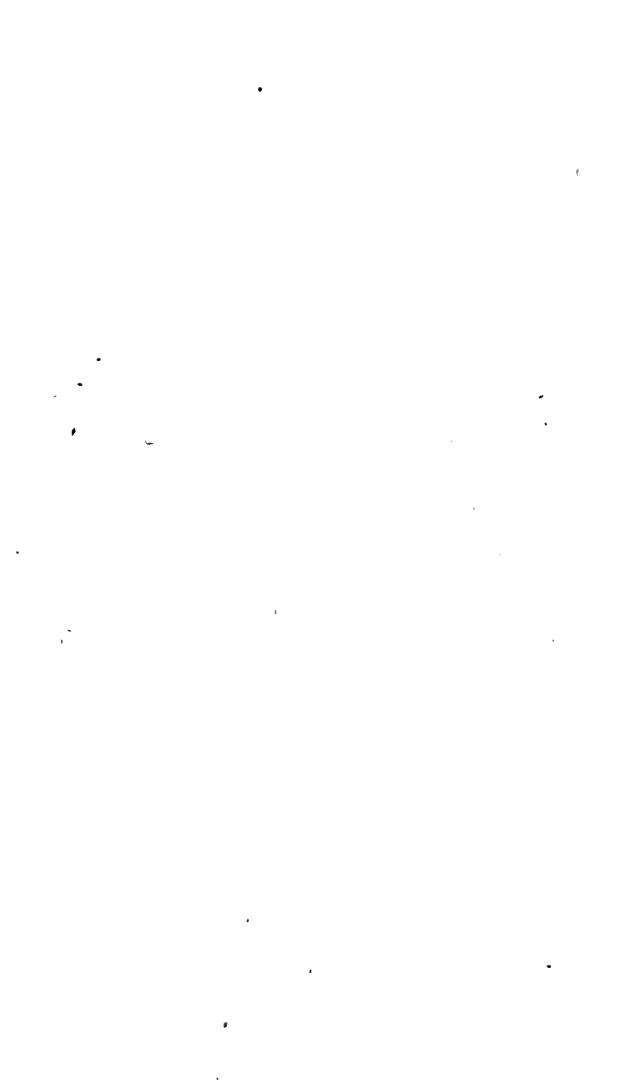




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Thoughts and counsels for
the impenitent









THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS

FOR

THE IMPENITENT.

BY THE

REV. J. M. OLMSTEAD.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN common with other christians, both in the ministry and out of it, the author has not beheld with indifference the vast mass of immortal mind which is moving onward to destruction. And for several years has his voice been employed in the endeavour, with the aid of our Almighty and pitying Lord, to arrest a small portion of this moving mass in its progress toward so mournful an end. But his voice cannot reach so far as his desire to do good extends. Hence the following work. He is not ignorant of the fact, that several other works of superior merit, designed for the same class, exist. Yet has he been induced to send this forth, under the impression that it may fall into the hands of some who may have never read those other works; or who, should they have had access to one or more of them, may still, perchance, have their eye fall on something here which may be to them not altogether unprofitable. To the blessing of the God of Grace the author would commend both it and the reader.

July 2, 1846.

From the Rev. Dr. Miller, of the Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J.

I HAVE had an opportunity of hearing read the introductory, and several other leading portions of a work, in manuscript, entitled, "Thoughts and Counsels for the Impenitent," by the Rev. James M. Olmstead, Pastor of the Church at Flemington, N. J. ; and, so far as this cursory examination enables me to judge, I consider it as sound, evangelical, able in argument, and well adapted to be extensively useful. I sincerely wish the Reverend Author may receive encouragement to commit the work to the press, and thus to extend the circulation of it among the multitudes to whose case it applies.

SAML. MILLER.

Princeton, N. J.,
1 April, 1846.

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THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS

FOR

THE IMPENITENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE BAD BARGAIN.

READER, if you are an impenitent, unconverted sinner, I am glad you have taken up this book. I have long felt a desire to say something to you, but hitherto “lacked opportunity.” Will you not retire into some apartment, or put yourself in some spot, where you may be alone, not subject to distraction or intrusion, whilst I attempt to throw before you some thoughts, and offer you some friendly counsel.

I suppose that you were not aware of it—but, appointed to watch for souls as one that must give account, I have been watching with some concern your movements—have been observant for a considerable season of what you were occupied in doing. I have seen you busy—have observed you to be employed in making a *bargain*, and one

which, if it should be consummated, I have no doubt you will regard as unfortunate; will afterwards deeply regret; feel greatly sorry for. I have seen you occupied in the business of barter—of bartering *your soul for a portion of this world*.

I have been greatly amazed that you could deliberately set about the work of doing such a thing. I have thought, Surely that person's mind must be labouring under some hallucination, must have somehow lost its balance, or he would never think of making such a bargain. What! trade away his soul for such an object! Surely, I have said to myself, he must put a very high valuation on the *world*, and a very low one on his *soul*, or he would never imagine it wise to trade away the latter for the former.

There was, reader, between eighteen and nineteen centuries ago, a being in human form on this earth, who was remarkable for his talents and knowledge. He had a very comprehensive and very penetrating mind. He knew, perfectly, what this world was, from the centre to the surface, and from the equator to the poles: not only knew every thing that was in it; but exactly how much every thing it contained was worth. And as he dropped something on the point to which allusion has been made, it would be well for those who know less than he did, to consider what he said. Reader, it was this: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall

gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii 36, 37.)

Here are the two things specified of which we spoke—the *world*, and the *soul*—one, the object we said you are bartering away, and the other the object you are wishing to get for it.

First—The object you are bartering away—the *soul*.

Your soul, what is it? and what is it worth? It is a thing intangible, invisible, but do not infer that it is therefore of little or no worth—that it is a puff of empty air. The most valuable objects in the universe are such as we receive no information of by any of the five senses. If your soul consisted of matter, it would be by no means worth what it now is.

God made, first, the material part of man, a part indeed curiously fashioned; but it did not appear to be of any great use, did not seem of much if any value, by itself. It was not merely a sluggish but a motionless mass, incapable, in its separate state, of being converted to any great or good object, or of enjoying any thing. The soul was put into it by its Almighty and Immortal Author. The creature then became a moving, thinking, planning being, and far from useless in the divine kingdom. God prized it. He had made this terrestrial ball, and, successively, every object that he put upon

it. He then proceeded to make the human creature ; but he first did what was strikingly indicative that he was about to form an object of dignity and importance paramount to any previously created—not excepting the earthly ball itself. He paused in his creative work, and using the language of deliberation, and even consultation, he said, “ Let us make man.” Ah! *man, man*, he set a value upon, we are there taught, which transcended that which he put on the earth and all its furniture. Indeed, he built this terrestrial fabric, and furnished it, as a habitation for man. How important a creature, in the estimation of the Deity, does all this show man to be. But what is it that gives value principally to man? Evidently the spiritual, not the clayey part.

Again. The soul—how long is it to have an existence? That sun shall one day lose its brilliancy ; shall set in a night succeeded by no morning. The time is to come when those stars shall cease to sparkle in night’s diadem. Worlds shall be hurled into the nonentity from which they sprang. But at the period when all this shall occur, the soul, *your* soul, reader, shall exhibit no more signs of death, or symptoms of decay, than it did the first morning after its creation. As to the future, it is an everlasting creature. The eternal God will endure no longer than will the spirit which dwells in that frail tabernacle.

Now, you know we estimate certain articles according to their durability. All other things being equal, we will choose an article that is more, in preference to one that is less durable. Here is an article which will last always—will never wear out. Eternity is written upon the walls of its every chamber. On all its faculties is to be found the stamp of immortality.

And of what capacities, what susceptibilities, is that soul possessed. Even in the infancy of its being, what surprising things can it devise and accomplish. Look at its achievements in science and in art. These achievements which we witness, and of which we read, are all from souls in their infantile state. What must they become capable of knowing and achieving, after they shall have been in existence millions of ages! Why, the period will come when a single human soul shall know more than all men and angels are acquainted with, or ever have known.

And if, intellectually, the soul is susceptible of such enlargement of capacity, and of such acquirement—then, what shall we say of its coming capacity for *bliss* or *woe*? Oh! what happiness or misery it may hereafter hold. Why, reader, if you find a home in the third heaven, your soul will enjoy, *in the eternity before it*, a greater amount of felicity than has ever yet been enjoyed by all creatures, human and angelic, thus far; and

than they will enjoy up to the funeral of time. On the other hand, if your soul shall fall into the burning lake, it will, *in its eternity*, endure more pain than all that the fallen angels, and human spirits accursed, have suffered, or will suffer, until the archangel's trump shall sound, and the sleeping dead awake.

The allwise God does not greatly care for a thing of small moment. Objects are constantly eaten, destroyed by the teeth of time—so little regard has he for them, that he does not interfere to prevent it. Even *a world* he can burn up, and will do it, of so insignificant account is it with him. But *man's deathless spirit* he has not been indifferent about. Long before the human spirit had a being, the Omniscient mind saw and greatly cared for it. The covenant of a past eternity is not silent as to this point. After man had fallen from God into himself, and was in imminent danger, momentarily, of falling lower, the Being Divine manifested an astonishing regard and lively concern for him. Not for his body. That he was willing to let die, and mingle its particles with its brother clay. But for the immaterial part. I cannot read what the Lord, immediately after the first apostacy, said about the seed of the woman, and the various subsequent revelations of the Old Testament; its visions and voices; its typical institutions; and the predictions and instructions of its prophets and

teachers, without being struck all the while, with the thought of the immense regard had by the Deity for the spirit of man. And still more powerfully is such an impression made on my mind, when I turn my eye to the revelations of the New Testament, and its institutions; its commissioned apostleship and appointed ministry, and the nature of the duties and character of the labours and services of these; and, I may add, the ministry of a higher order of intelligences than human; yes, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God.

Especially can I not read, in the gospels, of Bethlehem's stable, the garden of agony, and the bloody mount, without being constrained to exclaim, Oh, what a regard has God had for the human soul! The cross, and the sacrificial victim, the infinite suffering endured by the one on the other, especially cannot I look or think upon, without saying, Here see the worth of man's soul! Here behold God's estimate of its value! Think of the "price, all price beyond," paid for it. "If a God bleeds, he bleeds not for a worm." We said "*infinite suffering*," and we meant it. For though it was the finite nature of Jesus that underwent the torture, yet his infinite nature sustained the finite, and enabled it to endure and exhaust the curse. And I know not, reader, how to set a limit to that curse. "Every groan of Calvary," says one, "pronounced the worth of the soul to be

greater than ten thousand material worlds. The Son of God would not have given his life to redeem the whole material universe from ruin. He would not have shed a drop of his blood to save this world with all its lumber from the flames. He will of choice give it to the flames, when its use to the soul of man shall be ended. And yet he shed all his blood to save the soul."

You see, dear, unconverted reader, from all this, what sort of an article it is that you are willing to barter away—an object of immense, inconceivable, may I not say, infinite value.

And what is it you are willing to barter it for? You know what it is—the *world*: your soul for the world.

You inordinately love, immoderately prize *the world*; and you are not singular in this. The same thing is done by large numbers of creatures wearing the same nature as your own. Millions, like yourself, love the world much more than they do Him who, by his almighty fiat, out of nothing produced it. How many idolaters are there, who are without the suspicion that they are such.

You desire to gain the world. So do many beside you. You have numerous rivals. We will suppose you to be the successful competitor. You have an exalted opinion of its value, and let me not here speak depreciatingly or disparagingly of it. It is a promising, flattering world, and you, no

doubt, like many others, imagine that its possession would make you vastly happy. As the Saviour makes the supposition about gaining "*the whole world;*" we will suppose you to be the individual who gains it—that you are so fortunate as to become this world's proprietor—that all its gold and silver; the cattle upon its thousand hills; its lands and tenements, and every thing else it contains in the form of property, or that can be converted into it, is yours. You have become a very opulent man. Thousands, possessing but a very inconsiderable part of it, might reasonably be accounted wealthy. This world, divided indeed between several millions, would make each of them rich. How incomparably richer you, who, stretching your arms like seas and grasping in all the shore, ay, and grasping the seas beside, can say of it collectively, "This is mine."

We will also suppose you to become the world's monarch. It seems reasonable that you, who own the world, should be ruler over it. All others of mankind are but your subjects and servants. They speak and sing your praises; bow to your will; run at your bidding. The gems that sparkle in the diadems of earth's princes, are brought and put into your crown. The concentrated power and pomp and glory of the globe is wreathed about your brow, and glitters on your person. The

world is in homage at your feet. There is nought of sublunary honour that is not yours.

Yours likewise become the pleasures of the world. Its beauties, its melodies, its sweets, are all for your gratification. Your every sense is regaled. Your heart dances with joy. In order to make your worldly condition as good as possible, we will suppose that you are made completely happy by your vast possession. And that your life may be long to enjoy your world, we will suppose your age to be protracted to double that of Methuselah—in round numbers, to twice a thousand years. So long a season is allowed you to enjoy what your great globe can yield. And verily to look forward, does it not appear like a young eternity? How rich, honored, and happy a man for twenty centuries.

At the end of this season, your breath and your world are to depart from you, and your soul that you sold for it, is to sink into the flames kindled by God's wrath. The earth whirls and whirls around in its orbit, and years take their station with those beyond the flood. One century after another expires. At length your twenty centuries have all, up to the last hour of the last one, passed away. Hark!—There is your last gasp! With it you resign your possession, and plunge into hell. Alas, what a plunge! and what a shriek follows. Let the scene dwell on your imagination for a

time. * * * * * Your world, which you loved, prized, so much, where is it? and where now are you? It is a new situation for you to be in. What a contrast between it and your former one, when you were owning and enjoying your world. Poor soul! your harvest-season of mercy is gone.

Your world yielded you perfect happiness during twenty centuries; and should you be perfectly miserable for the twenty centuries immediately succeeding, in your new and fiery abode, you will have received an equivalent for this last, in your former enjoyment. But remember, friend, that after your soul shall have been tossing on the fiery billows for twenty centuries, your sufferings will be no nearer an end than they were the day you entered upon them. There is an *eternity*, an *eternity* beyond, during which you must suffer want, and the wrath of God. You sold your soul for the world, "the whole world," and you see the result. *How bad a bargain!*

But, reader, it was a *supposition* that you were to gain the whole world. It was a *supposition* that you would hold it twenty centuries. And it was a *supposition* that its possession, while retained, would make you perfectly happy. The sober reality is, that you are to live but a very small part of twenty centuries—perhaps not twenty years; and peradventure not one. Instead of gaining the

whole world, you will, with unremitting and utmost effort, gain but a very, very small portion of it. And you will be far from being made completely happy, whilst you hold it, by what you will get. The question then comes to this:—Will you, for the trifling amount of property, or power, or pleasure that you can here procure; and for the exceedingly brief and uncertain period that you can hold it; and for the small amount of comfort or gratification that you can derive from it—barter away that soul of such vast, inconceivable value? Say, will you?

If it would be madness inexpressible in you to sell that spirit immortal, which is tarrying for a few days in that material frame-work, for the whole world; and that world to be had in possession during the long period that we supposed; and when also it was to yield you perfect happiness all that period—then, is not language infinitely too feeble to express the degree of folly and madness with which your conduct is marked, in bartering it away for so much more trifling a consideration as you are actually disposing of it for? Oh! my friend, how it sickens me to think of it. The man who should trade away a continent for a trinket would make a good bargain compared with him who gives his soul for the little that he can get of the property, honour, or pleasure of this world. “Ah! it is enough to break the heart, to see for

how mean and miserable a consideration, men barter away their eternal all; for what a worthless vanity they sacrifice their heaven—at what a paltry price they sell the hope of the soul. Souls are cheap, for the market is glutted. Let intemperance, debauchery, vanity, worldliness, and ambition, say what they give for souls, and men will be amazed at how cheap a rate all is parted with.”

Alas! what multitudes act either as if they had no souls, or as if they did not imagine them to be worth the most trifling consideration. How many, evidently, care less for their souls than they do for a dollar;—trust their souls where they would not trust a dollar;—manifest more anxiety, and put forth more effort to obtain that inconsiderable sum, than they do to secure the soul’s eternal salvation! Nor is conduct resembling this, confined to the inexperienced, giddy, and thoughtless youth; but extends to the more advanced in years and experience; to the cool and the calculating of middle life; to numbers of this world’s wise ones; to men of mighty and treasured intellects; to grave statesmen; to “the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.” Amongst people of almost every rank and calling are to be found those, and not in inconsiderable numbers, who are busied in barter-

ing away their souls for an empty nothing. Large numbers of them, I suppose, are not aware of it—but their not being aware of it does not alter the fact. A great proportion of the unconverted, nearly all indeed, will not so much as stop and think what they are doing. Onward, as with bandaged eyes, they rush to destruction. They have their objects of which they are in pursuit, and for the attainment of which they will sacrifice all that is valuable in immortality; the unspeakable and fadeless glories and felicities of heaven; and bring upon themselves the awful and eternal horrors and miseries of perdition.

That the soul may or can be lost, is a truth assumed by Jesus Christ. It was so well known to him, and what he thought men had so much reason to believe to be a fact, that he does not stop and labour to prove it. The bare intimation, from the lips of our blessed Lord, of such a thing, should be to us as the most laboured demonstration. He would raise no false alarm; he would excite no unnecessary painful apprehension. He would not disturb the repose of a slumbering world, if there was no call for it. Ah! my reader, it is a fact that the soul may be lost. In reference to myriads of our fellow-creatures it is a still more solemn and awful fact that it is in infinite danger of being lost. Yet Christ seems to intimate that if men would not so foolishly and madly engage in bar-

tering it away, it need not be lost. It is by implication asserted, that if men would bestow due care on, or take due pains in relation to, their souls, instead of being lost, they should be saved. And what is here implied respecting this point, is more than implied, is clearly taught, in various parts of Christ's blessed gospel.

After all, however, that has been said, my impenitent reader may perhaps hesitate about admitting the correctness of the charge, that he is bartering away his own soul for a portion of this world. You may not think that you are doing this. But I beseech you, unconverted friend, just to consider what it is that you most love; are most solicitous to obtain; are chiefly or exclusively seeking after and labouring for. Do you not, on examination, find that it is something earthly? Is it not, in your case, obviously so? Are you as diligently, earnestly, perseveringly, using means for securing your soul's salvation, as you are for the acquisition of earth's fleeting vanities? Do you not see, are you not constrained in honour and truth to confess, that you are not? Are you not, for the sake of the worldly, neglecting the heavenly? Then are you chargeable with the folly, infatuation, madness, of which we have been speaking.

It is related in profane history, that a certain sovereign, Lysimachus, king of Thrace, when

suffering under extreme thirst, offered his kingdom to the Getæ for the means of quenching it. After his thirst was quenched, how differently did he view the matter than before. His exclamation was, "Ah, wretched me, who, for such a momentary gratification, have lost so great a kingdom!"

In sacred history it is related of one, that in a time of hunger, he sold his birth-right, which included not only temporal, but choice spiritual privileges and blessings, for a mess of pottage. Afterward, when he better saw the character of the transaction, he wept bitterly. But the die was cast. Then, though he most earnestly desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; he found no place of repentance in his father, although he sought it carefully with tears.

So the period is coming, when you, my impatient reader, will have your eyes open to see the kind of bargain you are now making. But it may be when it is too late to rectify the mistake—after the bargain is concluded, and your soul tossing on the fiery billows. Then, what more bitter and protracted weeping yours than that of Lysimachus or of Esau. Oh, how, through eternal ages, will you wail over your fatuity; howl over your madness! Your invaluable soul for ever undone—sacrificed for a trifle!

CHAPTER II.

INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGION.

O MY friend, let me sit down by your side—be not afraid of me—and suffer a few words to be dropped into your ear. The subject may be unwelcome, and you may think me meddlesome. But how can I refrain from expressing my concern for you, and the pain I feel because of the indifference which you manifest to religion? If you took no great interest in the trifles of a day—if earth presented no such charms to you as to cause enchantment; if the objects which wither at the touch had not power to kindle in your breast the faintest desire for their attainment—I could hardly think it strange, but would rather suppose that you had come to your right mind. I would conclude that you had been weighing them in the balance of the sanctuary, and ascertained how light and comparatively worthless they are.

But when I observe that you can be in earnest—that you have a heart that can be on fire, and hands which can be busy: and that it is solely these fading objects that surround you which kin-

dle the fire in your bosom, and put your hands in motion—when I see that you have zeal, and are inclined to bestir yourself, but that your zeal and activity relate exclusively to what moth and rust can corrupt, and death put forever far from you, I cannot feel as if I were discharging my duty, or acting a friendly part toward you, by keeping silence. So far from wishing you harm, dear reader, I wish you the greatest good you are capable of receiving. I would not destroy your happiness, but promote it. I would have you opulent, honoured, and blissful. I would have you singing with seraphs long after this world shall have been burned up—long after the wicked shall have gone from the judgment to their fiery home.

Oh, is this rational creature of God willing thus to spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not? With this reader, whose breath is in his nostrils, and who is on the edge of a precipice, is religion such a trifle as to come in for no share of his solitudes? What must he think of it? Do you, my unregenerate friend, entertain any suspicion concerning the truth of the christian religion? Are you inclined to suspect that the christian scriptures do not contain a revelation from God, and therefore direct not your thoughts or anxieties to the religion they inculcate or teach? Is the Bible a cheat? That Book was written either by bad men or good.

Bad men could not have written it, if they would ; and would not if they could. And good men would not have attempted to palm upon the world, as a revelation from God, what was no such thing. Would the apostles have exposed themselves to what they did, in propagating a religion which, if false, they must have known to be so? Miracles were wrought. Would God have put forth his almighty power in confirmation of a falsity, or an imposture? Predictions were uttered and recorded, a number of which have already been exactly fulfilled. Could such predictions have come from any other source than from a mind which knew what should be, as well as what was? Inspect the character of the doctrines and principles of the scriptures. Look at the effects produced by those scriptures, or the religion they teach, where those writings have been disseminated, and the christian religion embraced. Take the narrative portions of that volume. Could those have been palmed upon a people living in the same age in which such and such occurrences are there said to have taken place, if those narratives were false? Or could the next succeeding age have been thus imposed on? How utterly incredible!

Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West, whilst infidels, resolved each to write a treatise oppugning the scriptures, and exposing what they considered their absurdities and falsity. The former selected as a

subject, *The Conversion of St. Paul*; the latter, *The Resurrection of Christ*. This, leading them to a perusal and examination of parts of the sacred writings, resulted not only in the conversion to the christian faith of them both, but to the production of two able treatises in favour of the christian scriptures as a Divine Revelation: one of these treatises entitled, *The Conversion of St. Paul*; the other, *The Resurrection of Christ*.

There are such evidences in support of the claims of the Bible, and it is a book so much needed in such a world as this, that it will never be generally repudiated, or become obsolete. Not long after the Revolutionary war, when, through the influence of that war on morals and religion, as well as through the influence of Paine's "*Age of Reason*," infidelity was rife in the land, "A distinguished member of Congress,"—that body sitting then in Philadelphia—"A distinguished member of Congress, who had been a very profane man, but in the mercy of God was arrested in his course, became anxious for the salvation of his soul, and went into a bookstore in that city to purchase a Bible. The owner of the store was behind his counter, and told the member of Congress that he did not keep Bibles for sale. "What! not keep Bibles!" replied the surprised inquirer. "No sir," answered the bookseller with a smirk; "and we think sir," he continued, "that it will not be long

before Bibles will neither be sold nor read in this city." The indignant Congressman, looking him sternly in the face, replied, "The Bible, sir, will be read in Philadelphia, a thousand years after you will have been broiling in hell."

But, dear reader, how indifferent soever you are to the true religion, I presume you are not ready to admit that your indifference is the result of scepticism. I doubt not but you are prepared to declare that in your opinion the religion which is the burden of gospel revelation is no cunningly devised fable. You acknowledge it to be a reality, a verity, the thing which it professes or claims to be; that it is founded on the firm, solid rock of truth. I am desirous, however, that you should not stop with confessing the religion which the sacred scriptures furnish us with a knowledge of, to be based on truth, and, if you please, in addition, that all its walls up to the topmost stone are of nought else but everlasting truth. I wish you, moreover, to have so clear and impressive a discovery of its nature, its features, relations, bearings, and of its importance to you, as that you shall feel and be constrained to confess that indifference on your part in regard to it is highly improper, unrighteous, and unwise.

Oh, reader, this celestial visitant has come down from the upper skies, robed in beauty, and displaying worth and excellence such as to show whence

she is descended—as to afford evidence of her high and heavenly birth not only, but of her worthiness to command the admiration and love of yourself, and of every beholder. Do you not see that she can be met properly with no other feeling than that of warm affection? To be indifferent to her charms; to hear the music of her sweeter than seraphic voice without being enraptured; to continue standing at a distance when she calls, instead of rushing forward toward her; to see her moving onward with superangelic grace, and beckoning to us to follow, and yet we stand still; to hear her claiming our homage, and yet we not fall prostrate at her feet; to have her commands reach our ears, and yet those commands not be met with cheerful obedience on our part—this, this is a sort of feeling and conduct far indeed from what might be rightly or reasonably looked for.

To whatever branch of the true religion you direct your eye, you cannot but discover that indifference in relation to it is highly absurd or improper. The truth that there is a God lies at the foundation of religion. There can be no religion without a God—without an object of worship. Now the God whom the works of creation in a measure, and more clearly and fully, the sacred scriptures, reveal or bring to our notice, is a Being of superlative, infinite excellence. Even the voice

of Nature proclaims him to be a Being of transcendent and astonishing greatness, wisdom, and power, and one worthy of supreme regard and reverence. But in louder, clearer, fuller tones does Revelation speak of this wonderful Being. That sacred volume whose words are all verity and no lie, tells us that he is eternal both as to the past and the future, or, as Israel's sweet singer expresses it, "from everlasting to everlasting;" that he possesses the attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, almightiness; that he is holy, and good, and just, and faithful, and merciful, and *infinite* in every one of these respects; in short, that he is a Being so great and glorious, that it is impossible that he should be any more so than he is. He is, in addition, in the sacred scriptures, represented as sustaining certain interesting and important relations to us, and all others of our race. We discover in that Book of books that he is our Creator, our Preserver, Benefactor, Father; that he has exceedingly cared for our welfare, and done for us what has excited the astonishment of all the "principalities and powers in heavenly places."

Now, what sort of feelings should be cherished toward such a Being, and standing in such relations? May he with propriety be loved only a little, or none at all? Can he properly be regarded by us with indifference? May we innocently or reasonably have a bosom barren of affection to-

ward him? Of what measure of love from you and me does he himself think he is worthy? How much does he think due as a tribute from these our hearts? Oh, does he not say that we should love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? And is this too much? Must we not acknowledge this measure of love to be right and reasonable? If so, how must indifference in reference to him appear in his view? Otherwise can it appear than most absurd and culpable? And should it not so appear to us? Between supreme attachment on the one hand, and indifference on the other, how great the contrast! And if the former is God's due, and what he claims from us, how reprehensible and displeasing is the latter!

And, as regards the *service* of God: If he is such a Being, and sustains such relations to us as have been spoken of, may you or I serve him or not, as is most convenient, or as we chance to be most inclined? May it innocently be a matter of indifference to us whether or not we render him any service? How large is his demand? "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1st Cor. x. 31.) Now what a difference there is between this mode of living or acting, and a being indifferent whether we do anything to his glory—a not caring whether we serve him at all or not.

There is Jesus Christ: what sort of a Being is he? Is he clothed with superangelic and divine excellencies? Is he one with the Father as to the nature he had before the world was? Has he the same infinite power, wisdom, holiness, goodness? Is he, as Mediator, the chief among ten thousand, yea, altogether lovely? And what sort of feelings has he cherished, and after what manner has he acted toward us? O, my Bible tells me of one who has proved "a Friend above all others" to the fallen of human kind. It speaks to me of amazing condescension on the part of one, who though he "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation" for our sakes. I read in my Bible of a personage who, though he was rich, so rich as to be the proprietor of all worlds, yet for our sakes became poor, so poor as not to have even where to lay his head, that we through his poverty might be rich. There was, as I have been credibly informed, one born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, who, though he is said to have come from the third heaven, was seen living here in the vale of obscurity, and a deeper shade surrounding him for some thirty or more years, than has been observed to settle about ordinary humanity. For the last three or four years of his life, I see him the marked victim of fiendlike malice, and hellish hate. I see him toiling as one that had much to

do, and sorrowing as one that had much to suffer. I follow him at the dead of night to a garden at the foot of Olivet, and witness his prostrations, his cries, and his bloody sweat. And to the Sanhedrin and to the judgment hall I attend him too, and observe to what shame and spitting he is there subjected. I see him with his scarlet robe and his crown of thorns. And what occurs on a certain mount where a cross is raised up and a victim on it, I also witness. Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears! I hear him crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and behold him bowing his head and giving up the ghost!—All this, dear reader, I witness, and I ask, why? for whom or what was all this humiliation, and ignominy, and sorrow, and pain undergone? and I learn from the same sacred book that it was for sinners of human kind, for creatures of like condition and character with you and me. I learn that it was for our good, even for our salvation, that all this was endured, voluntarily submitted to—that it was that we might be delivered from eternal anguish, and find endless blessedness.

Now, what temper of mind, what state of heart, does it become you and me to have in relation to such a Being? May such excellence, love, and compassion, be met with icy-heartedness or indifference? Oh, what love and gratitude are due

him who is in himself so lovely, and who has manifested such friendship, (oh! what a weak word!) such more than friendship, for such wretches! Say, reader, is he not deserving of more love than your idols? Does he not merit higher regard than any thing and every thing of earth? Such a measure of love as will secure from us a keeping of his commandments, nothing short of this, certainly, should you or I be at all satisfied with.

“Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our soul, our life, our all.”

Should we not, in return, have for him an esteem or affection so pure and strong as to be an operative, reigning, controlling principle?—as to bring every power of the material and spiritual man into the service of Christ? A martyr was asked, whether he did not love his wife and children, who stood weeping by him. “Love them? Yes,” said he: “If all the world were gold, and at my disposal, I would give it all for the satisfaction of living with them, though it were in a prison. Yet in comparison with Christ I love them not.” So transcendent a love, reader, should your heart have for Christ. Indifference toward this lovely Prince of grace, toward such a Brother and Saviour, how inexpressibly unbecoming and vile!

The religion of the gospel, my reader, offers

greatly to befriend us and others of mankind—offers to supply us with all that we really need. And surely the offer is a kind and large one: For we need *much* as *fallen* creatures, incomparably more almost than we do as creatures; and much must be done for us, or we are wretched, and forever undone. You, as a transgressor, have fallen under the curse of a broken law. You deserve to die, and are actually exposed to a punishment indescribably severe and everduring. You, in common with the other creatures of the fall, are a poor, weak, disobedient, blinded, defiled, debased, as well as dying creature, and, withal, accountable—accountable to Him, whose creature you are. Now, the religion of Christ comes to you with its great and appropriate tenders. It offers to roll away the heavy curse which has settled on you—to deliver you from that tremendous punishment which you deserve from the hand of a holy and just God. It offers to unscale your eyes, and to disperse the darkness in which you are enshrouded. It offers to strip you of your rags, and to apparel you in vestments, whole, beautiful, and clean. It offers to take you from your hut of poverty, and so to alter your circumstances, as that you may regard yourself, even while here, as truly rich, and as heir to a fortune greater than earth knows. It offers to purify, elevate, ennoble you; to make you a near relative of the King of

kings and Lord of lords, ay, to make yourself a king, the heir apparent now to, and, after a few short years, or months, or days, the actual wearer of a crown richer, brighter than earthly prince ever wore. It offers to lift you out of your wretchedness, to wipe your sorrows dry, and to place you where you will know and feel nought but happiness ineffable, forevermore. All this, and much more, the blessed religion of the gospel offers to do for you, and for all others who will embrace her, who will receive her cordially, accept humbly and thankfully of what she has to give, and who will take upon them her light and easy yoke, and walk in her paths.

Now, can it be regarded as wise or proper for you, or for any others circumstanced as you are, to slight such a benefactress?—to treat with indifference such a religion? Should not her tenders be cordially and thankfully accepted? and should she not be greatly loved and zealously followed, both for the sake of what she is in herself, and for her unspeakably kind and invaluable offers?

Indifference toward such a religion cannot be justly regarded but as the extreme of fatuity or madness. No one who by the hearing of the ear has been afforded any knowledge of her, and especially who lives where her light shines, where her claims are pressed on the attention, and her proffers made, can have a want of warm feeling or

ardent love towards her, without acting very culpably, and highly displeasing him with whom we have to do. Do not, as some appear to, imagine that because you make no profession of religion, because you are not connected in the way of membership with the church, you are excusable for the indifference which you feel, and, after one and another manner, show toward this religion. It is *your* duty to love God and his Christ supremely. It is *your* duty to obey and serve the Lord with body and soul, and to do this every day and hour that you breathe God's air, or live on God's bounty. The fact of your not being a professor of religion does not release you from this; it cuts not the bond of religious obligation. No; so long as you are God's creature, you are bound to love him with all your heart, and to glorify him with all your powers. And so long as you have a soul to be saved or lost, you cannot treat the religion of Jesus with indifference, without both displeasing its divine author, and greatly wronging yourself. Condemn yourself, oh reader, and smite upon your breast, because you have so long treated the religion of our Lord after the manner you have. And repent as in dust and ashes, this hour, of your present indifference and negligence in regard to it. Your feelings are far from right, and your state is far from safe.

Do you feel inclined to ask, what reason the

writer has to suspect you of being mournfully indifferent to religion? Permit me to request you to put that question to the ever-present and omniscient Deity. Does he whose eye is constantly upon your heart, and who pondereth all your goings, see that heart throbbing with a deep and abiding anxiety to honour, please, and serve him? Does he behold the sacred volume oft spread open before you, and its precious contents searched with a mind deeply interested—intent on ascertaining truth in order to its hearty reception, and duty in order to its faithful performance? Is he witness to a frequent, daily observance of that injunction, “Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret?” Can you call God to witness that you love the holy sabbath—desire to be found stately, on that day, where Jehovah is worshipped; there to adore Him, who is, and was, and is to come; there to feast your soul on Christ’s ravishing charms; to eat of the bread of life, and draw water out of that well of salvation? Does he observe you looking much more intently and constantly at those things which are above, than at the gross and decaying objects about you? Does he see you ardently bent on preparing to abide forever in a “house not made with hands?” To such questions as these can you conscientiously give an affirmative answer? Oh, how much I wish that you could.

Dear reader, your heart has never been melted into penitence for sin. Your feet have never yet borne you to that tree on which Jesus died. Your soul has never yet been in the bath of blood divine. The Holy Spirit of God you have never yet welcomed to your bosom. You are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Your infractions of the Divine law expose you to the severe inflictions of inexorable justice. Your peril, how imminent. Yet you tremble not. The salvation of the gospel you pant not after; the terrors of perdition you appear indifferent about escaping. I entreat you, friend, to open your eyes. Look, look at your terrible situation. Persist in contemplating it, until you shall feel uneasy, and begin to inquire, What must I do? Where can I fly for succour? I love you too much, dear reader, to be willing that you should sink into the place where sighs cease not. I long to have you prepared to spend your eternity with me on the sunny heights of glory.

