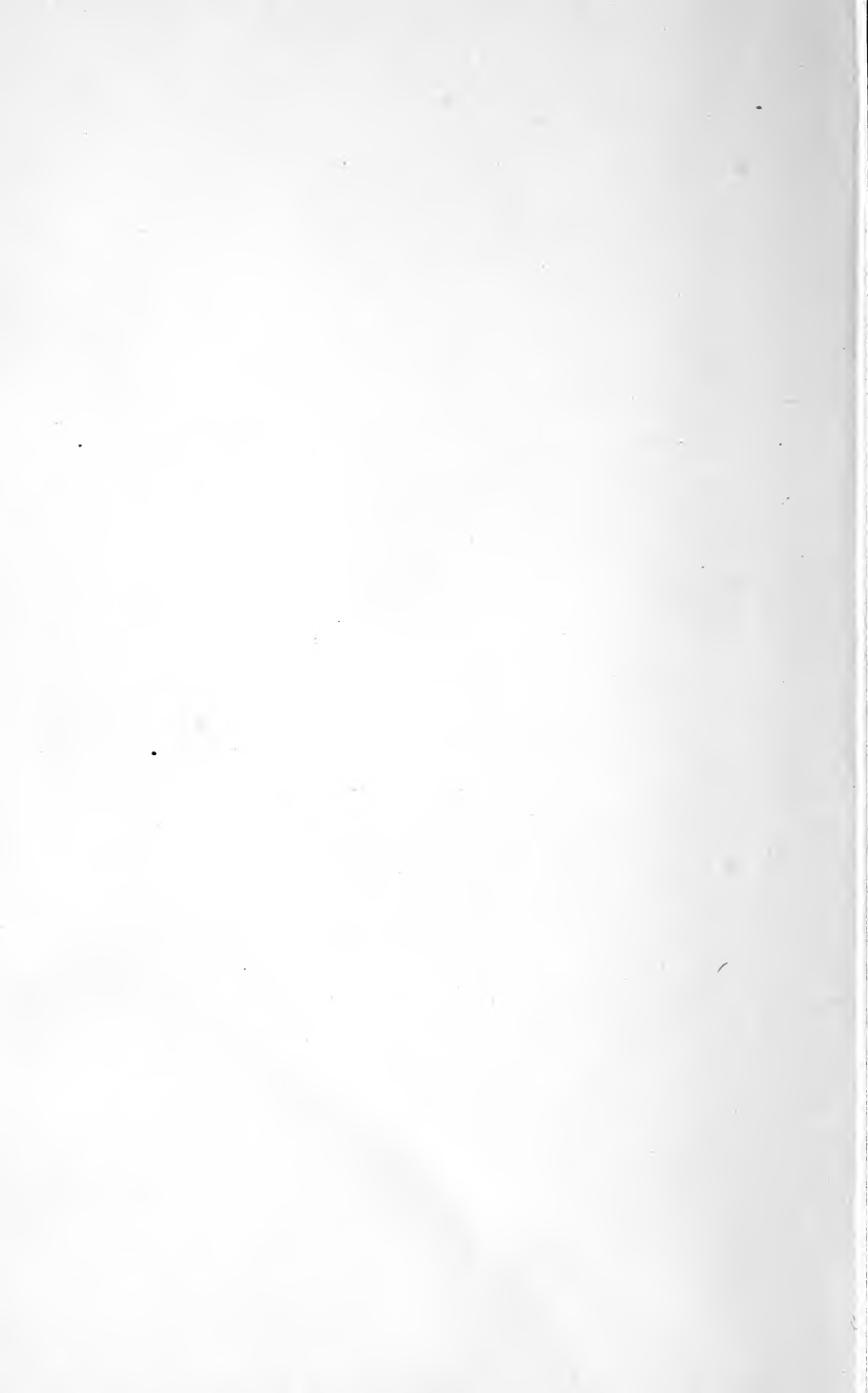
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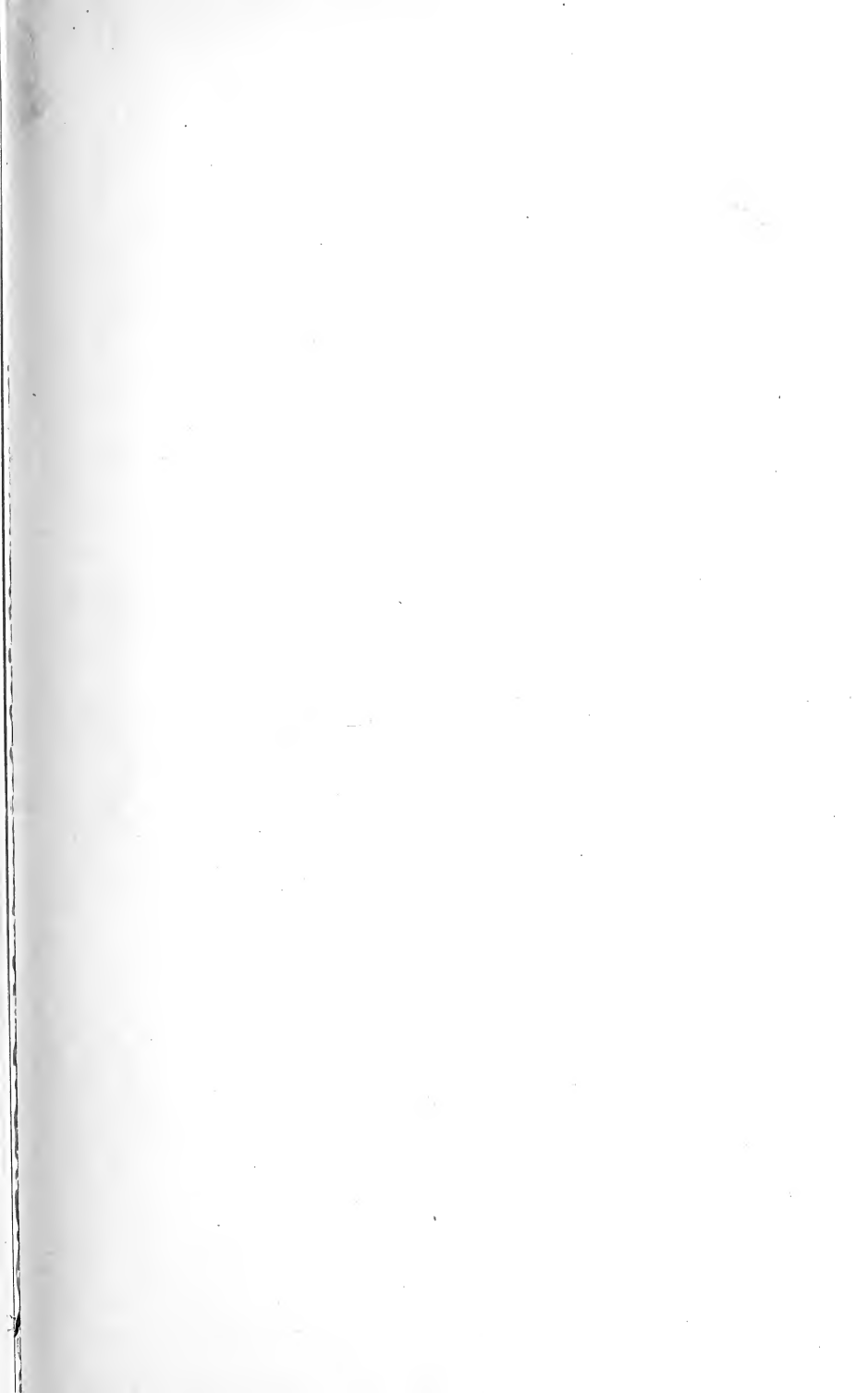


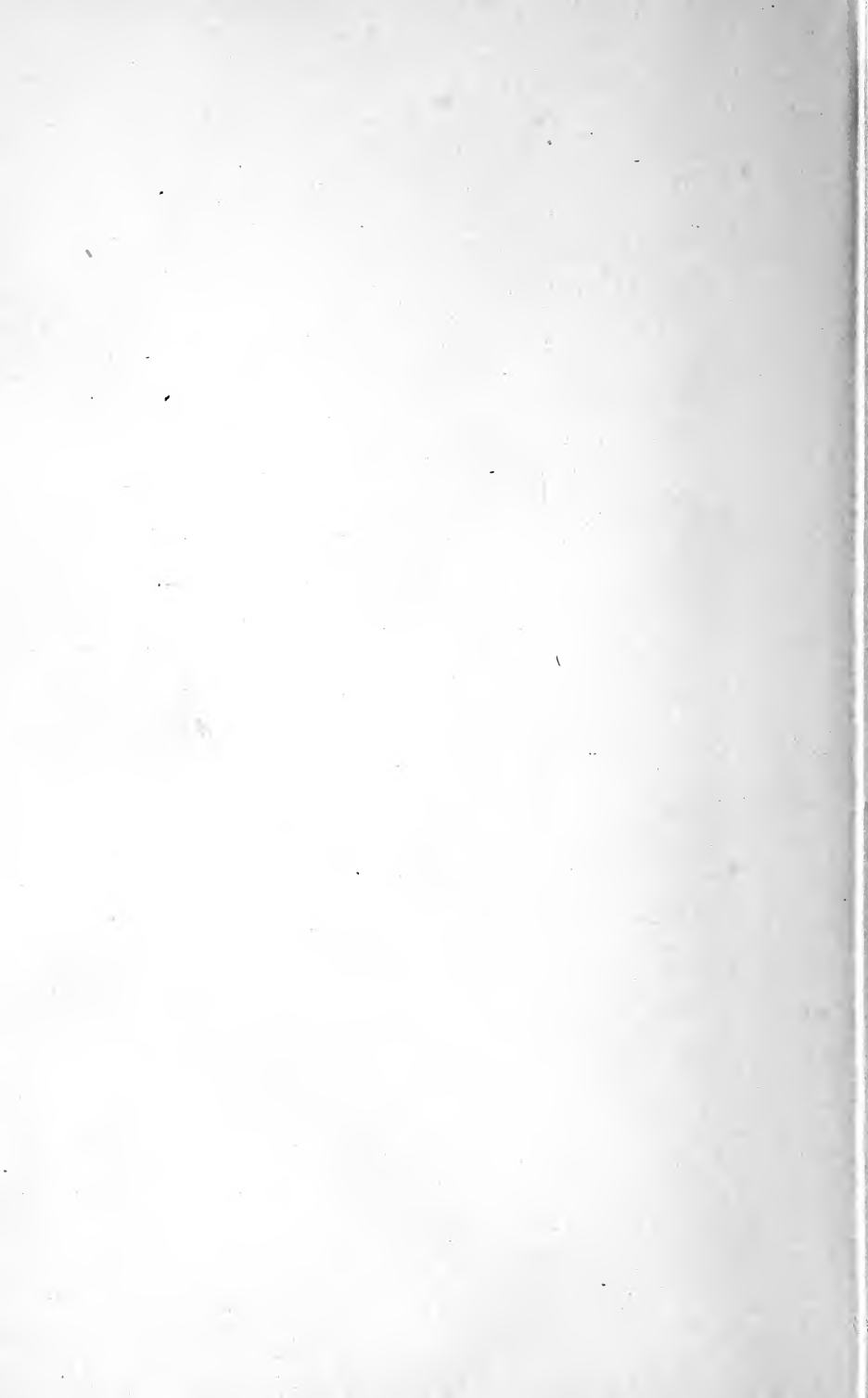


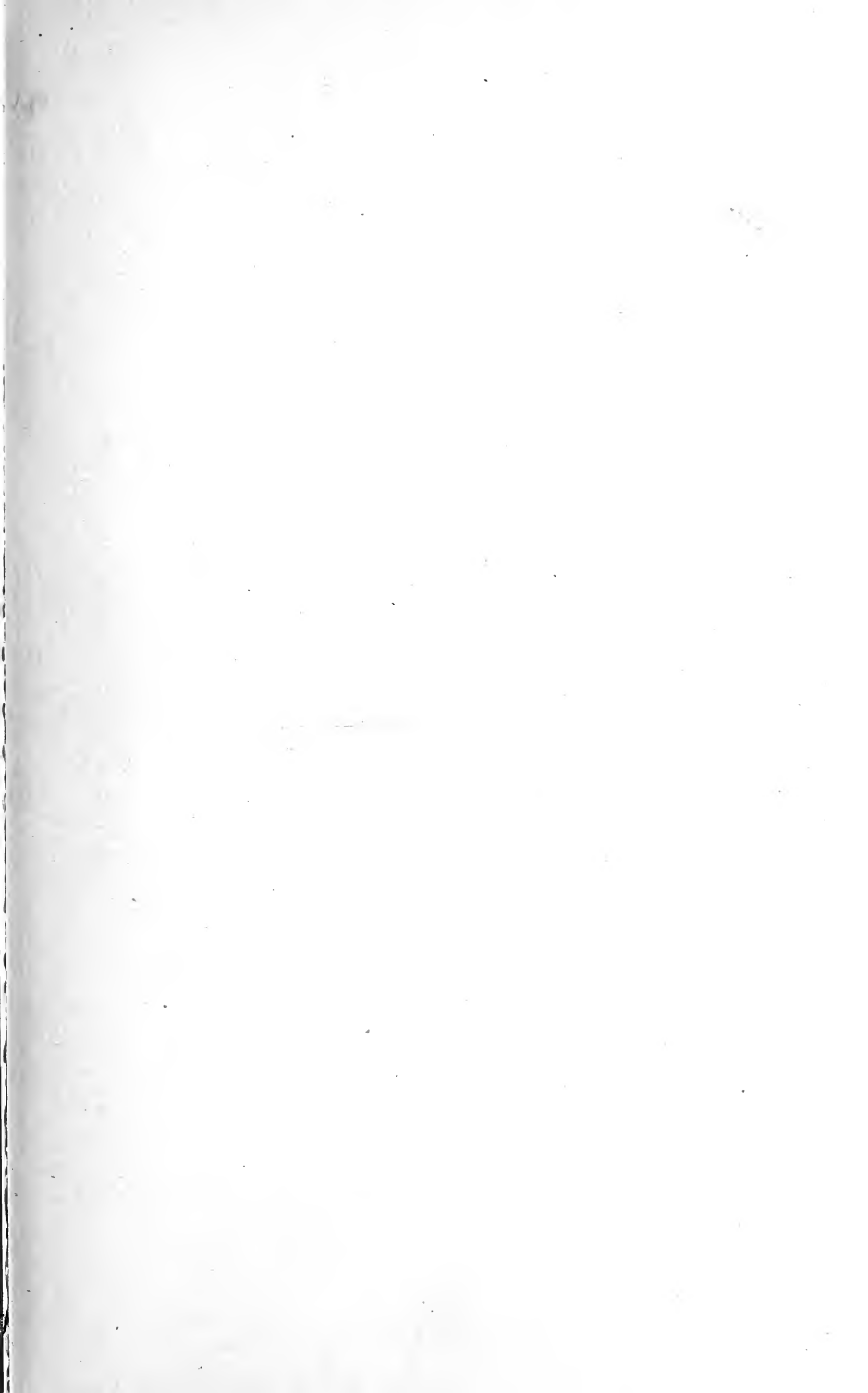


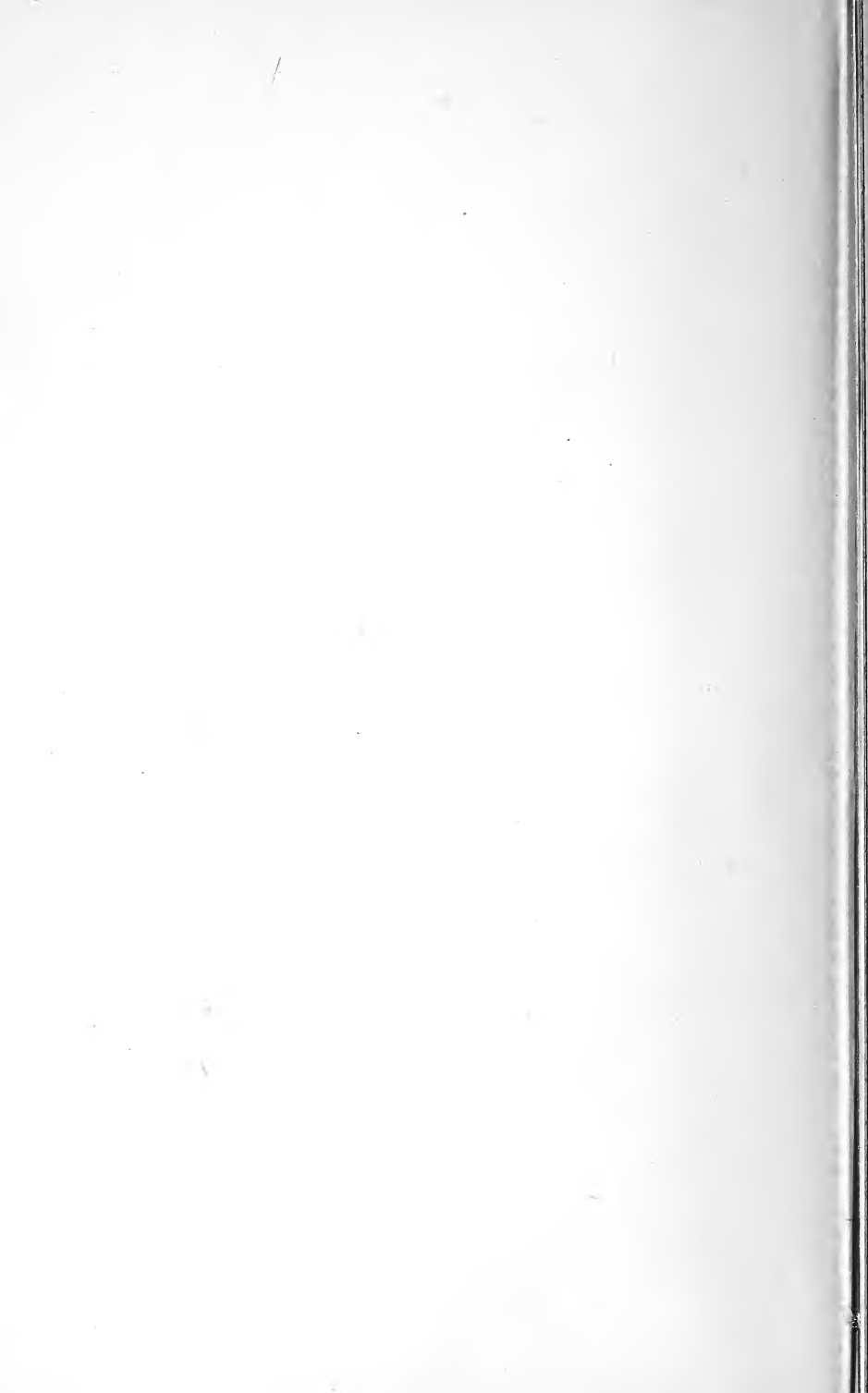


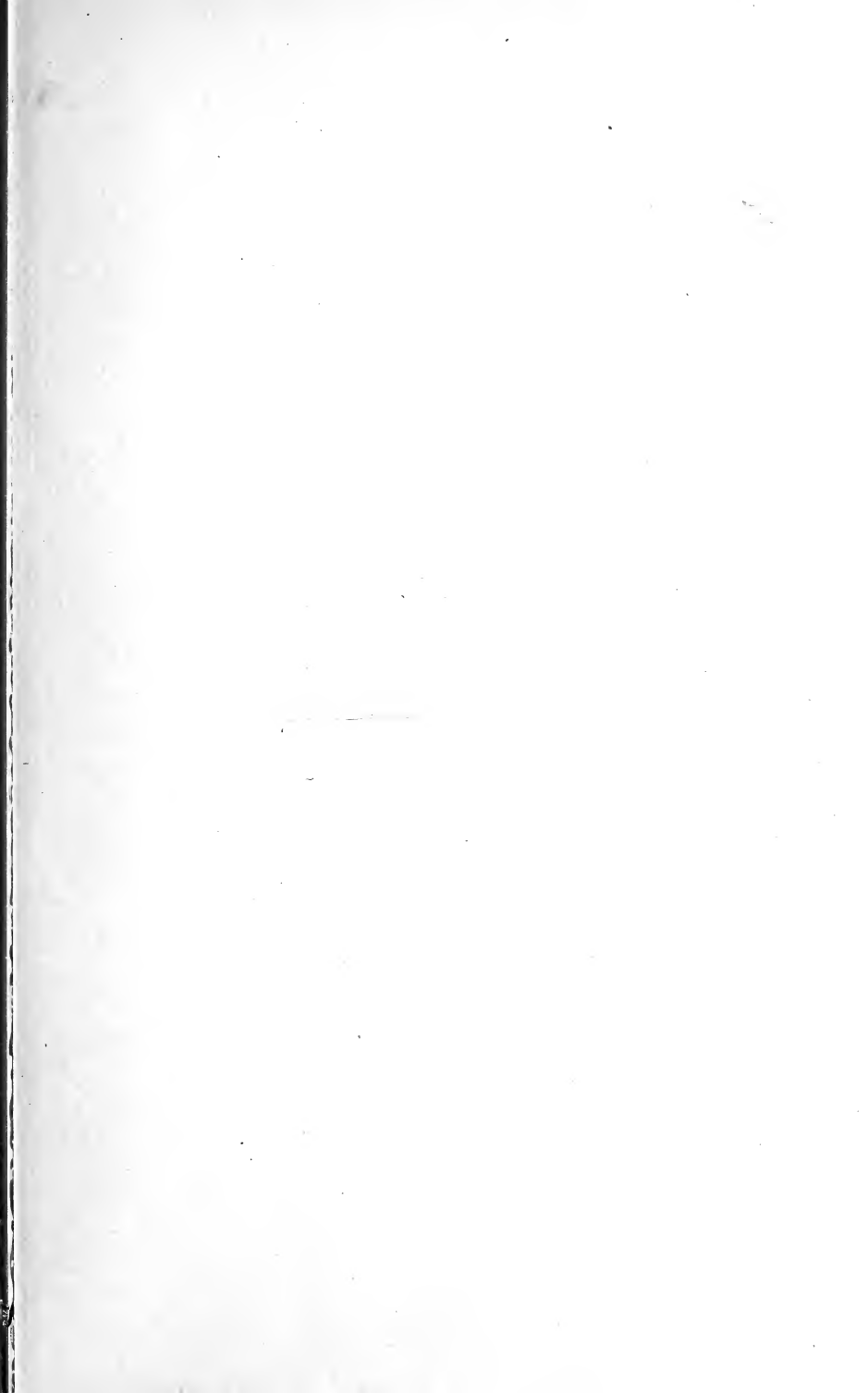


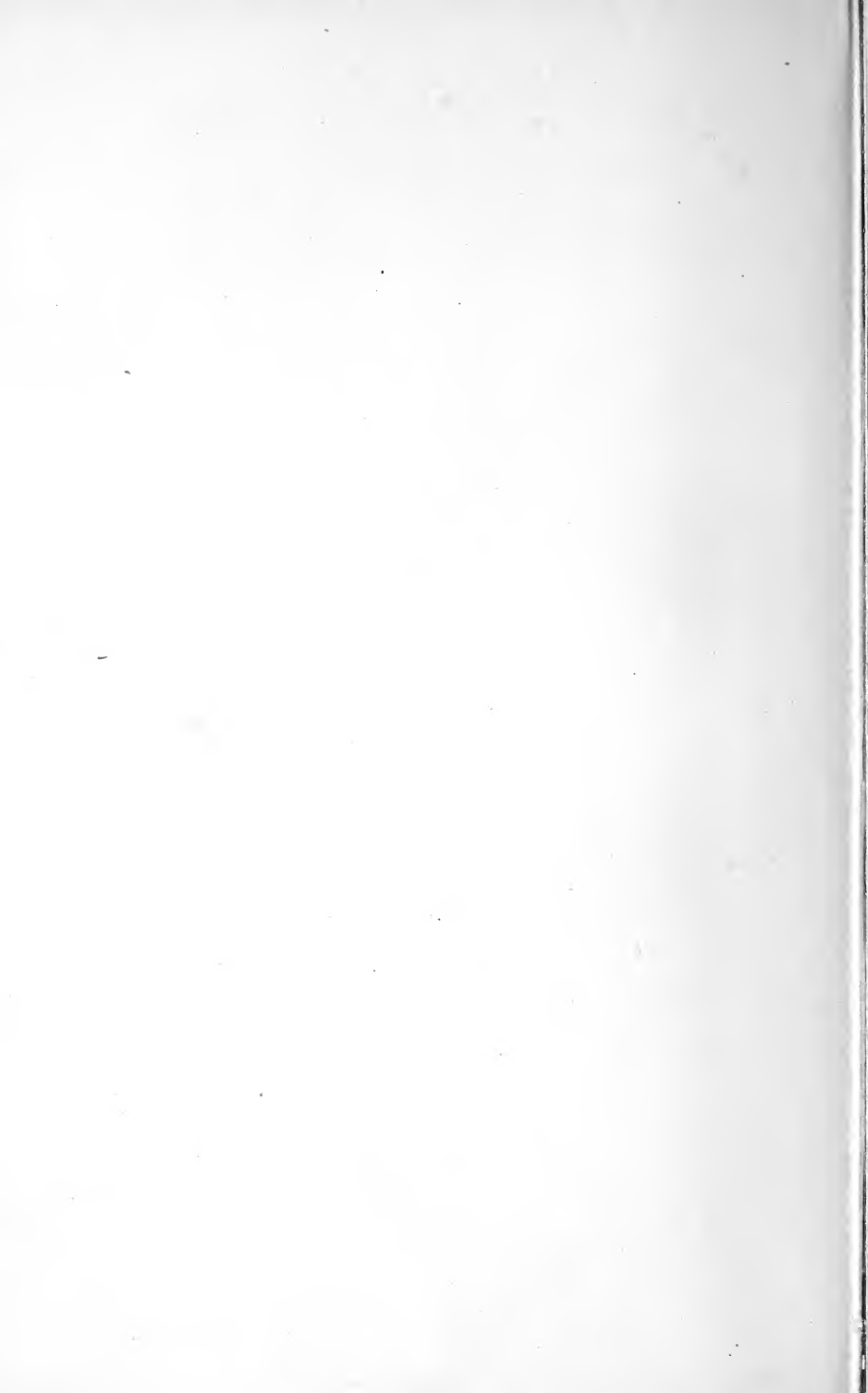


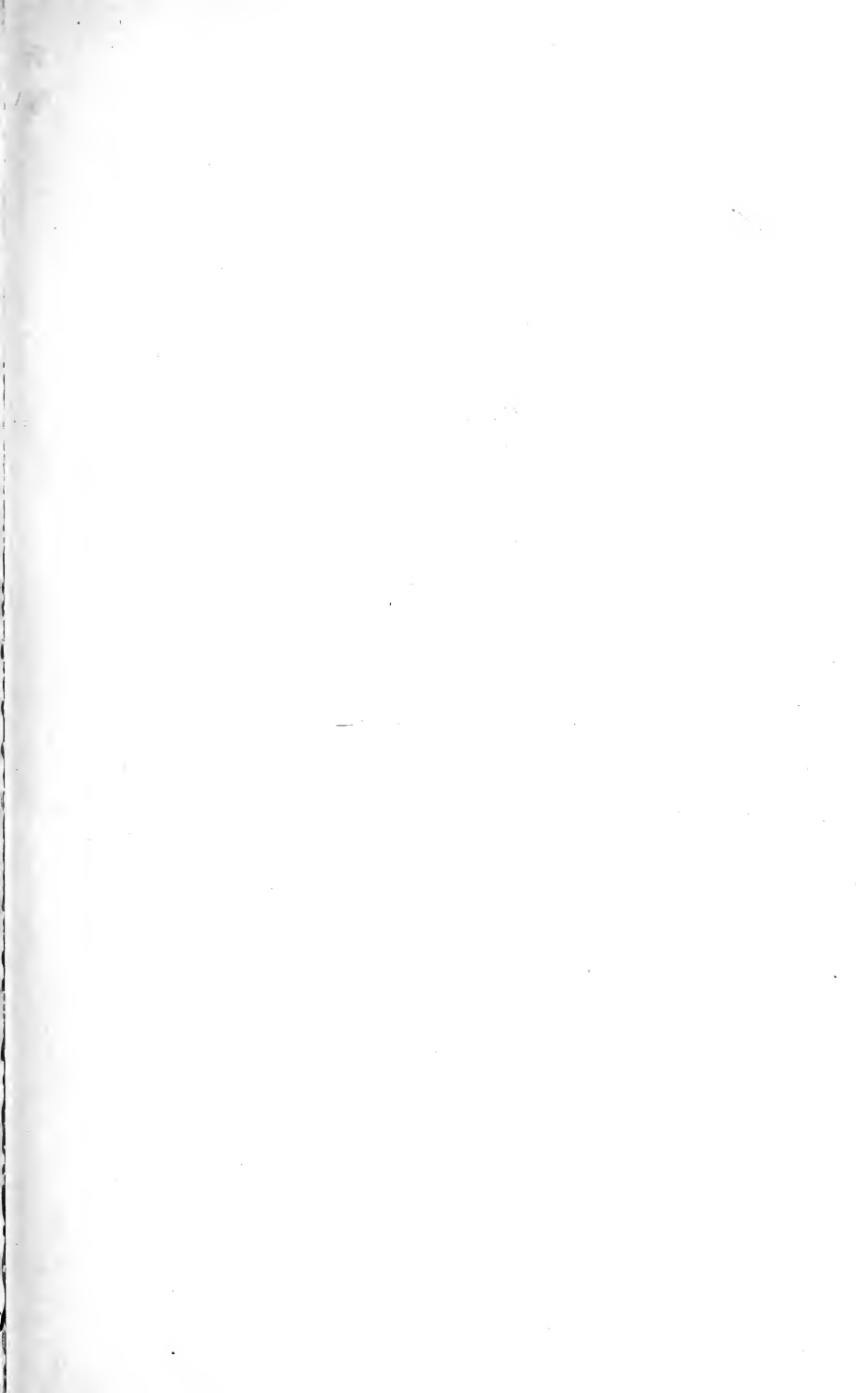












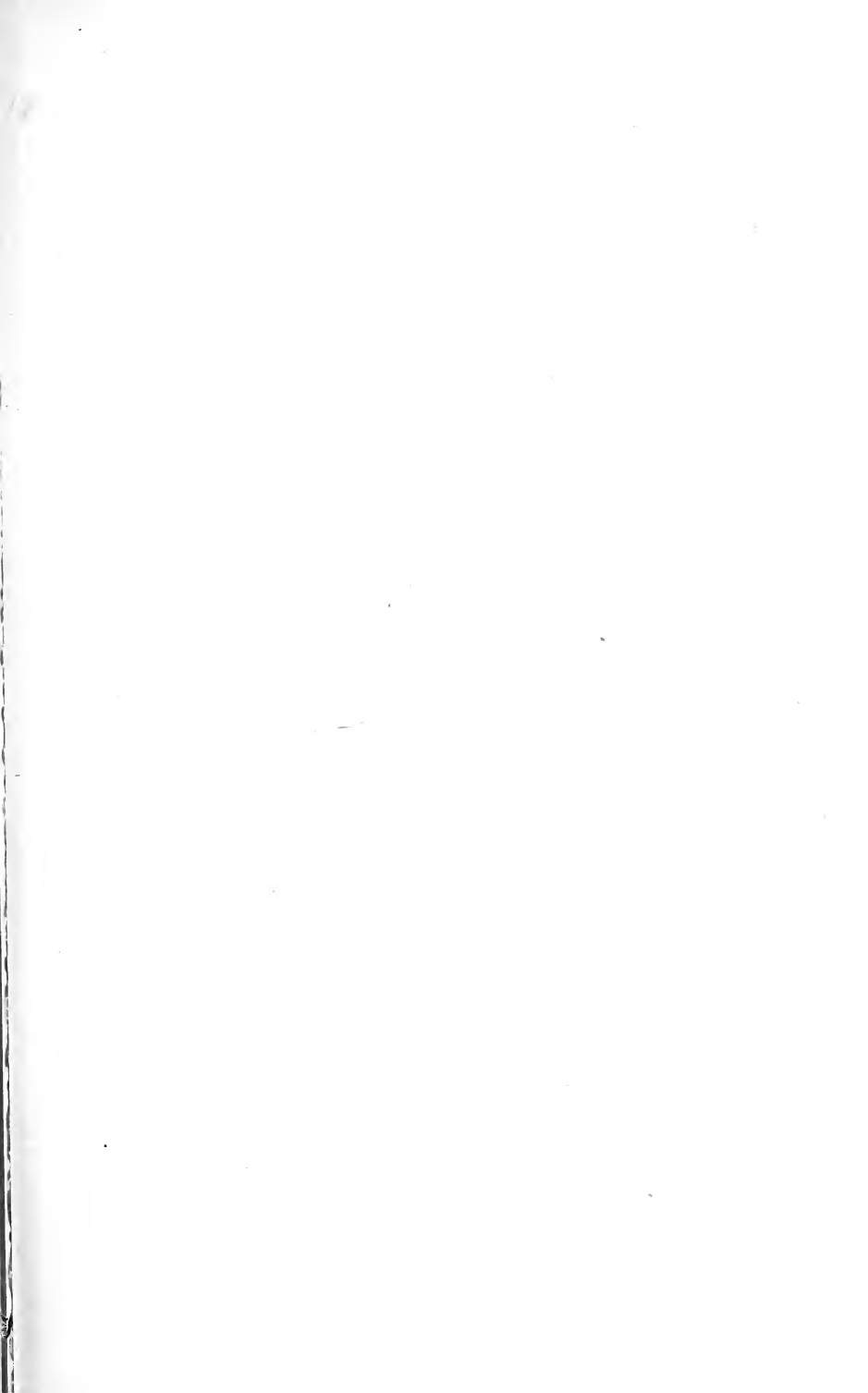
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REV. J. W. GABLE

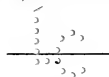
SPIRITUAL

Counsel and Encouragement

BY
John Wesley
REV. J. W. GABLE
" "
YOCUMTOWN, PA.