CHAPTER III.

NO NEUTRALITY.

As in the natural world there is light and darkness, so is there in the moral. There is the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkness; the Prince of light, and the prince of darkness; and the cause and interests of each. Now in that declaration of God the Son, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad," it is implied that that omniscient Being saw that there were, and would be, human creatures, who would like to regard themselves, and be regarded by others, as occupying a position of neutrality in relation to these: as neither for God nor against him; as neither of the one kingdom nor the other; as espousing the cause and interests of neither party. God—for Christ is God; he, "in the beginning," was not only "with God," but "was God," and he has not ceased to be God by being made flesh, or taking our nature unto him—The all-knowing and veracious God has declared, in the words above quoted, that there is no such thing as neutrality—that no

rational creature can find any neutral ground on which to stand. It exists not.

1. That there is such a thing as being "with," that is, on the side of, the Lord, I cannot indulge the idea that you, reader, are disposed to deny. There is such a thing as being with him in our sentiments; as having, so far as our knowledge extends, opinions in harmony with his. There are those who go to the Bible for information as to truth and duty. That holy book is from God, and contains such a portion of his sentiments as he has been pleased to reveal. They believe what is there stated, to be true; imbibe his sentiments; and henceforth think with him. So far as their knowledge reaches, they harmonize with him in sentiment for example, as to his own attributes and excellences; as to the Mediator's character, offices, work; as to sin, the world, the soul, salvation, time and eternity; as to the state, interests, duties, and destiny of man; as to the world of glory, and the world of woe.

There are those, too, who are "with the Lord" as to their affections; who have a heart which beats in unison with his. When the Lord was on the earth, he gave strong, indubitable evidence, that he greatly loved the Father, and manifested intense anxiety and desire that the Father might be glorified both by himself and others. He exhibited a feeling of strong approbation of the di-

vine government, a very high esteem of the divine laws. The holy and abiding objects of the spiritual and celestial world were not absent from his affections; he panted after them as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. On the other hand, he showed an inexpressibly strong dislike to sin. Oh, how he did detest disobedience to the precepts, want of submission to the authority, of the infinite God. How hateful to him was depravity; what pain did he feel when he beheld its workings in the hearts of men. His benevolence toward the fallen of human kind, his concern for their welfare, his desire for their holiness and happiness, were all intense beyond the power of utterance; and his hostility to the kingdom and the works of darkness was no less inexpressible. Now it must be acknowledged, for the thing is manifest, that there are those whose feelings harmonize with his, on these several points.

The Lord also is making efforts, and not unsuccessful, to advance the prosperity or promote the interests of the kingdom of light and righteousness in this dark and wicked world. He is labouring earnestly and assiduously to thwart the designs, weaken the strength, and diminish the subjects of the kingdom of the Prince of darkness; to wrest captives from the snare of the fowler; to tear down the strongholds which the adversary has erected in the different parts of his empire; to re-

move more and more from the earth the evils which afflict poor, fallen humanity; to originate, augment, cause to abound, " whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;" and to prepare men to enter upon and enjoy the everlasting glories and felicities of the world celestial. And efforts of this character, there are those both on earth and in heaven who agree with the Lord in putting forth. Saints and angels harmonize with him in these exertions, and with joy and rapture hail every advance in so magnificent an enterprize, so blessed a cause.

2. On the other hand, reader, we have evidence too abundant and palpable to allow us to deny, that there is such a thing as being *against* the Lord; as being hostile to him, his kingdom, his cause. You and I both know that there are those who contemptuously set at nought the religion of God; cast away as a figment that Book which teaches the doctrines and inculcates the duties of that religion. The whole class of deists do so. Amongst these, some indeed are more bitter against what they call the imposture than are others. But the Lord Jesus Christ finds no favour among any of them. Voltaire was in the habit of calling him, " The Wretch," and nothing else did he apparently desire so much as to " crush" him and his cause.

And as to Paine, I would be far from willing to repeat the expressions of low scurrility which he used concerning the son of the virgin. Several writers, both in England and France, spent a considerable portion of their life in attempting to refute the christian scheme: some in more, and others in less, offensive and violent terms.

There are those also, who, although they have not settled it in their minds that Jesus is an impostor, or the Bible a product of priestcraft, are nevertheless, in a greater or less measure, scoffers at sacred things. And there are large numbers who show in ways which need not be specified, that they harmonize not in feelings with the Lord—love not what he loves; hate not what he hates; and who, instead of making exertions to promote the cause of righteousness in the earth, are, in one form and degree or another, ready to oppose it. The kingdom of darkness is obviously a favourite with them; not the kingdom of light. This is shown by their fruits. Such are ever raising objections to any good cause which is presented to the notice; are ready to ascribe its origin to unworthy motives; and can never be satisfied with any proper mode or means adopted for its advancement. They evidently wish holiness not to prevail on the earth; would much dread having it introduced into their neighbourhood; prefer the

prevalence of sin in both ; and, after some manner, give expression to their preference.

Thus have we set before you, reader, the two great conflicting causes and interests which seem to divide between them the rational creatures of God, human and angelic—and the two different, opposite classes which espouse them. I say, *seem* to divide between them the rational creatures of God—for I choose to state the matter at present in this form, lest I should appear to assume as true what I have not yet advanced arguments to prove.

I stated at the outset, that the Saviour's language which I had quoted, manifestly implied that there are those who would like to regard themselves, and to be regarded by others, as occupying a position of neutrality in relation to these two antagonistic causes.

Before I proceed to the proof that no such position of neutrality is to be found—no third class to occupy such a position—suffer me to ask you, reader, whether you suppose that *you* occupy such a position ? or whether you would be willing to do it, if you could ? Why, all inanimate nature would cry, "Shame on you!" if you could so much as desire it—would lift her voice to reprove you. Go, listen to the language of the works of God. Those valleys smiling in verdant beauty, those fields teeming with fruitfulness, those forests untrodden by the foot of man, those mountains

which lift their towering heads to the skies—these occupy no neutral position. Those seas, those rivers, those rills do not. That bending corn, those waving meadows, those beauteous flowers do not. Those winds and flying clouds, that hail, snow, rain, those flashing lightnings, and bellowing thunders do not. That glorious luminary in the heavens which sends down upon us, and upon the world, his beams of warmth and radiance, that silvery moon, and those thousand twinkling lights which night reveals, do not. These speak of the power, wisdom, goodness, and sing the praises, of their glorious Creator. These are not against God, but for him. Nor are they mutely in his favour. They lift high, raise loud their voice, declaring the glory of Jehovah.

“There’s not the smallest orb which we behold,
But in its motion like an angel sings.”

“These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then;
Unspeakable, who sitt’st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

But this is not all. The elements of nature *fight* for God. Fire, hail, snow, vapour, waves, winds, lightnings, contend for the Lord against his enemies.

Reproof would also come to you from the animal creation. The living creatures which have this earth for their abode, occupy no position of neutrality, my friend. These all speak of Him who formed them; and by the power and skill manifest in their structure, by the life which animates them, and the various powers with which they are endowed, tell you that he who made them is worthy of exalted praise. These all answer the great end of their being, and are employed in their several ways in rendering praise to their Creator. You witness a song of praise ascending from the feathered songsters of the grove; a tribute of gratitude and praise from the joy which dances in the eye, and is visible in the boundings of the young, when nature appears clad in vernal loveliness; in the grazing kine, as they feast on the rich luxuriance of the meadow; and, as to one and all of them, in the strict obedience which they severally yield to those laws which have been given them by their Maker. These do not ask to be neutral, do not wish it.

And can you, a rational creature, endowed with such powers, intellectual and moral, as the Almighty has conferred on you, and after you have been afforded such means of acquiring a knowledge of God's excellences, and your obligations to him—oh, can you wish to be in a state of neutrality? can it be your desire to be not for him? Can

you satisfy yourself with a heart without love to him, a life without service, and lips without praise? If you can, shame on you! "Solon made a law in Athens, that those who, in a sedition, or contest of the citizens, refused to take either part, should be esteemed infamous."

But should you have ever so strong a desire to occupy a neutral position, or be ever so much prone to flatter yourself that if you are not for God, you are not against him, the thing is impossible. The clear, positive declaration of God in human nature, on this subject, should be enough to satisfy you and every other rational creature, that such a thing is not, cannot be.

Inasmuch, however, as this is a fond idea with some, and may, dear reader, be so with you—inasmuch as it is a notion which is liable to be clung to with a good deal of tenacity, and so prove an obstacle to keep the arrows of conviction from reaching the heart—I shall attempt to present three or four arguments additional to the one drawn from the Saviour's affirmation adverted to, to show the falsity of such a notion.

In the first place, then—I can find no position of neutrality spoken of or hinted at in the sacred scriptures. I have been in the practice of perusing and searching the scriptures for several years, but I have never yet found any thing there to support or justify the opinion that a rational, accountable

creature, can occupy any such ground. Mankind are moral agents. In that light are they contemplated in the sacred volume. Little is there said about those inferior and adventitious distinctions which are so much on the tongue, and are made so much account of in this world: such distinctions, I mean, as high or low, patrician or plebian, rich or poor, illustrious or obscure. These are sometimes slightly mentioned in passing, and for some ulterior end. The *moral* distinction I see frequently and prominently brought to view in the sacred word. I find mankind spoken of, and classed as saints and sinners, righteous and wicked, believers and unbelievers, penitent and impenitent, obedient and disobedient, loyal subjects and rebels, friends and enemies of the Lord. I do not, within the lids of the Bible, find a third class spoken of, and described as neutrals. I find not the least hint there, that among all the rational and accountable beings that God has made, there are any who do not belong to one or other of these two classes. No intimation do I find there, that there are any of mankind that are neither saints nor sinners, neither righteous nor wicked, neither obedient nor disobedient, neither the friends of the Lord nor his enemies. Such a third class is not known in our sacred book, and appears not to have been known by its Omniscient Author. Neither God the Father nor the Son seems to have found any, just on

the line between the two kingdoms of light and darkness. If he had, it seems strange that he did not make some mention of it; it certainly would have been worthy of mention.

In the next place—I find mentioned in the sacred scriptures, but two places of final destination for rational, accountable creatures. I find heaven and hell spoken of; paradise and perdition; a world of glory and a bottomless pit; a place of happiness and a place of misery. I find in no part of scripture, the faintest intimation of any medium state or place; of any world where rational creatures are neither happy nor miserable; where neither pain nor pleasure is felt. Yet such a third place, such a middle state, would seem to be called for, if any intelligent or accountable creatures were neither righteous nor unrighteous, neither the friends nor the foes of the Lord.

Again. We read, in holy writ, of a day of judgment; and, according to the scriptures, the two species, men and angels, will be there judged, that is, all the rational and accountable creatures of God: For we read of no others. And as to the race of mankind, it would appear as though the Judge would be at no loss how to arrange or station them, upon their rising to meet him at the judgment-seat; nor what sort of a sentence to pronounce. We are told, and by him too who is to be the judge of quick and dead at the last

day, that he will station one portion on his right hand—these are called the sheep—and another portion on the left—these are termed the goats. We read of no others, occupying a third station there; yet we read that all mankind must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. And when the sentence is pronounced upon those appearing there; there is a sentence of acquittal on the one hand, and a sentence of condemnation on the other. There is a “Come ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you”—and a “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” Yet, if there were any at the judgment-seat who were neither righteous nor wicked, neither *for* nor *against* the Lord, they would be neither welcomed to heaven as good and faithful servants, nor driven to despair as foes and rebels. Heaven is a state and place of glorious reward; hell a place and state of punishment. But if there are any of mankind who neither do good nor evil, are neither for the Lord nor against him, they can neither receive a blessed reward nor be punished.—If they could be: rewarded or punished for what? rewarded for doing no good? punished for doing no evil? How absurd! Or, if you please, rewarded for being neutral—a reward bestowed by the judge for not doing evil, though no good has been done, no service rendered, no love or respect for the person and will of the Lord shown.

Again. By such as imagine that they occupy neutral ground, there is no account made of breaches of the positive moral precepts of the Lord. If there were any persons occupying a position of neutrality, then a breach of the class of precepts just mentioned, or a leaving undone of what God has commanded to be done, would not be criminal, sinful. There could be no sins of omission. Yet how large a class of our sins are those falling under this head. The last words which Archbishop Usher was heard to express, were, "Lord, forgive my sins, especially my sins of omission." In our Lord's account of the day of judgment, found at the close of the 25th of Matthew's gospel, what class of sins is it, think you, that is assigned or alone mentioned there as a reason for sentencing the wicked to the place of torment? Turn to that account and see.

An additional argument, of some weight in my view, I will state in an interrogatory form. Constituted as a human creature is, can he have a neutral state of mind or heart in reference to any two known great and opposing objects or interests? You look upon two contending armies, or two contending individuals—will you not detect yourself having a preponderating feeling on one side or the other? You hear two men in argument on some important topic—will your mind or heart remain in a state of entire neutrality? will it lean toward

neither side? Or, let us have a case directly in point. Here are presented to our notice, two great causes or interests in the moral universe: The cause of sin and the cause of holiness, or of righteousness and unrighteousness—the cause of light, and the cause of darkness—Christ and his kingdom, and the adversary and his. Can we remain in a state of neutrality in reference to each? Can we keep from a bias or leaning one way or the other? Is it possible for our bosom to remain void of a feeling of preponderance? No—we would have to lose our nature; we would have to be differently constituted, before such a thing could be experienced or witnessed. Carry this as a truth with you: Rational creatures, without an exception, either love or hate the Almighty; are, where his name is known, either friends or foes to Christ.

It would indeed, dear reader, be a high misdemeanor not to love and serve such a Being as is our Lord Christ, and standing in such relations to us as does he. A want of love and obedience is a great want truly in a rational and moral being, and situated too as fallen man is. But in the case of mankind, where there is a want of this sort, the want does not exist alone. There is an opposite bias, an opposite feeling; and an opposite course. The carnal mind is not represented, in sacred scripture, as in any case, or at any time, neutral in reference to God and his spiritual king-

dom. No—there is no neutrality under the moral government of God ; no neutrality in relation to the Messiah and his kingdom. You and I, reader, as well as others of the human family, are feeling and acting either as friends or as foes of Immanuel, and will be dealt with hereafter as friends or foes.

Even if any persons could be found who did not feel or act either for or against our Lord, or for or against any matter pertaining to the great cause of morals or of holiness in our world—would the *influence* flowing out of that neutrality as to feeling and action, be itself neutral or nothing? No. He who has it in his power to favour or aid any good cause, and does not, injures it. If he did not feel or act against it, the fact of his not feeling or acting, exerts an influence against it. A good cause of any sort has a right to support, a just claim to encouragement ; and, by any who have it in their power to yield it, aid cannot innocently be withheld. Even the influence of withholding it is bad ; and a man is responsible for his influence. If you have any doubt as to the existence of such right, or just claim, as we spoke of in the sentence before the last, just read the two following passages of scripture :—“ Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.—As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.”

Finally.—That to a rational creature there is no such position as that of neutrality, I think may be shown in the two following sentences, one from myself, and the other from a better source: to-wit—During our wakeful moments, our outward man is *mostly*, and our inner man *always acting*. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever ye do*, do all to the glory of God.”

Are you not convinced, my reader, that there is, can be, no such ground or position as that of neutrality? What then is your position? In a state of impenitence, unconversion, you belong to the class of the wicked. You are against the Lord; against the kingdom of light and righteousness; against Christ and his cause. You are on the side of God's enemies, and doing the work of an enemy of God. Instead of favouring Christ's great enterprise of setting up a spiritual kingdom in this world, you are opposed to it, and operate against it. You are unwilling to become a subject of that kingdom; to pray and labour for its advancement; are unwilling to give yourself to God and serve him. You are a servant of his adversary. Your feelings, your influence, your efforts, are on the side of the prince of darkness and his cause. Think of this your position. Meditate on what you are, where you are, what you are about. It was shown in one part of this chapter, that if you were or wished to be neutral, it would be

shameful—that all inanimate nature and the whole animal creation would cry out against or reprove you. What then must these say, and what must be thought, felt, and said by all holy creatures, when the fact is so much worse? when you are against such a Being as God is? against him who made you, who preserves you, blesses you? against such an one as is Christ? against such a kingdom and cause as his? O my friend, you are no negative character, no neutral creature. You are in the battle-field; your armour girded on; your heart, hands, weapons busy in the conflict; warring against the Lord and his anointed! Audacious, wicked creature, what will you gain by it? Are you so deranged as to imagine that you and your party will be victors? Think of the power that Omnipotence can wield; of the variety and vastness of the forces which the infinite God can employ. Can you, and the whole army to which you belong, possibly escape defeat, destruction? Now, be entreated to stop; to throw off your vile armour; to come over on the Lord's side. I wish to see you on a side so good. It is my desire to behold you among the conquerors, and wearing the conqueror's crown.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DECIDING SEASON.

ACCUSTOMED, beloved reader, to peruse the Volume indited by the Infinite Mind, and presented by the best of Fathers, because he knew I needed it, my eyes were to-day running over a chapter in one of the minor prophets, when this lively passage particularly attracted my attention: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." "Valley of decision!" said I to myself; "what valley may that be?"* May not the prophet mean this terrestrial vale? For earth is a valley, having higher worlds on each side of it; and perhaps the only valley in the universe, except that deeper one where lost spirits dwell. It was once not so. The period was, and the angels remember it, when it

* It is possible that the final decisive conflict of true religion with, and victory over, the powers of darkness, and every thing that sets itself in opposition to it, may be that which is specially alluded to or foretold in these words. But even supposing such to be the case, there can be no impropriety in making them suggestive of the train of thought and remark pursued in this chapter.

stood a lofty eminence in the vast kingdom of God. Its location was contiguous to Heaven. But it was, long since, sunk by sin into the low valley we see it. Yet low as it is sunk, it attracts the notice of the loftiest created intelligences, and of the great Creator besides, because of a remarkable peculiarity belonging to it. It is, as the prophet denominates it, "the valley of decision;" and the only spot perhaps in the boundless universe that is entitled to such a denomination.

Yes, reader; this world, or the state of being this side the grave, is, to the moral and accountable creatures of the human kind, "the valley of decision," is the great deciding period or portion of human existence. Immediately successive to the fall, it is true, it did not so appear. It then seemed as though man's destiny was finally determined; as if the decisive step had been taken that sealed his doom. And, certainly, man did not deserve to have any other opportunity afforded him. But through the astonishing benevolence and pity of Jehovah, the apostates were thrown under a dispensation of mercy. Under the present divine arrangement, this world is what the prophet calls it, "the valley of decision." So soon in life as moral agency commences, mankind begin, individually, to decide for themselves, as to the various parts and parcels of their general conduct; as to the thoughts of their minds, the feelings of their

hearts, the several actions, one after another, of their lives; as to the character they will sustain, and the condition they will be in, not only during this short and uncertain life, but for ever.

You are not, reader, no one wearing your nature is, a mere piece of machinery. Neither you nor your brethren are under the power or operation of blind, rigid, unbending fate. The thoughts, emotions, words, and acts of the human creature are not the product of any irresistible, fatal necessity. It could not be said of these, severally, that they are of a moral nature, were this the fact. Mankind could not, with any shadow of reason or propriety, be held responsible for these, or be regarded as accountable beings, were this the fact. They severally possess a moral sense and a will. They are both capable of acting, and do act voluntarily; in view and under the influence of motives. Their mental exercises and outward acts are not like the motions or pulsations of the heart. These last, as you know, do not originate from, nor are under the control of the will. Our wise and benevolent Creator has placed what is so related and essential to life's preservation under a law of a different sort, a law which the will has nothing special to do with. But as to their moral exercises and acts, mankind, in a certain sense and degree, have the power of deciding, and do determine for them-

selves, beforehand, of what sort or character they shall be.

The moral agent performs every one of his actions from motive—under the exercise of the power of choice. A separate volition precedes and gives birth to every thing you do. The traveller to eternity takes not a single step in his journey, without first determining that he will take that step; nor without deciding what sort of a step it shall be.

The moral agent, whilst he is located this side the grave, is emphatically in the valley of decision. Every day and hour of his life, when awake, is he employed in deciding what his feelings, actions, habits, and state shall be. Look at him any hour or moment of his life, when sleep holds not its dominion over him, and you may find him employed in acts of decision. Continually may you behold him occupied in throwing into the one scale or the other, weights possessing in themselves a particular character, and which go toward deciding, moreover, *what* he is to be, and *where* he is to be, through an existence which is never to terminate. The righteous man takes not a step in the path of righteousness, nor the sinner in the way of rebellion or evil, without by a particular act of the mind deciding to take that step; and that step taken, goes toward deciding *what* and *where* he shall be, or, if you please, what shall be his *character* and *condition*, everlastingly.

In casting your thoughts back, dear reader, on your past life, can you not discover that in every instance, before you did any thing, you decided what you would do, and, consequently, what sort of a creature, in a moral respect, you would at that time be?

Have you been altogether or mostly a prayerless creature? Say, reader, have you neglected or restrained prayer before God? Has this been your habit? You were not ignorant of what was your duty in this particular, for you have been reared in a land of bibles, of sabbaths, and of sanctuaries. You have known that it was your duty to call on the Lord, stately, affectionately, believably. You have known that the great God has commanded you to offer supplications unto him, and to pray without ceasing. If you have neglected what you thus knew to be your duty—if you have been a prayerless creature—then have you decided, daily and hourly decided, that you would be so; that you would not call on God—would not present praises and petitions unto him. The call from God to you has been, "Pray." By your neglect you have decided that you would not comply with his call. Every day and hour, during a long season, have you, either directly or indirectly, come to a decision to act the part of a transgressor of this command; resolved in substance, each day,

hour, that you would not, in this matter, obey the Lord.

Reader, the Divine Being has enjoined it on you as a duty, to love him supremely ; to give unto him your heart. You have known this to be a duty. Have you, in your past life, done this ? If you have failed to do it, you have been guilty not of one single act of sin here, simply. There has been by you an awful repetition of acts of disobedience to this command. Consider yourself as having, every day and hour for years together, been engaged in acts of decision ; as having decided, moment after moment, all that period, that you would not give your heart to the Lord ; that you would not love him supremely. And consider, likewise, all of these separate acts as telling on your eternal state ; as going to modify, or in some manner and measure to affect and decide on your character and condition beyond this dawn of existence. For, every single moral exercise and act stretches, as to its consequences, into the vast, limitless futurity ; goes with you, somehow, into the unseen world, and runs with you along the whole line of an interminable duration.

Reader, Jehovah has, during your past life, been calling on you, every day and hour, to repent of your sins, and turn from your estrangement and your wanderings unto him. You have not been ignorant of the fact. You have been acquainted

with this call, or rather with the countless repeated calls of this kind. Have you been occupied in complying with this call? Or are you, up to this hour, an impenitent sinner? If so, then have you, every day and hour since the period that your moral agency commenced, been deciding not to obey that command of Heaven; not to repent and turn to the Lord. Hour after hour, during all that season, you decided that you would live in sin; would walk at least that hour in a way displeasing to God.

You have been called on, reader, by your Maker, during all of your past life since you became a moral agent, to cast yourself on the atonement of Jesus, and bathe your polluted soul in the fountain which he has opened; have been commanded to part with all for the Pearl of great price; to throw away every idol; to give up your love of sin, repudiate the world, and come and follow Christ. Has this been done by you? You were acquainted with the fact that this was your duty. Have you obeyed? Or have you continued to this hour away from the best Friend that poor fallen creatures ever had. Have you refused to come and take Jesus of Nazareth for your Saviour and portion? If so, remember that your refusal, during so long a season, has not been one act simply. It has been a continued repetition of acts of refusal. You have decided, over and over again

each day and hour up to this, that you would not act toward Christ as you knew it to be your duty to do.

If you, dear reader, are yet unreconciled to God, you have determined, in repeated instances, that you would not be reconciled to him. Whenever you have sinned, you have, in your mind, decided to break some commandment of the Heavenly King. How much and often have you, in your past life, been the subject of gospel invitation, proffer, counsel, and entreaty, and as often decided that you would not accept of the one, nor be influenced by the other.

Reader, you have, on the whole, in your past life, been quite favourably situated, for deciding in a manner pleasing to God, and advantageous to yourself. An ancient philosopher used to bless the gods for three privileges—"That he was made, not a brute, but a rational creature; that he was born, not in barbarous climes, but in Greece; and that he lived, not in the more uncultivated ages, but in the time and under the tuition of Socrates." How much greater reason have you and I to bless God that we were born in gospel times; had our lot cast in such a land; and been afforded such light and privileges. You know that mankind are not all situated in a manner equally favourable for arriving at a correct decision in reference to conduct and the lofty interests of salvation. Look at those

millions of human creatures, for example, who inhabit the dark, dreary deserts of Paganism. How unhappily circumstanced are they, comparatively, for deciding right. They have the light of nature, it is true. The great volume of creation is spread open before them. If they would read that book as they should, and follow what it teaches, they would have no other object of worship than the true God. It is under the influence of a corrupt, wicked heart, that they will not learn from that book, who and what the true God is; and that they offer worship to idols. How irrationally they act. "At Buhapurum, in the northern Cicars, a child about eight years old, who had been educated in Christianity, was ridiculed on that account by some heathens older than himself. In reply, he repeated what he had been taught respecting God. 'Show us your God!' said the heathens. 'I cannot do that,' answered the child; 'but I can show you yours.' Taking up a stone, and daubing with some resemblance of a human face, he placed it very gravely upon the ground, and pushing it towards them with his foot; 'There,' said he, 'is such a god as you worship.'" The idolatrous heathen ought to know better. They live not up to the light they have. But there is a sort of light which you have, that the greater part of the pagans are wholly destitute of: The light of the Gospel. Should any one ask me the question,

“Will not the better sort of heathens go to Heaven?” I might be tempted to reply to him in the language of a certain clergyman who was asked the same question by a fellow-passenger in a stage coach. “Sir,” answered the clergyman, “I am not appointed *judge of the world*, and consequently will not take it upon me peremptorily to decide that point; but if you ever get to heaven, you shall either find them there, or a good reason why they are not.” I am willing to say, in general terms, that I cannot believe the heathen to be happily situated for deciding aright in reference to salvation. The apostolic commission assumes that they are not. The Macedonian cry assumes it. And I am determined not to be hasty in entertaining a sentiment which would virtually accuse Christ of unnecessarily appointing a ministry, or enjoining on them a superfluous work; and a sentiment too which would virtually excuse the church of Christ from putting forth effort to send the gospel, and as quickly as possible, to every portion of the heathen world. If the heathen do not need the gospel, if they are well enough off, or their prospects as to salvation fair, without it, why send it to them? I may drop the additional remark that the heathen do not appear generally to be preparing for so pure a place as Heaven; nor, by worshipping idols, to be getting ready to offer worship forever to the one only true God. How much better

situated have you, all your life, been, than are the heathen, to decide correctly in reference to the various branches of human duty, and the nature and means of salvation.

And even within the bounds of Christendom how many localities are there, where the people are much less advantageously circumstanced than yourself, to decide right as to each of these matters. Suppose you had been born and reared in Italy, or Spain, or Portugal, or France, or South America, how comparatively unhappy would have been your condition as regards the point now claiming our notice. O my friend, under such advantages as you, all your life, have been favoured with, may you not be said to be in the highest degree inexcusable if you do not decide to act after such a manner as to secure the approving smiles of Heaven, and as to issue in your own welfare, temporal and eternal?

From what you read in the earlier part of this chapter, you could not fail, unconverted reader, to discover that you have not been inactive; that you have been very busy; have been active in the solemn business, substantially, of deciding where you will have your home in eternity. This matter has not been fully and finally decided as yet by you, probably; and the reason of this is, because you are not yet out of "the valley of decision." But permit me affectionately to say, that if you con-

tinue, up to the close of life, to do as you in time past have done ; if you continue to yield to temptation, and to be governed by adverse influences from within and without, as you have been ; if you persist in deciding, from day to day, for a while longer, not to pray ; not to repent ; not to put away your idols, nor forsake your sins ; and not to be a believer in and a follower of Christ—then, your decision as to your eternal state will be, that you will lie down in sorrow ; that you will “ dwell in everlasting burnings.”

But if, on the contrary, in your future of this life, under the influences of conscience, of providential calls, of divine truth, of pulpit and private appeal, and of the Holy Spirit, you shall come to a decision of a different character—if, under such influences, you shall decide on repenting, returning by the way of the cross to the God of Jacob, and on living a life of faith, and self-denial, and holy obedience, then will you effectually decide that heaven shall be your home ; that your eyes shall gaze on your enthroned Redeemer ; and that all holy creatures, human and seraphic, shall constitute the society with which you shall mingle forever and ever.

In eternity, dear reader, all is fixed, unalterable. There is no deciding season allotted to man there. There is no change of character or condition beyond the cold river of death ; no passing from sin

to holiness ; no possibility of getting from hell to heaven. On this, not on the other side of the tomb, lies what the prophet calls "the valley of decision."

Besides yourself, there are very large numbers in this valley. The prophet, in the passage to which we have adverted, exclaims, "Multitudes, multitudes!" The word is repeated to express an amazing number. Of those of the human family who have already gone to eternity, and whose case, therefore, for everlasting ages is decided, finally, irreversibly decided, the number is beyond our power of reckoning. But there are great multitudes still this side of death's cold flood, and so in "the valley of decision." The human beings at this time on the globe, amount to some 850,000,000. If we subtract from this number, all in a state of infancy ; all the sad subjects of idiocy ; and all who have committed the unpardonable sin, or who have grieved away finally the Spirit of God—there still remain enough on the earth, who are occupied in the solemn, tremendous work of deciding in reference to interests of inconceivable magnitude—in deciding their eternal destiny as to weal or woe ; to constrain us to cry with the prophet, "Multitudes, multitudes!" Oh, what millions upon millions are now engaged in deciding, not whether they will win worlds or not—something of greater moment than that—in deciding whether

they will go to paradise or to perdition; whether they will soar and sing with angels, or sink and sigh with devils, for evermore; whether they will bathe, world without end, in the river of God's pleasures, or writhe in the flames which almighty wrath has kindled for the just punishment of all the finally impenitent and ungodly. And oh, how it makes one's heart bleed to think how large a proportion are deciding *wrong, wrong*—deciding that they will persist in their evil courses, and so, substantially deciding that they will go to ruin. But we cannot dwell on this mournful point.

In the concluding clause of the passage to which allusion has been made, the prophet says, "The day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." "*The day of the Lord,*" here, is the day of judgment; either of the general, or of a particular judgment. So soon as a human creature dies, enters eternity, he undergoes a particular judgment, and, as a result of it, is sent immediately either to heaven or to hell. The affirmation that "the day of the Lord is *near* in the valley of decision," imports that human beings do not stay long in this valley. It seems clearly to denote that they have but a brief season allotted them in which to decide whether they will be holy and happy, or unholy and miserable creatures forever;—that the period in which they will severally be judged is near, from any, every part of this valley. The

particular judgment of individuals comes immediately after death. "After death the judgment." Now death is near, so near that his footsteps may almost be heard by every one from any, even the most remote part of the valley of decision. Alas! how near is the day of the Lord to the various individuals that are clad in the livery of mortal flesh. That valley of decision which the now living descendants of Adam occupy, will, in a few days at most, be occupied by another generation. That valley how narrow in every part, and is more and more so the farther one moves along in it. Ah, what numbers of its fleeting occupants would like to have it wider, even as wide as it was before the flood. How much was its width diminished, so to speak, by that catastrophe; and how much more has it since been narrowed by the waters of time. How many, considering how infinitely momentous is the matter to be decided on, would be greatly gratified, if the Ruler over boundless space and duration would take a portion of what now belongs to eternity and add to it, to increase its breadth. This, however, there is no prospect of his being persuaded to do. He had his reasons for bringing it down to the width it now is. And it is very much to be doubted too, whether mankind would do any better on the whole, in the work of decision, if it were made wider. But oh, it is an exceedingly "narrow neck of land," and lying fearfully

“betwixt two boundless seas.” I tremble when I think of it. Alas, what danger of being pushed, or of sliding off of it, any hour, moment, into the deeper vale of eternity! Reader, can you tell what will be on the morrow? what a day may bring forth? Is not your case then, for the vast, unending perpetuity of being before you, nearly decided? May not your soul, this night, be required of you? The brief interval may be the whole of what remains to you before your bark is tossing on the waves of the boundless ocean. Your pencil may, the very next moment, give the finishing touch to your eternity. Take care—do it well. When the prince of poets was asked by a friend, why he studied so much accuracy in the plan of his poems, the propriety of his characters, and the purity of his diction, he replied, “In æternum pingo”—*I paint for eternity*. Oh, does it not behoove a creature to do well, what he does for eternity? Alas, impenitent reader, what a frightful, horrid picture, it is that you have employed your time hitherto in drawing. If, in your everlasting state, you shall have no more comely one to look upon, you will be poorly off indeed. Ah, paint a better picture, dear friend, and be about it; you have no time to lose. The little season yet to come is all of life that you have, to prepare for a blissful immortality. The worse than wasted past, if you had to add to it, you might well be glad

But it is irrevocable. "Time is eternity; pregnant with all eternity can give;" but precious, invaluable as it is, you have but little of it left. Act henceforth as if you thought every moment of it above all price. It has been reported of an illustrious female sovereign that when dying, her agonizing language was, "Millions of worlds, millions of worlds, for a day!"

CHAPTER V.

THE HEART'S WICKEDNESS.

“To know our disease is half the cure.” If you, reader, are diseased within, it is very important for you to know it. That you have a bad inward disorder, One Being in the universe appears to know; and to this Teacher allow me to send you for instruction. Opening the Book from Heaven, turn, for example, first, to Jeremiah xvii. 9 —“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” What heart? whose heart? you may inquire. We reply, The human heart; the heart of fallen man—of course, *your* heart. Wherever amongst our species, you find an unchanged, unregenerate heart, you come across just such an one as is here described. If a truth, dear reader, what a truth is this! How humiliating! How great need of a physician; of an all-powerful remedy. If a truth, how great the necessity of crying, Lord, heal; Lord, save!

That the heart is not, and, ever since the occurrence of that great moral catastrophe, the fall, has not been in just so good a state as it might and

should be is, I presume, not a very uncommon opinion among men. Most persons, probably, would be willing to admit that it might as well be somewhat different from what it naturally is. But they have an impression so faint respecting its disordered state; they see and feel so little of the evil, the wickedness, that is lodged there, that they take no pains to have it eradicated: are very indifferent about having this important part of them put in a healthy or proper state. Beloved reader, do not think me cruel or wanting in tenderness because I say it:—I would like to have you a distressed, agitated creature. If I could have my wish, you should so see yourself, that you could not rest, day nor night, till a wondrous change took place upon you. I would have you mourn, and weep, and be in deep trouble, because of the root of bitterness, the filthy fountain, within you. I would have you smite upon your breast, and cry, Alas! alas! what a heart! what a desperately wicked heart I have!

The mass of evidence is great, going to show that the human heart is just what God, in the verse you a moment ago read, asserts concerning it. I can, within the compass of a chapter, lay before your mind but a small part of the proof of the great, exceeding wickedness of the human heart. It would be necessary to give a history of the species from the fall of man downward, if we

would say all that might be said in proof of this. To the omniscient One, your heart, and the hearts of all men, lie naked and open. There is no darkness nor disguise that can in the least conceal the inner man from his scrutiny. God's testimony you cannot but see to be important in this matter, and in the Bible you have it. It is clear and direct. Cast your eye again upon the passage you read: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Here you observe to be language too plain of import to be misunderstood or evaded. It is the direct assertion of Him who searches the heart, and who cannot lie. Turn next to Eccl. ix. 3—"Yea also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." Mark the expression—"Full of evil." Turn to Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Look at Job xvi. 15, "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water." It was said of Jesus Christ that he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of them: for he knew what was in man. Now, what did Jesus Christ say concerning the human heart?—"For within, out of the heart," said he, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lascivious-

ness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Such is Christ's testimony; and sound philosophy agrees with it. Sin has its seat in the heart. There is no sin in word or deed which is not first in the heart. "An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil." *The evil treasure!* Here is the spring and source of all moral evil in our world. Here the spot whence comes the gall; the root of bitterness which produces the wormwood. A clergyman, who had preached a sermon on innate depravity, was waited on by some persons, who stated their objections to what he had advanced. After hearing them he said, "I hope you do not deny *actual sin* too?" "No," they replied. The good man expressed his satisfaction at their acknowledgement. "But," said he, "did you ever see a tree growing without a root?"

As in the heavens there are stars whose light has never yet reached mortal eyes, and in the earth's depths much embosomed that never became subject to human gaze, so are there heights and depths of wickedness in man's heart which never come to the light of day; which no eye sees save one;—a great deal of sin embosomed in the heart which never becomes embodied in overt action. Still, there is a tremendous flood that is visible; a moral deluge that seems sometimes to threaten every

thing good and fair—to upset the everlasting hills, and tear down the universe.

Jehovah, forming our opinions of Him from his manifestations, what is he? What, as he shines in the sun; glows in the bestudded and lustrous firmament; and breathes in the luxuriance and beauty of this lower sphere? What, as he stretches forth his full hand to supply the wants of every living thing? What, as he marches forth to tread down oppression and wrong, and vindicate the just? And, above all, what, as he shines in the face of Jesus Christ? Oh, what excellence and loveliness beam in his character! What wisdom, benevolence, and pity in his countenance! Saint and seraph on high admire him; love him with an affection supreme; and praise him day and night in his temple. But, does the unregenerate sinner's soul admire, or his heart love God? Reader, need I answer the question for you? Judging from what you perceive and feel, are you not constrained to say, *no*? Said Christ, on a certain occasion, to the Jews, "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you." But alas! this is not true of that people alone. *The race*, except so far as grace has operated, have not the love of God in them. Now, how wicked must the heart of man be, how wicked your heart, when it loves not such a Being as is Jehovah! For what the infinitely glorious God is in Himself,

every object in the universe, both animate and inanimate, is exhorted and ordered to extol his great name. But is the order heeded and obeyed by all? By all, it may be answered, except—except sinners. These do not praise Him; they have no heart to it.

No; nor do they care even to know Him. The major part of mankind are idolaters. How became they so? The sacred scriptures tell us how. It was because they “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” The very existence of idolatry testifies that the human heart must be very wicked. Reason, occupied in scanning the Creator’s works, would have arrived at a conclusion very different from what have the heathen. Exercised aright, it would have preserved to entire humanity the knowledge of the true God. But depravity, it appears, was too strong for reason. The heart ran away with the head. Hence idols were substituted in the room of the everliving and everblessed God; the religion of Paganism for the true religion. But for the wickedness of the human heart, idolatry would have never stained and defaced the earth. The true God would have been every where known but for it.

We have said that the natural human heart has not the *love of God* in it. But this is not all we can in truth say. It has the exact opposite; has *hatred, aversion*. “The carnal mind is *enmity*

against God." In many ways does the natural heart exhibit its dislike to the Deity. When occasions present themselves, how does it rise and swell against his holiness, justice, power, authority, will. Opposed to these? what a heart!

There is prayer: How does unregenerate humanity stand affected toward it? Does she in her totality, and with utmost ardour of desire, seek after communion with, and bow the knee to the Father of spirits? Does she run with willing feet, or on swift pinions fly, to the private and the public altar, there to present an offering to the Lord of Hosts? From the Bible, and from the upper skies, great inducements are held out to her, to act the part of a petitioner. But her heart feels repugnance, and her tongue is mute. "Ask and receive," says Heaven. But she refuses; says, no, I will not. Needy as she is, and tremblingly awful as is her exposure, she cannot be moved to spread forth her hands in supplication. What tale, reader, does this tell about the heart? Ah, your present feelings and past life bear a certain sort of testimony on this subject.

Gratitude: alas, would this word have been seen in the dictionary of mortals, had not the principle of which the word is expressive been originated by grace? Poor, fallen humanity has a very cold, ungrateful heart. As much as she is accustomed to receive from the Divine Donor, she

is not accustomed to thank Him for his gifts. She sits down at his full-spread board, and rises from it, without so much as thinking of Him by whom it was furnished. Whilst the face of the beast turneth downwards, to her was given a face to turn upward, that she might observe the source whence her blessings come, and lift up her heart and voice in thankfulness to the exalted Dispenser. But her face she, nevertheless, chooses to turn in the same direction with that of the mere animal. The night cometh, and also the morning, but the returns of neither season witnesses from her the offering of thanksgiving. Ah, human heart, how steeped in ingratitude! how worse than bestial! If thy heart, reader, was not very wicked, couldst thou live a life so unthankful?

How does unsanctified humanity act toward the Bible? What an invaluable boon. Its truths how unspeakably precious and important. God has taken a great deal of pains, so to speak, to communicate to mankind its contents. Yet, how much is that book depreciated and neglected. It is treated very much as if it were thought unworthy of belief or of notice. If its truths were relished, loved, would the book of God be so much slighted, think you? If the heart were not desperately wicked, would not its truths be more highly prized than thousands of gold and silver—indeed, than all material good?

If mankind are the creatures of God, then has he a right to be their Lawgiver. Laws have come to them from him. Their excellence shows their origin. Like himself they are holy, just, and good. In them he commands nothing except what ought to be done; forbids nothing except what ought to be avoided. Man's interest unites with his duty in calling on him to obey them! Are they generally obeyed by the sons and daughters of Adam? The Most High speaks. Do mankind, one and all, listen? He issues his commands. Do his creatures of earth stand ready to execute them? Does it not seem, on the contrary, as though the human family had purposely set themselves at doing just the opposite of what the Divine Lawgiver and Sovereign enjoins? Now would mankind thus act unless their inward part were very wickedness? The manner in which the third and fourth precepts of the decalogue are treated, tells a loud tale against the human heart. With so little temptation to profanity as there is—so unprofitable, mean, and contemptible a vice is it, that really it seems as though the heart must be full to overflowing of wickedness, or such a stream would never be seen running from it. And as to the sabbath, that precious institution, “day of all the week the best,” which should be specially employed in laying up better than earthly treasures, in preparing for a better than an earthly home—

how are its sacred hours desecrated! How is the Lord God insulted instead of honoured on that holy day. With what multitudes is it a day of diversion instead of devotion.

How are the human family disposed to treat God's greatest gift to men—his "Unspeakable Gift?" Do they hail the approach of the Son of God with joy? Are they charmed with the brilliancy and beauty of this "bright and morning star?" A pious young Indian girl said, "I have often heard christians undertake to tell of the excellency that is in Christ; but their tongues are *too short* to express the beauty and love which are contained in this lovely Jesus." Some regard him, and justly, as "the chief among ten thousand, yea, altogether lovely"—but only comparatively a few, and they such as have undergone a wonderful transformation, been "created anew." Can it be said of the multitude that he and his salvation are welcomed to their hearts? Are they willing to part with every thing for a share in his favour, or an interest in his propitiatory sacrifice? He "came unto his own"—what reception or treatment did he meet with from them? It is said of the Rev. Dr. Robertson, the celebrated Scotch historian, that preaching once in the forenoon, he affirmed in the words of the ancient heathen—"That if perfect virtue were to descend to the earth, clothed in a human form, all the world would fall prostrate

and worship her." In the afternoon, Dr. Erskine, preaching in the same pulpit, remarked, on the contrary—"That perfect virtue, in the human nature of the Saviour of mankind had indeed appeared on the earth; but, instead of being universally worshipped, the general cry of his countrymen was, Crucify him, crucify him." By other people, and other, later generations, has there, I ask, been a general and wide outstretching of the arms to receive him? Is he thus received by the present generation? Need I answer, no! Though he makes them the proffer of treasures exhaustless, and a crown unfading, if they will turn from their iniquities and follow him; yet even that invaluable offer induces not the multitude, induces but here and there one, to renounce their sins, cast themselves upon the virtues of his sacrifice, and live in a way pleasing to him. He assures them that they are in the road to an awful and eternal hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, and that besides himself there is no Saviour; and though he says, Believe and be saved—yet are the multitude too much in love with sin, and too much bent on the practice of it, to heed and obey. They will take sin and death in preference to holiness and life. If this, reader, does not go to show that the heart is exceedingly wicked, what can?

Again. Why are the convictions, produced by

the Spirit of God, so often stifled or worn away? Why, when the sinner is, in some measure, brought to see his sin and his danger, and tremble through fear of coming wrath, does it so often occur, that there is a fighting with the Spirit, and a return to carelessness, but because the heart is so very wicked that it is unwilling to yield itself up to Christ's claims and sway, or part with its loved idols and sins? There would be no grieving of the Spirit of God, no stifling of conviction, no great, mighty efforts to lull the awakened conscience by deadly opiates, if it were not for the heart's desperate wickedness. If it were only a little wicked, it would be far less reluctant to part with sin. It would maintain, if any, a much less strenuous conflict with an awakened conscience, and with the Spirit of God.

Again. Look at the *pleasures* and *diversions* of unregenerate humanity. Is not a considerable proportion of these such as cannot be loved and indulged in, without an amazing amount of depravity? I need not go back to antiquity and tell of "the brutal entertainments," so greedily sought after, so highly enjoyed, and so firmly established under the sanctions of law, in Greece and Rome, and other heathen countries. I need not tell of the public games in which naked men contended for superiority in feats of agility and strength; of the gladiatorial shows, in which men,

trained for the purpose, butchered each other for the amusement of their fellow-men; and of the exposure of human beings to the fury of wild beasts, while thousands enjoyed the sport of seeing them torn asunder, as a mere entertainment; ay, and of some other things of which it is "a shame even to speak." We would just ask you, what are some of the prominent, favourite pleasures of modern times? What is their character? The sports of the turf, the gaming-table, the theatre, the places of resort consecrated to lechery and ebriety—need I describe them? There are pleasures and diversions of a less low and foul kind than these—pleasures held in reputation by the multitude—but which, on the part of those who indulge in them, show a heart alienated from the living God, and deeply in love with sin. Must not that heart be awfully wicked that can take no pleasure in serving God?—that draws its chief or only pleasure from iniquitous or worldly sources?

The *gains* of men: what is the character of much of them? Who that has much to do with his fellows, is not liable frequently to be imposed upon or wronged? On many tongues what is a *good* bargain, but a dishonest or fraudulent one? How much unbecoming and blameable effort, amongst large numbers, to empty the contents of others pockets into their own? Who feels that his pro-

perty is safe, unless it be under bar or lock? How difficult oft times is it to determine whom one may safely trust. Even human life, how unsafe is it. For how small a temptation, frequently, does the murderous weapon find its way to a brother's heart! How numerous and shocking crimes are perpetrated! Our laws, our courts of justice, our jails and prisons, tell a hard tale about the human heart.

But, reader, as much as the human heart shows of wickedness by the streams it sends forth, yet how incomparably more wicked is it in the eye of God, than it ever appears to ourselves to be. How much adultery, murder, and theft, for instance, are committed by the *heart*, that are never committed in action. How many more deeds of cruelty, villainy, and lewdness, do human beings *wish*, than they dare, to perpetrate. What an astonishingly great criminal is every man, woman, and child in *heart*, even where the life appears decent and respectable. Who would be willing to have all his thoughts of one day laid open to the gaze of the world? Who would not fear that his reputation for humanity, purity, honesty, might be stained or tumbled into the ditch, by such a disclosure? Many things operate to prevent men from acting out but a very small part of the wickedness that is in their hearts. Human laws and penalties do much toward restraining men. No one can tell

how much more rampant vice and crime would be, were it not for these. The operations of conscience, the influence of instruction, a regard to reputation, impose such restraints that we little imagine what mankind would be without them. And there is, above all, God's restraining grace—how thankful should men be for it. How much, by means of it, are they withheld from doing, which, at one time and another, it is in their heart to do. Whenever the pious Bunyan saw a criminal borne on the way to Tyburn, he exclaimed, "There goes John Bunyan, but for the grace of God."

Only a little change in one's circumstances, bringing along with it some fresh temptation, not unfrequently reveals to a person some form of wickedness which was previously undiscovered, and that he till then did not in the least suspect to have a place in his heart. When Hazael, an officer at the court of Syria, was told by Elisha what evils and barbarities would be perpetrated by him, after he should come to the throne, he is reported to have exclaimed, "But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yet Hazael afterwards did those very things. This man knew not what was in his heart till, by a change of circumstances, it was evolved. The emperor Nero appeared very humane at the commencement of his reign. When he was desired

to sign his name to a list of malefactors that were to be executed, he exclaimed, "I wish to heaven I could not write." Yet this was the man who afterwards assassinated his mother; set fire to Rome, destroying thereby multitudes of men, women, and children, and then charged it on the christians; and otherwise showed himself a monster in cruelty and iniquity. The truth when spoken is, that all mankind are naturally monsters of depravity and wickedness *in their hearts*, how fair soever with many of them may appear the exterior. In its unrenewed state, and all restraint thrown off, the human heart may be indeed said to be capable of every kind or degree of impiety, iniquity, enmity, cruelty, which was ever committed, or can be conceived.

From what has been said, reader, you may learn—

1st. How little reason mankind have to boast of the goodness of their hearts. It is not uncommon to hear it said of this or that profligate or notoriously wicked man, that he has "a good heart"—meaning to have us understand by it, that, how bad soever his conduct is, his heart is not bad. Now his heart is far, far the worst part of him. As bad as the worst man in the world is in his conduct, he is inexpressibly worse in his heart than his conduct shows him to be. There are deep recesses of

wickedness within, that have never yet been so thrown open as to meet the eye of mortals.

2dly. If your heart is desperately wicked, unconverted reader, and that it is you cannot well deny, after what you have read in this chapter—then are you desperately wicked, yourself, since a man is really what he is in his heart. I wish you to settle it in your mind, impenitent friend, that you are a desperately wicked creature. Carry this impression about with you wherever you go. Whether you be in the field, or by the wayside—whether you are in your bed at night, or are engaged in the business of the day—wheresoever you at any hour are—think what an exceedingly wicked heart you have, and so how very wicked you are.

3dly. Is the state of your heart such as we have attempted to prove the heart of unconverted man to be? Then watch it narrowly, and guard against what will excite and bring out its corruptions. Throw not yourself needlessly into circumstances of temptation, lest you be overcome, or led to do what may throw clouds and darkness over your prospects, and imbitter the rest of your days. You carry tinder, ay, something still more inflammable, even powder about you. Keep at a distance from the fire—put yourself where the sparks cannot reach you, else you may receive a wound which neither time nor skill can cure. Let no one

hold a parley with temptation. Considering what his heart is, "let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let him not have a high idea of his own safety.

4thly. If your heart is desperately wicked, then how little reason, dear reader, have you to be proud of yourself. A high opinion of one's self illy becomes one who has such a heart. Instead of having an exalted conceit of yourself, oh, what an humble mind, what a lowly, broken, contrite spirit should you have. How should you loathe yourself, and repent in dust and ashes.

5thly. If you have a heart desperately wicked, then how great a change do you need to experience before you can be qualified to enter into heaven. Infinitely holy is God; the society of heaven is perfectly holy; nothing impure, unholy, can ever be admitted there. You then must meet with a wonderful transformation; great things must be done for you; a new, clean heart you must have, before you can take your stand with the holy worshippers in heaven's temple.

Lastly. To effect such a change as you need, how requisite, how indispensable, are the influences of the gracious Spirit of God. Your heart is so exceedingly wicked that you cannot wash away all its filthiness, even if you would; and so wicked that you will not have the disposition to exert yourself enough for its removal, even, if you had

the ability. Divine power and grace must operate, or you are for ever undone. Pray then earnestly, dear reader, and pray much, for the Holy Spirit's influences—for renovating and sanctifying grace. And begin now.

PRAYER.

O God, convince me more deeply, thoroughly, than reasoning can, that the heart which I have is desperately wicked. Grant me such a sight of its filthiness as shall constrain me to utter the cry of the leper, "Unclean, unclean." May I be much troubled for having such a heart, and be overwhelmed with astonishment that notwithstanding the polluted streams it has so long sent forth, I have not ere now been driven to the abode of unclean spirits in the nether world. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Take away, I beseech thee, not only my guilt, but also my pollution, that after the termination of this short life I may ascend to dwell forever with the holy. All this grant through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SINNER'S SELF-IGNORANCE.

“KNOW thyself,” was a precept held in great veneration by the ancients. Though Thales, the Miletian, was the author of it, yet it was by them regarded as having in it too great weight of sense and wisdom to be human in its origin. They would have it that it had come from Apollo, and so had it written in golden capitals over the door of his temple at Delphos. The precept is indeed divine. The ancient heathen *conjectured* that it came down from heaven; we *know* it did. In various parts of the sacred oracles is it in substance to be found. Clemens Alexandrinus maintained that Moses, by that phrase so frequent in his writings, “Take heed to thyself,” means the same thing as did the ancients, by the precept above. That precept the wise men among the heathen did not prize too highly. It is excellent, it is important, truly. A knowledge of one's self cannot be too highly estimated. This precept, viewed comprehensively, embraces a knowledge of one's corporeal, intellectual, and moral being and condition.

There is, among mankind, a great want of self-acquaintance as to each of these parts of them. Most men know next to nothing about their own body, that house they live in; whilst, of their mind, they are, if possible, still more ignorant. Leaving, however, to the physiologist and the metaphysician what belongs properly to their departments, permit me, reader, to offer you some thoughts concerning a knowledge of your character and state as a moral being.

Should I say that you are a fallen creature, a sinner, I would, by that declaration, afford you no information—would introduce into your mind no new idea. But should I assert that you are a *great* sinner, perhaps you would not consider me as asserting the truth. I presume you do not believe that you are such. If I should hear you speak out on this subject, I would probably hear you say, “I am not a great sinner—am far from it—have much in my character that is commendable, that I have no reason to be ashamed of.” How much farther you would proceed in the way of self-commendation, if you should declare your whole mind concerning yourself, I cannot say—but probably you would not stop short of several degrees. Dear unconverted friend, how can I keep from charging you with great self-ignorance?

There are three short portions of scripture which are here suggested to my mind. One is:

“The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” (Luke xviii. 11, 12.) Another is: “Thou say’st, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Rev. iii. 17.) The third is: “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.” (Ps. xix. 12.) Just read these passages over again, and still a third time. I would recommend to you to open the holy Bible, and turn to and read them there. I may make some allusion to them in the course of my remarks in this chapter.

Does it not appear, from these passages, that poor, fallen creatures, may be very ignorant of themselves—may think themselves one thing when they are another—may not know what sinners they are?

As it is not uncommon to meet with those who imagine themselves to possess a symmetry of figure, or a beauty of personal exterior, which does not belong to them; and as we may, almost every where, come across men who vainly think themselves to have an amount of intellectual energy and attainment which they certainly have not; so is it not a rare occurrence to find, among the creatures

of our species, those who in imagination invest themselves with moral qualities, excellences, which are quite foreign from them. How observably was this the case with the Pharisee whose prayer, (*prayer* shall I call it?) you have just been reading. What a remarkable degree of moral excellence did he clothe himself with, in his own fancy. And those Laodiceans thought their state a charming one, just the opposite of what it really was. And you observe that the pious king of Israel, whom you can hardly suspect of being uncharitable, had the idea that, to say the least, most men were very self-ignorant. "Who," said he, "can understand his errors?" Here are two things intimated. One is, that the errors of mankind are such, both as to number and quality or degree, that it is not common to meet with those who understand them. Such a thing is so unusual, that, as if almost despairing of discovering any one who possessed so much knowledge of himself and his actions, the Psalmist exclaims, "Who"—"*who* can understand his errors?" Where is an individual to be found that does? The other thing intimated is, that it is a matter attended with *difficulty* for fallen creatures to attain to such an understanding.

And he appears too to have been far from imagining that he was fully acquainted with himself. Though he had been so taught of God, had been

afforded so much of a discovery of his sinfulness, that he had repented in dust and ashes, yet he could not but entertain the suspicion that he himself had sins or defects which had escaped his own observation ; that besides the errors he had already detected in himself, or remembered that he had committed, he could not but believe that there were other faults which he had fallen and was perhaps daily falling into, that had escaped his detection. This suspicion on his part is evident from the petition offered up by him to God, "Cleanse thou me from *secret faults*." *Secret faults!* How *secret?* secret to whom? Not to God. The man who penned the 139th Psalm did not need to be told that there is nothing secret or unknown to the Lord. Nor did king David mean, secret as to his fellow-man. This is evident not only from the character of the interrogation preceding the one in which the phrase "secret faults" is found, but from the contrast drawn between those faults and "presumptuous sins," spoken of in the succeeding verse. Presumptuous sins are not alone those which are open. Murder, theft, and many other presumptuous sins are most commonly perpetrated in secret, not in the view of others. By "secret faults," then, the Psalmist must mean, faults secret to one's self, not known to or detected by the individual who commits or has them. There is a loose and very erroneous notion entertained by

some, that no act is faulty or blameworthy, unless it be known by the individual to be wrong before he commits it. According to that idea, there could be by possibility no secret faults, in the sense just mentioned. Is then the true standard of right and wrong one's own notions? Was Paul as innocent when he was engaged in persecuting Jesus of Nazareth or his followers, as free from fault, as he was when employed ardently in his cause? He tells us that at the time he did it, he verily thought he ought so to do. Yet, was his conduct in this matter not faulty? He lets us know that he afterwards thought it very faulty. He speaks of his having been a persecutor in terms of strong condemnation. The truth is, he ought to have known better: Yes; men may do many things which are faulty, may indulge in things not a few that are highly blameworthy, and yet not know, at the time, that they are so. As to themselves, they are faults which are *secret*.

From what you have already read in this chapter, do you not see that a sinner may be very ignorant of himself? may think himself to have moral excellences which he has not? may be a very great sinner, and yet not know it?

An amazing amount of self-ignorance prevails amongst all the unconverted and careless. Whence originates it, or to what is it to be attributed? The

causes or reasons which might be assigned for it are various. We will specify some of them.

1st. It is doubtless attributable in part to a want of acute moral sensibility. This want has led to inattention to the moral quality of their exercises and acts. The question has not been agitated by them sufficiently—Is it *right* to indulge this or that feeling, or do this or that thing? The question with unconverted persons has, for the most part, rather been, how it would affect their worldly interest or pleasure. And when it has been decided that it would affect it *favourably*, they have at once set about the indulgence of the feeling, or the performance of the action. By not instituting an inquiry into the character, in a moral respect, of the thing felt or done, many an evil thing has been indulged or run into, many a sin committed, that they never knew to be criminal. Now men's personal character is according to the character of their feelings and their deeds. And, for the reason that we have mentioned, sinners, being ignorant very much of the character of the latter, are of course very ignorant of their own character.

2nd. Another reason of the sinner's ignorance or erroneous opinion of himself is, his taking a wrong test, or selecting a false standard by which to try or form a judgment of himself. He compares himself *with others*. He makes other men whom he sees or hears of, the test or standard

by which to form a judgment concerning himself. And in setting up others as a standard too, he is very apt to look at or think of those, more particularly, who have some prominent vices or defects attached to and forming blots on their character, instead of those possessing an unblemished reputation, and real excellence of character. The Pharisee whom you read of, did so. He said, "I thank thee that I am not as *other men* are." And when he thought of other men, take notice who they are on whom his mind fixed:—"extortioners, unjust, adulterers." Such were the men selected by which to try himself;—such the characters he chose to compare himself with, and by which to form a judgment of his own. In the light of such a comparison, his own character appeared tolerably fair.

A similar thing does many a sinner do, now-a-days. He thinks of the drunkard, the awfully profane man, the notorious liar, the thief, the slanderer, the sensualist, the extortioner, the defrauder, and oppressor, and if he has not one, or many, or all of the unseemly attributes or dark spots of character which these have, why, he thinks quite well of himself, and almost or quite wonders how any one can call him a sinner. He imagines he has whereof to boast; and not before man merely, but also, as did the Pharisee, before God. An inspired apostle alludes to this method as one which

was taken by more or less in his day, by which to come to a conclusion as to what themselves were; and he does not appear to think at all well of it. "We dare not"—mark his strong language—"we *dare not* make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise." (2 Cor. x: 12.) A very common standard which unconverted persons select by which to judge of themselves, is that assemblage of things which go to make up a good reputation, or fair name and character in cultivated society, or amongst the respectable of this world. Forming a judgment of themselves by such a standard, they may be able to find no blemish or next to none in their character, and are led to inquire as did the young ruler, though with much less reason, "What lack I yet?" Should the person who reads this chapter, even select the truly pious with whom to compare himself, and be himself pious, he would have occasion to cry with David, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults;" and with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But when he whose eyes run over these lines, selects merely the outwardly moral, who are unregenerate, and so have in their hearts not a particle

of love to God, and, in their actions, do not a single thing to the glory of God, with whom to compare himself, and is himself in a state of impenitence, then how much reason has he “low in the dust to fall,” and to cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

3rd. Another cause of the sinner's great ignorance of himself is, the partial or limited view he has of his duty—or, which is the same thing differently expressed, a want of thorough acquaintance with the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the Divine Law. A man will be liable to consider himself as having done all that it was his duty to do, if he only looks at some things which belong to his duty, and leaves out of view other things. The Pharisee tells us that he fasted twice in the week, and that he gave tithes of all that he possessed. This was all well enough so far as it went. The law of Moses required him to fast and to pay tithes. But the Pharisee spoke of these things as though they comprehended the whole of his duty, whereas they constituted but a very small part of it. It is not an impossible thing to find men now, who, because they do something to promote good morals, and give something to benevolent institutions and religious objects, imagine they do all that duty requires. These things are proper and useful ; but it will not do to substitute so small

a part of duty for the whole, or to attempt to make perfection out of imperfection.

The great rule of duty which our Divine Lawgiver and Sovereign has given us, and the only proper test or standard by which to try ourselves, our character, our actions, is the moral law contained in the ten commandments, and drawn out in detail in the various moral precepts of the sacred volume. If after having obtained a perfect understanding of it, we will try and judge ourselves by this rule; if we will bring ourselves, our state, our character, our thoughts, desires, affections, passions, volitions, words, and actions, in all their variety, and examine them by this broad, deep, spiritual law, this perfect standard, which has come to us from high heaven, we may then learn how God views us, and what sort of opinion we ought to have of ourselves.

But ah, we come now at a prominent as well as painful reason why so many sinners are so ignorant of and consequently so well satisfied with themselves—why such multitudes of mankind are to be found who are, in heart, proud, vain, self-complacent, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and therefore safe.

Besides the extreme ignorance of the law of God which prevails amongst the unregenerate, and their great unwillingness to make it a subject of thought and study, some other things are true.

Some who belong to the class of the impenitent, will not take the moral law at all, either as a rule of duty, or as a standard by which to try themselves, their internal exercises and their actions. Some are unwilling to take but a part—either the first table, prescribing those duties which we owe to God, and leaving out those duties which we owe to man; or else, taking as their rule the second table, comprehending those duties which are owed to men, and passing by those which are owed to God. Some are averse to receiving or judging themselves by any but the prohibitory part of the decalogue, or that which forbids certain things to be done. Such of course overlook, as of no account, their want of a compliance with the positive commands of the law: in other words, they seem not to imagine sins of *omission* to be sins at all. Others appear to have embraced the idea that if they do what is directly commanded, they may indulge, at least in a measure, in what God has interdicted. And there are multitudes to be found, who seem to have no idea of disobedience or sin lying in anything except overt action. Such of course leave out of view or make no account of sinful exercises of heart. Some in judging of themselves and their actions, overlook or disregard altogether the *motives* by which they are influenced; the aims and intentions by which they are governed. They satisfy themselves with the mere

form of obedience without the substance, the shell without the core. The young ruler, Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion, and most of the Scribes and Pharisees, overlooked that kind of disobedience and wickedness which lay in sinful exercises of heart; and disregarded the motive or intention with which things should be done in order to render them morally right, good, or acceptable to God. Outwardly they were righteous, but inwardly were unsound, rotten. Besides; the Pharisees were very deficient in another respect. Whilst they were very punctilious as to minor matters, they were negligent or wanting as to those things that were vastly more important. Whilst they "paid tithes of mint, and annis, and cummin," they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: "these," says Christ, "ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Thus we see, dear reader, how a human creature may deceive himself by not taking the law, the whole law of God, and in all its spirituality and extent, as his rule of duty, and standard by which to try himself, his character, his actions, in order to ascertain what sort of a creature he is, or what state he is in.

Of the common *morality* which is current in the world it may be said, that "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the

covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." There is one great, prominent deficiency in it. There is no true *love to God* in its composition. It wants this great, ascendant, controlling principle; without which there is no genuine obedience rendered to any law of heaven; and without which, along with a true faith in Christ, all else, so far as our future and eternal happiness is concerned, is but as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Even when a man, by comparing his inward exercises and outward acts with the law of God, arrives at the conclusion that he has failed, and failed very much, as to the keeping of that law, he may still continue to entertain a very erroneous opinion concerning himself, may think quite too favourably of his character or conduct, by not duly estimating the great sinfulness and demerit there is in moral evil; by not taking into consideration the degree or magnitude of the evil that there is in sin. He may not see sin in general, nor his own sins in particular, to be "exceeding sinful." He may imagine sin to be a trifling evil, a matter hardly worthy of account. Such, dear reader, is the tremendous turpitude and evil of sin, that I have no doubt but God would look upon a creature as a great sinner, who had transgressed his holy, just and good law in a single instance. The Lord was willing to affix the penalty of death everlast-

ing to *one* transgression, which that holy and righteous Being would not have been willing to do, if a single sinful act had not been, in his account, such a tremendous evil as to deserve such a punishment.

But have you, my impenitent friend, been guilty of only one act of sin, in your past life? Could you reckon up the number, if they were all thrown in a heap before you? Your sins are innumerable. There is a great deal of ignorance among sinners concerning this point. They have no idea how multitudinous their sins are. Take any commandment of God, the fourth one of the decalogue, for instance: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." Since the period when you began to know right from wrong, how many sabbaths have you lived through? Now, every moment in every one of those sabbaths which was not kept holy, witnessed a fresh act of sin. But, if you are an unconverted sinner, you have not kept one of those moments holy. Your breaches of the fourth commandment then are as numerous as all the moments in those sabbaths. In every moment of them all you have failed to obey God. In every one of those moments you have substantially said to God, "I will not remember the sabbath day to keep it holy."

Unregenerate sinners render obedience to no command of the Lord. Nothing which they do is

done out of love to the Lord, and where there is no love there is no obedience, in God's account. They do nothing which Jehovah commands *because he commands it*. Count over the various commands of the Lord, contained in the Bible, which are still binding. You have committed a fresh act of sin every moment in which you have failed to obey each of those precepts. By looking over the Scriptures you find that you are commanded to love the Lord with all your heart; to believe in Jesus Christ; to repent of your sins; to deny yourself all ungodliness; to put off the old man and put on the new. As many moments as you have lived, since you knew your duty, so many times have you violated each of these precepts. If what I have now said be so, are not the hairs of your head few in number compared with your sins? And yet for any one of these sins you deserve eternal death. Oh, what a guilty, hell-deserving creature you are! Is it not a wonder of wonders that God has borne with you so long? —so long kept back from you his fiery wrath?

Though what has been already remarked under this head might be considered as substantially comprising it, yet it may not be useless directly to drop the observation here, that a poor blinded sinner may be very much in the dark respecting his character, by taking a too limited view of his responsibilities: a thing, to say the least, which is

very frequently done. The human creature is responsible for his time, his mental faculties and corporeal powers, his acquirements, his property, his example and influence, and his privileges or means of getting and of doing good. He is accountable to God for the use he makes of these. They may be used for God or against him—may be employed in a right or a wrong manner. Alas, what an untold amount of sin is the fallen, unregenerate creature guilty of, by an abuse or misimprovement of these, severally!

I will proceed to assign, briefly, two or three additional causes or reasons why a sinner is so ignorant of his sinfulness; or why he has so many faults which are secret, sins which are unknown, to himself.

4th. *Habit*—what is the effect of habit? Why this is one common and obvious effect of it: to render us almost or quite unobservant of what is done under its influence. A thing is done without much thought or attention that is done from habit. A *new* thing is done through an *effort* of the mind and will. Not so with a thing that is habitual. *It* is done almost, as it were, without thought or volition. Through habit, a man may do many a thing that is wrong, and yet he take no notice of it; or remember not the next moment that he has done it. The profane swearer utters many an oath, pours forth from his lips many an imprec-

tion which offends God, and shocks the sensibilities of the pious, that he himself is, at the time, hardly conscious of, or at least knows not the next moment. Besides ; men are not generally found inclined to examine into *the right* or *the wrong* of what is done *habitually*. One of the effects of habit is to lull or stupify the conscience—to cast her into a sleep more or less deep. The morphine administered by habit operates so powerfully upon her, that many a fault escapes her notice—she detects it not. If she were awake, she would thunder ; she would smite or reprove him ; she would so hold up the criminal thing before his mind ; by scourging would so turn his attention to it, that he should both see and remember what he had done, and see and remember it as a fault.

5th. *Custom*, likewise, has a wonderful effect in blinding one's mind, and rendering him ignorant or insensible as to the character of much he does. Many look to no better a source than custom, the customs of society, the customs which prevail about them, in the making up of their opinion as to things right or wrong. To such, a thing appears *right* which is *customary*, or *wrong* which is *not customary*. There appears very little of a disposition among many people to inquire into the right or the wrong of custom. That which they have seen prevailing around them from their earliest years, they are apt to take for granted to be

right ; and are, on the other hand, apt to take for granted, of course, that that which interferes with what they have been accustomed to seeing prevail, and which looks toward a breaking up of the custom, or a putting of it down, is all wrong. Hence to some extent, at least, it is, that reformers so often fare so poorly.

6th. Still another cause or reason which I shall mention is, inordinate self-love, or *self-partiality*. A creature may be so fond of himself, and so partial to his own actions, as very much to blind him as to their true nature. A thing done by another person frequently wears quite a different aspect from what the same thing does when done by one's self. That, for example, which is avarice or covetousness in others, is only prudence in one's self. That which appears like extravagance when seen in others, is only a matter of decency when beloved self is the actor. Parsimony in others, is with one's self nothing more than economy oftentimes. That which may appear like criminal levity in others, may, when indulged in by one's self, seem nothing more or less than innocent cheerfulness. And so with a hundred other things.