This book is especially designed to reach the common class of people, and is adapted to the average reader.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—(Jer. 6:16).



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ENDORSEMENT

THIS booklet of "Spiritual Counsel and Encouragement" is the thoughtful work of one of the youngest ministers in the East Pennsylvania Eldership. It should receive an equally thoughtful, and as well a prayerful, reading. It has many helpful and encouraging words for believers and non-believers. The counsels are very appropriate and suggestive. We have read it with spiritual profit in manuscript, and believe it has a mission. It can not be read as it should be without spiritual profit to the reader, whatever be his relationship to God. It makes no pretensions to fine diction, or to depth of thought; but it is written with a heart prompted by love for the welfare of souls. No one ever rightly hears a sermon thus preached, or reads a book thus written, without better thoughts, stronger purposes for good and nobler aspirations.

C. H. FORNEY, D. D., LL. D.,
Harrisburg, Pa. *Editor "Church Advocate."*



PRELIMINARY REMARKS

SOME ONE has truthfully said, "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few are to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

I have written this little book with a sincere purpose and an unprejudiced mind, and it is my strong belief that it merits the careful consideration of all who may have the privilege of reading it. I believe that a copy of it should be in every home, or library; not that I claim it to be superior to all other books of a similar character, but because it contains the honest convictions of one who desires to know and disclose the truth.

I am well aware that some will say that there are already too many books, and that the Bible is the only book necessary. But when I see the same persons who raise such objections buy other books of less value than mine, some even of detrimental character, and moreover fail to read the Bible of which they so highly speak, I am more determined to pursue my course than before. I am sure that I am right, and I go ahead.

I admit that the Bible is a sufficient guide for any heaven-bound traveler, if it is read daily and understood rightly; but, alas, how few there are who read it with an honest purpose, if they read it at all, and how many there are who do not understand it when they read it. The Bible is a large book, and it requires much time and study to gain a clear conception of it. Therefore God has called, and still calls, men to leave all secular employments, that they may devote their whole life, time and talent to the study and preaching of the gospel. We may preach by tongue or pen, from the pulpit or through the press: I preach by both methods. The Apostle Paul and many others did likewise.

Never in the history of the world were there so many bad books printed and read as in the beginning of this twentieth century. There was, therefore, never a greater need for good books than at the present time. However, if men would love to read the Bible as they love to read newspapers and fictitious tales, I could afford to quit writing and preaching and go back to my trade.

There are but two classes of people to whom this little volume is not directed. It is not directed to any who are so wise as to understand all of the Bible, so that they can learn no more; nor is it directed to any who do not accept the Bible as the inspired word of God. This little book is not to be considered as a substitute for the word of God, nor as a supplement

to it; but rather as an encouragement to accept and practice the precepts and believe and lay hold on the promises of which it teaches. It is designed furthermore to give a clearer light to those who diligently inquire after the way of salvation, by properly associating one passage of Scripture with another; or to answer such as would know what to do to be saved by referring them to the passages in the word of God where the question is answered. In fact, this little book is full of counsel and encouragement.

That some one else might have treated these subjects more thoroughly I will not dispute, for I aimed to give truth rather than fine rhetoric. I have written according to my convictions, and I could not afford to do otherwise in order to gain the applause of man. And whether my efforts will be successful is not to be determined now, but shall be determined at the judgment of the great day. If then I may learn that I have been instrumental in bringing *one* soul to Christ, I shall know that my work has been a success. But if no one will give ear to my pleading and counsel, and if I shall have no precious sheaves to take with me for the garner of the Lord, I hope to feel at least that I have tried. And, oh, that I may hear the Master say of me, "He has done what he could."

J. W. G.



Christ Not a Hard Master

“His commandments are not grievous” (I John
v. 3).

THIS assertion is just as true as any other statement found in the sacred Scriptures. It is known to be a fact by all true Christians; but the unconverted are inclined to look upon Christ as a hard master.

We have many infallible proofs that his commandments are not grievous, such as may be found in the Bible, by experience and observation; but I think the most conclusive proof is that which may be felt in a Christian's heart.

The Bible teaches us that God wishes his children nothing but the greatest good. He has no delight in seeing them laden down with unnecessary burdens. When certain false teachers tried to make the Gentile converts believe that circumcision was necessary to salvation, it pleased God to inspire the Apostles and elders of the church to write letters to their brethren, stating that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to the church to lay upon them no greater burden than these necessary things. When they had read the letter they rejoiced for the consolation (See Acts xv. 22-31).

By our own experience we know that his commandments are not grievous. Before we were converted by

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the grace of God we looked upon the commandments of Christ as severe and rigorous; but when God changed our natures, and sanctified us by his Spirit, and filled our hearts with love, we were converted all around and through and through, and we no longer considered Christ a hard master, but found him a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

If we will but observe the experience of others we can see that his commandments are not grievous. Wicked men who would have hid their talents in the earth; men who were afraid of Christ and his cross; men who would have nothing to do with Jesus, when once wrought upon by the all-sufficient grace of God no longer wasted their time and strength in idleness, but were frequently heard to cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" They are no more afraid of Christ and the cross, but declare them their greatest glory. Instead of having nothing to do with Jesus, he is now their all in all. They consecrate their lives to him. They take up their cross daily. They delight to do his will because he saved them, gave them a new heart and turned them completely around, so that the things they once loved they now hate, and the things they once hated they now love. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II. Cor. v. 17). However, to have an experience like this, one must be born again.

But I said that I believe that the most conclusive proof is that which is felt in a Christian's heart. Do what you please, or say what you will, you can never dissuade him concerning the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. v. 7), nor "the love

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of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19). He has gone too far to be deceived by sceptics, infidels, or the devil himself, for he has had a glimpse of Jesus. The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. His heart is filled with supreme love, and this makes all things easy. "Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

The sinner does not believe that the commandments of Christ are not grievous else he would become a Christian; but such disbelief does not change the truth. As instances I will cite the following:

For a long time it was universally believed that the earth is flat; but infallible tests have proven it to be round, and also much larger than at first supposed. It was at first believed that the sun moved, and the earth stood still; but now we all know that the earth moves, and the sun stands still.

The reason that it was believed that the earth is flat is because so little of it can be seen at a time.

The reason that some think the sun moves is because the earth moves, and this makes it seem so, just as when we look through a window of a fast train the trees and fences seem to fly at great speed. Even Joshua of old did not know of his error when he commanded the sun to stand still; but God knew what he wanted, and he doubtless answered his prayer by pulling the reins of this swift-flying planet on its journey around the sun.

The sinner knows so little about the love and grace of God that I do not wonder that he thinks religion is a gloomy thing. He sees the results of the doctrine of false teachers and vain pretenders, and having no ex-

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perience of the grace of God in his own heart, he naturally concludes that all is vanity. But to me it is a standing proof that Christianity is a good thing because so many try to imitate it.

The mischief arising from considering Christ as a hard master is more than a little. For as long as one thinks that the commandments of Christ are grievous and the gospel a system of slavery, he will not willingly become one of Christ's followers. And unless he follows willingly, he will not follow at all; and as long as he does not follow Christ he cannot claim him as his own personal Savior. Because sinners think that the commandments of Christ are grievous, they will put off their return to God until quite late in life, as though they expected then to be released from duty out of respect for their age. Such, of course, are ignorant of the fact that his yoke is easy and his burden light (See Matt. xi. 30). And about the time they think of beginning to live a different life, Satan says, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep" (Pro. vi. 10). "Then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (I Thes. v. 3).

It is not the truly converted that think the way to heaven is difficult. It is not they who worship God with the whole heart that find his service unpleasant and distasteful, but such as try to serve two masters, thus serving neither of them right, and having the displeasure of both; such as are converted only by education, or book knowledge, but whose hearts know nothing of it. No wonder that sinners faint at a Chris-

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tian's duty. No wonder that carnally minded men faint at spiritual things. They need a deep work of grace in their wicked hearts, which is the only secret of endurance.

This work of grace, which is the secret of endurance, is accomplished by him who did many other things just as great and mysterious. He made earth, sea and sky; sun, moon and stars. He formed man out of the dust of the earth, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And can God not now fill man's heart so full of love that obedience to him will be delightful? Reader, "stand still and consider the wondrous works of God."

But what are the commandments of Christ? They are principally included in this: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. iv.19). Our first duty, then, is to love God; and our second duty is to help to save our fellow-men. Reader, I again ask you, Why should you be loath to follow a friend who loves you with a greater love than that of a mother's for her darling child? Can it be hard to keep from sinning when God makes sin hateful to you by creating within you a clean heart and a right spirit? If your heart is right you would sooner do anything else than displease him. And if you are a Christian, can it be unpleasant to serve him who has answered your penitential prayers and whispered, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2), and who has taken you out of deep waters and planted your feet safely on the "Rock of Ages?" Is it a grief to you to tell your friends and neighbors of the love of Jesus, and to persuade them to go along with you to heaven?

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O thou poor, undone creature! When once you are what Christ would make you, you will prefer to be cast into a furnace of fire rather than be disloyal to God. You would risk a den of lions rather than quit your prayers. You would sooner be burned at the stake as a martyr than to give up your faith in Jesus. Yea, and if you were to testify to this truth, as you will be constrained by love to do, even though before your conversion you had been told again and again that his commandments are not grievous, your testimony now would be somewhat like that of the Queen of Sheba's: "Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me" (I. Kings x. 7).

"Ah, soul, are you here without comfort or rest,
Marching down the rough pathway of time?
Make Jesus your friend ere the shadows grow dark;
Oh, accept this sweet peace so sublime."



Admonition to Sinners

“Ponder the path of thy feet” (Pro. iv. 26).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. cxi. 10).

MY mission is to call the attention of sinners to the salvation of their souls. I do this not by my own authority, but in obedience to the great Commission of my Lord: “Go, ye, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark xvi. 15). Not that I am to undertake to do this great work all myself; I am only to do of it what I can.

I am well aware that I may be looked upon by some as an intruder, because I give counsel to those who did not ask me for it; but as one of the watchmen over the interests and eternal welfare of our fellow men, I must sound the gospel trumpet: “Repent, ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. iii. 2). As a minister of the gospel I must “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (II. Tim. iv. 2). As an ambassador for Christ I must look after the interests of his kingdom. As a child of God I must be about my Father’s business.

If, while passing your residence some morning very early, I should discover that your house was on fire, while you and your family were inside fast asleep,

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would I be considered an intruder if I would loudly call you and inform you of the danger to which you are exposed? Surely not. Yet such would be a small matter compared with the interests of your never dying soul. If, then, I would be justified in proclaiming to you such unwelcome news when I was not asked to do so, why should I not be justified to proclaim to you the good news of the gospel?

I am not to determine the future destiny of any one. God has reserved that right and power to himself. I can do no more than urge this matter upon you; but that I do diligently, lest you should some time lie in hell, wishing, when it is too late, that you had pondered the path of your feet. The admonition that I am about to give you is of good will, and I trust it will be received as such. If, however, after I have shown you the path of peace and earnestly exhorted you to walk therein, you should prefer to go on in sin, I shall feel at least that I have done my duty.

This little book doubtless will be read by some with whom I am not acquainted, and whose faces I will never see. I, therefore, leave it for you, who read these lines, to determine whether you are a saint or a sinner, or whether you are saved or unsaved. That you may make no mistake in your decision, I will refer you to certain texts of Scripture, which, if you will carefully and sincerely study, will clearly decide where you stand.

You are a Christian if you love God supremely. That is, if you love him more than all things in the world, so that you would rather think and speak of him than think and speak of worldly things. "Thou

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shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark xii. 30). If you would sooner read the Bible and go to prayer-meeting than to read newspapers and story books, or attend parties and theaters, then you undoubtedly love God. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. viii. 6).

If you are a Christian you will know it; no one needs to tell you, for, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (I. John v. 10).

Have you the spirit of Christ? Christ had a meek and quiet spirit. He went about from place to place doing good, and he was especially mindful of the sick and the poor. He had good will even toward his enemies, and he always returned good for evil. His will was always to do the will of him that sent him. "Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9).

If your profession of love to God is to stand, you must prove it by following Christ through storm as well as through sunshine, for he says, "Whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 27).

The following counsel is for those who have learned by examining the Scriptures that they are yet unsaved; who have weighed themselves in the balances, and found themselves wanting.

It is indeed a serious thing that you have wasted so much of your time and talents in the service of sin. Doubtless you have already helped to ruin some one whom you might have led to Christ. I do not say

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that you have tried to bring any one to ruin ; but you are traveling in that direction, and some have followed you. The only difference between you and some of them whom you have unconsciously influenced to go your way is, they outran you and got to the end of the road, while you have not yet reached it ; their case is utterly hopeless, but you may yet turn back if you will.

You may be a good citizen and an example in morals, so that it might be said of you, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34) ; and by your good qualities you may encourage others to be just as good as you are. But because you are without Christ, all who imitate you will be without Christ. And when the judgment will be set and the books opened, you and your fellow travelers, not having had your names recorded in "the Lamb's book of life," will all be shut out of heaven.

A man must not necessarily be wicked to be a sinner. An ungodly man ; that is, a man without the grace of God in the soul, has no more chance of getting to heaven than a hypocrite. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). The sin of unbelief, or rejecting Christ, is sufficient to condemn any man, for, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Luke xvi. 16). So the question is not are you guilty of blood, do you steal, do you swear or break the Sabbath ; but, do you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and King.

There is nothing in a sinner that is lovely. In fact, about the only thing in a saint that is lovely is

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that which was imparted to him from heaven. God hates sin. Man by nature hates God. Notwithstanding all these facts, God loves the sinner. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

"Some mortals may wonder how heaven can bend
Down, down to the lowly and speak as a friend;
Some ask us the question how justice can spare;
Go, search in the Scriptures, Love's reason is there.
"Love tenderly pleadeth, 'Soul, open the door!
Thy-Savior would enter to leave thee no more.'
All heaven is waiting thine answer to know;
How can'st thou refuse him who loveth thee so?"

Do you say, "I didn't do anything bad?" How can you say so when you know that all these years you have been rejecting Christ, abusing God's love and grieving the Holy Spirit? Did you not learn by examining the Scriptures, and were you not forced to admit, that you have come far short of what God requires of you? How is it that you would, notwithstanding all this, still make it appear that you are good enough as you are? I cannot persuade myself to believe anything else than that you only say such things for an excuse. You surely do not mean what you say.

I do not see how a man could be so foolish as to hope to be saved by offering his own good works as an atonement for his sin, when he knows that it took no less than the blood of Christ to make an atone-

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ment for him. How can a man please God in his natural state, being unclean, and all his works, especially when wrought as a ground for his justification, offensive? "We [those of us who are not made clean through the blood of Christ, and whose works are not of faith] are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6). Even "the plowing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. xxi. 4). Why, then, indulge in a hope that has been refuted nineteen centuries ago on Calvary? "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. ii. 8, 9).