7th. The last thing which I will specify is, *a want of remembrance*. A man is at present ignorant of things which he once knew, but does not now remember. A large number, probably a very

large majority, of the exercises or acts which the sinner's conscience told him, at the time of their birth, were sinful, have wholly faded from his memory. He recollects them not. Though on the day of judgment and in eternity they will not be, yet now are they, to him, as if they had never been. The sinning creature remembers but comparatively few of his once known sins. Yet God has not forgotten them; and he will not suffer the perpetrator's memory always to be what it now is. All of his sins will, ere long, if he repents not, stare him in the face, yes, and will each brandish before him a fearful weapon too, or add fuel to the fire into which he will be cast.

Through the combined operation of the several causes now specified, sinners commonly know next to nothing about their character—are extremely ignorant as to what they truly are. You have heard, I presume, of poor deranged persons who entertained the idea that they were princes; or the possessors of vast wealth. Yet such opinion was perhaps no more absurd than that which prevails very generally among unawakened sinners, respecting their character and standing before God. How important is it that they should be undeceived—that they should become acquainted with themselves. It may be apprehended of the less gross and abominable sort of them, especially, that they will more or less cherish the spirit of self-compla-

gency; will pride themselves in their imagined goodness; will swell with fond conceit of their moral excellence, until in some way, error is made to give place to truth, in this matter.

Impenitent reader, I cannot but recommend to you to take into consideration those causes of self-ignorance which have been specified in this chapter; and to adopt the course requisite to have that ignorance removed. Let me exhort you to seek, at the proper source, for the awakening in your soul of an acute moral sensibility. Endeavour also to form a thorough acquaintance with the length, breadth, depth, and height of the exactions of the holy law of God, and the whole range of your responsibilities. Seek moreover to have your moral judgment delivered from the blinding influence of habit, and custom, and self-partiality; and strive to have called up to your recollection, as much as possible, the sins which you once knew to be such, but have forgotten. You may thus find course for being deeply troubled, instead of lying in the arms of ease, or reposing on the couch of slumber. You may thus find cause to smite on your breast, as did the publican, and to cry with Bartimeus, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

O, my unconverted friend, you have been very careless; very much at ease; have been very inapprehensive of danger. And why? Not because

you had any good reason to think your state safe, or yourself a favourite of Heaven ; but because you were so ignorant of yourself ; so unacquainted with your true character ; knew so little about the number and sinfulness of your sins. Alas, what a sinner you are ! How much you need to shake off stupor ; how much to become acquainted with yourself, your sins, your state. How troubled should you be ; how anxious to escape the just and awful punishment which is your due. If there is a possibility of finding pardon for your deep-dyed and innumerable offences, seek earnestly for it, until you have evidence that it is granted. If there is a powerful and merciful arm that is long enough to reach even to you, pray that it may without delay be extended, and you laid hold of and kept from sinking into endless despair and torment. Can it be possible that you will still close your eyes, and refuse to search out your iniquities ? How much better to become acquainted with your sins now, and see to getting their sting extracted, than to form an acquaintance with them where there will be no extracting power at hand, and where each of the innumerable throng will be a busy scorpion upon you.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ABOMINABLE THING.

EMPLOYING a few moments, this afternoon, in the perusal of a chapter in the Old Testament, my mind was struck with the Lord's prayer, which I there met with. 'What!' I think I hear you say, 'the Lord's prayer in the Old Testament? I thought it was in the New.' You are thinking, reader, of a prayer which usually goes under that name—a prayer which the Lord taught his disciples. That is a prayer designed to be offered by the creature to God. But the prayer I met with is offered by the Lord to the creature. 'What!' you exclaim again, 'God pray, and pray to the creature?' So it seems.

And what is the prayer? It is this: "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." I was moved, as you may well conceive I had reason to be, at the thought of the Creator offering supplication to the creature!—of the Infinite God coming and kneeling down, as it were, before a poor worm of the dust, and presenting such an humble and warm petition! Should you hear an earthly father using such language of tenderness and earnest entreaty to

a disobedient and erring son—should you hear a parent beseeching his child to desist from an act or course which was highly painful and displeasing to him—would you not be affected? Whilst the pathetic tones of the parent's voice were falling on your ear, would you not be apt to be moved even to tears?

You might well wonder, then, if I could hear the Almighty Father, him who gave existence to angels and men, addressing a portion of his creatures, yourself among the number, and saying to them, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" and yet remain unmoved. To see the great God placing himself before men in the attitude of a supplicant, and to hear him beseeching them to do one thing, or not to do another, ought certainly to be deeply affecting to us; ought to cause our bosom to heave with emotion, and our cheek to be suffused with tears.

In words such as you find in that petition, Jehovah frequently addressed the Jews, before he sent the king of Babylon against them. Prior to his destroying Jerusalem, depopulating their land, and causing the inhabitants, for the most part, to be carried into captivity beyond the Euphrates, we are told that he "sent unto them all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them," and through their instrumentality, he besought that untractable, disobedient, and covenant-breaking

people, to desist from idolatry, and other grievous sins into which they had fallen. It is the sin of idolatry, I suppose, that is more particularly alluded to in that petition ; yet what is there said is true of every species or form of iniquity. Of *sin in general* it may be said, that it is a very hateful, *abominable thing* in God's sight.

If to him whose eyes are now running over these lines, sin were likewise an abominable thing—if you, reader, had a lively and deep impression of its evil and detestable nature, greatly hated it, and had a head that was waters, and eyes which were fountains of tears because you had meddled with it, you might then pass at once to the next chapter, or even close the book. But I have had occasion to know how an impenitent sinner thinks and feels respecting sin, or rather how barren his mind is of thought respecting its nature, and how his heart, instead of holding it in detestation, loves the execrable, accursed thing. I am sorry to be obliged to say that sin is with you a light offence, a trivial evil. It is so with every one in a state of impenitence. And I cannot expect your state, and it is an awful one, to be ever any better than it now is, unless sin becomes to yourself the sort of thing which is intimated at the head of this chapter. I wish, therefore, to make some attempt to convince you that sin is so great and detestable an evil, that they must be fools who make light of it, and mad who do not

hate and turn from it. The Lord has a right view of, and right feelings towards every thing. If sin is hateful to God, and not merely this, but "*the abominable thing which he hates,*" language importing that there is nothing else in the universe which he does hate, and that *it* he hates intensely, then you need to know it, and your heart to feel it.

That sin is what this language imports, we proceed to show. 1. We remark, in the first place, that this is inferrible from the *holiness* of God. To many of the gods of the heathen, not excepting Jupiter himself, are attributed the most low and base vices. They are represented sometimes as yielding to excessive anger, and engaged in desperate quarrels; sometimes as burning with lust; sometimes as corroded by envy or jealousy, and laying plans to defeat each other's purposes; and even the best of them are exhibited with failings which may well lead us to wonder that they should have ever been worshipped, or even tolerated. Wherever idolatry has prevailed, the objects of worship have always been, in a greater or less degree, sensual or sanguinary; and the rites with which they have been worshipped, have been adapted to their character; rites which have caused the altars to smoke with human blood, or which have caused purity, even decency, to retire and weep.

But our God is no such one. He is a Being of

infinite purity. Holiness is an essential attribute of his nature, and is dwelt much upon in our sacred Book. "Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Worship at his footstool, for he is holy. These things saith he that is holy. God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name! for thou only art holy?" God is said to be "*glorious* in holiness."

Now God is highly pleased with this feature of his character. He regards his own holiness with infinite complacence. But sin is the direct opposite of holiness. It must then be the object of his abhorrence. And this sentiment is expressed too in scripture, and not only directly, but in very strong language. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." (Hab. i. 13.) Between his nature and sin there is an infinite repugnance. "Canst not look on iniquity." It is not here said, he *will not*, but *cannot*. It is not said he cannot look on iniquity without loathing it, or having his heart rise against it, but cannot look on it at all, so exceedingly hateful, offensive, is it to him.

Let a human creature become but imperfectly holy, and that creature greatly hates sin. So soon as the soul is regenerated, it becomes inimical to sin; and as the work of sanctification progresses, and in the same proportion, is there an

increase in his detestation of iniquity. What a hatred, then, must be borne to sin, by not only a perfectly but an *infinitely* holy Being.

2. From the effect which sin has had on the feelings and conduct of man in relation to God, an argument is derivable, that it is a very abominable thing in his sight. What has sin done with man's affections? Turned them away from God. He commands mankind to love him supremely, with all the heart. But where sin has possession, God is not loved in the least measure. But this is not all. Sin has had the effect of causing man to hate God. It has caused you to hate him, reader. Fallen angels and fallen men hate God. This is not a matter of mere conjecture. Actions have a tongue, and these testify that this is true. God knows it is so, and has let us know that he knows it. Now, inasmuch as Jehovah knows himself to be infinitely worthy of their love, and has commanded them to love him, thus giving expression to his desire on the subject, that cannot but be exceedingly hateful, abominable to him, that has stolen love from their hearts, and put enmity in its room.

He has expressed it as his wish that men should spend their life and employ their powers, mental and corporeal, in his service, to his glory. But sin does not let them do this. Unregenerate men, instead of seeking to please God in every thing, seek to please him in nothing. Instead of doing

every thing to his glory, they do naught to his glory. What a robber is sin! It robs God not alone of the love, but of the entire service of yourself, and of every other sinner. Another master is served by them, and a very different one from the Lord Almighty. The greater part of mankind are doing just the contrary of what God would have them do. See what a subtraction sin makes from the amount of glory and service due unto God. And can you imagine that the Deity can witness such a subtraction without being much displeased with the subtracter? behold himself thus robbed, and not detest the robber? Can sin take so much of what of right belongs to the Lord, and give it to Satan, his great adversary, and yet not be exceedingly abominable? There is no other robber in the universe but sin; and it is bold, audacious enough to rob the Sovereign of the universe. And then to rob him of so much too! Where are words to express its execrableness?

The Lord, moreover, has expressed it as his desire and will that mankind should love one another; should regard themselves as children of one Father, and be bound together in the bonds of amity and brotherhood;—that they should respect and promote the interest of each other, instead of looking every man exclusively on his own things, or being swayed by supreme selfishness. But mankind do not feel nor act after this manner toward one another—nor

is God a stranger to the fact. He sees that the human species are not, for the most part, very friendly to each other, and get along not very smoothly together. He sees them oft caring each for himself exclusively. He looks into their inner man, and beholds envy, malice, ambition, and other evil and pernicious passions rankling there, and observes them not unfrequently belching out their desolating lava, and sometimes spreading it far and wide, causing mischief and havoc which years cannot repair. He knows what is the originating cause or prime author of all this evil. He lays the charge at sin's door. And does he regard sin, then, with as much indifference as you do? Ah, "the abominable thing," how he abhors it!

3. That sin is exceedingly detestable and abhorrent to God, may be argued from certain memorable events recorded in sacred history; events partaking of the character of Divine judgments.

Of events of this sort I will refer you, first, to one which occurred to a portion of a higher race. The infinite Creator had brought into existence a highly intellectual, exalted, and numerous species of creatures, all spirit, to whom he had granted the high privilege of residing from the beginning in the best, most magnificent, and glorious world that eyes ever saw. In the immediate presence of the God of glory they were located, and were permitted to see, hear, and feel, what caused their hearts to burn

with rapture uninterruptedly. But ere long, their ranks are broken. Look over the sunny hills and through the enchanting vales of their native country, and only a part of the race are to be found. Where are the rest? Search every spot in the wide domains of the world celestial—no trace of them is discoverable. We inquire and learn that they have been banished—that the omnipotent Jehovah, lifting his strong arm, and seizing his thunderbolts, drove them out of heaven, that world of unutterable glory, purity, bliss—that he drove them far, far from his presence, and made them exceedingly miserable. And they have been exceedingly miserable ever since. For the space of six thousand years past, I cannot express to you what unhappy wretches they have been ; and they have by no means come to an end of their unhappiness.

Now why did Jehovah thus treat them? They were his own creatures, and he once loved them very dearly. Ah, they *fell into sin* ; that was the cause. But for this, they would not only be now in heaven, but would have been there all the long period that they have been suffering banishment ; and as happy the while, and still, as any of the seraphs that are there. Behold what sin can cause God to do. He is infinitely good ; and he infinitely delights in making his creatures happy. Yet see how he treated those angelic spirits that sinned, and because

they sinned. The inference is unavoidable, that sin must be to him exceedingly abominable.

Again. The Lord brought into being a human pair. These he placed, not indeed in heaven, but in Eden, a charming spot, the most so in the universe, next to heaven; and furnished them with all they could rationally desire. Besides what the garden itself afforded them, their infinite Maker himself visited them, and held communion with them as friend with friend. A little while after, look, and they are not there. Upon inquiry you learn that they have been expelled; forcibly driven out from Eden's bowers and precincts, into a wide, waste wilderness, every spot of which, wherever their foot treads or eye rests, lying under the scorching, withering curse of Almighty God, and on their account. Why this? Infinitely benevolent is God, and these were the creatures of his own forming. The answer is short; they had to do with sin. They meddled with the abominable thing which the Lord hates. Had they kept clear of it, they would have known no expulsion, their heart no pang, their eyes no tears. God would have continued to commune with them as at the first; there would have been no interruption or end to their joys.

Again: About sixteen and a half centuries after the creation, an amazing event took place. Verily it seemed as though the end of all things was at

hand. For the space of forty days and nights, without cessation, the skies poured down water, and the liquid stores in earth's bowels took their station on its surface, and among human creatures, oh, what a work commenced of giving up the ghost. It seemed as though the whole human race would become extinct. And indeed well nigh this occurred. After the waters of the deluge subsided, how many souls were found to repeople the globe? Just eight. All the others had perished from off the face of the earth. And why perished they? Why this submerging of the world, this depopulation of the earth? Reader, you know. Though these multitudes were the creatures of God, they were stricken down, overwhelmed as in a moment, because they had so much to do with sin, "the abominable thing" which the Lord thus shows to us that he hates.

About two hundred and fifty years after this, Abraham got up one morning, and looked toward the vale of Siddim, "and lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." In that vale, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim were situated. Those cities were in flames. As great as was their population, just four persons escaped. The conflagration, the flood of fire destroyed all the rest. And why this calamity? Is it all a mystery? Is the cause entirely unknown? Ah, the Bible informs us that it was because of *sin*,

that they were destroyed. Sin furnished the fuel, and lighted the fires. Had it not been for *it*, the Dead Sea would have had no place on the earth. Those were creatures which God's fingers had formed, yet see how his fiery wrath consumes them. In his sight what an abominable thing must sin be.

The children of Israel were not few in number when they left the house of bondage. Yet how few of them entered the land of promise. Of that generation which was delivered from the hand of their oppressors, what multitudes fell in the wilderness—never were permitted to see the goodly Canaan. Their sin provoked the Holy One of Israel, and he slew them. At one time he sent fiery serpents which bit them, and they died; at another, he caused the earth to open her mouth, and swallow them up. From their subsequent history, whilst the land of Canaan was their abode, what evidence is to be gathered that Jehovah is a sin-hating God. How oft were they scourged for their rebellion and iniquities; how frequently delivered into the hands of their enemies. What became of the ten tribes? As to the other two, where spent they seventy years? What did the king of Babylon first, and afterward the Romans do to Jerusalem; to their temple and altars; and to their land? And where have the Jews been, and how dealt with, for eighteen centuries past? Yet these were once God's favourite, covenant people.

And where are the seven nations which inhabited Canaan, before Joshua entered that land? And where are Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre? Who overthrew them, and why were they overthrown? Sacred history does not leave us to conjecture.

4. Why are mankind, individually, and as a race, so much the subjects of sorrow and trouble? Why do so many sighs escape them? Why are seen so many tears on their faces? Why do anxiety and care so much corrode? Why so many sightless eyeballs, deaf ears, maimed limbs, mute tongues? Why so many agues to chill, and fevers to burn? Oh, who can tell or conceive how much human wretchedness and misery are now on the earth! Does God reign here? What meaneth this heat, then, of his great anger? Why did Adam die? Why the antediluvians? Why the hundred and forty generations of human beings since? They are gone. Look over the face of the earth, and you can find scarcely a creature who has been on it so much as a century; nearly the whole of its inhabitants much less. Why has this earth been converted into one vast grave-yard? Had sin not been here, would death have been? The Lord turneth man to destruction, and saith, "Return, ye children of men;" but this he would not do, if men had not meddled with what he greatly abhors. "In every death you see a criminal executed according to the sentence of the law." But there would be

no such sentence, no such penalty, were not sin that abominable thing which God hates.

But, reader, beyond this world, there are ills and sufferings, compared with which, both as to intensity and duration, those of earth are as nothing. Somewhere within the compass of measureless space, there is a place of torment to which the scriptures give the name of *hell*. I cannot describe, no, nor have any adequate idea concerning the misery which those endure, each moment, that are there. There is a tormenting worm which never dies; there are fires which are never extinguished; sighs and groans there which never cease. There already are multitudes of creatures "who would but can't expire." You have read the descriptions which the Bible contains of that world of woe, despair, agony. And have you not sometimes endeavoured to conceive of the poverty, wretchedness, torment, of those outcasts from happiness and hope? Have you not let your mind, now and then, dwell on the subject for a considerable time? Alas! I fear you have not. It is not a matter, probably, that you like to think about. But I would like to have you frequently read over and meditate on those descriptions which the Lord has given, in the scriptures, of the world of woe, and what privations and miseries those souls are experiencing which have been driven thither; and I desire that you would, in connection with your meditations on the extremi-

ty of their distress and pain, try to think on the import of that word, *eternity*. I know that the misery of the wicked in hell, both as to degree and duration, stretches far beyond the reach of the human mind. It can be measured by nothing short of an infinite line.

And why all that anguish? Why was that place of torment ever prepared? that prison built? that pit dug? those fires kindled? Are creatures of God sent there forever to dwell? Why? That one word, *sin*, tells the whole cause. And how much sin must a creature heap up, in order to secure hell torments? Must it rise mountain high? Reader, how many infractions of a law of the land does it take to forfeit liberty or life? How many times did our first parents have to sin before they brought upon themselves expulsion and the curse? And how much was included in that curse? Ah, reader, can you not here find proof that sin is "exceeding sinful?" that God sees in it much demerit? that he regards it with intense, inconceivable abhorrence?

This earth has been "in pain as a woman that travaileth;" has been sighing, weeping, groaning, trembling in every joint, shaking in every limb, and had a severe heartache, for the space of sixty centuries; and her agonies are not yet ended. And there is another world which has witnessed deeper sighs, and heavier groans, and bloodier tears; and wailings which cannot be uttered, for as long

a period; and those sighs will always sigh, and tears will ever weep and fall, and groans will end not. And who is the mother that bears all this progeny of both worlds? Sin. And can she bring forth a progeny so exceedingly troublesome to God's own creatures of each world, and yet she who gives birth to them escape his utmost detestation?

5. Why came the only begotten Son of God to this earth, and wherefore formed he such an acquaintance with grief? Gethsemane and Calvary are spots which have witnessed extraordinary scenes. What a sacrifice was offered! Those bitter pains were endured for whom? for what? Was it sin that nailed God's Beloved to the accursed tree? that pierced his side, broke his heart, killed him? What! can the eternal Father see sin thus treating his infinitely dear Son, and yet not infinitely hate her? Impossible. Or, when the holy and just God saw sin resting by imputation on Jesus Christ, could he not keep from smiting, piercing to the heart, causing infinite suffering to, that "man who was his Fellow," because he beheld it resting there? O who can go and take a view of the cross, and of Calvary's crimsoned summit, and come away without the conviction that sin is "*the* abominable thing," the thing hated infinitely by the Lord?

It may be remarked that if God hates sin thus, when found only *imputatively* on his Son, then may we expect to find him bearing an exceeding detes-

tation toward it, wherever it exists actually. "If such things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Then if men or angels' nature or conduct be stained by it, it can be no otherwise to him than an object of intensest abhorrence. We dropped the remark near the beginning of this chapter, that the language "*the* abominable thing that God hates," appears to imply or import that there is nothing else in the universe which he does hate. Let me guard this assertion from misconstruction. Sin never exists, cannot, in an abstract form. Wherever it is found, it inheres or stands connected with a moral agent. Now, nothing is hated by the Lord which has no sin connected with it; and nothing is hated by him but because of the sin connected with it. God is not displeased with the nature of man as man, but with the nature of man as sinful. It is said by the inspired Psalmist, that the Lord "hates all workers of iniquity." But it is only as "workers of iniquity," that he hates them. Let iniquity cease to be any part of their work, and his hatred to them will cease. We remark, in addition, that there is nothing in sin which the Lord does not hate. It is an unmixed, unmitigated evil. There is nothing at all in it that can abate God's detestation; not the least grain of goodness to incline him to look favourably on any part of it; nor is there any thing merely negative in it to mitigate his abhorrence.

It may be inferred from God's intense hatred to sin, that he is not the author of it. He would in no way exercise his power or agency in bringing into existence a thing which is so much the object of his detestation! It is highly unreasonable to suppose such a thing. Nor is sin ever the object of God's command, but ever of his prohibition. He never inspires or excites to evil. "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Let no one therefore charge his sins on God, as though he was in any way the author or allower of them. If a man has a sinful nature, sinful dispositions, feelings, passions, the Lord gave them not to him. "God made man upright."

As sin ever has been, so it ever will be, an exceedingly hateful, abominable thing in Jehovah's sight. It will never become diminished in hatefulness to him. Familiarity with the sight of it may alter its appearance to man, but will never render it any the less base or odious in God's view. The period will never come when the Lord will let any of the prisoners out of the nether pit, because he has ceased to hate sin; nor when he will ever lighten their torment, because of his regarding it with less abhorrence. None of the tenants of the dark prison ought to indulge any hope of escape or deliverance, nor of a mitigation of their wretchedness, on that ground; nor do or will they.

Having thus considered what opinion God has

of sin, and how he feels toward it, I would now ask the reader how he views and stands affected toward sin. Do you view it, my friend, as a great and abominable evil, and feel intense hatred to it? I do not inquire whether you have all that intenseness of abhorrence of it that Jehovah has. None but such a mind as is infinite, probably, is capable of understanding how great an evil sin is, or of feeling all that detestation toward it, which it is just or right to feel. But in proportion to your ability, do you view it, and feel in a like manner toward it as the Lord does? It must be acknowledged that God views it and feels toward it justly. He has no weak and unrighteous prejudice against it. If he thinks it a great evil, and regards it with intense abhorrence, then it deserves to be so thought of or regarded. Now, are you and the rest of mankind on right ground in your opinions and feelings in relation to this matter? Are you and they any where near it? Is there not a great, most lamentable want of a just hatred of sin in the world? Surely God's rational creatures should hate what he hates. And if he greatly detests a thing, they should greatly detest it.

I need not ask the unrepentant sinner whether he hates sin. Reader, if you have never turned from sin to God, what is the reason you have not? If you hated sin, you would, of course, turn from it. Men do not adhere, and closely, to what they hate.

If you did not even love sin, you would not act, live as you do. And can you roll as a sweet morsel under your tongue, what is so displeasing to your Maker? What a heart then you must have; what a bad, wicked heart! Such a heart obviously needs a change, a great change. If iniquity, in all its forms, is not an object of your abhorrence, then you greatly need to be seeking after a change of heart. Had you been seeking to please that infinite Being who made you, you would have been seeking, striving, to renounce and avoid sin. But this you know you have not done. Instead of seeking to please the Holy One of Israel, you have, during your past life, been doing what is infinitely displeasing to him. The sin which you have accumulated is already as a great mountain in size. You have been adding sin to sin for years. In how innumerable instances have you done or indulged in that abominable thing which God hates. And do you approve of your course, and can you persist in it? Will you continue to cherish in your heart, and practise in your life, what is so evil, and so detestable to the Lord? Is it not a wonder that you have been spared, kept out of hell so long? Does not repentance, deep, thorough, become you? Ought you not to mourn and weep over your past conduct, and turn from a course so abhorrent to a Being of infinite purity? How vain is it for you to expect to fare well hereafter, with all your guilt uncanceled, all your sin un-

repented of, unpardoned, and unremoved? Can you indulge the idea that you can get into heaven with that cleaving to you which Jehovah infinitely hates? Will the infinitely Holy One admit into his presence, and make forever happy, a creature steeped in iniquity? No. Either part with sin, or give up all hope of heaven. Hell is the only proper place for you, if you live and die in sin.

Sinner, God would rather have you part with sin, than punish you everlastingly for it. He has come to you many a time as a suppliant already. He has by his word and his ministry come before you, repeatedly, in your past life, and now, whilst you are reading these lines, he is before you, saying to you in a warm and tender manner, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." He seems not to wish to be constrained to destroy you forever. Dear reader, will not the thought of the infinite God using the language of supplication before you, melt you to penitence, and move you to desist from sinning? He assumes that you ought to desist from sin, because it is the abominable thing which he hates. He assumes that you are under obligation to please him, and assumes, moreover, the fact that you are not wholly ignorant of this your obligation. You would have to be entirely without the knowledge of his excellences, of the relations he stands in to you, and of his will, to be in entire ignorance of your obligations in this matter. But you have not been left in such utter ignorance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WICKED WITHOUT PEACE.

ON the subject expressed in the above title I have concluded to offer some remarks, because it is my desire to convince the impenitent reader of these pages, that he is a loser instead of gainer by retaining his place in the ranks of that great army of revolters and rebels, that are continuing to wage war against God. I wish to point out to him some of the *disadvantages* attendant on ungodliness, and thus try to persuade him, out of regard to his own interest, to persist no longer in waging a warfare which is so *unprofitable*, as well as unnatural, unreasonable, and wicked.

The sentiment advanced in the title of this chapter is, dear reader, worthy of your attention. It is by no means a novel one. It was advanced more than twenty-five centuries ago. It is a sentiment which you need not hesitate about adopting, inasmuch as it emanated from an unerring source. It came from a mind that cannot be deceived, and from lips which cannot lie. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. lvii. 21.)

It is worthy of remark, that what is here affirmed by the Lord is discriminating—is not said of the whole of the human race, but only of a certain portion of them. It is not asserted that there is no hope or happiness to any of the fallen descendants of Adam, although such a declaration would have included nothing but what would have been in accordance with strict justice ; for no one of the human family merits any happiness or peace either in time or eternity. And when a portion of our race is singled out, concerning whom a fearful declaration is made, take notice, reader, what class it is that is singled out, and how that portion is designated. Earthly distinctions, as to rank or station, are by the divine mind too trifling to be noticed. Circumstances foreign from character, things extrinsic, which in the dialect of the creatures of earth throw men into various divisions or classes, these are overlooked by the great God. He seizes on a distinction that is *moral* ; he lays hold on character—on the morality or immorality, the right or the wrong of *it*, and shapes his affirmation accordingly. Neither in the declaration to which we turned your attention, nor any where else in the sacred volume, do you find the Lord affirming that there is no peace to the prince, or no peace to the peasant—no peace to the rich, or to the poor ; to the high, or to the low ; to the healthy and prosperous, or to the sick and afflicted of our race. Matters extraneous or foreign

from character, things merely extrinsic, do not mark the bounds within or beyond which peace or happiness is to be found. The Infinite One has, in his all-wise arrangements, not made our happiness to depend on things so superficial, or circumstances so trivial as these. You may find happiness sometimes in the vale of poverty, and sometimes also in the midst of affluence. Her seat is with some of the great and noble of the earth, and likewise, and more frequently, in the vale of obscurity, amongst those alike to fortune and to fame unknown. In the palace and the hovel may be found either peace, or the absence of this heaven-born principle. Amongst those on whose countenance health blooms and smiles, you may discover her; and you may place yourself by the couch where disease has carried its pains and its ravages, and you may find her even there. As to the production or existence of happiness, much less depends on such circumstances than is commonly thought. God says of none but the *wicked*, that they are destitute of peace. "There is no peace to *the wicked*."

And who are the wicked? Search the scriptures, and you will observe this term appropriated to denote the unconverted, unreconciled; those in whom the spirit of rebellion remains unbroken; all who are in their natural, unrenovated state, and so, entirely destitute of holiness. In the language of the scriptures, *they* are the wicked. In this large class,

there is discoverable quite a difference as to degrees of practical wickedness. Some are sinners above others. Some, like Saul among the Benjamites, are taller by the head and shoulders than those about them. There are the front, the middle, and the rear ranks in the great army of rebellion. Some are more bold in sin, more hardened in iniquity, than are others. Still, wherever you find a human creature with an unconverted heart, or an unsubdued, unreconciled spirit, there, according to the language of the sacred oracles, you will find a wicked person.

Concerning all then, who are not born again, and so concerning all who have not the principle of holiness within, is the affirmation made by the Lord, that there is "no peace" to them. Wherever there is, in any heart, a destitution of holiness, there is a destitution of peace. Bear this in mind, reader, as the assertion of God, of Him who knows perfectly the state of every human heart. God looketh on the heart, and wherever, amongst our species, he sees a want of holiness, he likewise sees a want of happiness or peace. Plant yourself on whatever spot on this globe you please, among whatever people you please, and if there were furnished you an eye so piercing and discriminating, that you could look in on the spirits of men, and mark the true condition and the entire workings of the human heart, you would find, wherever an unconverted heart was the

object of inspection, that there is *no peace* there. God, who is everywhere present, and who has an eye so piercing and discriminating as at one glance to penetrate and discover all that is in all hearts, has said that there is no peace to such ; and he always tells the truth.

The assertion made in the passage which I quoted, I know, is a *broad* one. It covers a good deal of ground. It goes so far that I presume it will not in every mind meet with a ready assent to its truth. For it is not said, qualifiedly, that there is but a *small amount* or an *inconsiderable portion* of peace to the wicked—but “*no peace.*” Now I will venture to affirm that, of the impenitent, unregenerate part of this world’s population, hardly one of a thousand will be ready at once to yield a hearty assent to the truth of what is declared in that passage, though it is the infinitely holy and veracious God who made the declaration.

What bears some faint resemblance to peace, the wicked sometimes feel floating about their hearts. There is an insensibility, and an airy, empty animal feeling, which is sometimes looked upon as possessing the character of peace. But the real christian knows that there is a great difference between it and the heaven-born principle, peace—almost if not quite as much difference, as there is between light and darkness, or any other two opposites. The difference is so great, that whenever a human

creature is brought to experience the new birth, he finds that he was always, up to that period, a stranger to true and solid peace. This I believe to be the universal impression of all the truly converted to God. That condition of soul which follows a sense of the divine favour through faith in Jesus Christ—that state of conscience which is the result of the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb upon it, when guilt with all its fetters and its heavy load takes its flight—ah, this, this is worthy of the name of *peace*.

Cast your eye, reader, on that passage again. You see that it is not said in it, that there *shall be hereafter*, no peace to the wicked. The future tense is not used, but the present:—"There *is* no peace to the wicked." At any period in time, as well as any period in eternity, that declaration may be made with truth. So long as a person is without holiness, or belongs to the class of the wicked, there is no peace to him. Look at the wicked at *this* moment, and you may say with verity, there is no peace to them. Travel onward twenty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand years, and at each of these periods, and every point in them, you may make the same assertion with truth. Go not only from one hour to another in time, but from one age to another in eternity, and, at every step as you proceed in your journey in the tract of interminable being, you may cry in the ears of all the unwashed and unreconciled, *There is no peace to the wicked*.

If we look at all narrowly into the condition of the wicked whilst they have this earth for their abode, we will find the declaration contained in that verse of scripture, verified in their case.

The human soul, dear reader, whilst divorced from God, is in a truly pitiable condition. Thus divorced, it is and must be destitute of true, solid satisfaction. The affections of the human soul, when detached from God, when they go astray from him, abandon the only portion that can truly feed or satisfy them. Such powers as the immortal spirit of man has, feed on emptiness when they feed not on God as their portion. The body might as well attempt to sustain itself solely on wind, as the human soul to sustain and satisfy itself on created things. It may apply its mouth to them for years, and obtain no nourishment. It will go away starved from them all. Let the affections of any human creature come down from God, and attempt to feast themselves on the creature, and they will, most assuredly, meet with dissatisfaction and disappointment.

“Ho! all ye hungry, starving souls,
That feed upon the wind,
And vainly strive with earthly toys,
To fill an empty mind,”—

you are poorly, sillily employed indeed. O that the Spirit divine might convince all such of the mournful mistake which they are committing. Such is

the error of all the wicked. They seek to feed and satisfy the cravings of their souls elsewhere than on God, and they seek in vain.

Terrene objects, moreover, present nothing substantial, solid, for the heart of man to cling to. Let the tendrils of the human heart cease to cling around God, and that heart has nothing to keep it calm and quiet whilst traversing life's tempestuous, troubled ocean. Separated from the immutable God, the soul will find all beside mutable. The shifting wind or changing weather is but an emblem of the changeable nature of all things else beneath the skies. A house built on the sand has a stable foundation compared with that soul which builds its expectations of enjoyment on terrestrial things. Have you never observed a bird lighting on twigs or branches which were too weak to sustain it? It flies from branch to branch, each of which sinks beneath its weight. So it is with the wicked. Their affections alight on one sublunary object, and then on another, but nothing of earthly texture is found substantial enough to bear them up. As it was with the dove which Noah sent forth from the ark, that found no rest for the sole of her foot, until she returned unto him into the ark, so is it with the hearts of the wicked. They have gone away from the only sure, substantial resting-place, and are seeking to find some terrestrial object that will serve as a rock to rest upon; but how vain is such search. Dove-like they must

return unto the place whence they have wandered, must return unto God, before they can find rest or peace. As well might we look for the ship to stand still, unmoved, on the mountain billow, on the waves of the lashed and foaming ocean, as expect to find human hearts at rest, whilst attempting to settle on the objects of this lower sphere. He builds on sand, ay, on the tossing wave, who builds beneath the skies. As soon as the soul begins fully to settle down on one earthly object, if not before, it is compelled to shift its quarters for another, and so another, and still another, until, too often, life's dream and life's pilgrimage come to a close together, and then, oh, what a shipwreck to the soul, with all its immortal interests!

Earthly objects, on which the affections of the wicked have been supremely seated—these, one after another, in this world of changes, are swept away; and under these losses, their souls have no almighty arm to lean upon, no God to go to. The God of heaven—he has been disowned, repudiated, by the sinners of earth; and when earthly losses, therefore, and disappointments come, they have no God to buoy them up. The waves of adversity beat against their vessel; afflictions roll in upon them like a flood; loss follows loss in quick succession, as wave follows wave, and where is some great, sustaining, supporting principle, now so much needed? The wicked have it not in their posses-

sion. The christian—he can get up above the world when winds blow, and storms assail, and tempests roar, and billows beat. Yes, the christian can then mount up above the world; can lay hold on the skies, for he has wings of faith with which to mount, and hands of faith with which to lay hold on heaven's pillars; and from his elevation he can look down on the commotion, the tempestuous, troubled scene below, with a serene countenance, and an unagitated heart. Or, in the very midst of such scenes, the children of the heavenly King can in patience possess their souls. But the wicked—what buoying, elevating, tranquillizing principle have they? Where is faith that has leaped from the skies? Where is heaven-born patience? These the wicked have not. They must get along without them as well as they can, amidst the disappointments, losses, and trials of earth. And, verily, they get along poorly enough without them. They make many wry faces, and utter many sore complaints, and oftentimes appear quite overcome. Their heads sink beneath the billows; by the hand sometimes even of self-destruction they pass away.

An Italian bishop struggled through great difficulties without repining, and met with much opposition in the discharge of his episcopal functions without ever betraying the least impatience. An intimate friend of his, who highly admired those virtues which he thought it impossible to imitate,

one day asked the prelate if he could communicate his secret of being always easy? "Yes," replied the old man, "I can teach you my secret, and with great facility. It consists in nothing more than making a right use of my eyes." His friend begged him to explain himself. "Most willingly," returned the bishop: "In whatever state I am, I first of all look up to heaven, and remember that my principal business here is to get there. I then look down upon the earth, and call to mind how small a space I shall occupy in it when I come to be interred. I then look abroad in the world, and observe what multitudes there are who are in all respects more unhappy than myself. Thus I learn where true happiness is placed, where all our cares must end, and how very little reason I have to repine or complain." But we do not, reader, find the unregenerate making such a right use of their eyes, as did this good bishop of his. The heart must be changed, must be set right, before the eyes will take such right views of things.

Again: The heart of the wicked is the seat of tormenting passions. Pride, for example, reigns in unbroken strength there, a passion which is a source of no small trouble to its possessor. The proud man is constantly meeting with something to cause uneasiness. He is perpetually looking for more respect and notice to be paid him, than is his due, or than others are willing to render. His mind is chafed,

his heart vexed with the veriest trifles. Holding his head high, bearing it aloft, it meets with many a catastrophe which the lowly christian escapes. There is *envy* also, which has its seat in the breast of the ungodly—a passion which causes a man to fret and grow lean when he witnesses the success and prosperity of others. And there is *avarice*, that uneasy, greedy passion which stretches out its arms like seas, as if solicitous to grasp in all the shore. This passion can hardly be said ever to be satisfied. Like the daughters of the horse-leech, it is continually crying, “Give, give.” Oh, how wide does this passion open its mouth, how ravenous its appetite, how large its stomach. Crowd in a world, and it will still cry for more. “A merchant who had accumulated a vast property by care and industry, yet still was as busy as ever in adding vessel to vessel, and store to store, though considerably advanced in life, being asked by a neighbour how much property he supposed would satisfy a human being—after a short pause, significantly replied, ‘A little more.’” And there is *ambition*, likewise, that haunts the breast of many of the wicked, and makes their life a very uneasy one. It will toil and sweat not a little to gain an empty name. It will lead its possessor, as it were, through fire, and through water; will cause him to compass sea and land to obtain a bubble. To discover the restlessness of ambition, you need but to look at Alexander

the Great, of whom it has been reported, that after conquering the most of the then inhabited globe, he sat down and wept because he could not find other worlds to conquer.

Such are some of the evil passions which are found dwelling more or less in the bosoms of the wicked, and are so annoying as to tend to keep peace at a distance from their doors. The ungodly, under the influence of such passions as these, often prove very troublesome to each other—are oftentimes rendered by them unfit to dwell in the same neighbourhood; and it seems sometimes almost an inconvenience to them that they are destined for a season to have a residence even in the same world. Possessed of such passions, the wicked continually carry about with them the principles of uneasiness. Wherever they are, howsoever employed, they are still “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Unmortified corruptions, domineering passions, and unbridled appetites and lusts, are productive to the wicked of much and almost constant disquietude.

Again: The *conscience* of the wicked is in a state that is by no means peaceful. Even when that power is not so roused as to utter a voice loud as seven thunders, or so moved and quickened as to execute very faithfully the duties of its office; when it has not to such a degree shaken off its torpor as to bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder—it is

still in a greater or less measure in such a state, that, in the case of the wicked, it knows not peace. It may appear to be entirely asleep sometimes, seem very inactive, almost or quite to have lost all sensibility—yet if you closely scrutinize its state even then, you may find some habitually annoying conviction of guilt in it—a something which keeps telling its possessor that he has done wrong in exiling himself from his Creator, disregarding the authority, and trampling under foot the laws of the Supreme Being; and in treating his heavenly Benefactor with such dishonour and black ingratitude. It feels burdened and disturbed on this account. “Colonel Gardiner, while he was eagerly pursuing the vanities and follies of the world, appeared so full of life and spirit, that he got the name of the *happy rake*; but after he became a new man, he declared that at the very time when he seemed so merry that others envied him his happiness, he was often so miserable in his own mind, as to wish himself *a dog*.” There is a sort of load on the conscience of the impenitent, even in their most careless state—even when that conscience seems to be sleeping and snoring. Let God but just touch it as with the tip of his finger, and it will, like a lion, start up and roar terribly. Oh, how different from that state of conscience which the true and devoted christian has. He has an inward peace which passeth understanding. And he has peace with God too—a thing

which the wicked have not. Jehovah is not, to these latter, a reconciled Father, but, on the contrary, a consuming fire. The inspired Psalmist tells us, that God is angry with the wicked every day; and that "if they turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath also prepared for them the instruments of death." "O Lord, thou, even thou art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?" Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end by timely repentance on their part; by a turning unto God through faith in the sin-atoning Lamb.

Oh, to live all one's lifetime, here, *an exile from God*, an outcast from his favour and smiles, *it is a poor way of living, a hard way of getting along indeed!* It is rather death than life. The way of transgressors, verily, is hard. To pass through life's pilgrimage with an angry God above, and with a heart at enmity with God—with no rays of sunshine from on high, and no solid peace in the heart—may the Lord in his great mercy, dear reader, deliver you and me from such a wretched, living death as it!

And if *to live* thus is attended with wretchedness, or an entire destitution of peace, ah, what is it to *die thus?* To be driven away in one's wickedness, to come to that bed where there is to be a giving up the ghost with a heart unreconciled to God; to

lay the head down on that pillow from which there is to be no lifting of it up, until the pains, the groans, and dying strife are encountered, and no Divine hand near to smooth and soften that pillow, no Saviour, no Prince of Peace at hand, whose smiles could chase away the gloom of the departing hour, and gladden the human spirit as it is about to leave its house of clay, and journey forth into the unseen world—ah, *this, this* is solemn, trying, mournful, terrific indeed! Oh, dying reader, I would not at all like to go down into the vale of death thus! I want my God as a Friend to be present, and his countenance beaming with smiles upon me, when my couch witnesses my dying struggle, and when I bid the world farewell!

And when the soul of the poor sinner, dying in his wickedness, has got out of this world, when the spirits of the wicked get into the world of spirits, how, how is it then? What is their case there? Escaped from this world of turmoil and trouble, are they bettered in their condition in that eternal world whither they have gone? Destitute of peace as their hearts were here, do they find peace there? Do they appear on the green, enchanting fields of Elysium with hearts filled with rapture, and with eyes gazing on before unseen, amazing, and unutterable glories? Oh, are they seen with spirits blissful beyond thought, now bathing in the pure river of the water of life; and

then skipping, bounding with joy over hill and through dale in the bright, heavenly paradise? What! the wicked go to heaven? the wicked, dying impenitent, dying in their wickedness, and yet happy after death? That would be strange indeed. Passing into eternity impure, unholy, and yet enter into the thrice holy city? Why, neither God nor angel would suffer such a thing to take place, or, if once entered, to tarry there quietly for a moment. If, in any clandestine, or underhanded way, the wicked in a body could, at some moment, get within the walls of the celestial city, why, as once in the case of the rebellious angels, so again, there would be war in heaven, until the ungodly were all thrust out. It is to be considered, moreover, that the sinner, carrying his depravity with him, would not be happy were he in heaven. Heaven would be no heaven to him.

No, no. Satan, indeed, has said to the transgressor, "Thou shalt not surely die;" but God has not so said. He has said the contrary. The devil tempts the sinner to say to himself, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart." But God says, "There is no peace to the wicked." And I would be poorly, wickedly, cruelly employed this hour, were I to hold up the idea to the unconverted reader of these pages, that his prospects in the futurity before him are flattering—were I to whisper in his ears, "Peace, peace," when

to the wicked "there is no peace, saith my God." No, I will not say, peace, peace, to the wicked—will not say so to the impenitent friend who is now perusing these lines. When he plunges into eternity, sinks into hell, and continues there, I will not let him have it in his power to charge me with having deceived him. He shall not have it to say that I thus lured him to perdition. Hell! an eternal hell! Is *it* the abode of the wicked beyond death? Are they to spend almost the whole, this life subtracted, absolutely the whole of their immortal existence in that place of unutterable torment? To live this short life on earth *without peace*, why, though bad truly, is comparatively a trifle. But to spend the ages heaped on ages of eternity without one drop of comfort, having no peace, no peace, day or night forever—ah, impenitent reader, *think of it!* think of it until your heart quakes, and your soul leaps into the crimson tide flowing from Calvary.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LORD'S INQUIRY.

READING, last evening, in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, I, not far from the beginning, came across this question: "How shall I put thee among the children?" Some thoughts suggested by it, unconverted reader, may perhaps not be unprofitable to you. I *pray* that they may not.

At that time, only two of the Jewish tribes were dwelling in the Holy Land. The other ten tribes were, and for over fourscore years had been, in captivity in Assyria—had been exiled thither as a judgment for their grievous sins. From the time of Jeroboam I., they had almost wholly forsaken the worship of the true God. For two centuries and a half before they were borne into a strange land, they were almost entirely worshippers of idols, and were great offenders in other respects. Though in a state of exile on account of these things, they were, even after so long a time, not a whit better; had not improved under the chastening hand of God; but, on the contrary, were still growing worse. Their residence among the heathen, instead

of exciting disgust and abhorrence at the vile practices of the latter, rather tended to make them the more heathenish. They had also built houses and planted vineyards in the country where they were, and seemed not at all anxious to return to the land of their former abode. The power, too, that held them, appeared not on the decline, but rather on the increase. On the whole, there were many and great difficulties in the way of their being restored to the land of Canaan, and placed among and favoured with the privilege of God's children there. The Lord had indeed said, just before, "Go and proclaim these words toward the North," (that is, toward Assyria, where they now were,) "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever." But then, he again, as it were, thinks of their unworthiness; of their persistence in the sins which had caused him to banish them; of their unfitness to be placed in Palestine, among his people; and other things;—his mind reverts to these, and he is caused to give utterance to the inquiry, "How shall I put thee among the children?"

The land of Canaan was a type of the heavenly land. And if the former was inhabited by those whom the Lord was pleased to denominate his children, the inhabitants of the latter he is pecu-

liarily willing to call and own as such. The celestial country is peopled in part by *natives*, for such the holy angels are. These derived their being from God, and in this sense he is their Father. Toward him who gave them being, they have always possessed and exercised a filial spirit; they delighted to call God their Father, and to act toward him as if they felt him to be so; and he was as much pleased to call them his sons or children. In the book of Job, there are two places in which the holy angels are denominated the "sons of God:" In the 1st chapter and 6th verse, "Now there was a day when the sons of God," (meaning the holy angels,)—and in the 38th chapter and 7th verse, "And all the sons of God shouted for joy," where the same beings are meant.

These have the heavenly land for their abode. But that land is not appropriated exclusively to these. There is quite a number of creatures of another race there also—we mean, of the human race. Astonishing that it should be so; for the whole human race lost their holiness; all fell from God. Still, a portion of this race are actually in the celestial country. God found some way of preparing them for, and receiving them there. They are there in a disembodied state, however, and so are spoken of as "the *spirits* of just men made perfect." Were all these counted, they would be ascertained to be already by no means a small company.

Some of these ascended from the earth, and took up their residence there before the flood; many more between the deluge and the coming of Jesus Christ; and a still larger number since. Those human spirits that have gone up, and are living among the angels, the Lord calls his *children*. Amazing condescension, certainly—for they were once aliens, and enemies to him; were once strongly opposed to the Lord, and were children of another father, servants of another master. But they became changed, dear reader, in their dispositions and conduct, and God adopted them into his family; called them sons and daughters. They were in a strange way delivered from their guilt and filthiness. They glory in nothing now so much as in being able to call God their Father; and are now actually in the heavenly Canaan; mingling with creatures that never fell; holding communion with the same infinite Father; bending before the same throne; and sharing in the same privileges and joys. They are perfectly holy creatures, however, as are the angels, and cease not, day or night, any more than do seraphs, from praising and serving Jehovah.

Now, on this earth are myriads of sinners, unchanged sinners—creatures so unlike to the heavenly inhabitants of which we have been speaking, as to have no filial spirit toward the Lord God, and as to engage not at all in his service. Yet some of these very ones may not be able to see or conjecture,

should they die to-day, why they may not be admitted into heaven, as well as those who have actually entered there. They may be unable to discover any serious obstacle in the way. They neither consider, nor think they have any reason to consider themselves as very bad—far from it; and they have besides heard, and see no reason to disbelieve it, that Jehovah is merciful. They hence infer that he will not be very strict or particular in regard to whom he admits into the celestial region.

It is not uncommon for unchanged, unrenewed sinners to feel differently in relation to this matter, from what even earthly saints or christian pilgrims do. These last, not unfrequently, have such a discovery of their aberrations and shortcomings, and such a sense of the greatness and power of their corruptions, as to cause them to wonder how they can ever have the celestial gates thrown open to them; how they can ever become companions of the cherubim, and the spirits of perfectly holy men. It seems sometimes to them as if there were wonderful obstacles still in the way. But, my dear reader, not so, always, does it appear to the inconsiderate and blinded sinner. He, on the contrary, will perhaps think it strange almost, if he should not take up his abode in the Canaan on high, and mingle with the inhabitants of that better land, when called away from this lower country.

But God looks upon this matter very differently

from what the self-righteous, self-partial, or blinded sinner does. The Lord sees, of one kind or another, so much in the way of it, that he may be considered, oh sinner, as feelingly and earnestly saying to you now, and again at the hour of your giving up the ghost, "How shall I put thee among the children?" How shall I put thee in the goodly land above, and among my pure and beloved creatures there?

There are certainly, my reader, great difficulties in the way of the impenitent and unchanged sinner being put into the heavenly Canaan, and among the saints and holy angels there. Some of these difficulties we will proceed to mention.

1st. One of the difficulties in the way of this is, that it would *militate against God's truth*. The Lord has promised heaven to certain ones, plainly implying that to those of contrary character or ways he will not grant admittance there. We find, for instance, such a question asked as this: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" A part of the answer is: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness." We are left to infer, that those who do not answer to this description shall not dwell in the place there specified. But the sinner does not walk uprightly, and work righteousness. It is by implication said, then, that *he* shall not dwell in God's holy hill. Yet this would prove untrue, should the unconverted sinner be put along with God's children on the

summits of glory. Again ; in the 24th Psalm, it is asked, " Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer is: " He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord." The inference is forced upon us, amounting to a declaration from the divine mouth, that the creature who has not clean hands and a pure heart, and these I need not say the sinner has not, shall not stand in God's holy place. And so, wherever else you find a promise of the heavenly Canaan given, it is to them of a contrary character or ways from those of the unsanctified sinner—plainly asserting in the form of implication, that to *him* it is not to be given.

But more particularly and clearly may we see, from the direct threatenings of the Lord, that the wicked cannot be placed in heaven without militating against God's truth. Let us look at a few of those declarations of God which have the form of threatenings. These are some of them: " The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.—For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight.—Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the

portion of their cup.—The soul that sinneth, it shall die.—The wages of sin is death.—These,” speaking of the wicked, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment.—And they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.—And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.” Does it not from these declarations, appear as clear as any thing can, that God cannot put the unchanged, unsanctified sinner among his children in heaven, without falsifying his word? without a sacrifice of his character for truth? This is one difficulty.

2d. Another difficulty in the way of the unchanged sinner being put into the upper Canaan among the Lord’s children is, that it would militate against or be in the face of *the justice of God*. The sinner, as you have just seen, is threatened with an exclusion from heaven not only, but with everlasting punishment for his sins. Now why is he thus threatened? Did God act without any reason in this matter? Did the creature, on account of sin, not deserve such treatment as he is threatened with, think you that he would have been thus threatened? If it had been *unjust* to execute the threatening, think you that it would have ever issued from God’s lips? When you look at the law, you find what the penalty is, in case of disobedience. Now would such a penalty have ever been affixed, if what it embodies was not due in case of transgression of the

law, or of non-conformity to it? By no means. That penalty shows what sin deserves, what is due to it, or rather what is due the sinner on account of it. God has rights; the sinner invades them. God has just claims; the sinner withholds what the Lord justly claims. The Almighty tells him what he deserves on account of invading his rights, or withholding his claims; tells what justice demands, even the sinner's everlasting death. Now, can the sinner get into heaven in the face of this? No satisfaction rendered by him personally, or otherwise, to divine justice, and yet he escape not only, but be put into a pleasant and magnificent habitation for ever besides? Surely that, reader, cannot be, can it?

Take this additional consideration. It appears from scripture, that the invasion of a right, or the withholding of a just claim, *in a single instance*, deserves everlasting death. An *individual act* of this kind is threatened with such a punishment. If the human creature broke the divine law in a *single instance*, divine justice would require that he should be cast into hell. Adam was threatened with death upon one transgression. So is every one of his descendants. Now, in how many instances has the sinner broken the divine law? In how many instances has he invaded the rights, or withholden the just claims of God? Could he count them, if he should try? Are not his acts of this sort literally innumerable? And can he, then, in the face

of the vast, mountainous debt which he has contracted—in the face of these innumerable sins, each of which deserves such a judicial infliction—oh, can he, in the face of all this, be put into heaven, among God's saints and angels there? Do you not see what an obstacle divine justice presents against such a thing?

3d. Another difficulty, reader, in the way of putting the unchanged, un sanctified sinner among God's heavenly family is, that it would be very offensive and derogatory to the *holiness of God*. That Jehovah is a holy Being, so holy that the heavens are not clean in his sight—that in consequence of the infinite holiness of his nature and feelings, he bears an intense hatred to sin, in every form of it, and so hates all the workers of iniquity as such,—that he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, so great is his abhorrence of it, and opposition to it—is what we are told, and clearly, in the scriptures of truth. Now is not here an obstacle, an insuperable one, to the un sanctified sinner's being admitted into the glorious presence of God? for God's heavenly family are in his glorious presence. What! admit a creature covered and pervaded by what God intensely, infinitely hates, into his immediate presence? Will he displease himself so much as to bring into his house and family, a creature that, on account of its defilement, is so offensive, that he cannot bear to look at or cast his

eyes upon it? That would be a strange thing indeed. No; he will keep out the unsanctified, unholy creature from his glorious presence and kingdom—we may be sure of it. Such a loathsome, disgusting object he would not pollute heaven with, nor have any where near him. He will keep every such object outside the walls of the celestial city, yes, and at a much greater distance from where his glorified children live. What did God do with that portion of the angels that meddled with sin, and so soon as they meddled with or became tainted by it? Did he let them stay quietly in heaven? Did he suffer them to abide there as before? Did he not, on the contrary, in his holy indignation, immediately rise, and drive, hurl them out of the holy city? He would not, indeed, let them stop and live any where near the place of their previous residence. He drove them far, far off—to an irreturnable distance from his blest abode. This he did, because he was so holy, and hated sin so much. And would he, after all that, would he now, admit into heaven, into the very place from which he expelled the sinning angels—would he, I ask, admit any other, and naturally inferior creature, that has stained itself with the abominable thing, there? He would not act so inconsistently. Besides; it would imply that he now had ceased to hate sin, or, at least, that he now hated it less than he once did; that the immutable

God had changed in this particular. What an absurdity!

In addition; suppose that God would and did open the door of heaven to the unchanged, unsanctified sinner, he would then connive at sin, would he not? and all his other intelligent creatures would find out that he connived at sin: why, then, would not the holy portion of them begin to regard God with less admiration, and feel toward him less esteem, than they previously did? Would he not sink in their estimation amazingly? And how astonishingly, moreover, would the motives to obedience and submission be weakened! Should the Lord treat the defiled and disobedient in the same way that he does the holy and obedient, one of the greatest and most powerful motives to obedience and holy living would be taken away or wanting. Encouragement would be thereby afforded to the rational creatures of God to disobey or sin whenever and as much as they might be tempted, or, on one or another account might choose to. Sin might then reign universally on this globe, and no one fare the worse here, or have the prospect of faring the worse hereafter for it. Indeed, as God's holy creatures are rewarded for holy service, if, without a change, the sinning, unsanctified portion could be admitted into paradise, and fare as well there as the obedient and holy, then would the former appear to be rewarded for sin, inward and actual. The awful spectacle would then

be witnessed, of creatures being rewarded with everlasting glory and felicity for sinning against God. The thought how shocking!

4th. Another difficulty in the way of God's putting the unchanged sinner among his saints and angels in the celestial Canaan is, that it would have a tendency to disturb the peace and harmony of heaven. God has promised his people rest and peace after this life. Heaven is described as a place of rest: "There remaineth a *rest* to the people of God." But, reader, how would that rest be disturbed, how interfered with, if impure and sinning creatures were put into "the city of habitation," as well as the holy. Uniformity or similarity of sentiment and feeling is essential to the peace and harmony of any society. Now the holy residents in paradise, and the sinner, think and feel very differently, the one from the other. Act together they could not in any thing. If the saints and angels, for instance, wanted to sing a song of praise to their infinite Creator, and should begin, why, the sinner, if there, would begin to growl, throw in his tones of discord, commence cursing the great I AM, or, in other ways, try to interrupt and stop them. Suppose the holy throng should propose some work of service to the infinite King, the sinner would not agree to the proposal; if they commenced, he would not join in it, but on the contrary, would endeavour to prevent the execution of it by the others. If they should cast their

crowns at the foot of the throne, and cry, "Worthy art thou, O Jehovah, of higher praise and thanksgiving than we can offer," the sinner, if there, would be so far from uniting, that he would call them fools, tell them to pick up their crowns, and quit their nonsense. If one unchanged sinner might be admitted into the heavenly Canaan, why not more? why not a large number? why not even all when called away from here? And what sort of a place would heaven then be? What would become of peace and concord? How would the wicked annoy the holy! What jarring, discord, and confusion would they cause! They would hate God's children; oppose, persecute them; and would do all in their power to destroy their happiness, and keep them from praising and serving the Lord. Now do you suppose, my unconverted friend, that God would put any creature into heaven that he knew, if there, would annoy his children thus; that would cause jarring and discomfort in every part of paradise; that would interfere with the fulfilment of their Father's kind designs and promises to his children; that would so much detract from the reward he had given them reason to expect; ay, and from the amount of glory, praise, and service that would otherwise be rendered to him? Of course not.

5th. Still another difficulty in the way of God's giving the unchanged sinner a place among his

heavenly family is, that such sinner would not enjoy himself if he were there. He would not like the appearance, the customs, the apparel, nor the fare of the place. He would not be pleased with the food nor beverage, of which the inhabitants of the upper Canaan partake. He would feel uncomfortable in a company who were employed in such exercises as saints and seraphs on high are. He would have no taste for their songs, no relish for their conversation, no liking for their employments. He would not be satisfied with the way in which the celestial city is lighted; he would even prefer not having it lighted at all, considering the character of the objects which are in it, as well as how the light would cause him to appear. The sinner, as you know, does, even in this world, prefer darkness to light. You have observed, too, that he does not like religious conversation and devotion here; and that he gets much wearied if called to pass an hour or two where Jehovah is prayed unto and praised. Reader, if you were a holy creature in heaven, and a sinner, for experiment, were put within its walls, what would you witness? Why, you would not see him drawing near the dazzling throne of the Eternal One to worship him. You would not see him entering into conversation, delightingly, with saint and seraph;—nor following the Lamb, as he leads his redeemed and sanctified ones unto the living waters, which come gushing here and there

out of the hills of paradise ;—nor opening his mouth to receive the food which the Lamb has to give. You would observe him strolling off, and trying to get by himself, that he might not be annoyed by the sight of the blazing throne of the Infinite King, nor by the songs of the worshippers round about that throne. And should you watch, you might, perhaps, after a while, see him creeping along close to the wall that skirts the heavenly country, and searching for some opening where he may have a chance to get out of a place which is to him so mightily disagreeable.

You see, my impenitent friend, from what has been said, that there are real and great difficulties in the way of the unchanged sinner being put among God's children in the heavenly Canaan. I say, *unchanged* sinner: for there are, on the sunny hills of that upper country, and in large numbers, too, those who were once sinners, sinners on the earth, and of Adam's offspring. They got there somehow. But how? Such difficulties as we have mentioned were once lying in their way. Was it, then, in the face, or in spite of them that they arrived or were put there? Did this occur, for instance, in the face of God's justice, and holiness, and truth? Did these suffer, were these illustrious attributes tarnished by their admittance to the hill country of the skies? You may be sure, not. They were admitted there after such a manner that the glory of none of these

perfections was soiled in the least thereby. The holiness, justice, and truth of God, in their case, opposed no obstacles. These, severally, were satisfied first. This was done through a substitute, Jesus Christ the righteous. His obedience and atoning sufferings were offered them by the gospel to present as a satisfaction on their behalf to God. They plead before the Father thus: "We suffered the penalty of the law, we met the demands of justice, *in Christ*, whom we have accepted by faith as our substitute. By him we have paid the debt which we had contracted. Thou hast executed the threatening of the law which was against us, thou hast exhibited thy hatred to our sin, and thy righteous demands have received satisfaction, *in Him* whom thou didst give to be, and whom we have received as a Saviour!" God heard their plea. His justice, holiness, truth, all professed themselves satisfied in reference to them; and so, when they were taken from the earth, interposed no obstacles to their reception to the upper skies.

And as to those other difficulties which we mentioned, viz., the possession of a spirit, of views, dispositions, feelings, that could not harmonize with those of the heavenly inhabitants: a spirit which would tend to create disturbance in a region designed specially by the Lord as the abode of rest and peace; and, moreover, a want of taste for the avocations, and of relish for the joys of heaven—so peculiar

are they—why, these difficulties became removed, in the case of those who left this lower for the upper sphere, and anterior to the taking of their departure. Before their souls took their flight from their bodies, they had their dispositions and their tastes changed, so changed, as that they liked similar employments and pleasures with those of the celestial inhabitants. Do you ask, *how?* Why, here, dear reader, were rich streams of mercy flowing; here were tenders of gospel grace made. They drank of those streams; they accepted of those tenders; and they became wonderfully different creatures from what they were before. The Holy Spirit came and offered to take away what was wrong in them; came and offered to give beauty in the room of deformity; purity in the room of pollution; heavenly principles in the room of those corrupt ones of which the natural heart is the seat. And that Almighty Spirit was not bidden away, nor were his offers slighted. Thus came they to the possession of a meetness for such an abode as that of the upper Canaan. They got, you see, the temper and the tastes of children, before God put them among the children.

Now, (hear it, dear impenitent friend,) the sinner who is yet on these mortal shores, and who lives under the light of the gospel sun, might, if he would, obtain a title to, and a meetness for the heavenly Canaan, in a way similar to that in which those whom

we have just noticed, obtained the one and the other of these. The sinner, if he would, might so avail himself of the merits and sacrificial virtues of the death of Jesus, for instance, as that neither the justice, the holiness, nor the truth of God would interpose obstacles to his translation to the celestial Judea, when his earthly house of this tabernacle shall totter and fall. And he might, moreover, if he would, so avail himself of the proffered aid and influences of the Holy Spirit, as that he would not be a disturber of the peace of the heavenly community, if put among them; nor have a soul that would dislike heaven's employments, sicken at its songs, or loathe its provisions.

And this suggests another and peculiarly mournful obstacle in the way of the sinner, while unchanged, being put into the celestial world when he dies. The difficulty is this: that the poor depraved creature, in instances beyond reckoning, is *not disposed* to avail himself of what the gospel proffers; is *unwilling* to avail himself of the benefits of Christ's death, and the aids of the spirit of grace. How common is it to find sinners, even where the gospel rays thickly fall, and where what the gospel has to give is freely tendered, refusing to satisfy the demands of the law against them, by taking Christ's blood and death, and pleading them before God—unwilling and refusing to render a satisfaction to the justice and truth of God, by throwing themselves

on the sure platform of substitution—on the vicarious sufferings of God's only begotten Son. Oh, how much are they urged to do so—but they will not. They are on their way to the judgment-seat, and will soon, oh, how soon, be there; but they have no such interest in what Christ has done and endured, as that God's justice, holiness, and truth shall raise no objection to their being put into the city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Appearing there on their own footing, these will raise objections insuperable to their being put among God's children, in the glorious region where they live.

How common also is it—do you not know it, reader?—to find sinners unwilling to become “new creatures;” unwilling to have their depravity purged out; to have their dispositions and feelings, tempers and tastes, changed by the Spirit of God. They refuse to yield to his renewing, transforming, purifying influences; refuse to be made meet to occupy a place where the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, have their residence. Though much urged, entreated, so to do, they refuse to become God's children, to become possessors of the mind and spirit of God's children, and so perpetuate the obstacles to their being put where his children of the human and angelic order dwell.

Now, sinner, I wish to tell you, and I will do it as tenderly as I can, that your conduct must change

in reference to what the gospel has to give ; your conduct must alter in reference to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, or heaven can never be your home. As matters at present stand, the difficulties which are in the way are such, that you cannot possibly, in the face of them, enter the golden city. You must have such a title to heaven, and such a meetness for it, as are to be obtained by throwing yourself on Christ ; and entertaining the Spirit's enlightening, transforming, sanctifying influences, or the goodly land of Canaan, beyond Jordan's waves, that soul which you have will never be allowed to enter. So far as respects our species, heaven is intended only for those who have an evangelical title to, and meetness for it. You, O sinner, at present have neither. Be persuaded, then, without delay, to throw yourself on Calvary's bloody sacrifice, and to give your soul to the Spirit, to be created anew, that your home, hereafter, and forever, may be with God's holy and happy children.

CHAPTER X.

CORRECT REASONING.

THE reasoning to which I allude, reader, is that of four leprous men who lived in the time of the prophet Elisha, and during the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel. The city of Samaria was suffering from an attack of the Syrians. Benhadad, king of Syria, had gathered his forces, and gone and besieged Samaria. It seems that the Syrians met with little opposition till they came to the capital, which was a fenced city, *i. e.*, a city *walled*, and otherwise fortified. This town appears to have been attacked at this time so *suddenly* by them, that its inhabitants had no time or opportunity allowed them to lay in any special store of provisions, so that it seemed now illy prepared to stand it out long against the besiegers. It was at length reduced, as a consequence of the siege, to a state of great distress. Want stared them in the face. Scarcity as to provisions became so great, that the inhabitants were to a man, threatened with death from starvation. "There was a great famine," says the inspired historian, "in Samaria: And behold, they besieged

it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver." (2 Kings, vi. 25.) If these pieces of silver were shekels, then about the sum of forty dollars was on this occasion paid for the head of an animal which was ceremonially unclean; which was not commonly used for food; and which afforded very little sustenance. Such a bargain, it seems, was, at this distressing period, at least once if not oftener, made, in the urgency of hunger. The extremity of the famine to which this city was reduced by the siege against it, appears very great, from another circumstance, related after the one already mentioned. The account is in these words: "As the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king! And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman," (a neighbour, I suppose,) "this woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him; and behold she hath hid her son."

Now whilst such a state of things existed *within the city*, there were four leprous men lodging in tents *outside* of its walls, who experienced the dire effects of the scarcity which raged within. They

had their lodging "*without*" the gate, being excluded the city, because as lepers they were ceremonially unclean. The rule laid down concerning lepers, as given to Moses in the law, was this: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean! he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." (Lev. xiii. 45, 46.) In another place, also, (Num. v. 1—4,) it is said, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper—both male and female shall ye put out; without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camp in the midst whereof they dwell. And," it is added, "the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the Lord spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel." We here have the reason assigned, why the four leprous men were lodging *outside* instead of *within* the walls of the city. They lodged, however, *near* the walls without, it seems: for they are spoken of as being "at the entering in of the gate." (2 Kings, vii. 3.) Inasmuch as the famine raged to such an extreme in the city, these lepers were on the point of perishing from starvation: for none came from within the town out to them to bring them food; and they were so enfeebled or otherwise affected by the leprosy, that they were not able,

probably, to procure the necessaries of life by any labour of their own. They therefore deliberate, or consult one another, as to what shall be done to escape, if possible, the death from want which threatens them. Their deliberations, and the conclusion to which they at length come, are given in the following words: "They said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." (2 Kings, vii. 3, 4.)

They attempted to carry this resolution immediately into effect; the consequence of which was, that their lives were saved, and that, too, in a providential and very unexpected manner. We are told that "they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians; and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the

camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent and did eat and drink"—found provisions to save them from death by famine—"and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it." (2 Kings, vii. 5—8.) They also carried news to the people within the city, of the departure of the Syrians, and thus were instrumental in delivering them earlier than they otherwise would have been, from the fears and miseries of famine.

The *reasoning* of these lepers, reader, is that which I wish you to fix in your mind, together with the *resolution* to which they came, and the *result* of carrying that resolution into effect. These lepers "said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore," &c.

Unconverted reader, both you and all unregenerate sinners are affected with a leprosy—the leprosy of sin; and being thus affected, are, in consequence, excluded from the camp of God's Israel. You are outside the walls of Zion, or the true spiritual church of God. You are likewise in *danger*, as the lepers were; in danger of death; but a death much more tremendous than that to which the four lepers, of

whom you have heard, were exposed:—a death not merely temporal, and of the body, but the eternal death of the soul. And as there was more than one way in which the lepers might die a natural, so are there more ways than one in which you and other sinners may come to die an eternal death—ay, quite a number of ways. There are many ways in which sinners may be lost forever; although, as with the lepers, there is one general cause. Famine, or want, was the general cause with the four leprous men. With all unconverted or impenitent sinners, *sin* is the general cause. But as the leprous men might, and were in danger of dying *from famine* in more than one way; so are sinners in danger of dying, or being lost eternally, *from sin*, in more ways than one.

I. The four leprous men said one to another, “Why sit we here until we die? If we sit still here,” say they, “we die.” So may it be said, reader, by you, and by every unconverted sinner, ‘If I sit still where I am, I die—die forever.’

Mankind are not naturally in so safe a state that they can indulge sloth, or *sit still* without danger. Their state being a sinful one, it is attended with peril, such peril that they have need to awake, and rise up, and look about them. God, nowhere within the lids of the Bible, encourages the sinner to expect life or salvation, if he *sits still where he is*—if he sits still in his sins. The Lord does not anywhere say

to him, ‘*Sleep*, and you shall be saved—indulge in sloth, or sit still in carelessness, and you shall not die; you shall go to heaven.’ This is not God’s appointed way of escaping the wrath to come. Look at the case of the man mentioned in the 25th of Matthew, who went and hid in the earth the talent entrusted to him by his master. When he came to be reckoned with, his lord said unto him, “Thou wicked and slothful servant,”—wicked because slothful, as well as slothful because wicked. “Take, therefore,” says his lord, “the talent from him, and give it unto him who hath ten talents. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

God nowhere sanctions idleness. He says to those not engaged in his service, “Why sit ye here all the day idle?” Some persons do not seem to imagine that sins of *omission* are hardly sins at all. Let such glance at the account of the judgment-day and its proceedings, as given in the latter part of the 25th of Matthew. Who are they to whom the Judge will say, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire? Why, you may at once see, there, that they are those that *did not*—*did not do* the things which it was their duty to have done. They were idle. They are condemned for sitting still. “They go away,” according to the account there given, or language used,—“they go away into everlasting punishment,” for omission or inaction.