It is true that we, especially we who have already received the salvation of Christ, are commanded to work out our own salvation; that is, in the sense in which we may be understood to work it out, with fear and trembling. We are to work out our own salvation because no other man can, and God will not do our part of the work. However, he worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure (see Phil. ii. 12, 13). But, after all, we must remember that after we have done all we can, and all we are commanded to do, we deserve little, if any, praise; for "we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke xvii. 10).

Boast, therefore, no longer that you can be saved by merely obeying the commandments. You have not yet obeyed even the first one, which is the greatest of all, and which is the root of all the others. I have already referred you to it: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart. . . ." It is plain that

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you have not that love of God in your heart, for your words and actions betray you. Nor can you truly love God unless you become savingly acquainted with him through Christ by the Holy Spirit. But suppose it were possible for you to obey all the commandments, and live a strictly moral life from henceforth, still there would be against you the evils which you have done in days gone by. Therefore, get right with God, and do it now, for to-morrow it may be too late.

Perhaps you consider yourself as good as some church members. Well, I suppose you are as good as those who are not what they profess to be. At least you are as good as such as are not any better than you. Not every church member is a Christian. But suppose you are as good as some one else who is not good enough to enter heaven, what can that profit you? I can plainly see how the devil can glory in such an irrational course as you propose to take; but I cannot see how you get any encouragement to go to perdition because some one else is traveling in that direction. Remember, if you fail in life, you fail for eternity. "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccl. xi. 3). You will never be on probation again. Evil doers are not wise because they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves (see II. Cor. x. 12).

Have you tried to persuade yourself, and perhaps even said that you have plenty of time to give your heart to God in the future? What if God would say unto you, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?" Your purpose in entertaining such

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notions is to repel the influence of the Holy Spirit. You say such things to confound the arguments of those who would reason with you concerning the salvation of your soul. It is unbecoming and offensive for a dependent creature to act so independently toward his Creator. And if God would now remove from you the light of the Spirit, your day of salvation would at once be ended. And who can assure you that such a calamity will not befall you, if, when God says, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" you say, "To-morrow will do just as well?" Sinner, remember, the Lord has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3).

Many who thought, or said, that there was plenty of time yet to be saved have deceived themselves. Some were called off very suddenly. Others gradually and unconsciously passed into such a state of darkness and indifference that they did not perceive their awful condition until the harvest was past and the Summer ended. If you were now to communicate with those unhappy souls, how much information they could give you. What warnings they would be likely to give you lest you also come into that place of torment.

Some have even dared to say, "I'll fare just as well as others. If they can stand it in hell, I can, too." Dreadful and unreasonable words! They would not think of speaking so unreasonably concerning any other serious matter. Suppose some one should be caught by the wheels of some powerful machinery and be mangled and ground to pieces while they beheld the terrible sight, would any one of them be

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willing that the same thing should befall him there and then? Or if he knew before hand that such an event would befall him within the next twenty-four hours, could he console himself with the thought that he will fare no worse than the one whom he looks upon? Yet even in such an instance it would be only the body that would suffer; but to suffer in hell is to suffer both in soul and body without any easing up. Unless such notorious sinners turn while there is yet mercy they will undoubtedly fare the same as others who are lost. And the question will not be asked them, "Can you bear your punishment?" They will have to bear it. Let them go on yet a little while until the Lord opens his armory and brings forth the weapons of his indignation, and, unless they are more powerful than the Almighty, they will be made to cry, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?" The most stubborn, stiff-necked and hardhearted sinner will then easily be subdued and forced to drink the cup of his fierce, but just and holy, wrath which was long in filling. The Lord gave them a fair chance. He said, "Look unto me and be ye saved;" but they said, "No." "Therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favor" (Isa. xxvii. 11).

I know you say that others do not live right, and you find fault with most anything you can think of; but I wonder if it is not sinful pleasure, politics, or the love and wrong use of money that are hindering you. But what is a little sinful pleasure when compared with a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of

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glory?" If you love good government, why not seek a country whose law is perfect, and whose King lives forever? Or if you desire an honorable position, why not humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time? "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xiv. 11). Why not quit serving your money, and make it serve you, that you may "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance?" Therefore, "If thy right eye [darling idol—Clarke] offend thee, pluck it out;" or, "If thy right hand [profitable employment—Clarke] 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" (Matt. v. 29, 30).

Do you say you do not feel like becoming a Christian? If that is true, then you must act on principle, or be lost. I cannot find anywhere in the word of God that a man is required to feel before he acts; some have wonderful feelings; others have not. If a man has a will to become a Christian, that is all he needs. "Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). That power to will every man has, if he will only make use of it. After you have willed to become a Christian, give your stony heart to God, and he will give you a heart of flesh (see Ezek. xxxvi. 26), and you will then feel and enjoy beyond measure the blessings of salvation. However, it seems strange that you would rather serve an enemy who seeks your ruin than to serve God who gives you every good thing that you enjoy. Is the

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world sweeter than Christ? The better you know the world the less you enjoy it; but the better you know Christ the more you love him.

What makes you feel so independent is because you have your earthly store-house well filled with provisions for your body. Some of them are necessities of life, and some are luxuries. Some have been given or loaned to you, and others you have stolen; that is, God has entrusted many things to your care, such as time, talents, a home, food and raiment. These things you should have used to his glory; but you wasted your time and hid your talents in the earth. You enjoyed your home when you should have been in prayer-meeting. You have not given to God the glory and praise due unto his name. Thus you have robbed him of that which belongs to him.

Now, let me tell you plainly why you ought to be a Christian. But before I proceed, promise me your faithful attention and consideration, for God may take your present decision as final. Let me reason with you in this way: You need salvation now, because if you will not belong to the people of God on earth you cannot dwell with them in glory. In this life we have joy and sorrow mixed; but in the continued life we will either have all joy and no sorrow, or all sorrow and no joy. And remember, eternity is long. Comparing a sinner's joys with a Christian's joys, we see that the sinner's joys are abating; that is, they are becoming less and less (see Eccl. xii. 1-7); while the Christian's joys are in a constant state of development. "The path of the just is as the

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shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Pro. iv. 18).

If there is an old-fashioned revival going on at this time in your community, go there. I know you can be converted at home; but so often it does not come to pass, and you might as well go now as after you are converted, for that would be one of your first and most important duties as a Christian. I will not say that you *must* go to an altar, or mourners' bench, unless you cannot conquer your pride in any other way; but I do say that you cannot find a better place than that. Beside, not one well-founded objection can be raised against the mourners' bench, while many arguments can be produced in its favor. However, if there is no old-fashioned revival going on within your reach, give your heart to God at home, in the woods, or anywhere. Do not wait until another revival. "Now is the day of salvation," to-morrow it may be too late. Don't think or say, "Some other time, but not now." That is the devil's advice. It will be just as hard for you to take this step later on as now, and perhaps harder. If you do not repent of your sins now while there is mercy, you will repent of them when it is too late. Then why not do it now?

If you are far advanced in years you will, no doubt, find many things against you that once were not, and nothing but a determined effort will loose you from the power of sin. But do not despair of salvation. There is yet hope. Turn to the right and go straight ahead, and you will soon stand within the gates of Jerusalem.

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If you are young, there are at least nine reasons why you should now give your heart to God:

1. You can do it easier now than later in life.
2. You will be happier.
3. You are leading some soul astray whom you may not be able to recall.
4. You have a sound mind and understanding.
5. You will have more time to do good.
6. You can form new and good habits now.
7. You may die in your youth.
8. God commands you to do so.
9. If you wait until you are old you will hardly be saved at all.

Do you fear that you would not be able to hold out? Satan would have you think so; but if you will but take a little advice from older Christians, and learn from the mistakes of others, you will have little difficulty. Remember, after you are converted you will look at things quite differently from what you do now, and you will have the Lord by your side to encourage you, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II. Cor. xii. 9).

Is there some one in the family that would oppose you in taking this step? I trust not. However, if such should be the case, proceed with even a more firm determination than you would otherwise. Better have the displeasure of man and the favor of God, than the favor of man and the displeasure of God. Better be turned out of a home than to be shut out of heaven. I like the little girl who had courage enough to be a Christian when her angry father turned her away from home for it. She went away singing; and

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not at all surprising, her father called her back, and that house became a house of prayer.

Friend, if you knew the beauties of holiness and the love of Christ, you would be done with sin forever. Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). Then when you lie down upon your bed at night you can have that sweet consciousness that you are a child of God, and that all is well with your soul. Your sleep will be sweet, and when you awake in the morning you will feel as though you had been in the society of angels. And by keeping close to Jesus you will "make life, death and the vast forever one grand, sweet song." Oh, will you come? Take now the most noble step that any man can take. Jesus is waiting; what will you do? If the step seems hard, make it quick. It is only the first step that is hard. The way is pleasant.



Fault-Finding

“They found fault” (Mark vii. 2).

MY object is to defend the reputation of the true Christian, and to point out the exceeding foolishness of fault-finding; not by false arguments, but by facts both reasonable and scriptural.

We find that the Pharisees found fault with the disciples for eating with unwashed hands. In other words, we may say, the unbelievers found fault with the believers.

The fault-finders to whom I refer were not right with God; but they thought none were right but themselves. They did not care to follow Christ themselves, yet they were constantly picking at those who did follow him. They rejected the only ground and hope of their salvation, and considered themselves good enough as they were. They flattered themselves with a lively hope of heaven, when in fact they had none at all. Christ says, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. v. 20). They seemed to think that if any people would be saved they would, on the ground that they were liberal in giving and strict observers of the law; but as it was prophesied concern-

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ing them, so it was: "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first." Listen to that little prayer of Jesus: "I thank, thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25, 26).

The disciples whom Jesus had chosen because they had chosen him were treated as living targets, or marks to be shot at, by their fault-finding enemies. They were counted a peculiar people. And indeed so they were in the eyes of the spiritually blind. "Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." They left house and home for the love of Jesus. Yea, they daily took up their cross and followed him; while their critical and hypocritical enemies bound heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers (see Matt. xxiii. 4).

These fault-finders looked on the surface of religion, while their superiors looked into the deep things of God. Their religion consisted in ceremony and sanctimony; while those whom they condemned worshiped God in spirit and in truth.

Fault-finding is *sin*, because it is the work of sinners. Ninety-nine persons will find fault with others because they wish to be excused from doing right themselves; while one will tell another his faults because he loves him and seeks his good.

Fault-finding is *dangerous*, because it is sinful. It is working for the devil, and, of course, the devil will

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be the paymaster. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23).

Fault-finding is *ignorance*, because it is like beholding a mote in another's eye when there is at the same time "a beam in thine own eye." It is confessing an evil, but never seeking a remedy. It is the height of ignorance, because such act as if they would sooner spend eternity in hell with hypocrites than to meet a few in the house of God occasionally. These fault-finders are foolish, because they compare a whole body of Christians with a few of the worst characters they can find among them; they look for faults only, and shut their eyes to all good, until they believe their own lies and forfeit their salvation.

Fault-finding is *undesirable*, because it is the work of the ignorant. It is like standing in one's own light. It is undesirable because no good man is engaged in such a low business.

These critics never tell us anything new. They do the world no good, nor do they improve their own happiness by their criticism. They seldom do the church any harm; but it is a sad fact that many of these unwise persons will continue condemning others and neglecting themselves until it may be said of them, "They died as they lived." Until they be cast into hell, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 46). Reader, whoever you are, "Judge not [that is, condemn not rashly and unreasonably], that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii. 1).



Result of Disobedience

“What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God” (I Peter iv. 17)?

THE gospel of God is a wonderful revelation of the grace of God to fallen men, which, if believed and accepted, leads to supreme delight and fulness of joy in more than Eden’s early glory; but if it be neglected until beyond probation it will leave a man in such a hopeless and increasing uneasiness that he would not neglect it again. It is sometimes called the “gospel of Christ,” the “gospel of salvation,” or “the word of truth.” It is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. i. 16).

It was foretold by the prophets of ancient days. It began by the incarnation of the Prince of Peace, and was continued by his public ministry. It was promulgated by the evangelists and Apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost; whose office largely was to teach them all things and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto them, and to reveal the deep things of God which they never knew before, nor could have known otherwise.

There will be an end; not an annihilation of the soul, but a terrible result of disobedience. What a relief it would be to a damned soul if it could be annihilated, that is, cease to exist; or, in other words, be

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so completely destroyed that it would no longer be a soul. But, alas for such unhappy souls, such is not the case, for "their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 46).

"But what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" What shall be the final result of disobedience and impenitence?

He who hardens his heart and stiffens his neck but *once* too often must himself atone for his sin, because he would not accept the atonement of Christ. He must die always, because he turned his back upon him who died in his stead. He must take his portion with thieves, murderers and hateful beings because he refused deliverance. He must make his bed in hell because it was *too* much trouble for him to go to heaven. He must be in awful misery because he wakes in surprise to discover that his life has been worse than a failure, and to see so much difference after all between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. He will be more provoked at himself than at God, or the devil; for God did not want him to go to hell, and the devil could not have compelled him. Life and death were before him and he chose to die; or rather, he chose that which he knew would lead to death. Probation has at last ended and judgment has taken the place of mercy, and so different is his condition now from what it once was that he who provided a salvation and did all he could to persuade him to accept it will now mock him in his trouble and laugh at his calamities (see Prov. i. 26). Such, my reader, will be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God. While they who have gotten the victory over

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the beast and his image will stand, as it were, upon a sea of glass mingled with fire, having harps in their hands and singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb, declaring that in all things God is just (see Rev. xv. 2, 3).





The Unpardonable Sin

GENERALLY CALLED THE

Sin Against the Holy Ghost

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men” (Matt. xii. 31).

“Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii. 17).

THERE were wicked men living in the time of Christ who were guilty of this awful sin. I doubt whether the world is any better now than it was then; consequently I fear that there are some sinners living in this age of the world who are guilty of this culminating evil.

Few will preach this fearful possibility, nor do sinners like to hear it when preached. The reason why it is so seldom preached, I think, is because ministers fear that they cannot do the subject justice; or they may fear that some poor, weak souls, through misapprehensions, will declare themselves guilty of this sin when they are not.

I myself am both unwilling and unable—unwilling because unable—to give a decided explanation as to how it may be committed. Nor do I consider it nec-

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essary. If my reader desires to know something of the nature of this sin, the malicious disposition of them to whom the words relating to this subject were first spoken, and who doubtless were guilty of this great sin; or if my reader desires to know the related circumstances which caused Christ to proclaim such an unwelcome truth, let him read Matt. xii. 22-37; Mark iii. 22-30, and Luke xii. 10. Read also Heb. vi. 4-7, and x. 25-29.

There are several reasons why I do not consider a further explanation necessary, viz.:

1. If sinners knew exactly what the unpardonable sin is they would fearlessly commit every other sin but that, just as they would put off their return to God until the eleventh hour of their lives if they knew the exact time of their death. I consider it sufficient to know that there is such a possibility, and such knowledge should be sufficient warning.

2. To one guilty of this sin an explanation would be of no use, for, "It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come;" *i. e.*, as Clarke understands it, neither in the Jewish dispensation, which was; nor in the Christian dispensation, which was to come, and under which we now live.

3. A man who is not concerned about the salvation of his soul does not want an explanation of this subject; and a man who is weary and heavy-laden because of his sins does not need an explanation, because he has something that is far better. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (II. Cor. vii. 10). It is God in his goodness that leads men to repentance (Rom. ii. 4), and

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will he begin a work in the souls of men and not finish it? No, he is "the author *and finisher* of our faith" (Heb. xii. 2). The fact is, a sinner cannot desire to be saved without the influence of God, and if he desires to be saved it is a sure proof that he is not without that blessed influence. It is folly to question the grace and mercy of God when it is so plainly manifested.

Even the best commentators differ in their opinions and explanations of this subject, thus making the question still more confusing to them who seek consolation thereby. Some commentators think that there is no one living now who is guilty of this sin. Others think that it is committed quite frequently. But be it seldom or frequently committed, one thing is sure: not one of them will ever turn to God. Not only because God will not receive them, but because they will not be received.