Do not misunderstand me: I say, *according to the account there given*. The provisions of God's grace themselves are not, in the scriptures, represented as attainable, or at least as attained, by the negligent and slothful. Far from it. "How shall we escape," says an inspired penman, "if we *neglect* so great salvation?" The five foolish virgins were sleeping, whilst they should have been busy in providing oil for their lamps. The consequence was, that when the bridegroom came, they were *not ready* for him, and were consequently shut out. You cannot sit still—not any sinner can, and yet comply with the requisitions of the gospel. That demands activity. That requires the whole man, with all its powers, to be stirred up to action. The demands of the gospel are, Repent, Believe, Watch, Pray, Deny thyself, Take up thy cross, Follow me. These things seem to be requisite before a fallen being can share in the joys and immunities of heaven. Yet these things imply great activity, ay, and activity of all the human powers, in a certain way. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Strive,"—as the original imports, *agonize*—"strive as those that run for a prize"—exert yourself to the utmost,—“to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Sinners are not in a vessel on a stream, where they may sit still and yet be borne as by the natural current to the secure and blissful harbour of heaven. Such are far from being the

representations of the God of truth in his word. Yet how many, oh, what large numbers of sinners are sitting still; are doing nothing, nothing at all, to escape impending destruction. O careless, impenitent creature! what mean you? Why are you sitting idle, "still," amidst gathering storms, and a lowering sky? Can you be so blind and insensible as to be unapprehensive of danger? Onward are you wafted, and with what rapidity, by time's swift current, toward eternity's ocean; your soul, your all in jeopardy, and yet what listlessness! what torpitude! as if there was naught to be attended to; as if all was safe, all well with you! How mournful, how heart-rending a sight it is, to see a poor, impenitent, unchanged creature, so stupid, blind, and hardened in sin, as to remain unmoved, careless, prayerless, whilst he knows not at what hour the cold mists of death shall settle upon him, and his spirit pass beyond the confines of mercy. Flee, O my impenitent friend, I beseech you, flee from hastening wrath. Those dark clouds, and that bellowing thunder, betoken a storm. Seek a shelter; escape for thy life! "A dying man, who had cared for every thing more than for his soul, awoke in an agony, as the scene of life was drawing to a close, and throwing upon his wife a look of wildness and terror, exclaimed, '*I am going—but where! where!*'" These were the last words he uttered, before he was called to his final account. Death

had taken him by surprise. The valley before him was all darkness and despair, and he shuddered on entering it. Reader, remember you are very soon to go—and, *Where? where?*

The lepers had become sensible, it seems, of their danger. They had been sitting still; but they are now brought to see that this will not do. They appear now fully convinced that something must be done, or die they must. There is no peradventure about it, if they remain where they are. “Why sit we here,” say they, “until we die?” They had fully made up their minds, it appears, as to the consequences of sitting still: for they add, in the most positive language, “If we sit still here, we die.” They discovered their danger. But it was not now merely a matter of *discovery*; it had become at this time also a matter of *feeling, of deep feeling*. They had become alarmed, so great, imminent, the danger that threatened them—and they had cause to be alarmed.

Would that the impenitent reader of these pages, and every other sinner, might both see and feel as much. Would that they all were so awakened to a sight and sense of their fearful condition, as to be constrained to say, one to another, or at least to themselves, not only with the positiveness, but also with the anxious feeling of the lepers, “If we sit still here, we die.” But alas! how many are there who have apparently no concern about their situa-

tion, though it is infinitely more perilous than that of the lepers. They are so immersed in worldly cares and business; they have so many earthly schemes to occupy their thoughts, and absorb and interest the feelings of their carnal, unrenewed hearts, that they have no time, or thought, or feeling to devote to their spirits immortal. Oh, what inexpressible, infinite peril are all unrepentant sinners in; yet there is but here and there one that appears to feel or even to see it. What crowds are whirling toward perdition, with as little thought or concern as the ox passes on to the slaughter. Sinner, I entreat you to *think*. Rush not onward to an eternal hell *without thinking* where you are going!

We remarked that the four lepers became sensible, deeply so, that it would not do for them to sit still—that they must do something if they would escape death. And *what* must they do? Must they rise up and go into the city? Could they in this way preserve their lives? No; it appears not. As we have found them saying, “If we sit still here, we die;” so do we also find them declaring, “*If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there.*” From which we would take occasion to remark,

II. That it is not *every kind of doing* that will secure the sinner from death or ruin. Whilst if the unconverted sinner “sits still,” interminable ruin will overtake him; yet there are *some things he may*

do, with a desire and design to escape death, and secure endless life, and yet these things be *unavailing*. Some things may be resorted to, as means to escape eternal destruction, which will not secure that end. The sinner who is awakened, who is convinced of his sins and his danger, is liable to betake himself to some improper source for help. There are what the scriptures call "refuges of lies;" and there is a wonderful inclination or tendency in the depraved human heart to resort, under conviction, to some of these. Man's spiritual adversary, the devil, is also very busy with his temptations; very active in his attempts to get awakened sinners to have recourse to some false refuge, or settle down on some wrong, sandy, soul-ruining foundation. Several of the senseless observances and absurd ceremonies of the Romanists may be ranked among the false and deceitful refuges. According to these, sinners are set at doing *something*, doing penance, for instance, or making confession before a priest, in order to obtain absolution; or praying to the Virgin Mary, and departed saints, or other things as absurd; and hoping to obtain heaven by such means. Or, awakened sinners may be tempted to lay great stress and place much dependence on some dream they have had, or some light they may fancy they have seen, or some voice they may imagine they have heard. Or, they may lop off some of their old sins, and thus commence an outward reformation, and depend on

it for eternal life. They may go to work to weave a web, and to make out of it a covering of righteousness for themselves, and thus attempt to enter heaven on the ground of personal merit. Or, they may enter on the business of fasting, praying, weeping, and place their dependence on these, altogether, for salvation—and so, by mistake, fail of obtaining pardon, or entering into life. We know, reader, what mistakes the Pharisees fell into as to this matter. Paul says of them, (Rom. x. 3,) “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” It is not a very uncommon occurrence for awakened sinners, in the present age, to fall into a similar mistake. Concerning John Bunyan, it is said, that, when he was under conviction, he ran for a while into a mistake of this kind. “Hearing a poor but pious man speak, one day, with delight of the comfort to be derived from religion and the Bible, Bunyan was so affected, that he resolved to prove, in some measure at least, the occupation which had afforded so much joy to the other. He read the scriptures; lopped off his outward vices; and was regarded by himself and others as a very religious man.” But he was destined not long to rest his hopes for eternity on the sandy foundation of his own righteousness, it seems: for, one day he overheard a number of poor women in Bedford in conversation on religious

subjects; the result of which, along with the appearance of pleasantness and satisfaction in these themes which they manifested, was, that he resolved to seek further opportunities of hearing their discourse. This led to a renunciation of his own schemes as utterly worthless, and a more sound and intelligent view of the gospel plan of salvation. In the life of David Brainerd, we are informed that that excellent, devoted man fell for a time, also, anterior to his true conversion, into a like mistake. The proud, carnal heart of the unregenerate sinner, even when he is awakened, shows oftentimes a very great reluctance to resign all dependence on self; to renounce all self-righteousness; and to feel and confess his utter impotence, or inability to obtain justification and eternal life on the ground of personal deservings; and to cast every thing of this sort at once to the winds.

“An Indian and a white man being at worship together, were both brought under conviction by the same sermon. The Indian was shortly after led to rejoice in pardoning mercy. The white man, for a long time, was under distress of mind, and at times almost ready to despair; but at length he was also brought to a comfortable experience of forgiving love. Some time after, meeting his red brother, he thus addressed him; ‘How is it that *I* should be so long under conviction, when you found comfort so soon?’ ‘Oh, brother,’ replied the Indian, ‘me tell you. There

come along a rich prince; he propose to give you a *new coat*; you look at your coat and say, 'I don't know; my coat pretty good; I believe it will do a little longer.' He then offer *me* new coat; I look on my *old blanket*; I say, this good for nothing; I fling it right away, and accept the new coat. Just so, brother, you try to keep your own righteousness for some time; you loath to give it up: but I, poor Indian, had none. Therefore I glad at once to receive the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.' "

It is an encouraging circumstance when awakened sinners become so fully, deeply convinced, that they have no personal qualities or performances of such a character that they can glory in, or depend upon them for salvation; when they become so humbled, and so sensible of their helpless and undone condition, as that they will willingly resign or renounce every thing of this sort—cast away everything whatsoever that prevents or operates as a hindrance to their flying as for their lives to the only true help or refuge.

The lepers, being convinced that they must die from famine *if they enter into the city*, no less than if they *sit still*, form a resolution which avails to the delivering of them, effectually and at once, from danger and threatened death. They say one to another, as the result of their deliberations, "Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and

if they kill us, we shall but die." They were *shut up* to this way; *no other* was left open to them, if they would save their lives. This expedient was attended with a favourable result. From which we are led to remark,

III. That sinners should resolve, and, looking to the strong for strength, should carry the resolution at once into effect, that they will try to escape endless death, and secure eternal life, in that *one only way* which the gospel points out.

Suppose, dear reader, that throughout the caverns of the lost, the sound should be heard—suppose that on the ears of the fallen spirits of the pit should for the first time fall a voice, making such a proclamation as this: "*Perhaps, perhaps mercy may be found.*" Oh, what a load, what a burden would roll off from their bosoms. How would their hearts be lightened by such a sound. Despair itself would begin to put on a smile; and the wo-begone spirits would instantaneously feel as if they already were almost out of hell. I ask, then, should not *fallen men on earth*, who fully deserve to drink of the wine of God's indignation forever, without one drop of ease or comfort mixed with it—oh, should not *they* feel their hearts kindling with emotions of joyfulness, if, by an accredited messenger from the court of heaven, it should be said in their hearing: *Perhaps, perhaps mercy may be found*; perhaps sinners can find pardon and peace; perhaps there is some way in which

they can be restored to the favour of a justly offended God, and thus escape the awful and unending wrath and woe which threaten them? Reader, if perchance you be one whose eyes the scales have so far left that you begin to see, and from whose heart and conscience, torpor and death are so far lifted off, that you begin to feel that you are a great sinner before God, so great a sinner that you stand amazed that you are not now for your sins in hell—I would just say to you, that *perhaps* you can find mercy; *perhaps* there can some way be found in which you may escape the damnation of hell. In running my eye over God's Bible, I think I discover, to say the least, some little ground of encouragement of this sort for the guilty, trembling, anxious, inquiring soul; some little prospect that he may escape the death that never dies, and find the life which never ends, if—if—— Let us see.

In looking over the Book which contains God's revelation, I find a brief account of some wonderful doings on Calvary. I find that God's blessed and only-begotten Son once was there. And on inquiring for what, *for what* he was there, I learn that it was for *sinners*, yes, *for sinners!* And what did Jesus, God's blessed Son, do there? Ah! I find him opening a fountain there, for some purpose. I find him there suspended on a tree, a sufferer—oh, what a sufferer! Do you see him on that cross?

Reader, that death—that death was for the life of

certain fallen creatures. Perhaps your case was remembered there. And perhaps, if you will now go to this once crucified One, go humbled, broken-hearted, feeling yourself to be a poor, undone creature, that needs help, ay, perishingly needs it;—perhaps, if you will go to Jesus in this way, and surrender yourself; throw on him the whole burden of your heart; cast yourself, with all your sins, all your guilt and unworthiness, into his arms; for him repudiate every idol—in a word, give up all—I say, perhaps, in such case, he will receive and bless you—perhaps he then will have mercy on your soul; take off the burden from your conscience; and save you from the everlasting damnation that threatens you, and which you cannot say that you do not deserve. I know of no other method by which you can escape God's burning wrath forever. I cannot find, within the lids of the Bible, the least intimation of any other way. Guilty, perishing sinner, to what danger are you this moment exposed! Will you not resolve, as the only, the last resort, to rush immediately into the arms of Christ, saying as you go, like the lepers at the entering in of the gate of Samaria, "If he save me alive, I shall live; and if he reject or refuse to have anything to do with me, if he cast me off, I shall but die." Sinner, in your straitened, perilous condition, will you not now at once rise up and go to Jesus, saying to yourself as you rush toward him—

“ *Perhaps* he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But, if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.”

CHAPTER XI.

WHY DIE?

To die is a serious matter, in what way soever you look at it, or in whatever sense you take it. It is a serious matter to die even a temporal death; that death which consists in the extinction of animal life. No one, however hardened, can look upon a fellow creature dying, without feeling that it is so. To behold a human being stretched on that couch which he is destined to leave only to be borne to the "narrow house;" to behold that vacant stare as his glaring eyeballs are becoming moveless in their sockets; to witness his tossings, his altered countenance, his heaving bosom, the pains, the groans, the dying strife; and to think, moreover, that here, here is the end of him, so far as his earthly career is concerned; and the introduction of the more interesting, the thinking, immaterial part to another and changeless state of being—ah, here is something solemn in its character indeed!

And if solemnity rests about the death-bed of a *fellow creature*; if, when we look upon the mortal conflict of one we love, of a dear relative, for in-

stance, around whom cluster the warmest affections of our hearts, we cannot keep away from our minds the impression that this is solemn work ; oh, how, then, when we think of it, must appear as to solemnity, our own personal struggles with the insatiate archer ! We know, dear reader, that it is appointed unto you and me to fall before him ; that there is no keeping of our hearts from his sharp and fatal shafts. Such an event, solemn as it is, being unavoidable, it would be but mockery to put to you the question, Why will you die this death ?

But, my friend, there is another and far more serious and awful death than this. "There is a death whose pang outlasts the fleeting breath : " a *death eternal*. Eternal death ! Ah, this is a phrase big with meaning. Can any human tongue tell in full what that death is ? To be ever dying—always undergoing the struggles and tortures of death ; dying through days, years, centuries, eternity ! A death in which there is no ceasing to exist and to suffer ! What a death !

Suffer ? What will the sinner, going into eternity impenitent and unpardoned, suffer, after his natural life closes ? Why, he will suffer more than eye here hath seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived.

One thing which may be specified that he will suffer, may be thrown under the head of *loss*. He will suffer the loss of all that he here holds dear. Man was made by his Creator a social being. He

cannot be happy when cut off for any considerable time from society. He must have about him those whom he loves, and who love him, or be wretched. Now, if you enter eternity an unreconciled, unsanctified creature, no friend, no heart entertaining toward you the least kind feeling, will you discover there. You will be henceforth forever a stranger to all domestic and all social sweets. Reader, think of it. How sad, horrible, to be where you can enjoy none of the pleasures of sympathy, friendship; no interchange of kind, tender, glowing thought and feeling;—to be where, what way soever you look, whether upward toward heaven, or around you in the lake that burneth with fire, your eye can light on none but such as are hostile to you, and wishing the continuance and increase of your torment.

You will experience, likewise, the privation of all that here yields pleasure to the eye, or music to the ear, or gratification to the taste, or any other of the senses. Have you possessed wealth, or any amount of worldly substance, while on earth? It is left behind. Did you secure the wreath of honour, the laurels of distinction? These you carry not with you to your everlasting abode. Have you loved either, idolatrously? Your idol leaves you when you journey hence. All “your good things” you have, exclusively, in this hand breadth portion of your existence. If any suffering

can arise from *want*, then of suffering will you be the victim, for, in common with "the rich man," you will want "a drop of water," in the pit to which you will descend upon your departure from this world.

In the place of lost spirits, you will have appetites, but they will be doomed to remain unsatisfied; you will feel the cravings of passion and desire, but these will continue unrelieved. They, severally, will burn and rage, and cry perpetually for gratification, but will find none. Such a sentiment as this last, was not absent from the mind of the ancient heathen poets—who represented Tantalus as punished in hell with an insatiable thirst, and placed up to the chin in the midst of a pool of water, which, however, flows away as soon as he attempts to taste it. There hangs also above his head, a bough, richly loaded with delicious fruits; which, as soon as he attempts to seize, is carried away from his reach by a sudden blast of wind. According to some mythologists, his punishment is to sit under a huge stone, hung at some distance over his head, and as it seems every moment ready to fall, he is kept under continual alarms, and never-ceasing fears.

Dying unconverted, you will suffer the loss of all *hope*. Hope, that benign principle which buoys up the spirits here, in the darkest, saddest hours, will never visit the dismal caverns of the lost. When pangs most intense are felt; when wailings most

awful are uttered ; when the undying worm is gnawing and gnawing at the heart ; and the quenchless fires are raging and tormenting to the uttermost ; the lost spirits in perdition will derive no alleviation from the hope that their condition will be ever any better. Despair, despair is one ingredient in that terrible cup of which the wicked will drink unceasingly.

The soul in every faculty, and, after the resurrection, the body in every member, will be in a state indescribably unhappy.

Especially, how troubled and how troublesome will be the *conscience* of the poor sinner, after this life. O, the stings and lashes of a guilty conscience ! Even in this world they are sometimes greater than a man can bear. Have you never had your attention particularly drawn to the workings of a man's conscience under a sense of guilt ?—How, even in the case of a convicted sinner, sleep has been, for days and nights together, chased away from the eyes, and slumber from the eyelids ?—And how, sometimes, he seems almost unable to live, under the heavy load which is pressing him down ? But if such be sometimes the gnawings and lashes of a guilty conscience while here, oh, what must be the sufferings which that power will inflict on the guilty creature in eternity ; when all his sins, in all their enormity, or with their several aggravations, will be set in order before his eyes. O sinner, sin

ner, if you die unreconciled to God,—if you pass into the unseen world unsprinkled by the blood of Immanuel, that conscience which you have, will sting and scourge you, causing agonies in intensity such as you have never yet felt, and have no conception of.

But, above all, will the unpardoned sinner in eternity be subjected to the direct operation of infinite wrath—to the scathing, withering fury of a justly incensed God. On the fiery billows of the Almighty's indignation will his guilty soul be tossed, "forever, oh, forever lost!" *Omnipotent wrath*—think of the effects which must flow from *it*, when it is brought to bear, in the world of retribution, against the ungodly. The wicked are threatened with the punishment of *fire*. God's word tells us that they shall be cast into a furnace of fire; a lake of fire and brimstone; the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. No illustration is needed of the power of fire to distress and destroy. The body, exposed to its operation, is thrown instantaneously into intolerable agony. How horrible to endure the pain of a fiery furnace for a few moments! How overcoming the thought of enduring it for a long season!

And how long a season are the sufferings of the wicked to continue? We have assumed, in some parts of this and preceding chapters, the *eternal duration* of them. I know there are those who

deny the doctrine of eternal punishment; yes, and those, too, who deny that the wicked are punished at all after this life. It appears to me that such are much in error on this point. I do not know how the doctrine of eternal punishment could be more plainly taught than it is in our sacred Book. He who is to be our Judge, has told us that on the day of judgment he will say to the wicked, "Depart, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire." And of the same class he says, just after, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." An inspired apostle, speaking likewise of the same class, has said, "Who shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." It is also elsewhere said of them, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *forever and ever*;"—"for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness *forever*." It will not do here to say that such proof as this just adduced, is not conclusive, since the terms "everlasting," and "for ever," are sometimes used in the scriptures where they cannot possibly mean absolutely *without end*. We assert, without fear of contradiction, that these terms do, in their *original and proper sense*, denote duration without limit. And, when applied to things which in their nature are capable of endless duration, and when there is nothing in the connection to limit their meaning, we are bound to understand them in their unlimited sense. On this principle,

these terms denote endless duration when applied to God ; to the continuance of his kingdom ; to the future happiness of the righteous ; and the future punishment of the wicked. We remark, in the next place, that Jesus and his apostles would have been misunderstood by the Jews of their time, unless, in such passages as those we have quoted, they had meant to teach the absolute eternity of the punishment of the wicked ; for this doctrine was held by all of them except the small sect of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the human soul, and of course that any of mankind were either happy or miserable after death. Another thing which is worthy of observation is, that in the scriptures, the word “ everlasting ” is applied to the future happiness of the righteous, and the future misery of the wicked *in the same connection*—witness Mat. xxv. 46, where the same term in the original is used in reference to the one and the other. In the sacred scriptures, the absolutely endless duration of the happiness of the former is no more clearly or fully taught, than is the absolute eternity of the misery of the latter.

We will here occupy no more room on this topic than that which it will take to remark, in addition, that the doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked is taught *by implication* in every part of the Old and New Testaments.

Thus, my dear reader, have we endeavoured to

set before you the nature and duration of those sufferings which are included in that comprehensive expression, *Eternal Death*.

As affecting as is the thought, to such a death you, as an impenitent sinner, are exposed. With such a death are you actually threatened by the holy but broken law of God. Yet—hear it—yet, from such a tremendous death there being a possibility of escape, in a certain way, as I have been informed—it is my desire and purpose, in the remainder of this chapter, affectionately and tenderly to press you with the question, *Why will you die?—Why die so awful and everduring a death?*

Is it, reader, because you are involved in deepest darkness in reference to the existence and character of the true God? or concerning the relations he sustains to you as your Creator, Preserver, Lawgiver, Sovereign Ruler, and kind Father? Surely you were not born and reared on the wastes of Paganism. You have not been located, all your past life, where no light has been suffered to beam forth upon you but the faint glimmerings of nature. If called to stand before the bar of the Infinite Judge in your sins, you will not be able there to plead that your lot was cast in a land where the bright sun of revelation never cast a solitary ray upon you. You will not be able to say, before the judgment-seat of Christ, “*Lord, I never, while on earth, saw or heard of a Bible; never heard of that holy Book that re-*

veals thy character." No; the sacred scriptures you have, and in a language too that you understand; and from early life you have been capable of reading those scriptures, and of learning from that source what sort of a Being the true God is; with what excellencies he is invested; what are the relations which he sustains to you, and you to him; how worthy he is in himself of your highest esteem; how reasonable it is that you should give him the warmest and the undivided affections of your heart. You have learned from the Book of books that you, as the creature, are the property of God; that to him you are indebted for all that you have and are, sin only excepted; that from him you derive that air which keeps your lungs in motion, that food which sustains, that apparel which warms, those comforts and mercies which cheer you, and which sweeten your earthly condition. And having learned so much concerning him, and especially his goodness, and your indebtedness, should not your heart be melted into contrition, won to him, and thus you have averted from you what the law threatens?

Why will you die? You cannot plead that you have not been made acquainted with God's requisitions, or that you have not the means of ascertaining the Divine will and your duty. That holy Book that has been put into your hands, testifies to the contrary. By means of it, the Deity has told, and is constantly telling you, both what he would

have you do and avoid. He there, moreover, lets you know what consequences will be visited upon the persevering and unrelenting transgressor. It may be said of you, that you have broken God's precepts, his precepts of the New Testament as well as of the Old, his evangelical precepts as well as the rest, knowing at the very time you were engaged in so doing, that you were thereby exposing yourself to endless death. Oh, how justly, how justly may you be made a sufferer in the infernal abyss, seeing that you are so stoutly, obstinately bent on running counter to Heaven's expressed will, that in the very face of the Lord's denunciations, you will persist in a course so displeasing to him. You are told that you must die, if you do this or that thing; that you must die forever; and this sound of threatening is rung in your ears constantly; and yet you as constantly are engaged in doing what exposes you to the infliction of what is threatened.

Reader, Why will you die? It is not because for sinners like you and me, the Most High has not opened a door of mercy, or provided a way of escape from impending ruin. God has not left the rebels of earth as he left those of a higher order that rebelled. Your ears and mine have heard of certain amazing doings; have heard that Jehovah let his own infinitely dear Son go from his bosom to become a man, and "a man of sorrows" too—to become very poor, very much despised, reviled, persecuted; to be

nunted after as a wild beast; to endure, especially on two spots which you have read of, one a garden and the other a mount, what no mortal tongue can tell, and for a most benevolent purpose. If you die, it is not because you have not heard of a certain personage called Jesus Christ, and of what he has undergone to procure the salvation of the perishing. You have often heard of him who let his own heart's blood flow out to form and fill a fountain that sinners might lave their guilty and polluted spirits in. If you rush into eternity a filthy creature, it will not be because you have not heard of this "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." If you gnash your teeth forever, ah, will it not be because you have trodden under foot the crucified Son of God?

Why, sinner, will you die? Can you say that any of the Lord's commands or claims are unreasonable? I know that God's claims are quite extensive. I am aware that he requires that you should love him with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; but I must learn that he is less excellent than the scriptures have represented him to be, and than I have been accustomed to think him, before I can believe this requirement unreasonable. It seems to me, also, that you should be very backward about complaining of the unreasonableness of such a requirement, until you can ascertain that he has not treated you kindly. I have the opinion that

he has been very benevolent and long-suffering to you. I have seen him bearing with your sins and great provocations for quite a season. You are alive, yet you have not deserved to live one of the many days which the Almighty has spared you. Had you been dealt with as you might justly have been, this earth would have been caused to cast you off, long since, from its bosom, and your soul have been consigned to the prison of despair. You ought to love God much, for the sparing mercy which he has shown to you. And the thing which the Supreme Being demands of you, is to repent—to grieve for, to hate, and to abandon your evil ways. Is this demand unreasonable? You dare not say that it is. Jehovah commands you to open your arms and cordially receive and confide in his beloved Son; to flee from the wrath to come, by fleeing to the cross. Is this unreasonable? Why, no; you know it is not. Our Divine Master calls on us to take upon us his yoke, to deny ourselves, and follow him. Have we any good reason to complain of this? Lovely Jesus, would that this reader and every other poor sinner might bow their necks to thy easy yoke, and put their feet in thy foot-prints.

My impenitent friend, Why will you die? Is eternal death so slight an evil that it should seem to you not worth while to make any great effort to escape it? What! eternal death an inconsiderable, trivial evil? The wicked, who are now in the place

of lost spirits, do not think so. The rich man who went down there, and lifted up his eyes being in torment, and called on father Abraham to send Lazarus, that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue, for "I am tormented," said he, "in this flame," *he* did not think so. Nor will you, my dying, unsanctified reader, if you at length go down and writhe where the rich man did, think so. That death is nowhere in the sacred scriptures represented as other than a most tremendous evil. Ah, friend, it is quite too great and fearful an evil for us to remain unmoved in view of. Reason, wisdom, everything that savours in the least of either, urgently calls upon every unforgiven creature to make immediate and most earnest efforts to avoid such a death.

Nor is the opposite of this, to wit, *eternal life*, so unimportant a matter, that you can reasonably neglect seeking after it. Eternal life! everlasting enjoyment of God! the endless glories, and unwithering bliss of heaven! this unworthy to be sought after? What creature can be so infatuated as to think so?

Why will you die? You know that if you do die, it is not because of not having been the subject of warning, invitation, and entreaty. You have been often warned—have repeatedly been called of God to turn from your sins, and seek salvation. Have you never been cast on a bed of sickness?

If you have, did not the Lord call you then? Have you never lost any near and dear relative by death? And were you not warned and called then? Look into a certain grave-yard. Perhaps the mortal remains of some beloved friend repose there. Ah, what does that grave, and that sleeping, decaying body whisper to you? Do they not say, "Set your house in order; prepare to meet God?" You have experienced trials of other kinds, have you not? What is the language of them? Were they sent for naught? Do they mean nothing? Have they no tongue? Do they utter no warning?

Why will you die? Have you never been informed that you are a sinner? Have your iniquities never been charged home upon you? Have you never been called on to return to God? Have you never been entreated to flee from the wrath to come? Have you never been urged to rush into the outstretched arms of infinite mercy and love? Has no Christian minister's voice, beseeching you to be reconciled to God, ever fallen upon your ears? Have you never been expostulated with by some kind christian relative? Has no pious friend or acquaintance ever given you any evidence that he desired your welfare, deeply cared for your soul? But why need I put to you such questions as these? You know that your soul's happiness has been a matter of desire on the part of the pious. You know that you have been often called, and invited to come

to Christ; often besought to forsake your sins, and prepare to die. Your Bible testifies that such is the fact. Some living minister or christian friend can, no doubt, testify that such is the fact. Your own memory testifies that such is the fact.

Why, unconverted reader, will you die? Has your conscience always been asleep? Has it never spoken either in a loud tone or in a whisper, and told you that you were doing wrong in forgetting God, and neglecting your duty?—wrong in not casting yourself on Jesus, and preparing to dwell in his magnificent and beautiful palace forever? Ah, your conscience, as sleepy as it has frequently been, as unfaithful a monitor as you have oft found it, has nevertheless, I will venture to say, repeatedly afforded proof that it had not given up the ghost, nor lost wholly the power of speech. Not seldom, in your past life, has it checked, remonstrated with, reproved you. And oh, that conscience will be far more talkative and troublesome hereafter, it may be, than it is now, or ever has been. If you die unsprinkled by the atoning blood of Jesus, that power will be an indescribably great tormentor to you in the abyss of woe. Oh, how it will make you writhe, and shriek, and wail, and cause your loud cries to resound forever through the dark, deep, doleful caverns of the pit.

Why will you die, poor sinner? Did the Holy Spirit never call, woo, strive with you? Oh, is not

that Divine and infinitely compassionate Agent striving with you now? Is he not telling you that you are a sinner; and urging you to turn from your evil ways to God, and lead a new life?

“Say, sinner, hath a voice within
Oft whisper’d to thy secret soul,
Uig’d thee to leave the ways of sin,
And yield thy heart to God’s control?”

“Hath something met thee in the path
Of worldliness and vanity,
And pointed to the coming wrath,
And warned thee from that wrath to flee?”

“Sinner, it was a heav’nly voice,
It was the Spirit’s gracious call,
It bade thee make the better choice,
And haste to seek in Christ thine all.

“Spurn not the call to life and light;
Regard in time the warning kind;
That call thou may’st not always slight,
And yet the gate of mercy find.

“God’s Spirit will not always strive
With harden’d, self-destroying man;
Ye, who persist his love to grieve,
May never hear his voice again.

“Sinner, perhaps this very day
Thy last accepted time may be;
Oh, shouldst thou grieve him now away,
Then hope may never beam on thee.”

Let me ask you again, Why will you die? Ah,

perhaps you are saying to yourself, What will my careless companions and unconverted acquaintances think of me, should I become serious or pious? Why, my dear friend, they cannot *with propriety* think any the less of you for it. They will have no good reason for disesteeming you, should you cease to be an enemy of God. It seems to me that they ought to think the better of you for ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well. It appears to me as though they ought to think you were beginning to come to your right mind in resolving to provoke no longer the wrath of the Almighty; to persist no longer in doing what will forever ruin your immortal soul. But supposing that they should be so silly and mad as to think otherwise, why, what great matter is it to you, I ask, what they may think? They are poor, dying worms of the dust like yourself—hastening rapidly, like yourself, toward death and the bar of God. They will soon be in eternity as well as you. If you should listen to, and, to please them, should go in the way of sin with them, they cannot answer for you at the bar of God, nor suffer for you in the abyss of despair. You will have to answer, and, if you die an unpardoned creature, will have to suffer for your own sins. They cannot help you in a dying hour, nor at the judgment-seat of Christ, nor in eternity. Do not, then, listen to them, if they would dissuade you from seeking the salvation of your soul. Do

as Bunyan's pilgrim did : put your fingers in your ears, that you may not hear them ; and run, crying, " Life ! life ! eternal life ! "

Why will you die ? Does God take pleasure in the death of the wicked ? Would he rather that you should die than live ? and in order to please him, will you therefore go and die ? That will not be pleasing him. Hear his language : " 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. " If you would please God, turn and have life.

Why will you die, reader ? Are you tempted by your own wicked heart, and by the arch-adversary, to put off all concern about your eternal welfare ? And are you going to yield yourself up to temptation, and thus float down the stream of time till you land in everlasting despair ? If you do, blame nobody but yourself for it. If you will perish, why, I cannot help it.

But, perhaps, you are entertaining the idea that you are willing to turn, but that Christ is not willing to receive you. Why this is not so, my dear friend. So far from being willing to turn and receive Christ, you are now voluntarily staying away from, or rejecting the Saviour ; voluntarily refusing to yield your heart to him. You are at this moment, of your own free will, rejecting offered mercy. You are keeping the door of your heart *closed* against the

Friend of sinners, and his salvation. It is *so*, whether you think it or not. Poor, perishing sinner, open the door and let the King of grace enter. Do not any longer refuse him admittance.

Yes, reader, living in this land of light and privilege, if you perish forever, may I not say that it will be because you "*will not* come to Christ, that you might have life?" And, oh, how aggravated will be your doom in eternity; how doubly miserable among the miserable; how doubly dammed among lost spirits, after such repeated calls and warnings; after so many warm invitations and pressing entreaties to fly to the only true refuge. Yes, reader, if you are lost everlastingly, you will remember, when tossing on the burning billows, that you, time after time, had forgiving mercy offered you, and eternal life through the blood of the cross, and that you *would not* have it. And this perpetual remembrance of a Saviour rejected, and of rejected offers, will make the cup of bitterness, of which you will drink, tenfold more bitter; will cause the fire, which never shall be quenched, to be tenfold more tormenting. Sinner, turn, turn from your evil ways, and receive and follow Christ. Then shall you *live*, and not die.

CHAPTER XII.

PROCRASTINATION.

THERE is a spirit, both very common and very dangerous, which not seldom exhibits itself, when the claims, the duties, the interests, and immunities of the religion of Jesus are presented, and pressed on the attention: we mean, reader, the spirit of procrastination. Few in christian lands, in proportion to the whole number, have come to the wild and dreadful conclusion, that the religion of Christ is all a farce, or but an ingeniously fabricated imposture. Most of those on whom the bright sun of revelation casts its beams, are ready to acknowledge its truth, the merit of its claims to their regard; that its statements are not mere idle tales; nor its proffers and its promises hollow and delusive. Nearly the whole of that number, we presume, who hear the proclamations of that mercy which the gospel reveals, have at least a vague and half-formed determination, that they will avail themselves of its provisions, at one time or another, before their bodies sink into the grave, and their spirits wing their way to an unknown region. But few comparatively, of that

number, appear to make up their mind to accept *at once* of Heaven's saving mercy, and to become *without delay* the true and devoted followers of the King of saints. Of all the recruiting officers which the Prince of Darkness sends to and fro among this world's population, to obtain recruits for his woful Tartarean dominions, there is no one besides, probably, which proves half so successful as does this serjeant Procrastination. The multitude of travellers in the broad way to ruin, have each his "convenient season," lying away off in the future. When plied with the overtures and entreaties of the gospel, you may hear one and all of them, some in louder and some in lower tones, saying, "*Not now—not convenient now.*" At the sound the Devil laughs, and Hell rejoices.