I believe that this hopeless condition manifests itself in such a complete deadness to the fear of God and the love of good that there is no possibility of awakening. It does not necessarily follow that a man is guilty of this great sin because he *seems* to be past awakening; but it must follow that if a man is guilty of this sin he *cannot be* awakened to a "godly sorrow," for "whoso confesseth and forsaketh them [his sins] shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13). It is true that "whosoever *will*" may come (Rev. xxii. 17); but the fact concerning such reprobates is, they *will not*.

Reader, shall your eternal destiny be heaven or despair? Remember, it depends entirely on whether you "will" or whether you "will not."

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To become alarmed with fear of guilt is no evidence of guilt; but I consider it a good evidence that such are not guilty. I do not say that God causes, or designs, such mistaken impressions; but it is one office of the Holy Spirit to "reprove [or convince] the world of sin" (John xvi. 8); or, in other words, we may say, the Spirit shows the sinner the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And is it not both natural and common for a sinner to tremble because of fear when he begins to see himself as God sees him? Before a sinner is convinced of the heinousness of sin one can hardly persuade him that he needs the Savior, and after he is convinced of his sin one can hardly persuade him that Christ is both *willing* and *able* to save him.

If you have a desire to become a Christian, and if your desire is as one who hungers and thirsts, it is an unmistakable evidence of God's grace toward you whether you think so or not, for, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. v. 6).

If you are a poor, penitent soul Satan may try to make you believe that *your* case is hopeless. He has tried it with thousands; but see God has given you a "will" to come to Christ, and moreover a "hunger and thirst." Yea, in the midst of your doubts you are encouraged to believe. These are surely heaven's gifts, for "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James i. 17). Does God give these gifts to devils, the damned, or any that are past hope?

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It is indeed a fatal thing to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost; but how much less will be the final fate of them who continue in sin until their hearts become stony and their consciences seared, so that their hearts and consciences which should have been instruments in their salvation become instruments to their damnation?





Counsel and Encouragement

for Penitents

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst
after righteousness: for they shall be
filled” (Matt. v. 6).

“Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith
the Lord of hosts” (Mal. iii. 7).

PENITENT seekers after salvation, I am glad you took this blessed step, and I believe you are glad. All honor and praise to the Holy Spirit! To this end was the mission of the Son of God. To this end was the gospel preached. I never saw a more impressive scene than the returning of a prodigal son or daughter. No wonder “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke xv. 10). Once you were on the way to ruin and misery; now you are on the way to heaven and eternal glory. If you would have continued in the former way you would have met with destruction, but if you pursue your present course you are sure to find salvation. Seek diligently. It does not take long for an anxious sinner to find an anxious Savior.

I never heard or read that Christ ever turned a sinner away. Did you? I know he never will turn any one away because I have his unfailling word for it. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”

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(John vi. 37). Truly "the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him" (Lam. iii. 25).

It is true that some have professed to seek Christ, and said they could not find him; but they sought him in such a half-hearted way that I doubt whether they were actuated by any holy purpose at all. They would not have appreciated salvation if they would have received it. They were not as much in earnest as they professed to be, else they would not have given up. They went back on God. God will never go back on any man. A sincere penitent would rather seek the Lord all his life than turn back; and he will not turn back. Penitents, be in earnest. If you seek him with your whole heart he will be found of you (see Jer. xxix. 13).

There are others who have sought the Lord for a long time before they found him, but because they were sincere they found him at last. And I never heard one of them complain of the time it took him, nor the effort he put forth to find the Savior. No; it was enough for them that they were saved at last.

Do you ask me the reason why some receive the blessing of salvation so much sooner than others? I will answer you by considering a few other questions.

1. Is God a respecter of persons? No. "There is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 11).

2. But is it not a fact that a man who has been very wicked often finds salvation before a man who has always been moral? Yes, and that is one proof of the fact that God is no respecter of persons. If

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he were a respecter of persons it is likely that he would respect the moral man.

3. How, then, shall we account for this fact? It is all very plain. You know that a sinner in order to be saved must be deeply conscious of his sin. This a wicked man naturally is when once wrought upon by the Holy Spirit. And you know that a man in order to be saved must give up the notion that he has ever done anything that ought to commend him to God. This a moral man is slow to do, because in his opinion he never was very far from the kingdom of God. Furthermore, when a wicked man repents, if he has anything to make right with his neighbor he goes and does it at once, for he feels he can bear his burden of sin no longer. He approaches Christ as the vilest of the vile. He is a sick man, and Christ, willing to show his skill as the physician of souls, quickly applies the remedy. To give a short answer to the question I would say: A wicked man is usually the first to meet the requirements, and he is therefore the first to receive the blessing.

4. But are there no other reasons why some are so long in seeking salvation? Yes, there are many other reasons, and perhaps some of them are better known and understood by you than pointed out and explained by me. I believe that the most common hindrance is unbelief, or mistrust. Some penitents expect to see visions, or dream dreams, as an evidence of their conversion. Others think they must have an experience exactly like some one else, and as long as certain outward manifestations do not agree with their foolish notions they think they are not saved. But know

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thou, poor, penitent soul, the evidence of conversion is to be felt in the heart after you have believed, and not seen with the eyes before you believe. Outward manifestations at conversion are very different. Some shout, some laugh and others weep for joy; but let those things take care of themselves, and be content only to know that you are born again.

Christ says, "Whosoever will, let him *take* the water of life freely." O thirsty souls, take the water and be satisfied. O prodigal child, your Father has long been looking for you. There is no doubt about your acceptance.

I do not care how wicked you have been, you shall be saved; for where sin abounded, there grace does much more abound (see Rom. v. 20). You need not pray for days and weeks before you can be saved. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (II. Cor. vi. 2). Is it dark about you? What can that hinder you? It is only the darkness which precedes the dawn. Just before the plan of salvation was finished by Christ on the cross it became dark over all the land for three hours.

"Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded heart, here tell your
anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heav'n can not heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure,
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
"Earth has no sorrow that heaven can not cure."

Christ and Peter on the Sea of Galilee

“And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink—”
(Matt. xiv. 29, 30).

AFTER feeding the five thousand men, beside women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, on the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus sent his disciples to the other side, intending soon after to follow. The disciples must have shown some reluctance to go before Jesus unto the other side of the sea else it would not have followed that he constrained them.

Perhaps they were anxious to know what Jesus was about to do that he so urgently insisted that they should go ahead. But later developments showed that it was well that they were constrained to go, although they would have rather tarried. We do not always know what is best for us; therefore we should cheerfully obey him who does know. He not only knows what is good for us, but he desires us to enjoy that good, which he is both willing and able to give in answer to the effectual, fervent prayers of the righteous.

After Christ had sent the disciples one way and the multitude another, he betook himself to some quiet,

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solitary place in a mountain where he could secretly commune with his heavenly Father. So often in our Christian life it becomes necessary to dismiss the multitude of earthly cares and embarrassments, and retire to some secluded place, and there in reverent posture, with uplifted eyes toward heaven, commune with God.

It was night, and while Jesus was in the mountain engaged in prayer the disciples were in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary; and it was not until nearly morning that Jesus came unto them, walking on the water.

The disciples saw him come, but did not know him. They were alarmed with fear because of misapprehensions.

“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”

As long as Peter kept his eyes fixed upon Jesus he could walk upon the water; but when he looked upon surrounding circumstances he began to sink. So in our Christian experience, the only way to keep on top is to look to Jesus regardless of the raging storms of trial and temptation around us and the billows of sorrow and bereavement which roll beneath our feet. Thousands, like Peter, have gone down when there was no other cause but a lack of faith.

When Peter saw his helpless condition he again

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fixed his eyes upon Jesus and cried, saying, "*Lord, save me.*" It was a short prayer, but it was urgent and sincere. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him." What a wonderful Savior we have! When we trust him he upholds us by his power, and if we sink or fall he helps us in his mercy. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Ps. xxvii. 23, 24).

When they were come into the ship the wind ceased. Why should it longer continue? Peter's faith was tested; Christ's divinity was proved, and God was glorified.

I believe that this storm was providential, or rather that Providence directed the disciples into the storm; and it doubtless was to this purpose that Christ sent them on ahead the evening before. I believe that some of the storms in our spiritual experience are providential. Such storms, of course, are designed for our good, and when we have learned the intended lessons, God rebukes the wind, and the storms cease, and we will have occasion to say, "Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbor" (Baxter)?

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform,
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."



The Truth of John iii. 16.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 16).

THIS is a wonderful text. It is the central truth of the economy of grace. “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. . . . Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (I. Peter i. 10-12).

Sinner, when once you truly believe in Jesus and receive the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding” and “the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,” it will be the wonder of your life that “God so loved the world.” God was willing to give his dear Son, and his Son was willing to be given. For the sake of unprofitable sinners Christ endured the hardships of a homeless life, the overwhelming sorrows of Gethsemane and the untold agonies of Calvary, all of which he foreknew before he came.

I like this text because it has brought joy and comfort to many contrite hearts and penitent sinners. I

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like it because it never fails to reconcile God and the sinner when it is given a fair and honest trial. I like it because it is so plain and simple that even a child can understand it and meet its requirements. For "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

I might lengthen and enlarge this subject until it becomes a volume in itself, but I do not consider it necessary. But there are three great truths in this text which should be clearly understood and forever remembered.

I. God loves *you*. Some think that God loves sinners only in a general sense, as though his great love were divided into countless parts and a small portion given to each one of the many who live, and have lived, upon the earth, thus making each one's share of little weight or value. But let such know that they are fortunately mistaken. If God did not greatly love the individual he could not greatly love the world, for the world is composed of individuals.

If a father could not take great pleasure in each of his children separately, he could not find much pleasure in the whole family. It did not require a whole world of fallen men to move the great heart of God to pity. His heart was moved by the fall of a few in Eden, far back in the ages.

For an illustration and proof of this fact consider the parable of the lost sheep. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose *one* of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders,

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rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over *one* sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke xv. 4-8).

2. Notice that great, comprehensive word, "whosoever." This word means, as some one has said, "you, me, or any one else." "Whosoever" admits of no exceptions. Whenever even a single exception is to be made to anything the word cannot properly be applied. God used the word "whosoever" because there are to be no exceptions. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I. Tim. i. 15).

For illustration, suppose some fortunate physician has lately discovered some infallible cure for consumption, and desiring that the whole country should know of its merits, he advertises that at a given time he will give every applicant a sample bottle of this great remedy free. The time for this charitable distribution arrives, and from morning until twilight the doctor hands out samples of his great discovery. Finally you step up to the doctor for your share of the offer, and he refuses to give it to you. What would you think of him? Remember, he said, "*every* applicant," which means the same as "whosoever;" but now after fulfilling his promise to thousands he began to make exceptions. Does he not, though he fail but once, prove himself untruthful in the end?

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Then if God will be truthful he dare not fail; and because he is truthful he will not fail.

But, you say, "Does not the Bible speak of reprobates and unpardonable sinners?" Yes, but observe, such will neither believe in Christ nor turn from their sins while they live; hence, they cannot be said to be included under the promise. Notice, the doctor of whom you just finished reading was under no obligation by his promise to any who did not apply. Neither is God under any obligation by his promise to such as *will not* apply for salvation; and we have already learned that reprobates will not apply. God is very exact concerning his promises. He is careful not to make a promise that will not be fulfilled; but he is sure to fulfill every promise that he makes, or has made. Truly his promises are "yea" and "amen."

3. Be sure that you understand the meaning of faith as it is implied in the words "believeth in him," otherwise you will surely deceive yourself. Some are so deceived in this matter that they think they believe in Christ in that they are certain that he lived, died and arose again, and that he was divine, just as they are certain that Washington and Franklin were two eminent statesmen. But know thou, my reader, that to *know of* Christ is not to *believe in* Christ, just as knowing of an eminent statesman is not necessarily believing in that statesman.

Others are so perverted in their opinions that they think they can believe in Christ to the saving of their souls, and yet live and act as they please.

Reader, I shall be honest with you in this important matter, for your eternal destiny depends upon

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whether you are a true believer in Jesus Christ or not. I shall not ask you merely whether you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was given for the salvation of sinners, though this is a part of the Christian faith. Nearly everybody believes this, even the wicked; and if such were all that there is of the faith referred to in the text it would not follow that "few there be that find it" (see Matt. vii. 14).

To know whether you are a true believer in Jesus Christ I shall ask you whether you are willing to accept him as your own personal Savior, not at death, but now. And do you believe that you must be born again; that is, receive a new nature and disposition, so that you may have good will even toward your enemies? Do you believe that you must forgive men their wrongs which they have committed against you before you can be forgiven of God for the wrongs that you have committed against him; and, if need be, forsake your chief joy for his sake, as well as take up your cross daily and follow him?

All this he taught, and much besides, and you cannot receive him and reject his teaching, nor believe in him and doubt his word. You cannot please God and be disloyal and disobedient. Do not persuade yourself that you are a true believer simply because somebody said you are, or because you believe the Bible historically.

Every honest man will give you a receipt when your debt is paid, even if another paid the debt for you. And you may be sure that God will give every true believer a receipt when he gives satisfaction and makes proper settlement. But you ask, "Did not

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Christ pay the debt for me on Calvary? And furthermore, I could not pay the debt if I would try." Truth. That is just what I want you to acknowledge. Go, tell that to the Lord, accept his atonement and get your receipt; but until you get your receipt, beware. The receipt is the Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16).

I thank God for John iii. 16, for it meets the needs of every sincere penitent and seeker after salvation. But I testify before God and men, and I know whereof I speak, that this is a text "which they that are unlearned [inexcusably unlearned] and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II. Peter iii. 16).



The Human Side of Salvation

(TRUE FAITH)

“What must I do to be saved” (Acts xvi.30)?

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts xviii.31).

THIS was the urgent question of a jail-keeper in Philippi. Whether the same question had been asked before we do not know, nor do we care; but we do know that many have asked the same question, and similar ones, since the time of this Philippian jailer's remarkable experience.

He was no doubt an obstinate sinner. It took a great deal to break him down, but when he did break down, he fell trembling before Paul and Silas, and in a short time he and all his family were thoroughly converted through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Three things I notice concerning this man:

1. He came trembling.
2. He soon found relief when he knew what to do.
3. He was the head of a family, and when he was converted they all became converted.

But, says some one, that was the experience of the Philippian jailer, but “what must *I* do to be saved?” I can see by the question you ask me, and the way you ask it, that you are yet in spiritual darkness, though not in obscure darkness, for you already feel the need

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of salvation or you would not inquire of me what to do to be saved. Your question, if you are sincere, places you in the position of a penitent, and makes you a subject of angels' delight.

But before we proceed farther with this matter, let me ask, To what end do you think you ought to do something? Do you think you ought to do some good work to commend you to God, or to atone for the evil you have done, as though you must merit salvation and persuade God to a willingness to save you? Or do you inquire how an unworthy sinner may come to God and receive salvation as a free gift?

If you think you can, or must, do some good work to commend you to God; or if you think you can, or must, merit salvation and persuade God to a willingness to save you, you are so exceedingly in error that you might weep day and night until you die, and yet not receive the salvation which is by faith in the Son of God; for without faith it is impossible to please him (see Heb. xi. 6).

Christ finished the work of redemption upon the cross, so that you have now but to accept him as your Redeemer, and love, follow and obey him as it becometh a redeemed man. If you add any supplement whatever to the finished work of Christ you displease God. Think no longer to persuade God to a willingness to save you, but strive to persuade yourself to accept Christ as he is offered to you in the sacred Scriptures. All heaven was willing that you should be saved long before you were. Christ is as anxious to save you as you are anxious to be saved.

If you inquire how an unworthy sinner may come

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unto God in his unworthiness, and be justified and converted by the grace and power of God, so as to be made fit to stand in the congregation of the righteous and associate with angels; yea, and become a joint heir with Christ and stand in the immediate presence of God, I will tell you what to do, as I have learned it by a careful study of God's word.

What you must yet do depends on what you have already done, and it also depends to some extent on what you know, and can know. But to tell you from beginning to end what is required of you, I will suppose that you know little and do nothing.

1. You must know that you are a sinner, lost and undone unless saved by the grace of God. This knowledge comes through the study of the Bible and the preaching of the word. This is **CONVICTION**.