We have the record of a memorable exhibition of this delaying spirit in the 24th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Felix, a Roman, and governor of the province of Palestine, was living in incontinence and adultery with Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa the elder, who had been given in marriage to Azizus, king of Emesa, but was persuaded by Felix to desert her husband, and live incontinently with himself. He appears, also, like many others of the Roman governors in the provinces, to have been an avaricious and rapacious man. Before this unrighteous and incontinent governor, and his guilty paramour, Drusilla, whose

residence was at Cesarea, Paul, who through the malice of the Jews was now a prisoner there, “reasoned of righteousness,” or justice; “of temperance,” or a keeping in due subjection the appetites and passions; and directed their attention to a “judgment to come,” when for their misdeeds, their violations of the rules of justice and of purity, they would be strictly reckoned with; and the apostle reasoned with such clearness and with such power that the Roman governor’s conscience was touched, and so thoroughly aroused and deeply pierced was it, that lo! before the *prisoner*, the *judge trembles*. Behold him! Witness the lion trembling before the lamb! In this predicament, what does this guilty governor and judge do? Does he, now that the deep-toned thunders of God are rolling over his conscience—does he say to Paul, as did the Philippian jailer, “Sir, what must I do to be saved?” Does he take that conscience, awakened, wounded, bruised, lacerated, to the Great Physician, the Prince of Peace, the alone true Pacifier of guilty consciences, and healer of broken hearts? Oh, had he done this, what an unspeakable blessing would it have proved to Felix, that he had ever had such a prisoner to stand before him! Instead of this, he has recourse to a very different expedient. He seeks to obtain ease to his stung and lashed spirit, by dismissing, for the present, from his presence, the faithful christian reasoner—under the plausible pretext that he could not now, but might and ex-

pected hereafter to find it convenient farther to listen to him. "Go thy way," said he, "for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Poor man! we never hear anything more about his "*convenient season*." It seems probable that, unannoyed by conscience, undisturbed by convictions, he passed off the stage without ever finding it, and without any solicitude concerning a preparation to meet at length without dismay the Divine Judge.

Oh, it is a mournful, dangerous thing to hush the alarms of conscience, and to return to a state of carelessness and of slumbers, after having been awakened, or aroused in any measure from the stupor of sin. I have seen, have been myself a witness to some of the dire effects of stifling conviction, and of grieving the Spirit of God. I have observed in instances not a few, what entire torpidity of conscience has succeeded a period of spiritual alarm,—what unmoved and immovable apathy the soul has often sunk down into, after having been awakened in a measure from the slumbers of iniquity, and after having been led to utter the inquiry of the young ruler, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Successive to a grieving away of the Spirit of God, I have marked what a deep sleep has come over the spirit of the sinner, and from which he was not afterward awaked by all the thunders

of the artillery of heaven. Oh, how thrice doleful a condition is the poor sinner in, who, after having been deeply convicted of sin, returns to his worse than former carelessness, and concerning whom, after such a slighting of his mercy, it pleases God to say, "He is joined unto idols; let him alone." Jehovah has said that his spirit shall not always strive with man. Nor ought we to wonder at this. Rather should it excite wonder in our minds, that God bears as long as he does with the sinner's setting at naught of his merciful overtures.

The part of Felix, in stifling conviction, throwing off alarm, and postponing repentance, and a setting of the house in order for a visit from the pale messenger, has been acted over and over again by hundreds and thousands in every age, from his day down to the present. At this day, we can go nowhere without finding a greater or less number, who are indulging the procrastinating spirit which the Roman governor manifested, and saying to all urgency or entreaty, whether of the christian or the christian's God, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

If, from any delaying sinner who reads this chapter, I could, with the aid of God's spirit and grace, succeed in removing this flattering unction, and tearing away this delusive spirit and hope—if I could set before him in so clear, and forcible, and commanding a light as to be influential, the crimi-

nality, folly, and danger attending a postponement of those concerns which pertain to the soul's salvation, and the duty and importance of listening *at once, without the least delay*, to Heaven's calls, and of now, even on this day, accepting of Heaven's overtures of mercy and forgiveness, I would rejoice; and along with me would rejoice the ministering spirits of glory. Spirit of power, deign to assist me; and to this reader apply the word.

Allow me, my dear delaying friend, to present some arguments in favour of an immediate dedication of yourself to God and his service; some reasons why you should *without delay* hear Christ's voice, and accept of the tenders of reconciliation.

1. The first reason which we would offer in favour of such a course, is derived from the consideration of the immense value of religion; of the vast, unspeakable importance of the soul's eternal salvation.

You must allow it to be the dictate of reason itself, to seek *first* after those things which are the most valuable; to attend *first* to those concerns to which the greatest importance should be attached.

All on earth is fading and transient. The leaf withers, the blossoms perish, and the flowers decay. All earthly good, how evanescent! all sublunary interests, how soon must be buried in oblivion, or pass away! This clayey structure, reared around the soul, must soon tumble into ruins; and all that

the world calls good or great, all save that which is of celestial mould, must soon be as though it had never been. But the case is otherwise with the soul of man. Cast your eye forward into the future. You may see yonder sun blotted out, or its brightness shrouded in eternal night. These blue heavens above us, and this green earth on which we tread, may flit away, leaving not a wreck behind. And you may travel onward with your mind's eye, millions and millions of ages farther into the vast futurity of duration ; and onward and still onward, millions heaped on millions, and ten thousand millions multiplied by ten thousand millions of ages still ; and inquire away off there, in that far distant future, about the soul of man, and you will find that soul to be even then but in the infancy of its being ; you will find it to have but just stepped on the mere threshold of existence.

And can the interests of such a soul, thus unwithering in being, be unimportant, think you ? Do not all the interests simply of time and earth, when compared with the former, appear as the small dust of the balance, or rather as less than nothing and vanity ? May these interests be reasonably slighted or overlooked ? May they be thrown into the background, until we attend first to the straws and bubbles of the world ; until we can find " a convenient season " to attend to those concerns which are of such infinite and eternal consequence ?

What! cast off to a distance *pearls*, and attend to playthings? What! let go a kingdom, an unfailing, glorious kingdom, and attend to our molehill? First, our molehill and toys—afterwards, when we may find a *convenient season*, attend peradventure to the pearls and the kingdom? Jesus Christ said, “One thing,” by way of eminence, “one thing is needful.” But man, in his wisdom, his folly rather, puts all other things before *the one thing* spoken of by the Saviour. What an unreasonable placing of things *last* which should be *first*. What a running counter to the dictates of true reason, and to the benevolent directions and counsels of unerring wisdom. Oh, did the comparative value of things temporal and things eternal strike our minds now, as they will in a dying day, how different would be our estimate and our preference; and that estimate and preference expressed, too, both with our lips and in our conduct.

“A person, not many years since deceased, and who possessed a speculative acquaintance with divine truth, had, by unremitting industry, and carefully watching every opportunity of increasing his wealth, accumulated the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds sterling. But alas! as is too common, he became engrossed and entangled with the world, and to its acquisition he appears to have sacrificed infinitely higher interests. A dangerous sickness, that brought death near to his view, awakened his fears. Con-

science reminded him of his neglect of eternal concerns, and filled him with awful forebodings of future misery. A little before he expired, he was heard to say: 'My possessions amount to twenty-five thousand pounds. One half of this my property I would give, so that I might live one fortnight longer, to repent and seek salvation; and the other half to my dear and only son.' "

The religion of Christ, my reader, does not demand a laying aside of the business of the world. It does not require an inattention to the concerns of time. But it does demand that we should not make of this world an idol. It does require that we should "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

2. And this leads us to remark, secondly, that *duty* and our own *highest comfort here below*, both demand from us a repudiation of the procrastinating spirit, and an immediate surrender of the heart to Christ.

It would apparently require but a small measure either of attention or discernment, to discover that it is "man's chief end to glorify God, and enjoy him forever." The scriptures, in the most direct manner, call upon us to glorify the great Author of our being with our body and our spirit. In turning over the pages of that volume which Jehovah has given to be a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path, we can nowhere find it said, First serve sin

and Satan, and afterward, when you may have "a convenient season," then serve God your Maker. No; we can nowhere, within the lids of the Bible, discover the least shadow of a sanction given to such a procedure. We do, it is true, find it said, in one place, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." But it will not be difficult to affix a proper meaning to these words, if we will but read what follows: "but know thou, that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment."

If there was any prospect of our finding, away off toward the end of our life, that fancied convenient season; if, after being unable to indulge sense and sin any longer, we should at last offer to God the dregs of our earthly existence—would this be enough for God? Would this be treating our Creator, him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, as he ought to be treated? Supposing we should offer, as a sacrifice to God, the blind, the lame, and the sick; will he be perfectly satisfied with our offering, think you, and say, "It will do; it is enough?" And is it *generous* in us to treat God thus? After all that in his infinite kindness and compassion he has done, and is still doing for us, is it generous, I repeat, in us to cast unto the Lord naught but the ragged, rotten remnant of our time, and of our broken-down and exhausted powers?

If there is one spark of generosity in our hearts, can we put him off thus? No, reader, we should not be at all satisfied with ourselves, or with our conduct, unless we serve God with our whole life, and the undivided energy of all our powers.

If we would consult, moreover, our own true present comfort; if we would secure to ourselves or enjoy the greatest amount of happiness which is to be found on earth, or in this life, we must *without delay* renounce sin and the world as a portion, and give our hearts to God.

It is a truth, reader, and we may see it to be so, all the world over, that "the way of transgressors is hard." Go where you will, wherever you find the tree of sin, you will find that tree bearing bitter fruit. It is indeed the case that some of the fruit of that tree, occasionally, when in the mouth, tastes pleasant. But only let it be swallowed, and it will invariably be found bitter. God has said—and he knows all about it; he knows all the springs which yield sweet waters; knows from what flows true pleasure and comfort—God has said of wisdom, which is here but another name for religion, that "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." I know that it is not at all uncommon to come across human creatures who think very differently on this subject from what God does. I know that the unconverted are apt to think that *religion*—oh, they are frightened at the very name

—that religion takes away pleasure or comfort ; that it pours, drains out of the cup of life, all its sweetness, and puts other, and very different ingredients in its room. But I will not believe the opinion of the unconverted, on this point, to be correct, until—with reverence be it spoken—until I find God's veracity questionable, and christian experience to be false. What! the favour of God do such mischief amongst the flowers and fruits of the garden of true pleasure? What! the favour of the supremely great and good, and Holy One, blast true joys, imbitter innocent and pure sweets, and spread over the pilgrimage of life the gloom of night, and over this earthly abode a covering of sackcloth? No; it is not the favour of God, but the displeasure and wrath of the Almighty which produce effects to be dreaded. The religion of Christ, it is true, forbids unreasonable indulgence and sinful excesses; but such indulgence and excesses bring along with them, sooner or later, and commonly very soon, not pleasure but pain, not joy but sorrow.

The true sweets of life are rendered by religion still sweeter. For the pure and unalloyed pleasures of earth it gives a higher zest, a keener relish. It gives to the fond ties of kindred and relationship still more strength, and elevation, and endearment. It gives to the innocencies of life still more innocence. It makes what is "pure, and lovely, and of good report," still more excellent and lovely. It

refines the delicacies and refinements of earth ; and what is noble, and dignified, and sublime, it still heightens. At the feet of religion, pleasure's clear, limpid waters glide softly and sweetly. She draws her hand over the brow of care, and its wrinkles vanish. She speaks, and clouds dark and lowering, and dangers threatening and thick, flee away at her bidding. The raging winds and roaring tempests are hushed at her word into unwhispering stillness ; the tossing billows sink into a calm ; and hope, and joy, and fond anticipation tinge the cheek, and light up a smile on the countenance of death. The christian pilgrim, through her influence, pursues his journey toward the land of spirits without fainting ; goes forward toward the dark valley with unflinching firmness ; and meets the vicissitudes and trials attendant on his earthly pilgrimage with unruffled and heaven-born composure.

“ His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.”

The pious and devout man, adoring the ever present Deity, resting on his arm, and breathing a celestial spirit, may indeed be said to be the only really happy and enviable mortal on the globe.

“ He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.

His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, 'My Father made them all!
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eyes they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world,
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?"

We see, then, that when to the gospel messenger or christian friend, while urging, or to the Spirit of God, when striving and entreating, the sinner either openly or in heart says, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee," he acts in this matter very unreasonably, as well as criminally. In the first place, he seems in amount to say to God—"I have indeed sinned against thee, but not long enough; let me transgress and rebel a little while longer. Let me violate thy laws, withhold from thee my affections, rob thee of thy due, abuse thy goodness, and slight thy calls, yet a while—until I shall find a convenient season to abandon this course, and pursue one of which thou wilt approve." What! talk about and wait for a convenient season to do what we should, every moment of our life, be employed in doing?

What! ask God to wait until it may suit our convenience to cease our rebellion, renounce sin, or begin to answer the great end of our being?

And, in the next place, the sinner does, in such case, virtually plead for a longer season in which to experience the truth of the declaration, that "the way of transgressors is hard;" in which to be subjected to the inconveniences, fears, privations, and sufferings caused by ungodliness. He is indeed in bondage—bound by the fetters, and loaded with the chains of sin—but he pleads to be galled by the one, and oppressed grievously by the other, a while longer. He is a stranger to peace of conscience, and to the thousand joys and sweets which religion can shed on life's pilgrimage—but he pleads for a future convenient season, before he would feel that peace, partake of those joys, taste of those sweets. Preposterous! How far from rational! Can we have so lost our reason, as for a moment to imagine that this is a doing right, either toward God, or toward ourselves? As if we had not sinned against God sufficiently, or been unhappy long enough, we still plead for "a convenient season." When urged and pressed, we still persist in saying, "Not yet; not yet attend to duty; not yet become acquainted with substantial pleasures and joys!"

It appears to me that the delaying sinner must be greatly beside himself, as well as very much har-

dened, to adopt and pursue the course of conduct which he does. He must be amazingly ignorant or insensible in regard to his responsibilities, if he can keep his conscience from being exceedingly troublesome, whilst he is acting this procrastinating part. Just think. God holds the creature responsible for all the wrong in thought, feeling, desire, will, word, action, which he has fallen into; and for all the glory and service which he might and should have rendered to the Lord, and all the good he might and should have done to his fellow men, but has not. And not this only. He moreover holds his rational creatures responsible for all that ability and disposition to serve him, and do good to themselves and others, which they would have had, had they taken care of and improved their moral nature to the utmost extent of which they were even originally capable. Take this thought with you, you who are for postponing the procurement of a right state of heart, the formation of a right character, the pursuit of a right course of conduct.

3. Another reason which I would offer against the indulgence of a procrastinating spirit, is drawn from the power and influence of *habit*. Plato, being informed that one of his pupils was fond of gaming, reprimanded him for it. The disciple excused himself by saying that he only played for a trifle. "But," said Plato, "do you reckon for nothing the

habit of gaming which playing for a trifle will make you contract ?”

Such is the power of habit—a power, in the impenitent sinner’s case, not lessening, not continuing merely the same, but constantly increasing—that, humanly speaking, the probability is day by day becoming less and less, that he will ever attend to what his duty and his high interests pressingly demand. By repeated acts of transgression, and omission of duty, the conscience is becoming more torpid, and the heart growing harder. Every additional sinful act or indulgence blinds the eye more to sin’s enormity ; renders repentance and reformation less likely ; drives the soul further from God ; and lessens the distance between hell and the sinner. In the case of the ungodly, as they go onward in their wayward and forbidden course, we find, step by step, more sins to repent of, and less time to repent in. Their insensibility spreads its roots wider and deeper ; their slumbers become more sound ; the loud thunders of Sinai, and the tender and mellifluous notes of mercy, fall on ears more and more deaf ; and their condition, by repeated acts of resistance and refusal, becomes more and more awfully alarming ! Think, dear reader, of that portion of the impenitent who have gone past the season of youth ; of those whose sun has passed the meridian ; and those with whom it is fast going down, near setting in the western horizon. They

are still in their sins. Yes, behold here an aged man, there an aged woman, impenitent, out of Christ, and yet how stupid, how careless and insensible. How unmoved under mercy's melting voice, and heaven's roaring, bursting thunders. Oh, young reader, will you not take warning from their carelessness and apathy, not to do as they have done? You see how unmoved and immovable they are. Will you not be persuaded to avoid following their example? A more convenient season? Before you plead or cry for it, think of the stupifying and hardening effect of delay. Think of the force and effect of habit. What! will the putting off of a duty which a man has *no heart to attend to now*, which he at present *hates*, tend in any measure to prepare him to love and attend to that duty afterwards? Will sinning more and more—will rebelling longer and longer against God, tend in the least to prepare a man to renounce his sin and rebellion? Will a heart that is now unwilling to accept of offered mercy, become, by repeated and still repeated acts of refusal, any more willing to accept of the mercy offered? Do you not see that a *convenient season* is in this way pushed farther and farther off, instead of being brought nearer?—That the *convenience* for attending to what should be the grand business of life, is every moment becoming less and less, as the sinner goes onward? His time is shortening, and yet his heart growing harder. To-

day, if you will hear God's voice, harden not your heart—harden it not by a farther repetition of sin, or by a longer indulgence of the spirit of delay and impenitence.

4. I will, in this chapter, advance but one more reason against indulging a procrastinating spirit. It is drawn from a consideration of the *uncertainty of human life*.

It seems as though the delaying sinner is calculating, as if certain of it, that he will live for some time to come. Would he suspend such invaluable interests as those of his immortal soul on an uncertainty, think you, if he plainly saw it to be an uncertainty? Is there such hardihood and presumption to be found in the human bosom, as to talk about, or be depending on, a future convenient season in which to prepare for death's approach, and for entering, exultingly, into the celestial paradise, unless he is imagining that he shall most certainly find such a season before he receives death's summons? Deluded creature! The fumes of the pit, along with the influence of a corrupt heart, have so bewitched his mind, and bedimmed his vision, that he thinks he sees, away off in the future, a convenient season to prepare to die! God says, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Says Christ, "Be ready; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh." But Satan,

along with a corrupt heart, says, "Wait a while. There is time enough yet. Give yourself ease. It will be more convenient for you to attend to religion at some other time." And the joint counsel of this Evil Spirit, and of a wicked heart is listened to, and followed by poor sinners, in preference to the kind counsel and command of God. Thus the delaying creature locks arms with the Adversary, and walks along carelessly toward death and eternity, and, whenever urged or invited, talks about a more convenient season to come, until death stops his mouth, and drives his soul out of its house of clay, to seek another dwelling-place! Another dwelling-place? Where? Dying as a sinner, impenitent—where? How my heart sickens and bleeds! Oh, how uncertain is life! It is affirmed that "by the circulation of the blood through the heart and lungs, in which motion is consumed, and motion renewed every moment, the question is put about three thousand times every hour, and above a hundred thousand times every day and night of our lives, whether we shall stay in this world, or be in heaven or hell to eternity?" Alarming consideration! tremendous thought! Oh, how soon and how suddenly may eternity burst upon the ungodly—upon yourself, dear reader! The angel of death may even now be reaching forth his fingers to loose life's silver cord, or just ready to grasp the golden bowl to shiver it to atoms! And, impenitent friend,

has that convenient season which you were promising yourself, yet arrived? If you will not obey Christ's voice, you must at least obey death's summons. The grim monarch of the grave will hold with you no parley. He will not wait till you set your house in order, if, when he comes, you are not ready. Speak to him about a convenient season; tell him it has not come yet, and ask him to wait; and he will answer you only by planting a dagger in your heart.

“In human hearts what bolder thought can rise,
 Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
 Where is to-morrow? In another world.
 For numbers this is certain; the reverse
 Is sure to none. And yet on this *perhaps*,
 This *peradventure*. infamous for lies,
 As on a rock of adamant, we build
 Our mountain hopes; spin out eternal schemes,
 As we the fatal sisters could outspin,
 And, big with life's futurities, expire.”

Ah, what a solemn season is fast coming on! A dark, portentous cloud is fast gathering over the head of the ungodly. That cloud is rapidly becoming heavier and blacker. See you that vivid lightning's flash? Flee, sinner, without a moment's delay; flee to the only shelter from the storm! Do not, by sloth, bring ruin on your head! Oh, do not, I beseech you, by procrastination, make your bed in hell!

CHAPTER XIII.

BEWARE!

So solicitous am I, dear reader, that you should not plunge into an undone eternity, but should smile and sing with the heavenly throng forever, that you must allow me, in this chapter, to throw before you some additional friendly cautions and warnings.

You are encompassed with dangers, and he acts the part of kindness who points them out to you, and cries, Beware! For want of this, it is to be believed, many rush on destruction, who, with it, might have been saved from such a catastrophe.

1. Beware of saying or thinking, "What have I done to deserve eternal destruction?" You have perused the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of this book to little profit, if you can here seriously ask such a question as this. What have you done to deserve to lie down in eternal sorrow? It is not necessary to relate everything you have done, nor everything you have left undone, in order to prove that it is a marvellous thing that you are yet out of hell. God has said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the

book of the law to do them." Instead of doing all things there required, what single thing which is there commanded have you done, and because he enjoined it, or out of regard to his authority, and from love to him? "The wicked shall be turned into hell." You are one of the wicked, for you have never been born again. In how many parts of the holy scriptures are such as you threatened with everlasting destruction. Yet do you suppose that God would threaten men with such a destruction, if they did not deserve it? You can have no very exalted opinion of the justice or goodness of the Deity, if you can imagine such a thing.

2. Beware of keeping yourself in countenance, or drawing comfort from the idea, that there are others worse than yourself. This may be so. It is nevertheless a truth which should yield you no great satisfaction, whilst you are yet an unregenerate, unpardoned sinner. There are large numbers of amazingly wicked people in the world. Some of these may reside in your neighbourhood. If you are not so bad as some or many others of the human family, that does not prove that you are what you ought to be. You may still be, and are a very great sinner—such a sinner, that unless you obtain mercy, you will be forever a wretch undone. Your sins are of such a character, and are already in number so great, that if they were divided between several millions of persons, they would be sufficient to effect

the everlasting ruin of them all. Not a few sinners are very much in the habit of warding off conviction, or of stifling it, by means of that flattering idea to which Satan is very ready, along with a depraved heart, to help them: that there are some, or many others worse than themselves. If you will but look at yourself in the mirror of God's law, you may discover enough to put you out of conceit with yourself, and to lead you to utter with earnestness the publican's prayer. If you will turn back to the 6th chapter, you will find a quotation from Paul's writings, which condemns the taking of such a test or standard, by which to form a judgment of one's self, as that here alluded to. Guard against that mistake.

3. Beware of trusting for an escape from the wrath to come, to the general mercy of God. Some sinners, when urged to fly from impending ruin, will plead, "God is merciful." It is a truth, a precious truth, that Jehovah is a God of mercy. No human creature would be saved, were he not. But is he not a just God too? Will he save any of the human family, to the dishonour of his justice? Does not the Lord hate sin! And has he not said that he will punish sinners "with an everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power?" He is merciful, but is he not also "a consuming fire?" He "keepeth mercy for thousands," but we are likewise told that he will

“by no means clear the guilty.” Is he savingly merciful to all mankind? Will he save all the human family, howsoever they live or die? Is there any such gospel as this to be found in our sacred book? If you continue in the love and practice of sin, or stay away from “the blood of the covenant,” will you be saved? There are those who will enter into life, even a multitude which no man can number—but not such.

4. Beware of pleading with a sort of satisfaction, “I do not wish to be a hypocrite. I detest hypocrites.” Well, I do not object to that. But who asks you to be a hypocrite? I am sure it is no desire of mine that you should be one. I wish you, and for your own welfare in two worlds, this and the next, to be a real christian. Do you detest hypocrites? Well, then, prepare for death and heaven. If you only get into that “city whose Maker and Builder is God,” you will not be annoyed with the sight of hypocrites. But if you fail of getting ready to enter there, why, what a calamity will come upon you—you will have to dwell with hypocrites forever!

5. Beware of resting on the plea: “I am as good as some who make a profession of religion.” It is possible that this may be so. All are not Israel, who are of Israel. Church-members are not all of God’s spiritual household. Even among the twelve apostles, there was one who was a bad man. Some

who joined the church under Paul's ministry, did not "run well." The being a member of a church, will not of itself save any one. - And, if it were necessary, we would warn you not to seek a union with the church under the impression that you will by that means be put into a state of safety. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," whether he is within or outside of that sacred enclosure. But I entreat you, reader, not to attempt to keep your conscience quiet by seeking after or looking at the faults of professors. Even the best of them are not perfectly sanctified. They have sins to deplore; and all the truly pious do mourn over their defects, and are seeking to become better. If you should become pious, and oh that you may, and without delay become so, I would not expect to see you sinlessly perfect all at once. Progression is the law of the divine kingdom. An infant does not spring up instantaneously into manhood. The grass, the grain does not shoot out of the earth, and appear at once in maturity. The Canaanites were not *all* expelled the land of promise immediately subsequent to the entering of the children of Israel into it. The apostle Paul, after he had been some time a christian, said concerning himself, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." It is to be deplored, indeed, that so many professors of religion are no more devoted, heavenly-minded christians than we find them. I pray that

you may not only become a child of God, but an eminently pious and useful one. Do gratify me in this particular.

6. Beware of pleading, or of saying to yourself, "I must wait God's time." When is God's time? Look into his word: what saith it? "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." "*To-day* if you will hear Christ's voice, harden not your heart." Where in the scriptures is it said, Begin to serve God *to-morrow*—Give your heart to the Lord *to-morrow*—Repent *to-morrow*—Believe at some future season? The commands of Jehovah have in them a *now*, either expressed or implied. *To-day*, even this hour, reader, cease to war against God. Come over immediately on the Lord's side. Without delay, make a surrender of your heart to him to whom it of right belongs.

Are you disposed to say, "I am doing all I can?" If you were doing ever so much, I would not have you trust to it for life, but would warn you against resting on such a foundation. Too many attempt to make a Saviour out of their own doings. "By the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified." But whilst I would not have you expect to be saved by works, I would not have you expect to be saved *without* them. There are things that ought to be done, and which human creatures can do. They can consider their ways. They can read God's word. They can attend God's sanctuary. They can

cry for help unto God. Do you do all these things, and to the extent that you are able? Beware of neglecting the diligent use of the means of grace. A certain old lady, when exhorted to prepare to meet God, replied, "I'm doing all I can." When asked, Do you read much in the Bible? "Not much," said she, "but I'm doing all I can." Do you attend religious meetings? "No—but I'm doing all I can." Do you pray daily, and several times a day, to God? "Why, no; I cannot say that I do; but I'm doing all I can." About after this manner are multitudes passing on to the close of the day of grace. When addressed in relation to the concerns of their souls, they are quick in replying, "I'm doing all I can"—when the sober truth is, they are doing just nothing at all to secure salvation, but much to ensure damnation.

7. Beware of trying to satisfy yourself for the neglect of duty by the plea, "I have not time to attend to religion." What! not time to answer the great end of your being? not time to accomplish the great purpose for which you were put here, and afforded a day of grace? It is not necessary for you to become idle, in becoming religious. You can attend as much as is needful to secular affairs, and yet attend to those momentous concerns which relate to the soul's salvation. If both could not be attended to, I would then certainly say, Let eternal things claim the attention, rather than those which are

temporal. But God has not cast us into such a situation here, as that we cannot attend to all needful secular concerns, and likewise to those which relate to our everlasting well-being. You spend a great deal of time in ways which do not tend even to your temporal advantage. You are a great squanderer of precious time. If it were not for the desperate wickedness of your heart, causing an indescribable reluctance to attend to the momentous concerns of religion, you could find time every day for serious meditation, prayer, and other things required. It is not for the want of *time*, but for the want of *inclination*, that your duty and your soul are so amazingly neglected; and that you go toward eternity after the thoughtless, reckless manner that you do. Oh, am I compelled still to weep over your obduracy and carelessness? I did hope that ere you reached this part of the book, you would come to its perusal with a troubled heart and weeping eyes at least—that you would feel yourself to be in such a situation as a poor, guilty, condemned sinner, that you would not need further to be urged to seek for mercy.

8. Methinks I hear you say, “I do feel that I am unsafe; my sins trouble me; but what can I do? I cannot change my own heart.” Well, I am glad to hear you express the least concern respecting your state. I do not ask you to change your own heart. I know that you cannot. It belongs to God the Holy Ghost to renew men’s hearts. But, then,

can you not ask him to do this work? And when he comes and strives with you, can you not welcome him, and accept of his gracious offer? One thing is certain, that you are not without a new heart because you are unable to renew it yourself. As soon, to say the least, as you shall be willing to have the work done, and will ask him, the Spirit will do it for you. Beware, then, of trying to justify yourself for continuing what or where you are, by the plea just stated.

And here I warn you to beware of trusting, as many do, to some outward and partial reformation. Such a thing may be quite a benefit to you as to this life. But it by no means amounts to what is requisite in order to enter into life eternal. Such a reformation as is outward or partial, it is in the power of the creature to effect. It is within the power, for example, of the profane swearer to forsake his profanity; of the inebriate to give up his intemperate indulgence; of the thief to abandon his course of violence and of plunder. All this may be done by them, and yet they retain hearts teeming with enmity against their Maker. I want you to meet with so great, thorough, radical a change, as God the Spirit alone can effect. But, then, as I intimated a moment ago, this Omnipotent and infinitely gracious Agent will be ready to do this work for you, just so soon as you shall be willing to have him do it.

But I can consent to occupy no more space or time in warning you against a resort to such miserable subterfuges. Beware of all pretexts of like character, they will but make you the laughing-stock of devils ; and, I would add, beware of indulging the disposition which originates them.

It is my desire, in the remainder of this chapter, to direct your mind to certain other things against which I am not a little anxious that you should be on your guard. One of these relates to *repentance*.

I can hardly entertain the idea of your being so much in the dark concerning your duty, and the way or terms of salvation, as to need to be called on to beware of imagining repentance to be unnecessary or useless. Nothing, certainly is so, on which the Deity so much insists in his sacred word as he does on repentance. Nor is this strange, since the Bible is a book intended for sinners.

We read that the Lord “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” Jesus opened his ministry with saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ;” and the same thing was the burden of his forerunner, John the Baptist. Our Lord, coming into Galilee after his baptism, preached, saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand ; repent ye, and believe the gospel.” The apostles of Jesus, in the fulfilment of the duties assigned them, preached repentance and remission of sins in his name, wherever they went among the

nations. Prophets under the Old Testament dispensation, as well as apostles under the New, called sinners to repentance. "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.—Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.—Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord." This is Old Testament language.

The indispensable necessity of repentance is insisted on in both Testaments. Hear what God by the prophet Ezekiel says: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; *so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*" And you remember those words of Jesus, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 3.) Apart from repentance, there can be no *preparedness*, no *meetness* to enter into life. Ruin, endless ruin is the consequence of a want of it. Beware, reader, of continuing in impenitence, if you would not lie down in unending torment. "Some people," said Philip Henry, "do not like to hear much of repentance; but I think it so necessary, that if I should die in the pulpit, I wish to die preaching repentance, and if out of the pulpit, practising it."

Assuming that you do not need to have the necessity of repentance at greater length dwelt upon, we will proceed to call your attention to another thing

respecting it, and about which it may not be needless to put you on your guard. Beware of falling into a mistake concerning the *true nature* of repentance. If its necessity is acknowledged—if it is so important that there is no escape from the terrors of coming wrath without it—then we would say, Beware of taking that for genuine repentance, or “repentance unto life,” which is not. Such a caution is the more requisite, because mistake here is so common, and so liable to be fallen into.

In repentance there is *conviction of sin*—a comparatively clear and lively perception of one’s guilt—a state of mind in striking contrast with that in which, perverted by abounding inward corruptions, prejudiced by erroneous notions, and habituated to view things through the jaundiced medium of his evil propensities and passions, the creature was prone to wonder why he should be accounted deserving of God’s everlasting displeasure, and represented as exposed to it. The true penitent sees his sins to be great in number and in atrocity, and that God would but act justly toward him should he consign him to the flames which will never be put out. He sees that it was astonishing divine forbearance which kept him from tossing on the burning billows of his indignation, whilst he was steeling his heart against him, trampling on his authority, transgressing his laws, and disregarding his glory. But here we would caution you against indulging the idea that

conviction of sin is *all* that enters into repentance. It is but a small part of it. Where it exists by itself, or alone in any mind, that man can with no propriety be called a true penitent. How many, at some time in their life, have their eyes thrown so wide open as to be amazed at the sight which they have of their sinfulness, who nevertheless persist in walking in their evil ways. Though for a little while brought to a sort of pause, their convictions are stifled, or pass away, and they "turn like the dog to his vomit again, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

In genuine repentance there is *sorrow or grief*. The penitent has a change in his *feelings*, as well as in his views. He is more or less pained because he has done wickedly. His tearful eyes and heaving bosom not unfrequently give signs of deep inward distress—distress occasioned by a sight of the manner in which he has been living. Many have felt indescribable mental anguish. The prophet Jeremiah represents Ephraim as "bemoaning himself," and as "smiting upon his thigh," in the grief and anguish of his heart. You must have sorrow for sin, if you would not pass into eternity in impenitence. You should be deeply grieved because of your infractions of the divine law, and your abuse of divine goodness—should be in bitterness of spirit because of having so multiplied your iniquities beyond all reckoning, and persisted in sinning under

circumstances so exceedingly to aggravate your guilt.

But we would, at the same time, warn you against the mistake run into by not a few—I mean the mistake of thinking that sorrow or grief is the utmost of what repentance embraces. And what we wish you on this point particularly to beware of is, the confounding of a sorrow for having exposed one's self to the threatened penalty, or dread consequences of sin, with a sorrow for sin itself. The two things are separable, and the former is often found where the latter has no existence. Sorrow for sin because of what itself is, is essential to repentance unto life.

In genuine repentance, there is a *hatred* of sin. Sin is detestable in its nature. It is, then, most reasonable to hate it. This feeling toward it entered into the repentance of the Corinthian professors. "For, behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you—yea, what *indignation*—yea, what *revenge*." This holy indignation, this heaven-born revenge, is a most important part of repentance.

But let it be borne in mind, that sin may be hated where genuine repentance exists not. Sin is *our* enemy, and it is likewise an enemy of *God*. Now it is possible to hate sin on the former account alone—not at all on the latter account. Evangelical repentance is not so selfish; it has *love to God*, as well as love to ourselves in it. We have a right to

hate sin, because it is our enemy ; but we should chiefly hate it because it is hateful to God ; because it is rebellion against him ; because it robs him of the glory which is his due. If you are brought to hate sin, ask yourself for what you hate it. He who has repentance unto salvation, hates sin because he loves God—hates it out of regard to the divine will and glory.

The repentance which we wish you to exercise, includes in it a *forsaking of*, or *turning from sin*. This last is indeed implied in a hating of it. There is a meaning in the expression, "*repentance toward God*," that is, as it may be understood, a repentance which includes in it a turning unto God. The prophet Hosea represents the God of Israel as complaining, "They return, but not to the Most High." Impenitent men often turn from one sin to another. But the truly penitent turn from all sin to the Lord. We will not turn as true penitents from sin, without making God the object of our affection, and endeavouring to please him by walking in his paths.