2. You must not only know that you are a sinner, but you must confess it to God, and you ought to confess it in the presence of your fellow-men because you sinned in their presence. You must not only confess your sins before God and men, but you must also turn from all sin which you know and which you confess. You, of course, will be sorry that you have sinned, and you will look upon sin as a thing hateful and dangerous. In other words, you will fall out with sin and fall in with Christ. This is true **REPENTANCE**.

3. You must forgive if you would be forgiven, for, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 15). If you have cheated, or defrauded, any man you must be willing to restore it, if possible, and show both God

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and the man whom you have wronged that you are willing (See Matt. v. 23, 24). If for some reason it is impossible to make such corrections—for the man whom you have wronged may be dead—explain the matter to the Lord, and he will take the will for the deed. And if there be any other matter resting upon your mind and troubling your conscience, learn the cause and seek to remove it, otherwise it will surely hinder your salvation by proving you disloyal to your own heart and conscience, and much more so toward God. “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (I. John iii. 20-22). If we do not seek to restore and rectify, we show ourselves utterly unworthy of receiving God’s unmerited favor. But remember, to restore stolen goods, or to be reconciled to an offended brother, is not being forgiven of God for the offense. It is a duty of man to man. This is **RESTITUTION**.

4. Because your will is contrary to the will of God you must resign it; that is, you dare no longer do as you please; but you must do what you believe God wants you to do. All sinful pleasure, and everything that would hinder you from pleasing him, you must give up in order that you may have treasure in heaven. This is **SURRENDER** and **SUBMISSION**.

5. Now, since you have confessed your sins and turned from them, and since you have made restitution and submitted yourself to the will of God, your

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own heart and conscience bearing you witness that so far as you can learn you have met what God requires of you. And having now shown to God and man that you are sincere, you have a right to fully trust your case to the merits of Christ's blood and expect what you desire, and more besides. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. iii. :5). This is TRUST.

These five transactions: CONVICTION, REPENTANCE, RESTITUTION, SURRENDER and SUBMISSION and TRUST, are not regeneration, as some suppose; but they constitute and bring to perfection living and saving faith, which cannot fail to bring salvation to every one who thus truly believes. In other words, it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with the whole heart, which is the *one comprehensive essential* unto salvation.

When you have done all that I have mentioned, you have done all that any man can do. This is the human side of salvation; nay, I should say it is the divine work on the human side. God alone can do the rest, which will be a radical change, and the effects will be love, joy and peace, such as you have never known, for you will have a new heart; that is, a new nature, with new likes and dislikes. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II. Cor. v.17). You will discover new beauties in everything; yea, it will seem like perpetual spring-time in your new-born soul. You will not be able to understand how such a beautiful change can be effected in so short a time; but as "the wind bloweth where it

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listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8).



Advice to Young Converts

“Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. iii. 11).

HAPPY young converts to the Christian religion, “the Lord be with you all.” “Rejoice evermore.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (I. and II. Thessalonians).

As a Christian pilgrim you are now on the way to heaven. Satan knows this and he will turn you back if he can. I cannot tell you in what way he will approach you, “Wherefore take unto you the *whole* armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, * * * * Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. vi. 13-18).

It is a common, but true, saying, that the crown of

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glory is not given at the beginning, neither in the middle, but at the end of the Christian life. To make your calling and election sure there are some things that you must do, and there are other things that you dare not do.

1. You must aim at the highest possible mark: perfection. Man is likely to fall at least a little short of his mark. If this be true, what will become of the man who aims at a low mark: imperfection?

2. You must take Christ for your example. He is the only one of whom it can be said, "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke xxiii. 41). It is misleading and exceedingly dangerous to take any one but Christ for your example.

3. You must take the inspired word of God for your guide, and not human creeds.

4. You dare not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (see II Cor. vi. 14, 15)? If you associate with sinners and seek enjoyment with them you will partake of their nature and lose all good influence over them. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Cor. vi. 17). It is true that Christ was much among sinners, but only to be their physician and not their companion.

You are now in a position where you can do much good if you will be faithful, or where you will do much harm if you will not be faithful. I know you have no thought now of every turning back to the world; but now is the time for you to take advice before it is too

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late. Before you were converted you were afraid you could not hold out, and now perhaps you are too confident. You cannot place too much confidence in God, but you can easily place too much confidence in yourself. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. x. 12).

It is wholly a wrong notion, common among young converts, that if they make mistakes, or in their weakness commit sin, they lose all favor with God, and must therefore leave off doing good, go back into the world, and become a backslider. A young convert does not commit *wilful* sins; that is, he does not have a will to sin. If any one has a will to sin, then I deny his conversion. However, if a Christian is not as watchful as he should be, he may be overtaken by the pressure of temptation, and before he is well aware, fall into some grievous sin and thereby lose the joys of salvation. Then what shall he do? Shall he, like Judas, give way to despair; or shall he, like Peter, repent of the evil he has done? Remember, Judas is lost, and Peter is saved.

There is no reason whatever that a man should do worse and worse even if he has done evil. It is as much of a mistake for a Christian to leave off doing good and go back into the world because he has committed a sin as it is for him to commit a sin. Suppose a man, traveling on foot from New York to his home in Brooklyn, should stumble and fall while on his way, would he, in order to get home, go back again to New York? No. He would get up as soon as possible, brush his clothes and hasten on his way home to Brooklyn. So you, my dear Christian friends. If

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you should stumble and fall while on your way to heaven, arise, cleanse your garments, and hasten on your way to heaven as though nothing had happened. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I. John i. 9). But let not a man receive these precious truths as an encouragement or a license to commit sin. They are not given us for any such purpose; but that we may know that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John ii. 1).

Let us notice a few important facts concerning backsliding, which may be of great value to you as a precaution, or as a means whereby you may be able to help some one else in the day of adversity. You are, no doubt, already familiar with what backsliding is. It may be defined as a sliding back from Christ to the world, or from the blessings of the gospel to the pollution of sin. It is to lose the love of God and the desire to be holy, pure and good, and giving place to the devil to fill the heart with great wickedness.

There is, however, a vast difference between one who falls into sin through weakness and infirmity, and one who is a backslider in heart. The former hates sin and longs for the time when he shall be delivered from all evil; but the latter seems to love sin as he before loved righteousness. The former is troubled about his condition; but the latter does not care. Of the one God says, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down" (Ps. xxxvii. 24). But of the other he says, he "shall be filled with his own ways" (Prov. xiv. 14).

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he

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walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. xii. 43-45). It is with such according to the true proverb: "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them." "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (II Peter ii. 20-22).

But what is the cause of all this backsliding? I will answer in the following manner:

1. *Discouragement.* Usually all goes well with a young convert until in some way he makes a misstep. Then Satan says to him, in his manner of speaking, "You have lost your religion, and you might as well give up." He partly believes it and is therefore much discouraged. Beloved, if ever you become discouraged, consult some older Christian about your trouble and he will help you out.

2. *An insufficient knowledge of God's word.* If you knew more of the word of God you could help yourself out of many troubles; in fact you would not

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get into so many of them. Therefore, young converts, study the Bible.

3. *Doing questionable things.* Some people believe concerning certain things that they are sinful; but because they want to do them, and because they see others do them, they will try to persuade themselves against their own convictions that they are not sinful. Need I tell you that such things destroy the joys of salvation and lead to backsliding? Reader, understand, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 23).

4. *Neglecting duty.* You cannot neglect your duty and be happy; but there is a blessing in store for you for every duty that you will perform in the name of Jesus. Christ endured the cross for the joy that was set before him, and if you will be faithful you shall be a joint heir with him. The cross is not greater than his grace; therefore, take up your cross and follow him. Remember, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James iv.17).

Do you have doubts and fears occasionally? They are common to all Christians, and they can be overcome by singing and praying and trusting in Jesus. Have you sore trials and temptations? It is only a sign that you are on the way to heaven. Sinners on the broad road do not have such trials and temptations. They travel with ease. Every temptation that you overcome makes you better and stronger. Christ was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Furthermore he assures us that he will not allow us to

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be tempted above that we are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape (See I. Cor. x. 13).

Who or what then can separate us from the love of Christ? "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? * * * * Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35-39).

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'edshadowed,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! 'tis the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of glory,
Over the Jasper sea.

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations,
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears;
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears!

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Jesus, my heart's dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o'er;
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore."



Prayer

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man
availeth much” (James v. 16).

An old treatise on theology in my possession has this beautiful definition of prayer: “Prayer is the offering of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and a thoughtful acknowledgment of his mercies.” But there is a little definition which I would like to give. It is so plain that even a child may understand it: Prayer is talking with God.

I find a great many Christians, especially young converts, who constantly complain that they cannot pray. I always have sympathy for such humble, gracious souls. I believe they mean to be honest and sincere in their complaint. They can pray, but they don't know it. Their gratitude to God for past favors and their hungering and thirsting after righteousness are so great that they can scarcely find words to express their feelings and desires. This is why they think they cannot pray. Such people, if they can cry, usually cry out their feelings of gratitude and desire; and even though their words may be few, God puts their tears into his memorial vial and records them in his book. Oh, that many more would realize such

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a profound consciousness of spiritual things which lie beyond the power of expression!

Another reason why some think they cannot pray is because they have wrong conceptions of prayer, which is evident by their frequent foolish expressions. They think rich, fluent and beautiful language is necessary to effectual prayer; but eloquent speech or fluent language is not necessary to please God. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. xvi. 7).

Let us notice some example of plain, yet effectual, prayer.

When Peter saw that he was sinking he was not at all concerned about eloquence of speech. Nor had he any forethought of what he was going to pray at that time, but according to his present needs cried out, "Lord, save me," and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him (See Matt. xiv. 30, 31).

When in the Temple at Jerusalem the poor, man-forsaken publican wanted God to have mercy upon him, he smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And before he left the Temple; he was as free from sin as though he had never sinned; while the proud, self-righteous Pharisee who prayed, as he thought, so eloquently, at the same time and place, went home a worse sinner than when he came (See Luke xviii. 10-14).

When the poor, homesick prodigal wanted to be reconciled to his father and received back into "sweet home" he began to pray, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more

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worthy to be called thy son," methinks at this humble confession his chin began to quiver, and before he could get quite through with what he had planned to say, father sent his servant for the best robe to put upon him, also a pair of shoes and a ring. And a joyful time it was, for their beloved boy was reconciled to his father and safely at home. Oh, what a picture of God and the sinner (See Luke xv. 11-32)!

When the poor, penitent thief asked but to be remembered, he received the sure promise of a home in Paradise (See Luke xxiii. 42, 43).

When a certain woman had been afflicted by a chronic disease, "and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse; when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague" (Mark v. 26-29).

"Just one touch as he moves along,
Pushed and pressed by the jostling throng,
Just one touch, and the weak was strong,
Cured by the healer divine."

If prayer is talking with God, then surely anyone that can talk can pray. But for the benefit of any one who may feel weak in prayer, I will suggest the following plan:

Steal away to some quiet, secluded place where no one but God can see and hear you. It may be some

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private room in the house. It may be in a field, or woods, or along a country roadside. Select the best time of day for this purpose; that is, the hour in which you can obtain the best results. Some find the morning hours the best for prayer; but as for me I prefer the impressive scenes of the evening, just as the shades of night begin to fall; and I am encouraged to select and mention this time because "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" (Gen. xxiv. 63).

When you have come to your selected place for prayer, turn your back toward the world and its cares and your eyes toward the "holy city, the new Jerusalem." Perhaps you have some friends or relatives there. You may think of them, but do not worship them. Sing a verse or two of some favorite hymn, so that you may get your heart in proper condition for prayer. Then tell God what you desire and what you need, and ask him in the name of Jesus to grant your requests. But because it might not be well for you to have all you ask for, don't forget to add to your humble petition these words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." If you do not know what you need, then ask God to give you what he sees you need and what is good for you. If you cannot do this, then I believe you do not want to pray. If you have a will to pray you will find a way.

Prayer must be the sentiments of the heart. The end in view must be right as well as the means employed by which to reach it. We must not only pray because we have made it a rule or a practice, but we should be intensely interested in our prayers. Too

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many of our prayers are, as Beecher says, like driving a wedge into a log.

I do not mean that we should not pray until we feel like doing so. We should make it a rule, as Daniel did, to pray audibly three times a day, and then stick to that rule. I mean to say that if we are Christians indeed, even though it may require a little effort to direct our minds from our particular interests and employments while busily engaged in the midst of them, yet we will not have prayed very long until it becomes a pleasure and a blessing, and we may truly say,

“Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!

That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at a Father’s throne,
Make all my wants and wishes known;
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief;
And oft escaped the tempter’s snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!

Thy wings shall my petitions bear
To him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless;
And since he bids me seek his face,
Believe his word and trust his grace,
I’ll cast on him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.”

I believe that as a rule our prayers should consist of our own words. I say this in opposition to the practice of using prayer-books. Who but God knows

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my needs and desires as well as I do? Therefore it is of him that we should learn to pray.

I believe they do well who repeat the "Lord's prayer" verbatim; that is, word for word, especially if they have studied it well so as to understand it thoroughly, thus making it in a sense their own sentiments. Yea, I believe we should make more frequent use of this prayer than many of us do. Christ taught us these words, and if we use them aright we will never pray amiss.

However, I do not believe that Christ intended to limit his disciples to these sixty-six words. I believe it was more the manner and spirit embodied in these words than the words themselves that he meant to teach.

That we may properly make use of this, or a more extended form of prayer, let us notice the following facts:

God loves to have us pray as though we would remind him of the glorious affinity between him and us since God and sinner have become reconciled, and the tender relationship which began when we became the sons and daughters of God. He will have us acknowledge him as our Father and ourselves as his children: "*Our Father, which art in heaven.*"

He would have us know that he is high and holy, wise and good, powerful and mighty. We should regard him with godly fear mingled with affection, and strive to honor and glorify him in all things: "*Hallowed be thy name.*"

He would have us seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. And pray for the joyful flour-

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ishing of Christ's kingdom on earth, and longingly look forward to his second coming: "*Thy kingdom come.*"

In heaven the will of God is done always, gladly and perfectly, therefore all are infinitely happy. God would make earth the counterpart of heaven, but his will must first be done: "*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*"

Bread is the staff of life, a necessary food. It is not luxuries or useless things that God would have us ask for, but bread, bread for the body and bread for the soul. We should acknowledge God as the giver of every good and perfect gift, and daily look to him for them; but, like the little birds, make use of the ordinary means which God has appointed whereby we may obtain them: "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

Sin is here spoken of as debts. God has made it a condition that man must forgive to be forgiven. If any man who has an unforgiving spirit makes use of this prayer with hatred in his heart he condemns himself, for he asks God to do with him as he does with his fellow men: "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*"

God is sometimes said to do a thing when he only allows it. If we try to go forward in our own strength he may allow us to fall into some temptation whereby we may be overcome. But, if we confidently place our hand in his hand he will deliver us from the snares of the devil. This I believe is the true meaning of the words, "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*"

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The gospel plan of redemption by Christ; the power by which it became effective and by which it must be maintained, and the honor and praise for this glorious system of mercy and truth, with the wonderful effects which it produces, belong to God, both in time and eternity, now and forever: "*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.*"

We should sanction our prayers by an established purpose and an unwavering faith, which may be expressed by saying, "*Amen.*"

Our prayers should be humble and childlike. We should be deeply conscious of our unworthiness, as Jacob was when he confessed that he was not worthy of the least of God's mercies; or as Abraham, when he made intercession for Sodom, saying, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." The more we become like little children in this respect the better we will be qualified for the kingdom of heaven. The lower we get down the more sinners we will be able to reach. And by thus humbling ourselves in time we shall be exalted in eternity. A showy prayer of meaningless words and vain repetitions God will reject as contemptible; but, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. li. 17).

Our prayers should be importuning and persevering. He who would find Christ, the bread of life, should be as persevering as a hungry beggar who goes from house to house and from door to door for his daily bread. A beggar may at times find it necessary to do a little manual labor in connection with the ordinary means of begging; not so much, perhaps, to

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earn his bread as to prove himself an honest beggar. So he who would prevail with God, either for himself or his fellow-men, must not be offended if his sincerity be put to the test.

The woman of Canaan was importuning and persevering in her prayer to Christ for her daughter who was grievously vexed with a devil. Christ and his disciples were Jews; the woman was a Gentile. The disciples said, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." Then Jesus tested her faith by saying, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then came she and worshiped him, saying, "Lord, help me." But he tested her again, and said, "It is not meet to take the children's [Jew's] bread, and to cast it to dogs [Gentiles]." And she said, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (See Matt. xv. 22-28).

Jacob was importuning and persevering in wrestling with the angel of God. He wrestled until morning, when he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Some people get this wrong. I have heard penitents at the altar saying the same words that Jacob said, and yet did not profit thereby. Why? Because they imitated Jacob in word only and not in deed. If any would imitate Jacob at all they should imitate him in faith, for it was faith that caused him to speak so decidedly. Cause must be before effect. But to say such words without meaning them is

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neither a cause for anything nor an effect of anything.

I believe physical exertion is not essentially requisite to effectual prayer; it is only a natural outgrowth of faith and diligence. Our prayers become effectual only in proportion to the amount of faith that accompanies them. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). Christ says, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi.24). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is as a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (James i. 5-7). "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. ix. 28).

Our prayers should be incessant; that is, we should never leave off praying. We should daily have our family prayer and our secret prayers. Yea, all day long we should be in a prayerful attitude toward God. "Pray without ceasing" (I. Thes. v. 17).

Two things we should bear in mind.

1. We must not suppose that God is dependent upon man for any knowledge whatever.
2. The design of prayer is not to persuade God to a willingness to supply our needs.

If God could not see our needs it is not likely that he could hear our prayers. If he did not earnestly

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desire to supply our needs it is not likely that he would have us pray incessantly. Then, says some one, "If God knows our needs and is willing to supply them, why should we pray at all?" "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Shall the clay say to the potter, why hast thou made me thus? Surely no one but an ungodly man or a hypocrite would raise any objection against such a blessed ordinance. It is the Christian's meat and drink. God has ordained prayer to be the vehicle by which our faith may be conveyed to the eternal throne. Through prayer we become prepared to receive God's mercies, and thereby we show our appreciation of mercies received. Surely what is not worth our humble petitions and our sincere thanks is worth neither receiving nor having.

My reader may wonder why I have not classified this subject into private, family and public prayer, and treated each part separately. My reason is this: Whether we pray in our secret closet, around the family altar or at a public meeting, we must be sincere in our devotion, and not faithless, but believing; and with such devotion and faith we will be ready for prayer upon any occasion.

However, I would say, he who neglects to pray in secret is likely to be overcome by the wicked one. And the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. xii. 45). He who has no time nor sufficient interest to erect a family altar, around which himself and family may daily blend their voices together in prayer, may see the time when one of his family shall be taken and the other left, or perhaps all left. Prayer

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in public should be energetic; not like whispering behind a door in a sick room. I can't help but wonder what ails such feeble, praying Christians, especially if they have been in the service of God for years. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Ps. cvii. 2).

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." Amen and amen!"



Christian Duties

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

THE following few pages, under the above subject, will be employed for the edification of those particularly of whom more is to be expected than of young converts, or beginners in the Christian religion.

My purpose is not to itemize the whole duty of man; however, I will call your attention to a few duties that are so often neglected. I believe that as Christians we should be governed by principles, and not by precepts. The better we are established in the principles of the gospel the less need we will have for the precepts of the law. "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing contrary to sound doctrine" (I. Tim. i. 9, 10).

It is true, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. iii. 24, 25). "For Christ is the

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end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4).

I know "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. * * * * The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" (Gal. v. 17-23). Are we then to understand that whatever a Christian does when led by the Spirit and governed by the principles of the gospel, is right? Yes. But lest you misunderstand me, I will put it in this way. A Christian who is led by the Spirit and governed by the principles of the gospel will do, so far as he knows and understands, only that which is right.

Your chief business as a Christian is not to buy, sell and get gain, but to glorify God in the salvation of men. To do this you must let all with whom you come in contact know that you are a Christian indeed. A certain minister once said, in reference to his conduct and conversation, that wherever he went he wanted all men to know that he was a minister of the gospel. Brother, or sister, you are an ambassador for Christ, a citizen of another world; let all men know it by a blameless conduct and a holy conversation.

Your life is like a book which many are reading. If what men see in your life is consistent with your profession they will almost involuntarily be drawn toward Christ and the gospel; but if they see that your life is not consistent with your profession it may

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cause them by and by to drift into infidelity. Thus instead of glorifying God you will dishonor him and be of more harm in the world than good.

You should therefore be an example to all men and a pattern of good works. If you are a father or a mother you are highly responsible to God to give your children a proper religious training. Remember, even your own family will be influenced to Christ and the gospel in proportion to your faithfulness and earnestness. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

My dear Christian friends, let us live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, "looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Let us be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is within us with meekness and reverence (see I Peter iii. 15). "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain (Titus iii. 9).





Parable of the Ten Virgins

“And five of them were wise and five were foolish” (Matt. xxv. 2).

PROFESSING Christians may be divided into two classes. They who are Christians indeed, and they who merely profess or pretend to be. The first class consists of men and women who love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind, and their neighbor as themselves; and who prove their love to God and their neighbor by willingly obeying the commandments of Christ and observing the golden rule, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matt. vii. 12).

Among the second class we find men and women who want to be religious for no other purpose than to escape hell. They are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,” and they pray only when they get into trouble. Among this class we find also such as have left their first love and become careless and cold-hearted, and others whose consciences are so badly seared that they can do most anything without feeling remorse.

The parable of the ten virgins is intended to show not only the present condition, but the future destiny of these two classes. It is intended to show the blessedness of true religion and the awful consequences of carelessness and hypocrisy.

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Hear the parable: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt. xxv. 1-12).

We are told that the Jewish weddings were generally celebrated in the night. The one spoken of in this parable by our Lord was after this custom.

The young ladies expected and were expected to meet the bridegroom at his coming. Because the wedding was to be celebrated at night, it was required that each was to be provided with a lamp in burning condition. They all were provided with lamps, and all went forth to meet the bridegroom; but the foolish took either no oil, or not sufficient for the occasion, and in that did their foolishness consist. But the wise

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seem to have carried an extra supply whereby they might replenish their lamps, if necessary, to maintain the flame; and in that did their wisdom consist.

When the ten virgins received the news that the bridegroom was coming, and the command to go out and meet him, they who had no oil saw their folly as never before. They, too, had expected to go, but now they were not ready. They had no oil, and the wise had none to give them. The wedding would not be delayed for the sake of a few fools. What should they do? In their excitement they started toward the store for oil; but while they were gone, and before they could get back, the wise virgins went with the bridegroom into the wedding apartment, and the door was shut.

When the foolish came back, whether they obtained oil or not, they found to their disgrace and sorrow that they had forfeited their anticipated enjoyment. The closed door signified to them who were without that the presence of fools was not agreeable to them who were within. Their friendship with both bride and groom had terminated forever.

The meaning or application of the parable is this: When Christ shall come to judge the world; that is, in the day when he shall make up his "jewels" and when he shall send forth his angels to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; when he shall come to see how his gospel has been received, and to determine men's destiny and appoint them their place, then it will plainly appear what was the real condition of all professing Christians. It will then be found out that many names

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have been written upon local church records that have never been written in heaven.

The fond hope of entering heaven without the salvation of God in the soul is as useless as a lamp without oil. But how blessed their condition who are careful to make ample provisions and necessary arrangements in time, or at the time appointed.

This is our watching and waiting time, while our Lord, the bridegroom, tarries. Why he tarries we do not know, but perhaps to give us more time to do good to those about us, that they may also enjoy the sweet rest of heaven; for the Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter iii. 9). Therefore, my Christian reader, in as much as it is possible "do the work of an evangelist." Or perhaps he tarries that we may better prepare ourselves for his coming. Then "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. ii. 1).

We should expect his coming at all times, either to us individually by death, or to all the world in judgment. For if a man once comes to this that he says within his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming," consequently, living and acting as though he had no soul to save, as though there were no heaven to gain and no hell to shun; "the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxiv. 50, 51).

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When Jesus Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven with a great company of angels, to judge the quick and the dead, and to reward every man according to his works, there will be such a time as there never was; for before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. xxv. 32, 33).

"Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

Methinks about this time these blessed saints will step into the aerial conveyance to be transported to the shining portals of glory where the accompanying angels may introduce them as "they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14). And then, I fancy, a great multitude of white robed saints, of which some will be recognized as their beloved ones over whose graves they once wept bitter tears, will come down to the celestial gate with harps of gold in their hands and crowns of glory upon their heads to give them a hearty reception to the sweet rest of heaven. Thus an abundant entrance will be administered unto them. Then farewell earth with its sorrow and pain. Farewell heartaches and headaches, for "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4). "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither

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shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 16, 17).

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41).

That will be a sad time when they must bid their last farewell to mother, home, the hope of heaven, or all that was dear to them. What pangs of anguish will seemingly tear their hearts to pieces to think that they must go away into inconceivable punishment, while the righteous are received into the ineffable joys of heaven. How sad the sight when they shall see Abraham and Isaac and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out.

Reader, are you unsaved, and "is it nothing to you?" "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Now is set before you the way of life and the way of death. To-day the door of mercy is open; to-morrow it may be forever closed.

Are you a Christian? Then "set the trumpet to thy mouth," and shout, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Say unto them, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11)? "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

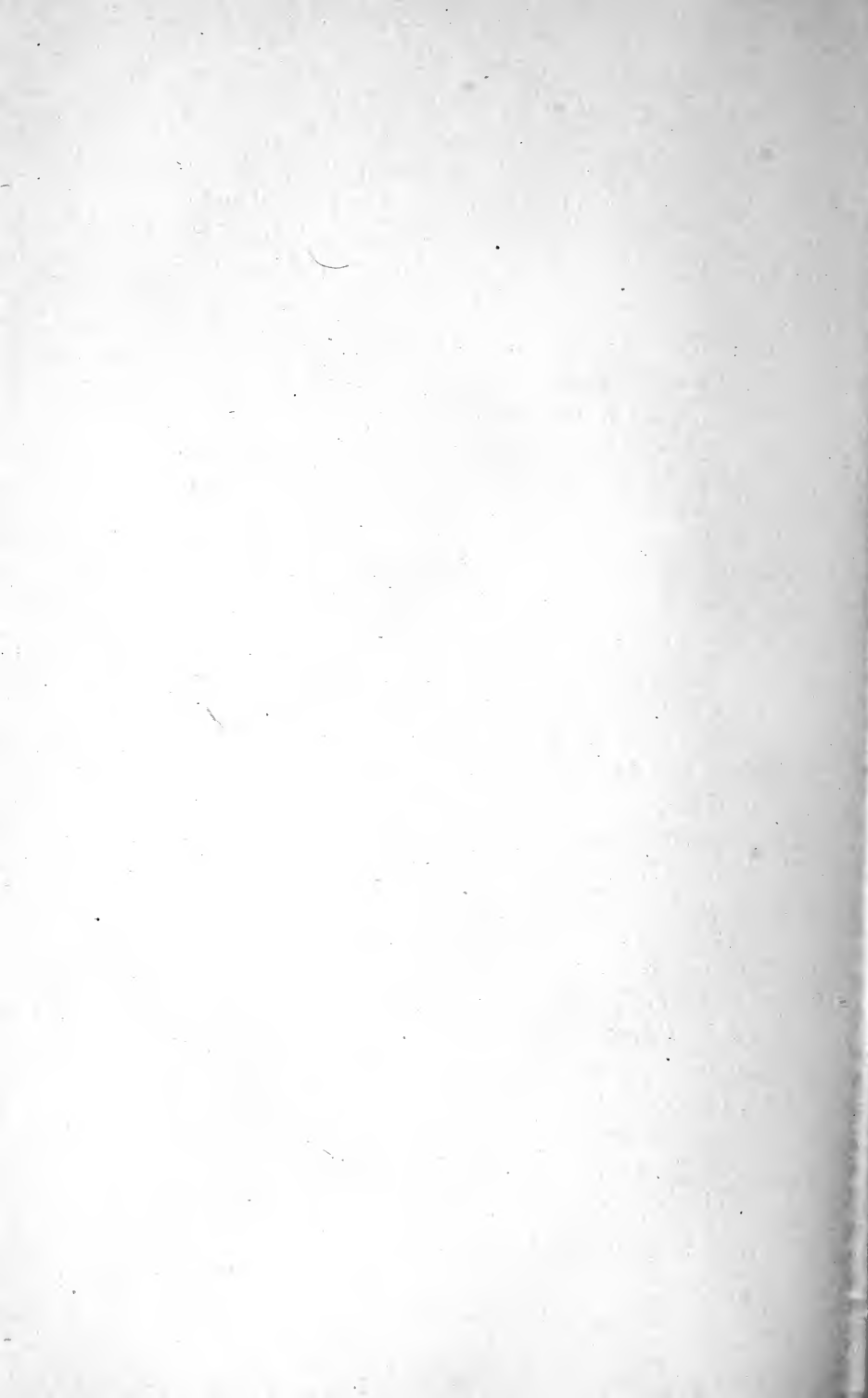
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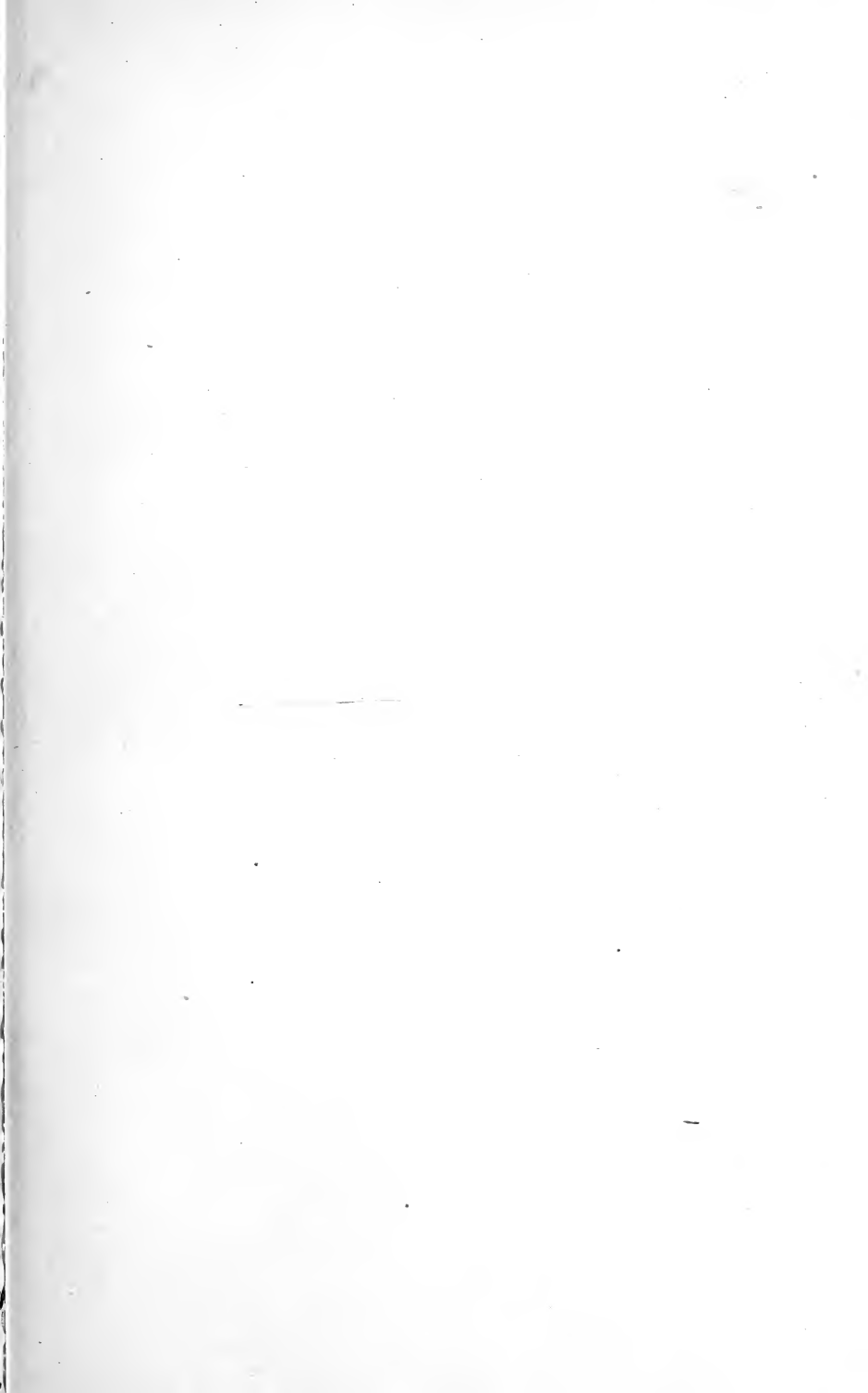
The coming of the Lord may be applied to the inevitable hour of death, as well as to the general judgment. The angel of death may have already received his commission concerning some of us, and ere long we may receive the summons to join