Genuine repentance leads to a confession of sin. Sorrow for and detestation of sin, and love to God combined, lead to this. There is no effort at concealment made by the true penitent ; or if there is at first, he is driven from it. His lips are forced open, that he may unburthen himself of the oppressive load. Hear what David says on this subject, in the 32d Psalm, "When I kept silence, my bones

waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." It was only in this way the Psalmist could find inward ease.

Such a repentance we call upon you to exercise. You will never enter the pearly gates, or walk the golden streets of the city of God without it.

But beware, at the same time, of making more out of repentance than the scriptures will warrant. Beware of putting it in the room of Christ, as we fear too many do. Repentance in no case satisfies for a breach of law. A man does not atone for a crime by repentance; nor does he pay a debt by it. A physician of great latitude in his religious sentiments, being called to attend an intelligent, pious lady in her illness, frequently insisted in her presence, with a good deal of dogmatism, that repentance and reformation were all that either God or man could require of us; and that consequently there was no necessity for an atonement by the sufferings of the Son of God. Upon the lady's recovery she invited him to tea. The table being removed, she remarked to him that her illness had occasioned him a number of journeys, and considerable expense for medicines, and expressed her sorrow

for it, and promised that on any future indisposition she would never trouble him again. "So you see," said she, "I both repent and reform." The doctor, immediately shrugging up his shoulders, exclaimed, "That will not do for me."

You have heard of the Foundation laid in Zion. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." If you build on any other, the consequence to yourself will be most disastrous. Your fabric will fall, and great will the fall be. Would you escape the wrath to come? It must be on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ. Would you have a title to life? Christ's meritorious obedience must furnish it. Would you know how you may obtain such an interest in the sacrifice and obedience of Jesus, as that these effects will follow? The answer is, by *faith*. Beware of thinking that you can escape hell, and enter into heaven *without faith*. If anything is plainly revealed, as essential to salvation, *faith is*. Take your Bible, and read Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 15, 16, 18, 36; v. 24; vi. 29, 35, 40; viii. 24; xii. 47, 48; xx. 31; Acts xiii. 39; xvi. 31; Rom. iii. 26; Heb. iii. 18, 19; Rev. xxi. 8.

Having thus ascertained that faith is essential to salvation, you should next be careful to ascertain in what it consists. What is its nature? Beware of taking that for genuine, saving faith, which is not. If you err here, you err to your ruin.

God has, in the sacred scriptures, revealed such truths as the following : We are sinners ; the soul that sinneth shall die ; Christ the Son of God is a Saviour ; there is no Saviour beside him. Now it is possible to fall into the mistake of thinking that a cold, heartless, inoperative assent to these truths is saving faith. An assent of the mind to such truths, is certainly one essential ingredient in it. It must be a *cordial* assent, however—for the cold and listless assent which is every day given to such truths by thousands who take no interest in them, and are in no degree influenced by them in their practice, can hardly so much as be called an ingredient in true faith. The awakened sinner, under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, has such truths presented to his mind, with an evidence which has all the force of demonstration. The operations of the mind on any subject cannot be so described as to render them intelligible to those who have never experienced them ; but, as one speaking on this point remarks, we “can conceive the difference between the assent that we give to a truth which we have not properly considered, and about which we feel no concern, and our assent to a truth which we understand, and know to be intimately connected with our interest. Such is the difference between the assent which enters into *speculative*, and that which enters into *saving* faith. The latter is founded on clear perceptions of the truth, and excellence, and infinite

importance of the gospel. An evidence accompanies it, which dispels all doubt, removes all objections, and creates the highest assurance."

But, my reader, your mind may yield a hearty assent to such truths as I specified, and you may yet want something which is essential to saving faith. The one great object of saving faith being the Lord Jesus Christ, how, suppose you, should the soul feel and act in reference to him? Should it not cordially "*receive and rest*" upon him for salvation? Such a reception and reliance are essential to the faith which is unto eternal life. He who savingly believes, not only assents to the testimony of God contained in the gospel concerning his Son as true, but *rests* on the object set forth in that testimony. This is evident from the terms in which such faith is described in the sacred writings. It is called a *receiving* of Christ, John, i. 12; a *coming unto* him, Matt. xi. 28; a *fleeing for refuge* to lay hold on the hope set before us, Heb. vi. 18; an eating of his flesh and a drinking of his blood, John, vi. 53, 54. These terms import such motion or activity as the soul exerts when it not only contemplates, but desires and embraces the good which is presented to it. Faith is indicated in the Old Testament by a *trusting* in the Lord. Now what is it to trust in a person? It is not merely to believe that he has power, and is willing to deliver us from danger and distress, and to confer benefits; but to

accept his proffered assistance, and to commit our interest to his care and disposal. The convicted sinner, discovering and feeling his guilt, hearing the denunciations of the broken law of God, and the accusing and condemning accents of his own conscience, resorts first to various expedients, such as his pride and carnality suggest, to relieve himself of his fears, and secure himself from the threatened evils—but finding them ineffectual, and the voice of inviting mercy falling upon his ear, and the tenders of gospel grace being presented to him, he is prepared to welcome them; cordially to receive the great Deliverer, and throw himself upon the true Foundation. Thus doing he feels himself secure. Knowing that the Son of God in our nature has suffered and died, “the just for the unjust,” that Jesus has paid the dreadful debt, and therefore that it cannot be exacted of himself, if he by faith be allied to him, his fearful apprehensions pass away. Having found an unfailing refuge and resting-place, he smiles and sings. He lifts his heart and voice in praise of redeeming love and delivering grace.

It may be remarked, in addition, that he who receives Christ in his sacerdotal office, will also receive him in his prophetic and his regal. He will be willing to be taught and ruled by him.

Oh, my reader, are you now willing to receive and rest on Jesus? *Beware of everything that would keep you from Christ.* Out of Christ, you are poor

and blind, and miserable, and naked. Out of him, you are as stubble to the consuming fire. Those who have gone to hell, all died out of Christ

Beware of "the damning sin of unbelief." Unbelief has the effrontery to call God a liar. Unbelief rejects Jesus and his salvation. It fastens the guilt of all his other sins upon the sinner. It doubly murders the soul. Alas! what myriads, from the Jews in our Saviour's time downward, in every age to the present, have ruined themselves forever through unbelief!

Beware of being *ashamed* of Jesus Christ. What a caution is this! Can it be possible that my reader needs it? Go, ask the shining ranks on high if they are ashamed of Jesus Christ. Would they not shudder at the question? Yet there are, doubtless, multitudes of creatures on earth that are ashamed of "the man who is God's Fellow;" ashamed to fly to him for help, and openly to appear on his side.

"Jesus! and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of thee?
Ashamed of thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glory shines through endless days!"

How unreasonable, how wicked, how ruinous to be ashamed of Christ! Read Mark, viii. 38: "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when

he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

My reader, is there not something—what is it—ah, what idol, that you are unwilling to part with for Jesus? Look at the following words—they are from the lips of Jesus Christ: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke, xiv. 26, 27, 33.) Let me request you to read likewise the following words of our Lord—"He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. x. 37, 38.) Voluntarily, cordially, separate yourself from every sin and every idol for Christ's sake.

Oh, be persuaded to *yield yourself to Christ*. It is related in Roman history, that when the people of Collatine stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, into the hands of the people of Rome?"

And on their replying, "We deliver up all," they were received. So you, beloved reader, should make an equally voluntary and comprehensive surrender of yourself, and all pertaining to you, to the blessed Redeemer. How much did he surrender for our sakes!

Beware of treating unkindly the Holy Spirit, and the convictions or serious impressions which he produces. His visit to you is one of infinite benevolence and mercy. He would show you your sins, and the danger of your state, that you may be induced to seek for deliverance. And he would then hold up to you Christ, and set before you the gracious truths and invitations of his gospel, that you may readily, cheerfully, betake yourself to him, and affectionately and gratefully embrace him. Be careful to entertain him, and the impressions of which he is the author. Grieve not away the one; wear not away nor stifle the other.

Beware, under conviction, of saying or thinking, "I am not fit to come to Christ." By means of this plausible notion of a want of fitness, the adversary would like to keep you from the only Saviour. It is *because* you are a *sinner*, that Jesus calls and invites you to come to him.

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him."

Says Thomas Adam, "If we see ourselves bad

enough for Christ, he sees us good enough." Never should the thought of the number, or greatness, or aggravation of our sins hinder us from fleeing to Christ. "The weight of our sins," says M'Cheyne, "should act like the weight of a clock; the heavier it is, it makes it go the faster."

Beware of staying away from Christ until you first become better.

"If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all."

Approach and touch the hem of Christ's garment, and thou shalt find virtue coming *out of him*, and *into thee*, that shall make thee better. Put thyself under the influence streaming from the cross, and instantly shall thy heart begin to spring up from the clay, thy dark character to brighten, and thy beclouded face to shine. Oh, reader, hie to the "wicket gate." Beware of counsel that "causeth to err." Listen not to "Obstinate," or "Pliable," or "Worldly Wiseman," or "Legality." Let nothing, nothing, from without or within, keep thee from the blood-sprinkled way leading to the celestial city.

CHAPTER XIV.

FORGIVENESS.

To an awakened, anxious sinner, such as you, reader, may now be, no subject can be more interesting and important than the one expressed in the above title. And in offering to you some thoughts upon it, at this time, I know not how better to proceed than by having, more particularly, before me those words of the son of Jesse with which is commenced the 32d Psalm: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." So thought that king of Israel who in another Psalm cries, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions;" and so will every one think who thinks aright. It is not here said, Blessed is the man who has never sinned, who has never broken the divine commandments; who has never trampled on the authority, or run counter to the will of God. Alas! where is such an one of woman born to be found? If no creatures were blessed

but such as have acted toward God, his government, his laws, as the holy angels have acted, then none of human kind, surely, could be pronounced blessed: for these latter all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Anterior to all experience, and to all divine testimony in relation to the matter, the thought could apparently have never entered the mind of man, that, transgressing in a single instance the law of God, he could ever be dealt with in the manner hinted at in those words of the inspired Psalmist, which we have quoted. The transgressors of a higher race found no pardoning mercy from the Lord. And the first human pair received no intimation, prior to their fall, that falling they could ever find any door of mercy thrown open to them; that they could by possibility ever hear of any such thing as is denoted by the word forgiveness. The conduct of our first parents, after they had partaken of the interdicted fruit, showed that their bosoms were strangers to any such fond anticipation as the first gracious promise was adapted and designed to inspire, before that promise was actually given them. Yes; it was too much for man to hope, that once transgressing the divine precept, he could ever possibly, in any way, find pardon. And certainly the threatening was too positive to leave any, even the least ground to hope.

Yet *our* ears have become familiar with the

sound, and our minds with the doctrine of Divine forgiveness. And familiarity here is attended with its usual effects. As in looking at the sun, we now little think of the glory of that luminary; so in hearing of *forgiveness*, we little think of the grace which that word imports, or of the blessedness of those who are the subjects of it. Oh, how few appear to think at all of its importance and preciousness. What smaller numbers still, so prize it as to seek after it.

In those words of the inspired Psalmist, which we have chosen as the basis of our remarks in this chapter, the *object* of forgiveness is stated in the three terms, *iniquity*, *transgression*, and *sin*. I suppose we may understand by these terms, as here used, all the various forms or sorts of sin—as sins of heart, sins of life; sins of omission, sins of commission; sin as seen by the Lord in states of mind, and that which manifests itself in action; as well as the different degrees of turpitude in which it exhibits itself. Now sin affects man in various ways. It, for instance, blinds his mind; it has turned his affections from right to wrong objects; his heart has become hardened by it; his soul has become polluted, corrupt, through its influence. But pardon has nothing to do, directly, with these effects. But there is another effect which sin has had on mankind. It has brought the *curse of God*, or of his law, upon them. They are *condemned*

creatures in consequence. The sentence which was pronounced against transgression they have fallen under. The penalty of the broken law they are liable to have executed upon them to their everlasting undoing. Now forgiveness has respect, strictly, to this latter effect, and indicates its removal.

The Psalmist's words speak of forgiveness in three forms. They speak of transgression *forgiven*; of sin *covered*; of iniquity *not imputed*. As to the first of these—there is indicated that he, whose transgression is dealt with according to the manner there spoken of, is delivered from the "obligation" to punishment, which by virtue of the sentence of the law he before lay under. As the original imports, the curse, which is as a heavy burthen, is *lifted off*; and thus the remission of sin gives rest or relief to the oppressed. The same idea is imported by the expression, "*take away*," as applied to sin. Thus Job says, "Why dost thou not *take away* my iniquity?" It is a metaphor derived from the circumstance of the lifting off the burden from a man who is carrying or attempting to carry a load whose weight he is about to sink under. Thus, when the heavy burthen of sin is on us, and pressing us down, this in the act of pardon is removed; the soul is lightened of it. Forgiveness is likewise expressed in the words alluded to, as well as elsewhere in the sacred scriptures, by *the covering* of

sin: "whose sin is *covered*." "Thou hast *covered* all their sin." (Psalm lxxxv. 2.) This was typified by the mercy-seat covering the ark, in which were deposited the two tables of the law. This covering of sin is not a covering of it from the eye of God's omniscience, but a covering of it from his vindictory or punitive justice; such a covering of it as that a righteous and sin-avenging God will not so see it as to proceed against it in the way of punishment. An object is hid from *our* view by its being *covered over*; and it is doubtless from *it* that the figure of the Psalmist is drawn. Again: Forgiveness is expressed by a *non-imputation* of sin. Thus it is said, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord *imputeth not* iniquity." A not imputing of iniquity is a not laying it to the sinner's charge; a not reckoning it to him in such a way as to proceed against him for it, as the Lord in justice might, or as the sinner deserves.

There are other expressions of holy writ by which forgiveness is denoted, and which may help to the understanding of its nature. It is expressed, for instance, as a *blotting out* of sins. Said God to Israel, "I, even I, am he that *blotteth out* thy transgressions." There is an allusion to a creditor, who, when his debtor has paid him, blots out the account, draws a mark across, or effaces it. His debts no longer stand charged in the creditor's books—no longer any account is to be found against him. To

forgive sin is also expressed by a *casting of it into the depths of the sea*. This form of expression is intended to import the Lord's burying of one's sins out of his sight, that they may not rise up in judgment against the perpetrator. It is, moreover, expressed by a *non-remembrance* of it. Thus God says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I *remember no more*," *i. e.*, treat them as if he had forgotten them.

It may be farther remarked in reference to forgiveness, that it comes, and can come only from God. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" said the Jews to Christ. None else has the right or the power. Sin is committed against God, and if it be remitted at all, the remission must come from him. The Popish absolution by priests is a figment. Reader, get your absolution from God, if you desire that which is real, and that which can profit you in the world to come.

The *ground*, the *sole ground* of pardon, let us proceed, though briefly, to consider. To you, my dear friend, a correct understanding of no point is more important than of this. Be careful, be careful to avoid all mistake or error here. The ground of pardon is not any merit of the creature. It is not anything that fallen man has; nor anything he can do. Wealth cannot purchase it; personal works, or righteousness, can by no means entitle any crea-

ture of the fall to it. Heaven cannot be entered without good works, without an internal righteousness. These pertain to a *meetness* to enter into life. But they help not in the least to constitute the meritorious ground of pardon. This is a distinct matter, which must be looked for elsewhere. The Rev. David Dickson, professor of divinity in Edinburgh, being asked, when on his death-bed, how he found himself, answered, "I have taken my good deeds and bad deeds, and thrown them together in a heap, and fled from them both to Christ, and in him I have peace." Oh, my reader, the streams of divine, pardoning mercy, which, when traced downward in their course, are found flowing to sinful men so much to their benefit, are, when traced upward, found to have their source in the benevolence of God indeed; but they are seen invariably coming by the way of Calvary, before they reach any of Adam's guilty progeny. On that crimsoned summit is kept, by the Lord God Almighty, the great reservoir from which sinners derive forgiving mercy, if that mercy they ever find. One of the most prominent doctrines of both the Old and New Testament scriptures is, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." But what blood? Not that of bulls and goats; it could never take away sin. But it told of blood that could. The bloody offerings of the ancient dispensation had typical significance in them. They speak of the bloody tree of

Calvary. Prophets and apostles stand and point to the cross. These both, with loud voice, cry, Remission of sin by the blood of the cross. The sufferings of the incarnate Son of God were vicarious; the death of Jesus Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice. Hear Isaiah: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Hear Paul: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." "He hath made him to be sin (a sin-offering) for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Speaking of Christ, Peter also says, "Who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree." And again: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." How often in the sacred writings is Christ represented as dying *for us, i. e.*, in our room or stead. Let me add the following passages: "But now once, in the end of the world, hath he (Christ) appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

I could here add remarks of my own, attempting to show that in such passages of holy writ as we have quoted, we are taught that Christ, by his sufferings unto death, has rendered such a satisfaction to the law and justice of God for sin, that all who receive him by faith obtain forgiveness. But it appears to me that this would be very much like attempting to demonstrate one of the plainest axioms in mathematics, or like holding up a candle to you at mid-day, to assist you to behold the sun. The language of the Holy Ghost on this subject is as plain as any language that can possibly be employed.

Carry this truth constantly with you, reader : The death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the alone ground of pardon. Are you a trembling sinner, panting for forgiveness for your aggravated and countless sins ? We would say to you, in the language of John the Baptist : " Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

It is not uncommon for sinners to look for pardon, or expect escape from coming wrath in some other way—in ways which the scriptures sanction not nor teach ; in ways, indeed, in which the Bible tells us positively that it cannot be obtained. Many look for forgiveness irrespective altogether of the atonement of Christ ; yet God grants it to none irrespective of it, and he never will ; nor indeed, (we would say it reverently,) can he, without trampling on the

demands of justice ; without appearing to connive at sin ; and without falsifying also his word. In all cases in which pardoning mercy is exercised, there is in its bestowment a due regard had to the rights of God ; to the honour of his government, and to the claims of his law. It is not a weak pity, such as is frequently exercised by a parent toward an offending child, or by a weak judge toward a culprit at the bar. God's forgiving mercy is combined in its exercise with the due influence of every consideration arising out of the public and official station which is occupied by Him as the ruler of an universe of intelligent beings, whose interests as a whole, as well as his own honour, will not be left out of view in the treatment of individuals. Its dispensation toward all the happy objects of it is according to certain rules, after a fixed order. It is "invariably accompanied with suitable displays of the divine purity ; and its consequences combine with the relief and eternal felicity of its objects, the maintenance of the claims of divine moral government, and the advancement of the divine glory." Look at the atonement made by the infinitely precious blood of God's dear Son, and you behold the peculiar and exclusive medium through which pardon is dispensed by the infinite God, and the alone way in which it can be dispensed, without infringing on the rights and glory of the moral Governor of the universe.

Do all mankind procure pardon through this medium? We reply, Those of mankind who procure it at all do; but it is to be borne in mind that according to the purpose and plan of God as revealed in the gospel, none receive forgiveness through the atonement of Christ except those who repent and believe. Repentance and faith the apostles every where taught to be essential to the forgiveness of sins. This, indeed, is the current language of the New Testament. You can nowhere find the gospel proclaiming and promising pardon to all men, whether they exercise repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, or not. Sometimes, it is true, the language is such as that some might conclude that only one of these is necessary—either repentance or faith—for sometimes the one is mentioned as necessary, and sometimes the other. It is seldom that they are both mentioned together. But then it is to be remembered that where *one* is mentioned, the *other* is implied: for they go together. Repentance and faith, in the gospel scheme, though they are by no means one and the same thing, yet are inseparable. Where one exists, there does the other. Let it be borne in mind, that the gospel does not proclaim a general amnesty, or an indiscriminate absolution, to all the human family; to the impenitent and unbelieving, as well as to the penitent and believing. No such proclamation as that, has Jehovah authorised to be made; and he

only has the right to say on what terms sin shall be forgiven. It is a great deal, to provide, and to say, authoritatively, that it may be forgiven in any way, on any terms. And it is certainly very gracious and merciful in him, to see to having such provision made, as that forgiveness may be offered on so easy terms especially as those of repentance and faith.

Notwithstanding what we have said in the preceding chapter in reference to these last, it may not be deemed superfluous to drop a few additional remarks concerning the necessity of each.

And, first, in relation to the necessity of *repentance*. It is not that repentance *merits* the forgiveness of sin, that it is called for as a prerequisite. I have already stated the sole meritorious ground of pardon to be, *the blood of Christ*. Tears cannot purchase pardon. If they could, then Christ's blood might have remained in his veins, and he in heaven; he then need never to have stooped so low as to assume our nature. But it has seemed proper in God's sight, and even to men there cannot but appear a fitness in it, that those only shall have the bestowment of so great a blessing as pardon, who desire and seek after it. But the impenitent, the blind, the obdurate, the careless, will not seek after it; they will not anxiously desire it; for they indeed see not the need of it. They see their sins, and view the law of God in no such light as leads to a discovery of the value or importance of pardon.

The Lord would have such a blessing as that of forgiveness prized by those to whom he imparts it. None but the humbled, penitent, contrite, know how to appreciate such a blessing. If it were even offered to others, they would be apt to reject it as worthless or unnecessary. They would behold nothing in their condition calling for such a thing.

And next—as to the necessity of *faith in Christ*, in order to receiving forgiveness, it may be remarked, that as it is only through Christ's atonement that pardon can come to guilty men, it does not seem reasonable to suppose that *they* can derive such a benefit from that atonement who reject it; and they reject the atonement, cast it away from them, who do not receive, or, in other words, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That, according to the scriptures, faith is a necessary antecedent to forgiveness, appears from such passages as these: "To him gave all the prophets witness that through his (Christ's) name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts, x. 43.) "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts, xiii. 38, 39.) "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts, xxvi. 18.) "He that

believeth not shall be damned." (Mark, xvi. 16.) Naught save Christ's blood can wash away sin; but that blood cannot with reason be expected to affect so materially what it reaches not. Now it reaches not the soul of the unbeliever; for faith only is the appointed channel of conveyance to the souls of men of the blood of Christ. The apostle Peter speaks of *the sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus. Now it is faith which may be said to sprinkle that blood on the door-posts and lintel of men's souls. Faith, as it were, puts its hand into Christ's wounds, and takes of the blood and sprinkles it upon the conscience, to the washing away of guilt. A connexion must subsist between Christ and the soul, in order to the blood of the Lamb efficaciously flowing to it. Faith forms that connexion. There must be a union between the one and the other. Faith is that bond of union. God would have all on whom he bestows forgiveness, feel their indebtedness to Christ for opening the fountain of pardon to them, and express their gratitude also to him for it; and he will have them express their feeling of indebtedness and gratitude by directing their eye toward, and coming to him—and this is by faith. The gospel offers the boon of pardon: faith is the hand appointed to receive it. Thus, my friend, we see in what sense faith is necessary to forgiveness. It is necessary instrumentally.

There is in the gospel no limit set to forgiveness,

other than that now stated. Let a sinner but repent and believe, and no matter how great his sins may be, he can find pardon. Though they be of astonishing magnitude—though they be as scarlet or as crimson in their hue, the sacrifice offered by our Great High Priest is sufficient to atone for them; “the blood of the Lamb” is of sufficient efficacy to wash their guilt all away. Reader, are you a great sinner? Do you appear to yourself such, at this hour? Are you amazed at the number and magnitude of your sins? Do they appear to you, at any time, too many, or too heinous to be forgiven? Know thou that the greatest sins come within the compass of forgiveness. Manasseh, that once wicked, cruel Hebrew king, who seduced the nation into idolatry, and made the land reek with blood; Saul of Tarsus, that once fierce persecutor of Christ’s followers, that “chief of sinners,” as he afterwards called himself; and the dying thief—these men found forgiveness. Ah, there are many, many now shining ones in glory, who were once very great sinners; who were guilty of deeds among the most dark in the catalogue of crimes: yet God granted them pardoning mercy. Some of the Jews who participated in the deed of crucifying our Lord, are now circling the throne rejoicing. They found forgiveness through that blood they helped to spill. Oh, there are no sins that will fail to be washed away through any want of virtue or efficacy in the

blood of the Crucified One. Let there be but repentance and faith, and the very chief of sinners need not despair of finding pardon.

It may be also remarked, that when the Lord grants forgiveness to sinners upon their repenting and believing, the forgiveness granted extends to *all* their sins—all the sins they have ever fallen into. He does not forgive some of their sins, and leave the rest unpardoned. No, no. God does not thus do his work by halves. It would be to little purpose to have some sins remitted, and to have the guilt of the rest remaining uncanceled. Jehovah, by the prophet Jeremiah, said of Judah and Israel, "I will pardon *all* their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." David, in the 103d Psalm, says of the Lord, "Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities." Paul, writing to the Colossian christians, says, "Having forgiven you *all* trespasses." God blots out all one's past transgressions, when he blots out any. I say, *past* transgressions: for sins future cannot be actually pardoned until they are committed; nor will they be forgiven till they are also repented of. Indeed, if pardon extended to sins yet having no existence, as well as to sins past, there would be no need for *christians* to *pray* for forgiveness. It is vain or useless to pray for the pardon of that which is already forgiven. Besides, Christ is an advocate to intercede for his people in reference to their daily sins; but

what need of daily intercession, if daily sins are previously, even before committed, all forgiven? God has, it is true, determined to pardon all the sins which his people shall ever fall into; and the forgiving of past sins is a sure token of such determination, and a sort of earnest of what he will do for them as to their future sins, upon their repenting of them and looking to Jesus; and that is all that is needful, or can in reason be looked for.

It is our purpose to devote the remainder of this chapter to a consideration of the *privileges* of a pardoned condition. It may thus be shown, according to what is affirmed by the Psalmist, in the words to which we alluded near the commencement of the chapter, that he is "blessed" truly, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;" or, as it is in the original, and might be translated, "*Blessednesses* to him whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. *Blessednesses* are to the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Quite a number of great and choice privileges and blessings, each yielding a blessedness its own, are to such an one.

One of the privileges of a pardoned condition is, deliverance from the curse which man as a sinner lies under; an exemption from exposure to suffer the penalty of God's violated law; a release from condemnation. The various scriptural expressions which were mentioned and explained a while ago

such as a *covering* of sin by the Lord ; a *not imputing* of it ; a *non-remembrance* of it ; a *blotting out*, and a *taking away* of one's iniquities ; and a *casting of them into the depths of the sea*, all import that the soul for which such things are done, is no longer exposed to endless suffering for past sins. The curse is lifted off from all who have obtained pardon. Jehovah's law has no thunders for them on account of anything they have done, or omitted to do, how evil, criminal soever their conduct may have been. The Lord looks upon a pardoned creature as if he had never sinned. As the cancelling of a bond nulls it, makes it as if it had never been ; so the forgiving of sin is as a making of it not to be, so far as penal consequences are concerned. Thus, we read in the book of Jeremiah, " In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none ; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found : for I will pardon them." Now here is a mighty burden rolled off ; a great and unspeakably blessed deliverance granted. Think what the unpardoned sinner is exposed to. Think of the horrors and torments of the second death. Oh, think what God has threatened the wicked with in the world to come. And think, too, that the wicked, unpardoned creature is condemned already, and is only afforded a brief respite here ; that he shall soon be as miserable as he deserves ; dying unpardoned, oh,

how miserable, and that, too, world without end. Upon the grave-stone of every one who departs this life unforgiven, may be written the epitaph, "It had been good for this man that he had never been born." Oh, what inexpressible misery, even as to degree, will such an one feel; and, then, that word *eternity*, *eternity* is written indelibly on all his pains and woes. In reference to such wretchedness, he whose sins are forgiven is in the position of a creature that has never sinned. A condition, oh, how privileged!

Again: He whose sins are forgiven, has peace—peace with God, and peace within. Not only is God reconciled to him, but he is also reconciled to God. He is willing that the Lord should not only rule in heaven, but likewise on earth. He is no longer disposed to quarrel either with God's preceptive, or his providential will. His laws he is no longer inclined to charge with being too extensive or severe in their exactions. He is no longer disposed to call in question the wisdom or rectitude of the Divine Lawgiver, in imposing such rules of conduct on his human creatures, or annexing such a penalty to their violation. He is reconciled to God's providence, as well as to his laws. He likes the idea that the Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and that his kingdom ruleth over all. He believes that the great vessel of the universe will not go wrong under his management.

He can encounter winds and waves with such a guide and overseer, without having his heart greatly agitated, his equanimity disturbed.

He who has received forgiveness from God has peace within. The conscience of the pardoned sinner is not generally left long without the information of the forgiveness which the Lord has granted. God will not usually suffer that faculty to be long condemning one whom He no longer condemns; whom his law holds no longer under its condemning power. Hence pardoned sinners are commonly found enjoying a greater or less measure of inward peace. An unpardoned sinner has a state of conscience far from peaceful. It may be almost asleep sometimes; but that is a different state from one of peace. And then God may awake that power at any time, and cause it to roar and thunder terribly. Oh, the horrors of a guilty and accusing conscience! What misery, what misery can it kindle in the soul! But where sin is remitted, the conscience has no longer authority to accuse. Where God absolves, the conscience, if rightly informed, absolves. If the Lord says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," conscience says, "Go in peace." Said one, writing to a youth who was a stranger to it, "The peace of being forgiven reminds me of the calm, blue sky, which no earthly clamours can disturb. It lightens all labour, sweetens every

morsel of bread, and makes a sick bed all soft and downy."

Again: Where God pardons, he bestows a righteousness—he imputes the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where he exempts from *death*, he gives a *title to life*. Pardon is an important branch of justification. Acceptance as righteous is the other branch. These branches are never separated in God's proceedings. Where the former is granted by him, the latter is not withheld. Now what a privilege it is to be reckoned and dealt with as a righteous creature; to have a title to life the same as if one had always personally and perfectly obeyed the divine law.

We may remark, in the next place, that they who are pardoned are secure of *sanctifying grace*: for we have just said that they who are forgiven are also accepted as righteous, and so have a title to life. But they who have a title to life, God will by his grace and Spirit make meet for the enjoyment of it. In the 8th chapter of the Romans it is said, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified," *i. e.*, raised to glory. Nothing is there said, directly, about sanctification. But then, *it* is implied; for the Lord exalts none to glory whom he does not make holy, or to whom he does not impart a meetness for it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Without holiness, no one would be prepared to relish or enjoy heaven. Now what a

privilege it is to have a holy heart ; pure, holy principles, affections, dispositions. What happiness is the result of their existence and operation. They create a young dawn of heaven below. Faith, hope, love, are some of the principles which belong to the new man ; and how much happiness these yield to the possessor, this side of the tomb, it would not be an easy thing to tell. Yes ; God will impart gracious, holy principles to those whom he pardons. Sin enslaves its subjects. It is a great curse to have the desires, dispositions, feelings, of the unpardoned, and unsanctified, and be under the control of them. The drudges of Satan are such as are under their unbroken dominion. From the sway of these, pardoned souls are more and more delivered. Yes ; forgiveness has connected with, and invariably draws after it, the grace which sanctifies—draws after it the influence which adorns the soul with holiness.

Again : They who have received pardon are blessed, because to them are exceedingly great and precious promises given. For example, among other things, they are promised God's protecting, guardian care. Listen : " The Lord is thy keeper ; the Lord is thy shade on thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil ; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and for evermore." Everything has a commission

to do the pardoned creature good. Do afflictions come? Does loss, poverty, sickness, reproach, persecution, or sore bereavement come? These come not by chance. They are the Lord's kind messengers, wearing an unpromising exterior indeed, but nevertheless kind messengers, sent by God to convey to him good, inestimable good. If he be chastised, he is chastised for his good, not in wrath. Nothing comes to him in the way of punishment, strictly speaking; nothing in the form of penal evil. He has the favour of God, and that favour is manifested in all the divine dispensations toward him.

Even death, which is a terrible thing to the unpardoned, is an unspeakable blessing to him whose sins are forgiven. Death is to such an one not "the king of terrors;" has to such an one no sting. In the near prospect of it, instead of shaking in every joint and limb through fear, he can feel tranquil, or, beyond this, with joy unspeakable rejoice. As a proof and illustration of what I have just said, let me throw before you a few words of the dying Payson: "The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me; its odours are wafted to me; its sounds strike upon my ears; and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually draw-

ing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere ; pouring forth a flood of glory in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun ; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my wants. I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion."

As one said to Philip Jenks, just before he expired, "How hard it is to die!" he replied, "Oh, no ; easy dying ; blessed dying ; glorious dying !" Looking up at the clock, he said, "I have experienced more happiness in dying two hours this day, than in my whole life. It is worth living for, it is worth a whole life, to have such an end as this." When the English martyr, Bainham, was led to *the stake*, he found that the comfortable sense of pardon and salvation, through the all-sufficiency of Christ, triumphed even over pain in its most agonizing form ; and declared that the blazing faggots seemed to him as a bed of roses.

Well may the pardoned soul, dear reader, rejoice at death's approach, for it comes to him as a friend. It comes to knock off his chains, open the doors of his fleshly prison-house, and let the inmate go free—go to another and a better dwelling-place.

The pardoned soul, in short, goes to God, to dwell in his presence while eternal ages roll. And I will not tell you, no, nor attempt it, for it would be a failure if I did, how blessed or happy he shall be there. If you and I shall ever be permitted to plant our feet on glory's flowery brow, and hand in hand go up the enchanting way toward its gorgeous capital, I shall be better able to tell you then. But I will not promise that I shall be able to find language, even then, to express it to you. No description of mine, however, will be needed by you, if you shall be brought to feel the blessedness for yourself. Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, could ye tell this reader what happiness ye are now enjoying? what draughts of bliss ye are now drinking in? Oh, language how weak; even the tongues of angels how inadequate to express what those pardoned souls are now seeing and feeling! Yes—and still new scenes of sublimity and beauty will burst upon their vision; and larger, deeper draughts of bliss will they drink in; and from glory still to glory will it be their exalted privilege to rise, each successive moment in the eternity before them.

Oh, are not they truly, eminently blessed, whose transgressions are forgiven; whose sins are covered? What a precious series of blessings is that, of which forgiveness stands at the head. If you, my reader, have never yet received pardon, is it not the earnest

desire of your heart to obtain it? Do I not hear you say, "Yes, it is; but can the Lord be willing to grant pardon, and those other great blessings to such a sinner as myself?" After what has been already said, dear friend, can you doubt it? Not willing? Wherefore was his infinitely dear Son mantled in human flesh, and nailed to the accursed tree? Not willing? What mean those various pressing invitations of the gospel? What is the import of those words in a parable spoken by our Lord, "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him;"——and "said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found?"

Approach that God against whom you have so much sinned, in the appointed way; humbly, penitently, and with your hand resting on the head of the sin-atonement Lamb; and he will cast a look of inexpressible clemency and tenderness upon you; will at once grant you that invaluable blessing on which we have been offering some thoughts in this chapter: that first in the precious series, *forgiveness*——and in his good time, and after his established

method, those other blessings which belong to his salvation.

My reader, other duties call ; I must leave you. Give me your hand. May Israel's God abundantly bless you. Follow the counsel which has been given you in this book, and we shall soon meet again—meet in that beautiful and happy land which lies on the other side of Jordan's waters. Hasting, like myself, to the tomb, and to the territory of spirits beyond it, oh, let not my eyes fail to behold thee among the shining ones where starry crowns are worn, and Jehovah is worshipped in perfection.







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