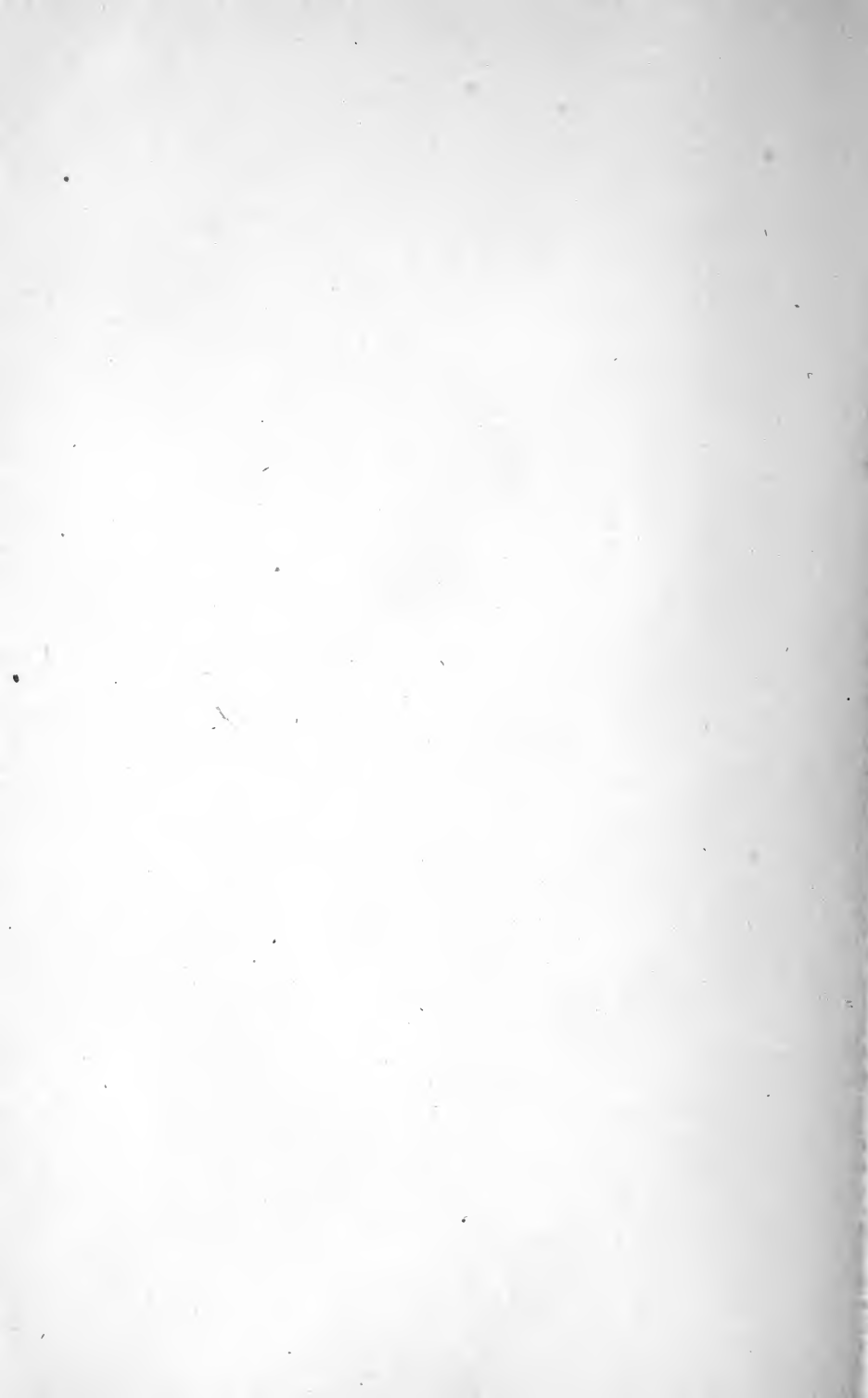
“The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death.”

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. xxv. 13).

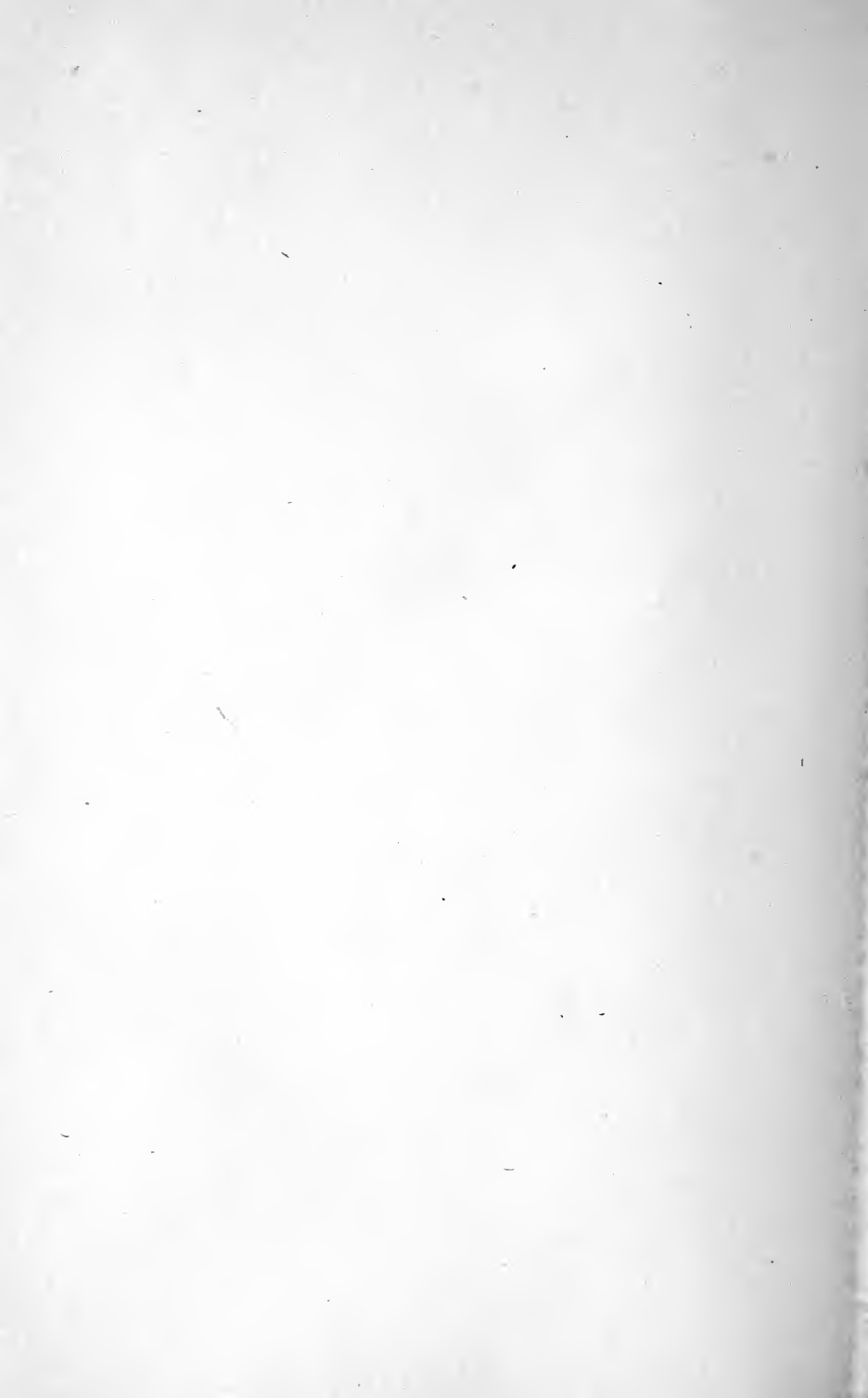
“I know not the hour of his coming,
Nor how he will speak to my heart;
Or whether at morning or midday,
My spirit to him will depart.
I know not the bliss that awaits me
At rest with my Savior above;
I know not how soon I shall enter
And bathe in the ocean of love.
Perhaps in the midst of my labor,
A voice from my Lord I shall hear;
Perhaps in the slumber of mid-night,
Its message may fall on my ear.
I know not, but, O, I am waiting,
My lamp ever burning and bright;
I know if Jesus will call me
At morning, at noon, or at night.
But I know I shall wake in the likeness
Of him I am longing to see;
I know that my eyes shall behold him,
And that is enough for me.”

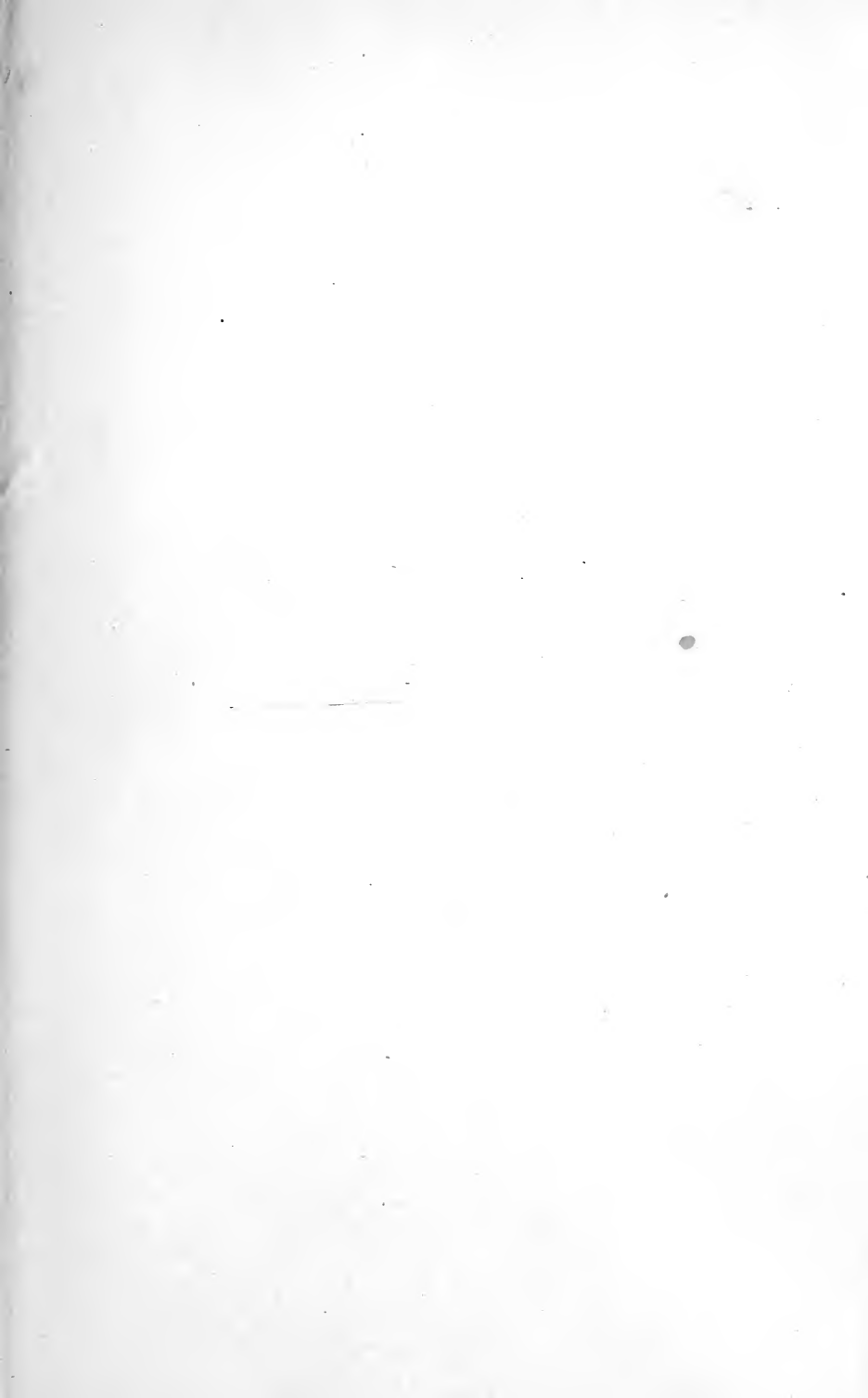










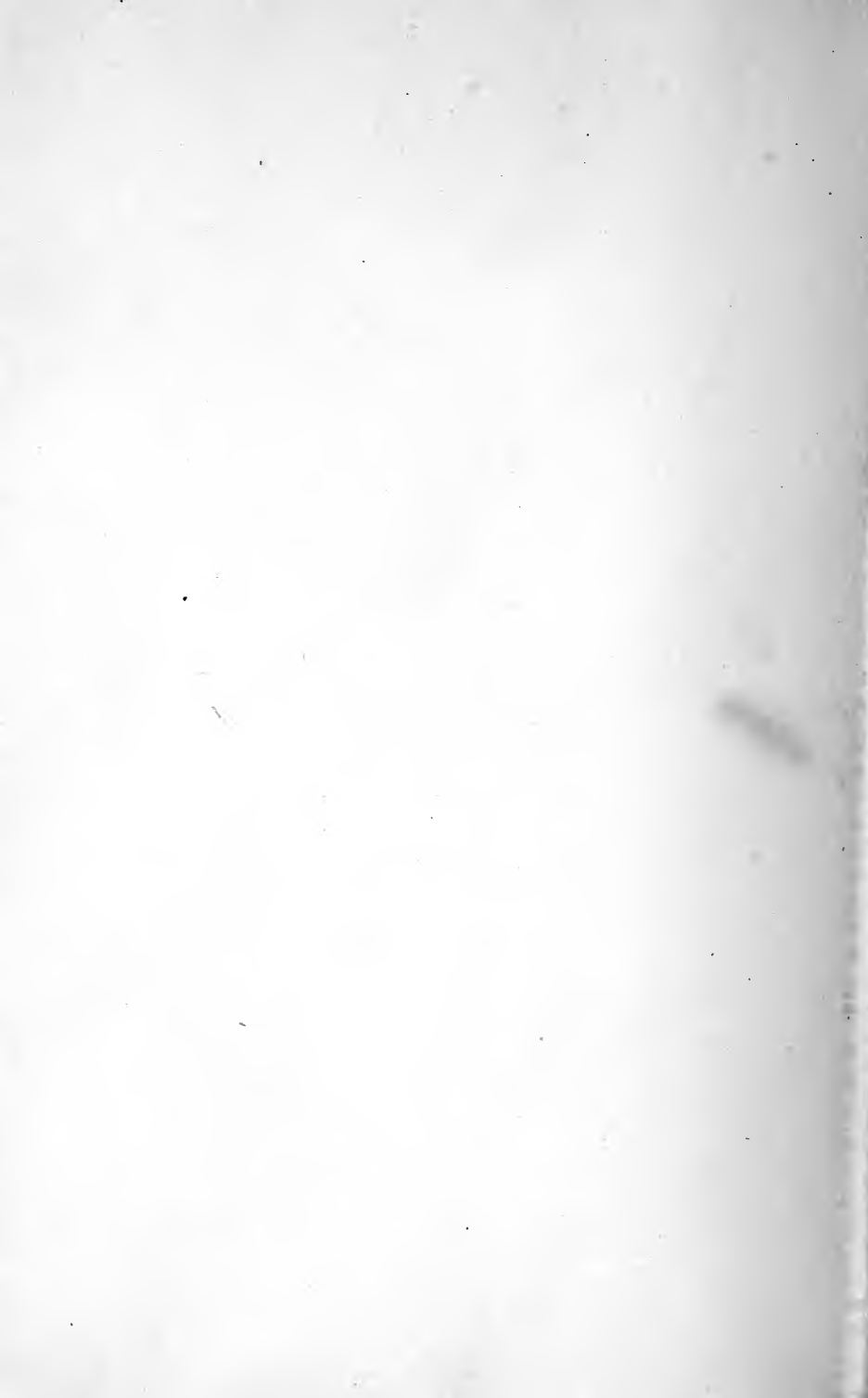














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